

Globalisation and Jobless Growth

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Abstract

Globalisation in its current phase was expected to generate more employment not only directly but also indirectly through expansion of trade, income, FDI, etc. But for many developing economies of the world, this expectation could not be realised during the last two decades of its operation and in particular, it has resulted in to a jobless growth which often led to a voiceless and ruthless growth ultimately resulting into a futureless growth.

The question of human rights protection in the field of employment under globalisation for women in EPZs in particular, is also important. This includes feminisation of poverty and subsequent denial of human rights.

This paper introduces these problems and attempts to depict them at different levels and emphasises on the experiences of India which is the habitat of one-sixth of humanity. The paper organises as follows: Introduction; Globalisation and Jobless Growth- A Global Scenario; Globalisation and Jobless Growth- The Indian Case Study; and Conclusion and Policy Prescriptions to meet the Challenges.

Key Words: Jobless Growth, Truncated Globalization, and Feminization of Poverty

1. Introduction

The UN Report 2007 on the World Social Situation has highlighted on the crucial role of productive employment and decent work in reducing poverty and promoting social development. This Report, entitled 'Employment and Social Imperative', has examined the concept of full and productive employment and its relationship to socio-economic security highlighting the vital importance of employment in achieving the goal of poverty alleviation in particular. The term 'jobless growth' is a paradoxical one as our economic teachings predict a positive relationship between economic growth and creation of employment or jobs. And, it is also universally accepted that employment generation is the surest anti-dote to absolute poverty which is extremely difficult to remove through subsidies and/or doles. About globalisation, ILO has stated that 'our primary concerns are that globalisation should benefit all countries and should raise the welfare of all people throughout the world. This implies that it should raise the rate of economic growth in poor countries and reduces world poverty, and that should not increase inequalities or undermine socio-economic security

within countries (ILO 2004). In fact, globalisation is considered to be an integration process of national economies into the international economy and also as the engine of growth, technical advancement, raising productivity, enlarging employment and bringing about poverty reduction along with modernisation. But, unfortunately, today jobless growth is not merely a theoretical possibility, it is in fact a grim reality of increasing concern in the world of work in the last two decades since when globalisation has become a buzzword and the whole world has willingly or otherwise has accepted it as an established fact. The above report has examined the global trends of employment in this period and analysed jobless growth as one of the areas of increasing global concern to prove that this trend is resulting in most cases, in increased insecurity for workers. The impact of such trends of jobless growth on major social groups as well as the gender dimension of the changing labour market requires a thorough analysis. It has shown further that 'in the current phase of globalisation, labour markets have generated greater economic insecurity and greater levels of most acute forms of inequality, adversely affecting decent work and employment opportunities'. Hence it concludes that productive employment for all is not a policy option, but it is an imperative for the twenty-first century.

In our paper an attempt has been made to analyse the incidence of jobless growth as a consequence of the current phase of globalisation especially in the populous low-income developing countries like India. Of course, it does not mean that the process of the ongoing globalisation process has only negative impacts; but it is more or less clear that it does not affect all regions or all sections of the people throughout the world uniformly. Further, in many countries, the globalisation has been adopted as a package along with other requisites like privatisation and/or liberalisation (e.g., economic reforms programme of 1991 in India). Again, globalisation has been understood and interpreted differently by many and also implemented in different ways in different countries. This paper also tries to link this unhappy situation with other perverse forms of economic growth, viz., voiceless, rootless, ruthless and hence futureless forms of economic growth as defined more than a decade ago by the Human Development Report (HDR) 1995. In organising this paper, we shall after this introduction, discuss the global employment scenario under the globalisation era. In the next section we shall analyse the Indian case as it contains the largest number of poor in the world and extensive levels of open unemployment including underpaid, degraded, part-time, irregular and casual employment and disguised unemployment also. The final section is devoted to conclusion and policy requirements.

2. Globalisation and Jobless Growth: The Global Scenario

1995 is the year of acceleration of the on-going globalisation process with the formation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) which hopes for global prosperity through global expansion of trade in goods and services. It is really a coincidence that in the same year, the World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen declared as its Commitment (No.3) 'to promote the goal of full employment as a basic priority...' Following this, the UN also has emphasised the role of productive employment in reducing poverty and promoting social development. After a decade, in 2005, in the World Summit, the world leaders again reiterated this as a central objective of their national and international policies. In 2006, the UN has included it as a target (goal 1) under Millennium Development Goals

(MDGs). However, this has its origin in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, where it is stated (Art.23 (1)) that 'everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment'. But in reality we find that throughout the world, many people face sufferings 'in the form of unemployment and underemployment, poor quality and unproductive jobs, unsafe work and insecure income, loss of hard-earned rights, gender inequality, exploitation of migrant workers, lack of representation and voice, and inadequate protection and solidarity in the face of disease, disability and old age' (UN 2007). In 2006, 1.4 bn workers were earning below \$2 per day and as many as 507 mn workers (including over 200 mn youth) lived below the \$1 per day poverty line and 130 young people are illiterate. Out of 650 mn people with disabilities, about 470 mn are of working age, and they are most likely to be unemployed or underemployed. It is estimated, as relevant statistics are often missing, that the indigenous people constitute 15% of the world's poorest though they constitute only 5% of the total population. And all these statistics after two decades of ongoing globalisation are not at all encouraging, saying the least.

As noted earlier, the current globalisation process has affected the labour market with different sets of challenges for different categories of labour. This is however in built in the nature of the process itself as it affects different groups differently. It should also be mentioned that this globalisation is primarily meant for free movement of finance and capital and much less or nil for labour and in particular for unskilled labour. Branco Milanovic, an economist at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, has mentioned that globalisation means free movement of capital, goods, technology, ideas and people. Any globalisation that omits the last one is partial and not sustainable (Datt and Sundharam 2007). This has prompted many to call this as a truncated globalisation (Sen 2004) compared with the process observed in the ancient period with completely free movement of capital and labour. As currently it is agreed that knowledge is power, the globalisation process is almost sure to favour the skilled, employed, educated, rich, strong, organised, urban, sophisticated and the capitalist at the cost of the unskilled, unemployed, uneducated, poor, weak, unorganised and marginalised, rural, tribal and the labourer. Consequently we note that under the present scenario, while the former groups dominate and gain, the others lose. Some of the social groups are more vocal and thus more visible, while others are voiceless and invisible. Thus, as the above figures show, the joblessness could not be cured under globalisation; it has accentuated the inequalities among various groups. This pattern of jobless growth therefore has also led to voiceless growth for the vulnerable groups of the society including workers and unemployed, women, migrants and other marginalized categories of people and it is urgently required that their views on matters affecting their lives are properly heard.

There has been also a decline in formal employment in many parts of the world as there has been external labour market flexibility for the sake of competitiveness and this flexible system has been also unstable leading to contractual and unprotected employment for a majority of workers. In contrast with the conventional economic theory, economic growth is found to be no longer associated with the growth of formal employment and informal activities are growing both in absolute and relative terms. This feature results in casualisation of labour associated with insecurity of labour both in job and in social life. The constant insecurity makes the worker further voiceless as he/she does not want to object changes in job conditions including loss of existing rights and/or benefits, out of fear of losing their jobs. The long tradition of social security slowly built up over the years with the development of the concept of welfare state is now getting fast eroded with the present policy of

marketisation, privatisation and deregulation of social services. Short term contracts, outsourcing and subcontracting are fast replacing the permanent nature of jobs with right to form trade unions. While all these policies are reducing labour costs, it is really doubtful if these are increasing labour productivity especially in the long run. The associated social costs also need not be overlooked as they can accumulate grave social tensions and disruption. For instance, in some areas, youths are unable to marry as they are not getting decent and permanent employment necessary to maintain their families. Even contractual jobs are not easily available in countries with high levels of unemployment. As a consequence there are rising cases of sex violence and related crimes even in places which were considered safe for women so far.

A few other factors are relevant in this context to show the tilt in the balance of power against the labourer. (i) The new emergence of agency labour for short term work assignments where the worker has no attachment to a particular company. Such moving workers do not develop any sense of collective bonding and hence do not possess any bargaining power.(ii) So far as the level of open unemployment is concerned, it is estimated (ILO 2004) that 'for the world as a whole, ... (it) has increased over the last decade to about 188 million in 2003'. Of course the results are varied over regions. In Latin America between 1990 and 2002 these rates were 6.9% and 9.9% respectively while they were 3.6% and 6.5% for South East Asia while Japan experienced a rise from 2.1% to 5.8%. The rates are highest for Sub-Saharan Africa (increased from 13.7% in 2000 to 14.4% in 2002) and Middle East and North Africa (the corresponding figures being 17.9% and 18%). Between 1995 and 2002, these rates went up also for East Asia (3.1% and 4.0%) and South Asia (2.9% and 3.4%), but declined for EU (10.5% and 7.6%) and remained unchanged for USA at 5.6%. This also amply proves that globalisation has not only been a case of jobless growth for most of the developing countries including the developed country like Japan, but also it has been beneficial for the EU and did not hurt USA.(iii) Another controversial aspect of globalisation is transferring jobs by the MNCs of high income countries to low income labour surplus economies which engender fear and insecurity among workers of the rich countries altering fundamentally the balance of bargaining power between the workers and employers. Perhaps without this feature, USA would have experienced a decline in her unemployment rate.(iv) The question of rising working hours for the workers is also no less important in this context. An ILO study by Lee and Messenger (2007) estimated that 614.2 mn workers, i.e., 22% of the global workforce, are working 48 hours per week. However in the services sector where it is difficult to regulate working hours, many people are working for much longer hours violating the legal limit of 8 hours per day. Such labour exploiting situation in a major economy puts pressure on other countries to follow such inhumane practice in the interest of competitiveness. Thus lowering the labour and hence the production cost make the consumer happy but he will have to feel otherwise when he works as a worker in the production process.(v) There is no doubt that employment of women has gone up in this era. But at the same time it is also clear that they have been absorbed mainly in the informal sector as casual, temporary, part-time and unskilled workers and in many cases are subjected to inhuman working conditions and sexual harassment. The issues of child labour and migrated workers are also important in this context.(vi) A non-economic issue of convergence of values and cultures under the impact of globalization is extremely important for the very large section of humanity mainly living in developing countries. This convergence tends to transform the diversity of cultures and values into a single pattern, viz., the uni-polar world economic order. The items under this convergence process is actually all-pervasive and includes dress design, food habits, language and writing patterns, family outlook, language and expressions, music and art preferences, many legal provisions to suit global trend and a

number of other areas. Diversities are considered as spices of life. In our physical environment we try to protect our bio-diversity which sustains the eco-system. But in the human society we are following a different course at present.

3. Globalisation and Jobless Growth: A Case Study of India

India is the second most populous country of the world, and have started officially the globalisation process in 1991 as one the three components of the strategy of economic reforms, the other two being liberalisation and privatisation although since the mid1980s she actually started the globalisation process in the form of liberalisation of international trade. India adopted the policy of economic reforms in the face of a serious balance of payment crisis and as dictated by the IMF and World Bank. This process of globalisation got accelerated since 1995 when India became one of the founding members of the WTO. As we have discussed the rationale of including the case study of India in the first section of this paper, it is high time to analyse its impact on the different sectors of the Indian economy with special importance on the employment sector.

Analysing globalisation and its impact on India we may take into consideration the remarks made by the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalisation (WCSDG) set up by the ILO about the experience of globalisation throughout the world. It says that “the current path of globalisation must change. Too few share in its benefits. Too many have no voice in its design and no influence on its course..... We wish to make globalisation a means to expand human well-being and freedom and to bring democracy and development to local communities where people live” (ILO 2004). About one of the principle aims of globalisation to expand trade in goods and services, the WCSDG has commented that “the trade expansion did not occur uniformly across all countries, with the industrialised countries and a group of 12 developing countries accounting for the lion’s share. In contrast the majorities of the developing countries did not experience significant trade expansion. Indeed most of the least developed countries, a group that includes most of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, experienced a proportional decline in their share of world markets - despite the fact that these countries have implemented trade liberalisation measures” (WCSDG 2004). This shows that the trade expansion expected from globalisation and hence the resulting expansion in employment generation did not take place in many countries of the world and it might have even gone down in some sub-Saharan countries.

In case of India we note that the merchandise exports during the period 1990-2003 increased at an annual rate of 9.1% compared to the world average rate of 6.1% in this period. Thus so far as the exports growth rate is concerned, India performed better than the world average. But India’s share in world merchandise exports improved only marginally from 0.51% in 1990 to 0.73% in 2003. However, if we combine India’s exports in the merchandise and the services sectors, this share improved from 0.53% in 1990 to 1.0% in 2003 as India’s performance in services sector exports was relatively much better. Even here considering the size of India’s economy, her gain is much smaller than that of South Korea, Mexico and China.

In the background of this increase in exports from India, the increase in imports from abroad has been far greater. Throughout the period 1990-1 to 2005-6 trade balances were

always negative with an increasing trend with a net positive balance in invisibles coming to rescue in this situation. This clearly shows that the foreigners have been able to penetrate the Indian market more effectively than Indians have been able to access the foreign markets. The present increasing negative trade balance(-4.9 in 2004-5 and -6.4 in 2005-6 as percentage of GDP at market prices observed from Economic Survey, Government of India 2006-7) is also of much concern which led to the reappearance of a negative balance in the current account.

Another important aspect of globalisation is to achieve a greater flow of foreign investment in the form of foreign direct investment (FDI) and foreign portfolio investment (FPI). During 2000-01 and 2005-6 the share of FDI was 46.1% and that of FPI was 53.9% showing that less than half of the amount of total foreign investment was available for increasing productive capacity which can enhance the level of employment and more than half of it are of highly volatile and undependable nature. So far as the FDI inflows are concerned it is noted that during January 1991-March 2004 nearly 69% accrued to five high priority sectors namely Energy, Telecommunications, Electrical Equipments(including computer software and electronics), Transportation and Metallurgical industries, most of which are not employment intensive and with falling employment elasticity. In other words the impact of FDI inflows in India on employment generation in this period has been also not appreciable (Economic Survey 2003-4). Further actual FDI inflows reveal a wide gap between FDI approvals and actual inflows. In fact, it has been 26.8% in the ten listed sectors attracting highest FDI approvals. This huge gap only highlights the slow progress in the actual help rendered by the FDI to promote development and hence employment in India. If globalisation has to make an impact and prove its effectiveness, the gap between approved FDI and actual inflows must be reduced. The situation has been complicated since 2000 when there have been FDI outflows as some Indian firms have been establishing investment projects in other countries. Hence there has been a sizeable reduction in the net FDI inflows, which is the real factor to increase the rate of investment, productivity and employment of the Indian economy from this source. An overview of the world situation in FDI inflows shows that nearly two third of it has gone to benefit the developed countries, while the share of India has been, as per the World Investment Report 2004, a minuscule amount of 0.8% in 2003. It has been further demonstrated by ILO (2004) in its report titled 'A Fair Globalisation: Creating Opportunities for All', shows that in the decade of nineties the distribution of FDI inflows to developing countries has been highly unequal as only 12 countries could corner 74.7% of the FDI inflows leaving the remaining 25.3% only for the whole set of 176 countries and territories. This distribution of FDI has been utterly unfair for India as she does not find a place within this group of twelve countries even though she accounts for 16% of the world population. The role of MNCs for using FDI to enhance their economic power has been mentioned in the ILO Report 2004 where it has been observed that by transferring production processes to the developing countries, the FDI investment is used to nullify the comparative cost advantage of such countries in cheap labour and raw materials in most cases. The Report says "Communication technology revolution, coupled with declining transport cost made the growth of far flung multi-country based production of goods and services both technically and economically feasible" (WCSDG 2004). It is therefore not also true that FDI inflows are all growth-oriented and employment generating as preached by the pro- globalisation lobby. In fact the MNCs and their affiliates actually strengthen their stranglehold over the global production system.

In India the period under economic reforms is usually identified as one of jobless growth as the employment situation in India like many other developing countries has

worsened in the era of globalisation. If we compare the pre-reform period of 1983-94 with the post-reform period of 1994-2000, then it is clearly observed that the growth of employment has come down from 2.04% per year to only 0.98% annually in the latter period. Sector wise, agriculture, mining & quarrying, electricity, gas & water supply have accounted for negative rate of growth of employment and the community, social & personal services sector registered a sharp decline from 2.90 % to 0.55% only. This was the consequence largely of a negative growth rate of employment in agriculture which was neglected during the reform period and which absorbed about 65% of total employed workers. Further by imposing a continuous ban on recruitment in the public sector units and also not filling up even the positions vacated by retirement of public sector employees, the level of employment growth was drastically curtailed in the public sector enterprises. This has been revealed in the Report (2001) of the Task Force on Employment Opportunities appointed by the Planning Commission, Government of India.

Like many other countries in India also globalisation pushed workers from the organised sector to swell the ranks of workers in the unorganised sector leading to often lower wages and accompanying benefits and lower job security. In this acceleration of the process of informalisation of the economy, a process of casualisation of work force has started and the data from the National Sample Survey show that the proportion of casual workers increased from 28.7% in 1983 to 33.2% in 1999-00. In a study on lockouts in India (Datt 2003) it has been shown that in the era of globalisation the following results were observed by using the instrument of lockouts :- (a) downsizing the firms to reduce the so-called surplus labour, (b) increase in overall production and productivity by increasing workload per worker, (c) reduction in the payment of statutory dues and other benefits through greater casualisation of work force, (d) to force workers to accept 'no work no pay' for the entire period of lockout, (e) to force stringent norms of work even in violation of existing Industrial Disputes Act, and (f) to weaken trade unions. In the organised sector also an increasing number of jobs are assuming characteristics of those in the unorganised sector. In a study comprising about 1300 firms in 10 states of India and covering nine manufacturing groups, it was found that most of the increase (by over 2%) in total employment between 1991 and 1998 was accounted for by temporary casual contract and other flexible categories of workers (Deshpande; *et.al.* 2004). It may be said that globalisation has accelerated the process of proletarianisation of labour. The bargaining power of trade unions being reduced, collective bargaining is being substituted by concession bargaining in order to protect the workers from job losses. The rise in the militancy of employers is reflected in the fact that in the pre-reform period of 1976-90, the man-days lost due to strikes and lockouts were 54.9% and 45.1% respectively. For the post-reform period 1991-00, these figures respectively became 60.8% and 39.2% with average duration of lockouts being 2.5 times the duration of strikes (Datt 2003).

Various other features are also becoming evident under globalisation along with jobless growth. These are increasing income inequality throughout the world, slowing down the process of poverty reduction, feminisation of labour in low wage jobs, weakening of the welfare state in favour of market when goal of full employment and decent work being sidelined. In this context the double standard of the developed countries has been exposed by Stiglitz (2002) to show that they are using globalisation to their advantage. In his words, "the western countries have pushed poor countries to eliminate trade barriers, but kept up their own preventing market access to the developing countries. Under the WTO since 1995 the net effect was to lower the prices for the products produced by some of the poorest countries

relative to what they paid for their imports. The result was that some of them were actually made worse off". A direct result of such policies has been the large number of suicides committed by cotton growers in India in recent years.

Let us discuss briefly these issues mentioned above. The public perception in this context is that globalisation has resulted in high degree of concentration of wealth. The ILO has commented that those endowed with capital and other assets, entrepreneurial ability and education and skills are in increasing demand, have all benefited. On the other hand the poor, the assetless and unskilled workers are the losers. In India also the estimates of growth rates in per capita expenditure during 1993-94 to 1999-00 point to a significant increase in rural-urban inequalities. Regarding social deprivation also it is noted that the proportion of population below poverty line among the deprived classes are much higher than those in case of other categories. The natural rights of the tribes on forest land and forests being encroached by the corporate houses under globalisation is causing serious disadvantage to both income and employment of tribes. The WCSDG has also commented that "the goal of full employment and achieving decent work for all receives low priority in current international policies". Globalisation is propagating competitiveness in the name of efficiency, a euphemism for cost cutting and promotion of the share of capital in the production process adversely affecting the share of labour in national income. It has quoted a participant in the Philippines dialogue that, "there is no point in a globalisation that reduces the price of a child's shoes but cost the father his job". The rural and informal economies remain on the margins and the result is persistent poverty. The most employment creating sector of small enterprises are unable to take the advantage of globalisation. There is no doubt that globalisation has weakened the welfare state in favour of the markets but the markets also have failed in many areas specially in the rural sectors as globalisation has bypassed agriculture in India, the principle source of livelihood of over 60% of the population. In the name of privatisation the MNCS under globalization has replaced the public monopolies with private monopolies. As globalisation lacks social responsibilities it is vitally necessary to change the present situation in which "government reigns, but global capital rules". The markets have a place but the task is to place the market in their place. The task of ensuring decent work is a task of restoring the state its rightful place in development (Reddy 2004).

4. Conclusion and Policy Prescriptions

In this context the ILO has suggested that the current globalisation process should possess a more human face. For this purpose there should be an agenda for a fair and inclusive growth. What we need a proper macro-economic and employment generation policy, improving the productivity of employment specially in the informal sector through promotion of skill development with the help of organisations of the working poor, with an emphasis on the development of the social sector and promotion of a balanced regional development. About India the WCSDG has mentioned that the lives of the educated and the rich had been enriched by globalisation but the benefits had not yet reached the majority and new risks have cropped up for the losers - the socially deprived and rural poor. Such a situation needs remedial action to achieve the target of a fair globalisation. Under the current macro-economic policy in India, the employment generation has not been a concomitant of accelerating growth rates. While there has been a growth in the employment of urban and educated section of the people, the major source of employment became dry. It is necessary

to improve the productivity of employment also as the main problem in India is underemployment and not open employment. As regional disparities have widened in India under globalisation it is necessary to put more emphasis on the development of backward states to achieve the goal of a more balanced regional development. To save the poor from exclusion from the benefits of globalisation which has increased the need for acquiring skills, it is necessary for the state to increase public investment in social sector. As human development is conducive to economic growth it is vital to adopt a policy framework to promote employment growth, social security, education, health care and effective poverty reduction program through employment generation and asset creation. In India since 2005 the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act has been enacted for the rural population and this is the major step towards the realisation of the right to work. If properly implemented this step can go a long way to mitigate the challenges of the ongoing process of jobless growth and lead to permanent eradication of poverty from the country. We may conclude in the words of John Haris (2005) that, “ India has such a huge domestic market that it need not rely on the overseas market for growth but to realise that potential, people need to have incomes”. Only a fair globalisation can help to promote growth and employment simultaneously.

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Note

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