

Globalization – A New Avenue to Women Empowerment

Dulal Kumar Basu & Manikuntala Basu

In ancient India women enjoyed equal status with men in all fields of life. They were educated in early vedic period. They were free to select their husband. They used to enjoy equal status and rights during early vedic period. But the status of women began to decline with Smritis (esp. Manusmriti in 200 BC.) and with the Islamic invasion of Babur and of the Mughal empire and later Christianity curtailing women's freedom and rights. It can be traced from one of the sayings of Manusmriti that goes like this – "In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons". It means woman is undeserving for independence. Since then the women in India began to face confinement and restrictions.

Gradually with the passing of times the social status of women deteriorated particularly from medieval period when Sati, Child marriages and ban on widow remarriages became part of social life in India. The Muslim conquest in the Indian subcontinent brought purdah practice in the Indian society. In some parts of India, the Devdasis or the temple women were sexually exploited, polygamy was widely practiced esp. among Hindu Kshatriya rulers and in many Muslim families women were restricted to zenana areas.

Practically speaking, patriarchal and social pressures like caste based discrimination and social restrictions, lack of education, inadequate access to productive resources, perennial poverty, insufficient advancement facilities and powerlessness in all spheres of life have plagued the lives of Indian women with little respite. Socially the majority of Indian women is still tradition bound and is in a disadvantageous position.

With this social background in view, this paper tries to give an overview of what are the pros as comparing to the cons for women empowerment in India in

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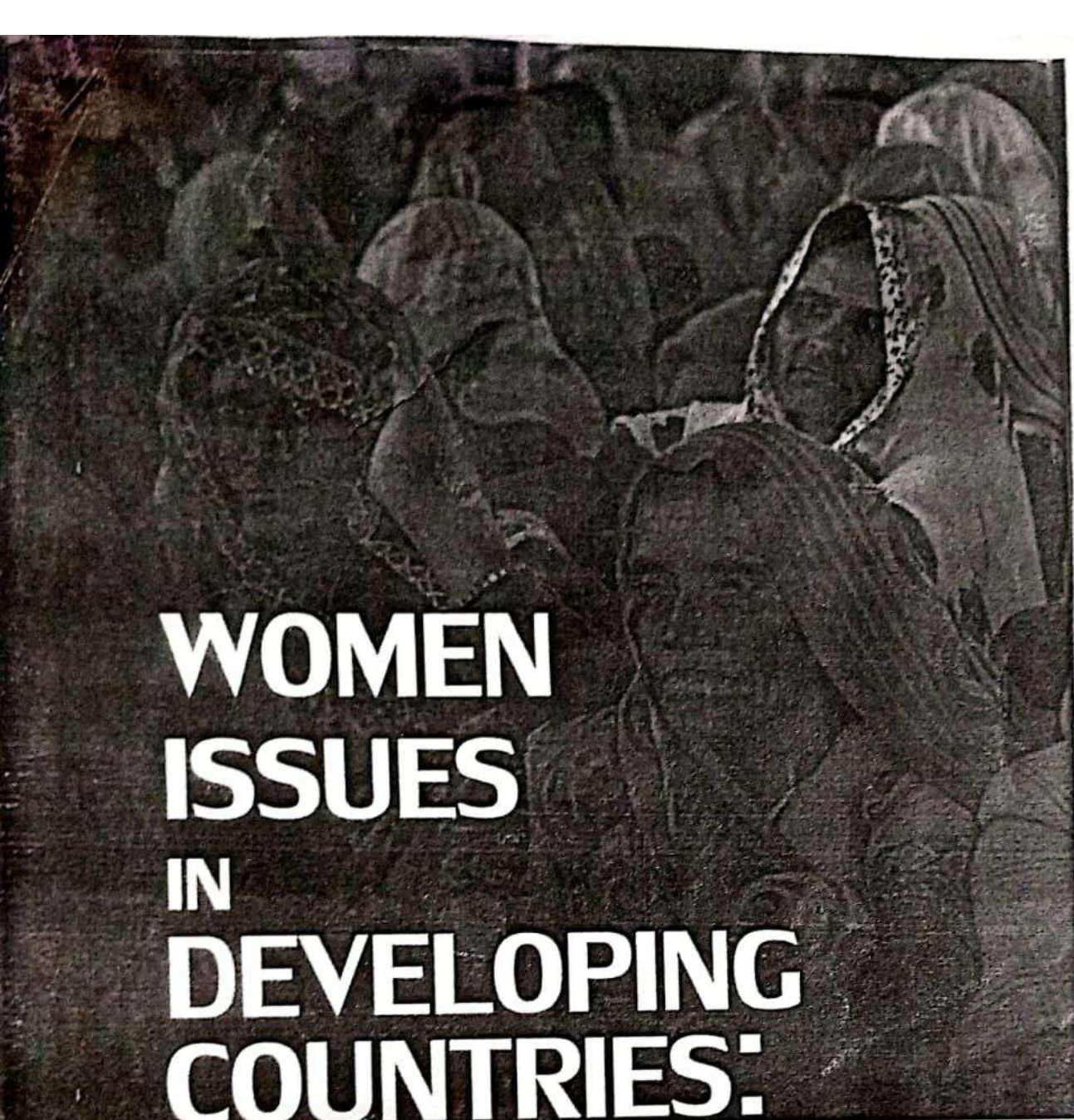
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