INTRODUCTION:

“You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women”. - Jawaharlal Nehru.

When Amartya Sen. had taken up the issue of women’s welfare, he was accused in India of voicing “foreign concern”. He was told, Indian women don’t think like that about equality. But he argued saying that if they don’t think like that they should be given an opportunity to think like that. The International Labour Organisation says that women represent:

i) 50% of the population
ii) 30% of the labour force
iii) Perform 60% of all working hours
iv) Receive 10% of the world’s income
v) Own less than 1% of the world’s property

Women’s economic participation can be mentioned in the field of production of goods and services accounted in the national income statistics. However, female work participation has always been low at 26% compared to 52% of men. The problem is that women have always been at work; only the definitions of work and work plan have never been defined or realistic to include their contribution to the economy and the society.

NEED TO WORK

Why do women work? Women work mainly for economic independence, for economic necessity, as some women are qualified enough to work, for a sense of achievement and to provide service to the society. Most Indian women by and large undertake “productive work” only under economic compulsion. This is the reason for high female participation rates in economically under privileged communities. Usually upper class women are limited to homes. Work participation rate is found to be higher among rural women than the urban women.

We will find that women usually go in for temporary and standby jobs because of the prevalent hesitancy to employ women in regular jobs and providing them with good working conditions.
The main workers are those who “work” for the major part of the year. Female main workers constitute 14.65% of the population and men- 50.54%. Female marginal workers constitute 6.26% of the population, whereas males being only 0.98%.

Women are working in both the sector i.e. Organized and unorganized but, most of the women are found to be employed in agricultural activities and in the unorganized sector. The employment of women is high in the unorganized sector such as part time helpers in households, construction center, tanneries (setting, parting and drying), match and beedi industries etc.

An estimate by the World Bank shows that 90% of the women working in the informal sector are not included in the official statistics and their work is undocumented and considered as disguised wage work, unskilled, low paying and do not provide benefits to the workers. Statistics show that vast majority of Indians work in Agriculture where 55% of the population is female agricultural workers and 30% of the men are laborers and not cultivators. These working conditions of women result in they are Exploitation of women, premature and stillbirths,, women are ill treated and it increase the insecurity amongst them. Working women are always overworked but there always the invisibility of women’s work i.e. women’s work is rarely recognized and they are sexually and mentally harassed at workplace.

The female labor force constitutes one third of the rural workers in India. Women workers face serious problems and constraints related to work such as lack of continuity, insecurity, wage discrimination, unhealthy job relationship, absence of medical and accident care etc. The exploitation of female laborers in rural regions happens both horizontally and vertically. It is time to address the issues and discuss the kind of policy reforms and institutional changes required for the emancipation and empowerment of rural female labor force. Empowerment should aim at changing the nature and direction of the power structures which marginalize the women laborers.

“Women do two thirds of the world’s work, receive ten percent of world’s income and own one percent of the means of production.” This is the present picture of women workers in the era of globalization. To understand the workplace culture for Indian women, a brief note on women’s empowerment in the present global scenario is highly essential. In the context of
development, women’s leadership and agency in social change have been levers for women’s empowerment within communities. Women have sought to fight entrenched interests for community benefits, and through their collective strength, have earned a new identity. Women’s rights around the world are an important indicator to understanding global well-being.

Although women hold a unique position in every society, they still belong to a disadvantaged class of society due to various social barriers and impediments. Women are usually the most exploited and least privileged members of households and as the primary caregivers of their families; they are often overburdened with domestic work for their families. Notwithstanding their second-class status in several societies, women’s issues have acquired growing importance in all countries as the impact on gender discrimination in the political, social, economic and employment arenas have come to light.

Although the humiliation, harassment and exploitation of women have been commonplace throughout history, such treatment has become more widespread with globalization. Globalization can be viewed as the international integration of national economies, i.e., the process through which the people of the world are unified into a single society. Globalization embodies integration of international markets for goods, services, technology, finance and labor. Multinational corporations serve as the engines that are driving globalization. Multinational corporations, in particular, are assuming a major role in integrating the world economies through trade, finance, technology, investment, transfer and relocation of their business activities.

Globalization at a minimum involves the creation of a world economy that is not merely the sum of its national economies, but rather is a powerful independent reality, created by the international division of labor and the world market, which presently predominates over national market. Large-scale, long term flows of capital, commodities, technology and labor across national boundaries define the process of globalization. However globalization has become a dominant feature of the world economy over the last decade, as more and more nations are becoming integrated into the global economy through trade and capital flows.

DEFINITION OF GLOBALIZATION
Although academics and economists differ on the definition of globalization, globalization can generally be defined as the integration of world economies by removing barriers to trade and encouraging the free flow of foreign investment, private portfolio capital and labor across national boundaries. The main principles upon which the entire theory of globalization is based are as follows:

1. Sustained economic growth, as measured by gross national product, is the path to human progress;
2. Free markets i.e., markets that are free from government intervention, generally result in the most efficient and socially optimal allocation of resources;
3. Economic globalization, is achieved by removing barriers to the free flow of goods and money anywhere in the world, which in turn fosters competition, creates jobs, increases economic efficiencies, lowers consumer prices, increases consumer’s choice and is generally beneficial to everyone by increasing overall economic growth;
4. Privatization, which transfers functions and assets from government to the private sector, improves efficiency.
5. Despite this optimistic outlook towards globalization, globalization has a dark side and has the power to create highly undesirable adverse effects. In particular, globalization has the potential to lead to exploitation of the female workforce and even to jeopardize their safety. It is in this context that the following examination of the concept of globalization and its impact on the working women is necessary.

EFFECTS OF GLOBALIZATION ON WOMEN IN INDIA

The positive effect of globalization is that it has opened up broader communication lines and attracted more companies as well as different organizations into India. This provides opportunities for not only working men, but also women, who are becoming a larger part of the workforce. With new jobs for women, there are opportunities for higher pay, which raises self-confidence and brings about independence. This, in turn, can promote equality between the sexes, something that Indian women have been struggling with their entire lives. Globalization has the power to uproot the traditional treatment towards women to afford them an equal stance in society.
Despite the positive effects of globalization through increased employment opportunities for women, globalization has a darker, more sinister side. Out of the total 397 million workers in India, 123.9 million are women and of these women 96% of female workers are in the unorganized sector. Accordingly, although more women are now seeking paid employment, a vast majority of them obtain only poorly paid, unskilled jobs in the informal sector, without any job security or social security. Additionally working women in India are more likely to be subjected to intense exploitation; they are exposed to more and more risks that cause health hazards and are forced to endure greater levels of physical and mental stress. Thus it would appear, that globalization has made many international corporations richer by the billions at the expense of women who are suffering enormously due to this expansion of corporate empires.