Short Communication

Globalization a Paradox: An Assessment of Women Empowerment in India

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Abstract
Over the last few decades, the policies related to the women displayed a paradigm shift with the central government making some path-breaking moves in order to ensure gender equality in social, economic and political arenas. The emergence of global women's movement has its origin somewhere in the decade of 1975-1985. This decade saw women of different communities coming closer to each other and sharing each other's experience. Network of issues were brought to limelight which helped a lot in perpetuating women empowerment. The network achieved a shape of a public agenda. The women themselves made every effort to fight against any violence and through their collective strength, have earned a new identity and respect. The main contention of this agenda was to highlight the fact that any well-being of any community is possible when the women are seen in equal terms along the men, so as to foster a kind of national harmony. The important thing about this can be better understood from the fact that the agenda crossed all the barriers that compartmentalized it to mere "women issues" and thereby embraced a wide range of concerns for human welfare in general. The establishment of some novel women's studies courses in adult and higher education can best be weighed as the consequence of a prolonged struggle. Opening new courses on women issues is undoubtedly a political act, aimed at reassessing the women's oppression and therefore, putting forth the ways to end their subordination. The current paper seeks to explore some pros and cons of globalization in relation to women. It will also try to bring both these paradigms parallel to each other and thereby analyze the way one influences the other.

Keywords: *Women, government, network, global, welfare, struggle, political, subordination.*

1. Introduction
Globalization as a powerful independent reality is reckoned as the consequence of the international division of labour and the world market. We usually see globalization as a dominant feature only in terms of business vis a vis trade, capital flow and world economy while as it also has worked wonders in relegating social and mental barriers that alienated erstwhile people from each other. Collectively such a scenario provided an opportunity for each and every individual who could build his own capacity in the global engagement of the things. Thus women too achieved the space whereby they could manufacture their talent and thereby contribute in terms of the workforce to the overall competence of their nations. The coming forward of the women and helping the societies keep up with the pace of development with that of the others proved fruitful not only in establishing standards but also in the strengthening their own status. Such an initiative is deemed to be an important move in order to ensure the equilibrium in power relations between sexes and it also covers the initial phase of the women empowerment: a process that voices in support of their ability and challenge the existential power relationships that relegated their role erstwhile to the periphery. Working in unison with the men acted as means whereby they could challenge the ruling discourse by the patriarchs who treated them as inferiors.

In the third world countries, women empowerment is seen as a result of the inspiration from the West. In India, prior to 1970's high female mortality rates, lower female education and health rates were key figures that displayed the dilemma of women. However, the critics like Kamala Bhasin, Hanna Papanek and Vina Mazumdar opine that considering women's movement a foreign movement is a male strategy and a superficial one. Some critics further contend that the " women's movement in India was spurred by the shock of the National Emergency (June 1975-February 1977), which set off a wave of equal movements of which the women's movement was a part" (qtd. in Margolis 384). The movement played a phenomenal role in bridging the gap between the urban, rural, ethnic, biological and racial differences bringing them to the forefront with equal powers as men. A survey conducted in 2004 highlighted the fact that out of the total 397 million workers in India, 123.9 million are women and out of this 96% of female workers are in the unorganised sector. This is ample proof of the fact that how globalization extended women's reach to the public sphere.

Coming out of the stereotypical images of Laxmi and Sita, who were victimised by the patriarchal norms, in the contemporary times we see them assuming the power and turning tables. The general awakening of the masses in India can be better estimated from the fact that a number of acts, rules, programmes were charted out consistently in order to ensure the engendering of the smooth state of India. The Eight- Eighth Five- Year Plan (1992-1997) marked a transition from development to empowerment concerning women. Prior to it the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961; Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971; Child Family Court Act, 1984; Indecent Representation of the (Women Prohibition) Act, 1986 are some landmark initiatives that were aimed at the rehabilitation of their status and position. Rashid khan and Zainab Bibi observed these as a means to ensure a one to one correspondence between women and developmental projects. They opine that "the greater interaction of women with the project services and their involvement in the development process will increase their capabilities thus will be having the positive impact on their poverty reduction". (135)

The primary motif of all these initiatives is to enhance the holistic empowerment of women in the social, political or familial domains so as to make a sustainable development of the society possible and ensure a global competition. These were the positive effects of the globalization for more and more reservation of women took place in socio-economic and political developments. Considering the same, more and more women were provided with the employment opportunities for "economic empowerment results in women's social empowerment" (Mishra 874). The backdrop of this all was to liberate the women from the discrimination and injustice. However, the gruesome and dehumanizing concerns emerged when women crossed the threshold of their families in order to work outside.

2. Fear of Job Security

Although globalization provides means whereby women see themselves as having a chance to have a job, yet in different economic sectors, women find themselves in the threat of losing their roles due to the competition for the best. The dire need of retaining their position in particular sectors creates a great emotional upheaval among women resulting in mental tension. The problem becomes more daunting when dealing with the piece rated work where the scale of wages depends on the speed with which they work. We know when a person's compensation is tied to physical output, negative health consequences are meant to be born. The other important factor contributing to the mental tension of the women is the employment of machines causing them loses their job and position.

3. Sexual harassment

Globalization opened different avenues for women's engagement in the public sector, but the menace of sexual harassment still looms large in and around workplaces. Although the 1997 Visakha case forced the Supreme Court to ensure the prevention of such inhuman actions, yet the government has failed to enact legislation in this regard. Here we have the zones like Noida where day in and day out more and more cases of sexual harassment are taking place, forcing women to either stay indoors or conform to the inhuman actions perpetrated upon them. Besides, the overtime is routine of such zones and women in this connection are paid much fewer wages considering their physical constraints. Even at times their class and physical structure put them at the great risk of violence.

4. Night Shifts

Globalization also caused the number of women working during shifts to grow at call centres, hospitals and other export-oriented companies without any proper protection. The Factories Act, 1948 contained a section 66, which exempted restrictions upon women from working in some factories. It was later struck down however, some guidelines were retained in order to facilitate their reach back to home safely. The issue of sexual

abuse has always remained a matter of concern. The Pratibha's case who was working in the multi-national company HP in Bangalore on Dec 13, 2005, is one such incident that exposes the tragedy with the night shifts.

This implies the fact that although the women have gained access to different fields of societies in this global scenario yet a strategy needs to be charted out whereby a feasible environment is created so that they feel safe and secure. Zentgraf, therefore deduces that the essence of real women's empowerment is:

The psychological experiences of feeling more self-confident and autonomous must be analyzed not as individual isolated processes but as processes that take place in relationship with family, community, and the larger social context. For immigrant women, this includes not only new social, cultural, and spatial contexts but also those that shaped their lives before migration. (629)

5. Conclusion

Globalisation has undoubtedly transformed the world into a global village where all have equal representation and access to the resources of their societies. But from the women's perspective, it has some adverse effects also. There is a need for better laws, provisions and accountability for implementation. In order to ensure a steady development and some steps need to be taken in order to enhance their safety in all the environments defying any kind of discrimination. Otherwise, yet in this era, the picture of women in societies remains grim and pathetic which in this global era of competition is more disheartening.

References

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