

## The Impact of Globalisation on the Role of Women in the Economy – A Case Study of India with Special Focus on Tamilnadu

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**Abstract:** The status of any section of population in a society is intimately connected with its economic position. The development strategy which neglects the need for enhancing the role of women cannot lead to comprehensive socio – economic development. Globalisation has introduced enormous economic opportunities for women, but they are associated with mounting threats. The research paper intends to comprehend and give an overview on the impact of globalisation in current scenario on women's employment in India with special focus on Tamilnadu. The objective of the study is to highlight the Gender gap and Gender divide through the sectoral participation of women. Analytical methodology is followed to give a critical note on the contribution of women in the socio-economic transformation of the state. Besides, both qualitative and quantitative analysis on the economic contribution of women is adopted in this study to analyse the implications of Globalisation.

**Keywords:** Globalisation, Work Participation Rate, Sectoral Division, Gender Divide, Gender Gap.

### Introduction

Globalisation involves the creation of a world economy which is not merely the sum of its national economies, but rather a powerful independent reality, created by the international division of labour and the world market which in the present epoch predominates over national markets. Today, the major phenomenon shaping our world is globalisation. Globalisation is a double edged process as far as women are concerned. It intensifies some of the existing inequalities and insecurities for women but on the other it opens up new opportunities for educated and professional women. Globalisation creates an environment that allows many women to achieve greater personal autonomy but it also increase unequal and risky environment. When women attempt to redefine their roles and expand their arena of choices, their perceptions and actions generate reverberations through the entire society.

Within the last three decades, the struggle for equality for women has gained momentum due to the international women's movement and through various world conferences on women. It paved the way to measure the position of women through Gender Development Index and Human Development Index to compare stages of gender development. Over the decade, the level of human development increased by 0.075 and gender development by 0.076 points in India<sup>1</sup>. It evaluates progress of women advancing in political and economic forums. Employment enhances financial independence and self – esteem of women. Women's access to more and better jobs has been widely recognized as important in facilitating a process of poverty eradication and empowerment. The present study highlights the impact of globalisation on women's employment in India with special reference to Tamilnadu and discusses the possible strategies for gender justice in the era of globalization.

### Globalisation and Female Employment scenario

Globalisation has contributed in reshaping the identity and role of women and challenged conventional ideas about gender roles. During the past two decades women have entered the work force throughout the world due to the rise and demand in the service sectors. Nevertheless, there has been an overall increase in the number of women working in the economy due to financial constraints, for becoming self-reliant and for enjoyment of individual autonomy. Of course, the increase in women's employment cannot by itself be construed as evidence of a trend towards greater equality. Participation of women in all the spheres of life enhances their role in the process of economic development. It has to be noted that the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 declared "Promote women's economic independence including employment and eradicate the persistent and increasing

burden of poverty on women<sup>2</sup>. The planning process has evolved over recognition of gender as a crosscutting theme across the years.

#### Female Work Participation Rate (FWPR)

Work participation rate indicates the economic empowerment of women in the society to a greater extent. The status of women is intimately connected with their economic position, which directly depends on opportunities for participation in the economic activities. Education clubbed along with participation of women in workforce has been universally recognised as one of the most crucial indicators and serves as an empowerment tool. There has been a considerable improvement in the emergence of women in all sectors of employment in the State.

Year	Gender	Tamilnadu			India		
		Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
1981	Male	59.24	51.25	56.58	53.8	49.1	52.6
	Female	33.55	11.97	26.52	23.1	8.3	19.7
	Total	46.48	32.05	41.73	38.8	30.0	36.7
1991	Male	58.28	52.78	56.39	52.5	52.4	51.6
	Female	38.50	13.10	29.89	26.7	31.0	22.3
	Total	48.49	33.34	43.31	40.0	42.0	37.5
2001	Male	59.38	56.37	58.96	52.4	50.9	51.9
	Female	41.33	18.42	31.32	31.0	11.6	25.7
	Total	50.39	37.59	44.78	42.0	32.2	39.3
2004-2005	Male	59.7	59.3	59.5	54.6	54.9	----
	Female	46.1	24.1	35.5	32.7	16.6	----
	Total	52.8	41.8	47.5	----	----	----
2009-2010	Male	60.3	56.9	----	54.7	54.3	----
	Female	40.5	19.1	----	26.1	13.8	----

*Source: Census of India 1981, 1991, 2001 and NSSO 55<sup>th</sup>, 61<sup>st</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> round*

As per the census report, 1991, the workforce participation rate of females in urban India was 31.0 while that for males was 52.4. However it was declined during the 2001 to 11.6 for female and for male are 50.9. In 2004-2005 there has been a slight improvement in both male and female from 32.2 and 16.6<sup>3</sup> respectively. Similarly rural women WPR also indicate the near-consistent decline. Tamilnadu stands out with high Work Participation Rates (WPR) for both men and women with its predominant agriculture and comparatively higher level of industrial development in the country. The Work Participation Rate for females rose from 26.52% in 1981 to 35.5% in 2005. The respective figures for males are 56.58% and 59.5%<sup>4</sup>. One positive aspect is that, the trend of WPR for women has improved favourably over the last three decades. It is pertinent to note that the FWPR is high in the case of rural women than the urban women. This is mainly due to their participation in agriculture and allied activities. According to the NSSO report of 2011 60.3% of rural males and 40.5% are females are employed. The corresponding proportion in the urban areas was 56.9% and 19.1% respectively. Of the total population although a close to half were females, yet they accounted only 30% of the total work force of India<sup>5</sup>. This proportion has to necessarily be improved for ensuring better and all round economic empowerment. However, these women who work are not enumerated since their works are

not remunerated and hence, remains unrecognised. As a consequence, the rate of women's participation in the workforce is shown in the bottom line. Given poor human capital investment, the share of women in the organised sector is also low. In every respect, FWPR is low in India, mainly due to the poor coverage portrayed to women's work, especially in the unorganised sector and partly due to heavy domestic responsibilities that inhibit women's economic activities. In addition to the traditional sources of employment such as cultivation, dairying, cottage industries, women are increasingly seeking non-farm and non-rural forms of employment both in the organised and unorganised sectors. Hence, employment policies are required to be fine-tuned to realise this objective of recognising female presence.

### Sectoral participation of women

The structural transformation among the sectors is an indispensable characteristic feature in the development process of the state economy. In the Primary sector, agriculture is the major source of sustenance. From time immemorial, women in the villages have taken part in agriculture labour, either on their own property or as hired workers. Women in rural areas are compelled to work in order to save labour costs and supplement the slender earnings of men. In fact, rural women contribute in multi-directional ways such as workers, labourers, producers and traders and also as housewives performing all kinds of traditional non-productive household duties. In the industrial sector, jobs in modern Indian society are created to suit the place and time of the employer and it is one of the factors responsible for women as only a third of world's official income earning labour force. The development of service sector is partly due to major changes in agriculture and industry and partly due to their heterogeneous production and consumption characteristics. The main services of this sector include trade, transport, banking, tourism, catering, etc. The sector structure on women in India as indicated by the table shows a healthy trend in the increase in women's participation in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors.

Years	Primary Sector		Secondary sector		Tertiary sector	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
1977-1978	57.4	73.2	19.7	16.2	22.9	10.6
1983-1984	49.2	70.4	23.1	16.4	27.6	13.1
1987-1988	46.1	65.8	24.6	20.4	29.3	13.8
1993-1994	45.5	67.3	23.6	19.0	30.8	13.7
1999-2000	42.9	62.8	25.7	20.7	31.4	16.5
2004-2005	35.9	57.6	31.9	26.12	37.91	22.46

*Source: NSS 32<sup>nd</sup>, 38<sup>th</sup>, 43<sup>rd</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> 55<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> Rounds.*

The proportion of female in the primary sector has decreased gradually from 73.2% in 1978, 70.4% in 1984 and then to 65.8% in 1988, 67.3% in 1994 and further decreased to 62.8% in 2000 and 57.6% in 2005<sup>6</sup>. The contribution of women in the secondary sector also shows a low profile, contributing 16.2 % in 1978, 16.4 % in 1983, 20.4 % in 1988, 19 % in 2000 and 26.12 in 2005<sup>7</sup>. The tertiary sector absorbs 22% of the state's female labour force. Gender-wise analysis reveals, that share of male workers in primary sector employment has been steadily declining. It declined from 57.4% in 1977-78 to 35.9% in 2004-2005. The corresponding ratios for females were 73.2% and 57.6%, during the same period. A significant development in recent years is the increase in the share of tertiary sector employment for females, from 13.7% in 1993-94 to 22.46% in 2004-2005<sup>8</sup>. The loss of share in primary sector employment for females has been more or less equally gained by the secondary and tertiary sectors. However, in the case of males, the secondary sector accounted for a relatively higher share in the recent period.

An analysis of the sectoral distribution of the total work force reveals that primary sector accommodates and absorbs a large portion of 57.6% of women labour force (as per NSS 61<sup>st</sup> Round-2004-05), around 26.12% are engaged in the secondary sector and 22.46% account in the tertiary sector

in the economy of Tamilnadu<sup>9</sup>. Though women play a crucial role in agriculture and food production, their potential for acceleration has not often been well rewarded and appreciated. A distressing feature is that the highly unorganized nature of this work exposes them to exploitation, as they are not well protected by any law being enforced in the organized sector. Further, discriminatory attitude and inherited bias in the agrarian development approaches have led to an inadequate perception of women's economic role. The role of women in the secondary sector has not reached the optimum level. The tertiary sector also shows a clear sign of labour market segmented by gender. Women are engaged in low paid and less skilled occupations, thereby reinforcing or aggravating the existing gender inequities in the labour market. The data analysis shows that the primary sector is overcrowded, the secondary sector has neglected women and the service sector has not expanded sufficiently.

The era of globalisation demands for the fullest utilization of human resources. To increase employment among women, several initiatives have been made by the Government of India. Some of the programmes are Swawlamban, Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP)(1987), Hostels for Working Women, with day care centres for their children, RashtriyaMahilaKosh (RMK) and Swayamsiddha(2001). These programme aims to provide training and skills to women to facilitate them to obtain employment or self-employment<sup>10</sup>. In the state, Tamilnadu Corporation for Development of women(TNCDW) has brought out qualitative change in the lives of women through MahalirThittam(1989), based on SHG approach and is implemented in partnership with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and community based organizations where women are empowered through SHGs<sup>11</sup>. Under these programmes, financial assistance is provided to Women's Development Corporations (WDCs), public sector corporations, autonomous bodies and voluntary organizations to train poor women, mostly in non-traditional trades and to ensure their employment in these areas. Some of the popular trades under the programme are computer programming, medical transcription, electronics, watch assembling, radio and television repairs, garment making, dress designing and fashion technology, handloom weaving, secretarial practice, community health work, embroidery, etc., and the aim is to make women self – reliant. Financial assistance is also provided to the grantee organizations for hiring of training cum- production sheds, training cost, machinery and equipments, stipend to the trainees and remuneration for the trainers.

#### **Women and IT sector**

The globalization process is being powerfully supported by ongoing Information Technology revolution with its phenomenal impact in the realm of knowledge and communication. Globalisation has given women a new identity, financial independence, freedom of expression as well as a remarkable social status. The advent of globalization is to a large extent predicated on the emergence and continuous development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Globalisation and IT sector has been widely accepted as two sides of a coin. NASSCOM conducted a study in June 2005 on women professionals in the IT industry in India. The findings of the study have revealed that most women in this sector are self confident, determined and immensely talented professionals and have managed to make their mark within their organisations, on account of their hard and soft skills. In the IT industry, the men to women ratio were 76:24 in 2005<sup>12</sup>. Women employed in the Indian IT industry increasing from 421,460 in 2006 to 670,984 in 2008<sup>13</sup>. Tamilnadu has been a state facing the transition of women in various sectors of the society since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Following table indicates the participation of women in IT sector in India.

<b>Table : 3 Gender wise Distribution of Employment in Major IT Industries in India</b>				
	Total No: Employees	Women in Nos	Percentage	Ratio
Wipro	12658	2530	19.98%	1:05
TCS	21800	5450	25.00%	1:04
INFOSYS	15356	2896	18.86%	1:05
HEWLETT-P	2245	320	14.25%	1:07
POLARIS	4800	1200	25.00%	1:4
L&T	2250	900	40.00%	1:2:5
HCL	5757	1150	19.97%	1:05
SUN	596	119	19.96%	1:05
ORACLE	2702	540	19.98%	1:05
PHILIPS	757	190	25.09%	1:04
SIEMENS	1390	260	18.70%	1:06
ROLTA INDIA	2346	123	5.25%	1:19
<i>Source : Report for Organisation Development, Hyderabad , 2006</i>				

IT sector is an area where there is a potential for women to make in career paths. Under the pervasive influence of information technology, the aspirations of people in general and the aspirations of women in particular have undergone drastic changes. Even in remote rural areas, there is a strong desire for a higher standard of living and better quality of life. The selection criterion of the respondents was studied in order to examine the challenges faced by them towards their progress<sup>14</sup>. The Statistics show that there has been a marginal change in their share over the last three to five years. In an evaluation of the above mentioned organisations. Managers play a key role in the area of decision making, while software engineers are still lagging behind when it comes to decision making on their own. Though majority of women work as software engineers only a few women hold key posts. The analysis and the data findings reveal that women are seriously underrepresented in field of decision making. It should be noted that the reasons may be lesser experience, lower cadre of job etc. In access to resources also opportunities were far behind for engineers in the lower cadre. The main reason is problems faced at workplace, women's family responsibilities – maternity, child rearing and general household tasks, etc. In power accruing also there is a minimal representation of women in higher positions. Lack of proper training, work pressure, marriage, child birth physical discomfort, mental tension and superior domination are the obstacles faced by women.

### **Implications of Globalisation**

#### ➤ **Gender Gap**

Gender dimension is one of the most neglected dimensions of economic growth in the country at the turn of the century. Some women might have gained better access to the labour market but the majority of them are staying locked in at relatively low levels of pay and skills, becoming increasingly discriminated against. Despite their contribution in various sectors of the economy, it is thus quite unfortunate that the gender gap is widening in the past decade and gender discrimination against women has been increasing.

<b>Table : 4 Gender Gap in Female work participation in Tamilnadu</b>	
Female work participation Rank	15
Female work participation	35.1
Gender Gap in Work participation rank	11
Gender Gap in Work participation	30.3
Source: Based on calculations from Census of India (2001).Notes: Work participation rates are calculated as the proportion of total workers (main + marginal) among respective populations above six years.	

#### ➤ **Unemployment Situation**

Employment and Un-Employment in the state determines to a large extent, the overall standard living of the people. Globalisation has been blamed to have increased the incidence of unemployment and under employment among women and also have given rise to many forms of discriminations in the labour market.

Table :5							
Registered with employment exchanges (2006)	India	Tamilnadu	Unemployment Rate 2004-2005 (%)				
			Rural		Urban		
job seekers	11731.0	1848.8		Female	Male	Female	Male
Male job seekers	29885.0	2410.2					
Total job seekers	41616.0	4259.0	India	1.8	1.6	6.9	3.8
			Tamil Nadu	1.1	1.2	4.8	2.9
Source: Women and Men in India 2007, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Central Statistical Organisation. (2008).							

Women's role in the family has remained unorganized even at the international level and it can undoubtedly be attributed to the fact that women are not in the control of administration and management sectors but are confined to sectors involving physical labour. The United Nation's report estimated that women's participation was less in management and administration. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) studies reveal that technological progress pushes women into the meager income generating activities. Due to lack of skill, women voluntarily accept jobs involving lower activities. While women largely accept family taboos to forego employment opportunities, it has to be accepted that in India, they have today entered into almost every profession. Despite this participation it has not left any adequate dent in the desired socio-economic transformation of the women's role in development.

#### ➤ Wage differences

Globalisation has the scope of widening the wage gap between men and women and also increases inequalities of income. Some women might have gained better access to income but the majority of them are lagging behind with low pay and discrimination. Hence gender divide is visible even in the digital era.

**Table: 6 Average Wage/Salary (in Rs.) Received per Day by Regular Wage/Salaried Employees of Age 15-59 Years by Industry of Work, Sex, Sector and Broad Educational Level, 2004-05**

Industry Division	Not literate		Literate up to middle		Secondary & Hr. Secondary		Graduate & above		All	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Agricultural	45.65	53.39	54.41	66.27	134.61	149.40	105.32	200.33	54.51	71.16
Mining and quarrying	84.88	174.13	212.29	217.64	83.29	323.41	0.00	341.46	82.75	246.93
Manufacturing	38.40	75.73	58.54	84.51	62.12	109.43	219.58	534.81	57.95	146.72
Construction	82.64	85.59	44.21	100.19	101.70	111.08	136.09	223.09	90.80	106.79
Private hhs with emp. Persons	29.18	50.74	34.10	66.68	54.90	88.14	0.00	137.67	31.27	67.80

Source: Women and Men in India 2007, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Central Statistical Organization. (2008).

It has been estimated that women's wage rates are, on the average, 75% of men's wage rates and constitute only one fourth of the family income. In any part of India women and men do not earn equal wages in agriculture. Also, women generally work in the informal sector where wages are lower and they are not covered by labour laws<sup>15</sup>. Women workers are also engaged in piecework and subcontracting at exploitative rates. Serious gaps persist related to discrimination against women in the workplace. There is a salary gap, with women earning lower salaries than men, evidenced even where the job description, skills and experience are equal. There are unequal employment opportunities and marginalization of women in the formal sector. Large numbers of women are relegated to the informal sector. Violence against women and sexual harassment persist in the workplace. The gender stratification of careers persists, with women having little access to promotions into leadership positions. There is a need to develop standards (pay, hours, etc) and ensure these standards get achieved.

- **Sexual harassment** at work place affects millions of women regardless of their profession, but legal systems offer them little protection. Even when they do have legal recourse, the fear of being penalized or else a promise of much wanted promotion keeps many women at bay.
- **Inequality in access to income** - Most of the working women, inspite of their economic independence are not truly independent. Neither do they have any control over their own income nor are they allowed to take important decisions in their lives independently. However, as women become career oriented, these differentiation in men and women is undergoing a serious manifestation.
- **Legislations** - The basic enactment regulating the working conditions of women workers employed in the different sectors of the economy are The Factories Act, 1948, The Mines Act, 1952 Plantations Labour Act, 1951, Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 etc. Under the Factories Act, women are prohibited to work during night hours and the Mines Act prohibits women from working underground<sup>25</sup>. Welfare facilities such as improved sanitation, maintenance of crèches in factories employing more than 80 women etc. are also provided under these Acts. These rules though laudable in their objectives have reduced the opportunities of employment for women in reality. Most of the companies, factories, firms and concerns prefer to restrict the number of women below the stipulated limit so that they can avoid the obligations and requirements laid down by the Government. The existence of these legislations for more than three decades has made little or no impact on the employment of women.

### Challenges

Globalisation is diverse and encompasses all aspects of women's lives in India. It has affected both the quantity and the quality of work available to majority of women in India.

- The traditional role of women in agriculture, livestock and animal husbandry, Khadi and village industries etc, is being undermined because mechanization and automation is becoming prevalent in the market based economy which will adversely affect the village based traditional economy.
- Globalisation has increased the number of low paid, part-time and exploitative jobs.
- With male migration is on the increase from the rural to urban sectors, the women have to bear the triple burden of caring, farming and paid employment in the rural sector.
- In the neo liberal work practices, contract work, working hours, cooperative practices, payment by result make it very difficult for women to cope with their multiple responsibilities.
- In the era of globalization, the number of women working in the night shift is increasing with call centers and export oriented companies employing women in large numbers during the night shift, without providing proper protection or transport facilities to them.

### Steps to cope with the changing scenario

New global economy operates to facilitate economic integration. If our international economic institutions are to improve their social accountability, women must be able to access and input in the developing world. However efforts must be made to address the problems through governmental and the non- governmental programmes. Globalization process requires proper focus on rural development, education, health and child care and proper gainful employment for the underprivileged women at the initial stages. The main goal of the Department of Women and Child Development is to empower women and to bring them within the purview of the mainstream development process. The capacities and capabilities of women addressing their own development should be the main focus of NGOs and women's organisations. Innovative approaches for poverty alleviation such as savings, credit and asset creation for poor women have emerged but are not adequate to fulfill the desired progress.

### Conclusion

Globalization has suddenly exposed the Indian economy rapidly without providing the required economic and social policies to the much required safety net; women, who have been involved with production in the traditional ways, have to cope up with numerous problems and yet strive to avail of the opportunities which an open economy promises. Majority of Indian women are tradition bound and still live in disadvantageous positions. The economy progresses from subsistence to modernized sector but women are hapless as they are lagging behind. Therefore, technological change can spell absolute deprivation of women at work by simply eliminating their designed tasks in the labour process or by promoting male substitution. Whatever may be the technological advancement, its impact on employment status of women is highly unfavorable and have more repercussions for women. From the above analysis on women in the economy, it is ascertained that women, as professionals, no doubt inculcate scientific temper and create awareness of physical, social technological, economic, cultural and aesthetic environment in Tamilnadu. New directions and new modes to manage the external and internal barriers are needed through redefining the roles of women. The number of women organizations and families responding to such change on women's role, status and position are few. However, a small beginning is made and it needs to be carried forward with a greater momentum and mobilization by the culture, society families etc. Women will visualize a new horizon and identify directions and handle tough decisions with ease in the years to come. The future women will cross the threshold to listen to their own voice.

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