CHAPTER II

GLOBALIZATION AND WOMEN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Globalization is a complex phenomenon. It is difficult to understand the concept of globalization. Various known scholars defined the meaning of globalization in different ways depending on the situation, culture, economy and people of the country. Amiyan Kumar Bagchi (2004:4) expresses globalization in the sense of ordinary human beings experiencing and being enriched by influences emanating from all over the world, is coterminous with human history. And globalization is the opening of trade connection between different countries.

According to Joseph Stiglitz (2002:3), globalization is 'the closer integration of the countries and people of the world which has been brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communication, and the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge and to (to a lesser extent) people across borders'. To him, globalization as a force is beyond human control, the next logical, almost natural stage in human development. The idea is that there are a few things wrong with it but, essentially, as John Bellamy Foster asserts, it is as though 'globalization [is a] process that is unfolding from everywhere at once with no centre and no discernible power structure' (Msimang 2004:172).

Slightly different from the above mentioned ideas of globalization, Naomi Klein (2002:28) refers to globalization as 'part of the continuum of colonization, centralization and loss of self-determination that began more than five centuries ago'. Tong Chee Kiong and Lian Kwen Fee (2003:58) defined Globalization as a logical development of capitalist expansion. It is a post capitalist phenomenon in which people’s lives have become consumption-conscious and utilitarian-oriented. Globalization is about making things global. It is the process of creating languages, services, and products that apply not just to an individual neighbourhood or city or country, but to the whole world.
Stephen Castles' (2000b:271) defined globalization as 'the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life ...' manifest in '... the rapid increase in cross-border flows of all sorts: financial, trade, pollution, media, products and people'. He views migration as '... a result of the integration of local communities and national economies into global relationships'.

In the same line, Young Ken (2004) also argued that Globalization is more than an expansion in the levels of cross-border flows. That, and even the increasing interconnectedness of economic activity, could have advanced within existing modes of capitalist socio-economic and political organization. Globalization, however, is leading to an accelerated reorganization of production, distribution and exchange on a transnational scale. It is manifest in new modes of organization of capitalist enterprises and bureaucratic institutions.

In the broadest sense Globalization is nothing new. According to Alison M. Jaggar, (2001:298) the contemporary form of globalization did not appear de novo in 1989, with the collapse of so-called communism. It did not even originate in 1945 at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, where the major institutions to administer the global economy were established, including the International Monetary Fund (the IMF), the World Bank, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which was the precursor to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Rather than being an unprecedented phenomenon, contemporary globalization may be seen as the culmination of long-term developments that have shaped the modern world. Specifically, for the last half millennium intercontinental trade and population migrations have mostly been connected with the pursuit of new resources and markets for the emerging capitalist economies of Western Europe and North America. Further Alison (Ibid: 299) mentioned that European and U.S. colonialism profoundly shaped the world we inhabit today. It produced the neoliberal philosophy that provides the rules for the war game currently known as "globalization," and it landscaped the highly uneven terrain on which that game is played.
Since last two centuries, globalization has been going on and spreading into the entire world and goes in parallel with the rise of modern imperialism, colonialism, industrialization by giving more emphasis on economic and technology change. And now we can see the process of Americanization (ubiquitous establishment of MacDonald’s restaurants, to genetically altered foods, the music of MTV, Hollywood films, Apache helicopters, “Baywatch” and the English language.) as same as globalization or modernization in every aspect. Because it is a condition rather than a policy, it must be taken as a systematic characteristics and therefore qualitatively different from situations that can be reserved by political decision or wished away by appeals to ideology or gender (Afkhami 2004:58).

According to Susan Hawthorne, globalization is a force that rides on the back of earlier waves of global exploitation, including European colonization spanning the previous 500 years. A new kind of liberalization began to emerge in the years following World War II (Hawthrone 2004:244). Therefore, globalization is not a new phenomenon. Economic globalization is not a new process either. The strategy of globalizing policies, economies, systems and beliefs, which we see so prominently today, is not new and it has not only been used for imposition and domination. The socialist, pacifist, anti-colonial, pro-human rights, feminist and other emancipatory movements of the past centuries have also aspired to the globalization of their visions, but they have not called these dreams ‘globalization’ (Facio 2004:135-36).

With the emergence of new kind of globalization in the years following World War II, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank were created. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) under the WTO enshrined the fundamental principle that export goods should freely enter into the importing country based on the premise that free trade would benefit equally all WTO member countries.

On the contrary, what has happened can be best described as ‘unfair trade’. For instance, while annual global trade had reached US$7 trillion in 1999, the total exports of
developing countries represented only 28 percent, while the share of the least developed countries was 0.5 percent; North America and the EU had the largest share of world trade in goods and commercial services (Del Rosario-Malonzo 2001:2). Therefore, earlier the strategy of globalization is to demolish national economic barriers, empowering financial institutions and transnational companies as never before. However, it has never been effective. In the very beginning, globalization made people believe that it will bring welfare and benefit to the entire humanity with free ‘exchange’ of people, goods and services without making any discrimination. But in true sense the globalization we are witnessing in the twentieth century and in the beginning of the twenty-first century shows that the only thing which has been globalizing is “market” and the free circulation of capital. This rapid pace of globalization has been done in the name of ‘financial globalization’. The whole process therefore, hits forcefully to the Third world countries and among them the condition of the women is becoming worse than ever.

The vision of globalization is by no means an uncontested terrain. Based on the Washington Consensus of the World Bank, the IMF, and the Treasury of the United States, the principle of globalization advocated liberalization of trade as one of the conditions of structural adjustment and reform. The breaking down of artificial barriers to the flow of goods, services, capital, knowledge and to (a far lesser extent) people has benefited some countries, but the majority of the developing countries remain unconvinced. The philosophy of globalization, often described as free market fundamentalism, is seen to contribute to the swelling numbers of people living below the poverty line (Mitter 2005:31).

At present, globalization is influencing every countries of the world in some way or the other. Real forces of globalization and their influences are felt everywhere today through free trade, free mobility of both financial and real capital, and rapid diffusion of products, technologies, information and consumption patterns. Along with this, governments’ policy choices have shifted in favour of openness of trade and financial flow like regulation of industry, privatization of state-owned enterprises and lower public spending etc. Liberalization policies coupled with technological advances in communications
accelerated the impact of economic integration, thus eroding conventional boundaries particularly that of the national state.

More than five thousand years ago the process of patriarchy had begun, and has continued with such success that today there is no question that patriarchy is global. Because globalization itself is very much patriarchal in character, as it has benefited and encouraged male suitable tasks and these processes is spreading everywhere. Globalization does not operate in a vacuum but has to contend with older and entrenched forms of operation. Globalization brings to bear upon the prevailing patriarchal system and the existing gender relationships at the economic, political and cultural levels. ‘Globalization’ offers a particular model of modernity. As, in a patriarchal system, the onus of upholding and preserving ‘traditional’ identities generally lies upon the women, any paradigm of modernity has a special implication of women and has to reach out to them so that traditions may be reformulated: whether as a strategy for cooption or to inaugurate radical breaks in them. Proponents of modernity also have to negotiate with traditionalities. The process of globalization as a project for ‘modernity’ might thus have a special significance for women, whether they are the subjects or the objects in the process (Bhattacharya 2004:ix). Cut in subsidies, leaving distribution to the market and targeting the ‘poorest of the poor’ are considered as the three key features of the policies being imposed by globalization on developing countries across the world (Swaminathan 2004: 24).

Therefore, regarding patriarchy and globalization, Ouyporn Khuankaew and Kathryn Norsworthy (2005:2-3), argued that Globalization involves a unique methodology, powerful global economies such as the USA, Japan, Germany and other western countries are influential in the development and operation of the global financial and trade institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, ADB, and WTO. These institutions are the main mechanisms that support globalization to operate at the global level. Small nations with less power are forced to be part of these institutions through pacts and agreements. In this way, globalization becomes a phenomenon of legal social development. For example, small nations are forced to neglect regulations and laws that
could protect their own natural resources and people. The myth of "Free Trade" that is created by globalization has never meant fair because only the nation with power can benefit from this free trade. That is why a culture of patriarchy has become fertile ground for globalization. Nowadays, most countries are patriarchal, meaning the values that underlie the systems are based on competition, individualism, and control. In a patriarchal system, certain groups hold power and define the rules and standards for society while less powerful groups are systematically disadvantaged and have less access to the necessary power and decision making to protect their own livelihood. Since corporate, financial, and trading institutions tend to operate from patriarchal values, it is easy for globalization to take hold because the local cultures of small nations also tend to operate from the same values. When the two systems come together, the result is a more powerful and destructive level to human beings and nature that we have never experienced before in human history.

It is widely believed that the entire process of globalization is the manifestation of the latest stage of capitalism. So, the whole process of globalization is to bring some revolution in information and technology along with the view of capitalist world economy under which only the rich (countries, individual) will benefit and poor will become poorer. In this case, if we think about the situation of women who are always considered as second citizen in every country and they occupied the space of more than 50 percent of the world’s poor, then it is hard to imagine their present situation and impact of globalization on them. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the implications of the process on women.

**Mantra of Globalization and its Consequences**

Free trade and free markets have become the mantra of the current devotees of globalization. Scholars argued that we must have free trade and investment in the global casino but only if the cards are stacked in our favor. Before the leading capitalist countries concocted the WTO, from the 1980s, they had enormously increased agricultural subsidies for their farm products; and then the governments of these countries (European countries, Japan, USA) said that they would begin to reduce the subsidies once
the WTO agreement came into operation. Third world countries farmers receive at most between 9-15 per cent of the value of their output as subsidy, whereas, in the European Union, the agricultural sector receives about 40 percent or more of the value of its output as subsidy (Bagchi 2004:8). This is the main reason behind this argument by the scholars because the process of globalization is draining the resources and products of the third world countries.

According to Ashok Mitra (2004:12), the theory of free trade is in fact more than two hundred years old. It proposes that economic development both within and outside the country is optimized when exchanges operate without local or national barriers. According to this theory, perfect bargaining can be possible only if trade transactions take place within a free market; only then is welfare maximized for everybody. In actuality, however, there are sellers who are very big and powerful, and buyers who have very limited buying powers. The sellers will then dominate the market. So, instead of there being maximum welfare for each and all, the rich and the powerful will always have some advantage over the others. This is precisely what has been happening since the late 1980s. There are some particular weapons which are often used by the developed countries whenever they see that they cannot compete with the poorer countries in terms of some specific production like textile. At this situation they used anti-dumping legislations and legislations known as 301 and super 301. In this way, poorer and developing countries are suffering under the mantra of globalization i.e. free trade.

According to Jayati Ghosh (2001:11), the two declared aims of the whole process of globalization which are in turn supposed to deliver growth and development are (a) to get foreign capital inflows and (b) to increase exports.

Under the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP), the state has to remove restrictions in agricultural goods, and accepting export-driven strategies to earn foreign exchange. The rural sector is pressurized to stop growing food-grains for domestic consumption and to grow fruits, vegetables, tobacco instead, and to get involved in more and more prawn farming, all to keep up to the demands of export (Sinha 2004:5-8). Due to this the state
cuts in public expenditure, such as in irrigation, programmes in poverty eradication etc., which in turn forces the women into worse living conditions. Globalization also encourages cut-backs to government services. Many political leaders have been persuaded that the best way for a country to reduce its spending is to limit the amount of money it spends on things like health care, education, electricity, water, and mail delivery. When governments stop providing essential services, the door is open for private companies to step in.

Therefore, it is said that Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) have meant the elimination of food subsidies and price controls, the free-floating of currencies, the removal of barriers to foreign trade and investment, cutbacks in government employment, and privatization of state-owned enterprises (Posusney and Doumato 2003:5-14). On this regard, numerous feminist scholars have argued that SAPs lead to increased hardships for women. SAPs often include cuts in government spending, in particular in the areas of public sector employment, education, and social services, such as antipoverty programmes. Each of these cuts in spending may have a particularly adverse impact on women, which in turn may impact fertility outcomes.

It is also argued by some scholars that globalization is a mixed blessing as globalization has brought a few new employment opportunities for working-class and poor women in particular. In some parts of the world, including Southeast Asia for example, many women are employed in appalling conditions in factories and in their homes though they work at the minimal pay without any employment benefit. At the same time, governments have privatized many state functions, including healthcare, and introduced user-fees for education. Cutbacks in social spending as government race to prove to inventors and institutional lenders that they operate efficiently have made it more difficult than ever for women to feed and clothe their families (Msimang 2004:173). As this account demonstrates, the net result has been a consistent chipping away of the fundamental human rights of women, ranging from education to health to employment. These setbacks are further compounded by women’s increased responsibilities towards their children, families and communities. Women’s rights to work and protection against
employment are also under threat in poor countries. Furthermore, women’s right to education cannot be said to exist for the millions of women over fifteen who are illiterate: two-thirds of all illiterate adults are women (Education for all 2008:8/15).

One impact of globalization and SAP is that jobs in the organized sector have shrunk even further and women are either not being employed or are the first to lose their jobs. It is believed that educated women in the cities are progressing but not significantly in various sectors but such jobs are unfavourable and less secured to women and put them among the more disadvantageous groups. Privatization of industries is another reason for discrimination against women (Sinha 2004:96). This is brought by the process of globalization which does have distinct economic consequences for female employment. Structural Adjustment, at least in the short run, appears to be having a negative impact as privatization reduces the opportunities for women in the public sector, while the private sector has not yet proven capable of absorbing sufficient numbers of female job seekers. (Posusney and Doumato 2003:17-19) Therefore, it is said that, economic liberalization has eroded the income-earning potential for both men and women, so that economic reforms that put men under threat of losing employment have brought about a social reaction making female employment less acceptable while reinforcing the cultural ideal of the male as breadwinner.

On the other side, Alison M. Jaggar (2001:300-301) opines that the expectation of globalization that will fulfill the dream by promoting peace, democracy, prosperity and social justice, environmental protection, the end of racism and ethnocentrism and women, is leading into different direction. Rather than experiencing an era of universal peace, the neoliberal world is ravaged by innumerable wars, many undeclared, and by high levels of militarism; many societies also face civil unrest and forms of institutional violence that are serious enough to be described as ethnic or class war. Not accidentally, the same world is characterized by a rapidly widening gulf between rich and poor, both within and among nations. Thus, rather than bringing universal prosperity, neoliberal globalization is creating unprecedented wealth for a relative few and poverty and destitution for millions, even billions, of people.
Moreover, globalization has permitted the country with the strongest market in intangible goods, and the military force to support its dominance, to be seen as a world leader in questions unrelated to its economic and military power. The political, legal and educational systems of the United States of America are viewed as models to be emulated in spite of the fact that American prisons are full of ethnic minorities, that women lack pre and postnatal leave, and that greater access to higher education is not resulting in more women in solidarity with those who are excluded from the supposed benefits of globalization. Rather, more education is resulting in more women who enjoy the privileges offered by this system at the expense of millions of women who cannot even aspire to basic education. Few seem to realize that these products of the United States only appear to give us more leisure, liberty, health and peace (Facio 2004:137).

The last decade of the twentieth century increasingly witnessed scenario of globalizing free trade, with the Bretton Woods institutions emphasizing that economic success can only be achieved by a process of liberalization to attract mobile instrumental investment (Ghosh 2004:27).

Through the policy of trade liberalization and globalization during 1990s, number of developing countries has managed to achieve some economic growth. One of the visible examples is the Southeast Asian countries. This growth has been achieved through the change of policies like encouraging the FDI in the export products in which majority of the workers are women, especially under the age group of 18-22. They are exploited in many ways with lower wage rates as compared to men for the same work.

The stark reality of the post-WTO period is totally different from people of the poor and developing countries. Investment to bring about gender equality appears to be at a minimum; the policy decisions to open up a market economy, promote free exports to developing countries at the cost of the dying out of local enterprises, enforce a monopoly of seeds and genetically engineered methods of weeding, promote cash crops as against vital food crops for the rural poor, abolish subsidies and the public distribution system, and the failure of implementation effective alternative food distribution to cover the 40
percent of the people who live below the poverty line, are supported by the same World Bank and IMF guidelines for a liberalized economy (Ibid: 32-33).

One of the severe impacts of the globalization on workers is that due to greater bargaining strength of internationally mobile capital both local and international capitalists imposed tougher conditions on their workers. This impact is not only concerned to the low wage rates and discrimination of women workers in the workplace, rather it affects on the legal institutions that are supposed to protect the workers of the country. There is an option of 'flexible' in the legislation of laws that concerns labour laws like reduction of maternity leave, worsening safety conditions in the workplace and inadequate compensation of industrial accidents etc.

Critics of the globalization charged that the current system of neoliberal globalization is dominated unofficially by transnational or multinational corporations, who "rent" governments (sovereign states who are officially are the members who can administered the economy) to bring cases before the WTO. Because the budgets of many multinational corporations are far larger than those of many nominally sovereign states, it is easy for these corporations to influence the definitions and interpretations of the rules of the global economy by lobbying, bribing, and threatening governments or government officials. Therefore, Alison M. Jaggar (2001:308-309) mentioned that - contemporary neoliberal globalization is characterized by the massive consolidation of wealth in a relatively few hands, by radically unequal access to and control over material resources, information and communications, by the centralization of political power and absence of democratic accountability, by environmental destruction, and by virulent racism and ethnocentrism. It is rhetoric of equality and participation masks a reality of domination and marginalization for most of the world's women.

The policy of export and import led to the condition to the compulsion of export at any cost; no doubt even by paying less to the workers and cutting down the facilities. Along with this by lifting of qualitative restrictions on imports with low tariff binding the third world countries have become the place of dumping for developed countries.
In the era of globalization, poor become poorer and hardly hits the women as more than half of the world’s poor are women. Because prime agricultural and costal lands are commercially used in this process of globalization which led to migration and displacement and people are moving to urban areas without jobs and falls into insecure life. At this situation, women who are less educated, unskilled and poor face unemployment, low wages, long working hours, poor working conditions and breakdown of the family, which especially forces women into vulnerability and sometimes they admit themselves that they make their body as commodity.

This is a globalization process which is primarily meant to benefit large capital. This is not globalization of the working class, of uniting the workers and creating international solidarity. It is true that technological changes have contributed to greater ease of communication and access to knowledge from around the world, for people generally. But the economic processes associated with global integration have also meant that the difficulties of the working class-across the world-have increased. While the mobility and freedom of capital to cross national boundaries and to engage in activities of choice has increased in the last few years, the same is not true of most workers. The mobility of most workers, especially those who are less skilled, has decreased. In fact, not just geographical mobility but even the difficulties involved in changing a profession or of moving from one job to another have increased, for workers in general and working women in particular (Gosh, J. 2001:8). Therefore, globalization is a nightmare to the women today because women are the poorest of the poor and the most violated and the most alienated among all. Above all globalization is more attracted to the women’s work force as they are cheap in the labour market.

The structure of the society is changing with the development of ITCs (Information & Communication Technologies) which is driven by globalization. It was believed that inequalities and asymmetrical power relationships between the rich and poor countries and among different groups will be reduced but the consequences say something different from the expectations. Only a very small percentage of the world population is connected in the Network Society and the majority women and men in the developing world are
affected by exclusion rather than inclusion. Moreover, women in both the developed and developing countries, embedded within patriarchal contexts, are most probably heavily disadvantaged compared to men, in both the access to and control over ITCs (Ng and Mitter 2005:9).

After looking at the consequences of globalization in Asia in general and Southeast Asia in particular, it is therefore, accepted that women have become the new industrial proletariat in export-based industries, where governments tempt multinational corporate investment with gendered stereotypes of Asian women workers as tractable, hard-working, dexterous-and sexy. Within these industries, wages and working conditions are often very poor, and harassment by bosses and managers is endemic. Again, the result is contradictory: the power of the women's fathers is reduced, but the women are superexploited by foreign corporations with the collusion of their own governments. As employees, they often experience a type of labor control that is almost feudal in its requirements of subservience and dependence (Jaggar 2001:305-306). Thus, the processes of globalization make the world to see – for women to exchange one master for another. However, in any case they are exploited and marginalized.

In addition to these, the process of globalization often forced women into the informal economy because they are driven off the land by the expansion of export agriculture, especially in South America and Southeast Asia. Those who remain in the countryside rather than migrating to the shanty towns that encircle most major Third-World cities are often forced into casual, contingent labor. Landless women from the poorest households are more likely to predominate as seasonal, casual, and temporary laborers at lower wages than their male counterparts (Ibid: 306).

**Women in Export Processing Zones (EPZs)**

Large numbers of rural women, often young and poorly educated, migrate to the metropolis in search of employment. In some countries this migration is largely to urban-based EPZs and SEZs. The vulnerability of these women makes them easy prey for exploitation, both economically and sexually. They are often willing to work under less
suitable conditions of work than are acceptable to both men and to poor urban women (Globalization, Gender Relations and the Situation of Women 2008:6/10). Both at national and international level, women contribute the largest amount of migrant labours. Women provide 80 percent of the work in every developing country's EPZs. The phenomenon of quantitatively increased employment opportunities is accompanied by low-quality conditions of work.

Table 5: Percentage Distribution of Employed Persons by Industry
August 1996-1998

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>86.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>48.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>52.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>51.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Classified</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>37.4</td>
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Available government statistics and data reveal that, the number of women workers in almost every sector is increasing. However, employment is increasing in such sectors where forming of unions and fighting for their rights are next to impossible.

Regarding women enter into these jobs of EPZs not out of some freely-determined choice, but because of the absence of other alternatives, given the economic crisis the poor are experiencing in most Third World countries. Although wages in the EPZs may be higher than in other jobs available to women, they are still low, and insufficient to support a family. Working conditions are often abysmal. Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson (1981:87-88) argue that while work in the formal economy may act to reduce some traditional forms of gender subordination, it may trade one form of exploitation for
another in which women are increasingly subject to the control of men other than their husbands or fathers.

Liberalization of economy and globalization (Sinha 2004:93) have become the standard antidotes prescribed to these countries (developing and underdeveloped), magic words sprouted with the promise of eradication of poverty, empowerment and development of communities deprived of the basic dignity of human life. Globalization creates a pressure of the world economy on regional and national markets, keeping very little space for the state and creating imbalances in the process. The state puts its mind and heart into growing cash crops and stops growing food with nutritional value, which was also shared with the family earlier. The state, thus, ends up:

(i) giving up its original products creating disturbances in the land situation in family-sharing and has to wait for the demand of the market to build up;
(ii) becomes co-opted by multinational companies
(iii) uses and buys products which are not necessary, and
(iv) witnessing profits going out of the country.

According to Ghosh (2001:8-9), it is really the globalization of capital that is taking place in this world. This has three types of impact. First, when any government – whether in the developed or developing world – wants to attract or retain capital inflows, it has to do certain things. To begin with, to make the site “attractive”, it is typically argued that is necessary to offer tax concessions – reduce taxes. This affects the tax – GDP ratio. This is a substantial drop, without which our overall fiscal situation would have been much healthier and there would have been more resources to provide essential public services to the people. This has a very bad impact on the common people and on women in poorer households in particular. These direct taxes, which apply to the big corporate houses, are cut down drastically but the burden of indirect taxes on the common man is increased. The most affected services are those which affect women more. That is, if the expenditure on health is cut down, there will be worse facilities in the government hospitals and women’s access to medical services will become less. Not only will their own health care suffer, but they will also spend longer hours of unpaid labour looking
after ill persons in the household because they will not be adequately cared for by the public hospitals. Similar conditions in case of drinking water and other essential goods, which adversely affect the women.

Women in the Era of Globalization

Every stage of history count and signify women into the marginalized categories and treat them as second citizen of the nation. Japanese journalist Yayori Matsui (1999:175-179) summarized the impact of globalization on women as “violence”. She cites incidents of globalized violence against women factory workers, against women’s sexuality promoted as a “product”, and against the natural environment through pollution and deforestation. And globalization is the latest in a stream of powerful forces arraigned against women. Colonization and domination in all its forms are familiar to women almost everywhere (Hawthrone 2004:244-245). As the continuous process of colonization, at present globalization is exploiting women in various grounds especially in labour market as cheap labour. Therefore, it is assumed that globalization has open new opportunities of women in the labour market. However, increasing participation of women in the labour market proceeds in different ways, at different levels and speeds in various countries. In some countries, the increase in women’s participation has proceeded in an extensive way, by including more women in the labour market but also as full-time employees. This suggests that the development in women’s employment is connected to factors other than the availability of part-time jobs and the need for flexible working time, and that the strategy used to attract women’s labour is constrained by traditions, norms and culture as well as the distribution of sectors and labour market regulations in different countries (Drew 2006:22-23).

A women’s work of her own family is not recognized and is not considered in calculating the national income. All the tedious and time consuming work done by women in family business is not calculated as productive work and the wage is not shared with her either. It is an irony that women are seen as reproducers and not producers while they continue to shoulder the double responsibility of running a family as well as working for the family business, trade or production. Women have to cope with the lack of proper
employment, promotion and further training even if they are working in the organized sector because they generally carry the burden of work at home, and of children and their education. Some organizations in the corporate and public sectors are reluctant to employ women (Sinha 2004:95). No doubt women form the backbone of society and they contribute to GNP of every country. Their works and contributions are not counted as most of them are largely found in the unorganized sector and their works are invisible. The general working conditions for women are deplorable and bereft of any protective legislation in the changing world of liberalization, globalization and privatization. Women in the organized sector also face wage discrimination and non-recognition.

In developing countries with surplus labour, the path of development lies in attracting capital into several labour-intensive industries which demand unskilled but cheap labour. This pattern of development, moreover, is closely linked with the adoption of SPA and trade liberalization. Women would get a preference in those industries because, besides being cheap, employers expect them to be docile enough to accept without protest worse conditions of work than would male workers with comparable qualifications (Banerjee 2004:72).

Increased access to paid employment does not necessarily improve women's welfare, since entry into the workforce is often a survival strategy adopted by women in response to increased levels of poverty (Bakker 1997: 9 quoted in Laura Mcdonald 1999:55).

*Despite significant gains by women's movements, the mechanisms of corporate globalization have...further strengthened the already tight grip of patriarchal on our world. The radical restructuring of economies has deepened existing inequalities of gender, class, race, caste, ability, religion, sexual orientation and age.*

- Vancouver Status of Women 1997: 10 quoted in Laura Mcdonald 1999: 55

Another aspect of globalization is the Green Revolution which has not only left the women but also ignored the traditional knowledge of women which they shared in the course of cultivation. Thus, the process of globalization seems to have hit hard at the very
roots of this age-old ethics of conservation (Ghosh 2004:28). Not only in the field of agriculture, the process of globalization destroyed the small and cottage industries which are taken away by MNCs and led to the problem of unemployment, means of earning by rural poor, flooding the market with expensive products for the elite classes, and obviously ignoring the millions of marginalized people. This whole process is hitting hardly to the poor and particularly to women.

The promotion of cash crop as a part of Green Revolution under the shadow of globalization, a change in the landownership had come and this is going against the interest of the rural women who are unable to produce or provide adequate supplies of food. The technologies which has been using in Green Revolution are all in favour of men and this neglect the works of women despite majority of women being engaged in agriculture – whether as wage labourers or unpaid workers. Large landowners supported by irrigation networks have actually marginalized the small family farmers with mostly women workers (Bagchi 2004:4). Despite all the uncounted works they do in the field they also consume less food and most of the time they devour the leftover food especially in the poor rural families. In some cases, women carry triple burden of wage-earning, housework, and pregnancy and childbirth. These directly or indirectly affect women and their health and welfare. Despite employment growth for women, major imbalances persist and one of the most marked of these is occupational segregation, on gender lines. Women continue to shoulder the main responsibility for the ‘second shift’ of running the home and looking after children, even when employed full-time. Despite women’s employment growth and entry to higher level professions and management, women’s employment is concentrated in activities and occupations that are already predominantly feminine. Segregation is found across a range of employment dimensions. According to Fagan and Burchell (2002:26), women are over-represented in the limited range of occupations, industrial sectors, in the public sector and in small private sector firms, and in particular, employment contracts such as part-time work. This is known as horizontal segregation. In addition, women are vertically segregated by being under-represented in the higher status and better paid jobs, such as senior government, management and many professions (Drew 2006: 20-21).
Anker (1998) argued that occupational segregation by gender is present in all countries and that ‘female’ occupations are associated with lower pay. This gender division of labour within the household constrains women’s economic independence and men’s involvement in their fathering role. It also limits the amount of time women have left for leisure, sleep and personal activities. These in turn affect other aspects of women’s and men’s working conditions such as pay and working time (Drew 2006:22).

Above all, the problem of unemployment is very much linked to the policies of globalization. In the process of globalization, the authority of the government is less and in order to attract the FDI; government uses different means which adversely affect the work performance of the poor especially in unpaid labour which mostly ends up with the women. As government is less powerful and unprotected for labour, big capitalists are getting super-profits through feminization of labor and it increases the exploitation of workers, poses obstacles to their militant unionization, and raises the rate of unemployment and underemployment. Therefore, it is becoming accepted by many scholars that changes in the international trade regime such as the new World Trade Organization and regional trade agreements are not gender neutral, but occur in the
context of, and are largely conditioned by, the pre-existing sexual division of labour in each country.

Southeast Asia and its Unique Features

Southeast Asia is a twentieth century term invented in the West which became popular at the end of World War II when the allies organized the Southeast Asian Command (Yamashita 2003:8). Southeast Asia is famous for its diversities in languages, culture, and complex array of indigenous and world religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. Southeast Asia is generally categorized as a mainland that includes the modern states of Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Lao, Vietnam, and archipelagoes (now the island nations) of Indonesia and the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore (Ramusack 1999:77-78).

Fernando N. Zialcita (2003:22) examines the region as ecumene of world civilizations – India, China, Islam and the West – as the result of its history and its linkages of the whole region together in various aspects of culture such as costume, food and housing styles. There are different ways of clustering “the unity of Southeast Asia”. There are different ways of clustering cultures together. The commonalities that link Southeast Asians together at present are not of the same order as those linking Europeans together. Despite internecine wars, Europeans share an ecumene defined by powerful, emotion-charged symbols. It is doubtful whether such a universe exists in Southeast Asian at present. Southeast Asia lays strategically across sea routes between two prominent world cultures i.e. Indian and the Chinese. It is always convenient place and easy route to reach and for the business purpose and merchant. This is one of the reasons why the outsiders are attracted to this place thereby spreading their influences even in the form of globalization.

The concept “Southeast Asia” has been constantly evolving. In centuries past, the Chinese referred to the “region of the Southern Seas” as “Nanyang,” the Japanese referred to it as “Nanyo,” and the Indian called it “Further Indian”. But Southeast Asians themselves seem not to have a common term for the region. “Southeast Asia” is a term coined by Westerners during the twentieth century, and it became popular at the close of World War II as has been mentioned earlier, when the allies organized a Southeast Asian Command (Zialcita 2003:22).
One of the defining characteristics of Southeast Asia is its heterogeneity. There is not one great tradition that covers all of Southeast Asia today, but four: the Chinese (Vietnam, Singapore), the Indian (Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, Bali, and to a continuing extent, the aristocracy of Central Java); the Islamic (Sulu, parts of Mindanao, Malaysia, most of Indonesia); and the Western (Singapore, the Philippines, Flores, East Timor). True, there are communalities in myth and behavior because of the related languages (Austroasiatic and Austronesian); there are also communalities created by a similar physical environment. But there are no highly charged symbols that are universal throughout the region. This may have been due to the entry of Islam in Southeast Asia around the fourteenth century via Indian traders, and slowly gained adherents in the Malay Peninsula, the Indonesian Archipelago (even in Sumatra and Java) and the
southern Philippines. In the following century, Christianity came in with the Portuguese, followed by the Spaniards in the sixteenth and gained a foothold in Malacca, Flores, and the Moluccas and in much of the Philippines. Then came the Dutch, the British, the French, and the Americans to trade and to colonize. Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, the Chinese migrated southwards, not merely as traders but as migrants. They brought with them their world view, their ethics, and their arts; and they established enclaves that persist to this day (Zialcita 2003:28).

**Historical Overview of Southeast Asia**

Women are frequently stereotyped in Southeast Asian historiography. Many outside sources on women in Southeast Asia refer to their relatively high social position and link it to their economic autonomy, the veneration of fertility in indigenous religions, and bilateral kinship systems in which decent and property may pass through both the female and male lines. Moreover, the existence of maternity among the Minangkabau in Sumatra, where both descent and inheritance passed through women, also attracts attention. Recent research also suggests that the acceptance of world religions and the development of larger, centralized states led to an uneven reduction in the autonomy of Southeast Asian women and their consequent ability to participate in religious, political and economic activities (Ramusack 1999:83-84).

In his Braudelian-inspired survey of early modern Southeast Asia, Anthony Reid asserts that the value of daughters was never questioned in Southeast Asia as it was in China, India and the Middle East, although sons are preferred in Vietnam. In many areas of Southeast Asia, as in South Asia before and after the arrival of Europeans, daughters and women are valued as marriage partners since inter-state relationships are closely correlated with kinship ties (Ibid:84-85). However, number of women in the public sphere especially in the field of politics, where the real power lies, is very less in Southeast Asian countries. Women's political role was more or less restricted to a supportive one that is women were expected to physically and morally assist in the nation's development. They are treated as second class citizens in various departments.
In the economic sphere, women were significant as local traders and produced some formidable exporters. Women of royal families participated extensively in international trade: for example, the wife of Sultan Hasanuddin of Makassar on Sulawesi and those who occupied the thrones of three port principalities (Aceh, Jambi, and Indragiri) on Sumatra. Utilizing such skills as negotiation and fluency in several languages, learned through commercial activities, women in Southeast Asia were also notable diplomats. The king of Cochin-China dealt with the first Dutch Vietnamese women who spoke Portuguese and Malay. Women were also used as envoys in peace-making missions, since they could bargain adroitly and were willing to subordinate their own sense of honor to the need to compromise in order to achieve settlements (Ibid:86).

In some areas of the Southeast Asia, women are actually ruled and successfully governed only by their skilful knowledge in various fields including markets and in matters of diplomacy. History of Southeast Asia is the biggest proof of it.

The fact that social relationship is multi-dimensional makes relationship in Southeast Asian societies very complex but appears to be loosely-linked. The spread of Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic and Confucian traditions brought about many of the patriarchal practices to the Southeast Asian societies. The traditional bilateral kinship pattern with equal treatment of both male and female children gradually changed to become more patriarchal in many but not all aspects (Pongsapich 1997:5). Women in Southeast Asia also seemed to experience restricted access to spiritual knowledge in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam; hence their participation in religious rituals was attenuated. The penetration of world religion, especially Hinduism and Islam, in Southeast Asia also diminished women's position within marriage, their physical mobility, and autonomous expressions of their sexuality. There was a growing emphasis on the duties of a wife to her husband as well as a concern over the propensity of women to tempt men from the pursuit of spiritual achievements (Ramusack 1999:88).

It is true that women in Southeast Asia are enjoying freedom from various angles as compared to their counterparts. However, this has changed with the entry of outsiders (Portuguese, Spanish, and the Dutch) from the sixteenth century. Their strategy to drain
resources from this region has brought many changes which affect the lives of both men and women of Southeast Asia such as development of major urban centres, increased monetization of economy, evolution of plantation agriculture to meet the demands of the export trade, greater disparities in the sex ratio etc. The whole process brings various changes into the lives of the Southeast Asian countries and impoverishes them.

Along with this, European practices (i.e. commoditization of sexual service: permitted local women to cohabit with foreign traders in temporary marriage) triggered changes that soon impacted the sexuality and economic potion of women in Southeast Asia. At the same time, the spread of world religions, especially Islam and Christianity, in Southeast Asia introduced new prescriptions on female chastity and physical mobility that further circumscribed female sexual and economic autonomy. When European traders first arrived in Southeast Asia, societies from Burma to the Philippines had long permitted local women to cohabit with foreign traders in “temporary” marriages where both partners had rights and benefits. As European traders and colonizers extended their political control and transmitted their cultural forms to Southeast Asia, they influenced the lives of indigenous women. The introduction of Roman law to the Philippines formally reduced the legal rights of indigenous women, particularly in regard to their children, to property, and to divorce. Spanish Christian prescriptions regarding premarital and marital sexual morality eroded the sexual freedom of Filipino women. Parents were urged to guard the chastity of their daughters, and at school elite girls were socialized to protect their virtue. The Catholic sacrament of oral confession also facilitated clerical efforts to ascertain and to condemn sexual practices contrary to Christian morality (Ibid: 89-91). Thus, with the coming of outsiders, the role and status of women in Southeast Asian countries has completely changed on various ground like merchant/ business, political, religion. But the situation has changed by the end of the nineteenth century with the rise of nationalist movements as women had actively participated in the movement and made demands like education as a means of self-improvement, escape from arranged marriages and polygamy. By this process of movement i.e. protesting against foreign political, cultural and economic domination offered ambivalent opportunities for women but not significantly. There is a little historical research directed on women’s economic situation during the colonial period. Even today most of the efforts contributed by the
women on various fields especially in economy have been ignored. In the early 1990s, initial efforts have been taken up to form the women associations. Some of the important organizations are- Indonesia: Putri Mardika, Isteri Sedar, Vietnam: Women's Labor-Study Association, Philippines: Asociacion Feminista Filipino etc. Along with this movement of women, demand on various issues to improve their status and avail protection from the government has been taken up in every part of the Southeast Asian countries.

Southeast Asia at Present: Era of Globalization

At present, Southeast Asian countries are considered to be developing at various sectors and especially in the world market. However, this process of globalization has adverse affects particularly in sectors where participation of women workers is maximum. The new policies which have been introduced by the multinational companies are not in favour of women. Access to credit is becoming more difficult. Longer and harder hours of work without enough leisure and food have adversely affected the health of women.

The constitution of all the Southeast Asian countries guarantee equality before the law, equal protection of law, and enjoyment of equal rights and obligations. Nonetheless, gender discrimination persists in practice (ADB 2002:39). This is the saddest truth against women in Southeast Asia. It is almost forgotten that Southeast Asian women are major contributor in their national income by participating actively in labour force in various sectors.

Table 6: Women’s Percentage Share in Economic Sector in ASEAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Economic Sector</th>
<th>Women’s Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Wholesale, Retail Trade</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Community &amp; Personal Services</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Finance, Business Services</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the booming economy, Southeast Asian countries are becoming the countries which have contributed maximum number of women work force in the world. Along with this the ideas of discrimination always exist in every department which starts from family till work place. No matter at public or private sphere, men always holds the superior position even in those sectors which are considered to be dominated by women.

Globalization in Southeast Asia

When we look at the process of globalization in Southeast Asian countries, we find tremendous changes in various levels such as, culture, politics and economy of the country. However, the one we are facing in Southeast Asia is economic globalization which brings freedom of capital and market by the developed countries. Even in the post World War II (Sen 2004:82-83), Southeast Asian women remained pivotal in the traditional economy. Their role enhanced during World War II. In the 1970s the ‘capitalist’ Southeast Asian countries witnessed a huge proliferation of consumer industries, consistent with the New International Division of Labour. As these countries embarked on labour-intensive export manufactures, a feminization of labour (details in the next chapters) occurred, especially in the industrial sector as export-led growth policies were adopted by the countries of the Southeast Asia. A large proportion of women have now entered the formal sector, and women constitute a larger and rising share of formal sector workers. These women are untrained. Therefore, they are generally hired in the lower occupational categories where job security is very low, and also low wages, and minimal labour protection. On the other hand, women are primarily hired for the jobs by foreign investors because of the gender socialization that already exists in the culture. In the countries of Southeast Asia, women are socialized to be patient, obedient, hard working, responsible and disciplined. They have been trained from an early age to do hard work that requires excellent fine motor skills. Women are expected to take care of the welfare of the whole family. Based on this cultural training they become a perfect fit for factory work and even when they are exploited they tend not to resist authority. In the countries of Southeast Asia, because of structural and institutionalized gender-based oppression, women typically earn lower wages than men for the same job (Norsworthy and Khuankaew 2004: 259-283).
Southeast Asian countries (especially Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia) – recorded strong economic growth during the last few decades of the twentieth century up to 1997, consistent with trade liberalization and labour-intensive manufacturing export markets. The factors that contributed to this growth are labour, physical capital, human capital, and the efficiency with which labour and physical and human capital were combined. In all these countries the state was seen as necessary for promoting agricultural transformation, bringing together the resources necessary for industrialization providing protection for infant industries; and investing in mass education as a prerequisite to the creation of human capital. Until 1970, government strategies for development were usually centered on import-substitution as a way of promoting industrialization. This was achieved by various measures, such as tariffs, quota restrictions to cut down on imports, and other measures to encourage indigenous enterprise (Kaur 2004:103-104). And in this era of globalization men are receiving the opportunities and benefits from modernization programmes. On the other side, women’s contributions in various aspects are ignored, but the burden on their shoulder is added up along with the modernization and its programmes. The result was a devaluation of women’s labour and a loss of status as earners and providers within the family/household.

In order to attract the foreign investors, the governments of these countries adopted various measures especially which controlled and managed labour activism. These include the elimination of the Communist threat; the strengthening of political power at the expense of workers’ rights; and the adoption of a range of policies and practices designed to ensure that worker organization, militancy and opposition remain subordinated to state interests. Some of the incidents which are worthy of mention are the Declaration of Emergency in Malay and Singapore in 1948, the New Order Government in Indonesia, Anti-Communist Act 1952 in Thailand etc. (Wright 2004:205).

One reason why the multinational corporations select these countries as their off-shore sourcing areas is the availability of cheap and docile female labour. In other words, when compared to female workers in the economically developed societies, the female workers
here are cheaper to hire and easier to control. In their (USA) effort to secure cheap and “good” workers, these electronic companies transferred their operations initially to the southern parts of America, later to Latin America (Mexico and Brazil) and subsequently to countries in Southeast Asia (Southeast Asia Chronicle 1976:5-6).

At the pace of globalization, the sector under which Southeast Asian countries are leading is in garments and manufacturing industries. It is because women and children are used as the labour force at lower wages, keeping production costs affordable. But the western capitalist countries want to have it both ways. Firstly, they would like to push their goods freely into these countries’ market so as to cause distress to the producers, female as well as male. Secondly, they would like to impose further restrictions on the export goods. In such a situation they make the excuse by saying that since the garment industries in these countries are run by paying low wages to women and children, they should not be allowed to sell their goods in the world market until they comply with western labour standards. In this way, where the poorer countries have a comparative advantage in trade, labor standards are used as an excuse to prevent their goods from emerging into the world market (Mitra 2004:14). This directly affects women as majority of the labour force under this sectors are women. Also with the imposition of the WTO patent regime, all poor people will suffer from inaccessibility to resources of their own country which they used to enjoy and that was a means to earn their living. Women in the Third World suffer particularly from malnutrition and morbidity of different kinds. People of the Third World are putting more into the vulnerable position as they are not capable of joining the pace of technological development which evolved with globalization. Many of the male are thrown out of the jobs and women have to work to supplement the family income by adopting the works like street-vending food corners. But these kinds of jobs are also cut by the development of American firms like MacDonald’s, Kentucky Fried Chicken, etc., which are the agents of globalization. Thus, globalization negatively affects women and their work force.

Following the withdrawal of welfare measures from the key sectors of health and education, women and girls are the worst affected, with little or no hope for revival. No
doubt trafficking in women and their sexual exploitation is a very old story but the process of globalization is adding new flavour in it by flooding foreign tourists into the low-waged countries of Southeast Asia. Directly or indirectly they forced the rural poor young girls to indulge into sexual and flesh business in order to feed their family. It is a well-proven fact in the Southeast Asian continent.

**Role of United Nations and Women**

The impact of the 'development narrative' on women is monitored world-wide by such bodies as the United Nations that uses international pressure to introduce legislation to protect women’s rights within the rubric of 'human rights'. The United Nations played an important role in the establishment of benchmarks and protocols for women’s status in society. In 1946 the UN established its Commission on the Status of Women with the charge of monitoring and promoting women’s rights. UN declared International Women’s Year (1975) and International Decade of Women (1976-85) and on 18 December 1979, the UN’s General Assembly ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and by 1993 the Commission on the Status of Women Declaration on Violence against Women (DEVAW) was established. Governments have been promoted to establish committees to create programs directed at women as a result of the UN’s support for women’s right. The UN’s decade for women promoted changes in numerous government legislative practices. APEC has also taken initiatives to promote the economic status of women within member countries. APEC has produced a Guide on Gender Analysis to promote understanding among government officials and development project managers about the best methods for promoting women’s engagement with APEC policies (Roces and Edwards 2000:6-7).

In this era of globalization, women in Southeast Asia are establishing dynamic new conceptions of contemporary cultural practice for their various nations, regions or communities. It was believed that twentieth century’s development project will provide new opportunities for women in the Asian region, but along with the opportunities, it also posed new dangers. Along with the process which involves masculinist project, it also
allows scope for challenging the oppression of women by the equally masculinist traditional cultural practices.

The ILO Convention on Home workers (1996) has been signed by most of the Southeast Asian countries. However, governments are hesitant to regulate the practice of subcontracting, as this may adversely affect their international competitiveness. In EPZs or SEZs, subcontracting and contractualization are mechanisms that transnational corporations use to maximize profit. For example, major international labels like Reebok, Adidas, Timex, Calvin Klein, Fujitsu, and Intel have a large share of their workforce subcontracted as contractual, the majority of whom are women and youth, forced to work overtime six to seven days a week for a period of three to four months at a time.

The most comprehensive treaty relating to women's status is CEDAW (ADB 2002:28), which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and entered into force in 1981. Women and women's organizations in the four countries tend to concentrate on this Convention and use it as a tool for encouraging their respective governments to introduce, implement and enforce laws to improve the status of women. However, almost every country of the Southeast Asia has reservation against the CEDAW.

Financial Crisis in Southeast Asia

Globalization policy was, however, pursued vigorously in favour of big business without adequate care for the under-privileged, leading to a bubble economy and worsening inequality. Eventually, the bubble burst in 1997 which we represent as Asian Financial Crisis of 1997.

It is undeniable that the Asian crisis had contributed to a large extent to bring various changes and transition in Southeast Asia and this process make the region one of the most rapidly developing and industrializing areas of the world during the 1990s. The Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-98 has had many important political, economic, financial and social consequences on ASEAN countries. The original members of ASEAN suddenly faced a 'total' crisis of financial, economic, and then social and political proportions. The
economic and social fabrics of their societies were torn as bad loans, shaky financial
systems, corporate bankruptcies, rising unemployment and plunging currencies suddenly
engulfed them. Indonesia and Thailand were forced into new political upheavals and
reforms. Similarly, crucial political and social reforms are affecting Philippines and
Malaysia. Even traditionally stable Singapore and Brunei face social reform and religious
tensions. Further, it also resulted in uneven distribution of wealth within countries and
within ethnic-cum-religious communities, like Indonesia and the Philippines and to a
lesser extent, Malaysia and Thailand. The less developed countries (Cambodia, Laos,
Myanmar, and Vietnam, or CLMV) were in the grips of their own painful economic and
social transformation; a process that is far from complete today. Reforms are still going
and it remains to be seen whether these countries will eventually succeed in adjusting to
the new globalized world (Cheow 2004:41). The Southeast Asian countries during recent
decades have generally experienced massive inflows of goods, money, information and
people.

The underlying cause of Asian Financial Crisis is a structural problem, i.e. in Thailand
economic integration into the world economy is carried out through the promotion of
labour intensive industries which relies on cheap labour. Women workers have been at
the forefront but they do not receive a just share because they are paid the lowest wage as
cheap labour. To create high growth, states in the Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs)
as well as that in the ASEAN region have opted for rapid economic integration through
the adoption of three successive forms and phases of industrialization: the import
substitution policy, the diversification of export and the export-oriented industrialization
(Charoenloet 2005:122). The situation of economy is worst after the crisis. The only
option with the Southeast Asian countries is go for debt from the developed countries.
The following table shows the clear picture of debt.
Table 7: Debt Indicators (Percent)

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>77.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>172.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>123.2</td>
<td>121.3</td>
<td>136.1</td>
<td>199.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>65.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>70.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>76.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>114.7</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>82.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Asian Development Bank (cited in Beeson, Mark 2001:10)

The Asian economic crisis has shown that the progress of globalization is no longer – if it ever was – unproblematic. Globalization presents Southeast Asia with both threats and opportunities. Moreover, when many Southeast Asian economies were experiencing booms, globalization seemed to promise further opportunities for growth. Since the Economic crisis struck in 1997, the global mood and that in Southeast Asian has changed significantly. According to Kevin Hewison (2001:2), it was in Seattle in 1999, that ‘anti-globalization’ became a force to be reckoned with.

As far as women and economic crisis is concerned, Women are subject to many forms of impacts caused by the financial turbulences. Due to their position in the labour market where concentrated in the “most precarious” forms of low-skilled wage employment, women were more vulnerable to lay-offs. Their vulnerabilities were further exacerbated by the attitude of the employers who regarded women as secondary income earners and so terminated their employment before men. In short, financial crisis added the gaps between men and women in the society, which led to a rise in the inequality and poverty (Zhiqin 2009: 4/10). Furthermore, during this period of economic crisis, women are particularly vulnerable to economic shocks because of their unequal position and role in
the labour market and in society more generally. They are much less well represented at
decision-making levels as well as in labour organizations. In addition, the current
deflationary adjustment policies have adversely affected women not only as workers, but
also as household providers, mothers, etc. Women’s access to basic needs such as food,
clothing, shelter and to the provisioning of common property resources; access to
education and skill formation which would allow women to move out of low-skill low
productivity jobs, access to the requirements for reproduction and nurture of the young
including not only health care and other social services but also child care, access to
productive employment outside the home and recognition of household work, control
over the allocation of resources both socially and within households have been negatively
affected not only by the reduction in government expenditure that comes as part of the
stabilization exercise but also by the general withdrawal of the state from various aspects
of the provisioning of goods and services and greater reliance on the market mechanism.
Real incomes have been reduced as standards of living for most women who assume a
greater burden of unpaid work.

Thus, millions of women have been affected by the economic crisis in one or the other
way. Nevertheless, throughout the region, women have been among the hardest hit by the
economic chaos. The burden of the economic ‘debacle’ (Wee 2001:1) is falling forcefully
on women through mass unemployment, devalued currencies, food shortages,
pharmaceutical shortages, rising crime rates, cutbacks in social services, and worse.
During the heyday of the ‘miracle’ the countries of Southeast Asia achieved record levels
of growth based largely on the labour of women workers in the export industries.
Alexander (1999:31) points out that it was women’s cheap labour that gives Southeast
Asia’s export industries a ‘competitive edge’ in the global market. Women were seen as
cheaper, more compliant, not unionized, and easier to dismiss using life-cycle events
such as marriage and childbirth. It was thus women’s supply of cheap ‘flexible’ labour
that enabled the export industries to compete globally.
Standing (1996:7) relates this development (feminization through flexible labour, subcontracting) to the rise of the 'supply-side'\(^1\) politico-economic agenda that has dominated policy making in most of the world in the 1980s. But as argued by Standing in many developing countries, including those of Southeast Asia, the supply-side agenda was operationalised through the deregulation of labour. This was the context for the massive entry of women as the workforce of choice for the export industries. The result was the so-called 'miracle' of export-led growth in Southeast Asia, founded as it was on a regime of feminized, cheap and flexible labour (Wee 2001:10).

The high and rising proportion of women workers in total employment has been especially marked in countries where export-oriented manufacturing has been prominent e.g. Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. This was resulted from employers' needs for cheaper and more "flexible" sources of labour given the rigours of international trade competition. That is why it has been associated with more casual contracts, part-time or piece-rate contracts, and greater freedom of hiring and firing. (Zhiqin 2008: 410) The flexibility of women's labour is associated with the casualisation of labour for example part time work, piece rate contracts, sub-contracting and home based work. This is rooted in the gender division of labour in everyday life, such that women in most societies are allocated the responsibility of caring for the dependent members of the community-the young, the old, the sick and the disabled. Because of their gender role in society, women tend to enter the work force with a propensity to seek casualised forms of employment that would enable them to combine their income-earning activities with their caring activities (Wee 2001:5). This demand for cheap casualised

\(^1\) Supply -side economics has been defined as:

(i) 'A School of thought within the economic profession emphasizing that the main source of a country's economic growth is constant improvement in the efficiency with which resources are allocated for production... Supply-side policy analysts focus on barriers to higher productivity-identifying ways in which the government can promote faster economic growth over the long haul by removing impediments to the supply of, and efficient use of, the factors of production... Supply-side recommendations typically include deregulation of heavily regulated industries, promotion of greater competition through lowering protectionist barriers to international trade, and measures to repeal special subsidies and tax loopholes targeting particular industries in favour of lower and more uniform tax rates across the broad' (<www.auburn.edu/~johnspm/gloss/index.html>)

(ii) 'Economic theory that concentrates on influencing the supply of labour and goods as a path to economic health, rather than approaching the issues through such macroeconomic concerns as gross national product' (<www.encyclopedia.com/articlesnew/12489.html>)
labour of this sort has also brought about the development of a mode of production that is organized through a complex process of subcontracting, with labour-intensive, low-paid, more informal activities being put out to undocumented women workers. That is one reason that women are pulling into the informal pool of labour force where no protection of labour prevails.

This gendered propensity for casualised labour of women (Ibid:5) meshed with the demand of companies to maximize profits through lowering labour costs. As a result, even in the heyday of industrial growth, women became an expendable workforce that could be flexibly hired and fired to meet the needs of external competitiveness. It is this expendable work force that has been worse hit by the economic contraction brought about by the financial crisis.

Despite their vital economic significance, women were generally invisible in policy discourse during the heyday of the 'miracle'. After the crisis of 1997, they have become even more marginalized. This increased marginalization from mainstream discourse and decision-making means the omission of women's livelihoods in any rescue package or recovery strategy (Ibid:10). Therefore, it is said that the Asian economic crisis is not just a crisis for the financial sector, but also a livelihood crisis for vulnerable sectors of society, especially women. This statement is supported by the speech of Sandstrom, Managing Director of the World Bank (The World Bank 1998) who acknowledged that 'this is a financial crisis and a human crisis – and both dimensions need to be addressed':

Civic groups are beginning to report how these issues [of unemployment, shortages of food and medical supplies, price increase, a squeeze on health and education programmes] are playing out in terms of people's lives:

- job losses linked to increases in crime and violence
- a rise in the numbers of street children and prostitution
- and, women's roles in households and job markets coming under pressure.

Many economic recovery programmes has been launched at various stages in Southeast Asian countries. However, there are no clear indications how women are to benefit from the economic recovery programme. No funds have been earmarked to address the gender-specific needs and realities of women bearing the brunt of the Asian economic crisis.
Instead, women are likely to be doubly victimized. Not only are they the first to be fired, they are likely to be bypassed in the economic recovery process, as shown by their omission in programmes directed at job creation (Wee 2001:11).

Although structural adjustments are regarded as necessary to lay the groundwork for steady economic growth in Southeast Asian countries, they have made in rising unemployment, increasing poverty, falling incomes and lower standards of living. In the short run, the process of adjustment entails costs that fall unevenly on workers especially on women. As reported by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (Introduction - Thailand’s Economic Situation in Brief 2008: 9/19), more than half of the workers who had been laid off by October 1997 were women. Unemployment, excluding the seasonally inactive labor force, is estimated to have risen to 1.1 million persons in August 1998, up from 293,000 persons in August 1997. Since most of the jobs lost will have come from labor-intensive industries such as textiles and garments, and shoes and leather goods, a high proportion of the unemployed will be women.

**Migration in Southeast Asia**

Southeast Asians are now emerging as among the most active migrants in the contemporary world within this context of global migration. This rapid pace of migration in Southeast Asia is directly due to the economic crises that led to the migration of the poor to urban areas, and other neighbouring countries in search of livelihood/job. The process of globalization has also facilitated increase in the volume of migration from rural to urban areas. Not only male heads of the family are migrated to urban areas, majority of the women especially at their teenage are moved out from the house and migrated to the urban areas in search of job. This has indirectly added more flavour into the flesh business and increased the number of prostitution in the region.

Increase in feminization of international migration have been noted worldwide especially in Southeast Asian countries since the mid-twentieth century. Currently, about half of the world’s 185-192 million international migrants are women (IOM, 2003:5 & IOM, 2005: 379). Southeast Asia is certainly no exception. Female labour migration in many
Southeast Asian countries has not only grown exponentially in recent years but in some countries, has overtaken the level of male migrants. Indeed, Southeast Asia is currently home to two of the world's largest exporters of overseas workers - Indonesia and the Philippines - and two large labour receiving countries – Singapore and Malaysia, while Thailand is both a significant importer and exporter of migrant labour. Both male and female migrants in Southeast Asia has been primarily associated with the transfer of less-skilled labour in the form of low-wage, low-end jobs rejected by local workers. In particular, female migrants have been concentrated in domestic services (also entertainment work) as local women are increasingly absorbed in paid work outside the home. For this reason, female migration in Southeast Asia is mainly associated with the transfer of reproductive labour, or what has been called “care work” needed to maintain and sustain human beings throughout their life-cycle., although export-led industries located in industrialized and industrializing economies have begun to recruit a large number of migrant women from neighbouring countries for their factories, e.g. many Filipino women are working in factories in Taiwan and Indonesian women are doing the same in Malaysia (Huang 2006:67-68).

As of migrated women in Southeast Asian region, Laura (1999:61) argued that migration may provide new opportunities for women to escape traditional patriarchal controls, but it also opens up new sites of exploitation, particularly for foreign domestic workers subject to high levels of control by both the host state and employers.

**Women in Southeast Asian Countries**

Many scholars expressed their views of gender relationships in Southeast Asia as complementary as and more equal than those observed in the neighbouring countries. There was only limited research on women and gender issues in Southeast Asian history prior to the 1990s. Most of the history has neglected the women and their role in the society. However, after the announcement of International Women’s Year, people stated giving attention to the women. Scholars started analyzing about the condition and status of women from the pages of history till the present situation of women and also towards policy issues, such as the impact of multinational corporations that employ millions of
Southeast Asian women. Not only this, scholars focused on the issues of differential rates of infant and maternal mortality among various segments of populations, health condition of women and of the development of international networks promoting prostitution in Southeast Asia which is the outcome of the process of globalization.

The Southeast Asian countries, except Thailand were under colonial rule and found themselves limited to processing raw materials. Almost every country faced the problem of lack of infrastructure and technology. Developed western countries and USA took this golden opportunity and flooded into these regions with new ideas and programmes which seem to benefit the Third World courtiers equally. However, the reality was something different from what these regions expect as these developed countries were attracted to these countries due to its cheap labour and unexploited resources and vision of setting up of new world market.

Structural change in the economies of the region has also played an important role in altering the status of women. Girls who once stayed at home until marriage are now potential earners as they take jobs in the multiple numbers of factories producing clothing and consumer items for export. In Southeast Asia, in particular, farming is becoming less important to the family income as women's labour is drawn into the new industrial sector. As is clear, both the nature of employment deemed suitable for women within the new industrial sectors and the wages paid to women within these industries reflect the view that women’s work is less valuable and less important than men’s. The changing economic base of many countries in the region has thus created new opportunities for exploiting old gender narratives in the pursuit of the export dollar (Roces and Edwards 2000:9-10).

Due to the intense competition in the export market, many companies use subcontracting arrangements, which have led to an increase in home-based piece-work arrangements for women. Such “flexible work” is attractive to employers who wish to engage women in home-based manufacturing activities to avoid paying higher wages, maternity and leave privileges, and other benefits (ADB 2002:9-10). Generally, women’s earnings vary
between 50 and 60 per cent of men’s in most Southeast Asian countries. In the decade 1980-90 (World Bank, 196: 21) women were paid lower wages than men, even in the narrowly defined categories of work that have traditionally been regarded as women’s occupations (Kaur 2004:119).

Table 8: Number of Female Workers Increased

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>16,934.6</td>
<td>22,506.5</td>
<td>29,422.7</td>
<td>31,729.0</td>
<td>33,079.0</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>10,657.0</td>
<td>10,749.1</td>
<td>14,386.2</td>
<td>14,795.2</td>
<td>15,041.3</td>
<td>14,365.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>6,070.0</td>
<td>7,569.0</td>
<td>8,185.0</td>
<td>9,505.0</td>
<td>19,451.0</td>
<td>11,709.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table shows the increasing number of women work force in some of the Southeast Asian countries. Thus, we cannot deny the contribution of women in the increasing GNP of the countries of Southeast Asia. However, this process leads to the structural changes of feminization or casualization of labour in various sectors. Table given below shows that female labour takes large amount as percentage of male in most Southeast Asian countries (Zhiqin 2009: 4/10).

Table 9: Female and Male Labour Force in Southeast Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region Country or Area</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Labour Force (in thousands)</th>
<th>Female Labour as a percent of Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>63798</td>
<td>93421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>87206</td>
<td>119692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>99121</td>
<td>133932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>10515</td>
<td>141087</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the entire Southeast Asian region, women have come to comprise a major share of the labour force in most sectors. This increase in women’s percentage share of the workforce (Wee 2001:5-6), is however, a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it has increased women’s labour force participation rate and concomitantly, their income-earning capacity. On the other hand, women’s entry into the labour force has been on less than equitable terms. As pointed out by Benaria (1989:249), ‘there is little variation in the fact that female occupations are paid less and that, when a male occupation becomes feminized, relative wages tend to decline’. Given the existing gender inequalities, the increasing feminization of workforce is also indicative of economies that have become increasingly reliant on a cheap and flexible workforce.

However, it is belief that, Southeast Asia (Roces and Edwards 2000:11) allows women greater control and decision making within the family and women’s productive and wage-earning roles are far more easily accepted, in some cases even expected. Women have been integrated into ‘development’ they are extensively involved in professional, technical and other white collar work, and have accessed university on par with men. Yet they live their daily lives ‘in a context in which “family” is highly politicized’ where father is the head of the family.

**ASEAN and Women Issues in Southeast Asia**

Following the heels of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, some women’s movements in Southeast Asia re-focused their attention on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). ASEAN Eminent Persons Group (EPG), the ASEAN Charter process has stimulated discussions on women’s movements that lie outside of the ASEAN’s formal structures and mechanisms. Certainly, they have provided opportunities for some women’s rights activists to begin raising ideas and issues as well as undertaking initiatives around gender equality, women’s rights and empowerment in the construction of a regional community of ASEAN states and societies (Francisco 2006:45). ASEAN is the most active and effective organization of the Southeast Asian countries. Therefore it is important to look into their role in various issues of women.
The ten-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) that was carried out by the region’s women’s movements raised major but varying concerns on how nation states in the ASEAN are delivering on their promises to their women citizens. They call attention both in the political and economic sphere. Especially in the economic sphere, government were reminded not to forget their commitments to ensuring that trade and other macroeconomic and sectoral policies do not harm women’s economic security, rights and empowerment. These include, for instance, the following sections of the BPFA:

- **Government Commitment 58 (c):**
  “Pursue and implementation of sound and stable macroeconomic and sectoral policies that are designed and monitored with the full and equal participation of women”

- **Government Commitment 58 (b)**
  “Analyze, from a gender perspective, policies and programmes”

- **Government Commitment 58 (b)**
  “Generate economic policies that have a positive impact on the employment and income of women workers in both the formal and informal sectors and adopt specific measures to address women’s unemployment, in particular their long-term employment”

- **Government Commitment 165 (a):**
  “Enact and enforce legislation to guarantee the rights of women and men to equal pay for equal work of equal value.”

- **Government Commitment 165 (r):**
  “Reform laws or enacts national policies that support the establishment of labour laws to ensure the protection of all women workers, including safe work practices, the right to organize and access to justice”

- **Government Commitment 165 (h):**
“Recognize collective bargaining as a right and as an important mechanism for eliminating wage inequality for women and to improve working conditions.”

- Government Commitment 58 (k):
  “Ensure the full realization of the human rights of all women migrants including women migrant workers, and their protection against violence and exploitation, introduce measures for the empowerment of undocumented women migrants, including women migrant workers; facilitate the productive employment of documented women migrants through greater recognition of their skills, foreign education and credentials, and facilitate their full integration into the labour force.”

One thing is apparent though and that is, within the ASEAN as regional institution the BPFA does not stand and never seemed to have stood out as a major reference document (Francisco 2006:46-47).

**Figure 4: Women’s Percentage Share in Economic Sectors in ASEAN**

![Graph showing women's percentage share in economic sectors in ASEAN](image)

The picture above shows that good numbers of women are participating in various sectors in the ASEAN countries. It can not be denied that ASEAN is trying hard to protect women labours and launching different plans and programmes.

Under Millennium Development Goals (MDG), Southeast Asian Women’s Watch or SEAWWWATCH (Francisco 2006:48) carried out the first regional study that looks at how governments are monitoring the expanded commitments to women’s rights and empowerment and covered the countries like Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia and the Philippines. Later on United Nations General Assembly meeting in September 2005 decided to expand the MDG on gender equality (Goal 3) beyond decreasing the gender gap in education, to include the following:

(i) an end to impunity for violence against women
(ii) universal access to reproductive health;
(iii) the right to own and inherit property;
(iv) equal access to labour protections, and
(v) increased representation of women in government decision-making bodies.

These additional targets and indicators reflect some of the major commitments in the BPFA and cuts across women’s reproductive, political, economic and socio-cultural rights. Thus, slowly and steadily the associations and women’s organizations started to demand for more attention on specific women’s rights and gender equality and state’s commitments to the implementation of the CEDAW and also upgrading of the ASEAN committee of Women in the organization of the ASEAN so that it can become a more significant body that truly represents one half of the citizens of the ASEAN.

The Southeast Asian (particularly Singapore, Malaysia Thailand and Indonesia) case is without doubt exceptional in the larger Asian context because the problem of feminization in this region is so high that immediate attention is being needed in order to protect women from many problems that concern them. It is, however, important to note that Southeast Asia had established traditions of high workforce participation of women, even in the Muslim countries, in strong contrast, as to West Asia where a religious
sanction against women's employment outside the home predominates. In order to know the overall impact of globalization in Southeast Asian countries let us look into the situation and position of some of the countries of the Southeast Asia which are considered to be the developing countries of the region.

**Women in Thailand**

In Southeast Asia, Thailand was the only one country which had never been colonized. Therefore, Thai women have never encountered a political sphere dominated by an imperial-colonial dynamics. During nineteenth and twentieth centuries, authoritarian Thai elite carried out a modernization program.

Legal reforms affecting women began with new family codes during the 1920s and then the Monogamy Law of 1935, which legally ended polygamy and prohibited husbands from physically punishing their wives of killing adulterous lovers. Gail Omvedt (1986) has argued that these reforms actually worsened the position of women because socially polygamy was still tolerated, while secondary wives lost any legal protection. Now it was more difficult for a woman to obtain a divorce, and the law required the husband to consent whenever his wife entered any contact. Such consent had not been necessary earlier. Once again, modernization and its influences, such as legal reforms, might have ambiguous effects on the actual situation of women (Ramusack 1999:105-106).

Since the late 1980s in the process of globalization, Thai society has undergone drastic social and cultural transformation. The state has had a great impact on marginal rural and ethnic communities due to the open market system and rapid industrialization. This whole process of globalization brings the rapid mobility and migration (majority of them are women) of rural people into urban areas where they encounter the culture of consumerism as well as industrial and capitalist work discipline, both of which are entirely alien to their rural ways of life. These rural people had no choice except to adjust the new atmosphere of urban society; they have experienced a sense of displacement and confusion which can sometimes develop into emotional disorders and psychosomatic disturbances like feelings of anxiety, powerlessness and insecurity in everyday life. In
case of Thailand, whenever we talk about globalization and its impact, the issues of growing up of sex institution is an important area to discuss as this has been created by the state in order to attract the foreign tourist.

**Women in Malaysia**

Globalization raises larger questions about the role of women in the production and distribution of wealth, in the preservation of cultural and religious identities of the future generations, and on combating foreign political and cultural domination by making important sacrifices that go unnoticed in Malaysia. Globalization also gives new challenges to the women regarding the denial of their human rights, the exploitation of them by MNCs as a cheap labour and their male surrogates in developing countries.

Islamic revivalism was a way to show and maintain Islam's identity and integrity in the world. In the whole process, women become the most visible evidence of measure to show the difference between them and westerners. This trend continues and most seriously in the era of capitalism, globalization and modernization. With the increasing forces of modernization, women are more and more restricted. Emphasis on her dress code, duties as an obedient wife and a mother are argued as a need to confirm to Islamic societal behaviour.

Industrialization has adversely affected women in traditional societies. According to Laeeq-Futehally (1980:87-88), in case of Malaysia, young girls are migrated from village to urban areas to work in multinational industries. They are required to adopt the norms and behaviors preferred by their respective managements, and consequently lead a life of uncertainty and insecurity. Furthermore, within the society, their family and community no more willingly accept them. While industrialization is encouraged, nothing is done to halt or to remedy the dislocation of the lives of these women.

The significant and rapid socio-economic progress of Malaysia in the post war era, especially since Independence in 1957 has been noted with appreciation by many economic scientist. After 1970, with the change in national policies, most manufacturing
industries are labour-intensive, export-oriented enterprises which are owned by foreign multinational corporations and that the majority of the workers are women. On this account, the role of the state and their authority should mention as they introduce various legislative measures in order to protect the interests of foreign investors.

**Women in Singapore**

Singapore is a small multicultural nation-state situated at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula. There are several features of the society that makes it an interesting case study of the impact of globalization and culture. Singapore has undergone tremendous social and economic changes in the last forty years. Deciding early on that industrialization was the key to its survival; it opened its economy and society to external influences. Already a cosmopolitan trading society in origin, it was exposed to global forces even further (Tong Kiong and Fee 2003:54).

Since independence in 1965, there has been an increase in the female work force, mainly because women were required for the many labour intensive industries that were established with rapid industrialization. In the first five years of independence, the total number of women (absolute numbers) employed increased almost seven-fold reaching a peak in 1973. The highest proportion of women employed is in lower rung occupations, and participation in higher levels of economic activity remains painfully low. In 1974, 40 percent of the total female work force was engaged as production workers, transport operators and labourers, while women in administration and managerial posts accounted for only 7.5 percent. In the majority of categories of employment, women workers get salaries ranging between 33-66 percent of what males earn in similar jobs (Tan 1980:79-81). Despite their (women) sincere contribution in the economic stability of the nation, inequalities still exist in the country, which has been considered as a model for rapid development and also in case of women holding the equal status in many sectors of the society.
**Women in Indonesia**

The role of Muslim women is fairly traditionalist in many respects. The term feminism is still a rather negatively connotated label hinting at Western (or Northern) influenced, anti-men attitudes. Earlier bilateral and parental kinship system which was widespread in Indonesia protects the status of women in marriage by allowing husband and wife to continue to belong to their own kinship groups of both parents. Women’s position was equal to men (Chitnis 1980:3).

Indonesian women participate in traditional activities and are very active in economic life, particularly in agriculture. Today women are employed in government services, and in private firms and factories as after completion of their studies, they wanted to explore their knowledge into practice. The number of women employed in private factories and offices of firms are estimated at about one third of the whole active labour force or half of the number of men workers. This employment generally includes secretarial jobs, typists, and operators. The industrial sector, such as the textile industry, batik, cigarettes, electronics etc. usually employ women for manual work but in most of the sectors women are discriminated in various forms including wage and security.

In a country like Indonesia where authoritarian regime exists, state plays a dominant role defining women. New order policies have defined women’s citizenship in terms of their difference with men. Women are assigned the primary roles of wives and mothers. Even women’s organizations such as the Dharma Wanita originated from the state’s policy which enforced women’s subordinate status in political power in particular – men were in the state bureaucracy while their wives were required to join the Dharma Wanita (Roces and Edwards 2000:14).

In Indonesia, as in many countries throughout the world, corporations have set up free-trade zones. Generally Indonesian women are concentrated in manufacturing, agriculture and make up 70-80 percent of the textile and garment industry. Because of a large number of rural families that have been pushed off their land by the military to make way for private developments and a sharp downturn in available work in agriculture,
rural women flock to the cities seeking jobs. These young women workers are getting only Rp 5200 (US$2) against the government estimated rate of minimum daily amount required to meet basic needs i.e. Rp 6200. A 1989 study of a range of factories in north Jakarta found that 72.55 percent of workers were paid below the minimum wage. Many companies get away with this by bribing government officials. It has been estimated that 2-10 percent of production costs is paid in wages, while 30 percent is paid for in bribes. (Ellis 2009: 3/25).

Women’s usual working conditions include long hours i.e. 12-14 hours each day, abusive environments, unhealthy conditions and restrictions on the rights to organize. Therefore it is not surprising to know that, the health of women workers is generally very poor with the problems like iron deficiency, anemia (40.3 percent of women workers), depression, chronic tinnitus, occupational bronchitis, menstrual disorders, intestinal parasites (30 percent), malnourished (88 percent), muscle strain disorders and hearing loss (Ellis 2009: 3/25).

The effects of poverty and globalization are clear in Indonesia especially in the lives of women workers. In general, there are no longer any obstacles for women who want to work outside the home, even married women with children. But it is felt that there is still a discriminatory approach towards working women, although according to the law workers get equal pay for equal work (Sudjahri 1980:142). But it is clear from the above statements that women are not getting equal pay with men even for the same job. There is lack of security, and chances of progress and promotion and fear of sexual harassment is always there.

**Women in the Philippines**

History paints a portrait of pre-Spanish Filipino women who were educated, respected, and who could succeed to Sultanates, especially when male heirs were wanting. Monogamy was generally observed except in the Muslim areas (Garcia 1980:142). In the Philippines the majority of employed women belong to the paid/ wage and salary category while the next group are self-employed. The rest are the so-called “unpaid
family workers.” The period 1960-1967 saw an upsurge in the number of part-time and full-time female employees: part-time, meaning those who work less than 40 hours a week, increased from 1.35 million to 1.879 million; full time, from 1.393 million to 3.442 million. All too frequently, women find themselves in positions that call for minimal skill and training and which are, therefore, in the lower pay scales (Garcia 1980:129). The imposition of Christian norms and values under Spanish rule led to an erosion of rights and freedom that women had earlier enjoyed. Since then, in the Filipino home, the husband is traditionally the head as well as the principal breadwinner. Women are counted under the second class citizen as any other countries.

As in any other countries of Southeast Asia, Philippines is also a victim of globalization especially women are facing difficulties as government has cut down expenditures on minimum needs (health care, basic infrastructures) of a citizen, privatization of various departments including water, encourage trafficking and allowed corporate to use women as cheap labour. Economic liberalization has reduced protective tariffs and trade restrictions, giving free-play to the market i.e. the average tariff was reduced from 43 percent in 1980 to 28 percent in 1986, and restrictions on more than 900 items between 1981 and 1985 were lifted (Bello 2004:16). Import liberalization is justified by the notion that it is good because consumers will have multiple choices and the ensuing competition will reduce prices. But flooding the market with imported goods destroyed local industries and livelihoods, resulting in increased poverty and unemployment. Among these, the textile industry suffered the biggest blow in which majority of the workers are women. It shrank from 200 firms in 1970s to less than 10’ (Bello 2004:16). The Philippine Department of Labor and Employment reported that a total of 287, 556 workers were displaced within a period of four years (2000-2003). In January 2006, the number of Filipinos unable to find work increased by 15 percent from previous year, bringing the number to 2.8 million from 2.5 million in 2005 (IBON, 2006b). The figures clearly shows the impact of globalization on women in the Philippines.
Overall Picture of Globalization

The impact of globalization in Southeast Asian countries is mostly negative, especially to women on various grounds. The whole policies and programmes aimed to attract foreign direct investment particularly hinder the development and welfare of the women community. Western influences drag the women of Southeast Asia into the marginalized status in every department and loose the status and freedom which they use to enjoy in their traditional society.

In spite of much publicized success of the green revolution, with the eternal lack of purchasing power amongst millions of the poor and the landless, the shadow of hunger continues to loom large, even when more grain is available in the market. With subsistence economies increasingly being commercialized, the worst sufferers are the poor, and women are expected to bear the greater burden (Ghosh 2004:28). The new market economy demands removal of privileges for the poor, unrestricted dumping, import of unlabelled genetically modified food items, promotion of ‘terminator’ seeds and ‘roundup’ herbicides, and abolition of subsidies and the PDS (Public Distribution System). Privatization is being proclaimed as the panacea against all ills. Reality, of course, tells a different story (Ghosh 2004:32).

In most of the Southeast Asian countries, the family and domestic relations have played a crucial role in shaping recruitment patterns, labour processes and producing gendered forms of labour control. The relationship between family and wage work appears not as dichotomous but as complementary, mutually reinforcing the extraction of women’s labour. Women’s experience of industrialization or any kind of economic development is influenced by existing gender systems (Sen 2004:78-79).

It is widely accepted that labour standards in Asia have improved. However, the problem is that the level playing field is titled very much in favour of employers at the expense of employees. Governments seem powerless or reluctant to tilt it back towards labour anywhere, but particularly in developing economies where cheap labour is axiomatically
viewed as the mechanism delivering them growth and competitive advantage over the developed economies (Brasted 2004:236).

No doubt globalization has brought many opportunities to women. However, the introduction of price liberalization and expansion of market-oriented economies in some countries of Southeast Asia, have had negative impact on the living conditions of women. They have faced a sharp increase in unemployment and reduction of welfare provisions as a result of the development of the private sector and decentralization of many factories and plants, which include state owned lands of collective farms. Therefore, the number of women-headed households in rural areas has increased as the search for jobs led to massive internal migration from rural to urban areas. This trend in some countries has developed home worker jobs, which has been proved to be a good way in strengthening income and generating opportunities for both rural and urban women (Zhiqin 2009: 4/10). It is undeniable that women of Southeast Asian countries are getting opportunities by the process of globalization however, at the same time they are also marginalized and discriminated in various centres with multiple burdens on their shoulder.

Concluding Remarks

It is believed that in every country, independence from colonial rule has brought significant improvement in the legal and sometimes social status of women. These changes are usually most noticeable among elite women, who were able to take advantage of new professional opportunities because of their education, economic resources, or family network. After independence each country passed a family or marriage law that recognized the right of women to free choice in marriage, to divorce, to retain custody of their children to some extent, and to inherit property. Educational opportunities increased, with a corresponding rise in literacy among women; such rates tend to be higher in Southeast Asia than in South Asia. The economic situation of women is more ambiguous. Until the 1990s, there was an important difference in the economic opportunities available to lower-class women in Southeast Asia, because of the penetration of multinational economic enterprises. Electronic and textile industries are
the most prominent in their exploitation of young, unmarried women, who are viewed as
docile, transient workers. In Thailand, prostitution that caters to an international as well
as an indigenous clientele has become a major source of employment for young women,
especially from lower economic groups. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed a new wave of
women’s organizations that are more sensitive than earlier ones to class differences and
more oriented to building class solidarity among women and other disadvantaged
economic groups. Women in Southeast Asia are mobilizing to counter the questionable
effects of modernization and development on their legal rights, social options, and
economic opportunities (Ramusack 1999:106-107).

The introduction of Information Technology within the context of regional globalization
exacerbates the vulnerabilities of non-core workers of whom women form a large part.
Women are doubly venerable in third world countries. ITCs have neither empowered
women nor have they brought the desired development benefits to women in poor
countries (Ng and Mitter 2005:14). This is a kind of violation of human rights as women
are not entitled the rights which they are endowed by the international institutions and
their county as well.

The biological and social roles of women as mothers, homemakers, and careers
circumscribe their ability and opportunity to function on an equal basis with men in most
economic spheres. It happens in traditional occupations and sectors, loosely described as
the Old Economy, and are likely to persist even in the so-called Digital or New Economy.
Societal roles or biological attributes do not always work against women. The patience
and persistence needed for repetitive work or the ability and inclination to work in a team
are the qualities that management often associates with women. This perception, real or
stereotyped, partly explains the feminization of the workforce in the manufacturing
industries of export-processing zones in the developing world (Mitter 2005:34-35).

By the end of Cold War, many of the regional organizations like Asia – Pacific Economic
Cooperation (APEC), Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), ASEAN, ASEAN
Regional Forum (ARF) etc. came up and took initiatives for the development of the
region. That is why the smaller countries of the Southeast Asia are progressing and it is surprising to know that 30 percent of the world economy is controlled by Asia. This is all the positive side of the globalization which generally people count. However, along with this progress, globalization and its strategies brought huge negative effects on poor countries. Under this process, capital moves at the high speed and form a system (quasi-governments) in the form of multinational financial institutions such as the WTO, World Bank and IMF. In the name of giving equal opportunities and benefits worldwide, these institutions are taking advantage of the cheap labour of poor countries and discriminating them from various angles.

The implementation of economic policies, including structural adjustment programmes, trade liberalization and the privatization of education and health services has compounded the feminization of poverty, for example, global economic trends take local form in terms of loss of livelihoods, unemployment, trafficking in women, street children and a total rupturing of the social fabric that binds communities together. Moreover, when international policies and economic transactions cause local economic crises, women are affected in different ways from men and in most case; they suffer more (Adeleye-Fayemi 2004:39).

There is a close linkage between law of the country and status of women. The current economic conditions and structural policies give further constraints to women’s economic opportunities. Amending laws do not effectively protect women from discrimination. It has to be implemented in a proper manner. For these reasons, governments must take concrete steps, and exercise to protect women especially disadvantage women.

In all Southeast Asian countries, we see patterns of (more or less) gender-asymmetrical marriage, domicile and inheritance, ideologies of domesticity and gender-typed reproductive responsibilities (apart from a few notable exceptions). Thus, the class of women who work and the kind of work they do are contingent on male decision-making in the family, euphemized as family decision-making or household strategy. Most Southeast Asian countries show a high plateau where extended families and traditions of
women's work have precluded the need for interrupting careers and employment upon marriage and/or child bearing. The double peak implies a temporary interruption in women's employment, usually for care of young children (Sen 2004:87-89).

In most Southeast Asian countries, women are allowed more power within the family but are constrained in the possibility of public activity. But women suffer discrimination in the labour market. Paid work are usually monotonous, always physically demanding and carries the danger of sexual harassment. In the industries of many Southeast Asian countries, despite lack of security, considerable gender discrimination in wages, long hours and deplorable work conditions, women report a positive attitude to wage employment. They have benefited, not only in areas like autonomy, self-confidence, improved conjugal lives, matrimonial relationships but also in decreased fertility and an increased age of marriage. Even where wider societal attitudes remain negative towards these women, they retain a positive self-image. Thus in some cases wage employment has led women towards some forms of 'autonomy', self-confidence, assertiveness and new values of self-worth (Sen 2004:95).

The expectation of the globalization to set up a universal culture where everyone will enjoy equal freedom and entitle benefit to all no longer exist. Under the roof of globalization, local products, services, and cultures disappear into a global culture, a culture defined not by the global citizenry but rather the world's economic and political superpowers. Unfortunately, globalization is not about equal exchange, it is about concentrations of profit and power in certain parts of the world and with certain people. It gives benefits to some particular country and institutions and specific group of people in case of Third World countries.

Globalization hits the poor hardest, and among them, it hits women even harder. Women have always suffered under the system of patriarchy in every country including Southeast Asia. Above all they carried the multiple burden which has been added by the process of globalization and they are suffering in their own country due to lack of proper maintenance in various departments which are essential for women like unequal wage
system, less access to education, medical facilities as the governments cut down expenditure in these sectors.

When we look at the economic growth in the region over the past few decades, it can be said that it has presented many new opportunities for women in Southeast Asian countries. However, women have not benefited to the same extent as men as globalization is welcomed by the male institutions and it is always benefited to men. Partiality always exists in the process of globalization. Therefore it is not at all a process to build a global culture or to bring equality and progress to the entire world.