

**Globalization, Tourism
and
Gender Relations:**

**A Case Study of a Coastal Community in
Sri Lanka**

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Index No : MA Scio 191

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**Thesis submitted for the Master of Arts
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August 2007



ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a sociological analysis of the changing gender relations in a coastal community in Southern Sri Lanka. The coastal communities have undergone many changes due to the expansion of tourism with the acceleration of globalization.

The study was carried out in Narigama – Wellabada and Wewala, two Grama Niladhari divisions at Hikkaduwa Divisional Secretariat division in the Galle district of southern province. One hundred and fifty household units were selected to collect basic information. In-depth interviews, case studies and participant observation were used to collect qualitative information. Ten women were selected for case studies. In addition, in depth interviews were carried out with key informants in the Hikkaduwa area.

The research problem that was investigated in the study was whether the tourist industry in the context of globalization has made an impact on existing gender relations in a southern coastal community of Sri Lanka. Firstly the economic changes that are brought about with the development of tourism in the area and secondly its impact on gender relations within households and community were analyzed.

The study clearly focuses two important aspects of globalization. Firstly, in the sphere of globalization, tourism has created a relationship and integration between countries of different power. The West is looking at the East with scenic beauty and historical attractions for their peoples' enjoyment and leisure. The poorer countries that are blessed with such tourist attractions look for the West for economic gains. This relationship has impacted the lives of villagers in Narigama – Wellabada and Wewala. The traditional economic structure of the villages has transformed to a new, modern one. The new economic environment has created many sources of income. Both men and women have benefited economically although insecurity and instability prevail.

Secondly, tourism within the context of globalization has a differential impact on men and women. Although both men and women have economically benefited the impact is seen different. Gender stereotyping and gender division continues to prevail

in the tourist industry. Men are better positioned in the types of employment and the diversifications of income sources are greater for men. Women on the other hand while gaining and improving their economic situation from what was before, are exploited in both productive and reproductive spheres.

In one hand women have opportunity to increase their income and gain better bargaining position with recognition in the household and community than to the extent they experienced in the traditional society. On the other hand women are overburdened with work due to reproductive role. Reproductive role is still seen as a *typical* 'Womanly role' even though women are taking an equal or more share in productive work. The study clearly shows that economic empowerment alone is not sufficient for a social or political empowerment as patriarchal attitudes and values still remain to be strong in society. Therefore, men still remain to have more power in the household and community even though certain changes have taken place.