



THE EFFECT OF GLOBALIZATION ON INDIAN WOMEN

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INTRODUCTION:

The roles of women in India have been changing and they are now emerging from the past traditions into the main stream of freedom and rights. The paper tries to examine the changing role of women in the Indian society influenced by globalization. There is need to critically evaluate the impact of globalization on women in India with regard to their position in the society at present.

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 various public spheres. While women in the West had to fight for over a century to get 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. Women of high profile do not represent the condition of Indian women.

The constitution of India guarantees equality of sexes and in fact grants special favors to women. These can be found in three articles (Articles 14, Article 15(3) and Article 15(A)). All these are fundamental rights. Therefore a woman cannot be discriminated according law. India today, a country where women are becoming more prominent, yet increasing numbers, women are fighting long-standing prejudices. Women still face enormous pressure to conform to societal norms, conforming to traditional roles within families poses as much as a barrier to businesswomen in India as the still-too-thick glass ceiling at companies. Though women have made great strides in the corporate world in the last three decades, women from all income classes are still too often discouraged by family members from having careers that infringe too much on family life.

POSITIVE EFFECTS OF GLOBALIZATION:

Globalization has opened up broader communication lines and brought more companies as well as different worldwide organizations to India. This provides opportunities for higher pay, which raises self-confidence and brings about financial stability. This, in turn, can promote equality between the sexes 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.

Women in the urban settings have become more independent and self-sufficient. The lower middle class is experiencing a shift in the way family relations worked. Traditionally women stayed at home taking care of domestic chores and children. Now most of the women are setting out of their private spaces to earn a living. Globalization has created certain needs based on capitalist sentiments. Advertising everyday reinforces new needs and creates a vicarious lust for more and more consumer goods in the masses. This has resulted in families desiring more household income to be able to afford these items. Therefore, women need to work and contribute to the household income to afford a certain lifestyle.

The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India is a union of women laborers willing to work hard and seize any work opportunities they might get. Globalization has aided their opportunities in various ways. SEWA has established a Women's Cooperative Bank with 1,25,000 members and through the aid of globalization, they have reached the women in the rural areas of India. Markets in different areas can now be reached by Indian women who have a part in businesses, or by craft-making women who have licenses to export their goods. Liberalization has led to a raise in their standard of living through innumerable opportunities.

One of the SEWA women, Mauna Dave has made tremendous advancements and is sharing her knowledge of the global world and economy with other Indian women so they can establish a better life for themselves. Dave attributes the skills she has obtained to SEWA and since she had the opportunity to speak and listen to other women in this organization. She is the director of kutchcraft, which is an association of 110 craftswomen into an empowered group that have obtained bargaining power to compete in the international market. Dave said that some of the most difficult challenges are to keep current on the global economy and the fast paced changes in India itself. Globalization has helped her and other Indian women share ideas and network in the international markets.

The effect has a lot to do with liberalization. Globalization has given women a stronger voice. Women are more vocal. Women's liberation started in the 70's and is beginning to grow and is on an upward spring. There has been a noticeable change in what women can do and what their opportunities are. The government has done more advertising portraying women in leadership roles and being in the army.

Different non-profit organizations have been brought to India from around the globe. These organizations have given women the skills they need to advance, such as literacy and vocational skills. One organization, Indiacorps, has brought in a range of programs to help women help women help themselves. One program in Ahmedabad has taught poor women how to create different crafts to generate income. With this program, women are able to earn their own personal money and enable the children to attend school instead of having to work to make more money. The women also gain business skills that inform them about career opportunities.

The women in rural settings have been influenced by globalization through media and through numerous intervention programs nonprofit organizations that are constantly investing in women's issues in a big way. These NGO's are creating awareness and proposing ways of change. The women are increasingly empowered and stronger than before. This change is not universal and does not happen in any particular pattern. Hence, we can observe pockets of changes due to efforts of a few. We need more such interventions and investments so that this work can continue.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF GLOBALIZATION

Globalization has had negative implications for Indian women. Their plights are similar to those of women in other developing regions such as Africa and Asia. Globalization has made many international corporations richer by the billions. However, what most people are not aware of is that women in these developing countries are suffering enormously due to this expansion of corporate empires. According to estimates from World Development Indicators, "Women work two-thirds of the world's working hours, produce half of the world's food, but earn only ten percent of the world's income, and own less than one percent of world's property.

According to Vandana Shivea, Indian economist and scholar, globalization along with the support of organizations 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 trade devalues the worth of people's lives and work. While globalization has brought jobs to rural, developing areas such as India where there was previously no employment, these jobs seem to be wolves in sheep's clothing. The work available to women is almost always poorly paid, mentally and physically unhealthy, demeaning, or insecure.

Women are suffering two fold. As women in developing countries move into the work force, their domestic responsibilities are not alleviated. Women work two full time jobs. One in a factory where they are paid next to nothing, the second is in the home where they are paid nothing. "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." (p. 124 ; Social strains of Globalization in India)

One example of women's labor being exploited would be the Noida Export Processing Zone, in New Delhi. These Zones prefer to hire women because they are "more docile and more productive than men." In short they are easier to control and less likely to retaliate against less than ideal working conditions, which exactly thousands of encounter 12 hours a day. There are no maternity benefits and minimum wage is never enforced. These zones are dangerous as they pose a threat to women's health.

WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMY

Almost most women in India work and contribute to the economy in one form or another, much of their work is not documented or accounted for in official statistics. Women plough fields and harvest crops while working in farms, women weave and make handicrafts while working in household industries. Additionally women are traditionally responsible for the daily household chores. Since Indian culture hinders women's access to jobs in factories and public sector, the informal sector is particularly important for women. There are estimates that over 90 percent of working women are involved in the informal sector.

The informal sector includes jobs such as domestic servant, small trader, artisan or field laborer . Most of these jobs are unskilled and low paying and do not provide benefits to the worker. More importantly, however, cultural practices vary from region to region. Though it is a broad generalization, North India tends to be more patriarchal and feudal than South India. Women in northern India have more restrictions placed on their behavior, thereby restricting their access to work. Southern India tends to be more egalitarian, women have relatively more freedom, and women have a more prominent presence in society. Cultural restrictions however are changing and women are freer to participate in the formal economy, though the shortage of jobs throughout the country contributes to low female employment. But in the recent years, conditions of working women in India have improved considerably. More and more women find themselves in positions of respect and prestige; more and more workplaces are now populated with women who work on equal terms as men. Working is no longer an adjustment, a mere necessity, but a means to self worth and growth.

Women have now not only found their place in work places but they also want to take part in governance. In recent years there have been explicit moves to increase women's political participation. Women have been given representation in the Panchayat Raj system as a sign of political empowerment. There are many elected women representatives at the village council level. At the central and state levels too women are progressively making a difference. Today we see women's participation in politics, thanks to the women's reservation policy bill which is responsible for their participation.

THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE:

Agriculture contributes just over 30 percent of GNP and accounts for 60 percent of employment. Nearly 63 percent of all economically active men are engaged in agriculture, compared to 78 percent of women. In the three rice growing states of Kerala, Tamilnadu and West Bengal , women provide more than 2/3 of the inputs including transplanting, weeding, manuring, and fertilizing, harvesting, threshing winnowing, drying, stacking, and carrying the produce. In the tribal colony of Orissa, women spend 105 hours per year on shifting cultivation compared with 50 by the men. In the Himalayas, a research study found that where a pair of bullocks works 1,064 hours and a man for 1,212 hours a year, a woman works 3,485 hours a year on a one hectare farm.

Women's double burden working long hours in the field as well as attending to household chores like cooking and collecting water and fuel for the day is often taken for granted . The technology used in used in agriculture is making women to cope with the technology.

THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON WOMEN IN INFORMAL SECTORS:

The emergence of a global market, with its associated policies of privatization, stabilization, and liberalisation , has led to the setting up of smaller new industries with highly flexible organization and simple infrastructure in developing countries. Closely related to this in formalization of work is the feminization of work. Labor intensive industries move to developing countries where women are the preferred labor force, because they can be hired at a low wage, Jobs become available for women, but only as unorganized laborers with no rights to form unions or fight for their basic rights: the situation of women working in the garment industry is a case in point. Low skilled jobs with low wages, long working hours and lack of job security are typical of the feminization of labor in unorganized sectors. The state generally supports the management and ignores any violation of the labor laws.

It is clear that the women are being exploited, but they may not raise their voices, not even against the sexual harassment they may face in the work place.

The roles of women in India have been changing and they are now emerging from the past traditions into a new era of freedom and rights due to globalization.

CONCLUSION

Women have made great strides in the corporate world but still the patriarchal nature of Indian society stops from having careers that infringe too much on family life

Women are supporting their families with dual incomes thereby increasing the voice not only at home but also at Parliament for 50% Reservation as they are contributing to the Indian Economy at large.

They have dual roles to play as unpaid servant at home and as paid servant in an organization. Not only this, they have to undergo stress and tensions at both places. Women today, consider themselves as the true ardhgini of their husbands. She is more cognizant of his world today and she understands his work pressures. It is widely felt that earning power allows them to voice their opinions on bigger decisions.

Women today are more practical and rational than earlier. Indian women have never been as expressive and independent as she is today. Today's women no more feel that a career would be at the cost of neglecting the family and children. On a whole it can be summarized that globalization has a deep impact on women in India. Globalization has brought about a transition in the power relations between women and society in India.

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