

Globalization and Its Impact on Rural Women

Abstract

“Globalization is the buzzword in the contemporary world. It has made countries to realize that nations can no longer be cocooned in their own cultural and economic nest but invariable be part in the picture which takes into account the competencies, interest and the dependencies of economies world-wide. Globalization is multi- dimensional and multifaceted. It is the process by which societies, politics, cultures, economies have in some sense integrated. Globalization is economic, political, cultural, ideological and technological. Due to technological advances especially in the economic fields it increases the inter dependence of the state the dawn of Globalization era from 1990’s has ushered in an era of greater turbulence and lesser stability in the socio economic political life of women. The rapid changes in socio- economic and political life of women due to globalization expected to elevate better status and role to women. But in contrast to the expectation it affects rural and urban women both positively and negatively. In this scenario this paper will give an over view of the positive and negative impact of globalization have in store for rural women in India.”

Keywords: Globalization, Nation, Multi- dimensional, Multifaceted, Integrated, Women.

Introduction

Globalization is the process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas and other aspects of culture. Advances in transportation, such as the steam locomotive, steamship, let engine, and container ship, and in telecommunications infrastructure, including the rise of the telegraph and its modern offspring, the Internet, and mobile phones, has been major factors in globalization, generating further interdependence of economic and cultural activities. Though scholars place the origins of globalization in modern times, others trace its history long before the European Age of Discovery and voyages to the New World. Some even trace the origins to the third millennium BCE. Large-scale globalization began in the 19th century. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, the connectedness of the world's economies and cultures grew very quickly.

The concept of globalization 'emerged from the intersection of four interrelated sets of "communities of practice": academics, journalists, publishers/editors, and librarians. In 2000, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) identified four basic aspects globalization: trade and transactions. Capital and investment movements, migration and movement of people, and the dissemination of knowledge. Further, environmental challenges such as global warming, cross-boundary water and air pollution, and over-fishing of the ocean are linked with globalization. Globalizing processes affect and are affected by business and work organization, economics, socio-cultural resources, and the natural environment.

The term globalization is derived from the word *globalize* which refers to the emergence of an international network of economic systems."¹ One of the earliest known usages of the term as a noun was in a 1930 publication entitled, *Towards New Education*, where it denoted a holistic view of human experience in education.² A related term, corporate giants, was coined by Charles Taze Russell in 1897- to refer to the largely national trusts and other large enterprises of the time. By the 1960s, both terms began to be used as synonyms by economists and other social scientists. Economist Theodore Levitt is widely credited with coining the term in an article entitled "Globalization of Markets", which appeared in the May- June 1983 issue of *Harvard Business Review*. However, the term 'globalization' was in use well before (at least as early as 1944) and had been used by other scholars as early as 1981.³ Levitt can be credited with popularizing the term and bringing it into the mainstream business audience in the later half of the 1980s. Since its inception, the concept of



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globalization has inspired competing definitions and interpretations, with antecedents dating back to the great movements of trade and empire across Asia and the Indian Ocean from the 15th century onwards. Due to the complexity of the concept, research projects, articles, and discussions often remain focused on a single aspect of globalization.

In 2000, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) identified four basic aspects of: globalization: trade and transactions, capital and investment movements, migration and movement of people and the dissemination of knowledge. With regards to trade and transactions, developing countries increased their share of world trade, from 19 percent in 1971 to 29 percent in 1999.

In **"The Consequences of Modernity"**, Anthony Giddens (1991), uses the following Definition

Globalization can thus be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.⁴

Ulrich Beck (2001), said that **"Globalization is a process of worldwide stratification in the course of which new socio-culture hierarchy, on a world wide scale is put together"**.⁵

The term globalization has been associated with key areas of change, which have led to a marked transformation of the world order. At political level, the process of deregulation and liberalization has led to an apparent diminution of state and a general assumption that all states everywhere must become democratic and secure good governance over their people. At the level of economy, globalization has been associated with the trend towards increasing economic liberalization. This has reflected in free trade and more deregulated labour good and financial markets. As per Bacchus (2005), North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), transnational corporations are using the profit motive to guide their factories toward developing nations in search of "cheap" female labor. Corporations prefer female labor over male labor because women are considered to be "docile" workers, who are willing to obey production demands at any price.⁶ In developing nations, certain types of work, such as garment assembly, is considered to be an extension of female household roles. Therefore, cultural influences in developing nations also impacts employment stratification. Bringing a high demand of employment opportunities for women in developing nations creates an instantaneous change within the social structure of these societies. Although the demand for female employment brings about an array of opportunities and a sense of independence, the glass ceiling continues to exist with the "feminization of poverty"⁷. Researchers in the fields of Anthropology, Sociology and Economics have collected empirical data that shows the consequences of globalization on the lives of women and their families in developing nations. Given these circumstances and the empirical evidence collected in the various studies, does

globalization have an overall positive or negative impact on the lives of women?

The roles of women in India have been changing and they are 'emerging from the past traditions into a new era of freedom and rights. The basic aim of this article to review the changing role of women due to globalization in Indian society. This concern is not merely academic but it central to the process of emerging development in India. There is a need to critically evaluate the impact of globalization of women in India and to know positive and negative impacts of it on the position of women in at present.

Globalization in India

Globalization is a fact of life, which has come to stay. It is expected to be a major force for prosperity. The essentials of the New Economic Policy which gave impetus to the progress of Indian economy includes Privatization, Globalization, Modernization and Improving productivity and growth rate. Globalization in India is generally taken to mean 'integrating' the economy of the country with the world economy. This, in turn, implies opening up the economy to foreign direct investment by providing facilities to foreign companies to invest in different fields of economic activity in India; quantitative restrictions over a period of six years beginning 1997. Moreover, as a part of the agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), the Government of India issued a Presidential Ordinance of January 8, 1999 granting Exclusive Marketing Rights (EMRs) in the field of pharmaceutical and agricultural chemical products pending the adoption of product patent in 2005.⁸ As a further step towards globalization and opening up, India notified the Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMs) maintained by it.⁸

Globalization and Women in India

It's true that we are in the midst of a great revolution in the history of women. We see the evidence everywhere; the voice of women is increasingly heard in Parliament, courts and in the streets. While women in the West had to fight for over a century to get some of their basic rights, like the right to vote, the Constitution of India gave -women equal rights with men from the beginning. Unfortunately, women in this country are mostly unaware of their rights because of illiteracy and the oppressive tradition. The status of women in any civilization shows the stage of evolution at which the civilization has arrived. India is a society where the male is greatly revered. Women, get very little standing in this country. Since women do not take nutritious diet, it causes malnutrition, especially among pregnant or nursing women. The literacy rate among women is low compared to men. Very few girls attend to school or actually attend primary school.⁹

As a result of globalization also there is no much change in the status of women in India, especially women in unorganized sector. They have been affected by unemployment, long working hours, migration, family breakdown, child labour, etc. As much as some women have come to enjoy the growth and foreign capital investment, more women have found no place to earn a living other than in the informal sector.^{10, 11} Globalization, no doubt, has offered tremendous opportunities. What has been the

impact of globalization upon women? This issue has attracted immense attention of scholars and academics the world over, with some emphasizing the beneficial aspects of globalization and insisting that women have generally benefited from improvements in the world economy, while others stress upon its overall negative impact which includes, but is not limited to a denial of entitlements as well as a violation of women's human rights. Central to a realization of the human rights of women is an understanding that women do not experience discrimination and other forms of human rights violations solely on the grounds of gender, but discrimination arises from the intersection- list of race, caste, class, etc.

Globalization is a double edged process as far as women are concerned. On the one hand, majority of women in India and other developing countries find themselves stripped off the benefit of social security, government subsidy protection of labour rights and the safety nets. On the other hand, there were possibilities of better education facilities and opportunities at the transnational sense which are attractive to the privileged few. It is, however, necessary to understand that effective development requires full integration of women in the development process as agents of change as well as beneficiaries because Indian women can be utilized as development resources in many ways.

Many critics fear that globalization, in the sense of integration of a country into world society, will exacerbate gender inequality. It may harm women-especially in the South-in several ways: Economically, through discrimination in favor of male workers, marginalization of women in unpaid or informal labor, exploitation of women in low-wage sweatshop settings, and/or impoverishment through loss of traditional sources of income. Politically, through exclusion from the domestic political process and loss of control to global pressures. Culturally, through loss of identity and autonomy to a hegemonic global culture.

The adverse impact of globalization upon women's livelihood, employment, education, health, etc has been highlighted by numerous national and international reports (BCR Report, 1987).¹² Majority of these reports point out the increase in violence against women; deterioration of the health system; increase in female headed households as men lose jobs or are pushed out of their traditional income-generating roles; shrinking of resources available to women; increasing women's total labour hours, etc. "Growth can, and has become for many, jobless, voiceless, rootless and futureless," poignantly states the UNDP Human Development Report of 1996.^{12, 13} Bhattacharya and Rahman, (1999), reported while globalization and trade expansion resulted in an increase in women's work participation in trade-related activities in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka similar trends in employment were not evidenced in Pakistan.^{14,15}

Though faster annual growth in female employment in the tertiary sector was experienced in the urban areas, evidence based on some micro studies in an eastern state of India showed that women did move from unpaid family labour to wage work in Handloom and zari work, and some found

employment opportunities in modernized mills (rayon). While some of the increase in labour force participation witnessed in parts of Asia may be due to greater recognition and quantification of women's work by enumerators, it is also viewed that there has been a genuine process of increasing participation by women in most of these countries.¹⁶ Some case studies based primarily on Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and export oriented manufacturing units show that women are better off in EPZs than in domestic industries, especially when their total remuneration is taken into account. Studies suggest that young single women were preferred while others show that the pay and working conditions are poor. These areas need to be examined in detail for delineating the issues and arriving at possible solutions in view of their long-term implications for growth.

Positive Effects of New Economic Policy on Women

Globalization has opened by broader communication lines and brought more companies as well as different worldwide organizations into India. This provides opportunities for not only working women, but also women who are becoming a larger part of the work force. With new jobs for women, there are opportunities for higher pay, which raises self-confidence and brings about empowerment among women. This in turn provides equality between men and women, something that Indian women have been struggling with their entire lives. Globalization has the power to uproot the traditional views towards women, so they can take an equal stance in society.

Globalization brings all women together to act. The modern development of technology offers the possibilities for women to communicate more directly through networking both within and across countries. Computer aided data bases and e-mail are increasingly being used by women's groups. Particularly in India, the productive capacity of women should be increased through access to capital, resources, credit, land, technology, information, technical assistance and training so as to raise their income and improve nutrition, education and health care and status within the household. The release of women's potential is essential to breaking the cycle of poverty so that women can share fully in the benefits of development and in the products of their own labour.

Negative Effects of the New Economic Policy on Women

Globalization has had negative implication for Indian women. Their plight is similar to those of women in other developing regions such as Africa and Asia. According to Vandana Shiva, an Indian ecofeminist and scholar, globalization along with the support of organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have created slave wages. These wages are not necessarily the result of unjust societies, but of the fact that global track devalues the worth of people's lives and work. Though globalization has brought Jobs to rural India, the work available to women is almost always poorly paid, mentally and physically unhealthy, decreasing or insecure.

Women are suffering two fold. As they move into work force, their domestic responsibilities are not

alleviated. Women work two full time jobs. The mixture of corporate capitalism and western culture models is dissolving family and community social controls as witnessed by higher rates of family violence, rape, divorce and family breakdown.

1. The traditional role of women in agriculture, livestock and animal husbandry, khadi and village industries including handicrafts, handlooms fisheries, etc. is being undermined because mechanization and automation is becoming prevalent in the market based economy which will adversely affect the village-based traditional economy.
2. Privatization and reduction of public services will reduce regular employment opportunities for women.
3. Globalization has increased the number of low paid, part-time and exploitative jobs.
4. Occupational sex segregation will be a stark reality in the open economy. This will tend to result in worse working conditions, lower pay and inferior career opportunities.
5. Curtailment of state provisions in child care, community care and social security, will increase the dual burden of employment and family responsibilities for women in general.
6. With male migration on the increase from the rural to urban sectors, the women have to bear the triple burden of caring, farming and paid employment in the rural sector.
7. In the neo liberal work practices, contract work, unsocial hours sectors, the women have to bear the triple burden of caring, farming and paid employment in the rural sector.
8. With the disappearing social and financial safety nets and government subsidy, the poverty alleviation programmes, universal education and woman oriented health programmes will be adversely affected.
9. Trade liberalization will allow MNCs to enter into food processing and other feminized industries which will lead to reduction in low skilled women labour.
10. Privatization of education and training will increase the cost of getting educated. When family budgets are readjusted, the female children will be the main casualty because most of the resources will be spent to educate the male children.
11. Migration of women especially for economic reasons often gives rise to exploitation and trafficking in women at the local, regional and global levels.
12. Open market economy leads to price rise in food and other basic necessities. Women who have to directly deal with family subsistence have to cope with such changes.

Basically, Liberalization and Globalization of the Economy will marginalize majority of women in India due to reduction of employment opportunities, reduction of wages, casualisation of jobs and women workers, execution from the modernized production process due to lack of education and training.

Conclusion

Globalization has "reduced the ability of women in developing nations to find paid work that

offers security and dignity". Although women's roles in the Labor force have changed from traditional agricultural and domestic roles, to manufacturing and assembly production, the overall effect of globalization (based on the literature used in this analysis) has proven to be negative. There are empirical claims of women gaining more autonomy over their own wages and a feeling of independence from traditional gender roles in society-especially in marriage and childrearing. Women are also becoming the breadwinners in most households because of the lack of male responsibility in the household. Young daughters are financially supporting their parents and fellow siblings, while mothers (married or single) are seeking informal work to provide for their children.

The impact of globalization on women and work varies from sector to sector. In most cases globalization expands opportunities for women in work place, but it does not remove barriers to advancement, ameliorate the predominance of low paying menial jobs held by women. Further, long working hours, relatively lower wages, the mass of influx of women into paid work, an insecure working conditions in the globalized economies have led to family breakdown.

In summary, globalization plays a definite role in increasing opportunities for women in the work place. It does not however solve the problems of the movement of the women beyond low paying and menial jobs. In addition, it may exaggerate the effect of recession which has traditionally hurt women more than men. For a better world, all government at central and state level, international institution and non-governmental organizations, should cooperate with each other for actions in order to improve the lot of the women.

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