
GLOBALISATION AND ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

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ABSTRACT

Globalization has a great influence on women's rights and this as concept deserves more attention. Globalization has improved the lives of women across the world, most importantly of those living in developing countries. Many of the forces like Foreign Direct Investments, Multinational Corporations and most important of it all – Technology have a great role and influence in the recognition of women's rights across the globe.¹

Since the early 19th century, we see that women have faced grave social, economic and political issues and have been linked to the strategies of globalisation and liberalisation but the scenario is now changing. Due to Globalisation, there are trade openings, there are abundant market opportunities, and Foreign Direct Investments and globalisation are of great benefit to all.²

In the late twenty-first century now, women have better access to information and economic probability which have excessive influence on the present gender roles and protocols. Through Empirical and Theoretical Research in this paper, I attempt to examine the Feminist approach towards globalization, the various theories associated with it and The Convention On Elimination On All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979 (CEDAW) and its contribution and impact on women at large. I also aim to ascertain whether globalization can enhance women's rights and if it does, then to what extent.³

¹ Elisabetta Ruspini, "From the Effects of Globalisation to Women's Agency in Globalisation" (2019)

² Ibid

³ Ibid

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation refers to the interconnection or the inter-linkage of people, nations, societies, thoughts, ideas, cultures etc. It is a process through which nations interact globally, expand their trade and commerce and function on a worldwide scale. We can trace globalization's extent to an era where initially the system of exchange was a "barter system" after which slowly trade and commerce began to gain a lot of importance when the currency was introduced. Economies gradually started developing and used currency as a system of exchange between nations which led to the widening of the trade and commerce market.⁴ In India, globalization's origin traces back to the rule of Dr Manmohan Singh in who's ruling with industrialisation, many more factories were set up, and with technology evolving, new and improved methods of production and supply came into being. This not only was a boon to the Indian markets but also affected the nations worldwide. New connections in the market were established between nations. Thus globalization is a great boon to the economy as it helps nations develop and strengthen their relations.⁵

Prior to British Rule, India was an independent, "self-sufficient" economy and was also termed as the "Golden Eagle". Post-British Rule, India was robbed off its wealth. Our Indian leaders struggled to get the economy back on track but failed miserably.⁶ A lot of preference was given initially to the concept of a mixed economy in the hope that it would be a boon to the economy. It was then that the concept of "public and private sectors" came into existence. Many of these sectors failed and the rate at which production was taking place fell gradually leaving India to suffer. At that time, there was unemployment and mass poverty everywhere because people did not have adequate savings left with them.⁷

Globalization has been a boon to India, providing its citizens with new and improved opportunities. With the introduction of Multi-National Companies, a lot of people have got access to good jobs. Globalization also strengthens the bonds between nations. With MNCs coming to India, new opportunities are available to people.⁸

⁴ Ibid

⁵ David L. Richards and Ronald Gelleny, "Women's Status and Economic Globalization" (2007) Wiley Vol. 51, No. 4 pp. 855-876

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

WOMEN AND GLOBALISATION

The Target Group in every society is always women. It is she who has to look after the family, her husband, her children and herself. Women have always faced “patriarchal and social problems”, “caste-based discrimination” or “social restraints. Many times it is so because of financial constraints and lack of support from the family. With changing times we see that women have shifted from their typical role of managing households and have engaged themselves in other activities. It has paved the way for them to achieve a good education and this in turn gives women better accessibility to jobs.⁹ With so many changes coming into being, the stereotypical attitude that others have towards women is also beginning to change and women are being treated at par with men in most of households and workplaces though a few exceptions do exist.¹⁰

This change in mentality and behaviour has got a lot to do with women’s movements that are happening throughout the globe and this provides disclosure to women globally by educating them about their rights and spreading awareness as well.¹¹

When it comes to women, globalization also has a negative impact on their lives. Women do most of the work and receive a nominal salary for the work done. This is the harsh reality of “women- workers” in India. Apart from these, they also sometimes face sexual harassment at the workplace and are insulted badly. Women are exposed to harsh, unhealthy working conditions which causes a lot of problems both mentally as well as physically. This is how women are being exploited and this can be seen not only in the rural areas or small businesses but also in big companies and sectors where they are expected to work on a 10-12 hour basis. This totally goes against the labour laws but is ignored by everybody. Even though a lot has changed with the influence of western thought on our culture and values, women are still considered to be weak and are looked down upon. We can see this kind of discrimination against them in workplaces as well.¹²

THE FEMINIST APPROACH

The Feminist Approach basically highlights the issues that are being faced by women globally

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

which mostly relate to gender discrimination and gender inequality. Feminism lays the foundation of “equal rights and equal opportunities” for both men and women without discriminating between them. It encourages women to stand up for themselves and raise their voices instead of being subdued. Feminists believe that everyone should be exposed to the same rights and opportunities and there should be no biasness when it comes to men and women.¹³

Feminist Approaches focus on grave issues and intend to remove gender biases and injustice relating to globalisation from society.¹⁴ Different feminists have different views regarding the same but the centre point revolving around all of these theories and views has been “equality for women”.¹⁵ Many feminists are of the view that this approach was very limited and restricted. In their opinion, even the challenges faced by women which seem to be grave issues that deserve attention.¹⁶

Most feminists in their writings have highlighted the fact that women are not “subordinate” to men. They should fight for their rights and not be subjected to “subordination”.¹⁷

Many feminists have given a lot of importance to Human Rights and addressed the problem of forced labour, sexual slavery etc. Gender issues should be looked into with utmost concern. There should be joint accountability and interdependence to solve these issues which exist in society. Iris Marion Young, a social feminist is of the opinion that the conventional theories of justice are just not merely enough to explain the unfair conditions that lead to the growth of factories in undeveloped nations. Iris Young goes on to further explain that the responsibilities of citizens of developed nations to labour in the Global South require a new framework. She refers to this new framework as the “social connection model” and goes on to explain that this model portrays the duties of the rich developed northern nations towards workers in the global south.¹⁸

The Social Connection Model is based on the ideology that every person who contributes to the framework which results in injustice has a responsibility to correct these wrongs as at the end of the day it is our actions in particular which lead these injustices to occur. According to

¹³ “Feminist Perspectives on Globalization”(2014) Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ibid

Ann Stewart, a social feminist “Legal Feminism” is beyond problems which are related to “relativism or universalism”.¹⁹ With the passage of time, we now now have a proper understanding of the movements relating to women and their rights globally.²⁰

Some feminists also talk about the concept of “ Feminist Orientalism”. Feminist Orientalism is a method in which feminist writers identify women’s problems and demands and make it available to the audience to spread awareness. If the lives of women in different parts of the world can be compared then the feminists’ desires to change the norms, then it can be seen as an attempt to change the west more like itself rather than a progressive effort to reorganize the West. Feminist Orientalism focuses on transforming western culture while preserving the essential western organizations and ideologies. It brings about a more conscious review of the different indications of the typical “ patriarchal society” and a change in the thought process of people by the publishing of novels like “ Jane Eyre” which reflects traces of feminist orientalism. This brings about awareness about women’s rights and empowers them.²¹

The theories of feminists which have laid special emphasis on globalisation are committed to the “ creation of self-reflexive critiques “. ²²The fundamental belief of this concept is to analyse feminist claims and put their extreme focus on feminist perspectives. An example of this can be the writings of Schutte who strongly believes that feminist ideas and values that are spread globally are influenced by the values of existing nations. This clearly explains why the thought process of women in developing countries is recognized when they comply with western ideologies. These kinds of values are utilised to rationalise “ political hegemony “ and “ economic exploitation “. ²³Brooke Ackerly, a feminist gives her views on the same where she states that the Feminist Theories can be applied to produce new ways to evaluate the work carried on by women’s rights organizations.²⁴ We see that different feminist scholars have different approaches towards feminism. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, who is a renowned professor of women’s studies laid down her observation and stated that the feminist scholars of the West inculcate an “ ethnocentric approach “ which portrays the women of the third world

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Charlotte Skeet,” The Globalization of Women’s Rights Norms” (2009) The Journal of Law and Social Justice Vol 4, pp 34-73

²¹ Joyce Zonana ,”Sultan and the Slave: Feminist Orientalism and the Structure of Jane Eyre” Vol. 18, No. 3 pp. 592-617

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

as “ one- dimensional and homogeneous.”²⁵ The Third World Woman usually lives an uneducated, poor and victimised life. ²⁶ Chandra Mohanty, another social feminist is of the view that a lot of significant developments can be seen in the development of feminism and globalisation research. Women bear the blame for gender indifferences in society and at home to express their concerns to change this pattern of injustice.²⁷

DIFFERENT FEMINIST APPROACHES

POST - COLONIAL FEMINISM

The concept of post-colonial feminism aims to analyse globalisation in the light of Western Colonialism. According to post-colonial scholars, western colonialism and imperialism has a major impact on the progress of the modern world and they illustrate how these effects tend to have an influence on global nations as well as cultural norms.²⁸ Post-colonial feminists, mostly emphasize the fact that “non-Eurocentric” perspectives challenge the North-South structural inequalities from the viewpoint of individuals from “ indigenous communities “. ²⁹Feminists say that it is difficult to grasp the regional customs and practices in emerging economies without taking into account the manner in which these customs have been formed or without even considering their historical background.³⁰ A few Western feminist scholars have been outspoken about their disapproval of cultural practices like Sati. Mary Daly is one example of the same. Another famous scholar, Uma Narayan strongly questions the feminists for accepting the “ Eurocentric ” notion. Uma Narayan also argues that Sati cannot be viewed as a distinct phenomenon and such thought majorly “ misinterprets “ it.³¹ She strongly believes that in the Post Colonial era, feminists should consider the past and present history of societies.

ETHICS OF CARE FEMINISTS

Another distinct school relating to feminist theoretical approaches revolving around globalisation is concerned with the task of taking proper care of the young, elderly and crippled.

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Catherine Eschle, “ Feminist Studies of Globalisation: Beyond Gender, Beyond Economism ” (2004) Global Society Volume 18 Issue 2

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

³²Many scholars believe that the traditional methods and analogies revolving around globalization neglect caring. In their opinion, this is objectionable as the principles relating to care are underestimated which acts as a major factor for the gender-based, racial and economic disparity between nations as well as the Global North and South. ³³Thus both theoretical, as well as practical approaches are involved in globalisation relating to ethics. The feminists who propose the Ethics of Care Theory lay down that there should be a more balanced model of globalisation which is based on social norms like care. Care is a fundamental component of humanity.³⁴ Social and Economic Policies should be created in a way where the main emphasis should be on satisfying human needs and decreasing misery over growing economies and rising economic competition.³⁵

TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM

As per transnational feminism, globalisation has set up conditions for feminism to spread beyond national boundaries. Global manufacturing of products and other related processes has made women experience inequalities across borders as well. If we consider the other aspect, globalisation-related innovations have brought new changes in the political arena where “feminist resistance “is being supported. ³⁶To build a positive perspective worldwide and in order to achieve transnational unity, transnational feminists combine the controversial opinions and ideologies of the post-colonial, third – world and the ethics of care feminists. ³⁷Transnational Feminists propose the ideology of “global sisterhood “that goes beyond ethnic, socioeconomic, and regional differences. They also support international cooperation among nations. Their main aim is to make sure that while globalisation has an influence on everyone, they also have a grave effect on women in geographical and social conditions.³⁸

THE CONVENTION ON ELIMINATION ON ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN, 1979 (CEDAW)

The United Nations General Assembly adopted an international agreement known as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women or the CEDAW

³² “Feminist Perspectives on Globalization”(2014) Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid

on December 18th, 1979.³⁹ This refers to an “international bill of rights for women “and has around 30 Articles and was ratified by 89 states.⁴⁰

The CEDAW puts legal obligations on its member countries to preserve, promote and safeguard human rights. India ratified the CEDAW in 1993, officially becoming a part of it. The CEDAW mainly laid emphasis on encouraging gender equality and stopping gender discrimination.⁴¹ Under CEDAW, all member countries are bound to abide by the rules and regulations laid down by it once it joins the convention. According to the CEDAW standards, States have the obligation to make sure that women are not being exposed to discrimination in their marriage and family. States must take measures to correct these ongoing issues.⁴²

The CEDAW Committee’s general recommendation mentions that member countries should establish a strong framework to provide guidance to the government, to administer women’s rights and to develop innovative strategies.⁴³

CONCLUSION

From this research, I have concluded that there are many factors that determine the “global flow “in a country and it is not solely dependent on the economic efficiency of a country alone. Lifestyle standards of the people have vastly enhanced with the advent of globalization and the changes that it has brought along with it. Under-developing countries are developing and developed nations are gaining the most out of globalization. ⁴⁴

From my analysis, I have concluded that too many idealised philosophies of the radical-democratic model have silenced criticism and variation. ⁴⁵This has resulted in the development of feminist multi-party politics. To evolve with the changing trend, feminists have put forward that there must be a link between social change movements. This link should be the basis of clearly established mechanisms.⁴⁶ This paper has questioned the notion of a societal movement which is against globalisation. I have started with the introduction, talking about what

³⁹ “The Convention On Elimination On All Forms of Discrimination Against Women,” (2006) The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment for Women

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Krisha Kamal, 'Impact of Globalisation on Feminism' (2021) 4 Int'l JL Mgmt. & Human 908

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Ibid

globalisation in general means followed by how and what changes it has brought post-independence in India and how it affects nations throughout the world. I have then spoken about how globalization has affected and influenced women and what changes it has brought about in their lives. I have spoken about the Feminist Approach to Globalisation and the ideologies and theories of various feminist scholars about globalisation and its impact. By talking about Post-Colonial, Transnational and Ethics of Care Feminists I have tried to highlight their perspectives on the inequalities in the Global North and South and their take on how globalisation has affected women throughout the world and continues to do so.⁴⁷ Lastly, I have highlighted what the CEDAW or the Convention on All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women 1979 is, what its major objectives are and how it functions.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ “Feminist Perspectives on Globalization”(2014) Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

⁴⁸ “The Convention On Elimination On All Forms of Discrimination Against Women,” (2006) The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment for Women