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IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION UPON INDIAN WORKING WOMEN

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Abstract:

Over the last decade we come across more frequently with the term Globalisation. Globalisation is a process of increasing interdependence, interconnectedness and integration of economies and societies to such an extent that an event in one part of the world affects people in other parts of world. Advances in transportation and telecommunications infrastructure, including the rise of the Internet, play vital role in globalization. It is generating interdependence of economic and cultural activities of one corner of the world to other corner. More and more nations are becoming integrated into the global economy through trade and capital flows. Globalisation entered India around 1991. It automatically has its effect upon the women . It affects different groups of women in different places in different ways. Under globalisation networking of women in different corners of the world take place. Consequently, they may raise joint campaign on common concern. With the advent of global communication networks and cross-cultural exchange there seems to be a change in the status of women . 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. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. The government has framed many policies for equal access of women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office etc. Development is not possible if the women's opportunities cannot be created. Globalisation can lead to a new way to growth, but due to unequal distribution of its benefits women have been adversely affected in many cases. So it is very much essential to create opportunities for women to be part of this development process. To accelerate the process many laws were formed in favour of women but until they are properly implemented the scenario will not change. From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. But the scenario cannot be changed only by formulating some laws if the change does not come from inside of human being.

KEY WORDS:

Globalisation, gender disparity, special economic zone, basic need, transnational companies, formal and informal sector

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INTRODUCTION

GLOBALISATION AND PESSIMISTIC VIEW

Globalization has also the power to create highly undesirable adverse effects leading to exploitation of the female workforce and even to jeopardize their safety.

· According to ILO report out of the total 397 million workers in India, 123.9 million are women and of these women 96% female workers are in the unorganised sector. It reveals that majority of women workforce obtain poorly paid unskilled jobs in informal sector, without any job security or social security. Thus working women in India are likely to be subjected to intense exploitation in terms of low wages, poor working environment, denial of right to representation or other occupational hazards. They are exposed to more and more risks that caused health hazards and are forced to endure greater levels of physical and mental stress and all these happens as they receive very low wage rate. Globalisation 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.

· The number of girls working in the informal/unorganised sector for precarious wages has also increased. National and multinational corporations operating in Free Trade Zones, Special Economic Zones and Export Processing Zones in India employ girls in production units or hire them on a piece-rate basis for home-based work. Using girl-child labourers is the cheapest way to increase the profit margin.

· Globalisation has increased the job opportunity of women workforce but at the same time those jobs are not secured and this has negative impact on the health of female. For this insecurity they do not dare to raise voice even they have to work for a long hours for a very poor wage rate. If the woman who already has entered in the workforce loses employment then it hampers her emotional stability as it detrimental for her financial freedom, self image and self esteem.

· It is not only in unorganized sector or in small enterprises, but also in modern sectors like Informational Technology where working women are forced to work for longer hours while the local governments ignore this open flouting of the labour laws. On the one hand the jobs are insecure and on the other hand they have to face the tough competition to retain the position in working place so it causes mental tension, strained social relationship and psychological problem.

· Women continue to be perceived as weak, inferior and second class citizens. In a family, since the childhood, a male member is given the nutritious food and then comes the turn of female member. 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.

· In addition the age old inherent idea that women alone are responsible for the domestic work, leads the working women a feeling of guilt when they are not able to look after the children or family members due to their official works, often resulting to psychiatric problem.

· Owing to their many roles, as would-be mothers, as mothers responsible for the health of their children and families, as working women at home and outside they often suffer from health hazards and are major consumers of healthcare products. In recent years a serious issue has come to light where many products related to women's health, found to be dangerous and banned or restricted in the developed countries, were marketed in the developing countries. Transnational Corporations (TNCs) see the developing world as a convenient dumping ground for these products and medicines.

· In several traditional industries where women work in large numbers like handloom and food processing has introduced modern machines, power loom etc. after globalisation and due to this large number of women have become unemployed.

· It is true when we are talking about gender parity we cannot avoid night work of the women workforce but incidents of sexual abuse is a matter of concern. For years women are working in hospitals, in telecom department, in IT sector etc. In modern times the number of women working at night is increasing. The export oriented companies located in the Export Processing Zone is also going to increase and they have to work at night but most of the companies do not provide proper protection or transport facilities to them.

· The relationship between the formal sector and the decentralised sector is a dependent relationship. The formal sector has control over capital and markets, and the 'informal' sector works as an ancillary. In India, more than 90% of women work in the decentralised sector, which has a high degree of labour redundancy. These women have almost no control over their work and no chance for upward mobility because of the temporary nature of the work. The shift from a stable/organised labour force to a flexible workforce has meant hiring women part-time, and the substitution of better-paid male labour by cheap female labour. The new economic policies provide State support to corporate houses that are closing down their big city units and using ancillaries that employ women and girls on a piece-rate basis. Home-

IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION UPON INDIAN WORKING WOMEN

based work by women and girls gets legitimised in the context of increasing insecurity in the community due to a growth in crime, riots, displacement and relocation. Sub-contracting, home-based production, the family labour system, all have become the norm. This is being called an increase in 'efficiency' and 'productivity'. The casual employment of urban working class women in the manufacturing industry (textiles is a glaring example) has forced thousands of women to eke out a subsistence through parallel petty trading activities (known as 'informal' sector occupations).

The employers of the unorganised sector often force the working women to work into the unorganised sector and deprived them of their rights. The women fall outside protective labour laws such as the Maternity Benefits Act (1961), Employees State Insurance Scheme, Factories Act (1948), Equal Remuneration Act (1976) etc.

All units operating in Special Economic Zones are categorised as "Public Utility Service", meaning that many labour laws become irrelevant. A Public Utility Service is defined to be a service that is of great value to the society, and the lack of provision of which can affect the life of everyone. In this case, employees have to give a 14 day notice before going on strike. Additionally, employees (which includes women employee) in SEZs don't have protection in the form of a notice period or compensation against retrenchment. It follows that employees will be reluctant to raise a voice against their employers when the need arises. Moreover, employers in SEZs have the right to change the terms and conditions of service at any point of time.

It is argued that women shoulder the burden of domestic duties as well as remunerative/office work, so a reduction of working hours will give them some relief. This deprives women of promotions and responsible assignments and discriminates against women by projecting them as "supplementary earners".

Sometimes the Multi National Companies for their profit earning also can dictate the host government's policy and exploit women workforce.

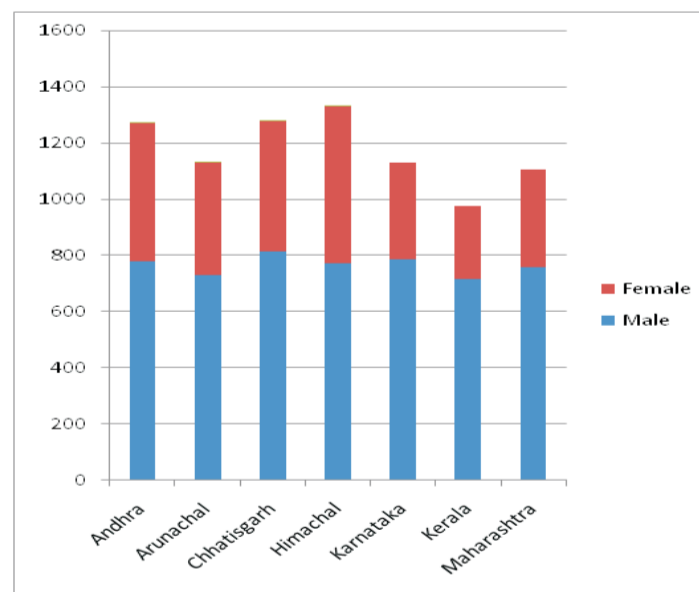
GLOBALISATION AND OPTIMISTIC VIEW

Globalisation has attracted many multinational companies in India which provide the employment opportunity for women workforce for higher pay. It generates women's self confidence and uproots the traditional treatment towards women and helps them to afford equal stance in society with their male counterpart.

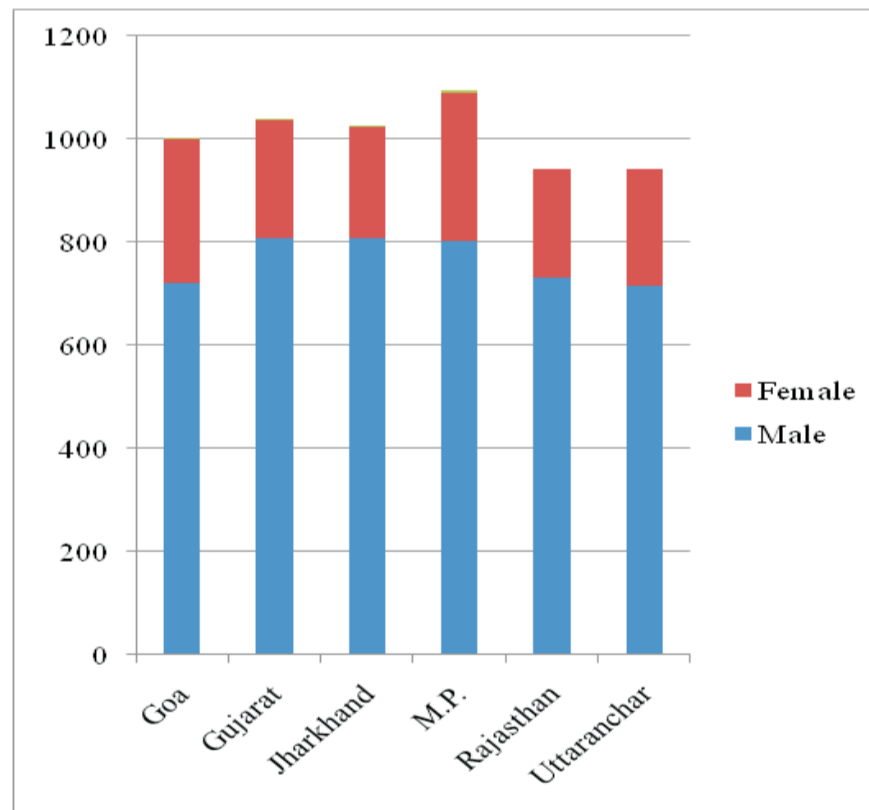
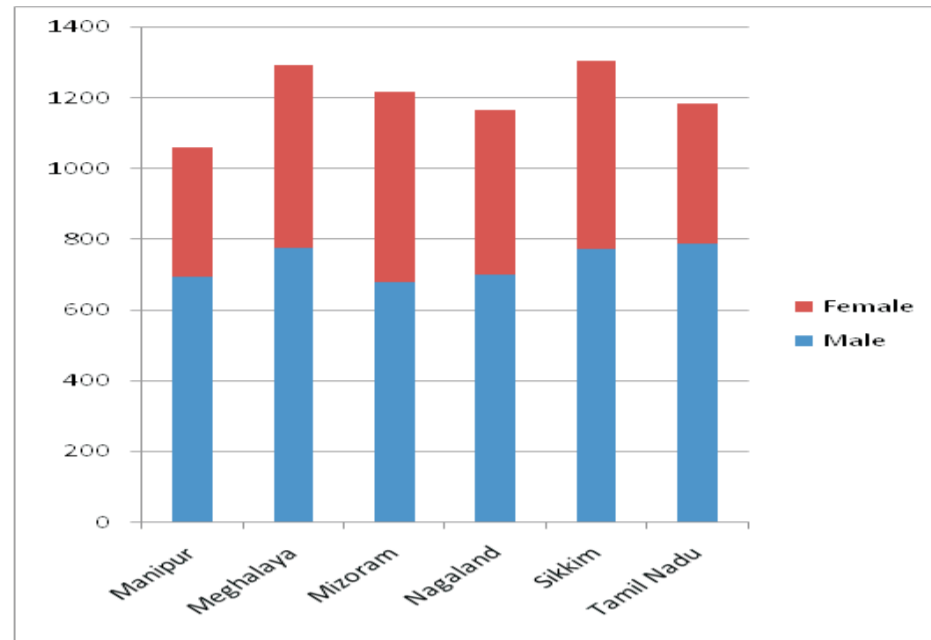
Earlier the Indian women had second class status. They had to take care of the family but no one was there to take care of them. Globalisation has helped the Indian women to fight for their right, to raise voice against gender discrimination everywhere- in political, social, economic or in employment arena.

The globalisation now has changed the outlook of the society. Now the women can earn for the family. The family which so far neglected the women and girl child in the distribution of basic goods such as food and healthcare changed the orientation and started to demolish the gender difference.

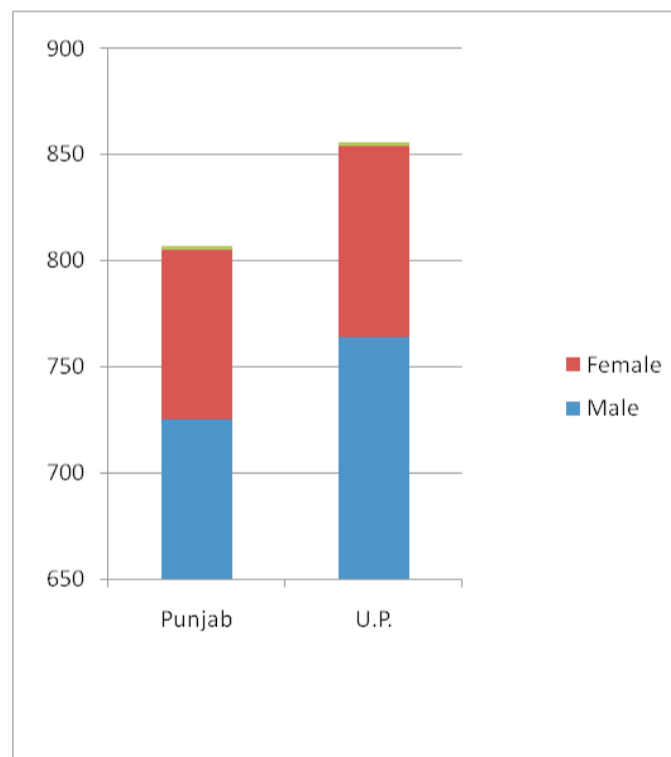
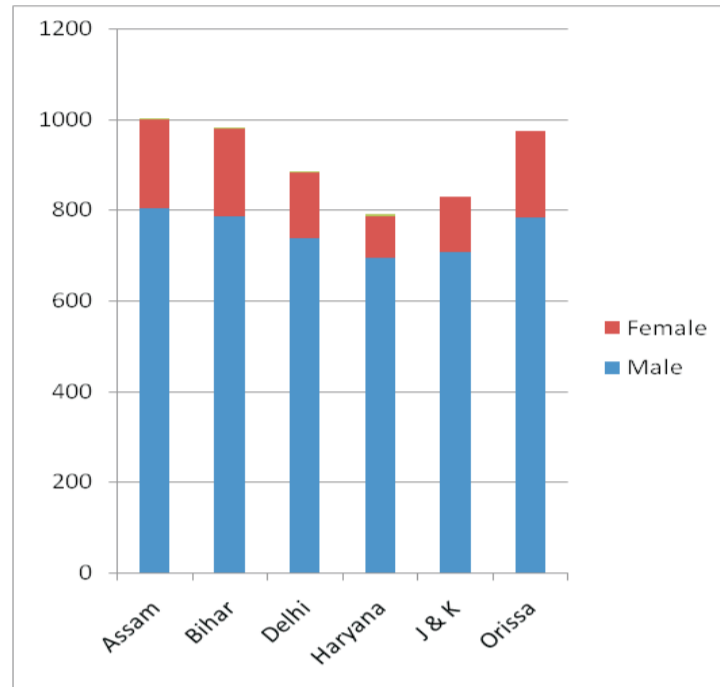
As the women are becoming more and more vocal and self dependent they enjoy freedom in all domains, whether in public or in private sphere, such as health care, education, birth control etc.



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Source: Report on 2nd annual Employment and Unemployment Survey (2010-11), Ministry of Labour and Employment Labour Bureau, Labour employment rate (per 1000) for persons age>15

Number of working women in Punjab and Haryana are the lowest. The position of Delhi and W.B. are alarming and astonishingly the position is just like that in Assam, Bihar, Orissa, Haryana, Chandigarh, J & K, Lakshadweep.

GOVERNMENT POLICY AND NGO

Recently some measures have been adopted to protect the Indian women workforce from different type of exploitation.

SELF EMPLOYED WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

SEWA which was founded in India in 1972, has a membership of over 250,000 women and "has provided a range of services (financial, health, child care, and training) to its members." The work of SEWA is more important for the example it sets than for the number of women it reaches. More recently, SEWA has led an international movement of women workers and negotiated with international trade union federations and the International Labour Organization to recognize informal sector workers.

SELF-HELP GROUP

While institutions at the district level will be strengthened, at the grass-roots, women will be helped by Government through its programmes to organize and strengthen into SHGs at the Anganwadi/Village/Town level. The women's groups will be helped to institutionalize themselves into registered societies and to federate at the Panchayat/Municipal level.

PLANNING COMMISSION

The women's movement in India has suggested the ways to reduce the double burden on women could include the provision of cheap and safe eating facilities, childcare centres that provide both custodial care and developmental inputs for children, and better transport facilities

In the National Perspective Plan (NPP) for Women (1988-2000), the government responded quite positively to demands from women's groups for State support to Female Headed Household. NPP also provided to enhance women's access to credit for production. Other supportive measures would be taken to ensure adequate flow of credit through financial institutions and banks, so that all women below poverty line have easy access to credit.

The National Perspective Program (1988-2000) provided also programmes for training women in soil conservation; social forestry, dairy development and other occupations allied to agriculture like horticulture, livestock including small animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries etc. will be expanded to benefit women workers in the agriculture sector. The important role played by women in electronics, information technology and food processing and agro industry and textiles has been crucial to the development of these sectors. They would be given comprehensive support in terms of labour legislation, social security and other support services to participate in various industrial sectors.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Women at present are afraid of working in night shift in factories even if they wish to. Suitable measures will be taken to enable women to work on the night shift in factories. This will be accompanied with support services for security, transportation etc.
2. The important role played by women in electronics, information technology and food processing and agro industry and textiles has been crucial to the development of these sectors. They would be given comprehensive support in terms of labour legislation, social security and other support services to participate in various industrial sectors.
3. The legal and other institutional set ups of the country have to ensure that no discriminations against women prevail in the society so as to reap the full benefit of increased participation of the women in the development process
4. The administrative system should be more prompt and strong while taking decision against the guilty persons
5. Only formulation or implementation of laws are not enough, the change must come from within the society
6. The women have to be strong and daring enough to join in the development process tackling any undesirable situation and ignoring it just as the incurable disease of the society as we all know Darwin's theory Survival for the fittest

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