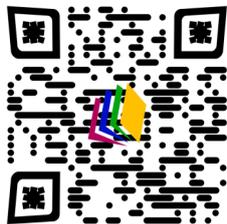




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## Being Global: A Feminist Perspective

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### **ABSTRACT:**

The main objective of this research article is to explore the impacts of globalisation on gender empowerment. Here, the question addresses that how far globalisation as an economic process is gender neutral? Has it weakened patriarchy and created greater employment opportunities and greater equality for women? There is a need for an assessment and theoretical consideration from the feminist and socialist standpoint, since the bourgeois/ non-feminist scholarship makes invisible both the class and gender dimensions of the dynamics of power and capital distribution. More specifically, the paper attempts to trace how these policies have impacted on women's access to employment, their enjoyment of social rights and empowerment as far as globalisation and its impact on women at large is concerned.

**KEY WORDS:** Globalisation, Women Empowerment, Feminist Perspective, Impact of Globalisation, Negative Impact, Positive Impact, Global Feminism.

### **Introduction**

Globalisation can be defined as “a complex economic, political, cultural, and geographic process in which the mobility of capital, organizations, ideas, discourses, and peoples has taken a global or transnational form” (Moghadam 1999: 369). Globalisation is very difficult to define neatly or precisely due to its non-uniformity, non-coherency where all the aspects of socio-political and economic life did not shift in a single direction (Ali et al. 2015: 645). It can be said as a complex process having multi-facets with different pace in different parts of the world which influence different groups differently. Globalisation has also a contradictory effect having both its negative and positive site. As an ideology it evolve using the International Monetary Fund (IMF), The World Bank (WB) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) to shift resources from the peripheries to the core countries. In this process lot of people has been affected, including women since the late 1980S in the entire world. As far as globalisation and women empowerment is concerned, the clarification of women empowerment as a concept which was illustrated by Eric & Indira provided in the following lines.

The empowerment of women, understood as ensuring that women can fully enjoy the same rights as men and are not discriminated against, is normatively desirable. It is also instrumentally valuable because it promotes economic development, if women can flourish and freely develop their full potential as talented and productive workers, mothers, care givers, and often more responsible managers of

households than men in many countries (Eric & Indira 2011: 1066).

Since the last three decades globalisation has made severe impact on women especially in developing countries. To meet out the high demand of women in employment sector within the neo-liberal corporate agenda, changed the social structure of the developing 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 "feminisation of poverty" (Moghadam 1999: 374). The sociologists, anthropologists, and economist have empirically proved the negative consequences of globalisation on the lives of women and their families as far as developing countries are concerned. The question arise here, does globalisation have both positive and negative influence on women of developing countries?

### **Economic Globalisation and Its Impact on Women**

Economic globalisation as a neo-liberal economic agenda having the ingredients of deregulation and privatization paced the flow of capital, services, goods, and labours. There are two stands of views regarding women and globalisation via three perspectives: financial globalisation, trade globalisation and the economic practices of IMF and WB. One group of scholars argue that participation in global market will develop the status of people, including women. In the other hand the second perspective argues that economic globalisation will devastate the condition of women and will worsen the already inevitable inequalities among men and women especially in developing countries.

Some view, globalisation as hindering or preventing women from earning an independent wage, challenging management; regarding wages and working conditions, attaining greater education levels, and /or achieving a more equitable distribution of socio-political rights. Orford suggests that "the processes of economic restructuring and trade and financial liberalization are the primary causes of human rights abuses" (Orford 1998: 171). The condition of women is continuously degrading due to globalisation. There is also another criticism that

globalisation implements neo-liberal market ideology which makes 'power less State' and made the State incapable to carry out traditional societal jobs such as public welfare and social safety, where women as a backward group needs social assistance and welfare programmes. The multi-national corporations (MNCs) investment provides little economic benefit to women like Latin America, Middle East and Africa. Nigeria which considered MNC investment, failed to develop the condition of women though Chile is an exception. In Nigeria, women continue to be unequally employed in low skill and low paid jobs in compare to their men counterpart (Everett, J., & Ellen M. S. 2014: 7). The male centric globalisation placed men over women especially in professional and management level jobs. The general criticism against economic globalisation is that the imposition of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) by the IMF and WB degrading women's status. However research highlights that these policies fail to provide benefit to women. With the establishment of international free trade policies, developing countries and MNCs searching 'cheap' female labour, where female labour were preferred over male as 'docile' and willing to product the demands at any price (ibid:9). Corporations desire female labour for assembly production because women will "work in labour-intensive industries at wages lower than men would accept, and in conditions that unions would not permit" (Moghadam 1999: 380). Women are attracted towards globalized industries due to their cheap labour, sexiest imagery, docile nature and lack of scope in other industries. Another effect of women working in MNCs with westernized dress and changing life styles caused rejected by their families, where it is very difficult to re-assimilate in their society.

### **Feminist Opposition to Globalisation**

The most prominent feminist voices in the Indian context are those who have opposed the coming of globalisation, and for reasons well-rehearsed in the literature. In this view, globalisation can only result in deepening processes of impoverishment and insecurity for the majority, with women suffering the most (Mary 2009: 47). Ever since the landmark 'Towards Equality' report, it has been common knowledge that the condition of women

deteriorated sharply in the very era of socialistically oriented, import-substituting planned development precisely the era that leftist critiques of globalisation hark back to today (ibid). How can we be confident that a resurrected version of this state in the adverse market-dominated conditions of today will be more accountable to its women? (ibid: 48). A more fundamental oppositional critique has been offered by eco-feminists such as Vandana Shiva. Her critique extends well beyond the latest form of globalisation to cover the entire period of modernity, colonialism and capitalism, and in such a manner that “decentralized agricultural communities” are the only alternatives (ibid). Here, too, one is left with a host of unanswered questions, especially when it is claimed that women farmers already possess a non-hierarchical relation to production, nature, and to gender (ibid: 49).

The Marxist-feminist, Rohini Hensman argues against reducing globalisation to a set of policies. The anti-globalisation agenda, in her view, does not make sense for third world women workers, with its defense of national boundaries which foster nationalisms that in turn, promote imperialism, fascism and war. Thus the unviable monopolies and inefficient bureaucracies led by Hindu upper castes in case of India may well lose out to new multinational corporations employing the cheap labour of women or lower castes (Eisenstein 1998: 56). It too begs many questions: on what basis can one expect that hitherto marginalised groups will be in a position to take advantage of the new situation, or that dominant groups would lose out?

In 1990s several studies analyse women's relationship to globalisation which brought out the implication of privatization on public services and spaces displaced women in both industrial and developing countries. The federal regulations regarding environment, medicare, vaccinations for poor children was totally hampered due to privatisation. Eisenstein reminded us that globalisation trickles down to women's daily life in material ways: the disappearance of abortion rights, prenatal and other health care, and workplace safety. (Eisenstein 1998: 56).

### **Women and Globalisation: The Negative Effects**

Globalisation as a process, brings with it disregard, for human needs of an impersonal marketplace, uneven development and fragmentation of humanity into the poor and the rich, and exacerbates divisions—economic, political, educational, social—between women and men (Moghadam & Valentine, M. 2013: 144). However, at the same time, globalisation creates exploitation and marginalization of many women workers. In counter, it also opens up spaces for the empowerment of women. Globalisation is a process that establishes new forms of inequity and stratification. As transnational corporations transcend local hiring patterns, some job opportunities are created for women in the service sector and at managerial levels that benefit middle-class, educated women (Moghadam 1999: 381). Literature on globalisation and female manufacturing workers in export enclaves indicates that these global transformations bring little security to young women workers who find themselves in a pool of recycling female labor, knowing that they will be replaced by the time they become 'adults.'

A vivid example of the plight of women engaged in this type of work comes from Mexico where for the last three decades mostly United State of America (USA) assembly plants have turned border outposts (ex., Tijuana, Juarez, Matamoros) into cogs in the global economic wheel, producing televisions, telephones, appliances, and car parts for the U.S. market. These outposts, popularly known as 'maquiladoras,' employ over a million workers, 65 percent of whom are women, most under the age of twenty (Bharti 2009: 37). Most of the women are migrant laborers who come to the border towns from the impoverished countryside to seek paid labor. Some are as young as 14 or 15. They receive extremely low pay, are subjected to mandatory pregnancy tests (are dismissed if pregnant), live in sprawling shantytowns, and are often the victims of rape and even murder. In the city of Juarez, several hundred young women 'maquiladora workers' have been raped and murdered, their bodies discovered frequently on garbage heaps (Bharti, 2009: 37).

The increasing incorporation of regional and national markets into the world economy often had

the effect of disfranchising women. In Central and Eastern Europe, as capitalism began to replace centralized economies, women were the first to lose their jobs and women's unemployment in most cases has remained higher than it is for men (Moghadam & Valentine, M. 2013: 138). A direct effect of the economic dislocation for women has been the tremendous increase of traffic in women as sex workers. It is estimated that traffic in women from Eastern Europe is more profitable than traffic in drugs or in arms. Cuts in subsidies to the educational sector have contributed to the significant drop in female school attendance and literacy rates between 1985 and 1994 in many parts of the world, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America (Eric & Indira 2011: 1067). The restructuring of western welfare States, carried out in the name of improving international competitiveness, has meant that many gains made by women in earlier struggles are being lost, whether these are child care facilities, social security benefits, access to higher education, or health care. Particular importance have been given on women's reproductive rights, and especially the legal right to abortion, which have come under increasing assault in the United States as well as many other countries.

The leftist scholars argue that globalisation mobilized capital and has increased its relative strength vis-à-vis a labour. Due to this, tough conditions were imposed on workers where women worker faced worst attacks (Megovarn. L. L., & Wallmann, I. 2009: 12). Women workers are seen as more subservient to male managers' authority, and hence hired more. They are also perceived as anti-union/ lesser capability to organize unions, more willing to accept poor working conditions and easier to dismiss using lifecycle criteria such as marriage and child birth (Ghosh 2001: 134). Ahmed contesting this argued that in looking at the impact of globalisation on women, we need to look, not at the binary of national frontier versus globalisation, but at capitalist-patriarchy. She shows that the ideology of globalisation and the drive for cheap labour has meant the defiance of India's labour laws, especially affecting women (Ahmed 2004: 39).

Globalisation dealt blows to traditional rural economy where women had a space were diluting through globalisation. It push for cash crops and

high technologies were adopted making female and traditional rural economy damaged where women were performed major role.

At the same time, this shift to cash crop and the need to meet orders quickly meant regular hired (male) labour replacing women who henceforth used to combine house and field-work flexibly leading to a higher wage gap. It is the experience, that when compensation is paid, whether in the Narmada eviction cases in Western India (since the 1970S) or in Singur in West Bengal (2006), most often the money is given singly to a male 'head of household' (Bharti 2009: 38).

In this process feminisation of poverty goes hand in hand with the process of globalisation. In one hand the rich are getting richer and the poor becoming poorer, where the women constitute a major part of the poor. It can be said that free trade jones, MNCs and private sectors demanding women labour thrive on young women's super-exploitation. In the global South women are in vulnerable condition where globalisation wider the gap between the haves and the have-nots. The dominance of neo-liberal policies and SAPs has let to unprotected labour practices in unorganized sector where women are largely exploited. The developing world women opt for migrant work which make them more vulnerable to emotional, psychological, physical and sexual exploitation (Gizem, & Nuroen 2015: 799). Whatever the new opportunities given by globalisation are not reached to women, because they are not playing key role in decision making process.

The radical scholars criticize globalisation as 'masculinity' and 'corporate globalisation' which leads for the subjugation of women across the world. The globalized woman is burnt like a natural fuel, where she act as the chief worker in export industries, who absorb the shocks of SAPs. As some argue, increased employment and higher wages do not amount to empowerment if exploitation and abuse accompany these positives (Standing, 1999: 592). While globalisation may increase female employment and earnings in some countries, it may well reduce them in others (Standing, 1999: 592). The existing literature on globalisation and gender is very critical on the effects of globalisation and women.

### Positive Effects of Globalisation on Women

In contradiction to the negative effects of globalisation, there are scholars who argue that globalisation empowers women and liberates them through providing opportunities in trade and investment industries (Gizem, & Nuroen 2015: 799). The advocates of economic globalisation have highlighted the positive impact of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), because it does not distinguish between man and women developing and developed. The economic globalisation accelerates the development of a country specially focusing on women's needs. The economic free market generate competitive economic growth and enhance the live condition of the citizens by raising income standard where economic growth indirectly facilitate more government expenditure on social and welfare sectors which directly benefit to women. Globalisation as a free process of ideas, technologies, and wealth, liberate women from the clutches of 'patriarchal bargain'. It also changed the world patriarchy traditional societal relationship of male dominance.

### Globalisation and Women: A Critical Assessment

In the economic realm, it further marginalized women in the informal labour sector or impoverishment through loss of traditional process of income. In 2000, the Beijing+5 Document, while reviewing progress made since the 1995 in the UN Conference on Women, notes that,

Globalisation presents opportunities to some women but leads to marginalization of many others and thus advocates mainstreaming in order to achieve gender equality. Globalisation affects different groups of women in different places in different ways. On the one hand it may create new opportunities for women to be forerunners in economic and social progress. With the advent of global communication networks and cross-cultural exchange there seems to be a change in the status of women albeit not to a very large extent. However, globalisation has indeed promoted ideas and norms of equality for women that have brought about awareness and acted as a catalyst in their struggle for equitable rights and opportunities. On the other hand it may exacerbate gender inequality in a patriarchal society,

especially in the developing world (Bhatri 2009: 34).

Globalisation provides new avenues of growth creating opportunities for development processes. But due to unequal distribution of the benefits of globalisation, it adversely affected the women in developing countries. Globalisation through liberalisation also resulted further marginalization of rural and indigenous women. It increased women's unpaid work as social services are privatized. Globalisation as a process, must be reconsider to make into people-centric instead of profit-centric and more accessible and accountable to women. As women are facing a consumer culture which reduces them to commodities and producers should be reshaped as far as globalisation as a neutral process is concerned. They should be provided high paid jobs, proper working environment stability in employment and right to representation through the process of globalisation.

Mary E. John has rightly mentioned in his work about the statement of UNESCO in the following lines: As the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) underscores, globalisation is a multidimensional process of economic, political, cultural, and ideological change had a mixed impact on women's rights. On the one hand, it has led to increasing violations of women's economic, political, and cultural rights in large measure due to the withering away of the welfare state, the feminization of poverty, the expansion of religious fundamentalism, and new forms of militarism and conflict. On the other hand, aspects of globalisation have provided women with increasing opportunities to work in solidarity at regional, national and international levels to demand their rights. Their objective is to help, promote mechanisms that strengthen the positive aspects and consequences of globalisation, especially with respect to women's rights and gender equality (Mary 2009: 13).

### Global Feminism

The path breaking realities of marginality, inequality and patriarchal character of globalisation depicts the stereotyping myths of transnational and globalized policies. In counter to this backdrop, global feminism is limited to the

theoretical and practical problems of the distribution of resources, class and gender dichotomies of world politics. Global feminism has set the ideas and movements against the devastating aspects of global politics which engenders and subordinate the people. It reacted against the segregationist ideas generated by movement whose aim is to fulfil equality of all in terms of socio-economic, civil and political rights (Megovern, L. L., & Wallmann, I. 2009: 163). It exceptionally desires for inclusive gender politics taking accounts gender development indicator of the developing countries. Globalisation as a process of development must incorporate the cultural mode of gender integration very seriously. Different strategies and global women agendas have not only fully incorporate the sustainable dimension in developing peace and justice at both local and international levels in areas of citizenship, rights and equality but also the grass root development programmes also highlighted keeping the gender gap in the era of globalisation which strategically mapped out (Janakai 2015: 825). However, despite of all this efforts, masculine domination of NGOs and social movements with cultural leadership prejudices have remained static even in the face of global new trends on human rights and security.

## Conclusion

The inferences shows that women's condition in a particular country relatively interrelated with the involvement of that country in global economy. The relation between women and economy globalisation are more positively co- related, and in some cases vice-versa. It has changed the intra-household responsibilities in family challenging the traditional family function role. Women were provided more autonomy over their wages and independence to their counter mail parts. Globalisation as a process impacted women in an uneven way. A small sections of women have gained opportunity in sectors which demanded skills, where the semi-/unskilled ones have dislocated from their natural resources and traditional industries. The overall impact of globalisation has proven more negative and less positive. The limited advancement of women in formal sectors shows great disregard for their social and economic responsibilities within the developing countries. The neo- liberal policies and SAPs with

globalisation created most negative impact especially in developing countries. In order to meet out the opportunities of globalisation female workers should be provided equality, dignity and quality of life with sustainable living standard and proper working environment without which women will continue as a commodity in the liberal economic market.

The result exhibits variable impact of globalisation on gender empowerment which is relatively positioned on the cultural context, women's decision-making power and State's location in the global economy. Some ingredients of globalisation have positive effects where the other have negative effects on gender empowerment. The contradictory effects have posed severe problems as well as challenges and opportunities for women worldwide. While the capitalist world-economy imposed by the West on the East has led to greater economic exploitation and dislocation as well as marginalization of many women, and liberal democracy has not included women in its scope of citizenship, where women all over the world are increasingly resisting these forces and are responding to them in creative ways. In order to make globalisation as a neutral and gender bias process, it should inculcates women's voice from all groups, countries and regions of the globe.

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