

Globalization and Women at Work: A Feminist Discourse

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(This is a longer version of the paper presented at the Summit)

I. Introduction:

Since last two decades the processes of globalization and the opening up of market economy have given rise to many philosophical and policy crisis (Eagan, 2005) especially in the context of developing economies. It is so because it provides a life-world, i.e. in the form of social reality as well as the world view which initiates several conceptual approaches and theoretical debates to understand: globalization (Derida, 2003; Egan; Jameson, Egan, 2005). One of these theoretical approaches relates globalization with two broad macro processes, i.e. the globalization of trade and trade culture and the changing nature of labour and gender struggle in the transforming economy. The trend of debate is more towards dynamics of gender exploitation and social security aspects of labour force within a symbiotic postwar relation of “capital” and “labour”. At this backdrop, the present paper makes an attempt to explore the complex relation between the gender and the economic liberalization of trade and market policy that underpin globalization process. The paper analyses “gender” and “globalization” from macro as well as micro socio-economic postulates.

The Theoretical Discourse:

The present content of theoretical proposition is that the impact of globalization on gender is explicit and geared to gender discrimination and inequalities in terms of access to and control over capital and resources. While some women have gained work opportunity in terms of newly emerging forms of employment, especially in the IT and service sectors the semi-skilled or the unskilled ones have lost the control over their natural recourses (land etc), resulting in the loss of traditional livelihood and sustainability. Under such climate of economic transition towards global economy, the moot issue remains “the status of women” in changing labour market and how the contemporary capital and labour operate in the context of globalization from a feminist perspective, more so, the dynamics of power and capital distribution exerting gender discrepancies that are otherwise left invisible in the “male stream of theoretical “ discourse.

While probing the above issues, the underlying assumption is that women have never received equal treatment of homogenous category and, when united as gender, other factors

like : class, ethnicity, religion have further divided them in terms of the age, ideology and sexual preferences. One has to keep these differences in mind while talking about 'globalization and women' as indeed, one woman's forte might be another woman's loss. For instance, in the case of female migrant domestic helper in the countries like Middle East and Europe, an housewife gets service from a migrant domestic maid at the cost of exploiting 'her' wages and working hours or sex (Ceilina, 2000). Therefore, it remains an illusive concept of economic 'freedom' as described by the advocates of globalisation and neo-liberalization who assert that women are expected to enter in many new job opportunities in new economic era, whereas the reality depicts that emerging new work opportunities laid out to them generate further exploitations and vulnerability.

The argument illuminates from several feminist critiques (Dex, 1985; Sanderson, 1990; Walby, 1990; Cecilia, 2000; and Jain, 2000) that the globalization process is not necessarily integrating 'men ' and 'women' into a homogenous entities in the sphere of economy, culture, technology and governance. On the contrary, many of these feminist writers consider that the globalization and neo-liberalization have geared the process of euphemism for ultra imperialism (Ceilina, 2000). Indeed, neo-liberalization and globalization have led to severe fragmentations and the emergence of divergent views and identity politics. In that sense, globalization certainly gets ambiguous to be entitled as esoteric, universal and equal. In the Second Global Knowledge Conference held in Kuala Lumpur (2000), two of the main themes of the conference were the 'indigenization of knowledge' and 'sovereignty' --- a counter discourse to that of globalization (ibid). The forces of globalization might have to contend with other forms of social and cultural resistance, thus making its spread a much more complex process. As Diana Wong (1990) puts it aptly: " the challenge of globality today may not lie in the attainment of convergence, but in the recognition and acceptance of difference"

One needs to consider that the debate on women labour force and globalization presents a much more complicated scenario as it places "gender dynamics" in all aspects of life, from family to the political spheres. But the essence of this moot debate remains live as whether globalization has chiseled away sexist structures, processes and attitudes? What would be the opportunities for future work and the preferences that can be rendered for women? It also raises the dilemmas, whether the oppression would continue to exist under induced patriarchic structure of gender discrimination and exploitation of women? As Gosh (1999) has rightly observed "...structural adjustments in the labour market and massive lay offs (retrenchments) have the key to casualisation of workforce where women are disproportionately targeted and victimized". In India, for example, the laws of free trade of a number of commodities have threatened many industries like handloom, weaving, dairying and even dry land farming (for the coarse grains) which provide source of sustenance to millions of women, due to extinction of employment opportunities, if not erosion of the same (Jain, 2000). The critical issues of gender deprivation and discrimination revolve around the

question of unequal wages, lack of maternity benefit, discrimination at work place, lack of childcare facilities.

However, it is also to a large extent true that, through globalization, women have gained certain opportunities in terms of widening field of job options and also in terms of recognizing women's rights as a part of the human rights. Their empowerment (wherever applicable) has given considerable opportunities and possibilities of improving employment conditions through global solidarity and co-ordination. But the argument here, is that these gains have been made both 'as a result of and in spite of 'globalization' --- within last three decades or so, through the momentum due to the international women's movements and through international discourses on women and exposition of their exploitation. Indeed these global debates and discourse have put forth the global governance on women's position and rights and in result, have made their impact on national governments to adapt their stance.

To understand the status of women at work under the globalized web of economic activity, feminist critiques have not only described the form of patriarchy superseding certain gender (females), but also tried to focus on how global capitalism or global imperialism affect all aspects of social relationship of "women" under different social and economic classes. As Hobsbawm (cited in Agnihotri, 1999: P:7) points out: " Woman's assertion is a significant expression of democratic upsurge in developing countries and shall remain one of the largest contribution for the 20th century" .

Under the above context, the following sections highlight few gender issues in relation to women's employment, their changing socio-economic status, opportunities and fringe benefits (maternity benefit, social security etc) that they receive in the present era of globalization, at their work place, at their home and in society in general.

II. Feminization of Employment, Sub-Contracting and Flexibility of Labour Structure

The greater bargaining strength of internationally mobile capital has allowed both local and international capitalists to impose tough conditions on their workers. Such conditions not only reduce the power and rights of workers but also demean their working conditions. Women workers especially get the brunt of such exploitative, aggressive and capitalist policies of the global labour market. Under neo-liberalized global policies, corporates in competition make their own strategies in order to meet challenges for their own survival. One of such major strategies which deal with the labour can be seen from three major forms -- labour flexibility, casualisation and also feminization of labour. Consequently, two dual processes are emerging; first, the fragmentation of labour processes resulting in low skill and repetitive work, and the declining trend of regular

work through various forms of non-regular, flexible employment, e.g., part time, temporary, sub-contracted and home based work. The other process is upgrading the workers' skills in multi task jobs, using information communication technology (ICT). This results in an increasing demand for multi - skilled workers with hardware/ software as well as business skills.

In the area of 'foreign trade sector' (FTS), both export and import policies have been re-structured paying attention mainly to keep the capital productive and globally mobile both by national and international agencies. This severely affects the status of working women and their work situations. For example, export has boomed up in Southeast and East Asia in the last quarter of the 20th Century, as fuelled by the contribution in export related activities and through the remittances made by migrant workers. In Malaysia, electric and electronic products comprised about 60% of the manufactured export and they generate one-third of the manufacturing employment in the country. A majority of the employees in such industries are Malay women. Thus, in the case of paid employees, mainly within the MNCs, women are employed to gain more flexible labour with much cheaper bargain on the part of employers. Hence, global capitalism makes use of existing patriarchal ideology whereby women are perceived to be more sub-servient to (male) managers' authority, less prone to organize unions, more willing to accept poor working conditions and easier to dismiss using lifecycle criteria such as marriage and child birth (Gosh, 1999).

In India, there have been major changes since 1991 in implementing policies leading to reduction in the industrial licensing and opening up of the economy. The major thrust of the liberalization process has been wide-ranging trade reforms and restructuring custom duties with a gradual elimination of restrictions on trade. In the pre-reform regime the import duties in India were the highest in the world (NCAER, 2003). Since 1991, the tariff has been brought down from 60% in 1994-95 to 45% in 1997-1998, and 40% in 1999-2000 to 35% in 2000-2001 (Chowdhury, 2004). Indian government is virtually compelled to protect the interests of the global corporates, otherwise it is argued that capital would go to Myanmar, Bangladesh or other countries where wages are lower and workers have even fewer rights (Ceilina, 2000; Gosh 1999).

The world of flexible labour, sub-contracting and the process of casualisation raise many other complex issues in the context of "gender" exploitation in global economy. The informal sector is one of the most affected areas which even otherwise has been plagued by arbitrary gender discrimination, low wages and lack of job security. Then there is a trend towards in formalization of women's labour .“ For example, the economic processing zones (EPZs) especially in the form of informal sector be it in the agro based

production or the manufacturing, is one area where exploitation is much higher. In Indian, EPZs consists of a majority of women workers as compared to any other areas of production. These women are lowly skilled, between the age 18-24, with no unionization and ready to work even at cheaper wage rates. They are exploited at job in many ways.(Sharma and Sengupta in Hebsur, 1996).

In addition, the trend of extreme decentralization of production has given rise to sub-contracting or piece-meal work through small units employing informal workers. In India, for example, in places like Ghaziabad and Greater Noida, sitting at home, women are engaged in stitching buttons on T- shirts, which will be the final product of a company like Benetton or even smaller less famous manufacturers. The basic nature of contract here is the piecemeal job, with effective low rate of wages – which creates the need to earn more and eventually includes elder women and children -- sometimes the whole family. A wide range of sub-contracting or piece-meal works include garment, luggage bag making, fancy items, food products and their processing, along with traditional sub-contracting like the 'pappad' or shoe laces making. These contract laborers are mainly the female labour force and are visible everywhere in Asia, especially in the countries like India. These women workers are feted to work under inferior employment conditions with no avenues to legal rights or voice against the employers. As a result, they succumb to low wages, over- working hours, and if they do not meet the demand of employers, termination of job contracts. Such work conditions reinforce traditional patriarchy, which colludes with global, national and local capital to maintain a system of gender relations that exploits and subordinates women --- through sub-standard labour and low wages/income

Gujarat is also another example(Chowdhary, 1996) in expanding fast growth informal sector and informalisation of labour force. In last two decades, Gujarat has witnessed economic downturn by the decline of textile industry and also replaced by overall industrial development since 1987-97. Though a significant rise of working population indicates overall growth of employment and economy, the informalization or casualisation of jobs in the formal sector have taken well advantage over the large number of displaced textile labour in Gujarat. A study (in Chowdhury, 2004, p: 11) shows a significant fall in the wage earning by former textile workers who are presently employed in the informal sector. Gujarat has established minimum wages in 53 activities in the informal sector where the wage varied from Rs. 45 to Rs.53 in 1998. In the case of women, the wage is even lesser (i.e less than Rs. 37), with an increasing number of daily wage earners with approximately 33% female workforce below poverty the line (Brenan, 2001).

Thus, in general, the poor and the unskilled women workers class are the worst hit of the sub-contracting and casualisation process, which squeezes profits at each level in favour of the employers. It involves low/minimum investment of capital input, with no risk or responsibility to labour force, void of social security and while maximizing the output

Furthermore, The decline of trade unionism in the era of globalization is another trend that has severely affected working class movement in India. Unions appear to be unable to stem the tide of trade liberalization policies to protect labour interest. In fact workers and their unions in India recently are on the receiving end due to growing influence of bigwig international organizations and corporates on Indian government. The result is that the 'regularity' and 'security' of industrial jobs are no more guaranteed . Moreover it has led to eroding women's right over work, and has also affected 'her' reproductive health and work status.

III. Breakdown of Traditional Family structure and Kinship Network

Breaking down of extended or joint family structure and kinship ties is no more atypical to urban India. Rural India is also facing such a trend due to the gradual impact of globalization and changing economy in the country. Such a trend has severe impact on women both in rural and urban areas.

The era of globalization has accelerated the pace of migration more so in last 15 years . The pull-push factors have uprooted millions of Asians especially the north – east Asians towards comparatively advanced countries to secure better means of livelihood. The trend of outsourcing and supply of cheap labour mainly from Asian labour market, is one of major trends of advanced countries like America, Europe and Australia. In such context, India is of no exception in supplying cheap labour force to other countries. At global level, more than 120 million migrants have left their home countries in search of greener pastures abroad, leading to the warning by the United Nations as the 'human crisis of our age, (Cellina, 2005).

In Asia, migration for economic reasons has denuded poor families leaving children to care for themselves with either father or mother away in a foreign land. The problems faced by female migrant workers have not received much attention by the researchers, activists or administrators. In India, such compulsive migration has multifaceted impact on women. For example, migration of rural men towards urban areas and later to outer countries has led to an increasing proportion of feminization of household, with a majority

of them belonging to extreme poverty. For instance, 30-35% of the rural households in India are female-headed households, compared to the 25% in Cambodia, 15.75 in Korea and 21.4% in Mongolia (Rasheda, 1995).

However, moving out for rural men is not atypical in the history of migration in India, but the recent trend makes newly emerging phenomenon, which pushes thousands of rural women coming to cities and engaging themselves in unskilled labour (mainly in the construction and infrastructure- building projects) due to the lure of earning better livelihood. As a result of such intensifying pace of migration, the traditional joint or extended family is getting de-structured. Furthermore, globalization has also brought the philosophy of marketisation and consumerism in new era, which has led to erosion of traditional values, threatening the traditional kinship ties and bond of indigenous neighborhood or communities. 'Cash and commodity' relation has replaced the earlier defined values, based on socio-economic relations; this in turn endangers social cohesion and kinship bond of rural India.

Thus, with the commercialization of agriculture, migration and breaking down of traditional value-laded social networks, poverty has taken a synonymous face of 'female' or female headed household. In indigenous rural areas, taking away of their customary land to make way for the building of dams and commercial crops (also cash crops) has led to a degeneration of the status of women, who once owned land; and cultivating their own lands was related to their higher status in the community.

Another reason of women migrating to urban areas is the gradual low productivity of agriculture. A research report (NCW, 2005) asserts that over 5-7 years there has been a steady decline of economic opportunity in rural India, ranging from 20% to as much as 77%. In such cases, traditional patriarchal ideology generally imposes the reproductive role on these women and also demands their productivity in terms of wage earning to meet the changing demand of economy and livelihood under globalization. These women usually are to carry their children with them due to lack of extended family support and poverty. Further, they are victimized in terms of exploitation of wages with no support of social security or health or medication, leading to malnutrition, increase in maternal mortality rate, jaundice, etc.

Migrating to comparatively advanced counties to earn better salary is another emerging phenomenon among urban women. These women are mostly hired on contracts both in skilled –organized and unskilled –unorganized sectors. Hiring their services is like domestic work, caretakers, homemakers etc. Though these women earn much better

than they would have in their own country, by catering services to reproductive role like child rearing, cooking etc, there is a flip side. Housemaids in these foreign countries like US and Middle East often work in exploitative conditions. They are often paid lesser than agreed amount in the contract, over-worked with domestic services and in many cases also sexually abused or used by the heads of households (Groots, 2005). Furthermore, in many cases, women workers who have migrated to another country often become severe victim of dislocation uprooted from their native settlement, alienated from kith and kin. Subsequently, they even lose their traditional source of livelihood, leading to either feminization of poverty, or prostitution has become common phenomenon for female migrants in south - east Asia.

Furthermore, in urban India, for skilled expertise of women labour force, it has almost become a necessity to obtain a profession to support the family. Besides the trend of choice that modern women would like to see themselves as productive and successful like the traditional 'bread-earner' (men) especially when globalization has opened up various opportunity for women labour force, there is a trend among the couples to earn together to manage household across. The increasing cost of living, privatization of services, demanding quality of life and consumerism are a few factors that have created a forced situation for urban couples mainly living in cities to earn together. The impact of breaking down of joint or extended family is one of the major factors that has further initiated the necessity and compulsion for such forced situation of independent and individualised livelihood. In a globalized era as a result, the burden becomes double for these women for maintaining both - their family and the work front. In this context, the feminist critiques (Jain, 2000, Gosh, 1999, Krishnaraj, 1999, Blanchard, 2003, Bernard, 1987, Kishwar and Vanita, 1984; Kumar, 1994) have been demanding more freedom and choice to reconsider the traditional gender role and gender relations. The fair demand of women to have shared responsibilities from their spouse in domestic chores and childcare tasks yet remains a neglected dimension by the patriarchal ideology. The emerging contradictions lead to marital disputes in family courts, resulting in divorce and separations.

IV. Commodification of Women and Sexuality

The process of globalization has inflicted the philosophy of laissez-fair and neo-liberalization across the globe. The ideology enhances the concept of marketisation and consumerism as inter woven factors ruling the new changing economy. The ideology of consumerism and marketisation envisages world as market where individuals can access anything in the market what 'he' or 'she' wants to consume. It enhances the logic that everything in the world can be commercialized and commoditised. This rising trend of individualism and consumerism comes hand in hand with the neo-liberalized philosophy. In the same vein, the concept of woman as a commodity has been further reinforced

through several service and entertainment sectors like the hotel industry, film industry, tourism, and so on.

The economic globalization in the form of market democracy has commoditised women and sexuality as never before. Women are commonly employed as models, films stars, telemarketers, servers and entertainers in bars and restaurants. This is because the service sector has always shared a very thin borderline with entertainment industries. As models, these women feature in advertisements falling into two categories: looking after the home and staying young, slim and beautiful. Articles in women's magazines are often written about looking beautiful through dieting, and how to get a 'man' and keep a 'man'. All of these images make women feel insecure about them because very few women look like supermodels on billboards, in magazines and on televisions (Jeong and Choi, 2005; Kumar, 1994).

Women are thus portrayed as ever-available sex objects in an endlessly repetitive male dominated world. These jobs are not only unstable, low waged and physically strenuous but also reinforce the use of femininity and sexuality to raise sales, making women more vulnerable to possibilities of sexual abuse and exploitation. The increasing rate of sex tourism, sex trafficking and violence against women are inevitable outcome of such commoditisation of women and sexuality in Asian countries. A few data can be recalled in this regard:

The total number of reported rape cases in Malaysia increased from 879 in 1993 to 1323 in 1997 - a 50% increase (AWAM, 2000). Rape of teenage girls rose from 604 in 1995 to 719 in 1996. As police reports that 67 % of the victims were the minor girls.

- Prostitution, forced prostitution, trafficking of women and children associated violence and harassment have become a major concern in South East Asian region.
- Women migrant workers from the region engaged in tourism industry, service sector (domestic work) are increasingly becoming victim of sexual violence (Jeong and Choi, 2005).
- In India, in 1997, 14, 000 women were raped and 27,513 were sexually assaulted (NCW Report, 2000)
- According to another repor, 16% cases of molestation of women, 785 cases of kidnapping/abduction (mainly used in sex trafficking) , 68% sexual harassment at work were reported during 1994-1995 in the country (Crime in India, 2000).

These above data reflects on the growing malaise in so - called 'developing societies' more caused due to over riding of economic institutions over age old community based societies, which confront new dimensions of exploitation and inequalities mainly in terms of gender. Feminist critiques like : (Jain, 2000, Gosh, 2005, Krishnaraj, 1989, Kumar, 1994, Cellina, 2005,) opine that though globalization in urban India projects of modernity, egalitarian and secular world leading to changing female roles, in reality, the underlying truth is that globalizations has reinforced the unequal gender relation in many folds. The pre-modern patriarchal ideology is far more active under the sleeves of modern fervor of globalization.

V. Market Liberalization in Agriculture and Status of Women:

The shift in production towards cash crops from household subsistence production is one of the defining characteristics of commercialization in agriculture, associated with globalization. In many regions of sub-Saharan Africa, the introduction of cash crops has changed the gender division of labour and management of household resources. Women are increasingly put to manage the household food production while men's primary economic activity has become cash crop production (Tibaijuka, 1994). Women are still expected however to contribute to the men's cash crop production (especially in labour intensive operations), while taking over tasks that men customarily carried out before, such as land preparation and tilling for the household subsistence production. For example, Ibo women in Nigeria traditionally have had primary responsibility for household food production. While they engaged in planting, weeding, harvesting, animal husbandry and food processing, their men-folk were responsible for the soil preparation (Ezumah and Di Domenici, 1997). But with the men increasingly involved in cash crop production, non-farming activities and waged employment, the women have also become responsible for the work that was previously done by men (Karl, 1997). Most agricultural policies in developing countries generally tend to favour large farms, which are thought to have greater potential for achieving higher outputs.

In India, feminization of poverty has been atypical in the rural sector. About 94% women workers are employed in the primary sector in India (ILO, 2002). In the rural informal sector, women usually engage themselves traditionally in agricultural and para - agricultural activities, like transplanting paddy, seedling by long hours of standing, bending in the slush of the field, winnowing and drying of grains, weeding and caring of cattle etc. All these farm activities related to the subsistence of agriculture.

A Study conducted by the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER, 2003) has shown that there is a very large section of women workers (72.51 %) in

agriculture as compared to men (52.38%) and the share of casual workers belongs more to women than the men.

The emerging globalisation and market liberalization policies (through WTO) in agriculture have severely impinged on the rural household economy, leaving women highly affected with several disadvantages. When agriculture takes a concept of commercialization, leading to mass production, it has its severe impact on health and economic status of women, and also their access over food production, seed keeping, hoeing, processing etc. As women have been the primary seed keepers and processors, WTO policies have made their impact throughout the food chain. The impact of WTO in agriculture has adversely affected women due to implementation of a few policies like AOA (Agreement on Agriculture), TRIP (Trade Related Property Rights), and the SPA (Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement).

Commercial farming, massive production of agricultural food and cash crop production are the growing trends among the rich farmers. In their large farms, the use of agro-chemicals like herbicides and weedicides are necessary for achieving higher yield. Normally, it is the women who are predominantly employed in such large farms and the use of chemicals has affected women's health, leading to serious health hazardous and gynecological illnesses like arthritis, intestinal and parasitic infections. Low affordability and inaccessibility to medication add to their woes. Furthermore, there is growing trend of using bio technologies to develop high yielding varieties and tissue culture in the farming. Such high tech agro farmings are throwing women from their century old employment in subsistence agriculture. The trend might further worsen the employment situation for women in future, if practiced to a large extent. There is also discrepancy in the wage structure of female workforce engaged in the farm activity. Differential wages in agriculture in relation to its degree of commercialization is in another issue. It is reported by the NCW (National Commission for Women: 2005) that the average daily wage for a farm worker across India is as follows:

- Haryana: Male Rs. 50-60; Female 25-30
- Saharanpur UP: Male Rs. 60, Female Rs. 35-40
- North 24 Parganas(WB): Male Rs 40 (six hour work), Female Rs. 25 (six hour work)
- Andhra Pradesh: Male Rs 40-50, Female 25-30

Thus the discrimination is practised at two levels: across the region and along the gender lines.

Another study conducted by the Research Foundation of Science, Technology and Ecology, New Delhi for the National Commission of Women (NCW), in 2002, stated that the WTO is making a disastrous impact on the plantations sector. The report asserts that the tea plantation workers in Kerala, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu are virtually facing starvation due to the closure of several small and medium plantations. This is mainly caused due to the policies of WTO favouring the large –scale production and small farmers finding themselves unable to compete in the international market with the rich owned large plantations. Moreover, it also could be an outcome of unrestricted imports and a sharp decline of tea prices in the international market. This is evident from the export data for India with the sharp decline in the tea export from \$542 million in 1998 to \$ 209 million in 2003 (Shiva and Jafri, 2004).

In the case of coffee plantations, the average working days of the labour has reduced by 30% (ILO Report, 2002). In the case of rubber plantation, the integration of Indian market to that of the international has led to accumulating huge surplus stocks, followed by the reduction of price. This has further intensified the problem and jeopardized the economic condition of the workforce, which is predominantly female (ibid).

Thus, the traditional and central role of women in the food chain from seed keeping to food making is being broken with the onset of globalize food industry, led by multinational giants in the international market. Such a sad state of affairs is mainly caused due to international trade agreements where the vulnerable sections of populations, dependent on traditional sources of livelihood, stand threatened.

Another important issue is the 'trade related intellectual property rights (TRIP). It has made adverse impact on women's traditional knowledge and control over seeds, by using the female workforce when required and taking over the control through mass production of agro products. The end result is that a male dominated corporate –oriented food culture is being imposed in vulnerable societies including India. TRIP agreement is gradually transferring the control over knowledge of seed and biodiversity from rural women to global corporations engaged in agriculture. Under the SAP, Indian government's expenditure on the health services has been curtailed and women who traditionally used to take care of the family members are strained due to looking after the family and also due to rising expenses on health service.

Agreement on Agriculture (AOA), which is also a part of the WTO agreement has proved to be unequal and unfair in its application, which has allowed massive subsidies to rich farmers of the North leading to artificial dumping of cheap products on the poor South,

thereby destroying livelihood and income of their rural populations. Furthermore, commercialization of agriculture is also destroying heritage of crop biodiversity and food diversity, which are traditionally maintained by rural women in societies, like India. In fact in subsistence economies, food security used to depend on women's knowledge and women's skills in varied operations like seed saving, agricultural production, food processing, local marketing and also the cooking.

Thus, in brief, globalisation and WTO agreements have initiated the process of market liberalization and commercialization of agriculture in many developing societies like India. This has disturbed traditional community arrangements in agriculture and also brought new hardships to the womenfolk who stand more vulnerable today.

VI. Concluding Observations:

Traditionally, within Hindu culture dominated Indian society, women have been subservient to their male counterparts under the dominant institution of patriarchy. Though women being co-partners in traditional subsistent economies, never got the status of equal partnership in sharing the livelihood decision making process, lest said about their sharing ancestral properties. Such inferior status to women has been challenged in free India, where a few highly educated women broke the traditional nexus of patriarchy and power and have come out openly in favor of gender equity and justice. It is also true that girl child today has a conducive environment to achieve educational and professional skills.

A more drastic and sensational change that is emerging on Indian scene is the process of liberalization and globalization, which are influencing traditional socio-economic institutions and the people in multiple ways . The above processes are happening under broader capitalist formations, and first time in India, capitalism is taking deep roots. The free economy and the above processes enhance marketisation and consumerism as interwoven factors, ruling the new changing economy. The rising trend of consumerism comes hand in hand with new liberalized economic policies. In this changing Indian society, same view the concept of women as 'commodity' has further been reinforced through several services and entertainment sectors, like the hotel, film, tourism and media.

Amongst the most visible changes in economic institutions, is the status of labour, production processes and the work culture. While the dominance of 'trade union' movement is on decline due to onslaught of capitalist forces, the lowly skilled labourers

are the worst victims of this change in 'industrial democracy' and the labour market. Labour flexibility, casualisation of labour and feminization of labour are a few dangerous consequences of the processes of globalization and liberalization. The present paper more dealt with the impact of above processes on women workers. Various kinds of service sectors are emerging where employers are finding new methods of engaging female workers at low wages and insecure job conditions. Women are 'more flexible' labour with much cheap bargain on the part of their employer. 'Sub contracting', 'home based' and 'piece meal' works are becoming rampant, where job security is temporary, with low wage and more working hours. Garments, luggage bag making, food products and several such other activities are thus de-skilling or de-casualising the already vulnerable female workers. Export processing zones (EPZ) are another category where the 'nimble fingers' are engaged under similar work conditions, and where 'hire last and fire first' is the prevailing norm.

Migrating to comparative advanced countries has emerged another phenomenon where skilled and even unskilled women are hired more on contractual basis, and many of them face new kind of challenges and exploitations. Along with more career oriented opportunities for women in 'dynamic' 'globalized' economy -- with their extending benefits to well educated career oriented women, there is also a compulsion for couples to earn together to manage household across various strata of society. The increasing cost of living, privatization of services, demanding quality of life and consumerism are a few factors that have created a forced situation for urban couples to earn more.

Similar to the urban front, the situation in rural areas is equally alarming. Emerging globalization and liberalization policies (like, under the WTO) have severely impinged upon the traditional sustainability of vulnerable sections of rural India. Expectedly, the worse affected are the women. For instance, agriculture is being targeted more and more commercialization and mass production. The marginalized families are pushing their females into contractual work for mass production. This has brought extra strain to their health and life-situations. They are losing access to traditional sources of livelihood, like seeds, common property resources and flexible working hours in the field. First of all, they have to pay more for two meals a day. Thus, there is a process of feminization of poverty, which though existed traditionally, now finds new forms and dimensions. Overall, economic globalization in the form of market democracies not only reinforces the patriarchy, it has commercialized women and their sexuality as never before.

To conclude, in the global tide of changing economy and labour market, 'women' have been highly exploited to suit to the new market economy in myriad ways. Dynamics of power distribution and gender discrepancies have taken the new forms of discrimination and victimization of women under the garb of economic empowerment. Hence, though

globalization and new market democratization promise new employment opportunities, equal status, more freedom and choice to women's lives, in reality such economic vistas are the double edge sword rendering women to the onslaught of their productive and reproductive roles.

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