



An analytical study of food and nutrition related problems of scheduled caste women

(With special reference to Godda District of Jharkhand)

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Abstract:- In an agricultural country like India, as per the data of 2011-12, 22 percent people are living below the poverty line which is almost 27 crores of the total population. It is 25.70 percent in rural areas and 13.70 percent in urban areas. According to Niti Aayog, the poverty level in Jharkhand is 42.16 percent. In Jharkhand alone, the rate of poverty among the scheduled castes is 30.1 percent. This figure shows that poverty is at its peak even in independent India. These People are forced to live below the poverty line. When facts related to food, nutrition and economic status were collected from 40 women of Scheduled Caste society in Teachers Colony of Mahagama block of Godda district of Jharkhand, it was revealed that all the women here are living below the poverty line. These women neither have their own land nor do they have any kind of regular employment. As a result, the problem of food resources always remains in the homes of these women. These people do not get sufficient food and are nutrient deficit which leads to many diseases and health issues in their lives. They do not have land for agriculture and they do not even get proper work. If they go to someone else's place and do petty jobs, they get some income, but it is very difficult for them to support their family with that meagre income. These Scheduled Caste women said that they are so poor that they are not able to provide adequate food for themselves and their children. They neither have their own houses nor do they have their own land. They somehow live in temporary houses built on government-land. There is a Degree College near their houses and a government hospital located 1.5 kilometres away from their house, where they sometimes go for treatment. But the biggest problem among the people of this society is that of food. Due to lack of food and sufficient nutrition, many issues and physical problems have arisen among these people. These People said that neither is there any agricultural work done at home nor do they get any other work that could earn them livelihood on a daily basis. These women said that when they are not able to feed themselves and their children then how can they think about their education. The real situation here is that almost all of these people are illiterate or if they have got education, they have studied till primary school only and then left the studies. These people lack resources to such an extent that it is difficult to even imagine in independent India.

Key Words :- food shortage, Nutritional Deficiency, living below the poverty line, Unemployment, health problem

Food shortage is a serious problem among the scheduled caste community of Teachers Colony. These people are struggling with many issues like landlessness, social and economic inequality, lack of food resources and such others. Food and nutrition are as essential for human survival as air is needed to breathe. But due to lack of food items, the people of this society find it very difficult to arrange their meal twice a day. As a result, these people do not get adequate and nutritious food regularly. In such circumstances, the outbreak of malnutrition can be seen among these people. They usually face various health issues as they donot get proper amount of calories, vitamins and minerals needed by the body to maintain various body functions.

Literature Review :- Underweight among women of reproductive age is a significant global health problem. The problem is acute in India, particularly in West Bengal where an estimated 33 percent of women are underweight. Women of scheduled caste community are more prone to this type of problem as many problems like poverty, lack of food items and health problems are prevalent among them. Inadequate intake of nutritious food contributes to the poor health status of these women (**Biswas, et al, 2023**). Deficiency of micronutrients and poor dietary intake causes many problems in women of reproductive age. When the body does not get adequate protein and micronutrients, the chance of getting sick increases. Because it is only through nutrients that the internal functions of our body are maintained. In India, 50-57 percent of pregnant women suffer from anemia due to lack of micronutrients in their diet (**Sharma, et al, 2020**). Nutrition is the main factor that provides energy to the human body to perform various functions and live life. Nutrients include proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. These nutrients are chemical substances that are present in our food. These nutrients help our body to maintain healthy condition and maintain physical strength (**Acharya & Das, 2015**). Food shortages and malnutrition are a serious problem in Asia, with women and children suffering the most. Often it has serious consequences which have an adverse effect on health. Malnutrition among women and its effects on their lives are often passed on from one generation to the other, creating a vicious cycle for women (**Madjdian & Bras, 2016**). Malnutrition is prevalent among all sections of the indigenous population in India. But the group most affected are Indigenous women and children. A subjective study conducted in the tribal area of Jharkhand revealed that women suffer from malnutrition as they have to face many problems like lack of nutritious food and lack of food items (**Kpoor, et al, 2022**). Jharkhand is a poorly performing state with poor nutrition indicators. The prevalence of underweight and anaemia among women in the state is 42.6 per cent and 70.6 per cent, respectively. When women lack nutrition and food, symptoms of many diseases like anemia start appearing on their body and their weight also starts decreasing. (**Jerath, et al, 2016**). When the nutritional status of women is not good then many problems arise in their body. Many problems like lack of nutrition, poor health and serious illnesses occur due to lack of adequate food. According to a recent study, 25.3 percent of tribal women in India suffer from malnutrition (**Biswas, et al, 2022**). There are many reasons for poor health conditions among women, such as consuming food with inadequate nutrients. Due to this, many diseases like malnutrition and anemia start entering the body. Therefore, a diet containing nutrients is necessary so that no disease related problem arises in the body (**Rokade, et al, 2020**). Good nutrition is a fundamental component of good health. When nutrients are available in wrong quantity in a

person's diet, the nutritional balance in the body gets disturbed, and this becomes a serious problem. Which can also be fatal. Therefore, taking a proper and balanced diet is beneficial for health. This ensures that the body's working capacity remains intact. Proper eating habits protect health, maintain peace in the body and improve productivity (**Krishna & Dhas, 2020**). According to the World Health Organization, approximately one in every three people suffers from some form of malnutrition. Globally, approximately 462 million adults are underweight due to lack of adequate nutritious food. According to the report of National Family Health Survey 4, 20 percent of tribal women of reproductive age in Kerala are malnourished (**Mohandas, et al, 2019**).

Research gaps :- It is very important for all human beings to consume adequate nutrition so that the internal functions of the body can be maintained. From the literature review, it came out that due to lack of food and nutrition, many diseases and health issues including physical weakness are arising among the Scheduled Caste women. Very little research has been done on what deficiencies occur in the body due to lack of food and nutrition and how it deteriorates the body with special reference to scheduled caste women . Therefore, this study is required to know the problem being faced by women of scheduled caste society due to lack of food items.

Scheduled caste women problem:- Women of Scheduled Caste society face many problems like lack of food, lack of nutrition, living below poverty line, unemployment, health issues, landlessness etc. Among these, one of their major problems is the lack of food items. They do not have their own land and there is lack of employment. Even if these women work at someone's house in their own locality, their monthly income is only between Rs. 2000 to Rs. 3000. In such a situation, these women are not able to raise their family properly. These women do not have their own land or houses. They somehow live in temporary houses built on government land and undergo various challenges everyday . When they cannot feed themselves , how can they take care of their family.

Objective :- To understand the current status of food and nutrition deficiency among scheduled caste women.

Method of Collection of Data :- This research is based on Scheduled Caste women. In this research work, data were collected using qualitative and quantitative research methodology. Qualitative research methodology uses personal accounts, interviews, and non-participant observation to obtain data on food and nutrition and related problems in order to understand people's attitudes, preferences, and motivations behind their behaviour. Under quantitative research technique, facts related to diseases and problems caused to scheduled caste women due to lack of food items have been obtained through survey, structured interview, observation, records, reports, review etc.

In this study, facts related to food and nutrition were obtained by interviewing 40 women of Teachers Colony under Mahagama block of Godda district of Jharkhand. There is a government degree college near this village. There is a government hospital about 1.5 kilometres from their house, where the women of this community get themselves treated in case of any health problem.

Structured Interview Schedule :- In this research methodology, protected interview schedule has been used to collect data regarding food habits of Scheduled Caste women. Under the protected interview, the problems of these women and what problems do they face due to lack of food resources and the real element related to how they earn their livelihood by hard labour etc. has been obtained.

Analysis :- When facts related to food and nutrition of Scheduled Caste women were collected, the main points that came to light were that most of the women here are living below the poverty line. These people neither have any land nor any source of regular income. As a result, the Scheduled Caste women of this locality are not able to get nutritious food. These people have always been found to have lack of nutrition in their body. These women said that they are not able to get adequate amount of calories and energy for their body. Sometimes, due to lack of food resources, the whole family have to face starvation. The situation is so worse that the outbreak of malnutrition can also be seen in this area such as low birth weight of children and various health issues of women of reproductive age, etc. These women said that when they go to someone's house and work, they get some money with which they support their entire family. The women here do not have just one problem, they have many problems such as illiteracy, unawareness about family balance, social or political realities and such others .

Importance of research :-

- For the real development of the society, the problems of Scheduled Caste women with respect to food resources should be considered.
- The deteriorating health condition of women due to lack of food should be protected.
- To improve the condition of Scheduled Caste women, awareness should be spread about education, employment etc.

conclusion :- Jharkhand is a mineral rich state, whose economy depends on mineral wealth. When facts were collected from Scheduled Caste women in Teachers Colony their real status came to light. These women are completely illiterate , landless as well as jobless. They donot get any work which could earn them regular income. There is always a shortage of food resources in their houses. In such a situation, the women here are living their lives in poverty. All the women here are living below the poverty line. There was no house where people were employed or had some small business. All of them were unemployed and lived in slums built on government land. The situation is so worse that these women have to face various physical issues due to lack of food resources. Sometimes the whole family is not able to get enough food because they do not have any source of income; even if these women do some work in the village they get very little income. It is not possible for them to educate the children and feed themselves .These women donot get suitable work due to which it is very difficult to earn livelihood. In such a situation, women are not able to get treatment for their illness at the right time. Lack of nutrition has also been found in their bodies; the situation is such that women are somehow managing to survive. Their problems are so many that it is hardly possible to explain them in a few words.

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