



MILLET NETWORK OF INDIA

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PRESS RELEASE

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Millet Sisters symbolize Nari Shakti !

With great pleasure we inform you that **All India Millet Sisters Network (AIMS)** has been awarded the **Nari Shakti Puraskar, 2017** by the Government of India for **outstanding contribution to women's empowerment**. The award was presented by the President of India in a prestigious ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi on the 8th March 2018 on the occasion of International Women's Day.

Millet Sisters Network is a celebration of very small women farmers who have infused life into the 'concept' of millets by cultivating, onserving and consuming millets, the great civilisational contribution to the humankind. **All India Millet Sisters Network** which was launched in November 2016 has about 5000 women farmers membership from across the country.

Deccan Development Society which was the earliest NGO in India to have thought and articulated the primacy of women as farmers is the "home" to Millet Sisters. At a time when the developmental world in India still thought of women '*in agriculture*' Deccan Development Society had started developing the articulation of '*Women are agriculture*'. In eighties and nineties this understanding of how women were the soul of agriculture was developed by DDS through its daily interaction with women farmers where thy began to articulate the multiple dimensions of millets and contributed hugely to this concept.

Millets in our understanding are **Miracle Grains** that have held together food, farming and life itself across the three southern continents of South America, Africa and Asia and present a profound meaning for Agricultural civilisations.

While more than 50 countries cultivate and consume millets in various forms across the globe, its political importance especially in India has always been severely undermined. This might be partly due to the fact that millets do not need external industrial inputs such as hybrid and high yielding seeds, chemical fertilizers, irrigated water etc. Being **no external input** crops, millets run against the high input=high output market logic. Therefore it defies the dominant corporate economic model. Probably these very sterling values of millets might be the reason why it does not attract government attention..

Millet Sisters bases itself on these amazing principles of millets:

- They are resilient
- They are life infusing
- They are life sustaining
- They are life generating

Millet Sisters in league with Millet Network of India a network established eight years ago by the Deccan Development Society provide a strong platform to advance the strong traditional ecological knowledge that women retain in agriculture

While Millet Sisters celebrate the Nari Puraskar recognition by the Government of India , they are not ready to deviate from their concerns expressed in the pledge they made early this year to welcome the decision of the Government of India in requesting the UNO to declare this year as the INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF MILLETS. In a clear voice they have said that what they want are not symbolisms but strong and concrete action. They have clearly said:

"Millets are our heritage crops. These ancestral crops have been providing us food for our homes, fodder for cattle and strength for our soils and are supporting our health.

Our millet based agriculture possess strength to sustain without irrigation and electricity.

We don't need chemical fertilizers to cultivate our millets. We don't use a drop of chemical pesticide.

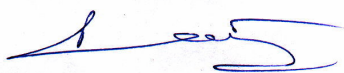
We have abundant knowledge needed for this cultivation. Because of this we have been able to carry forward our self sustaining and sovereign agriculture for many generations. This is our heritage.

We are very happy to know that our Indian government is now marking efforts to make this a global heritage.

However we want to remind the government its responsibility to ensure that this ***International Year of Millets*** doesn't take away the control of this farming system from small and women farmers like us.

Big businesses and corporates have already hijacked organic farming which we have been nourishing for many generations. In the same way, if millets also are transformed into corporate farming, it will be a vicious blow on our long earned heritage. In such a scenario, we feel it is better we celebrate this as a Chiru Raitula Samvatrasam (year of small farmers) instead of Chirudanyala Samvastram (year of millets). Government should recognize, take all measures and declare millets as a possession of small farmers."

We at the *Millet Sisters* and the DDS reiterate this resounding pledge to celebrate the NARI PURASKAR.



PV Satheesh
National Convenor, Millet Network of India
Director, Deccan Development Society