

GLOBALIZATION AND ASSAMESE WOMEN

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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.8241051](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8241051)

Abstract

Globalization is the process of increasing interdependence, interconnectedness and integration of economics and society to an extent that one event in one part of the globe affect people in other parts. Globalization has also affected different groups of women in Assam and now they have been changing and have been emerging from past tradition into new era of rights and freedom. The constitution of India guarantees equality of sexes and in fact grants special favors to women. There is no doubt that economic empowerment of women has a direct relationship to employment opportunity that globalization offers to women. Women have entered the work force in large number in state that has embraced liberal economic policies. Bringing high demand of employment opportunity for women in developing countries like India creates instantaneous changes within social structures of these societies. Assamese women have never been so expressive and independent as they are today. Thus, the objective of this paper is to study the impact of globalization, both positive and negative, on women in Assam at present.

Keywords: Globalization, Employment, Empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization is the process of increasing interdependence; inter connectedness and integration of economies and society to an extent that an event in one part of the globe affects people in other parts of the world. Today “Globalization” is such a word known to one and all human being be it be a kid or an old, irrespective of their social or economic background in all forms of their life. Globalization has now crossed the bars to reach out to people in anticipation. Globalization has reformed the world and our society with modernisation and knowledge in hand. So as 21st Century people we have already witnessed globalization and if not we ought to do so. Hence globalization has enlightened every nook and corner of the world.

Globalization has provided movement of goods, services, technology, ideas, information etc. to people from one country to another. It has provided various opportunities to the people worldwide and with this now women are no more considered as the deprived or stereotyped section in our society. Globalization has led to a significant increase in women’s human rights which was earlier under the dark shadows of traditional sarcasms and women’s education, politics; sports were all things of luxury. Following this trend, Assamese women have now geared up for their brighter future. Day-by-day, female work participation rate is increasing. Along with moving time, our society is also getting reform and consequently a large number of women are coming towards government, private, low-paid, informal and casual type of jobs which is now a factor of growing literacy rate and economic development of our state. Participation of Assamese women in international affairs is increasing rapidly due to globalization.

Globalization has far reaching impact on the development of women. Globalization led to a significant increase in women's employment. Women's right is being increasingly recognized. More women are working, more girls are being educated, women are living longer and having fewer children, there are more females in business and in politics.

OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this paper is to know both the positive and negative impacts of globalization. The paper analyse whether globalization has been a boon or a curse for the mass especially the women.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature and purely based on secondary data. The relevant secondary data is collected from various research reports, articles, journals and newspapers.

ANALYSIS

We must agree to the very fact that we have been exposed to the global scenario but we must also be concerned with the other unseen or unknown reality we experience in less virtuality. In case of women, globalization has provided various opportunities to the Assamese women to join the economically active or advantaged population of the state through opening up of more avenues of employment. The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India is a union of women labourers searching for work opportunities and willing to work hard. Due to globalization, prospects of higher education have become feasible for these women can afford them.

Now paving our way of discussion towards Assam, the "Gateway of North East" where women are yet a misfortuned class in the society, we talk about women empowerment in household industries like Sericulture, Horticulture, Pisciculture, weaving, knitting, embroidery, jam, jelly and pickle making, bamboo industry and other handloom and handicraft industries which all worth to be discussed in this era of women at work.

Today we are proud to invite to our home in Assam, people from within our country or from abroad to have a glimpse of the wonderful art. Really the growing sericulture industry in Suwalkuchi considered as the "Manchester of Assam" and other places like Dhemaji, Lakhimpur are attracting visitors with the unique "Nuni pat" and Muga and with this women are growing adventitious of growing expert market provided with credit, information, self-motivation and self-reliance within this accessible system.

Speaking about our very own Nalbari District, today we can be boastful about the famous and very attractive handicraft industry which we call as "Japi". In this region of women working society, Japi is already exposed to the outside world rather than being humiliated as a minor art of hand. Thanks to the womenfolk of Nalbari who have actually made it come true. Thanks should also be owed to the general men and women of this place who made it is possible to endow the Japi to spread its branches outside the region otherwise this talent would have been nipped off at the budding stage.

Not to forget about the hard workers- the Bodo women of our neighbour Baksha district. They have already created a revolution by establishing the household handloom industry preparing the traditional dress materials like Gamosa, Dakhna etc. And now we expect every people to know that it has already occupied the market of our neighbour country- Bhutan. Today we see Bhutani people buying out these creations of hand. Lastly we can't go further in our discussion leaving the topic of the "Pital industry" in Sarthebari, Jojoba cultivation in hilly districts of Assam etc. But sad to say the less known and less discussed fact rather we can call a drawback is the ill system of technology which hinders the economic as well as cultural growth and forces it to remain idle and slows down the pace of production.

Now the problem is that our problem is beyond the limit of our traditional mentality. Machine is brought underway which have forced the lesser manpower in our industries. People are disguisedly engaged in certain workfields. A particular work needs only a few workers to accomplish the task and hence the problem arises leaving people jobless.

Thus we conclude "Machine makes manpower idle". Global trade in textile and apparel has grown from US \$ 6 in 1962 to US \$ 343 in 2001. Elimination of quota restricted from developing country during 2005. Silk industry in Assam has been in cloud nine with 1.72 weavers producing 167 Million MT of fabric against a demand of 370 Million MT by 2003. Assamese women produce a variety of silk golden muga, white pat yarn and eri. The positive effects of globalization are new employment opportunity results from higher demand and market share, wage structure.

Assam is not lagging behind compared to rest of the country in respect of women entrepreneurship. It is found from the study that Assam accounts for 18% women entrepreneurs against 77% in the country. But they are not in an organized manner in this field due to various barriers like inadequate finance, poor technology, poor transportation facility, communication problem, poor infrastructure, lack of confidence, shyness, and exposure to the outside world etc. as per 1991 census of Assam, women constitute 48.1% of the total population but out of that only 21.61% has so far entered into working force against 49.46% in case of male population.

It is fact that women's role in present socio-economic scenario in Assam is very recent development in the orthodox traditional socio-cultural set up of our society. Economic activities of women not only confined to earlier discussed activities but are also engaged in fashion designing, jewellery designing, international beauty clinics, play back appearances etc. But in recent years it has been observed that they are venturing into non-traditional traits also. It is important to encourage women to take up entrepreneurship as a career for growth and development of a particular region as well as the country.

Assamese women are very much devoted towards their work. There are various promotional organization set up to help women. A women bank has been set up at Jorhat initiated by Lakhi Priya Mahanta Baruah known as "Kanaklata Mahila Urban Co-operative Bank Limited" under co-operative sector, where all the depositors are women and managed by women. They also give loan to women who wish to undertake Self-Employment. Now a day NGO or SHGs are playing a very efficient role for the development of the women entrepreneur of Assam. Women's participation in politics is also significantly noted. Thanks to the 33% seat reservation quota offered especially to the women coined in our prestigious constitution.

Global integration offers a number of opportunities for individual countries to achieve higher rates of growth and increase living standard through import of new technology, efficient utilization of resources and cheap foreign capital. Though there are abundant merits of globalization still one can not ignore the ill effects of it. The process of globalization has benefited underprivileged minorities. But larger majorities irrespective of gender are its victim. It is painful to state that women are the worst victims of globalization and liberalization process. Globalization process is sharpening the cleavage between haves and have-nots and between men and women. If we consider the majority of women, globalization still cannot be regarded as a blessing for them.

The belief that women represent the weaker section of our society has been there since a long time. The belief continues even today in the modern globalised world. Since they are considered weak, they are usually not permitted to undertake certain jobs. The social values have been encouraging employer to ban women from many jobs and made sex discrimination. It has resulted in an increase of employment in low-paid jobs, mainly in manufacturing.

Female labourers are wanted because of the fact that women work in labour intensive industries at wages lower than men. Globalization has been identified as a contributor to the feminization of international migration as well as migration from Rural to Urban areas in search of jobs. Although there is an increasing supply of women worker, the demand is not commensurate with the same. Hence most women can find employment only on casual and informal basis. The less educated girls working as vendor and saleswomen for different companies is seen and also the highly educated young women have to work at low rates on casual and informal basis. Working women have to face various challenges like gender discrimination, balancing family responsibilities with career etc.

Moreover, women workers are often submissive who obey production demands at any cost. Women are compelled to work for long hours at unfavorable working conditions. Their human rights are often violated and many of them fall prey to sexual exploitation. With the development of transport and communication, powerful international media now enable the big economic powers of the world to directly intervene and influence the social and cultural life of the people.

Due to globalization human trafficking, mainly the trafficking of young girls has increased. Women are shown as a target of attacks, sex, rape and such other exploitation. Beauty contest, modeling and fashion shows have now found their place even in small towns. This homogenization of beauty is being turned into commodity for the market so that one can buy from the market as cosmetics.

Today as responsible citizens of this very age we are already experienced with the mega eduventures and have come across the education system within the country or even out of this country which are less focused on imparting education but rather are attentive on earning quicker money. An important aspect to be noted is that education system is undergoing constant changes under the effect of globalization. The structure of education is being altered it to complete in an open, global market leading to the modification of education.

Educational institutions around the world are being forced to compete globally, by engaging in entrepreneurial activities to sustain themselves in an uncertain and competitive world. The strongest arms of globalization are privatization and information technology. The problem which arises here is that girl child are deprived of their basic and vital opportunities and necessities which they win by birth, hence we see not many girls are educate d. Privatization has worsened the condition. Private institutions are only seldom considered as an option for the girls. The major drawback of our educational system is the demand for better fees even in the institutions under the government which are becoming unaffordable for certain sections of our society.

Eyeing back to the past, it required a much lesser fee to get educated and even then we had experienced lesser girls in the schools and colleges. So how can we expect more girls getting educated now? Question should be put up to the concerned authorities. But yes positivity is very prevalent factor in growth of any major idea to be built. With the grace of God rather our good governance we are up with certain schemes to educate girl child at schools free of cost. Now the need of the hour is to urge for such schemes at the higher levels of education. After all, an educated society is referred as the society where girls and women are educated and not the male population.

CONCLUSION

Coming to the end of our study, we are up witnessing both the merits and demerits of globalization and its effect on the women worldwide, broadly with respect to the Assamese women. We concluded education is still a luxury for a larger half of the society but if we are concerned enough with the present global scenario or not going far beyond from our very own state we see girl competitors performing much better than the boys. Here we are glad to mention that the two girls topped the Science and Commerce streams this year respectively in the class 12th board exams as a live example to support the very fact.

Globalization has radically changed both the power value and power balance. In a society not very old from now women used to take care of their family only and bitterly remained dependent on men who controlled financial property and other family matters, but with globalization their roles in the economic sector are predominantly increasing. Women are now no longer suppressed to work in their homes looking after a bulk of children.

They are now no longer reinforced to work against their wills. We can also prove this “fact” by picking up the unbiased results in respect of earning foreign exchange. Our women are able to earn in dollar terms and various other foreign currencies by getting them involved in the above mentioned economic activities particularly the attractive handicrafts. Thanks to the efficient laws put up by the successive government.

It is concluded that the industries like Sericulture, Horticulture, Pisciculture and other small scale industries are running on the advent of women participation. But we have discussed that the rate of production is not as expected though we have invested on it largely.

Let us not forget that Rome was not built in a day henceforth, we can't come up with women empowerment at a flicker of second. And in this regard Globalization really owe a bouquet of thanks as it is helping in all round economic development of the nation as it is realizing the role of all the segments of population to bring about the

desired changes in the economy. At the very end we are happy to acknowledge globalisation as it recognized the women as a part and parcel in the process of economic development.

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