Chapter-I

INTRODUCTION

Women form a major segment of our society, as home-maker and nurtures – their knowledge, awareness and efforts have a marked impact on growth, development and nutritional status of their family members. Before the advent of the modern era, women in India were generally confined to home, within the four walls of the house. However, in the Post-Independent India, many new vistas have opened up and the women have made themselves free of the fetters in an effort to establish their own identity. In the recent years, many of them have had an access to education which has resulted in their intellectual awakening and broadened thinking. Education of women especially the nutrition and health related education should be our major thrust area. Nutrition awareness for women is extremely important because they, as nurturers, are engaged in bringing up our future generations.

The first education of the child takes place within the periphery of the family where he/she inherits a certain culture, imbibes certain values, habits and comes in with his/her immediate environment. A woman’s contribution in moulding the child surpasses that of any other member of the household and, therefore, it is the mother who needs to be targeted and made nutritionally wiser. The educational level, position, health and nutritional status of the women is central to the quality of life and is a key determinant of family health (Jyothilakshmi, 2004). Her food preferences are reflected in the food purchases she makes and the meals she serves to the family. This, in the early years of life, will affect the child’s food habits which will rather be passed on to the next generation when, today’s young will become parents and will serve as role models for their children. As such special attention should be given for the improvement of nutritional awareness among the women.
which is also clear from the words of Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, “good nutrition is a function of both economy and education”. Women's education is hypothesized to exert a major influence on health and nutritional status.

Today many women are moving out from their home in search of better job prospect. Money earning capacity builds status of women not only in her home but also in the society. This view is stressed by Sheela and Shashikala (2001) also, who believed women's employment has the potential to benefit household nutrition through increasing the household income. It is an accepted fact that in household with low average food availability, women and children are especially at risk. Thus, the most important social, economic and cultural dimensions which effect women's provision of nutrition are women's employment and women's decision making power. visa versa the disposal of their income including marketing of food purchased or purchasing food in the market, on the one hand, and their ability to cook and serve adequate quantities of food to individual household members. It encompasses their nutritional knowledge and autonomy in ‘kitchen’ decision making, on the other (Khetarpaul, N. and Grover, I. 2001). Increased income in the family of working women may improve the nutritional status of the family but it may also affect her health indeed if she is not nutritionally aware.

The presence of working women may well increase the food consumption of poorer households, even if the women have to travel away from the home to earn money. This is true for a variety of reasons, such as the improved capacity of the wife to exert her preferences within the household (which may reflect society’s gender-defined roles rather than some innate preference to buy food) and improved ability to buy food items that require cash in small but reliable flows. For richer households, the net effect on calorie intake and calorie cost may will be zero or
even negative as food (and especially calories, as opposed to micronutrients) becomes a less important component of the budget

**Status of Indian women**

Although India has made considerable progress in the economic sphere, it is one of the few countries where men significantly outnumber women. Maternal mortality rate in rural areas figures among the world’s highest, and communicable diseases and malnutrition account for majority of the disease burden. Women and girls, particularly the poor, are more susceptible to and trapped in the cycle of disease and illness primarily due to their nutritional status being affected by unequal access to food, health care and heavy work demands. To add to this, very often, they do not receive medical treatment before the illness is well advanced.

In India, the nutrition and health status of women is abysmally low. The National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) Survey (1990) done in India shows that women's calorie requirement after the age of 10 years is not adequately met. This itself indicates whether women are undernourished. The poor health status of women in India is mainly due to patriarchy and other socio-cultural constraints leading to her secondary status at home and poor health. It is a bitter reality that in India women's health and nutrition is inextricably linked to social, cultural and economic factors.

In India, when the food intake of the “privileged” and “underprivileged” males and females was compared, it was realized that 24 per cent of the females were malnourished in the privileged group, while 74 per cent were malnourished among the underprivileged. The percentage for males was lower in both cases: 14 per cent among the privileged and 67 per cent in the underprivileged.

In some cultural and social contexts in India, women are prohibited from eating essential quality food particularly during menstruation, pregnancy and
lactation such as milk and green leafy vegetables. In India parents who wish to postpone the marriage of their daughters often limit their food intake because they fear that girls who are well nourished will mature at a younger age, and this will place them at a vulnerability of early marriage.

Ancient Indian Women

In ancient times Aryans were the main inhabitant of India. These people were mainly Brahmins and they used to give the status of goddess to the women. At that time women enjoyed no less than status of 'Lakshmi' (goddess of wealth) in the households. A famous Sanskrit shloka (form of Hindu verse) signifies the status of women in that era, "Yatra naryastu puhyante, ramante tatra devta" meaning, the place where women are worshipped, god themselves inhabit that place. The women of ancient times had immense power this is evident from a South Indian legend that once a king accidentally killed the husband of a woman and she had such powers that she burnt the whole kingdom to ashes. Women in that time had place even superior to men. They had representation in each arena from assemblies to religious rituals. In fact no religious ritual of Hindu Brahmins was supposed to be complete without the presence of the women. An incident of Ramayana is a proof of this as when Lord Rama was performing "Ashvamedha yajna" his wife Sita was not with him and he had to use the gold idol of his wife to compensate for her absence.

Ancient Indian women had say in each and every aspect related to their lives. They had the right to choose their own life partners. The process of choosing the life partner of own choice was known as "Swayamvar" in which grooms assembled at the house of bride and she used to choose the one whom she liked. Maharishi Ved Vyas' Mahabharata and Mahrishi Valmiki's Ramayana bear testimonial to this. In Mahabharata, Draupadi's father arranged for her 'Swanyamvar' and Arjuna (a
Pandava prince in exile) successfully managed to fulfill the conditions and became eligible to marry her.

Even the model women of Tretayuga, (second out of four ages of Hindu mythology) "Sita" also had 'Swanyamva' in which kings of different states participated and Lord Rama won her over by breaking the "Shiv Dhanusha". (Hindu God Shiv's bow) Not only just princely women but the common women were also given the same rights. Women were so important that many of the major battles were fought for them. The fiercest battle of ancient India Mahabharata was fought for the honor of Draupadi (wife of Pandavas, ruler of Indraprastha). The Kauravas (ruler of Hastinapur) insulted her in the court and this led to the enmity between cousins and resulted in the most devastating battle of ancient India.

Another example of women power is evident from the cause of death of most learned man of his time Ravana. He was the best scholar of his time and was the master of all the four Vedas of Hindu religion and had immense powers. Even gods were not able to defeat and kill him but a woman was able to bring his doom. Ravana captured Sita and tried to marry her forcibly which led to his destruction.

Women were not just confined to domestic arena but they were also part of religious teachings. In ancient India woman like Gayatri, Maitreyi, Anusuya were renowned seers of their time this shows that women had the right to religious teachings. They were not prohibited even from learning. They could learn whatever they wanted.

The status of women of Vedic era began to decline with time. Gender inequality started creeping into the society. Slowly women's status degraded to such an extent that they were not given the freedom, which was available to even Sudras (lowest caste of ancient Hindu society). They were not given the basic rights. They were debarred from religious practices. They began to lose their political freedom.
as well. As Vedic age progressed, the status of women became worst. And till the
time of 'Smirits' (religious scripture of Hindus) the condition became so bad that
women were not allowed free access to education they were given education related
to just domestic purposes.

**Medieval Indian Women**

Medieval India was not women's age it is supposed to be the 'dark age' for
them. Medieval India saw many foreign conquests, which resulted in the decline in
women's status. When foreign conquerors like Muslims invaded India they brought
with them their own culture. For them women was the sole property of her father,
brother or husband and she does not have any will of her own. This type of thinking
also crept into the minds of Indian people and they also began to treat their own
women like this. One more reason for the decline in women's status and freedom
was that original Indians wanted to shield their women folk from the barbarous
Muslim invaders. As polygamy was a norm for these invaders they picked up any
women they wanted and kept her in their "harems". In order to protect them Indian
women started using 'Purdah', (a veil), which covers body. Due to this reason their
freedom also became affected. They were not allowed to move freely and this lead
to the further deterioration of their status. These problems related with women
resulted in changed mindset of people. Now they began to consider a girl as misery
and a burden, which has to be shielded from the eyes of intruders and needs extra
care. Whereas a boy child will not need such extra care and instead will be helpful
as an earning hand. Thus a vicious circle started in which women was at the
receiving end. All this gave rise to some new evils such as Child Marriage, Sati,
Jauhar and restriction on girl education.

- **Sati**: The ritual of dying at the funeral pyre of the husband is known as "Sati"
  or "Sahagaman". According to some of the Hindu scriptures women dying at
the funeral pyre of her husband go straight to heaven so its good to practice this ritual. Initially it was not obligatory for the women but if she practiced such a custom she was highly respected by the society. Sati was considered to be the better option then living as a widow as the plight of widows in Hindu society was even worse Some of the scriptures like 'Medhatiti' had different views it say that Sati is like committing suicide so one should avoid this.

- **Jauhar.** It is also more or less similar to Sati but it is a mass suicide Jauhar was prevalent in the Rajput societies. In this custom wives immolated themselves while their husband were still alive. When people of Rajput clan became sure that they were going to die at the hands of their enemy then all the women arrange a large pyre and set themselves afire, while their husband used to fight the last decisive battle known as "Shaka", with the enemy. Thus protecting the sanctity of the women and the whole clan

- **Child Marriage.** It was a norm in medieval India. Girls were married off at the age of 8-10. They were not allowed access to education and were treated as the material being. The plight of women can be imagined by one of the shloka of Tulsidas where he writes [r1] "Dhol, gawar, shudra, pashu, nari, ye sab tadan ke adhikari". Meaning that animals, illiterates, lower castes and women should be subjected to beating. Thus women were compared with animals and were married off at an early age. The child marriage along with it brought some more problems such as increased birth rate, poor health of women due to repeated child bearing and high mortality rate of women and children.

- **Restriction on Widow Remarriage:** The condition of widows in medieval India was very bad. They were not treated as human beings and were
subjected to a lot of restrictions. They were supposed to live pious life after their husband died and were not allowed entry in any celebration. Their presence in any good work was considered to be a bad omen. Sometimes heads of widows were also shaved down. They were not allowed to remarry. Any woman remaining was looked down by the society. This cruelty on widows was one of the main reasons for the large number of women committing Sati. In medieval India living as a Hindu widow was a sort of a curse.

- **Purdah System** The veil or the 'Purdah' system was widely prevalent in medieval Indian society. It was used to protect the women folk from the eyes of foreign rulers who invaded India in medieval period. But this system curtailed the freedom of women.

- **Girl Education** The girls of medieval India and especially Hindu society were not given formal education. They were given education related to household chores. But a famous Indian philosopher 'Vatsyayana' wrote that women were supposed to be perfect in sixty four arts which included cooking, spinning, grinding, knowledge of medicine, recitation and many more.

Though these evils were present in medieval Indian society but they were mainly confined to Hindu society. As compared to Hindu society other societies such as Buddhism, Jainism and Christians were a bit lenient. Women in those societies enjoyed far more freedom. They had easy access to education and were more liberal in their approach. According to these religions gender was not the issue in attaining salvation. Any person whether a man or a woman is entitled to get the grace of god. During the time of king Ashoka women took part in religious preaching. According to Hiuen Tsang,
the famous traveler of that time, Rajyashri, the sister of Harshavardhana was a distinguished scholar of her time. Another such example is the daughter of king Ashoka, Sanghmitra. She along with her brother Mahendra went to Sri Lanka to preach Buddhism.

The status of women in Southern India was better than the North India. While in Northern India there were not many women administrators, in Southern India we can find some names that made women of that time proud. Priyaketaladevi, queen of Chalukya Vikramaditya ruled three villages. Another woman named Jakkilabbe used to rule seventy villages. In South India, women had representation in each and every field. Domingo Paes, famous Portuguese traveler testifies to it. He has written in his account that in Vijaynagar kingdom women were present in each and every field. He says that women could wrestle, blow trumpet and handle sword with equal perfection. Nuniz, another famous traveler to the South also agrees to it and says that women were employed in writing accounts of expenses, recording the affairs of kingdom, which shows that they were educated. There is no evidence of any public school in Northern India but according to famous historian Ibn Batuta there were 13 schools for girls and 24 for boys in Honavar. There was one major evil present in South India of medieval time. It was the custom of Devadasis.

- **Devadasis.** It was a custom prevalent in Southern India. In this system girls were dedicated to temples in the name of gods and goddesses. The girls were then onwards known as 'Devadasis' meaning servant of god. These Devadasis were supposed to live the life of celibacy. All the requirements of Devadasis were fulfilled by the grants given to the temples. In temple they used to spend their time in worship of god and by singing and dancing for
the god Some kings used to invite temple dancers to perform at their court for the pleasure of courtiers and thus some Devadasis converted to Rajadasis (palace dancers) prevalent in some tribes of South India like Yellamma cult

The plight of women in medieval India and at the starting of modern India can be summed up in the words of great poet Rabindranath Tagore: "O Lord Why have you not given woman the right to conquer her destiny? Why does she have to wait head bowed, By the roadside, Waiting with tired patience, Hoping for a miracle in the Morrow?"

**Modern Indian Women**

The status of women in modern India is a sort of a paradox. If on one hand she is at the peak of ladder of success, on the other hand she is mutely suffering the violence afflicted on her by her own family members. As compared with past women in modern times have achieved a lot but in reality they have to still travel a long way. Their path is full of roadblocks. The women have left the secured domain of their home and are now in the battlefield of life, fully armored with their talent. They had proven themselves. But in India they are yet to get their dues. The sex ratio of India shows that the Indian society is still prejudiced against female. There are 933 females per thousand males in India according to the census of 2001, which is much below the world average of 990 females. There are many problems which women in India have to go through daily. These problems have become the part and parcel of life of Indian women and some of them have accepted them as their fate.

**The main problems of Indian women includes**

- **Malnutrition**: Generally in India, women are the one who eat last and least in the whole family. So they eat whatever is left after men folk are satiated. As a result most of the times their food intake does not contain the nutritional value required in maintaining the healthy body. In villages, sometimes
women do not get to eat the whole meal due to poverty. The UNICEF report of 1996 clearly states that the women of South Asia are not given proper care, which results in higher level of malnutrition among the women of South Asia than anywhere else in the world. This nutritional deficiency has two major consequences for women: first, they become anemic, and second, they never achieve their full growth, which leads to an unending cycle of undergrowth as malnourished women cannot give birth to a healthy baby.

- **Poor Health**: The malnutrition results in poor health of women. The women of India are prejudiced from the birth itself. They are not breastfed for long. In the want of a son, the women want to get pregnant as soon as possible, which decreases the caring period to the girl child whereas the male members get adequate care and nutrition. Women are not given the right to free movement that means that they cannot go anywhere on their own if they want and they have to take the permission of male member of family or have to take them along. This results in a decrease in women's visit to doctor and she could not pay attention to her health as a result.

- **Maternal Mortality**: The mortality rate in India is among the highest in the world. As females are not given proper attention, which results in the malnutrition and then they are married at an early age which leads to pregnancies at younger age when the body is not ready to bear the burden of a child. All this results in complications, which may lead to gynecological problems, which may become serious with time and may ultimately, lead to death.

- **Lack of education**: In India women education never got its due share of attention. From the medieval India women were debarred from the educational field. According to medieval perception women need just
household education and this perception of medieval India still persists in
villages of India even today. Girls are supposed to fulfill domestic duties and
education becomes secondary for them whereas it is considered to be
important for boys. Although scenario in urban areas has changed a lot and
women are opting for higher education but majority of Indian population
residing in villages still live in medieval times. The people of villages
consider girls to be curse and they do not want to waste money and time on
them as they think that women should be wedded off as soon as possible.

The main reason for not sending girls to school is the poor economic
condition. Another reason is far-off location of schools. In Indian society virginity
and purity is given utmost importance during marriage and people are afraid to send
their girl child to far-off schools were male teacher teach them along with boys.

The lack of education is the root cause for many other problems. An
uneducated mother cannot look after her children properly and she is not aware of
the deadly diseases and their cure, which leads to the poor health of the children. An
uneducated person does not know about hygiene. This lack of knowledge of hygiene
may lead to poor health of the whole family.

- **Mistreatment**: In India, violence against women is a common evil. Not just
  in remote parts but in cities also women bear the brunt. They are subjected to
  physical and mental violence. They are the one who work most but are not
given their due. The women is not safe anywhere neither at home nor at
workplace. Every hour a woman is raped in India and every 93 minutes a
woman is burnt to death due to dowry problem. There are many laws such as
The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, The Hindu Succession Act of 1956, The
Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1856, The Hindu Women Right to
Property Act of 1937, The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, to protect women
and punishment is severe but the conviction rate of crime against women is very low in India

- **Overworked**: Indian women work more than men of India but their work is hardly recognized as they mainly do unskilled work. Their household chores is never counted as a work, if a woman is working in a field to help her husband it will also be not counted as a work. A study conducted by Mies in 1986 states that in Andhra Pradesh a woman works around 15 hours a day during the agricultural season whereas a male on an average works for around 7-8 hours.

- **Lack of power**: In India a large percentage of women do not have power. They cannot take decisions independently not even related to their own life. They have to take permission of male members for each and every issue. They don't have any say in important household matters and not in matter of their own marriage.

- **Marriage**: The family mainly fixes the marriages in India. The scenario in villages is very bad. The girl is not consulted but is told to marry a guy whom her family has chosen for him. They are taught to abide by the whims and fancies of their husbands. Going against the wishes of husband is considered to be a sin. In marriage husband always has the upper hand. The groom and his parents show as if they are obliging the girl by marrying her and in return they demand hefty dowry.

- **Dowry**: It's a serious issue. Courts are flooded with cases related to death due to dowry harassment by husband and in-laws. In ancient times women were given 'Stridhan' when they departed from the house of their parents. This amount of money was given to her as a gift which she can use on her and her children but her in-laws did not have any right on that amount. This
amount was supposed to help the girl in time of need. Slowly this tradition became obligatory and took the form of dowry. Nowadays parents have to give hefty amount in dowry, the in-laws of their girl are not concerned whether they can afford it or not. If a girl brings large amount of dowry she is given respect and is treated well in her new home and if she does not bring dowry according to expectations of her in-laws then she has to suffer harassment. Due to this evil practice many newly wed women of India have to lose their lives.

- **Female infanticide/foeticide**: As women were supposed to be and in some areas of India are still considered to be curse by some strata of society their birth was taken as a burden. So in past times they were killed as soon as they were born. In some of the Rajput clans of Rajasthan newly born girl child was dropped in a large bowl of milk and was killed. Today with the help of technology the sex of the unborn baby is determined and if it is a girl child then it is aborted down. In all this procedure women do not have any say they have to do according to the wish of their husbands even if she does not want to abort she have any choice.

- **Divorce**: The divorce rate in India is not so high compared to western countries but it does not mean that marriages are more successful here. The reason behind low level of divorce rate is that it is looked down by the society. It is regarded as the sign of failure of marriage, especially of women. She is treated as if she has committed some crime by divorcing her husband. In some communities like Muslims women did not have the right to divorce their husband they were divorced at just the pronouncement of "I divorce you" by their husband thrice and they could not do anything except to be the mute spectator. Recently Muslim Law Board has given right of divorce to
women. After divorce women is entitled to get her "Mehr" for herself and her children's sustenance. In Hindu society women get maintenance for themselves and their children after divorce.

**Employment of women**

Out of the total 397 million workers in India, 123.9 million are women. Of these, roughly 106 million women work in rural areas and the remaining 18 million work in urban areas. 96 per cent of the women workers are in the unorganized sector. Overall, the female work participation rate has increased from 19.7 per cent in 1981 to 25.7 per cent in 2001. In the rural areas, it has increased from 23.1 per cent to 31 per cent and in the urban areas from 8.3 per cent to 11.6 per cent. Although more women seek work, a vast majority of them get only poorly paid jobs in the informal sector, without any job security or social security. This is because of the increasing unemployment and under employment among the male members of the family and the increasing cost of living as a result of the neo liberal economic policies.

The most serious hazard faced by the working class in the era of globalisation is the increasing threat to job security. The informal sector is fast expanding, while the organized sector is shrinking. Contract, casual, temporary, part-time, piece-rated jobs and home based work etc. are increasingly replacing permanent jobs. To circumvent resistance to amendments to labour laws and to give the employers the freedom to hire and fire workers, the governments of the day are resorting to various back door measures. The NDA government had introduced "fixed term" employment through an administrative order, which continues under the present UPA regime. Special Economic Zones, which are areas deemed to be outside our territory, are being opened in large numbers throughout the country.
While there is no explicit provision that labour laws would not be applied in these zones, in practice, even labour commissioners are not allowed inside these zones and the workers are practically at the mercy of the employers. Neither the central nor the state governments intervene to protect the interests of the workers. Even in the public sector, the number of contractor workers is increasing.

On the pretext of abolishing ‘Inspector Raj’ attempts are being made to give a free hand to the employers to flout all labour laws with impunity. The UPA government has introduced bills giving exemption to small and medium enterprises from maintaining several records and registers, which mostly relate to the workers. It has also changed the definition of small enterprises by increasing the number of workers. Due to the strong opposition from the Left parties and trade unions, the government has agreed to remove the labour related clauses from the bills, though the bills in the new form have not yet been introduced in the parliament. All these have adverse impact not only on the working conditions of the workers, but also on their health.

The workers in the informal sector, a large number of who are women, have no job security. Work is often unskilled or low skilled and low paid. Availability of work is irregular, when work is available, they have to work for long hours. Not just in the unorganized sector or in the small enterprises, but also in the modern sectors like the IT, automobile industry etc, workers are forced to work for 12 hours while the concerned governments choose to ignore this open flouting of the labour laws. The uncertainties in getting work and the dire need to keep it in the midst of intense competition and the necessity to evolve strategies for this, cause mental tension, strained social relationships, psychological problems and chronic fatigue, all of which are difficult to prove as work related.
Piece related work contributes significantly to the level of fatigue felt by the workers. The wages of piece related workers depend on the speed with which they work. Some studies indicate that out of the workers who suffer from neurosis, 71 per cent are piece rated workers as against 26.5 per cent who receive daily or monthly wages.

Several traditional industries where women work in large numbers like coir, handloom, food processing etc. have undergone changes in the forms of production with the introduction of machines, power looms etc. which result in the loss of employment for large number of women. With the introduction of machines, women in manufacturing are replaced by men.

Unemployment, underemployment and temporary work are more common among women than among men. The workers do not have any social security or health care benefits. As a result, the work-related illnesses, which they suffer from, remain hidden. As per available research, unemployment is harmful to health and constitutes a serious risk for the workers' emotional stability, because it leads to poverty, deteriorates self-image and self-esteem.

It is generally believed that women prefer part-time, temporary or home-based work because such jobs enable them to balance their job responsibilities with their domestic responsibilities. But in fact, making working hours flexible as per the requirement of the employers makes it more difficult for the women workers to adjust their domestic responsibilities with the working hours at their workplace and disrupts family life. Absence of clearly defined work schedule increases the stress and impacts their health.

A large number of women workers complain of frequent headache, back pain, circulatory disorders, fatigue and emotional and mental disorders. Poor nutritional status, anaemia due to poverty and the cultural practices, where women
eat last and the increased workload due to domestic responsibilities, lead to fatigue among women. Worry, responsibility, strong emotions, concentrated attention or precision required by some jobs like embroidery, assembly of electronic or electric appliances, gems, jewellery etc. and exhaustion caused by intellectual or mental activities also produce fatigue. A large number of women workers complain of symptoms such as irritability, mood swings, depression, sadness and concentration problems. The exhausting conditions make it difficult to recognise these states as ‘abnormal’. Fatigue is generally not considered an illness, but if it is neglected, it can lead to a variety of illnesses.

Certain types of work, where the worker is subordinated to machines, which are boring and do not require any personal initiative, also cause fatigue. The attitudes of the employers or supervisors that tend to create feelings of inferiority, uselessness or inability also result in mental fatigue. Various studies show that fatigue and stress-related illnesses are common in the sectors that employ mostly women. A study on data entry operators indicated high levels of fatigue and stress due to the intense pressure of their work, the high degree of job dissatisfaction and the lack of initiative and creativity required by the position.

**Hazards faced by working women at the workplace**

Majority of women working in the organized sector have been employed in the public sector. But with restructuring and downsizing of workforce in the public sector and government departments, as a part of the neo-liberal policies, women are the first to be retrenched, because of the general perception that women’s income is supplementary. Women have been forced to go on VRS in some banks, under threat to transfer to far-off places; Coal India has formulated a special VRS package for women.
Large numbers of women work in schools, hospitals, as salespersons in shops, in plantations, in construction etc. It is found that even in many government hospitals and schools, there are no separate toilets for women. Lack of such basic facilities like toilets, rest rooms, dining spaces, etc. at the workplace cause a lot of physical discomfort and mental stress besides leading to several urinary tract and other diseases, particularly, among pregnant women.

Women working in the informal sector do not have any child-care facilities. Even in the organized sector, crèches are not provided in most of the establishments. Even where they do exist, they are either ill-equipped or are not maintained properly, as a result of which women are reluctant to keep their children in such crèches. Most often women workers, particularly in the informal sector, are forced to leave their children at home, under the care of their elder children, or old people or neighbours. This causes great anxiety and emotional strain. Some studies indicate that this is a major problem for working women.

Sexual harassment is another serious hazard faced by working women. Whether in the organized or unorganized sector, whether illiterate, low paid workers or highly educated and highly paid executives, a large number of working women face sexual harassment at the workplace. Nearly a decade after the Supreme Court judgment in the Visakha case, the government is yet to bring legislation against sexual harassment at workplace. Even the Supreme Court guidelines of constituting complaints committees, amending standing orders, creating awareness, etc. have not been implemented in most of the establishment.

The government has decided to amend “The Factories Act” allowing women workers to work in the night shift. Women have been working in hospitals, in the telecom department and in the fish processing industry in the night shift. But in the era of globalisation, the export oriented units and call centres, etc. are employing
women in large numbers in the night shift. without providing proper protection or transport facilities to them. Besides, women who work in the night shift generally are not in a position to take proper rest during the day because of their domestic responsibilities, impacting their health.

Women working in some industries like construction, brick kilns, electronics industry etc suffer from gynaecological problems, miscarriages, premature deliveries etc. and give birth to babies with low birth weight or birth defects. Given the socio-economic conditions of these women, these often lead to tension and strained relations in the family, along with the physical problems.

The Factories Act, The Mines Act, The Dock Workers’ Act etc. are some of the laws, which contain provisions for regulating the health of the workers in an establishment. The Employees’ State Insurance Act and the Workmen’s Compensation Act provide health benefits and compensation to the workers in cases of ill-health and injuries etc. But in the unorganized sector, where the majority of women workers are concentrated, no occupational safety and health safeguards are in place. Even in the organized sector, where these are applicable, safeguards are rarely provided for the workers, either male or female. Usually the safety devises are designed keeping the male workers in view and become unsuitable for women workers. Besides, the social aspects of work are not considered risk factors. As a result, more emphasis is given to work related accidents than to illnesses.

**Hazards related to the attitude of society and family**

Though more and more women are coming out in search of paid employment and their families also need their income, the attitude towards women and their role in the family has not undergone much change. Women continue to be perceived as weak, inferior and second-class citizens. In capitalist society, this feudal attitude is
utilized by the capitalist classes to further exploit women and increase their profits. For working women, this discrimination is extended to the workplace also.

Even today, looking after the family and children is generally perceived to be the primary responsibility of women. With the State retreating from its minimum responsibilities of providing welfare measures and privatization of basic services like health, education etc., and women are forced to spend more time and energies on these responsibilities towards their children and other family members. The unpaid labour of women in providing these services to the family increases their burden while at the same time helping the employers in keeping the wages low.

Because of this perception, which is prevalent even among most of the working women, women have to shoulder the entire burden of domestic chores, which they try to complete before leaving for work with little help from the other, particularly the male members of the family. Many women have reported not to have a proper meal before leaving to work. Improper and insufficient dietary intake along with the heavy workload results in nutritional disorders. In addition, this perception that they alone are responsible for the domestic work, leads to a feeling of guilt when they are not able to look after the children or the family due to their official work, often resulting in emotional disorders.

**Hazards faced by women trade unionists**

Working women face double burden due to their domestic and official responsibilities. That is one of the important reasons for women not coming forward to take more responsibilities in the trade unions. It is very rare to find family support for women who play an active role in trade union activities. Besides the physical burden, women trade union activists often become victims of character assassination. There have been many instances where women trade union leaders
had to face physical and mental violence, including attempts to murder and murder, from family members because of their trade union activities.

**Women are malnourished**

The exceptionally high rates of malnutrition in India are rooted deeply in the soil of inequality between men and women. "The poor care that is afforded to girls and women by their husbands and by elders is the first major reason for levels of child malnutrition that are markedly higher in India than anywhere else in the world."

This point is made in the article, The Asian Enigma, published by UNICEF in the 1996 Progress of Nations, in which the rates of childhood malnutrition in South Asia are compared with those in Africa. We learn that malnutrition is far worse in South Asia, directly due to the fact that women in South Asia have less voice and freedom of movement than in Africa. "Judgment and self-expression and independence largely denied. millions of women in South Asia have neither the knowledge nor the means not the freedom to act in their own and their children's best interests.

"Gender disparities in nutrition are evident from infancy to adulthood. In fact, gender has been the most statistically significant determinant of malnutrition among young children and malnutrition is a frequent direct or underlying cause of death among girls below age 5. Girls are breast-fed less frequently and for shorter durations in infancy; in childhood and adulthood, males are fed first and better. Adult women consume approximately 1,000 fewer calories per day than men according to one estimate from Punjab. Comparison of household dietary intake..."
studies in different parts of the country shows that nutritional equity between males and females is lower in northern than in southern states."

Nutritional deprivation has two major consequences for women, they never reach their full growth potential and anaemia. Both are risk factors in pregnancy, with anaemia ranging from 40-50 per cent in urban areas to 50-70 per cent in rural areas. This condition complicates childbearing and result in maternal and infant deaths and low birth weight infants.

One study found anaemia in over 95 per cent of girls ages 6-14 in Calcutta, around 67 per cent in the Hyderabad area, 73 per cent in the New Delhi area, and about 18 per cent in the Madras area. This study states, "The prevalence of anaemia among women ages 15-24 and 25-44 years follows similar patterns and levels. Besides posing risks during pregnancy, anaemia increases women's susceptibility to diseases such as tuberculosis and reduces the energy women have available for daily activities such as household chores, child care and agricultural labour. Any severely anaemic individual is taxed by most physical activities, including walking at an ordinary pace.

Women and nutrition

India is a country of rich natural resources and talented human resources and yet its dream of becoming self-sufficient and considered a "developed country" rather than a "developing country" seems a distant reality due to the complexity of its problems.

India, the second most populous country in the world, has no more than 2.5 per cent of global land but is the home of 1/6th of the world's population. Its high population density makes it appear as a resource poor country despite its significant achievements in the fields of medicine, agriculture, industry, literature, nuclear
physics and information technology. One of the reasons is that 36 per cent of its population still lives below the poverty line.

Majority of Indian population lives in rural areas (72 % rural as compared to 28 % urban population) where the pace of progress in literacy, education, employment and technology is slow, urban areas get the maximum benefits of the progress.

The patriarchal system prevalent in India (except in one state) makes women the worst victims of poverty as their multifaceted responsibilities include that of a carer, giver and a protector. Women are socialized to be self-sacrificing from childhood onwards to give first and take only if somebody chooses to give or if there is something extra to give.

Women work more at home as well as at the work place, to take care of the families particularly men and children, but they earn much less than men because majority of them are engaged in self-employed, unprotected work with no social security benefits. This is more true among those women belong to the low socio-economic groups in urban slums and rural areas. Women receive the minimum benefits of health care, nutrition and economic gains which is evident from the fact that level of anaemia among women ranges from 50-80 per cent which is a major contributor of the high maternal morbidity and mortality in India.

**Justification of the Study:**

In the words of Rousseau “Where there is no mother, there can be no child, their duties are reciprocal, and if they are badly fulfilled on one side, they will be neglected on the other”.

This quotation is very appropriate to the subject of adequate nutrition for each woman. The belief that a woman should eat better foods and more
food (for pregnant women) is as old and has been held by both the extremes layman and scientists. So there is always a need for such a study, which may provide a database to show the exact picture of the concerned area regarding food, nutrition and health.

Selecting state like Uttar Pradesh has enough points to prove the same. According to National Family Health Survey, India, 1998-99, U.P. lies behind the national average, no matter if we consider food consumption or BMI or anemia. In U.P. 30 per cent of women were found to be malnourished.

Keeping in view the above facts, the present study has therefore, been designed to compare the nutrient intake among working and non-working women in Lucknow district with the following specific objectives.

1. To study the socio-economic status of working and non-working women.
2. To assess the nutritional status of working and non-working women.
3. To study the dietary pattern and nutrient intake of the women.
4. To develop low cost recipes for the respondent including time and money.
5. To develop the nutrition package for awareness purpose among working and non-working women.

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