Way back in the year 1848, Karl Marx in his Communist Manifesto (1848:5) objurgated globalization as the “constant revolutionizing of production” and the “endless disturbance of all social conditions”. The whole process is marked by “everlasting uncertainty”. Everything “fixed and frozen” is “swept away” and “all that is solid melts into air”. Karl Marx was decrying against the deriding consequences globalization can have on the overall mode of production, especially, labour and the ultimate uprooting of social conditions, including means to livelihood, throughout the world.

Indeed, on one hand, we witness the “compression of the world” as had been described by Roland Robertson (1992:8) on account of increased global (international/interregional) interdependence. On the other hand, as far as labor force is concerned, we are witnessing a rigorous fragmentation. Contemporary labour force is marked by irregular, temporary and subcontract workers, informal workers and home based workers, which are beyond the protection of labor laws. Principally, such a consequence is the result of globalization of capital and flexible employment. In such a scenario, what is worth mentioning is the impact on women in general and Thai women in particular because Thailand is one of the countries which represent maximum number of women work force especially in private sectors which was the result of globalization. Thai women are generally in high demand in the labour market as they are perceived to be less demanding, obedient and respectful towards their authority as well as source for cheap labour.

Various scholars argued that globalization is gender biased and operates as major obstruction in the process of development and growth of women. This type of argument can be clearly examined in the Thai society. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the relationship between globalization and its impact on Thai women work force and their
position in the hierarchical structure of workforce and also their role in transforming the society. The present work looks into these issues.

In order to provide a theoretical context for the purpose of the study, this chapter is divided into five sections — women and globalization, historical overview of Thailand, Thai women work force and globalization and Thai women work force. The final section gives the theoretical context of the study based on the understanding developed in the above set sections.

Women and Globalization

The issues of women have never been accorded its due importance throughout history by the academic community and policy makers alike. The trend is still prevalent today in every global villages of this global world. It is widely admitted that historiography belonged to the males. As a result, women’s issues were relegated to the background. Even today in many research studies women’s issues appear as a separate set of questions, not relevant to issues such as labour movement, development policy or globalization. It was only when journalist and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) who are working for the improvement of women that people started giving importance on the issues to some extent. Nevertheless, most of the writings confine to the impact of development, seeing gender inequality and victimization as the main results. These studies miss the pivotal role of women as creators of the economy as active, self-empowering agents, not mere passive victims (Bell 1997:60).

When it comes to the impact of globalization on women, there are three broad categories. First, some scholars agree that women benefit from globalization on account of increase in world economy. Most of the literatures in this category (literatures of scholars like Pete Geddes, Jenet Henshall Momsen) talk about how an average person gains from the process of globalization. They stress that globalization has also brought greater freedom to women living in traditionally conservative societies such as Indonesia, Ireland and Thailand. On account of globalization, women are able, for the first time, to be economically independent of men and have at least some choice in their personal lives.
Ultimately, by bringing women into the workforce, globalization has given women power they lacked in the past - the power to end the system that breeds poverty, exploitation and oppression. However, very few studies are available that focus sharply on women in the age of economic transition and their marginalized situation in various field.

The second category of scholars (Eleanor Doumato, Marsha Pripstein, Erika Kinetz) claims that globalization is a mixed blessing on women. Others conclude that women are negatively affected by globalization. This group of scholars (Joanna Kerr, Andrew Colgan, Bekey Ellis) understands globalization as re-colonization in a new garb, which has become the Eleventh Commandment and others define it as neo-colonialism and neo-liberalization. For example, UN Human Development Report, 1999 opines:

_The new rules of globalization - and the players writing them - focus on integrating global markets neglecting the needs of people that markets cannot meet. The process is concentrating power and marginalizing the poor, both countries and people... The current debate (about globalization) is...too narrow, limited to concerns of economic growth and financial stability and neglecting broader human concerns such as persistent global poverty, growing inequality between and within countries and persistent human rights abuses._

In the same light, International Labor Organization (ILO 2004:1) cited that “More women are entering the global labor force than ever before, but job equality, poverty reduction remains elusive”. No doubt, women are entering in global work force in records but according to a report of ILO on the International Women’s Day, women still face higher unemployment rates and lower wages and represent 60 percent of the world’s 550 million working poor. The report further mentioned that, still the explosive growth in the female workforce hasn’t been accompanied by true socio-economic empowerment for women. Nor has it led to equal pay for work of equal value or balanced benefits that would make women equal to men across nearly all occupations. These vulnerable conditions are really undermining Thai women and their work force. If it goes on, true equality in the world of work especially between men and women will be out of reach. Above all, with the privatization of social services, globalization has increased the
number of women’s unpaid work. Along with this, it has decreased the quality of many of their paid work opportunities. Women are already overrepresented in low-paying, labour-intensive sectors where women’s nimble fingers, flexibility, and ability to work hard are needed. Free trade drives wages even lower and make these industries even less stable (UNPAC 2008:3-4).

In the following sections, we shall elaborate the views expressed by the third category of scholars in terms of gender inequality, position and wage in work place and women in trade export as a result of globalization.

**Gender Inequality**

Women have been the subordinate gender in larger part of the history and continue to remain the same in contemporary times. Women have been seen as preservers of the private space in almost every country, who have less control over resources, including their own bodies. All phenomena commonly associated with global interactions, such as trade, nationalism, state-building and so on, have had contradictory influences on women’s lives throughout history (Bagchi 2004:3). There is always the division of public and private sphere where woman is considered to be responsible in the private sphere. But the question is that - How does one know that it is ‘natural’ for a women to be a wife and mother, and for a man to be the sole breadwinner and leader? How do we know that it is ‘natural’ for women to put their family before themselves and everything, and for a man to sacrifice everything (including his family) to get his job done? These notions of ‘what is natural’ are defined by traditional societal and male constructs of sex roles, which restrict a priori what each gender is fit to do (Loo 2006:87). Yasmin Tambiah (2003:64-65) in “The impact of Gender inequalities on Governance” stated that, state compounds private patriarchy and the domesticated feminine when it nominates or (mis) recognizes men as heads in every field. State continues to see women as unqualified.

Helvi Sipila, Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations focused in a recently published special report on the State of the World’s Women, “women and girls, who constituted one half of the world’s
population and one third of the official labour force, performed nearly two thirds of work hours, but according to some estimates received only one tenth of the world's income and owned less than one hundredth of world's property" (Chhabra and Basu 1980:22).

Onset of globalization has not resulted in gender equality or does not provide a solution to gender inequality. In fact, it sharpens the division between the two sexes. Globalization has entrenched gendered hierarchies in the labor force as well as increased the percentages of women living below the poverty line. Globalization is actually welcomed by leading institutions. New technologies are made for male use, and hence they become skilled labor and women unskilled labor. Thus, women have been exploited under the process of globalization. Female labor is thus increasingly integrated into global production, but in a fragmented form with contradictory consequences.

As the process of expansion of capitalism and globalization continued, capital proved-blind and the cheap, efficient labor of women was found to be preferable to that of men. Structural adjustment generated the triple burden for women, and globalization has reinforced its consequences. Women have become an integral part of this liberalized labor market, but simultaneously been marginalized within it, as they have to develop strategies for dealing with conflicting demands of fragmented insecure work, domesticity and community participation.

**Position and Wage of Women in Workplaces**

Women are the invisible victims of structural violence associated with globalization. Work, for example, is promoted as one of the areas in which, through globalization, women have most to gain. The rhetoric of globalization, like Peter Sutherland's formula of "all winners, no losers," is that the workforce of the 21st century will have to be highly educated, adaptable to change, and capable of having several careers in a single lifetime. These are the winners of the globalized economy. Women working in the export zones are the big losers (Hawthrone 2004:245-246).
The proportion of women in higher status positions is one of the key indicators of level of equality between men and women in a society. How women are employed also has important implications for organizational performance and for national economic growth. Moreover, if one looks at the employment hierarchical structure in any country, we find lack of women in the higher rungs. It is not denied that women continue to increase in managerial positions but in a very slow rate and most of the top positions in every occupation is held by male members, even in typically female occupations such as nursing and teaching. With women’s share of managerial positions in some 60 countries ranging between 20 and 40 percent, the data show that women are markedly under-represented in management compared to their overall share of unemployment (ILO 2000, 2009:2/22)

Different scholars give different views on this pattern. Some link it to lack of qualified women without taking into account to societal steering mechanisms. And some others have attributed the under representation of women to demand side factors, such as women’s experience at work, particularly discrimination. Lack of women participation as managers or professional is a neglected aspect of labor participation in emerging economies, particularly in countries such as Thailand where women outnumber males in the country’s work force.

There is no country in the world where women earn more than men (New Scientist, 27 April 2002:37). Women are still the largest class of poor people in the world and as a social group they represent an important touchstone for the effects of globalization. Since women generally work in the lowest-paid jobs, with the lowest security of employment, and often work long hours in unsatisfactory working conditions, the acceptance and enforcement of good labour standards and practices has become a matter of critical concern. Despite considerable pressure of improvement from international and national groups, labour standards for women workers remain below acceptance norms in many Asian countries. Moreover, weakness of union representation for women workers contribute to the failure of organized labour to exert sufficient pressure of change.
The situation of unequal pay for equal work (Charoenloet and Soonthorndhada 1988:223) is the cause of discouragement among women workers and has become an issue of conflict between workers and the management. Accordingly, the women workers, despite having the same experience still have less opportunity for advancement in their careers than men and also are facing the problems of job security and job contract termination. It is clearly evident from every angle that in every area all the supervisors are male and presence of women is few.

With the onset of structural adjustment and globalization, all labour has been casualized in larger proportions, but the intensity of casualization has been even greater among women. Marilyn Carr and Martha Alter Chen (2001:2-4) stated that globalization puts pressure on low-skilled workers and petty producers by weakening their bargaining power and subjecting them to increasing competition. The link between working in the informal economy and being poor is stronger for women than for men. Moreover, there is a gender gap in incomes and wages especially in informal economy. Thus, globalization of the economy tends to reinforce the links between poverty, informality, and gender. Southeast Asia has experienced substantial growth of modern sector employment but also experienced a substantial decline in the wage employment after financial crisis and leading towards the feminization and in formalization of employment.

On the other hand, the host governments themselves have also in many cases enacted policies which were intended to make their country a more favourable environment for foreign direct investment. These factors have had their effect on local labour markets, and in turn, on women’s work and lives (Kurian 1999:174). Thus, these governments attempted to adopt what were termed ‘flexible labour policies’ as an extra incentive of multinationals to invest in their economies. These incentives were in line with the broader policy framework limiting government intervention in order to promote efficiency and profitability of production. Specific labour market policy measures included the easing or removal of wage policies, social security policies, access to jobs and incomes, and to collective bargaining and unionization on the grounds that they served as unnecessary interventions which could lead to misallocations. These policy measures resulted in
greater vertical segmentation of the labour market, with some workers being more privileged in terms of ages and conditions of work, while others—and these constituted often the majority—had to be eased out of employment through rationalization and/or to be employed in relatively vulnerable categories of work (Ibid: 177).

Moreover, the proportion of women working in the formal sector has always been much lower than that of men, but within the formal sector, public administration and public enterprises has a much larger proportion of women. Organized public sector employment in the 1990s actually remained stagnant and there was only a marginal increase in organized private sector employment. Thus, again, the small advantage women have gained earlier as a result of expanding public sector employment has been lost in the process of globalization. Over and above, the differences between advanced and backward regions, and urban and rural areas, have unambiguously increased in the decade of economic reforms. And since women are often more rural in nature than men, the gender disparity in respect of education, health and survival has widened rather than narrowed. Finally, regarding gender discrimination, men are seen as the frontline fighters in economic warfare and women as only the sustaining camp followers (Bagchi 2004:11).

In industrial world, women are concentrated in occupations that are particularly monotonous and tedious. In terms of wages, as stated above, they are paid less than men. Discrimination pertaining to appointment and promotion is a common occurrence (Laeeq-Futehally 1980:5). Women are also adversely affected by the system promoted by industrialization which generates new forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. Their exploitation is facilitated by the fact that they are poorly organized to assert their rights as employees and as workers. The efforts of bodies like the International Labour Organization is not successful because the dice in the employment markets of development societies are so heavily loaded in favour of men that regulations and requirements aimed at protecting women are easily bypassed.

According to the International Labour Office’s report (ILO 1995:18-20) women’s work fall outside labour organizations, social security systems and collective agreements which
were formulated to regulate formal employee-employer relationships. Women earn only about 50 to 80 percent of men’s wages. The gap is mainly on account of factors such as over-crowding of women in low-skilled, low-status job, the segmentation of the labour market into masculine and feminine occupations, women’s shorter working hours and unavailability for overtime, night work and shift work because of legal barriers and/or family responsibilities and so on.

**Export led Trade and Female Workforce**

As a result of globalization, women have entered the workforce in large numbers in states that have embraced liberal economic policies. A United Nations survey concludes that it is by now considered a stylized fact that industrialization in the context of globalization is as much female-led as it is export led. The overall economic activity rate of women for the age group 20-54 approached 70 per cent in 1996. The highest absorption of women has been witnessed in the export-oriented industrial sector. This is especially the case in Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and Special Economic Zones (SEZs), and in those labour-intensive industries that have relocated to developing countries in search of cheap labour (J. Oloka-Onyango and Udagama 1999:1).

Investors have demonstrated a preference for women in the “soft” industries such as apparel, shoe and toy-making, data-processing and semi-conductor assembling industries that require unskilled to semi-skilled labour. Such industries are also labour intensive, service oriented and poorly paid. Thus, according to the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) women bear the disproportionate weight of the constraints introduced under the yoke of globalization (Globalization, Gender Relations and the Situation of Women 2000:6/10).

Women are less interested in union participation and less political and less demanding and bound by the socio-cultural and religious processes. This is why women are more preferable by the owner and easily fit into such work where they are treated as cheap labour and are out of the labour laws. Women are thus remain a peripheral workforce in consumer-driven industries and continue to be the first to bear the brunt of cost-cutting
strategies by management. And thus, the most important aspects of globalization have been the growth of labour-intensive exports from developing Asian countries and the internationalization of industrial production. Such developments have drawn attention to the conditions of workers in developing countries, especially women (Brasted 2004:218-238).

*Globalization: A Threat to Women’s Survival*

The effect of globalization becomes a threat of women’s survival because they continue to suffer from the continuum of discrimination, abuse, violence, poverty, all of these compounded many levels deeper than for men. At this process of globalization, they play a dual role. They are either confined in the house and their works are considered economically unproductive and if they work outside they are paid less with insecurity of job, health and life. Most of the country often forgot that women are playing important role in contribution of GNP of the country.

According to the UN data (UN Human Development Report 1999) when compared with men, women are diverse group and overwhelmingly disadvantaged economically. Almost all the recent research studies conclude that majority of the worlds women earn significantly less than men. After looking at the booming of economy of Asia including Thailand, it is almost neglected to study its negative impact on people especially on women, who suffer the most in the whole process. Therefore, it is becoming an important field to study and find the solution to improve the situation to bring progress and prosperity in the society. During the era of globalization the study of women’s work force becomes an important area of study. Some of the important reasons are mentioned below:

1) Despite representing more than half of the work force, why are women in economically vulnerable condition?

2) Women are getting less than men for the same work. Why do majority of the countries neglect the ILO’s charters, especially equal pay for equal work?
3) Women are put into vulnerable situations and marginalized in every field by various discriminatory policies, practices and laws which are brought by globalization.

4) Slow implementation of the women’s positive gains and their issues especially in the field of economy to promote the world economy in the era of globalization.

5) Women’s political, social and economic rights are an integral and inseparable part of their human rights. But most countries still do not consider women’s rights seriously which mentioned in CEDAW, especially those relating to economic rights.

Thus, globalization offers a particularly rich context in which to analyze and assess its impact on women work force in general and the Thai women in particular, at the millennium. Neoliberal globalization has not resulted in progress, interdependence, equality, peace or happiness for the majority of the world’s population, and even less so for women who are worse off than ever. Every step of it is in favour of few section of the society. Jayati Ghosh (2001:1-4) says that the process of globalization primarily benefited to large capital. This is not globalization of the working class, of uniting the workers and creating international solidarity. In this whole process of globalization, because of the decreasing the role of the government and the import-export policies, not only employment affected, but unpaid labour (mostly performed by women) has increased.

It is undeniable that globalization has offered a particular context to study its impact on women work force in general and Thai women in particular because Thailand is one of the countries which has been influenced heavily by the process of globalization and is famous for her pool of women cheap labour in the market. In order to study this issues it is important to look deeply into historical overview of the country, what were the position of women and their role in the socio-economic and political transformation of the Thailand.
Historical Overview of Thailand

The kingdom of Thailand, formerly known as Siam, is the only country which was never colonized in the Southeast Asian region. However, monarchy enjoyed absolute rule until it was transformed into a constitutional monarchy in the early twentieth century.

The kingdom of Thailand is an independent country lies in the heart of Southeast Asia. It is bordered to the north by Laos and Myanmar, to the east by Laos and Cambodia, to the south by the Gulf of Thailand and Malaysia, and to the west by the Andaman Sea and Myanmar. Thailand has an area of 513,120 square kms. In the year 2000, it had 76 provinces, 795 districts. Thailand was the fourth largest country in Southeast Asia in terms of population i.e. according to 2000 census (NSO 2000), total population of Thailand is 60,606,947 out of which 30,762,077 were females. The sex ratio in the year 2000 is 97.0, which was lower than that in 1990 (98.5). The total literacy rate is 94.1 percent (2007 estimate), among this female literacy rate is 92.6 percent against the male literacy rate of 95.9 percent.

Thailand is ethnically not a homogeneous country. Its 60.6 million people (2000 census) consist of Mons, Khmers, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Malays, Indians (Hindus and Shikhs) and, more recently, many small groups from the Middle East. In addition to these, there are many communities of the Hill People, who have their own distinct cultures and norms. The people of Northeast (Isan) make up the largest ethnic group and are the poorest. About 95 percent follow Buddhism, the followers of Islam, the second largest religious group, account for 45, Christians for about half a percent and others for the second half of the percent (Robert N. Nearney 1975:220).
Thailand is divided into six regions, Northeast, Northern, West, Central Plains, South, and East. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration is in Central Plains. The regions vary considerably in population, wealth, and resources. The Northeast is the most populous region, and contains large plains that have been deforested over the last century. This region is regarded as the poorest in Thailand; it has poor soils and is subject to periodic droughts. Its economic potential may lie in its proximity to the neighboring countries of the Greater Mekong Sub-region. The people of the Northeast region are predominantly Lao Thai, with close cultural and language affinities to the neighboring Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR). The Northern region is underdeveloped but rich in mountain forests, minerals, and areas suitable for cultivating temperate crops. It
includes a number of successful tourism centers, particularly Chiangmai, and is home to most of Thailand’s ethnic minorities. The West is a small mountainous region bordering Myanmar. Gem mining, logging, and illegal opium cultivation are its principal industries, but its scenic attractions make it suitable for tourism development. The Central plains are the “rice bowl” of Thailand, characterized by fertile, irrigated farmlands and general prosperity. This region contains the smallest proportion of the population, if metropolitan Bangkok is excluded. The South and East regions contain important tourism centers. The East region contains major oil palm and rubber plantation industries. The South, bordering Malaysia, is more mountainous and under-developed, and is home to Thailand’s Muslim minority (Women and Human Development 1998).

Table 1: Comparative Human and Gender Development Indicators, Greater Mekong Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Cambodia</th>
<th>Lao PDR</th>
<th>Myanmar</th>
<th>Thailand</th>
<th>Vietnam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HDI Rank</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDI Rank</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Expectancy at birth</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>66.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult literacy</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>93.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real GDP per capita ($) (PPP)</td>
<td>1,110</td>
<td>2,571</td>
<td>1,130</td>
<td>7,742</td>
<td>1,236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population below poverty line</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross enrollment at all levels</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No safe water</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No health services</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No sanitation</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


According to Human Development Report, Thailand is ranked 58th out of 174 countries in the Human Development Index, higher than its GDP per capita rank of 77 (World Development Report 1995:163). Moreover in the Gender Development Index Thailand has shown a 78 percent improvement over 1970 (the largest improvement of any country
after Poland, Hungary and Russia). Thailand fares less well in Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) rankings placing 54th out of 116 countries. Specifically, only 3.7 percent seats in Parliament were held by women, 22.2 percent of administrators and managers were women, 53 percent in professional and technical positions were women. Thai society is a gendered class formation: its pattern of development exhibits both class and gender biases. Available studies show that women are disadvantaged in every way: they receive less income, less education, have higher rates of unemployment, and have less access to many occupations. They occupy an insignificant number of political and legal/administrative positions. Clearly the Human Development Report does not see capitalism or patriarchy as inherent structural problems (Bell 1997:61-62). Furthermore, the regional comparisons figures show that peace and the prosperity of the growing market economy have produced, overall, higher levels of human development in Thailand compared with neighboring countries.

At the approach of the twenty-first century, Thailand finds itself at a crossroads. What was traditionally an agrarian economy has, in the last few years been transformed into a vibrant Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) led export-oriented manufacturing base. Thailand has been an attractive location for labour-intensive production activities due to its abundance of low cost, low skilled labour. The boom in investment and economic growth, however, is having the consequence of raising wages, and with the appearance of new sources of cheap manufacturing labour in other emerging economies in Southeast Asia, Thailand will eventually lose its initial comparative advantage in low-cost labour (Charoenloet 1997:199). In order to understand the above statements, it is an important step to look into the stages of development or process of evolution of globalization in Thailand.

**Evolution of Globalization/ Economic Development in Thailand**

Thailand has engaged in international trade since Sukothai kingdom, the first kingdom of Thailand (1249-1438), trading largely with China. During the Ayudhtaya kingdom (1350-1767), Thailand's trading partners expanded to include Indonesia, Japan, India, Persia and European countries such as Portugal, Spain, Holland, England and France. The United...
States began to trade with Thailand in the early period of the Ratanakosin kingdom (1782-present). In the old days, Thai people lived at subsistence level in a self-sufficiency economy and paid tributes to the government with their surplus products. Exports of the surplus and imports were then monopolized by the government. Major exports were primarily agricultural and forestry products such as pepper, sugar, rice, wood, wax, horn, etc. Major imports included silk, ceramics, cloth, guns, handicrafts, etc. (Pupphavesa, 2002:1)

The steps of modernization in Thailand took place during the reign of King Rama (1868-1910). To counter imperialism and sustain Thailand's independence and sovereignty, King Rama V initiated and implemented social infrastructure investment, government reform, high level diplomatic relations and trade agreements.

International trade of Thailand was largely monopolized by the government and the aristocrats from 1855. The Bowring Treaty that Thailand signed with Britain in 1855 and similar treaties with other countries including United States, France, Portugal, Denmark, Holland, Prussia, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Spain, Japan and Russia that followed resulted in liberalizing Thailand's trade. Trade liberalization led to expansion of rice production and export, particularly in the Central Plain area, and the gradual transition from a subsistence-economy to a commercial economy. The commercialization was, however, slow and taking place only in the Central region although the railway installation helped open commercial opportunities for the North-Eastern and Northern Region. Most farmers tended to protect themselves against risks of food shortage and income instability by remaining the self-sufficient and sold only the surplus. Chinese merchants then played the role of middlemen taking the surplus from Thai farmers to commerce (Ibid:4). After the World War II Thailand's international trade expanded further in response to foreign demand. Agricultural production was more diversified and geared for exports. The cash economy expanded and replaced the self-sufficient economy. Thus industrialization process came in Thailand with different strategies.
The industrialization strategy in Thailand in the late 1950s focused on expanding investment in infrastructure and primary education, increasing agricultural output, and promoting import-substitution industries. A worsening balance of payments in the late 1960s led to a policy shift toward export promotion. (Introduction: Thailand’s Economic Situation in Brief 2008:9/19) But it cannot be denied that Thailand export-led industrialization helped it to become one of the fastest growing economies in the late 1980s. However, this whole process of development and industrialization benefited only few sections of people – most of male members of the society.

At this point, the case of Thailand is little different from other countries as the military dictatorship of Thailand had absolute control of the labour market and particularly the activities of the workers. The lowering of the workers’ wages (Charoenloet and Soonthorndhada 1988:210) became a permanent feature of the economic policy of the military regime. Consequently, the purchasing power of the workers, not to mention the peasants, was at its lowest. Inflation was kept in check and the rate of profit was high. These policies had very adverse effects on workers and their families, especially those in the lowest income bracket. In order to survive, all members of the families of male workers and peasants were forced to enter the labour market. In this way, women were increasingly drawn into the industrial circle and many of them were absorbed into the textile industry which experienced a boom in the 1970s. With this Promotion of Export (PE) in the early 1970s, the Thailand Government encouraged farmers to grow cash crops for export. The foreign exchange earned would be used to finance the imports of capital goods. During the second phase, 1970-80, there was a move towards the creation of export-oriented industries, such as the textile industry. In the Fourth Plan (1977-81), the government began to give importance to labour-intensive industries particularly to the agro-industry, to create more value-added (Ibid:211-212). Faced with the dilemma of sustaining growth through foreign financing, the Thai Government chose to intensify the export-oriented process by encouraging the export of manufactured goods instead of agricultural products. This strategy is known as Substitution of Exports (SE). However, this would only be viable if a thorough reform of the national economy were carried out. The latest development in industrial strategy is the privatization of the economy. This is
being encouraged, albeit quietly, supposedly to do away with the bureaucracy and management of the economy. The state would no longer intervene; instead it would allow market forces to determine the allocation of scarce resources. Therefore, in order to attract foreign investors, the Government of Thailand launches various policies and programmes which is leads to marginalize the poor sections of the society especially women. Thus, in the beginning of the 1990s, a combination of trade expansion, private investment, and tourism provided powerful driving forces that gave Thailand three consecutive years of double-digit growth. However, the economy began to slow down once again toward the mid-1990s which is known worldwide as “Asian Economic Crisis”. In order to recover from the economic crisis the Government of Thailand launched various short-term and long-term strategies. However, these could not cope up the problems effectively. Economic growth for 1997 was estimated to be negative, and forecasts for 1998 suggest a GDP decline of 7-8 percent. A $17.2-billion loan has been arranged through the International Monetary Fund (IMF), along with a reform package aimed at macroeconomic stabilization and tackling the serious problems of financial institutions. The emphasis of the structural adjustment loan on monetary and fiscal policies, along with financial sector reform, has been designed to assure price stability, a viable balance of payments, and sustainable growth (Introduction: Thailand’s Economic Situation in Brief 2008: 9/19).

In fact, development processes have been strongly male-biased and bypassed women led the international aid community to attempt to integrate women into the production (market) system so that the economy could grow more vigorously. Thailand enthusiastically embraced economic growth as the goal of their national policy. This process of “modernization” was invariably synonymous with urbanization, industrialization, and westernization. But as economic development progressed, not only did poverty and inequality persist but also social values eroded and women’s position worsened (Tantiwaramanond and Pandey 1997: 86).

The rapid growth of the Thai economy under the export-oriented strategy has not led to a ‘trickle down’ effect, but has tended to generate an increasing concentration of wealth
among the rich (the share of wealth among the affluent, the (richest 20 percent), rose from 49.3 percent in the 1970s to 54.9 percent in 1988 and 59 percent in 1994. The share of the poorest 20 percent fell from 40.5 percent in 1988 to 3.5 percent in 1994), and the hyperurbanization of Bangkok – the only metropolis attracting investment – has led to the marginalization of the poor and the rural areas. In other words, it has not solved the problems associated with the previous import-substitution strategy (Charoenloet 1997: 206). This whole process severely hits at women especially in the rural areas as male members of the family migrated to Bangkok and left the entire burden on women’s shoulder. Along with this, young migrated girls are attracted to the sex industry.

Unlike any other countries, Thai women have enjoyed the voting right before World War II. Regarding the spatial aspects of industrialization, Hussey expresses his views on Thai case as “unique among industrializing countries, because development is overwhelmingly concentrated in one urban centre” (Theobald 1997:190).

Rapid industrialization in Thailand has brought about structural change in the economy i.e. the integration of Thai economy into the world economic system with the combination of foreign market, foreign capital and foreign tourists. At this process of growth and development, everyone has almost forgotten the impact of this progress on women who has contributed major part in the country’s GDP.

This chapter starts with some theoretical issues which may help in our understanding of women’s work force and impact of globalization on them in Southeast in general and Thailand in particular. The problems which they are facing in the work force, and how far the process of globalization affects their position and act as an obstacles in their development and growth, will be discussed elaborately in the following chapters.

This gender parity is clearly reflected in Thai society. To start with, it is clearly a male dominated society. Women are always at a disadvantage in every field. In economic field their presence is virtually absent at the higher level, where the real power is lies. Thai women are getting less pay for the same work than Thai men.
Thai Women Work Force

Compared with their counterparts of the neighboring countries, Thai women are quite liberal and easily visible and also have no restriction in mobility in public places. Since the early 1960s, Thailand has undergone rapid development when Thai industrial policy had come to focus on labour intensive, export-oriented manufacturing industries. It is belief that along with national economic transformation, the status and role of Thai women has increased. But the problems and issues concerned with women as an effect of rapid economic transformation is hardly acknowledged and have not given sufficient attention by policy makers and scholars.

It is stated that (Tantiwiramanond and Pandey 1997:88-92) Thailand may not have a pronounced ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity, but it has distinct regional variation. The contemporary regional and rural-urban inequalities are added on the historical class inequalities which have existed in Thai society over seven centuries. The dichotomy - (clear separation in the traditional Thai social system between somewhat egalitarian village at the base and the hierarchical oligarch at the top) – affected the status and role of women in each stratum. And in Thailand, capitalist patriarchy overlays existing patriarchal institutions such as Buddhism and the family structure. It sustains particular form of exploitation and subordination which strengthen or replace the older ones. The export-oriented (neo-liberal) growth model promoted by the World Bank has dominated Thailand’s economic policy since the 1980s. The model has intensified regional, class, and gender biases in the society. It has biased the economy towards production for export markets, diminished the role of government, favored unfettered capitalist development, privileged the urban area, over the rural, and promoted tourism as a source of foreign exchange. The particular role of women in Thailand corresponds to the particular phase of capitalist accumulation in the world economy.

Thai women have played a major role in economic role of the country throughout history (ADB, Women and the Economy 2008:9/5). The kind of support parents expect from daughters and sons is different. Daughters are expected to take care of the family welfare, while sons are expected to bring honor and power to the family by ordaining as Buddhist
monks according to the belief that they will bring them to heaven in the next life. Buddhism does not allow ordination for women, so as to earn a similar favor; women may choose to improve their parent’s welfare in their earthly life by working hard to provide them with material comfort. The high level of female rural-to-urban migration may be explained not only in terms of the demand and preference for cheap female labor by certain industries, but also by cultural emphasis on the duty of a daughter to serve her parents.

61 percent of the world’s workers are employed in the informal sectors (farming, cottage industries, tools and garment makings etc.) and most of these workers are women in every country and Thailand is one the countries where highest number of women are in these fields. In the informal sector, domestic workers are estimated to number over two million in the greater Bangkok area, and are estimated to remit B 1,000 million to rural households each year. Home based subcontracting and small industries are another major source of informal economic activity, producing silk, textiles, garments, artificial flowers, wood carvings, umbrellas, and basketry, processing seafood, and cutting gems. Women workers predominate in these industries (Barbara Stark 2008:7/29). And most of these industries prefer relatively young female workers because of the nature of the work as it is repetitive, monotonous and does not require any physical effort; women work better than men in this kind of job because they work more quickly, are patient and attentive; the cost of female labour power is low as Thailand was the second lowest among the countries of Southeast Asia in terms, of wage of women; they require the intensive use of cheap and abundant labour which allows for maximization of profit in minimal time; and the abundant supply of young female workers.

Globalization and Thai Women Work Force

By the time of 1960s, Thailand was an attractive place for industrial investment for both domestic and foreign investors. Within a decade the number of factories increased more than three times in Bangkok and provincial cities, as shown in the following table:

\[
\text{T}1\text{H-16822}
\]
Table 2: Hierarchy Number of Factories Expanded during 1958-1968

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bangkok-Thonburi</th>
<th>Provincial</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>5,740</td>
<td>6,291</td>
<td>11,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>6,634</td>
<td>6,669</td>
<td>13,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>7,018</td>
<td>8,989</td>
<td>16,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>7,740</td>
<td>15,322</td>
<td>23,026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>8,305</td>
<td>16,252</td>
<td>24,557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>8,857</td>
<td>18,479</td>
<td>27,336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>9,513</td>
<td>19,917</td>
<td>29,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>12,001</td>
<td>32,257</td>
<td>44,258</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Large numbers of jobs are created by expansion of these factories but all of them are at the lower level. The occupational class of factory laborers arose in this period. The agricultural laborers were the source of these industrial laborers. Nitaya Onozawa (2001:85) argues that the migration of labourers from rural areas to the industrial areas in urban towns was also a recent phenomenon that started in this period.

By the 1970s, Thai industrial development policy had come focus on labour-intensive, export-oriented manufacturing industries, particularly garments and textiles. One important result of these policies was to open a new labour market for young women workers. The role and status of Thai women thus has changed over the past twenty years as part of the national economic transformation. It has been acknowledged, however, that many problems and issues concerning young women in manufacturing employment have not received sufficient attention from policy makers and scholars.

manufacturing industries opened up the new labor market for young women workers. Thai society has generally recognized a major economic role for women in the family and the local community but the process of globalization severely impacts the women’s work participation pattern. And their role is not acknowledged and sufficient attention is not getting from the policy makers, scholars and government. The government’s recognition of women as a specific target group in development did not occur until the fourth development plan, covering the years 1977 to 1981. And it is also noted that Thai labor laws give very minimal importance to two United Nations standards, i.e. United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women of 1967 and International Labour Organization’s 1975 declaration of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Women Workers.

**Women and Industrial Workforce**

Increasing significant number of women into the industrial workforce is one of the most notable features of development process of Thailand. It is one of the highest in the world with more than 76.3 percent female workforce which is higher than Hong Kong (48.6 percent), Japan (48.6 percent) and South Korea (44.9 percent) (Bello et al.1998:81-88). There has been a rapid increase in women workforce particularly in the manufacturing sector, where Thailand’s rate of growth of total industrial output and employment has been the fastest. In the year 1989, 50 percent of the total GDP was contributed by women from various events. Despite manufacturing sector, if we include the sectors of tourism, entertainment, and sex industries which play an important role in Thailand’s economy, the role women is even more remarkable than we calculated. The active participation of Thai women in various sectors is clearly understood with the table given below:

**Table 3: Percentage of Women Workers in Different Sectors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Export Item</th>
<th>Percentage of Women Work Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Garments and Footwear</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Textiles</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It has been stated that industrialization has adversely affected women in traditional societies (Laeeq-Futehally 1980:5). Here we can look into the conditions of Thai women who are working in the factories at vulnerable state. Women are concentrated in the occupations that are particularly monotonous and tedious. They have been discriminated against in matters of appointment and promotion and paid less than men for same work. Their exploitation is facilitated by the fact that they are poorly organized to assert their rights as employees and as workers. The efforts of bodies like the ILO that reaches out to protect their rights and interests are defeated because the dice in the employment markets of development societies are so heavily loaded in favor of men that regulations and requirements aimed at protecting women are easily neglected. Apart from these disadvantages of industrialization, women are adversely affected by the fact that the value system that industrialization promotes tends to generate new forms of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Women accounted for only 11.6 percent of the officially employed labor force in manufacturing in the late 1980s, but they accounted for 80 percent of the total employment in ten of the largest export commodities: canned and frozen fish products, textiles, jewellery, cotton, fabric, footwear, electrical parts, leather goods, frozen foods and knitwear (Bell 1997:65). Majority of the women under these occupations have low education and less salaries and work in hazardous and unhygienic conditions. Thus, Thai women helped in many ways, offset the country’s balance of payment deficits. The average male wage in manufacturing in the Bangkok area was US$250 per month (US$170 outside of Bangkok) and for women US$168 a month (US$112 outside of Bangkok). The rate of exploitation for women was around 120,000 percent. From the beginning of the development process, planners have largely ignored the issues of equality in order to boost economic growth. The migration from rural areas occurs not
because of industrial replacement but because women (especially young women) are pushed out by poverty and an overexploited natural environment. These women are spending little time to search jobs and take up any job available in the market without thinking the negative consequences only to remit their parents as soon as possible. These women constitute 80-90 percent of the labor force in the highest foreign exchange – earning sectors, export manufacturing and tourism, with the majority of them are working in industry for less than the minimum wage. The consequences of all these are clearly with the increasing number of health problem and of AIDS infected patients (Ibid:65). Thai women are using their bodies to reserve rural poverty where the government has failed to do so. Indeed the state created the development policies which have made this flesh trade necessary. Tourism is one of the largest earners of foreign exchange.

**Women as Main Contributor of Economy**

This is an outstanding fact that women are contributors of nation’s economy. This statement is proved by various available data, reports and research work. With the increasing pace of globalization women’s entering into the workforce has also been increasing in different sectors.

**Table 4: Percentage of Women Workers in Selected Groups of Occupations, in 1960 and 1970**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1960 (%)</th>
<th>1970 (%)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional, technical, and Related Workers</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>+ 7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>+ 19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>- 0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Fishing, Hunting, Logging and Forestry</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>- 0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Equipment Operators, and Related Fields</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>- 0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen, Production Process Workers, and Labourers</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>+ 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Workers</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>+ 4.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that, there are three groups of occupations in which the percentages of women workers outstandingly increased. The increased percentages among them were: the Professional group 7.3 percent, the Clerical group 19.5 percent, and the Services group 4.6 percent. However, women are paid less than their male counterparts for the same work.

According to the official labor force statistics (ADB, Women and the Economy 2008: 9/5), women exceed men only in the category of unpaid family worker, which disguises the economic contribution of women to household enterprises such as farming, fishing, trading and handicrafts. Women have made a substantial contribution to Thailand's economic development. Labor force participation rates in the 13-14, 15-19 and 20-24 age groups are significantly higher for women. Female production workers comprise between 70 and 90 percent of the labor force in Thailand's export industries. These industries prefer younger ones with perfect eyesight and better education and require women to retire at 55 years. In 1993, there were 12 million workers in manufacturing, commerce, and service industries, of whom slightly more than half were women (6.42 million). The overall pattern is for large enterprises to pay women the minimum wage or higher, but medium and small enterprises, which employ about two-thirds of women workers, typically pay women about 60 percent of the minimum wage. Women predominate in the lowest income group (less than B 7500) in the manufacturing and service sectors. Women are a minority in the upper income group (over B 5,000), particularly in manufacturing and agricultural industries. The very idea of equality before law is ignored and not legislates in case of women in the work areas. It is estimated that 11.2 million Thai women work force do “homework” through a “putting-out” system with every low piece wages without legal protection. Much of this work is linked with the export-led industries which has forged the economic miracle. One of the studies has shown that 7 out of the leading export industries have linkages with the putting-out system in this informal economy. This represents another, almost invisible, aspect of the super-exploitation of Thai women in export-led growth. Thailand is the world’s largest producer of rice, tapioca, and rubber, and a leading producer of sugar, shrimp, and canned fish—all female labor intensive industries. Agriculture industries are the basis of some 25 percent of
manufacturing activities in Thailand. Among rural women, labor participation rates are highest (approximately 80 percent) in the older groups of 30-34, 35-39, 40-49 (Ibid.).

Here we need to ask a question that why women of the young age group’s work force are higher in urban areas and older age group’s in the rural Thai? And women’s access to credit differs in the informal and formal sectors. Informal credit is accessible to women. Money-lenders in rural areas often demand evidence of a wife’s knowledge before approving a loan requested by her husband. This is because women are known to control family expenditure and are considered more credit-worthy for the disbursement and repayment of loans.

In 1992, 16.8 percent of Thailand population lived in households headed by women. But in 1994, the percentage of poor headed households and female headed households was similar. Since women have better life expectancy, this may indicate that households headed by elderly women are the most disadvantaged. Because of women’s longer life expectancy (the age group of 60-70, the proportion of men and women is 37.7 compared to 10) and more marginal economic situation in the formal economy, women will bear most of the undesirable consequences of trends (Ibid.).

Bhassorn Limanonda (2000:247-264) stated that women were preferred employees for the new jobs such as clothing and shoe manufacturing, the sorting of transistors, the assembly of pocket calculators and the handling of microchips for computer components. Away from their family and community and their support, these women are leading an extremely vulnerable positions in the work place. The economic downturn since 1997 has also demonstrated that unskilled women workers remain the most disposable workers. They are often the first laid-off and few have access to severance or redundancy payments.

Above all female workers played an important role at the lower levels of the industrial and work hierarchy in the context of flexible labour markets and the ‘cost-effective sourcing policies’ of multinationals (Kurian 1999:178-79). Flexibility and lower fixed
costs could be realized by employing female workers on the temporary basis and/or by subcontracting low-skilled labour-intensive work to firms (affiliates or locally owned) which had to supply products at short notice and which usually then hired women to do the work. Finally, the scale of production at the lower levels of subcontracting was smaller and it was assumed that workers/women here were less likely to be involved in labour organization or trade unions, something that was often considered to be anti-management. These are the main reasons why multinational companies prefer women in the industries.

**Instability and Insecurity of Job**

Voravidh Charoenloet's (2005:121-140) article "Globalization and Informalization in Thailand in Workers in the Informal Sector: Studies in Labor History, mentioned about one of the research papers on “Economic Crisis, Layoffs and Social Inequality” (Charoenloet, Thanachaiserthavid and Chaowilai, 2001), it is found out that of the 1,154 workers laid off because of the economic crisis, 72.9 percent were women. 45 percent had previously worked in textiles and garment industries. Many especially women, had difficulties in finding new jobs because of old age, lack of skills and low education. The majority of the women laid off was married and have children. With no employment, family income was adversely affected while the cost of living was rising. During economic crisis and afterwards, the sector which produced the highest number of the layoffs as reported were textile and garment and electronic which employed the majority of women. Workers are facing more serious problems of declining standard of living and increasing job security. Due to lose of job and inability to fulfill expected family expenditure, there were increased family violence and many husbands left their women alone. In fact, once laid off, women workers are loss the status of being regular workers and come under the category of temporary workers and earn lower wage (80 percent earned less than 5,000 baht a month) without welfare benefits while they had the same working hours, i.e. 8 hours a day and 6 days a week. At this point “home-based work” system is increased in number. Effects of the 1998-99 crisis on subcontracting are largely related to decline or loss of employment, decline of orders and decrease in piece rate wages.
The Kader and Eden case (one of the largest businesses in Thailand where 4,000 women were worked) are the tragic incidents and it clearly shows that Thai workers are cheap not only because of low wages, but also because their lives are considered very cheap and they are very much away from the legal protection. Most of the foreign companies are in contact through subcontractors and then subcontractors provide work to the workers in informal ways where majority of them are women. These workers cannot access the social security and welfare system because they are out of the reach of legal protection and the companies are not allowed to set up trade union.

In the era of globalization women’s participation in the workforce is affected by breaking the dominance of agriculture through industrialization of economy (Limanonda 2000:256-257). Over the entire period of 1970-96 the proportion of women engaged in unpaid family work was more than double that of men. Women continue to concentrate in the agricultural sector (more than 50 percent of women are in this sector) with traders, service and professional sectors being the next largest employers of women. In contrast, the proportion of men categorized as employers, governments employees and small businessmen as much higher than that of women. These figures indicate the continuing difficulty for women of gaining access to the wage sector of the economy. Those within these sectors often find that, despite the legal guarantees of equal pay for equal work women usually receive on average lower pay than men who are engaged in the same time of work. Women continue to predominate in the lowest rugs of the salary or wage scales according to the National Statistical Office (NSO 1990b; 1991; 1997a). For example, in 1994 the average monthly per capita income by gender indicates that where women in urban areas earn 5669 baht, men earn 8995 baht. In rural areas women earn 1494 baht compare to their male counterpart’s 3238 baht (NSO 1997a:77).

Difficulties in Workplace

According to a report of Committee for Asian Women (1991:74-76) on “Many paths one goal: organizing women workers in Asia”, clearly explained the vulnerable situation of the Thai women workers like health, sanitation, sexual abuses, less chances of promotion, overwork time, maternity leaves, lack of women in trade union and associations etc. It
further mentioned that Thai women workers are majorly found in textile, garment, food and beverages and electronics, etc. which are the major export items of Thailand. These industries recruit women labor for tedious, monotonous routine work because women can be paid low wages and are easily controlled.

Furthermore, with the strong control of the government and the lack of organized labor unions, the laborers were badly exploited, especially the women and child laborers. Labor laws were usually violated. The wages were low without any welfare, and the work places were in a low-sanitary condition. Nikom Chandravithun (1968) who was Head of Labor Department for many years describes the working condition of female industrial workers in the small and middle sized factories that,

"... workers use half of their working space as combined bedroom and kitchen. This makes it very un-hygienetic and creates fire hazard. Some women, who have small children, bring them into the work place. Sometimes, the whole family works in the same place and the children's ages range from 10-14 years. ...In textile, candy and bakery factories women work about 12 hours per day when orders are urgent and there is no overtime pay. In Construction work and road building, women work as diggers, cement mixers, gravel and sand carriers, iron cutters, floor polishers and some also work in high and dangerous places”


According to the study of Mary Beth Mills (2005:118) union organizing is legal in Thailand but only 3 to 6 percent of the private sector industrial workforce is unionized. Among them hardly women members are active, and they are not allowed to participate actively in the union and also are discouraged to come up in the hierarchical structure. At present Thai women are facing the problems in every walk of life as a worker, as a woman, as migrant in different social environments. The author further expresses that Thai women’s labor activism engages a distinctly gendered politics of place.

Rachel Kurian (1999:175-176) stated in his article “Women’s work in Changing Labour Markets: the case of Thailand in the 1980s”, the pattern of Thailand’s export-led industrialization with trade liberalization and high input of foreign direct investment
gives considerable influence on local labor force by giving importance to horizontal labor segmentation i.e. unskilled and cheap women labor. The vertical segmentation of the labor market was most evident in the increasing significance of hierarchization to informalization of the labor market. Data on female labor-intensive industries (where the proportion of female labor is higher than the proportion of female labor in total employment) in 1980 and in 1989 reflect the increasing importance of women in those manufacturing and service industries that were linked directly or indirectly via subcontracting to foreign direct investment. These industries represented 93 percent of total female employment and generated 47.7 percent of GDP. By 1992, 80 percent of the workers in seven of the ten leading export industries were female.

Thailand is one of the countries who has not been signed the International Labor Organization Convention on Homeworkers, 1996 (Asian Development Bank 2002). Thai government is hesitant to regulate the practice of subcontracting, as this may adversely affect their international competitiveness. Thai labor laws therefore cover only the formal sector and offer little protection to these home based workers. Under this situation, many companies use subcontracting arrangements, which have led to an increase in home-based piece-work arrangements for women and avoid paying higher wages, maternity and leave privileges, and other benefits. These arrangements weaken the bargaining leverage of both home-based workers and other female workers in the formal sector. The whole process is hitting women from every angle.

Due to the very nature of production the easiest target by the export-oriented factories are women as they are less interested in politics, and union formation. For this perspective, it is clear why the labour market is one of the main channels through which globalization as impacted on women workers in developing countries.

After looking at the available literature on women in general and Thai women in particular we can say that still, women are marginalized in every fields. The patriarchal domination leaves no room for women to allow them freedom to live life of their own choice. Above all this, globalization seriously affect on the work force of women
representing as a cheap labor with the growing industries. Women clearly stand out as distinct group whenever we study and analyze the impact of globalization. The current problem faced by Thai women is varied in numbers and occupations.

Economic growth has been embraced enthusiastically as national policy by Thailand and this whole process of modernization results to many problems in the country such as persistence of poverty, widening gap between the poor and the rich besides eroding the social values and these whole process adversely affect women in every fields.

The rapid industrialization of the Thai economy over the past few decades coupled with the globalization of the international labor market, leads to increased migration into city area and the male members of the family into rural areas left the works on the shoulder of Thai women and women are facing double burden of work in Thai society. And large number of young and less educated girls migrates to the cities in search of jobs in order to support of their family. These migrant young girls are mostly pulled in the urban based EPZs and SEZs, where they are marginalized and kept in the vulnerable condition and victimizing them economically and sexually. We can see these fact clearly in Thailand, as the sex worker of women is increasing as the tourism industry is attracting millions of tourists in this global era and earning high rate of foreign exchange.

Thailand as a country, which embraced liberal economic policies, attracted large amount of women in workforce as cheap labor. We can clearly find this in the export oriented industrial sectors, especially Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and Special Economic Zones (SEZs), the place which are looking for cheap labor. Women are required in the fields where they need unskilled and semi-skilled labor such as garments and textile, shoe and toy making, electronic factories. Such industries are also labor intensive, service oriented and poorly paid. Thus, according to the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) women bear the disproportionate weight of the constraints introduced under the yoke of globalization.
Besides having low level of education and skills, women are also treated unequally in terms of opportunity for training and promotion than men and making them disadvantaged in the manufacturing sector and ill-equipped to face the new challenges of globalization.

As a result of globalization, large number of people enter into informal sector, where the labor conditions are worse than the export oriented factories as well as a sector where labor are not benefited as they do in the traditional employment such as criteria of protection and security in job. Under the rays of globalization, number of cheap labor in various sectors is increasing especially women and beside this due to loss of jobs of men and reduction in the traditional employment sector income most of the women are flooded into the labor market. Non firm income contributes more than 50 percent of the total income of poor families in rural Thai and becoming a major component of the informal economy. These kinds of works are for women by migrating in cities as hawkers, food vendors, and domestic workers. Accurate figures of these women and their work condition is difficult to obtain.

Thailand is known for its rich history, culture and tradition and recently because of its economic miracle, which, in actual, has been built up largely on the backs on women. This economic miracle which has been bestowed by globalization, a capitalist patriarchy, is a kind of development model where women are employed as cheap labor in several areas such as industrial production, agriculture, unwaged homework, subsistence production and lead a hazard and vulnerable life and exploit them mentally and sexually.

In modern sectors like finance, corporate business, market trading, university teaching and medicine, which often are considered as male-dominated realms in most of the countries, Thai women are visibly participated and the number are increasing these days. This sometimes gives to outsiders the pictures of Thai women as liberal, enjoying high social status, independent and success with country’s road of progress in industrialization and growing economy. But the real picture is different. After looking at the few number of women’s visibility at high level in Bangkok, it will be wrong to assume that Thai
women are benefiting in the era of globalization. At this point, we cannot ignore the problems faced by Thai rural women that due to globalization, their men moved to city in search of jobs and women are taking double burden of work i.e. in field – agriculture and household works. Thai women are independent and economically active from the very beginning but they are facing severe problems due to pattern of industrialization and globalization. Even if we considered the women in the visible position in the city areas also, we will find most of them are not allowed to enjoy equal share in administrative and decision-making process. Thai women received intense and concrete attention of their role in development only in the Fourth-Five Year national Economic and Social Development Plan of 1977-81.

The producers of Thailand are forced to make adjustments like introduction of new technology and labor lay-off, to remain competitive in the world market by the globalization of manufacturing production and changes in technological and demand conditions. These reduce the demand of the low skilled young women from the poor provinces, whose family income is almost depending on them. The economic crisis along with existing Structural Adjustment Policies put pressure on Thai women to compensate for men’s loss of income from the formal sector.

Due to lack of women in the higher rung of the hierarchical employment sector, it is always to address the gender related issues and improvements of women’s issues and their benefits. In order to improve the status of women especially in economic rights, it is essential to increase the number of women at the higher level of workforce because women are more empathetic and compassionate towards the problems faced by other women. Women usually find their counterparts more approachable to speak about their problems. It is therefore becoming an important issue to address and increase the number of women at the higher level of workforce in this era of globalization and also to find out the solution to improve the status of women in society.

After looking at all the problems faced by women in workforce particularly by Thai women in this growing process of globalization, we need to ask some questions, like:
(a) After looking at the Human Development Report of 2003, we can conclude that large numbers of women participate in labour force, especially in EPZs, where cheap labour is in demand and agriculture and unpaid works as well. Here we can see that women work force is increasing only at lower level of jobs where power is restricted. The problem here is that women’s labour participation is increasing in every field but why only at the lower rungs of jobs and why few women stand in the top positions of the hierarchical structure of the system?

(b) As part of the race to the bottom to attract FDI, some countries, including Thailand have either exempted EPZs altogether or relaxed existing national labour safeguards vis-à-vis EPZs. Needless to say, such actions are in complete violation of ILO standards encapsulated in the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998).

(c) Globalization which is patriarchy in character is standing on the sweat of Thai workers, especially Thai women. But women are getting much more less than what they deserve and less than their counter part men in terms of wage and benefit for the same work. This issue is almost ignored by everybody, including governments, academic research and civil society sectors in Thailand.

(d) Despite being one of the countries representing the highest number of women workforce in the world, it is tragic to find little data and research work on women work force. This matter itself becomes an evident for the apathy on women’s issues in Thailand.

(e) Thailand is one of the countries among Southeast Asia where three aspects tradition, modernity and international export emphasis- plays an important role in shaping the lives of Thai women.

The situation of women in such a changing scenario of globalization looks bleak, with no one seeming to be concerned about the fact that women constitute 40 percent of the world’s work force in agriculture, 2.5 per cent in industry and 33 percent in the service sector (ADB, Women and the Economy 2008:9/5). Everyone has almost forgotten that women farmers in developing countries grow at least 50 percent of the world’s food. At present, globalization which is gender bias seems to be the major roadblock to achieving
sustainable development in every department of development and growth of women. This type of situation can be clearly examined in the Thai society. Therefore, it is becoming more and more crucial to examine,

(a) The social status of women in Thailand
(b) To explore the relationship between globalization and its impact on women workforce in Thailand
(c) To study women’s position in the hierarchical structure of workforce in Thailand and
(d) Finally, to provide and seek a probable answer for the development of women’s social being, thereby enabling them a participation in the hierarchical structure of employment in every field.

The contribution of Thai women in the national economy and other field has not been acknowledged by academicians, media, policy makers etc. In fact most academic studies, even the most recent ones, are silent on the subject of women and their sincere contribution. Women remain largely invisible in major important streams and ignored them as they considered as second class citizen.

In the process of globalization, we can see clearly that some parts of the world grow fantastically rich and most parts grow desperately poorer (here we should not forget that majority of the poor in the world is women and child), at this point, we need to ask questions about the true meaning of globalization. Does it mean in the existing world of opportunities which is the target of globalization is the place where a few get to have all the comforts and riches on the basis of their geographical location and race, while the rest literally clean provide service to them like a slave? Is it giving equal opportunities to all in order ensure equal access to the benefits of trade and investment, and to fairness, equity and justice? Is it giving essential of living to poor or else snatching it from them?

In the changing scenario of international economy women have become primary producers of the surplus value of cheap commodities which constitute a large part of
international trade and which pay for imported capital goods needed for industrialization. Despite their sincere efforts they are still marginalized in every walk of life.

Ideology of neoliberalism which has come as new version of development i.e. globalization is responsible for impoverishing millions of women, maiming and killing many and making life more difficult for most, then endow problem in every streams of life for the poor Third world countries and among them specially women. In order to solve this we must begin to face the harsh reality, cooperate to each other, instead of pretending it does not exist.

On the light of Monitoring Report of United Nations, World Population and Trends, role and status of women in employment is not just a matter of women’s liberation per se. In essence the subject deserves careful consideration both in the context of a country’s overall development planning and population dynamics. In particular, women’s work patterns are found to be related to childbearing patterns, as well as to the distribution of employment for women in terms of occupation, industry and location of work. It also clearly shows the existing interrelationships between women’s role, status as well as their problems in employment and fertility, mortality and migration levels. On the other hand, in the context of an overall development strategy, women workers represent an important potential of human resources. Women have contributed substantial amount in the economic growth and social development in the society on variety of occupations – including those not traditionally considered as feminine. The same trend is followed at the family level, women as the basic unit of a society; take a major responsibility of home work and raising children. Yet, their position, status and contribution are not recognized in the society. Therefore, these issues need an appropriate analysis and solutions.

Economic empowerment is a necessary condition for the empowerment of women and other disadvantaged peoples. As the contribution of women work force in the development process of every country in this era of globalization, has become an important aspect, this study makes an attempt to analyse the issues of women work force in the process of globalization and its impact on them from various angles with reference
to Southeast Asian women in general and Thai women in particular and their changed status in the society with the increase level of marginalization, commodification and feminization of women force. Therefore, there is urgency in studying the impact of globalization on women from various directions on the Thai women which is considered as cheap labour. We need to examine the obstacles, economic policies, labour laws of the government as well as the foreign firms towards women.

**Theoretical Context**

The study of women’s work force in a society involves a complex of multi dimensional thoughts. Complexities and predicament of women in general in the globalization process, and Thai women in particular have been highlighted in the above sections.

Women have been marginalized in every walk of life. In order to put issue of impact of globalization on Thai women into perspective, one has to examine how globalization brings about the feminization of labor, especially as cheap labor. It is also pertinent to examine how the process has impacted and transformed the structure and concept of labor. One has to understand that globalization is a process of restructuring of an international sexual division of labor in which third world women serve both as producers of surplus value of cheap manufacture and as objects of (sexual) consumption (through prostitution) for First World men. For purpose of the study, a Marxist Feminist theoretical perspective shall be followed.

Liberal Feminism affirms that society remains structured in ways that favors men and disfavors women in the competitive race for the goods with which our society rewards us power, prestige and money (Saxena 2000:14-15). This school of thought is against the excuses or justification employed to keep women in a lesser place. They argue that society should not only compensate women for past injustices, but also eliminate socio-economic as well as legal impediments to women’s progress today. However, this structural school of thought cannot give an adequate explanation regarding exploitation of women in the era of globalization and a pragmatic solution for its removal.
Marxist – Feminism does not consider women oppression as a result of the intentional act of the individual. According to this school of thought, women oppression is a product of the political, social and economic structures associated with capitalism. They argue that women’s subordination is a form of oppression, resulting from the institution of class society and maintained into the present because it serves the interest of capital. The major thrust of the Marxist-Feminism is towards the abolition of gender distinction in market.

**Labour Segmentation along Gender Lines**

Marxist-Feminism argues that labor markets in most industrialized and developing countries is characterized by segmentation along gender lines. At the same time, women are disproportionately represented in certain labor-intensive and repetitive segments of production and services in labor markets of industrialized and developing countries. According to Rachel Kurian (1999:175-176), labor segmentation, or existence of separate sub-labor markets, can take place along horizontal and vertical lines. Horizontal segmentation occurs when the production process is separated into different ‘segments’ according to the labor process. Vertical segmentation can occur by personal characteristics: sex, age, experience, education, personal connections or race.

Adoption of ‘flexible labor policies’ (Kurian 1999:175) by developing countries to attract foreign investors and promote efficiency and profitability of production resulted in greater vertical segmentation of the labor market. Some workers became more privileged in terms of wages and conditions of work while majority of the workers were eased out of employment through rationalization and/or to be employed in relatively vulnerable categories of work. The whole process adversely affected women’s labor force and left women in a vulnerable position.

**Low Wage**

In terms of wages women are less paid than the male counterparts even for equivalent work. Women have also tended to be at the lowest rung of the industrial hierarchy. The Marxist – Feminist are against the argument of the human capital school of thought these differences are on account of lower skills and productivity of women workers. Anne
Phillips and Barbara Taylor (Phillips and Taylor 1986) argue that skill definitions are saturated with sexual bias. This obviously results in a situation in which the work that women do is viewed as inferior because it is women who do it. Clearly, gender in itself is the cause of segmentation, although this is also mediated by segmentation along other lines, such as age, ethnicity, color and race. In the third world work force women belong to the lower level with no power and authority with less security and pay.

**Feminization of Production and Consumption**

Marxist Feminist draws a correlation between a country's economic growth rate and the growth rate of women's manufacturing employment. The phenomenon is called 'feminization of industry' as a reflection of the growing share of women workers in the manufacturing work force. The term also means that, increasingly, the working conditions offered to women workers would come to resemble the kind that were earlier offered to industrial workers with low wages and uncertainty of employment (Banerjee 2004:72).

Feminization of production rests ultimately on the patriarchal subordination of women in factories, commercial sex work, and unpaid agricultural and household labor. In many developing countries, subordination has been exacerbated as a result of adoption of "structural adjustment" programs in the 1980s, with its emphasis on export oriented growth and tourism as sources of foreign exchange of industrialization.

Feminization of consumption is the commodification of women through the growth of Madison Avenue style advertising images, and through the growth of consumption which affects women's lives as mothers, wives, and partners. It has meant the transformation of the lives of women through the breakdown of the traditional family. Many women in the developing countries have become objects of consumption through men's clubs, tourism and the international traffic in women.

This theoretical understanding shall underpin the study of "The impact of globalization on women work force in Thailand".