

Globalization and Persons With Disabilities in India with special reference to employment scenario

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The word *Globalization* is one of the most popular and important terms of the present century. It is treated as a subject of debate in academic literature in social sciences. It pertains to economic *inter-dependence* of different countries on each other, leading to more and more *free* trade all over the world. For a common person, it means increasing privatization of services, opening up of economy and technological advancement. From an economic perspective, it involves huge capital investment by Multi National Corporations (MNCs), big financial exchanges by private players, increasing competition among various firms, loosening of regulations on economic activities, big surge in global trade and more emphasis on economic efficiency. Globalization also symbolizes rapid spread of information through modern means of communication such as TV and the internet, fast development of transportation, growing employment opportunities in various sectors, a rising living standard for the emerging middle class, availability of electronic goods and automobiles at a cheaper price.

However from a different perspective, globalization means privatization and disinvestment, de-regularization and more autonomy for raising productivity. For the social sector, it means a cut in welfare services, withdrawal of subsidies, shrinking of public employment and an overall reduction in public expenditure.

Disability may be defined as a hindrance faced by a person while doing some work due to physical or mental impairment. Such impairment may be in the form of the loss of a limb, sensory impairment or mental retardation. The long term impact of disability is not limited to just physical impairment, but also to challenges in social, psychological, educational and vocational fields. (Bhatt, 1963: 66)

Disability may be of different types. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities act of 2016 mentions 21 types of benchmark disabilities which are as follows: (Government of India, 2016: The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill 2016)

- 1) Blindness
- 2) Low-vision
- 3) Leprosy Cured persons
- 4) Hearing Impairment (deaf and hard of hearing)
- 5) Locomotors Disability
- 6) Dwarfism
- 7) Intellectual Disability
- 8) Mental Illness
- 9) Autism Spectrum Disorder
- 10) Cerebral Palsy
- 11) Muscular Dystrophy
- 12) Chronic Neurological conditions
- 13) Specific Learning Disabilities
- 14) Multiple Sclerosis
- 15) Speech and Language disability
- 16) Thallasemia
- 17) Hemophilia
- 18) Sickle Cell disease
- 19) Multiple Disabilities including deaf blindness
- 20) Acid Attack victim
- 21) Parkinson's disease

But, here we may consider only those disabilities which are mentioned in the disability bill of 1995. On the basis of benchmark disabilities mentioned in the bill of 1995, the disabled population in India as per the 2011 census is as follows (Government of India, 2011: C series census of India)

Disabled Population by Types of Disability in India India : 2011

	Persons	Males	Females
Total	26,810,557	14,986,202	11,824,355
In Seeing	5,032,463	2,638,516	2,393,947
In Hearing	5,071,007	2,677,544	2,393,463
In Speech	1,998,535	1,122,896	875,639
In Movement	5,436,604	3,370,374	2,066,230
Mental Retardation	1,505,624	870,708	634,916
Mental Illness	722,826	415,732	307,094
Any Other	4,927,011	2,727,828	2,199,183
Multiple Disability	2,116,487	1,162,604	953,883

Source: C series census of India 2011

The question of the hour is what is the impact of globalization in India on persons with disabilities especially in the context of employment? Is it leading to inclusive employment or is pushing these persons to the margins of the society?

According to Peter Marber, globalization involves the cross border interaction whether economic, social or cultural, leading to human progress. (Marber, 2015: World policy Journal) It is only due to globalization and economic liberalization that India has now become one of the fastest growing economy with a forex reserve touching Dollar three Billions.

But, Everything is not rosy in the present scenario of globalization and economic liberalization. common man is just impressed by the presence of big companies, handsome pay packages, availability of consumer goods, good transportation and telecommunication services. But, this is only one side of the picture. the deeper analysis of globalization presents totally different situation. The situation of unequal competition, unjust trade rules, trade imbalance between centre and periphery, exploitation of labor class, instability in job prospects, no social security for workers, frequent economic crisis, cut in welfare services, environmental degradation, rising consumerism and materialism and above all, the decline of the sovereignty of the state.

Globalization implies implementation of the structural adjustment programs (saps). It literally means the cut in the government expenditure. It badly affects the sectors like health and education. It results in reduction of subsidies and the privatization of essential services. As the MNCs buy the state owned companies, many workers lose their jobs. Not only that, services like the transport and the power supply become more expensive. (Sengupta, 2003: *Social Scientist* Vol. 31)

The net result of the saps is rising unemployment, constant inflation, rise in food prices and the withdrawal of subsidies from public services. Moreover, it also challenges our sovereignty since the parliament has no control over the day to day functioning of the foreign companies. (Sengupta, 2003: *Social Scientist* Vol. 31)

Employment situation of persons with disabilities in pre liberalization period

We cannot understand the impact of globalization on the employment scenario of persons with disability unless we compare the pre liberalization period in terms of employment with the period of globalization. In the pre liberalization period, India adopted a development strategy with mixed economy based upon planning with a predominance of public sector. The main thrust of the state was to have a control over all key sector of the economy with an instrument of state planning. The objective of development at that time was to establish a socialistic society. That is to bridge the gap between the rich and poor.

This policy resulted in a big rise in public employment and social security for a common person. The industrial resolutions of 1948 and 1956 as well, established state monopoly over all the key industries such as coal, iron and steel, minerals, ship building, manufacture of aircraft and of telephone and telegraph equipment, railways, defense, Nuclear Energy, Space Technology etc. (Gill, 1985: 6) not only this, all the basic facilities such as health, education, public transport, power and water supply and public distribution system were in government hands. That was the time when

public sector was the major employer of most of the people including persons with disabilities.

In the countries like India, it is public sector who is major employer of persons with disabilities. It provides employment under different categories through the agency of reservation in jobs. The public or government employment in the Indian context, is not only a means of livelihood but also an agent of social security. The government employees have fixed tenure. They cannot be removed easily. they enjoy all types of facilities including leaves, increments and timely promotion. They get social security cover in the form of medical facility, life insurance, provident fund and retirement pension. Moreover, they have the security of all the labor laws. In a nutshell, government job in India is a guarantee for a healthy and safe life. On the contrary, the private sector is quite hesitant to provide most of the above said facilities.

If we see the pre-liberalization scenario of employment of persons with disabilities in India, we find that In 1977, a provision was made through an executive order that all the 3 categories of the disabled would be given 1 percent of reservation each, which would be computed on the basis of total number of vacancies in any department. But, this provision was accompanied with the clause that reservation can be given only on identified posts. This policy also mentions the carry forward of jobs and exchange of jobs. Initially, the reservation was confined to class C and class D jobs. But, later it was extended to class B and class posts also. The persons with disabilities act of 1995 further consolidated these provisions. (Sarin, 2009: 228-229)

Employability of persons with disabilities and its consciousness started taking roots during the decade of 1980s. and that is only when the organizations like National Federation of the Blind resorted to mass struggle for employment. One example of this was a big agitation of persons with disabilities in front of parliament on March 16 1980 in which police resorted to lathi charge on these persons. This incident drew attention of general public, mass media and international organization to the problem of acute unemployment of disabled in India. Consequently, the year 1981 was declared the international year for the disabled by the United Nations Organization. In the decade of 1980s, the level of education and professional training among the disabled was not so high. So, the work force which was prepared at that time was basically for low level jobs. The emphasis at that time was on the class C and class D vacancies. The reservation was also at that time was in group C and group D posts. The special recruitment drive for the disabled in 1987 is worth mentioning here. In this drive, a lot of persons with disabilities were recruited on the posts of lower division clerks and school teachers. (Rungta, 2016: personal interview)

The success in getting group c and group d jobs led to more struggle for group a and group b post since 1987. Consequently, there was an order of central government that priority should be given to disabled in the selection of candidates for these categories. In 1993, a landmark judgment of supreme court came wherein it was ordered that disabled including the blind should be allowed to sit in civil services exam. If he qualifies in that, he should be given employment in group a or group b post. Government should also consider reservation in these categories. But, in spite of this and persons with disabilities act of 1995, no reservation was given in group a and group b posts upto 2005. Again a struggle for the same

was started and the success could be achieved upto 2007 and 2008. (Rungta, 2016: personal interview)

It must be kept in mind that whatever had been achieved after 1991 was not due to the impact of globalization but it was basically due to disability act of 1995 and sincere efforts of disability organizations. Thus, we find that in the pre liberalization period, the chances of employment for disabled persons were quite optimistic. Since most of the economy was in public sector, so, it was bound to provide employment through the agency of reservation. (Rungta, 2016: personal interview)

Declining employment of persons with disabilities in the era of globalization

In July 1991, India adopted the policy of economic liberalization, privatization and globalization. The policy was a response to grim economic situation. The external debt reached to an alarming point that India was on the brink of a repayment default. the uncertain political situation further worsened the situation. Not only this, the fall of socialist block in Eastern Europe including Soviet Union took away the glamour from socialist ideology. Moreover, the neo colonial forces became keen to integrate India into world’s capitalist economy. (Gupta, 1992)

The assumptions behind the new economic policy was that system of controls and licenses had discouraged the efficient growth of industry, created a vested interest in ever increasing bureaucracy. The public sector controlled by Political patronage, managed by ill-trained and corrupt bureaucracy and run by inefficient and irresponsible work force was eating into public resources. (Gupta, 1992)

It was in this background that there came the liberalization package starting from July 1991. First step of this was devaluation of the rupee. This was followed by removal of industrial licensing for most products, raising of foreign equity limits in industries, abolition of MRTP clearances, disinvestment of government holding in public sector, reduction in the number of product and reserved for the small sectors, automatic permission for foreign technology agreements in high priority industries, automatic clearance for import of capital goods for export oriented units, liberalization of policy regarding industrial location, concessions in taxes etc. (Gupta, 1992)

Globalization means that the economic policies of a nation are not limited to their national interest only. Globalization leads to automation which is a part of economic policy and technological advancement. so, employment prospects are depending upon these policies. Under the process of globalization, the companies have become transnational and are engaged in cut throat competition. In such a situation, they adopt the method of cost cutting to remain in market. For cost cutting, they not only resort to new techniques, but also tend to reduce their work force. Due to this technological advancement, the opportunities of employment at the lower level are going down both in public and in private sector. These tendencies result in reduction in actual work force. there is no doubt that if the work force in general is declining, the employment of physically challenged is also declining. Moreover, there may be an increase in employment in the private sector, but the public employment declines. (Rungta, 2016: personal interview). The table below shows these trends.

Growth of Workforce, 1981-2001 Census

Fig. in lakh

Census Year	Total Population		Total number of Workers (main +marginal workers)		% of workforce in population		% increase in work-force in 1981-1991 & 2001	
	India	Delhi	India	Delhi	India	Delhi	India	Delhi
1981	6851.85	62.20	2446.04	20.02	35.70	32.19	-	-
1991	8463.05	94.21	3141.30	29.80	37.12	31.63	28.42	48.85
2001	10270.15	137.83*	4025.12	45.27*	39.19	32.84	28.14	51.91

* Provisional

source: Employment Handbook 2016

We may easily visualize that the population in India as well as in Delhi increased substantially between 1981 to 2001, but the work force did not increase at the same pace. It actually declined at the national level, but it increased marginally in Delhi. even the increase in Delhi may be attributed to the migration of workers from neighboring states.

Moreover, studying the data as provided by special employment exchanges for the period between 1990 to 2013 regarding the placement of physically challenged persons, we find that there is hardly any increase in the ratio of employment being provided to such persons in the country. The table below shows this trend:

Figures For Special Exchange For Physically Handicapped.

Information collecting from June 1998.

(In Thousands)

Year	Placement				
	Blind	Deaf and Dumb	Orthopedics	Total	Women**
All Employment Exchanges *					
1990	0.3	0.2	3.4	3.9	
1991	0.3	0.3	4.0	4.6	
1992	0.2	0.2	3.9	4.3	
1993	0.2	0.2	4.0	4.5	
1994	0.2	0.1	4.2	4.5	

1995	0.2	0.2	3.3	3.7	
1996	0.2	0.2	3.4	3.9	
1997	0.4	0.3	3.8	4.5	
1998	0.3	0.2	3.2	3.6	0.5
1999	0.2	0.2	3.8	4.2	0.9
2000	0.2		3.0	3.3	0.7
2001	0.2		3.1	3.5	0.7
2002	0.4	0.3	2.7	3.4	0.7
2003	0.4	0.4	3.1	3.9	1.0
2004	0.2	0.3	2.9	3.4	0.8
2005	0.3	0.3	2.6	3.2	0.7
2006	0.4	0.3	2.6	3.4	0.6
2007	0.4	0.3	2.6	3.4	0.7
2008	0.3	0.3	3.1	3.7	0.8
2009	0.3	0.2	2.8	3.3	0.8
2010	0.3	0.2	2.6	3.2	0.8
2011	0.3	0.2	2.8	3.3	0.7
2012	0.2	0.1	1.8	2.1	0.5
2013	0.2	0.1	1.6	1.9	0.4

Source: Employment Handbook 2016

Globalization has an adverse impact upon the employment of the disabled, especially in the public sector. For the all-India working age population. In 1999-2000, 62.5 per cent of the working age population reported being employed, which is 24.9 percentage points higher than the employment rate for those with disabilities (37.6 percent) in 2002.

The employment of the disabled persons in India fell from 42.7 percent in 1991 to 37.6 percent in 2002 due to the shrinking of the public sector, where these persons were employed most. (Mitra and Sambamoorthi, 2006: 199-203)

Globalization, liberalization and privatization of economy during the decade of 1990s has helped in the growth of highly skilled jobs in Information Technology, Automobile Industry or other service sector of economics. But, it has failed to create jobs for the unskilled poor workers, because Public Investment' in areas of economy which generate jobs for the Millions of unskilled labor force lagged behind the requirements of expanding Indian Labour Market. This tendency is more acute in the case of persons with disabilities. (Bhambhri, 2005: 17)

In the era of globalization and economic liberalization, Getting 3 percent reservation in the government employment is very challenging. It is full of all types of hurdles right from tedious paper work to pursue the officers, going to the courts and even agitating on the roads. (Rungta, 2016: personal interview). the reservation in government jobs has been implemented either with the help of judicial pronouncements or through the agitations done by disability organizations. The government itself admits that out of 3 percent, only 1.2 percent of reservation has been given. Out of this reservation, 60 percent has been given to locomotors disabled, 25 percent to hearing impaired and only 15 percent has been assigned to blind. (Rungta, 2016: personal interview)

So, globalization is affecting the employment of disabled persons. the low level jobs are shrinking due to technological advancement and the tendency of cost cutting. The high level

jobs are increasing slightly. But, only the people, who are well educated and are from well to do families are taking advantage of these opportunities. But now, even high level jobs are not secured. Government is adopting the policy of contractulization and outsourcing. So, the employment opportunities for disabled is basically decreasing in the age of globalization leading to their marginalization.

Employment scenario of persons with disabilities in private sector in the era of globalization

The persons with disabilities bill of 1995 provides for 3 percent reservation in public sectors in jobs for persons with disabilities. There is also a provision for providing incentive to private firms who employ 5 percent disabled people in their total work force. but still, there is acute unemployment prevailing among persons with disabilities. Even the private sector, with a high growth rate, could not provide enough employment to these persons. Apex bodies such as CII, FICCI and ASSOCHAM still do not have policies relating to employment of disabled people. A study was conducted in 1999 by the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, Delhi, to identify the current practices of Indian industry with regard to the employment of disabled people. A sample of 100 corporate houses was chosen, by including all the corporate houses listed in the 'Super 100 ranking of the corporate sector' by 'Business India'. 23 companies in the sample were public sector companies while 67 were the private sector companies and 14 were multinational companies. Of the 100 companies to whom the questions were sent, only 70 responded. The total number of employees in these companies was 7,96,363 of which 3160 were disabled persons' consisting of 0.4% of the employees. Among the companies who responded, 50 (71.43%) companies had employed disabled persons belonging to different categories of disabilities. (Abidi, 1997). The table below shows this trend:

Types of disability among the disabled employees

Types of disability	Percentage of total disabled employees
Visual impairment	9.87%
Loco-motor impairment	70.57%
Speech and hearing impairment	8.26%
Mental retardation	0.66%
Other disabilities	1.87%

Disabled persons as a percentage of the workforce in different companies

Types of company	Percentage of disabled persons employed
Public sector companies	0.54% of the total workforce
Private sector Indian companies	0.28% of the total workforce
Multinational companies	0.05% of the total workforce

No company in the sample employed disabled persons above the 2% level, way below the 5% level to claim the incentives guaranteed to them if they employ disabled persons. Disabled people with loco-motor disability were the group most commonly employed, probably because they are less severely disabled, and people with mental retardation are rarely employed, probably due to the stigma attached to mental retardation. It has also been found that persons with disabilities, who are employed, have a mild degree of disability which is not a big hindrance in doing any job. (Abidi, 1997)

Another issue regarding the employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector in the era of globalization is the lack of education and proper skills among these persons which is very essential for a market economy. The private sector may give job to only those workers who are well educated, trained and have good communication skills. It has been found that the disabled persons who belong to a well-to-do family may easily access education, technological advancement and other facilities. But, those who are not so fortunate or who live in rural areas can not have the same. It must be kept in mind that in the countries like India, there is direct relation between disability and poverty and most of persons with disabilities belong to poor section of our society who are not suitable for modern skilled employment.

Thus, privatization of economy has opened highly skilled new job avenues for disabled persons. But, these avenues are available for only those with higher education and adequate training. Most of the training programs do not match with the requirements of the modern skilled jobs and most of persons with disabilities are from poor families.

Employment and social security

One may argue that In the era of globalization and economic liberalization, private employment is rising which is benefiting a lot of people. But, does it ensure social security for the workers or particularly those with disabilities?

The pre 1991 reform period in India is quite different in terms of the development strategy and its impact on the labor regime. The era was marked by the policy of mixed economy with a prevalence of public sector. Since, most of the working force was engaged in the organized public sector at that time, they were automatically given all the benefits.

In that period, the government of India also supported the trade union movement and came out with various labor laws for the protection of workers. Apart from benefiting the general

workers, these laws have been quite important for workers belonging to weaker sections of society such as persons with disabilities.

The important labor laws made by the government of India from time to time are ---

- 1 Minimum wages act 1948
- 2 Payment of bonus act 1965
- 3 Provident fund act 1952
- 4 Union act 1926
- 5 Compensation act 1923
- 6 Contract labor act 1973

All such acts insured the safety of the workers in both the public as well as the private sector units. Whenever the workers felt any dissatisfaction with the authorities, they came out with trade union activities, strikes, lock outs etc. (Singh, 2016)

The post liberalization period saw a U turn in the development policy of the government. The period is marked by the main features of globalization such as free flow of capital, free flow of labor and free flow of technology. The number of public sector undertakings is decreasing constantly. The government wants to disinvest the units, down size the staff and privatized most of the sectors in the economy. The emphasis is now on inviting the foreign direct investment at a large scale.

The major short coming of the various labor acts in India is that they only cover the labor of the formal sector. The labor in agriculture as well as the informal sector is not covered by them.

thus, various labor laws are applicable only in the organized sector. Even in the formal sector, a number of workers can fall outside the preview of the laws due to the nature of work they perform. If the workers in the private sector units are given full benefits, it will reduce the profits of the investors. So, the prevalent practice is to minimize the coverage of the labor law without making any change in that. (Singh, 2016)

Often, The workers in private sector industrial units are not given permanent jobs. They are hired on the contract bases. Their employers thus have the full freedom to hire and fire the workers. These workers cannot have the other job related benefits such as bonus, provident fund, medical facility, insurance, pension and other retirement benefits. The

workers with disabilities are either not taken by private sector units or even if they are taken, they do not enjoy any social security as they also work on contract basis.

Suggestions and Conclusion

The above discussion reveals that the process of globalization and economic liberalization is adversely affecting employment scenario of persons with disabilities. If they do not get adequate employment, their inclusion in main stream society would be quite difficult and they would remain marginalized. But, what are the ways to face the challenges put forward by globalization and privatization?

The process of globalization and economic liberalization is irreversible. We cannot go back to pre liberalization period of state controlled economy. but, globalization and liberalization should have a human face as said by Dr. Manmohan Singh. It means promoting balanced social and economic development, responsible macroeconomic policies with strong emphasis on agriculture, employment and viable social safety net." The development process should be in tandem with emphasis on creation of job opportunities. If this policy is followed honestly, it would lead to an inclusive growth, involving all sections of society. (Singh, 2004)

It is a fact that public sector would not be able to absorb all unemployed disabled persons. It is true that the reservation should be properly given. But no government can provide employment to all needy persons. Hence, the disabled persons should be trained in such a manner that they will be able to compete in open market with other able bodied persons.

The government has introduce some measures which would enable the persons with disabilities to meet the challenges of globalization. For instance, In the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill of 2016, there is provision for skill development for disabled and also facilitating their self employment. Not only this, reservation in public establishment has been increased to 4 percent in place of 3 percent. There are provisions to give incentive to private firms who employ these

persons. But, one must admit that legislation may only give rights in theory, it cannot provide employment in practice. No legislation can say that if people trained in management or information technology are required in job market, those persons should be given employment only on the basis of disability who even do not qualified for a class D post. (Rungta, 2016: personal interview)

In order to prepare the persons with disabilities for job market, they should be given education and vocational training needed for job market. The jargon of inclusive education can make quantative increase, but it may not lead to qualitative education. The work force prepared by such education would be unemployable. They would again become a liability for the society. Although, integrated education must be there, but, Special schools cannot be eliminated altogether. In the disability bill of 2016, it is upto the parents whether they want to send their disabled child to an integrated education school or to a special school. (Rungta, 2016: personal interview)

Economic freedom and capacity is the key to get equal status in any society. The employment of the disabled has changed the attitude of society towards the disabled. Nobody can do manifest discrimination against a disabled person if he is employed and earning his living respectfully. We must adopt a multi prone approach to change the attitude of society. First of all, the disabled workers must set an example of sincerity and best performance. They should try to work better than able bodied workers. The working performance of outstanding disabled persons has earned respect for other persons with disabilities in the society. Attitudes should be changed by demonstrative value. The talk about one sincere disabled persons leads to the change in attitude of people to other disabled persons also. (Rungta, 2016: personal interview). All these measures would bring the persons with disabilities in the main stream society and would bring their marginalization to an end.

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