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GLOBALISATION AND ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN IN INDIA - A REVIEW



ABSTRACT: -

The world today is termed as a 'Global Village' where there is interconnectedness and interdependence of all nations, with respect to transfer of capital, goods, and services across national frontiers. While globalisation is largely an economic concept, its arena includes an important component, like service which represents among other services the service of education. The impact of globalisation on education is quite intense worldwide and India is no exception. In India the issue of women education is a critical one and the impact of globalisation has both positive and negative effects on the education and consequently on the life of the women folks of the country. The present study highlights the impact of globalisation on women in India through a survey of previous literature. The objectives of the study are to find out how globalisation in India has affected the scenario of women education; what are its positive impacts; and how globalisation has adversely affected the life of the educated and uneducated women in India. The current study is based on the review of previous literature. The review of literature shows an upward inclination in the social and economic life of an educated woman who enjoys the benefits of empowerment. While the lives of the uneducated ones are burdened with multiple role and multi tasking

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bereft of empowerment and other privileges. Such is the diversity of the impact of globalisation.

KEYWORDS: Globalisation, women education, empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Today the world segregated by political boundaries is united with one another by means of economy, finance, trade, and communication. Progress in transportation facilities and telecommunication infrastructure, especially the internet, have shrunken the world and has transformed it into a global village. The withering away of boundaries among countries is a resultant of globalization whereby countries remain interconnected and interdependent to endorse free transfer of capital, goods, and services across national frontiers. The process is not at all a new one. Such economic and financial inter change and communication and commutation across national boundaries were present long before the European quest of discovering the 'New World'. However the magnitude of the process at that time was on a much smaller scale. In the late 20th century due to unprecedented advancement in technology and communication, different countries of the world became connected rapidly.

GLOBALISATION

Globalization as a term became popular in the mid-nineteen eighties and nineties. It refers to attainment of international integration through exchange or sharing of ideas, views, products, and

cultural aspects. In 1992 Roland Robertson, renowned professor of Sociology at University of Aberdeen, defined globalization as *'the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole'* (Globalization: social theory and global culture). While Professor Robertson emphasizes on the ideological aspect of globalization the International Monetary Fund (IMF) stresses on the practical aspects. According to them (IMF), globalization involves trade and transactions, capital and investment movements, migration and movement of people, and the dissemination of knowledge. Anthony Giddens, in 1991, stressed on the effect that globalization has on different areas. He defined globalization 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'* (The Consequences of Modernity, 1991). Thus it can be summed up that globalisation is an extensive process having effect at both the micro and macro level of the society/country. It refers to migration of people, idea, knowledge, information, economy, business, etc across political and social boundaries.

The current wave of globalisation has affected almost all the countries of the world either favourably or adversely. This paper tries to give an overview of how globalisation has affected women especially in India through a review of previous literature.

OBJECTIVES

- To find out how globalisation has affected the lives of women.
- To inquire the positive impacts of globalisation on women education in India.
- To delineate the adverse affect of globalisation on the life of the uneducated women in India.

GLOBALISATION AND WOMEN

The present world is very different from the bygone nineteen seventies. Today nearly half the world's labour force in the global market is from the three giant population blocks, namely China, India and the Republics from the former Soviet Union. Both men and women are important contributors in this market. The role and status of women has changed with the onset of globalisation. Throughout the world it has been found that globalisation has greatly improved the lives of women, particularly those residing in the developing countries. However the picture is not so bright in every area of life. Lots of difficulties are faced by women in matters of education, employment and health. In the field of education, out of 72 million children who do not attend school at the primary level, an estimated 57 percent are girls (U.S. Agency for International Development and the World Bank). Those who are privileged to attend primary level often do not complete this level successfully. In issues related to health, maternity care is the worst affected area with approximately 529,000 women dying annually during pregnancy and childbirth (Gender statistics, 2010).

Gender disparity is a stark reality even in today's globalised world. The UN's Millennium Development Goals prioritize gender equality and empowerment of women. To inculcate gender parity, The Millennium Development Goal Three, aims to *"promote gender equality and empower women."* It has also been resolved that indicators of gender equality like the levels of female enrollment at school, participation in the workplace, and representation in decision-making positions and political institutions will be closely monitored by international communities like the UN, as part of the Millennium Goals. Several international conferences have been held in different countries of the world to understand the problems of women. In 1985, the UN published 'Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women' for drawing a plan for global action to achieve women's equality by the year 2000. Later in 1995 the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, 'Beijing Platform for Action' was issued. Its purpose was to *'inform and stimulate the people worldwide towards the commitment to gender equality'*. The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women guarantees equality of women with men in the arena of *'education, employment, health care, suffrage, nationality, and marriage'*. The United Nations General Assembly, in July 2010, agreed to create UN Women. This body would help other intergovernmental bodies in formation of policies that are beneficiary for women. It would also help member states implement new standards and regulations related to gender equality.

In India, globalisation is a 'double edged' process as far as the women folk of the country are concerned.

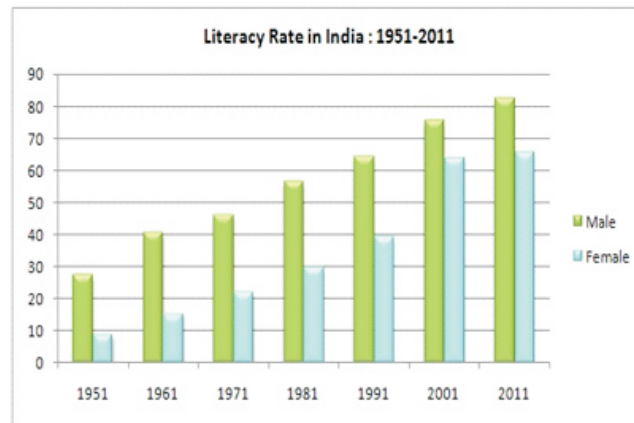
On one hand globalisation offers better education facilities and job prospect to the educated and privileged women. On the other hand the process of globalisation deprives the less privileged women from the benefits of government subsidy, protection of labour rights and social security. Over the ages Indian women have been plagued by the problems of patriarchy, social pressures, caste based discrimination, social restrictions inadequate access to productive resources poverty, insufficient advancement and of course powerlessness! All these factors contribute significantly towards underachievement of women in education and in the job market.

Positive impacts of Globalisation on Women Education in India

In the early nineteen nineties, due to foreign exchange crunch, India had to open up its economy. Today if we compare globally India is the fastest growing economy after China. India ranks third in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), in the world. Companies with high brand value as well as worldwide organisations have entered Indian economy in the recent years. This has ushered in a variety of job opportunities for Indians, both men and women. Women are now becoming a larger part of the workforce in India. New job opportunities have helped women in breaking the barriers of stereo typed jobs. They are now possessed with the option to choose from a variety of jobs to suit their needs. Economic independence along with lucrative pay packet raises the self-confidence and brings about a sense of independence in her. This, in turn, has led the Indian patriarchal society to understand the importance of equality between the sexes, an issue which Indian women have been fighting for since time immemorial. Traditional views towards the role of women are also fast changing and so is the attitude of the society towards women's role in the society. Women who are able to avail the opportunities of globalisation reap a number of benefits.

In the field of education, with the spurt of globalisation, most of the leading universities and educational institutions have entered the Indian educational scenario. Indian students have also gained access to foreign universities and educational institutions. Prospect of higher and quality education have become possible for women who can afford them economically and socially. In India the Government both at the centre and state have initiated several policies and programmes to encourage the participation of females at all levels of education (i.e., primary, secondary, higher secondary and the university level). Free compulsory education till the age of fourteen is a fundamental right of all girls in India. Most of the states have made girl's education free upto the university level. Hostel and boarding facilities for girls are provided at the secondary and higher secondary school levels. The Central Government has initiated Kasturba School to facilitate residential schooling for girls. Government has opened special Women's Study Centre and cells in selected universities and colleges (Women Studies Research Centre- CU, JU, Centre for Women's Studies JNU etc). The University Grant Commission has created the post of Part-Time Research Associate- ship for women in Science and Humanities, including Social Sciences, Engineering and Technology. A conscious endeavour to improve the content and process of education has been made since independence. This process has gained momentum with the advent of globalization. Gender sensitive and gender friendly curriculum has been designed at all levels of education, to achieve gender harmony and gender justice. The Distance Education System and Open Universities have made higher education more accessible to girls in urban areas, small towns and also in rural areas. The government has also initiated a number of programmes for vocational and technical education especially for women. The National Vocational Training Institute was launched in 1977 to provide advanced skills in selected trades with high employment potentials. A new scheme, 'Science and Technology for Women' was introduced in the eighth five year plan (1992-97) with a broad objective of improving the condition of women through application of science and technology. Government and private endeavours have helped in almost doubling the literacy rates among women in the post globalisation period (1990s) in India. Opportunities for employment in technological and other advanced sectors are now accessible to women who are empowered with quality education.

Literacy Rate in India: 1951-2011



Source: Census 2011: Provisional Population Total - INDIA

The rise in literacy rates among women has brought about a significant change in attitude towards women, especially in the urban areas. Urban women enjoy more democratic gender relationship than the less fortunate rural Indian women. In post globalised India, educated women are more confident and healthy as they garner the benefits of good job opportunities, family planning and health care, child care etc. Globalisation has also helped in the increase of women's movements. These movements have been recognised at the international level which has helped to bring about major changes in the economic, social and political lives of women. The problems faced by Indian women today, are not exclusive to them, and hence they seek their solutions in the solutions derived by other women worldwide, faced with similar problems. Decrease in gender inequalities has a positive effect on women's empowerment in the socio-economic context.

Adverse Affect of Globalisation on the Life of Uneducated Women in India

One of the most important areas which have been greatly affected by globalisation is that of world economy. In order to expand the economy of developing countries, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank encourages the use of 'export-led growth' model. In such globalized economy there is demand for a huge labour force. The developing countries contribute greatly to this labour force. Cheap labour of the poor and especially that of women are in great demand. The multinational corporations whose primary aim is profit-making, targets this labour force. This also helps the corporate giants to escape from the hands of trade unions, and high operating costs in the First World. *"Being docile, young women are the ace cards in these consumption goods industries. In the booming toys sector, for example, a million are employed in more than four thousand factories in South China alone"* (Wichterich, 2000). Women not only provide cheap labour; they also work without complaining in unhealthy and unsafe environment. For example the garment workshops in the Bangladesh hire hundreds of girls and women who work for ten to twelve hours a day on piece-rates and produce garments for the international market.

The United Nations Information Unit (1997) stated that the condition of women worldwide is pitiable. Gender equality has not been achieved by any country in the world. About seventy percent of the 1.3 billion poor people, worldwide, are women. Of the 27 million refugees in the world between 75 and 80 per cent are women and children. The World Development Indicators opined that, *"Women work two-thirds of the worlds 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 the world's property (Tomlinson)"*.

In developing countries like India the problem faced by women is two-fold. The domestic responsibilities of women are not alleviated when they join the work force of the country. *'Firstly they work in a factory, where they are paid next to nothing, and secondly they also work in the home where they are paid nothing'* (Moghadam). In India globalisation has led to the migration of men to cities, increase in prices of commodities

and a saturated job market. Further it has led to adverse social effects like decrease in family and community social controls resulting in 'higher rates of family violence, rape, divorce, and family breakdown' (Social Strains of Globalization in India: M. A. Taber and S. Batra). Today, women represent the largest group of "unpaid" workers, both in rural and urban India. In India, male casual workers increased from 65 percent in 1972 to 80 percent in 2002 while female casual workers increased from 89 percent to 92 percent over the same period (World Bank, 2008). Research studies shows that women suffer more than men, because of poverty.

It is a proven fact that in India there exist inequality between men and women in matters related to income and consumption. Women are easily inducted into export industries where they are made to work uncomplainingly at any allotted task with a meagre pay. The work environment is often unhygienic coupled with threats of sexual harassment. While rural Indian women slog both in the farms (agricultural labourer, farmer) and home, the uneducated and unskilled urban women are left with job choices in the informal sector which includes jobs such as domestic servants, small traders, artisans, etc. Such jobs are unskilled and hence low paying. These do not benefit the workers. Again these jobs are rarely covered by social security systems. All these problems faced by women due to globalisation also have their root in the inaccessibility of education among women.

The UNESCO states that the primary cause of poverty, leading to the plight of women, lies in unequal access to education. In India, since independence, all educational Commissions have made women friendly recommendations, but one hardly finds any implementation of these recommendations. Because of globalisation a number of foreign private educational institutions have entered India. However these institutions cater mainly to the economically advantaged class of people. Women of this advantaged class, both in urban and rural area, reap the educational opportunities but hardly join the work force of the country. From the data of Census of India 2001, we find that the work participation rate of total women population in India is 25.6%. Of these 30.8% are rural women while only 11.9% are urban women.

CONCLUSION

The present article attempts to assess the effect of globalisation on the life and education of Indian women on the basis of analysing past literature. From the above study it can be observed that globalisation does not have similar effect on all women. The factors like class, nationality, race, ability, religion, age and education plays an intersecting role. It has been seen that urban educated women largely benefits from globalisation enjoying better employment opportunities and autonomy, access to new technologies and increased purchasing power. Today, in India, about 1.25 lakh women graduate as doctors every year. 21% of India's software professional and 25% of science and engineering graduates are women. All these prove that globalisation has brought about an improved lifestyle along with positive attitudinal change in the globalised urban women. However this educated urban class comprises only a handful of the total women population in India. The uneducated section of both rural and urban women is hit the hardest by globalisation. In India, the national level large scale surveys are unable to capture this reality. These women remain as secondary earner and do not feature in the official data system. As a result no policies are framed to lessen the sufferings of these women who form a bulk of the cheap labour force. In India the Government encourages gender sensitive policies. However these policies are hardly implemented. Most of the women are not aware of these policies; and those aware find it difficult to implement them.

The process of globalisation is irreversible. Therefore it is important that the government and all organizations working for the cause of women are conscious about the divide between rural and urban women, organized and unorganized sector and ensure that a significant number should not be left out or alienated in the process. There should be positive approach to strengthen women's security and welfare, on behalf of the Government and the NGO's. Women have to be made aware of their rights and the opportunities made available to them by the government and other organisations. Women need to be educated. Once women are able to make their decisions based on information relevant to them, their requirements will also be fulfilled as per their own terms.

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