

A Symposium on 8th-March-2014

**TOPIC : International Women's Day
"Women Empowerment Status in India"**

The Idea of an International Women's Day first arose at the turn of the century, which in the industrialized world was a period of expansion and turbulence, booming population growth and radical ideologies.

On 8 March 1857, women working in clothing and textile factories (called 'garment workers') in New York City, in the United States, Staged a protest, They were fighting against inhumane working conditions and low wages. The police attacked the protestors and dispersed them. Two years later, again in March, These women formed their first labour union to try and protect themselves and gain some basic rights in the workplace.

On 8 March 1908, 15,000 women marched through New York City demanding shorter work hours, better pay, voting rights and an end to child labour. They adopted the slogan "Bread and Roses" with bread symbolizing economic security and roses a better quality of life. In May, the Socialist Party of America designated the last Sunday in February for the observance of National Women's Day.

Following the declaration of the Socialist Party of America, the first ever National Woman's Day was celebrated in the United States on 28 February 1909. Women continued to celebrate it on the last Sunday of That month through 1913.

An international conference, held by socialist organizations from around the world, met in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1910. The conference of the Socialist International proposed a Women's Day which was designed to be international in character. The proposal initially came from Clara Zet kin, a German Socialist, who suggested an International Day to mark the strike of garment workers in the United states.

How It Happened continues...

1913-1914

On the eve of World War I campaigning for peace, Russian women observed their first international Women's Day on the last Sunday in February 1913. In 1913 following discussions, International Women's Day was transferred to 8 March and this day has remained the global date for International Women's Day ever since. In 1914 further women across Europe held rallies to campaign against the war and to express women's solidarity.

1917

On the last Sunday of February, Russian women began a strike for "Bread and Peace" in response to the death over 2 million Russian soldiers in war. Opposed by political leaders the women continued to strike until four days later the Czar was forced to abdicate and the provisional Government granted women the right to vote. The date the women's strike commenced was Sunday 23 February on the Julian calendar then in use in Russia. This day on the Gregorian calendar in use elsewhere was 8 March.

1918-1999

Since its birth in socialist movement, International Women's Day has grown to become a global day of recognition and celebration across developed and developing countries alike. For decades, IWD has grown from strength to strength annually, for many years the United Nations has held an annual IWD conference to coordinate international efforts for women's rights and participation in social, political and economic processes. 1975 was designated as "International Women's Year" by the United Nations. Women's organisations and governments around the world have also observed IWD annually on 8 March by holding large scale events that honour women's advancement and while diligently reminding of the continued vigilance and action required to ensure that women's equality is gained and maintained in all aspects of life.

IWD is now an official holiday in Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, China (for women only), Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Nepal (for women only), Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Zambia. The tradition sees men honouring their mothers, wives, girlfriends, colleagues, etc with flowers and small gifts. In some countries IWD has the equivalent status of Mother's Day where children give small presents to their mothers and grandmothers.

About this International Womensday.com website

Internationalwomensday.com is a global hub for sharing International Women's Day information, events, news and resources.

The website was founded in 2001 as a non-profit philanthropic venture dedicated to keeping international Women's Day IWD alive and growing.

Since 2007, IWD has gained considerable momentum due to greater media attention, events, social networking and corporate support, IWD is now celebrated via wide scale activity in almost every country and many world leaders support the day with official statements.

Women in India

Now the women in India enjoy a unique status of equality with the men as per constitutional and legal provision. But the Indian women have come a long way to achieve the present positions. First, gender inequality in India can be traced back to the historic days of Mahabharata when Draupadi was put on the dice by her husband as a commodity. History is a witness that women were made to dance both in private and public places to please the man. Secondly, in Indian society, a female was always dependent on male members of the family even last few years ago. Thirdly, a female was not allowed to speak with loud voice in the presence of elder members of her in-laws. In the family, every fault had gone to her and she was responsible. Fourth, as a widow her dependence on a male member of the family still more increased. In many social activities she is not permitted to mix with other members of the family. On the other hand, she has very little share in political, social and economic life of the society.

Empowerment of women in India

The concept of empowerment flows from the power. It is vesting where it does not exist or exist inadequately. Empowerment of women would mean equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have positive esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in development activities. The empowered women should be able to participate in the process of decision making. In India, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD- 1985) and the National Commission for Women (NCW) have been working to safeguard the rights and legal entitlement of women.

At the central and state levels too women are progressively making a difference. Today we have seen women chief ministers, women president, different political parties leader, well established businessmen etc. The most notable amongst these are Mrs. Pratiba Devi Singh Patil, Shila Dixit, Mayawati, Sonia Gandhi, Bindu Karat, Nazma Heptulla, Indira Nuyee (Pepsi-co), BJP leader Susma Soraj, railway minister M. M. Banerji, 'Narmada Basao' leader Medhapatekar, Indian Iron Woman, EX-prime minister Indira Gandhi etc. Women are also involving in human development issues of child rearing, education, health, and gender parity. Many of them have gone into the making and marketing of a range of cottage products-pickles, tailoring, embroidery etc. The economic empowerment of women is being regarded these days as a sine-quo-non of progress for a country; hence, the issue of economic empowerment of women is of paramount importance to political thinkers, social thinkers and reformers.

Reasons for the empowerment of women

Today we have noticed different Acts and Schemes of the central government as well as state government to empower the women of India. But in India women are discriminated and marginalized at every level of the society whether it is social participation, political participation, economic participation, access to education, and also reproductive healthcare. Women are found to be economically very poor all over the India. A few women are engaged in services and other activities. So, they need economic power to stand on their own legs on par with men. Other hand, it has been observed that women are found to be less literate than men. According to 2001 census, rate of literacy among men in India is found to be 76% whereas it is only 54% among women. Thus, increasing education among women is of very important in empowering them. It has also noticed that some of women are too weak to work. They consume less food but work more. Therefore, from the health point of view, women folk who are to be weaker are to be made stronger. Another problems is that workplace harassment of women. There are so many cases of rape, kidnapping of girl, dowry harassment, and so on. For these reasons, they require empowerment of all kinds in order to protect themselves and to secure their purity and dignity. To sum up, women empowerment can not be possible unless women come with and help to self-empower themselves. There is a need to formulate reducing feminized poverty, promoting education of women, and prevention and elimination of violence against women.

We like to celebrate International Women's Day, but we also want to celebrate our Supporting Partners.