

Market Capitalism and Women

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Abstract: Globalization means different things to different people. More importantly it refers to a process of deepening economic integration, increasing economic openness and growing economic interdependence between countries in the world economy. Globalization is helping the women to involve in different spheres like social, economic, political and cultural. Globalization and the new economic policy reforms in India have showed positive as well as negative impact on women in general and rural women in particular. A large group of working women of India is in the rural and unorganized sectors. The majority of Indian women are still tradition bound and are in a disadvantageous position. Since globalization has suddenly opened up in the Indian economy at a very high speed without the required economic and social policies to provide the much required safety net, women who have been involved with production in the traditional ways, have to cope with numerous problems and yet try to avail of the opportunities which an open economy promises. This paper mainly focuses on the impact of globalization on women.

Keywords: Globalization, Social Conditions- Economic factors, Privatization Liberalization, Economic growth.

I. INTRODUCTION

The world is becoming more and more integrated. The greater trade openness is translating into growing global economic integration and independence as transnational movements of people and capital accelerate and information becomes ever more accessible. Technological developments are rapidly changing the way people learn, work and communicate.¹ This paper focuses on how does globalization affect the social, economic and political conditions on women? We expect to find a considerably mixed picture. Some women will benefit from globalization and some will be hurt, the status of women will improve in some respects but not others. This paper focuses on the effect of globalization for women, not for other groups of people. Because

firstly, assessing the condition of women. Secondly, gender is one the few modes of differentiation that has social, cultural, political and economic implication everywhere in the world. The 1995 Human Development Report declares, on the basis of numerous indicators, “In no society today do women enjoy the same opportunities as men”. In 1999 Human Development Report, both of the composite measures, the “gender empowerment measure”, and the “gender development index”, show disparities in every country.

Globalization is the new buzzword that has dominated the world since the 90’s of the last Century. Countries world-wide are under the magnetic spell of triplet of LPG- Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization. Globalization is the integration of one’s own country’s economy with the world economy for the commencement an interdependent world economy. It implies an intensification of social and economic relations beyond state borders, with the consequence that local and global events are increasingly linked to and influenced by each other. It is characterized by such movements that have led to the phenomena of converting the entire world as one market and one village the global village.

II.Globalization and Women

Globalization is 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 safety nets. On the other hand, there were possibilities of better education facilities and opportunities at the transnational sense which are very attractive to the privileged few. It is however, necessary to understand that effective development requires full integration of women in the development process as agent of change as well as beneficiaries because Indian women can be utilized as development resources in many ways.

The impact of globalization on women needs to be assessed in the light of women’s multiple roles as productive and reproductive labour in their families as well as their contribution towards overall community, cohesion and welfare and maintaining the social fabric. Globalization offers both blessings and cursing to women all over the world. By bringing them into workforce, globalization has given the women the power to question the system that breeds poverty,

exploitation and oppression. The mass production of labour saving devices like cookers, washing machines, microwave ovens etc. have served a lot in reducing the drudgery of women in their housewife roles. Globalization has given women a new identity, financial independence, freedom of expression as well as a remarkable social status. At the same time globalization has pressurized women by putting a double burden of maintaining a balance between home and work front. Whatever globalization has truly helped women in their struggle for identity and equal status as human beings or has it only changed the manner of age old exploitation putting more burden and pressures is a topic of serious discussion.

III. The Status of Women in India

The status of women in any civilization shows the stage of evolution at which the civilization has arrived. The term status includes not only personal and proprietary rights but also duties, liabilities and disabilities. India is a society where the male is greatly revered. Since women do not take nutritious diet, it causes malnutrition, especially among pregnant women. Very few women seek medical care while pregnant, because it is thought of as a temporary condition. This is one main reason for the increasing maternal as well as infant mortality rates. Starting from birth girls, do not receive as the literacy rates among women is low compared to men.

There are several reasons why families choose not to educate their daughters. One reason is that parents get nothing in return from the education of their daughters. Another reason is that all the females in a household have the responsibility of the house work. So even though education does not financially burden the family, it costs them the time she spends at school when she could be doing chores. Because women are not educated and cannot hold a prestigious job, they take on the most physically difficult and undesirable jobs. A typical day for a woman in an agricultural position lasts from 4 am to 8 pm with only an hour break in the middle. Most women are over worked with no maternity leave or special breaks. But, the work performed by women is unrecognized and invisible, because the work done by women does not require lot of skill and are traditional bound.

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.⁷ Several problems have plagued the lives of Indian women with little respite. But, the new circumstances created by Structural Adjustment Policies for globalization are diverse and encompass all aspects of women's lives in India. The current process of globalization is generating unbalanced outcomes, both between and within countries.

One of the most significant social effects of the new global international economy has been the enormous numbers of women joining the economically active populations of all countries both as wage earning employees and as self-employed workers. Women have of course traditionally carried out socially productive work in the household and in childcare, in the cultivation of the land and in the paid activities of the man/head of the family.

Thus, the new economic policy reforms have had positive as well as negative impact on women in general and rural women in particular. Structural adjustment policies vis-a-vis, women can be viewed in terms of the following. (a) Changes in income, wages and level of employment. (b) Change in price essential commodities (c) Changes in working condition hours of work (Women will have to work longer to earn more) etc.

From its inception, the UN has addressed issues concerning women. In the late 1940s and 1950s the UN established a Commission on the Status of Women and sponsored a Convention on the Political Rights of Women.¹¹ The First ever World Conference on Women was held in Mexico in 1975 to address the issue of gender inequality. It was followed by a Second World Conference on Women at Copenhagen in 1980 and a third in Nairobi in 1985. At the United Nation Conference on Environment and Development in Rio (1992), World leaders accepted women's vital role in achieving sustainable development. At the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna (1993), government acknowledged that women's rights are human and headed the evidence of widespread violence against women. At the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994), women empowerment was recognized as a cornerstone for effective population policies. At the World Conference for Social Development in Copenhagen (1995), gender equality was recognized as a prerequisite for the achievement of productive

employment, social integration and poverty eradication. The Fourth World Conference on Women took place in Beijing in September 1995 followed by Beijing +5 were held in Geneva in 2000.

The most prominent among the international treaties is the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly. These treaties and convention have become the primary international vehicle for monitoring and advocating for non-discrimination, and their ratification has spurred progress towards granting formal rights in several areas of women's lives, in large part by facilitating legislation either where it did not exist or where existing laws were discriminatory and needed to be overturned.¹³ Some evidence also shows that participation in CEDAW has improved women's literacy levels, labour force participation rates and parliamentary representation and in some cases has reduced absolute gender inequalities.

IV. Positive Impacts on Women's Emancipation

Globalization has opened by broader communication lines and brought more companies as well as different worldwide organization into India. This provides opportunities for not only working women, but also women who are becoming a larger part of the force. With new jobs for women, there are opportunities for higher pay, which raises self-confidence and brings about empowerment among women. Thus 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. 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 product of their own labour.

The IT enabled jobs in call centres, BPOs and medical transcription recruit young women in large numbers who so far used to remain jobless and hopeless. Increase in job opportunities has raised the self-confidence and sense of independence among girls and women. The economically poor and socially exploited image of traditional women has changed drastically, at least in urban areas. In the case of career oriented, elite, educated women from urban India, globalization has had positive impacts as follows:

- Increase in literacy and educational standards
- Opportunities for quality professional education for those women who can afford them.
- Opportunity for employment in technological and other advanced areas for suitably qualified women, making them economically independent.
- More opportunities for migration thereby giving a chance of exposure at international level.
- More egalitarian set of gender relations in urban areas.
- Benefits of family planning have helped women to gain better control on their sexuality and life options.
- More job opportunities coupled with increased child care facilities have served in alleviating the pangs of guilty consciousness that mothers had while joining the workforce.
- Economic independence has contributed to boosting up the self-confidence and self-esteem of Women.
- Increased access to micro-credit, employment opportunities and information for women in poor section due to ICT.¹⁷
- A large number of opportunities in the export oriented industries such as computer software, modern food processing, handicrafts where India enjoys comparative advantage are now available to women.
- Prospects of higher and quality education have become feasible for those women who can afford them, economically and socially.
- With changing attitude towards women, especially in the urban areas, women enjoy more egalitarian set of gender relationship
- Reduction in gender inequalities will have positive effect on women's empowerment in the socio-economic context.

- Attitudinal changes towards women's role in the family due to good education, benefits of family planning and health care, child care, good job opportunities etc., will surely help in the development of more confident and healthy women.
- The new economic climate under which decentralization, individualized based working is likely to increase may reduce the burden on the women. Women can perform some of the job at home without sacrificing the other tasks such as home managers, child bears and care takers.

V. UNFAVOURABLE 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. Globalization along with the support of organization such as the World Bank and 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 the 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.¹⁹ 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 automation is becoming prevalent in the market based economy which will adversely affect the village based traditional economy. Despite the positive effects of globalization through increased employment Opportunities for women, globalization has a darker, more sensitive side. Out of the total 397 million workers in India, 123.9 million are women and of these women 96% of female workers are in the unorganized sector. Accordingly, although more women are now seeking paid employment, a vast majority of them obtain only poorly paid, unskilled jobs in the informal sector, without any job security or social security. Thus, Globalization has made many international corporations richer by the billions at the expense of women who are suffering enormously due to this expansion of corporate empires.

(i). Health Problems Faced by Working Women

The major problem faced by the female workers is Job Security which leads them to psychological stress. It has become a dire need for the woman to work along with the men in the family in order to support the basic needs of the children/other family members. Among the workers in the informal sector a large number of them are women, with no job security. They are often been unskilled workers who receive low wages. They are not engaged daily with the work, but when they have work, they are forced and compelled to work overtime for long hours. It is the same case not only in the unorganized sector or in small enterprises, but also in sectors like the Information Technology and the automobiles, where working women are forced to work for 12 hours while the local governments ignore this open flouting of the labour laws. The uncertainties of obtaining work and the dire need to retain a position in the midst of intense competition cause mental tension, strained social relationships, Psychological problems and chronic fatigue, all of which are difficult to prove their abilities

The advent of the increased use of machinery has resulted in a degradation of working conditions for women in India. The wages of workers depend on the speed with which they work. When a person's compensation is tied to increased physical output, negative health consequences will almost inevitably ensue. While women working in piece meal industries have seen machines negatively impact their health, women in other sectors have lost their jobs as a result of technological advances. Several traditional industries where women work in large numbers like handloom and food processing have undergone changes in the forms of production with the introduction of machines, power looms etc, which have result in the loss of employment for large number of women.

(ii). Society and Family

Though more and more women seek paid employment, the stereotypical attitude towards women and their role in the family has not undergone much change. Women continue to be perceived as weak, inferior, second-class citizens. For working women, this discrimination is extended to the workplace also. The improper and insufficient dietary intake along with the heavy workload results in nutritional disorders. Obviously women feel guilt as they are not able pay complete attention to their domestic responsibilities like, looking after the children, family members, household responsibilities etc..., due to their official work, often resulting in emotional disorders.

So, this is how working women are under struggle to justify their role both at the office and the Family.

(iii).Sexual Exploitation in the Workplace

One of the evils of the modern society is the sexual harassment of women especially the female workers as they are harassed not only by the family members but also by the male colleagues in the work place. In 1997, the Supreme Court, in the Vishaka case, instituted a set of guidelines to ensure the prevention of sexual harassment and to protect women. The guidelines include rules against engaging in certain conduct that is deemed to be sexual harassment. The Vishaka case is considered to be a landmark case by the Supreme Court of India as it was the first time the Court ever officially recognized the need for sexual harassment laws. Nearly a decade after the Supreme Court judgement's in the Vishaka case, the government has yet to enact legislation which is adequate to combat the evil of the sexual harassment at workplace.

Even the Supreme Court's guidelines on instituting complaint committees, amending standing orders and educating workers about sexual harassment have not been implemented in most workplaces. In addition to sexual harassment in the workplace, women who are employed in Special Economic Zones specially created geographical areas in which Indian laws typically do not apply, are being opened in large numbers throughout the country. While there is no explicit provision that labour laws would not be applied in these zones, in practice, even labour commissioners are not allowed inside these zones and the workers are practically at the mercy of their employers. Neither the Central nor the State governments intervene to protect the interest of the workers. Without effective government oversight, workers in Special Economic Zones are subject to exploitative working conditions.

For year women have been working in hospitals, in telecom department and in the fish processing industry during the night shift. In the era of globalization, the number of women working the night shift is increasing with call centres and export oriented companies located in the export processing zone employing women in large number during the night shift, without providing proper protection or transportation facilities to them. The Factories Act, 1948 is a comprehensive legislation drafted incorporating various protective provisions that provide just and humane conditions for the workers. The Factories Act also a was landmark piece of

legislation, as it theoretically should have provided sufficient protection to women workers as the legislative intent was to enact laws that protected women from harassment and exploitation at the workplace. At the Section (66) of the Factories Act clause under which State governments have been given powers to vary the limits on night shifts. Such variation shall not authorize the employer of women between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 p.m. However, in *Triveni K.S. and others v. Union of India*, the constitutionality of Section 66(1) Clause (B) was challenged as being discriminatory on the basis of sex. Consequently Section 66(1) (6) of the act was struck down as unconstitutional by Andhra Pradesh High Court.

(iv). Causes for Divorce

The Globalization plays a vital role in the Institution of family as it increases the work opportunities of the men and women, they are engaged too much with the professional responsibilities sometimes ignoring the family Institution. It is not the mistake of the husband always, even the other family members in that family can be the root cause for the break-up of a family. Sociologists like Damle, Fonseca and Chaudhary together conducted a study in India which revealed the following causes of divorce : marital disharmony, sexual conflicts, maladjustments between husband and wife, marital desertion, husband's cruelty, prostitution on the part of wife, sexual impotency, severe and unmanageable clashes with the in-laws, mother-in-law's harassment, including dowry harassment, illicit sex relationship on the part of either the husband or the wife, irreparable health hazards, mutual distrust, total irresponsibility of the husband or wife towards the family matters and so on. Divorce causes lot of hardships especially for the women. It damages the social image of the wife. It becomes a permanent stigma in her life. Many sensitive women find it difficult to come out of the shock of divorce. The impact of divorce on children is also very severe.²⁵ Both the Governmental and Non Governmental Organization seems to be aware of the fact that the globalization process requires proper focus on rural development, education, health and child care and proper gainful employment for the underprivileged at the initial stages. NGOs such as Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Ahmadabad, Working Women's Forum (WWF) in Chennai, Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS), New Delhi, etc, have done commendable work in these directions. The government departments have also given the necessary boost to such experiments

through the support for expansion in many ways. Consumerist culture, high cost of living, education, increasing violence and lack of safety, increasing dowry demands, commodification of women's bodies, sex tourism, misuse of mobiles and internet, denigrating women's image in the media, over medicalization resources, the list goes endless are the new challenges for the emancipation of women in the global world.

Capacity building and proper sensitisation of girls and women to resist the evils is highly essential. Girls need help in the building up and maintenance of effective interpersonal relations with family members, peers, teachers and all elders. They must be made aware of the need to fix boundaries and limit themselves in all their relations so as to avoid chances of exploitation. It was analysed that rape and sexual harassment cases that have filled the columns of dailies how the craze for glamour and quick money has led to trapping up of several youngest in sex rackets. Girls must also be helped to select appropriate role models so as to facilitate their emancipation. Awareness regarding the use and misuse of technological advancements like mobile and internet must be given to all girls. Instances of atrocities against women at home, workplace roads etc. which are reported in newspaper and television

Should be made use for active discussion in women's groups with a view to develop timely alternative ways and means of self-help in them at the face of problematic situations. There are good number of laws and process for safety and security of girls and women in the society. But the socialization process teaches the girls not to respond but to adjust and suffer in silence all unwelcome advances and atrocities directed against them. Along with assertiveness training they must be made aware of their legal rights and the way to make use of the legal provisions for their safety. Media, mobile and legal literacy have become essential requisites for a woman to live in the globalized society to protect her basic human rights. Several researches support the finding that, depictions whether good or bad, cruel or soft in the television can strongly influence the human mind which has a natural tendency to imitate whatever it is exposed to, especially in the magic box. Psychological theories of observational learning, emotional contagion and conditioning explain the process by which violence, negative portrayal and degrading images of women depicted in the visual media can have vulnerable impacts in shaping up the outlooks, attitudes and behaviours of men and women always are at the loser side. In this instance what is

needed is developing awareness among men and women that whatever is depicted in the media need not be always true and real and hence should not be internalised and imitated as such. Instead they should be enabled to make a selective internalized and imitated as such. Instead they should be enabled to make a selective internalization of the real and rejection of unrealistic fantasies. Media literacy also includes the awareness for not being misguided by the representations given in the media and making a judicious and logical screening between what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

Now a day mobile has become a part and parcel of every individual, young and old, rich and poor, literate and illiterate, men and women. If judiciously used its merits outweigh its demerits to a great extent. But a lot of problems are emerging because of the misuse of mobiles by immature hands, with a heavy toll on women's privacy and security. Mobile literacy does not mean learning the skill to operate the mobile phones but learning to use the service of mobile phone facilities judiciously. Girls must be taught to use it in a mature way, not being subjected to harassment and victimisation by unsocial elements which sometimes may include their close friends, fellow passengers, classmates or relatives. They should be taught how to ignore unwanted messages and phone calls and how to deal with instances of cyber-crime and pornography. Girls must be familiarized with the Child Marriage Restraint Act, (1976), The Immoral Traffic Prevention Act 1956, The Indecent Representations of Women Prohibition Act (1986), the Supreme Court guidelines that Prevent Sexual Harassment (1997), the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, the Maternity Benefit Act 1961, the Contract Labour Act 1970, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 etc. Awareness on the Supreme Court guidelines that prevent sexual harassment and the domestic violence act must be given to each and every woman of the state irrespective of their caste, class or literacy. Legal literacy has become a minimum requisite for a woman to live in the patriarchal society to protect her basic human rights. Along with a potent law, there should be effective conscientising of women to enable them break hopefulness. Collective action of academicians, activists and NGO's is needed to develop the notion of "No more silence about violence" in women.

VI. CONCLUSION

The new economic policy reforms have had positive as well as negative impact on women in general and rural women in particular. Due to illiteracy and awareness, rural women have been subjected to exploitation. The changing trends as a result of structural adjustment policies have affected them in both ways. However, in view of the new globalization and new economic policies, a rapid growth rate is expected in export oriented industries and there will be an opportunity to generate large scale employment for both men and women, as a result of marketization, privatization and larger foreign investment. In spite of, this in general, 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 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, and insecure working conditions in the globalized economies have led to family breakdown. This reminds the early periods of the industrial revolution and is one of the most important social effects of the new type of economy. 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 women beyond low-paying and menial jobs. As long as these differences persist, globalization alone cannot and will not make gender inequality go away. Public action to close gender gap is therefore critical for centuries to fully capitalize on the potential of globalization as a force for development and greater gender equality. Such action is also urgent in light of the rising costs of gender inequality in a globalized world.

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