

GLOBALIZATION AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIAN WOMEN

Dr. Rajesh Shukla
Assistant professor and Head
Department of Sociology
Durga College, Raipur (C.G.)

Economic reforms are often projected as a panacea for economic progression and economic invigoration, which according to the advocates of globalization, will lead to reduction in poverty levels, squalor and regression, These global reforms though are discernable option, can itself be lopsided in increasing the trauma of the poor, bring down the status of women, if the communities in the developing world are not empowered on the effects of such reforms.

As one observes the direction of globalization , it is quite skeptical as to what changes the globalization can bring to eradicate poverty or in altering the status of children and women in the developing world. Economic restructuring may be a grand plan and design to eradicate poverty, but inadvertently the direction of happening in the globalization process shows that it works the other way more to ensure the survival of the rich. The products and consumer goods that come out of these new policies even in India takes every right thinking Indian to wonder whether they are here to cater to the 20% of rich Indian customers or to cater to the needs of the poor? On the contrary, what actually the country's poor pay for the reform process is high rates of inflation and due to government's complacency to check the same, makes the poor to face a situation of inaccessibility to even basic services such as food, education and healthcare for the poor.

Since women have to manage the households with limited income they are severe victims of globalization than men, as they have to bear the burden and brunt of inflation increased prices of basic commodities, losing sizeable amount of family income by way of men's unemployment in the family, as they are the households managers who have to manage the situation of food and other services. Even in work places, there cannot be better examples of exploitation of women labour, particularly in the Export Processing zones, While there is, of course, every opportunity for increase in women's employment in this globalization era, not because of any extra concern to improve the conditions of women workers, but it is due to the fact and perception that the women employees are at the outset traceable and would be more subservient to employer's authority, less prone to unionization activities, almost nil desire for upward mobility and above all, more easier to dismiss them under the pretext of marriage and childcare.

In short, the globalization has, till date, never offered women workers any opportunity either for achieving excellence in their job potential nor in the matter of wages, nor even in the living and working conditions. Therefore, while it is only an illusive economic freedom that is described by the advocates of globalization saying that women are expected to enjoy in many job options in present era, the reality seems that they are more vulnerable and hence, opportunities are greater for severe exploitation . The wages that women earn in these jobs are much lower than men. Training

and promotion options are always kept at minimum level. Typically, the trend can be described as women are given work options towards, 'dead end jobs.' Thus, but for small percentage of job options for women workers in manufacturing fields, women workers in all developing countries are still part of the informal economy, be it is the urban or in the rural scenario. Somethimes even when the women workers are offered new jobs in many places, most of them become severe victims of dislocations, as once when they are uprooted from their native settlements, they even lose their traditional sources of livelihood, leading to either feminization of poverty and prostitution in many countries.

If globalization can remove the economic and social inequality of women by transforming the existing sexual division of labour as part of this restructuring process, enhancing women's status, both at home and labour market, then some credit can be attributed to the globalization process. Otherwise, globalization will leave women where they are or even in the worst of conditions leaving them as victims of 'traditional' and 'capitalist' patriarchy. Further, the disadvantaged positions in which women are placed by Unfair Trade Agreements (UTA) due to the globalization process worldwide, is an uncompromising solution for job options, as in these agreements feminist perspective is either marginal or almost nil.

Women handle most of the food production activities as subsidized economy, most in India and in other developing countries. Therefore, removal of subsidies for food products has not only deepened food security crisis also contributes to environmental degradation as will We cannot forget that in every region of the world including India, it is these women as workers, prodeucers, consumers mothers and caretakers of families, who are the real shock absorbers and bear the disproportionate brunt of both economic transition and economic collapse. A comprehensive gender analysis of the effects of globalization on women will prove that women workers and children are in the first firing line in terms of economic transition and crisis.

Commercial spree in all traditional activities, such as fishing and in the handloom weaving, has marginalized poor severely . How are we to make them participate in the ongoing reform processes? In many of the coastal zones, where fishing is the predominat livelihood option, where women's role as workers is interated in the overall family's economy, the rapid proliferation of prawn farms has led to severe salt shortage for the fisherwomen to sundry fish that are left over, besides also hindering the access to sea to most fisherfolk in and around these areas. Similar is the trend in the handloom industry, where most of the cotton industries are now idled by shortage of raw materials as raw cotton is being exported. This has forced the women to shift their economic ventures toward unfavourable, marginal income generating activities like kawking and vendoring. There are thousands of instances that are direct consequences of globaliation that cannot be enumerated here.

Globalization has clearly benefited a sector of India's women. The elite, educated and upper middle class specially in the cities have gained by exposure to western ideas about women's roles,

career options, jobs etc. More Indian women than ever are engaged in business enterprises, international platforms, multi national careers like advertising and fashion and have better opportunities because of the free movement of goods, ideas and capital and the improved Indian economy that has been the result of globalization Indian government statistics verify this and show that the unemployment rate for educated women has declined considerably from the late 1970s to early 1990s. By many accounts which are mostly anecdotal and derived from news paper editorials rather than traditional research, the business environment in India is more hospitable to women compared to other similar developing countries. Men still largely dominate strategic sectors such as policy making and finance when women fare better in media and advertising. Financial institutions are said to have stricter loan standards for women entrepreneurs while sales jobs requiring field work, are often advertised for men only. Despite this adversity, the number of women applying to the prestigious Indian institutes of Managements (IIMs) is growing. The most wide reaching medium of mass communication in India is film and television, where new ideas are often first encountered. With four times U.S. population. India has five times as many film viewers in a year. Cinema attendance is disproportionately male, while T.V. viewership is disproportionately female. The recent advent of government controlled. T.V., private channels, cable and more recently satellite T.V. has introduced Indian Women, mostly urban, middle and upper class, to an array of both consumer goods and images of other women's lives. Sponsored T.V. serials started late in India. In 1985. 'Humlog' the first Indian show opera was telecast which was based on a Mexican Tele novella, designed by Mexico's government to promote family planning.

While going for globalization, long term measures, such as pro-poor strategies that would ensure social safety nets to the poor, basic healthcare, food subsidies to minimize the vulnerability of women and children through current trends of malnutrition, prevention of increased incidence of child labour and female infanticide are needed to be introduced by the policy makers while structuring plants for the poor. Credit assistance in the form of extension of microcredit options to enhance entrepreneurship among women, is also one of the avenues that would ensure women to overcome poverty and powerlessness. Any innovative system of micro credit along with organized social platform in the form of collective effort would facilitate women to transcend the barriers for collective action through their collective consciousness. The vision of the millennium should be rather to offer an agreement of the north and the south on major issues of poverty eradication, assurance to gender relations, concepts of more equal distribution of income, access to equity for all on a global basis. Only such an agreement on resource transfers and time frame work would lead to the empowerment of poor working population on their right to food, health, education, shelter, information sharing and fundamental rights as a strategy to fight poverty.

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