



**“WOMEN WORKERS AND GLOBALIZATION, EMERGENT CONTRADICTIONS IN INDIA” BY
MAZUMDAR INDRANI**

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Introduction:

Women workers and globalization, emergent contradictions in India” by Indrani Mazumdar, was first published in April 2007 by STREE, and imprint of Bhatkal and Sen.

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This book investigates the impact of globalization on the Indian women workers. It demystifies the phenomena of globalization, offering an overview of its prime drivers processes and forces. It covers four sectoral studies of women workers:- two on factory women in garment exports and electronics, third on home based workers in a range of manufacturing, its processes and industries and the fourth on middle class women working in information technology enabled services (ITES). Primary surveys were conducted among women workers in 2002-04, covering Delhi and its covering townships of Noida and Gurgaon by using secondary sources, the study links the experiences of these Delhi based women workers with the counter parts in the same sectors in other parts of the country for a wider understanding of the impact of globalization. The analysis of garment exports, electronics and IT services, which are clearly linked to global production and service networks, brings out global sectoral trends and their ramifications. The study

of home based workers on the other hand has focused more on the policy framework towards this particular section and the changes in the perspective that have accompanied the liberalization process. It is about the advent of middle class women workers in the new forms of employment in the service sector has led to globalization. IT-enabled service, the product of the digital age is seen by globalizers as very important for employment generations as well as to transform India from a largely backward and poor country into the super power league. This book is also about new avenues of employment combine with new forms of cultural degradation....

The book is about women as workers and their contributions. Globalization, liberalization and privatization have led to disturbances and swings in the wage and self employment following India's integration in the world market. As there was decline in the availability of public services and rise in the prices



of basic necessities devastated lives of many at the lower ranks.

Globalization was introduced in India from 1991 onwards. It was assumed that liberalization would lead to expanded international trade and large inflows of capital and investment from across the globe and integration of Indian Economy with world capitalism. Although the issue of such ‘Reforms’ and overall growth is a conducted issue in some sections such as India’s businessmen, industries some upper and middle classes propelled to high fortune. In a similar manner some of the global brands, financial interests and commodities have created names and spaces for themselves. Globalization has increased the vulnerabilities of women. It has made women more insecure. The advance of globalization has been marked by expanding forms of violence, insecurities and increasing pressure in the sphere of work, increased compulsions towards migration, greater vulnerability to economic and social exploitation.

The condition for poor has become harsher with more difficulties for the unskilled and uneducated. With Globalization their jobs in organized sector are shrinking and large majority of women are getting concentrated in the informal sectors. It also instigates the impact of Globalization on women workers in India. Here the author has covered the four sectors of study of women workers in India. The book is in 5 chapters such as: Chapter 1 Emergent Contradictions: Overview on Globalization, Chapter 2 Hierarchies of Exploitation and Multiple Inequalities: Women Workers in the Garment Export Industry, Chapter 3 The Cutting Edge and Nimble Fingers: Women Workers in Electronics Manufacturing, Chapter 4 Lengthening Shadows: The Closing Walls of Home-based Work and Chapter 5 Neither Mental nor Manual Labour. The Service Factories of the ‘New Economy’ This book speaks about whether supportive or critical

of the globalization project, have all pointed to its effects of increasing women’s vulnerabilities and insecurities. It is widely accepted that the advance of globalization has been marked by expanding forms of violence,

Insecurities and greater pressures in the sphere of work, increased compulsion towards migration, greater vulnerability to economic and social exploitation, and generally harsher conditions of life for the poor, the unskilled and the uneducated. While there may be disputes on the actual features, causes and processes, there is a consensus on the emergence of many new areas of concern consequent to the changes in women’s lives being brought about by globalization. In relation to women and work in the era of globalization, influential theories and

Propositions have been thrown up, often based on observation of partial or temporary phenomena. Some perhaps need to be reevaluated in the light of current evidence. This book also shows that globalization leads to the feminization of labour led the field of inquiry for many years. As such, the elements of counteraction to growth of female employment flowing from high levels of male unemployment, stagnation or deceleration in growth of employment, or the causes and effects of generalized swings in overall employment on women workers, remained relatively neglected areas of investigation. Similarly, with the shrinking of more stable and relatively protected jobs in the organized sector, a universal characteristic of globalization, the large majority of working women in developing countries are getting more concentrated in what is generally referred to as the informal sector. One the reason being that most of the women are uneducated and unskilled due to which they are absorbed easily by the unorganized sector. This has fuelled much discussion on the employment-generation capacities of the informal sector as compared to the formal sector,



and greater advocacy of promotion of informal employment as a survival strategy for women in poverty. The destabilizing effects of globalization on both incomes and employment in the

Informal sector, the profoundly exploitative tendencies in ‘perennialization’ and expansion of such informality, and the hardening of such characteristics, are increasingly being removed from the reckoning in the formulation of various strategies for the informal sector.

Advancing the debate on these issues on the basis of empirical and experiential analysis is not a matter of mere academic interest. It has become a crying need for those involved in organizing women at various levels. Within the women’s movement in India, there is growing consciousness of the relatively untapped potential of working women’s organization in the broader movement for equality and emancipation. Bearing the weight of organizing women within an enormously expanded range of issues, with often invisible interconnections, many a tired grass root organizer is desperately searching for information and explanations to advance

The movement’s capacity to provide informed perspective and leadership in relation to women workers. This is even truer for those working in the major cities, where the rapid pace of events constantly threatens to overtake and allows little time or space for women organizers to collate information, assess, review, and work out appropriate and relevant strategies.

Investigating the impact of globalization on women workers in India in jobs that are considered to be most prominent in discourses around women’s work, this book demystifies the phenomenon of globalization, offering an overview of its prime drivers, processes and forces. Primary surveys were conducted amongst 500 women workers in 2002-04, covering the capital and its

satellite townships of Noida and Gurgaon through a combination of structured questionnaires, individual and group discussions. These locale-specific primary surveys constitute the basis of identification of the main issues and concerns of women workers in these sectors. In addition, by using secondary sources, the study links the experiences of these Delhi-based women workers with their counterparts in the same sectors in other parts of the country for a more general understanding of the impact of globalization. The analysis of garment exports, electronics and IT services, which are clearly linked to global production and service networks, brings out global sectoral trends and their ramifications. The study of home-based workers, on the other hand, has focused more on the policy framework towards this particular section and the changes in perspective that have accompanied the liberalization process. The advent of middle class women workers in the new forms of employment in the service sector has led to much euphoric celebration of globalization among some sections of the business and middle classes. IT-enabled service, the product of the digital age, are seen by ‘globalizers’ as being singularly important for employment generation as well as in terms of the potential to transform India from a still largely backward and overwhelmingly poor country into the ‘superpower’ league. The authors suggests that in this new IT enabled sector, new avenues of employment can be seen combining with new forms of cultural degradation, with technology itself becoming an instrument of closer and more oppressive systems of social control. A crucial indicator of the effects of liberalization has been the steep fall in the work participation rates among women in both rural and in urban India. The globalization decade in India has been marked by an extreme instable in employment that is generalized across all sectors. The general results have been an extreme and continuous pressure on the wages



and incomes of the majority of women workers in the manufacturing sector, in many cases to levels far below subsistence. Moreover, the gap between male and female employment has been widening. An incisive guide to the impact of globalization on women's work, the book will be invaluable for scholars, activists, the general public, whose very livelihood is at stake, and indeed for policy makers. Chapter one in this book shows how Globalization has undoubtedly become the most powerful force diminishing current national and international policies and outcomes. The major changes are based on globalization and privatization which has swept across countries projecting absolute faith in the power of the unrestricted market to dissolve the fundamental problems of the human condition at global, national and international level. This chapter also shows how globalization, liberalization and privatization have led to majority of the women in the unorganized industry. The second Chapter is about the women workers in the garment export industry and the exploitation and inequalities faced by them. The wages that women workers get are considerably lower than the male workers and especially in states where the female share of employment is highest. Tamilnadu has the highest share of female employment and wages 33% lower than men, and in Delhi were the employment share is lowest the gap of wages is least (almost equal). There is persistent inequality despite the distribution of women within the industry. Men are being paid much higher wages to women.

Delhi has inequality to a very high level in Delhi's garment industry. Tailoring operations in most units are male dominated whereas women are mostly into unskilled jobs such as thread cutting and helpers etc. only 19% of women were employed as tailor operators and rest in unskilled occupations. The supply of male labour in Delhi far exceeds that of female labour. Hence there is higher proportion of male labourers in the

garment industry. One of the reasons given for continued male domination is the decimation of several fabricators units which has left thousands of trained male tailors without work, providing cheap labour for the manufacturer exporter. The level of unemployment of women is very high in the women garment workers of Delhi. The survey reveals that 30% of the women workers were unemployed. Young and old workers had lost their jobs. Older women who lose their jobs find great difficulty in finding one. Most of the unemployed women workers were casual or contract workers. Their jobs were mostly unprotected with no benefits at all. Almost one third of the unemployed women workers had lost jobs due to closure of their factories. Some were dismissed due to no work coming to their units. The burnt of termination of jobs and unemployment was clearly being borne by unskilled workers. 63% had lost their jobs were unskilled and unemployed. There is absolutely no job security for these women's.

The tragedy of unemployment was to such extent that one-third of the unemployed women whose husbands were also unemployed. There was starvation, no money and poverty. Such workers contribute towards the profit of exporters and export earnings of the country, but who are considered dispensable in the present era. There is increase in the casualization and contractualization. It points out how the sub-contracting and the kedar system has increased. The factories are now mostly getting into employment of workers within their own factory premises through labour contractors, so to avoid direct legal relationship with the workers. More than 1/3rd factories has increased the number of contract workers because of which there was rise in casual and contract work and permanent jobs being eroded. Even though after working for 10 years and more they were not employed as permanent or regular employees. This also worked in squeezing the wages of the workers. It was found



where the average wage of permanent worker it was 2,306 for flexible workers it was considerably less. There was also regularization of the overtime work. The regular eight hours wages for workers were so inadequate to meet their needs. The regularization of overtime work is one of the principal characteristics of garment export manufacture under globalization and has scared into consciousness of all workers. Workers are not paid the double the regular hourly wage for overtime work. Only 20% of the workers were given double regular hourly rate for overtime. Despite the legal bar of employment, masses of women workers in the garment industry exit factories sometimes at 8:00pm and sometimes as late as 10:00 pm. It was also found that there is no provision of transport for these women workers who work till late hours. Company transport was available to only 5% of the workers.

Here the author speaks about the widespread violation of workers' rights and entitlements. There are quite a lot of violations of labour rights across spectrum of labour laws. Maximum violation was in the sphere of minimum wages. In casual and contract labours 94% and 97% respectively were denied minimum wages. Among permanent workers more than 80% had access to health insurance, provident fund and leave less than 40% had minimum wages.

The third chapter is specifically about these women working in the electronics manufacturing industry. Women workers in electronics manufacturing. This chapter is about how with the fusion of computing and communication the technological progress the pace of growth of electronics production had by the 1990's surpassed all other core industrial segments. Electronics production has reached its peak. Convulsions in the employment scenario in electronics began to appear as a feature to be contended with as the establishment architecture of the production economy in electronics began. It was a worldwide establishment

trend in electronics to favor employment of women due to a notion that their nimble fingers were particularly suitable for the fine manual work required in electronic assembly. Women were found in large numbers in electronics industry, but in lowest wings. These women work in the electronic industry though with minimum or no benefits. These women work in bad conditions with fewer wages as compared to their male counterpart. Electronics industry became a leading example of feminization. But with marginalization of electronic components beyond manual capacities, manual work is giving way to automation.

Women losing jobs in electronics is considered as minor giving the argument that the growth of IT is leading to new opportunities for women but women who are losing jobs and women acquiring jobs in IT are not the same apart from the need of higher education. The women who are acquiring jobs are very few in numbers as these women are educated and skilled but majority of the women are losing their jobs and these are unskilled workers.

This chapter is also about the evolution of electronic industry in India. Up to 1970's the structure of electronics in India consisted of consumer electronics dominated by private sectors. 1970 also saw the emergence of state level public sector. 1970 also saw the emergence of state level public sector electronics corporations. The industry grew in major cities of Bangalore, Mumbai, Pune and Delhi.

Bangalore had major public sector in corporations in defense and telecommunications. Mumbai and Pune were traditional locations of private sector largely foreign owned. Delhi became important from 1960's. Towards the end of 1990 there was substantial increase in the organized private sector including MNC's. Global drivers of the electronics industry electronic production involves computer technology and organizational capabilities combined with intensive



production, international contract manufacturing and unequal working conditions. Contract manufacturing companies have presence in every region in the triad of the capitalist world economy, combining operations in the lead economies with mass manufacturing in developing countries.

Since 1996 in India contract manufacturing was propagated as the area where entry by Indian manufacturers could grow and enhance export. Outsource contract manufacturing on a global scale has increased in India.

In this book chapter four and five are about home based women workers who work on piece rate basis. This is one of the major outcomes of the globalization which has led to subcontracting and outsourcing. These women work from home on contract basis. Though inspite of the hard work these women gain nothing out of it. It is also about how women's services in the paid sectors have increased and mostly these women are concentrated in lower paid and informal kind of jobs. But in a way at least these women can work from home and earn something for a living. The study of home-based workers, on the other hand, has focused more on the policy framework towards this particular section and the changes in perspective that have accompanied the liberalization process. The advent of middle class women workers in the new forms of employment in the service sector has led to much elated celebration of globalization among some sections of the business and middle classes. IT-enabled service, the product of the digital age, are seen by 'globalizers' as being singularly important for employment generation as well as in terms of the potential to transform India from a still largely backward and overwhelmingly poor country into the 'superpower' league. The authors suggests that in this new IT enabled sector, new avenues of employment can be seen combining with new forms of cultural degradation, with technology itself becoming

an instrument of closer and more oppressive systems of social control. A crucial indicator of the effects of liberalization has been the steep fall in the work participation rates among women in both rural and in urban India. The globalization decade in India has been marked by an extreme instability in employment that is generalized across all sectors. The general results have been an extreme and continuous pressure on the wages and incomes of the majority of women workers in the manufacturing sector, in many cases to levels far below subsistence. Moreover, the gap between male and female employment has been widening. Hence as a result of globalization there is an increase of women workers in the unorganized sectors.

Conclusion and Reccomendatios:

Women's work is never done. It is valued only when it is paid, yet is essential to daily life in society. The jobs and roles that women have are very closely tied to the intersection of class, race and gender, making women's labor a very complex issue. This study has explored this in relation women workers in Delhi and its satellite townships of Noida and Gurgaon who work in the garment export industry, electronics manufacturing, as manual labour and home based work. This book also highlights the effects of globalization on these women workers. My research has helped to understand, the major issues of these women workers and the insecurity of their jobs. How these women are excluded from skilled tailoring, de-skilling, time rates and lower wages and their exploitation. The role of increase in the organized private sector including MNC's.

As a social science student scientist, this book gave me a brief idea about labor, especially women's paid labor, has become commodified in the public sphere, yet remains unappreciated in the private sphere. I hope that the production of research about women and the work that they do, will educate and empower us to change this ideology.

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