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## A STUDY OF GLOBALIZATION AND THIRD WORLD WOMEN



Dolly Limbu

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### Short Profile

Dolly Limbu is working as an Assistant Professor at Deshbandhu College, University of Delhi. She has completed M.Phil. She has professional experience of 3 years.



### ABSTRACT:

Globalization has become one of the most extensively used terms of the decade. With the advancement of science, technology and communication system, the world has become as a global village. Guy Brainbant says, "The process of globalization not only includes opening up of world trade, development of advanced means of communication, internationalisation of financial markets, growing importance of MNC's, population migrations and more generally increased mobility of persons, goods, capital, data and ideas but also infections, diseases and pollution".

### KEYWORDS

*Ultimate reality, Brahman, God, Atman and Soul – Self.*

## INTRODUCTION:

In this paper I intend to look at globalization and its impact on the lives of women living in third world countries. There is no contestation regarding the fact that globalization has enhanced the lives of such women in terms of better living conditions and employment opportunities due to mobility of trade. Various avenues and opportunities have opened up for women but we are challenged by a crucial question in this scenario - Are we willing to overlook the feminization of poverty which has emerged serious concern in our contemporary world? One of the main factors that have fostered the growth of MNC's in the era of capitalism is the free availability of cheap labour and abundant untapped human resource, mainly women workforce, in the third world. According to United Nations, Worldwide, women earn on average slightly more than 50 per cent of what men earn.

The lack of labour laws and the poverty and gender gap has resulted in people seeking employment in such corporates which does not ensure medical insurance or economic stability. At the same time women have emerged as leading breadwinners today, where they are no longer confined in their household chores but contribute significantly to the socio-economic growth of the country. Some of the questions that I address in this paper- Is globalization something to be celebrated about or is it just another slippery slope? Have MNC's empowered women to an extent that they can break the "glass ceiling" or "bamboo ceiling"?

## ADVANTAGES: ECONOMIC FREEDOM

Spivak says that her definition of a woman is simple: it rests on the word man. So by nature women have never been perceived as independent entities. Traditionally, in India a sense of subservience to men and dependency is always concomitant with women. There always has been debate surrounding the economic insecurity and infringement of rights that women workers face. To begin with economically challenged women in many developing countries enjoyed few social rights even during the so-called 'golden age' of capitalism and therefore, it is meaningless to condemn 'globalization' for creating jobs for women that have few social rights attached to them. As Sahara Razivi puts it,

[...] today, employment objectives, the creation of decent jobs and broad-based, redistributive social security systems are no longer the objectives of public policy in most countries. These concerns have now been relegated to the realm of 'safety nets', and small-enterprise and informal-sector specific programs, which very often lead to blanket exemptions from paying taxes and from observing environmental and labour regulations, thereby undermining the social policy agenda.

Roshini Hensman (Women's Studies In India, 198) shares the same view and feels that the highly controversial link trade of WTO ( World Trade Organisation) and the condition of the labour has no credibility and does not work in third world countries like India. It makes no sense to protest against globalization, as it provides developing countries with an opportunity to globally work towards the agenda of justice and equality. In a competitive economy like India, globalization definitely aids the marginalised sections of the society. For instance, farmers who severely underpaid for their produce have now a chance to parley their share in global market.

Globalization, therefore, provides a scope for women to explore their skills and not just stay cooped up the nitty gritty of domestic life but to be aware of their rights and to become a organised force to work for the betterment of their working condition and achieving a sense of accomplishment. Sarah Swinder speaks of "women's economic association" in Hong Kong, which is an organisation of migrant domestic workers comprised mainly of Filipina, Indonesian and Thai women. These women have built up networks of association which works towards safeguarding the socio-politico-economic interest of minorities. It aims at

protecting women from state's cut back on maternity benefits and demanding equal pay. Thus, by working and learning from each other, women workers can certainly bring an exemplary change in the society. Movement such as this is a result of women understanding the social reality and going beyond marginalisation and difference to work out for social transformation. Attainment of social security of one of the biggest milestone that globalization has enabled women to attain. In the Indian context SEWA, the Self Employed Women's Association, a trade union of poor and self-employed workers aiming at the economic empowerment of women in Gujarat and few other state through banking, maternal childcare and collaboration with the insurance companies. The same can be said about the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, which is a bank for the poor where more than 90% of the shareholders belong to the economically backward class. The interesting thing about this bank is that 98% of its borrowers are women. Expertise such as this definitely empower the marginalised community especially women from money hungry polices, money lenders and bureaucrats.

The Indian economy has witnessed a great shift post 9/11. The crash of World Trade Centre has resulted in the increase of labour outsourcing and consequently resulted in the mushrooming of B.P.O.'s across India. Fluency in English language is the basic requirement to work in a B.P.O, whereby, other required trainings are carried out by the company itself. Lack of opportunities and corruption has resulted in large scale migration of people from the North East to South and North India. Unemployed youths from all over the country, armed with their degrees enter this sector. Conventions are defied, with increasing number of women working in graveyard shift. Globalization has thus, has brought about higher rates of employment in women, thereby changing the whole spectrum of the socio-economic schematic of the developing countries. But globalization has its own set of disadvantages. Are women able to capitalise their earnings? Which sections of women suffer and which prosper from it? Is not responsible for the feminisation of poverty? These are all pertinent questions that we need to reflect upon.

### Disadvantages: Feminisation of Poverty

According to Donna Haraway, to be feminized means to be made extremely vulnerable. The term was first employed systematically by Guy Standing of the I.L.O. (International Labour Organisation). According to United Nations, the majority of the 1.5 billion people living on 1 dollar a day or less are women. We must first try to understand where the vulnerabilities lie. Women are replacing men in the jobs but the fact remains that women's average earnings are consistently below men and they work in deplorable conditions. They are exposed to exploitation in terms of lesser remuneration. Thus, feminization of poverty is the matter of grave concern in the new economy. Nirmala Benerjee also feels that even if the additional jobs go women in the new economy but the situation looks grim as the working conditions of whole working class is affected and is worsened. Further, an increasing numbers of women are solely responsible for supporting their whole family; however, this still does not necessarily mean that women enjoy the same social rights as men do. A crucial example being teenaged women in industrialising region find themselves as a sole wage earner but they are denied of land ownership. Ownership of a land is an important issue especially to the women in South East Asia where arable land is considered a very valuable property. Bina Agrawal mentions that control and ownership of land is the most critical contributor to the gender gap in "economic well-being, social status and empowerment."

Globalization has resulted in another phenomenon which is the reduced control of the state. As stated before with the increasing numbers of self-help and employment group through banking strategies are making its presence felt in the economy has no doubt resulted in improvement of the living standards. However, Mary E. John feels that the modus operandi of SEWA has been picked up by the World Bank for their own mercantile interest and applied not only in the third world but the First world countries as well. Thus, the seething interest of banks will continue to pervade many lives.



Another pressing issue we must focus on is to understand the situation which has relegated the women labours in third world countries to a position where they play second fiddle to their male counterparts. The low salary and deplorable working conditions is very dubiously and schematically planned by Corporates; as male labourers cost more, so they usually employ women and children workers. For example women constitute the major work force in footloose industries, since it is a very competitive sector, one of the crucial ways of maintaining flexibility is by hiring cheap labour. Women usually are hired and they enter the vicious cycle of low remuneration, low savings, and low standard of living, etc. out of which it is impossible to escape. Many industries employing a high proportion of women workers have expanded rapidly in response to globalization. This concern is echoed by Shahra Razavi when she says that due to increasing emphasis on cost-cutting competitiveness, firms have been searching for ways to reduce their labour costs that more and more women are hired as part time workers today in India and other parts of the world. This has often meant changes in the structure of the labour market- away from formal, full-time employment with entitlements, such as unemployment and sickness insurance, pensions and maternity benefits. (Globalization, Employment and Women's Empowerment, 25). Thus women despite being aware of occupational haphazard cannot help but be willing victims. Thousands of young women in India are gainfully working in B.P.O's, with 40% of them constituting the total workforce. However, in the absence of labour laws or regulations women are always at the receiving end of the exploitation. Most MNC's are beyond the jurisdiction of the host countries. The several rape and murder cases of B.P.O employees in the past years thus point to the lack of security that this graveyard shift entails to. In situation like these responsibilities and compensation of the company is unheard of. Further, MNC's also does not have provisions for employee associations or labour unions, thus making it difficult for the workers to get a redressal of their grievances.

Are women workers ready to move out from the shadows of the state and initiate free trade? The avenue of bio-piracy clearly shows how globalization has misappropriated the wages of peasants and tribal women in India. Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Vasundara Shiva are against such acts of global privatizations of indigenous knowledge which has led to the rise of transitional institutions such as WTO, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Dismantling state welfare results not only in underpaid army of female workers but also devastating effects on environment. Poorer conditions find readier acceptance among the women workers to take up employment in such corporations. Poor women are mostly affected by it such as women taking multiple jobs without any recourse and entitlements and are readily being exploited. There have been instances of women workers demands for better wage and entitlements in the past but such movements have never been fruitful. Spivak, in "Feminist and Critical Theory" speaks of how the demands for better wage by the women workers in a factory based in Minnesota based corporation, Data Control, in Seoul, South Korea ended in dispute. The male workers at the factory beat up women and many of the women suffered injuries and two miscarried. Therefore, globalization no doubts provide opportunities for women but it only protects the corporation's interests and women end up being the scapegoat.

Mary E. John poses a very interesting question: If poverty is bad for women, could prosperity be worse? Perhaps the question can never be satisfactorily answered, should women be breadwinners of the family or are they destined to be dependents? In fact the situation remains the same in some developed countries too. Japan is one of the few countries where roles of women and men are strictly postulated whereby women are mostly relegated to domesticity and the men provide the keep. Working women have to compromise their roles as mother in order to succeed. According to the Gender Gap Report 2013, Japan was placed as the 105th country in the world. However, Japan is trying to turn the tides in women's favour with the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe promising to provide three year child care leave and initiate favourable policies for working mothers. For Nirmala Banerjee, there is no feminization of workforce in India. She purports that MNC's dealing in garment industry usually hire skilled male workers, which ironically in other parts of the world are performed by female workers. Agriculture is another male domain and only when cultivation is intensified women get to work in India. Globalization gives opportunities for women to explore and develop

their skills but it's hardly certain that women are the sole stakeholders of the money they make. One can thus understand that globalization increases the mobility of the trade but opportunities should not come at the cost of exploitation. Women and other marginalised group, if given the right prospects can perhaps prosper from globalization and make most out of it.

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