

# International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

## *Golden Research Thoughts*

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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2231-5063

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## EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH NUTRITIONAL SECURITY



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### ABSTRACT

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. From equal status with men in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. In modern India, women have adorned high offices in India including that of the President, Prime minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition, etc. Indian women have mastered anything and everything which a woman can dream of. But she still has to go a long way to achieve equal status in the minds of Indian men.

**KEYWORDS :** Empowerment , Nutritional Security, agriculture.



### INTRODUCTION :

#### Status of Women from Historical Times

During pre-vedic period., During vedic period., At present time.

Status of women during pre-vedic period

- As early as 2000 BC. women were bestowed with higher status in the society.
- Mother Goddess was the first in the order of importance in worship.
- Women participated in decision-making of social and civic functions

Status of women during vedic period

- From 1500 BC. Mother Goddess was

stratified into three forms of worship as Lakshmi, Saraswati and Parvati. Lakshmi as Goddess of Wealth. Saraswati as Goddess of Knowledge. Parvati as Goddess of Power.

- The pivotal role given to women is reflected in bringing prosperity, enlightening the minds and fighting the evils of society.
- Popular prevailing notion - Mata, Pita, Guru, Bhagavan - shows prime importance and foremost position in the order of respectability given to women in the society.
- Women had mastered the ritual offerings and participated equally with men in sacrifices.
- Patriarchal system prevailed - birth of male child was favoured and female child was discouraged.
- More and more restrictions were imposed on women
- During Muslim rule Purdah system, Sati sahaamana, Jauhar etc. prevailed.

• Thus gradually the status of women had been degraded due to changing trends in the humanistic vision of development.

Status of women at present time

- Denial of equal rights and opportunities is visible in the society.
- Women are subjected to inequality, discrimination, oppression and violence.
- Diminished status of women in social, economical and educational fields.
- It affected food consumption, nutrition and health of women.

Gender equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. Equality between men and women exists when both sexes are able to share equally in the distribution of power and influence; have equal opportunities for financial independence through work or through setting up businesses; enjoy equal access to education and the opportunity to develop personal ambitions. A critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women, with a focus on identifying and redressing power imbalances and giving women more autonomy to manage their own lives. Women's empowerment is vital to sustainable development and the realization of human rights for all. Women's empowerment should cover making work places safe for women, by having fast track implementation of stringent laws against sexual harassment and domestic violence.

The Constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women equality (Article 14), no discrimination by the State (Article 15(1)), equality of opportunity (Article 16), equal pay for equal work (Article 39(d)). In addition, it allows special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women and children (Article 15(3)), renounces practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e)), and also allows for provisions to be made by the State for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief. (Article 42).

In 1990s, grants from foreign donor agencies enabled the formation of new women-oriented NGOs. Self-help groups and NGOs such as Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) have played a major role in women's rights in India. The Government of India declared 2001 as the Year of Women's Empowerment (Swashakti). The National Policy for the Empowerment Of Women was passed in 2001. In 2010 March 9, one day after International Women's day, Rajyasabha passed Women's Reservation Bill, ensuring 33% reservation to women in Parliament and state legislative bodies.

The National data collection agencies accept the fact that there is a serious under-estimation of women's contribution as workers. However, there are far fewer women in the paid workforce than there are men. In urban India Women have impressive number in the workforce. As an example at software industry 30% of the workforce is female. They are at par with their male counter parts in terms of wages, position at the work place. In rural India, agriculture and allied industrial sectors employ as much as 89.5% of the total female labour. In overall farm production, women's average contribution is estimated at 55% to 66% of the total labour. According to a 1991 World Bank report, women accounted for 94% of total employment in dairy production in India. Women constitute 51% of the total employed in forest-based small-scale enterprises. There is need to improve the situation of woman. In order to overcome this situation it is necessary to empower the woman. The woman empowerment is necessary to increase women's access and control over resources and to improve their control over decision making. Further working on these aspects will enhance the mobility and social interaction of women in the society which would positively influence all round development and empowerment of women in India.

Empowerment of women not only for health and nutrition but also for other related aspects in

society is the need of the day because, A significant few in the society still consider women as sex objects, gender disparity is high in society, crimes against women are increasing and violence against women is all time high and in most cases go unreported, dowry related problems and death is increasing, workplace harassment of women is rapidly increasing as more women join the workforce, early age marriages are still taking place in large numbers, the girls who join the school drop out by the age of puberty to get married and live a life of drudgery and Female feticide and infanticide is becoming one of the biggest social crisis. All this is happening despite the fact that there are number of programmes and policy initiatives that is being run by the government and other bodies since the year 2001.

How to achieve it :The empowerment of woman will be achieved by Education of women should be given top priority and female literacy programmes need to be enforced across the country. To improve the socioeconomic conditions women need to be trained and better equipped for taking informed decisions , to change the social attitudes and norms by involving men is the need of the hour. Improve the ground level living standards of women. This include making access to affordable cooking fuel for rural women, providing safe drinking water, sanitation, Increase the decision making capacity among women. Improve the political participation of women. Increase the security of women who are engaged in agriculture as daily wage workers and also at other work places.

The goal of woman empowerment can be achieved only by making woman financially independent through entrepreneurship. Economic empowerment of woman gives them self confidence, which helps them obtain a voice. Economic decisions: acquiring, allocating, and selling assets. However, this can be achieved only by entrepreneur skills especially in household related activities as majority of women are mostly illiterate.

### **BENEFITS OF EMPOWERING WOMEN**

The empowered women are recognized to be confident and efficient in solving any kind of problems they face either at family level or community level. Self-reliance through empowerment can contribute to their bargaining power within the household and their capacity to fully articulate for their demands in family and in community at large. This may serve to offset disadvantage and vulnerability experienced by women. With external assistance, encouragement and family support women can attain self reliance and thereby it enables them in contributing to family income, in managing small scale industries and mini enterprises effectively. Six out of ten people in Asia, eight out of ten people in Africa are the women engaged in farm activities. Even in India women take double or triple burden of family – working outside, fighting patri-focal mind set. Also it is a fact that in one out of three households, women are the sole bread earners. A report from Brazil reveals that when the income of family was in the hands of women, the probable survival rate of a child increased by about 20%. The inherent qualities of sacrifice, love and affection enable her to discharge effectively the welfare activities of the family , even at the cost of her health and needs. Many eminent personalities has described that self-confidence and empowerment of women are the key elements in considering the overall food security situation. According to the reports from Ethiopia, when women are involved along with men in community projects of Food for Work, women have earned a new measure of respect from the community and thereby improved their status and raised their self-esteem.

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