Introduction:

Promoting mainstreaming of gender and gender equality has increasingly gained attention over work places, both in public and private sector. Integration of gender sensitive policies and framework play a crucial role in balancing of work environment. Measures adopted to increase ratio of educated and independent women play an important role in empowering women to act as decision maker especially in matters of their own and family health and well-being especially in today’s world which is changing at a startling pace. These changes have created economic opportunities for women who want to do something for their own and for their family. A recent United Nations report concluded that economic development is closely related to the advancement of women. In nations where women have advanced, economic growth has usually been steady. By contrast, in countries where women have been restricted, the economy has been stagnant. According to the 1995 UN survey, “two changes have occurred over the past 10 years in the enabling environment for women in the economy. One is the establishment of legal equality for women. The other is granting women equal access to education and training.”

Women constitute almost half the total population of the world and out of which two-thirds of world’s adult illiterates are women. According to food and agricultural organization, the most disadvantaged section of society is the women. They are the ‘silent majority’ of the world’s poor. They face peculiar social, cultural, educational, political and allied problems. Women in India constitute about 50 percent of the total population. It is, therefore, important that when considering the economic development of this segment of the population, due attention is given to their socio-economic empowerment. India envisions a future in which Indian women are independent and self-reliant. (Agarwal 2003) Government of Karnataka state has taken a step to make this dream a success by recruitment at the post of bus conductors. Karnataka state
transport was the first to appoint women conductors in 1948. Maharashtra is the second state to do so. Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) has been instrumental in providing access and connectivity across the entire state of Maharashtra. The observations of the researcher shows that women conductors are facing a number of problems. They are simply not clear about their career path. The problems faced by women conductors, their health, safety etc. indicate that the area needs to be researched and solutions be found.

The reality of women’s lives remains invisible to men and women alike and this invisibility persists at all levels beginning with the family to the nation. Although geographically men and women share the same space, they live in different worlds. The mere fact that “Women hold up half the sky”- does not appear to give them a position of dignity and equality. True, that over the years women have made great strides in many areas with notable progress in reducing some gender gaps. Yet, ‘the afflicted world in which we live is characterized by deeply unequal sharing of the burden of adversities between women and men’. Sprawling inequalities persist in their access to education, health care, physical and financial resources and opportunities in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres.

Women Worldwide:

Women as Workers do more than:

- 67% of the hours of work done in the world
- Earn only 10% of the world’s income
- And own only 1% of the world’s property
- The value of unremunerated work was estimated at about $16 billion, from which $11 billion represents the invisible contribution of women
- Women are paid 30-40% less than men for comparable work on an average
60-80% of the food in most developing countries is produced by women

Women hold between 10-20% managerial and administrative jobs

Women make up less than 5% of the world’s heads of state

Women in India:

- Female share of non-agricultural wage employment is only 17%
- Participation of women in the workforce is only 13.9% in the urban sector and 29.9% in the rural sector
- Women’s wage rates are, on average, only 75% of men’s wage rates and constitute only 25% of the family income
- In no Indian State do women and men earn equal wages in agriculture
- Women occupy only 9% of parliamentary seats, less than 4% seats in High Courts and Supreme Court
- Less than 3% administrators and managers are women

It is observed that whether we talk about women at world level or at India’s level they are having problems. There are huge number of researches available on women and the problems faced by them, but most of them are on women entrepeneurs or on women’s belonging to self help groups. The researcher had visited many Indian universities and did online search also but there is approximately no research done in the field of women bus conductors. Whatever one or two papers the researcher came across were also from the medical point of view. This indicates that the area needs to be researched.

**A Brief History of MSRTC**

The process of Nationalization in the road passenger transportation sector started immediately after Independence, when the Central Government introduced the legislation for the purpose
sometime in 1948, which resulted in bringing on the Statute Book in 1950 - the Road Transport Corporation (RTC) Act. In December 1949, Bombay State decided to set up a single Corporation for the whole state under the Road Transport Corporation Corporation Act, 1948, which was later constituted under the Road Transport Corporation Act, 1950. Nationalization of passenger road transport services in the State started in June 1948, initially as a departmental undertaking with a fleet of 35 buses operating on the Poona-Ahmednagar and allied routes, which later were handed over to the statutory corporation viz., Bombay State Road Transport Corporation (BSRTC). This corporation in 1961 emerged as the Maharashtra State Transport Corporation (MSRTC), which is today the second largest (after APSRTC) passenger road transport organization in the country. Consequent to the bifurcation of the erstwhile Bombay State with effect from 1st May 1960, the Bombay Reorganization Act, 1960, made provision for the corresponding bifurcation of the erstwhile Bombay State Road Transport Corporation between the two state of Maharashtra and Gujarat. After bifurcation and with the approval of the Central Government, a notification was issued in June 1961, merging the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation, the State Transport Marathwada and the Provincial Transport Services, Nagpur formally with effect from 1st July 1961. Simultaneously, the jurisdiction of the Maharashtra State Transport Corporation (MSRTC) came to cover the entire State of Maharashtra. Maharashtra is one of the few States where passenger transportation has been completely nationalized. MSRTC carried out an ambitious expansion plan by laying down the principle of linking each and every village by bus service. MSRTC’s principal slogan is "Where there is a road there is a bus service". This approach has been responsible for extensive route network in the entire state of Maharashtra. MSRTC has made significant contribution by creating a good road transport infrastructure for developing the rural economy in the state. A brief profile of MSRTC is provided in Appendix I.
MSRTC at a glance

Established on 1st June 1948.

Owns 1379 hectares of land

No. of regions 618

No. of divisions 30

No. of depots 247

No. of buses held 15445

Average No. of routes 16640

Average no. of schedules operated 13930

No. of villages served (directly) 41418

Total population served 1009.78 Lakhs (99.77% of total population) as on 31-03-2005

Daily Effective kms operated 48.36 Lakhs

Average daily passengers traveled 62.10 Lakhs

No. of central workshops 3

No. of divisional workshops 32

No. of employees (including staff at central units) 102818 as on 31-3-06

**Significance of the Study:**

There is no significant study conducted in India highlighting the problems of women conductors employed with the state transport which is the prime area of this study. Lack of attention in this area is a major driving force to conduct this study. It is anticipated that it will give some policy inputs to make the working environment women friendly. In addition, the future researchers will obtain some idea to carry out research in this field.

The research findings will be useful in following ways:
• It will provide way to understand societal values and attitudes towards career women with special focus on their family members and the rural people of the field level.

• It will be helpful to identify the nature of problems, their influence and consequences.

• It will bridge the knowledge gaps of government initiatives and existing reality to ensure mainstreaming of women in Maharashtra state transport

Scope of the study:

Human resources are undoubtedly the key resources in an organization, the easiest and the most difficult to manage! The objectives of the HRM span right from the manpower needs assessment to management and retention of the same. To this effect Human resource management is responsible for effective designing and implementation of various policies, procedures and programs. It is all about developing and managing knowledge, skills, creativity, aptitude and talent and using them optimally. Human Resource Management is not just limited to manage and optimally exploit human intellect. It also focuses on managing physical and emotional capital of employees. Considering the intricacies involved, the scope of HRM is widening with every passing day. It covers but is not limited to HR planning, hiring (recruitment and selection), training and development, payroll management, rewards and recognitions, Industrial relations, grievance handling, legal procedures etc. In other words, we can say that it’s about developing and managing harmonious relationships at workplace and striking a balance between organizational goals and individual goals. The scope of HRM is extensive and far-reaching. Therefore, the researcher will be limiting the study to the following parameters:
**HRM in Personnel Management:** This is typically direct manpower management that involves manpower planning, hiring (recruitment and selection), training and development. The overall objective here is to ascertain individual growth, development and effectiveness which indirectly contribute to organizational development.

**HRM in Employee Welfare:** This particular aspect of HRM deals with working conditions and amenities at workplace. This includes a wide array of responsibilities and services such as safety services, health services, welfare funds, social security and medical services. It also covers appointment of safety officers, making the environment worth working, eliminating workplace hazards, support by top management, job safety, safeguarding machinery, cleanliness, proper ventilation and lighting, sanitation, medical care, sickness benefits, employment injury benefits, personal injury benefits, maternity benefits, unemployment benefits and family benefits.

It also relates to supervision, employee counseling, establishing harmonious relationships with employees, education and training. Employee welfare is about determining employees’ real needs and fulfilling them with active participation of both management and employees. In addition to this, it also takes care of canteen facilities, crèches, rest and lunch rooms, housing, transport, medical assistance, education, health and safety, recreation facilities, etc.