

IS GIRL CHILD CURSE FOR PARENTS

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Abstract - *The Proposed Research Article compares established societal fact with submission of different views from different peoples from society. Why it is so that a girl child is regarded a burden for parents? Neglect and discrimination against girls is a serious issue as it denies them their basic human rights. Behind this is the old and narrow thinking of our society which is not still completely changed and needs a change desperately. Finally concluded that in spite of the awareness the girl child is considered a burden on the parents unknowing the advantages they are going to benefit from her.*

Key words: Child Sex Ratio (CSR), Pre Natal Diagnostics Techniques (PNDT), Maternal Mortality Rates (MMR), Government of India (GoI), Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP), Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), Sukanya Samridhi Yojna (SSY)

1. INTRODUCTION

The pride and dignity of any country lies in its future torch bearers, particularly in empowering today's children. In a country like India children in general and girl child in particular occupies a place of primacy. Thence, empowering girl child is not just empowering one family but the whole nation.

Beauty, chastity and submissiveness of the girl child are qualities and virtues cherished in Indian society like any other. But the painful irony is that the same 'girl child' has been scorned, discriminated, and unwelcome and rarely consider as a normal human being from the very onset of creation. Girl children face obstacles not only because of socio-economic causes like illiteracy or poverty but by the mere fact of being girls and experience 'bias' in day-to-day life.

We are living in an era when countries have started recognising that women have an important role in national development. It is equally true in India also. While inaugurating a ministerial level conference of the non-aligned and other developing countries on the role of women in national development, Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi called for a determined struggle at various levels to accord women equal status and opportunities on a par with men.

Even after 69 years of Independence, the birth of daughter is still unwelcome in Indian society. Growing up unwanted, the girl child suffer denial and discrimination

throughout her childhood and is mercilessly schooled to perceive herself as second-class, and to accept and except that negative status.

The root of neglect are deep inside the time-honoured layers of culture and tradition. Despite progress in the provision of development services and opportunities for the people, discrimination against the girls and women persists. With the gradual spread of newer norms and role models, and increased government attention to health, nutrition and social services, some girls manage to join schools and stay in the learning stream and some women have broken out of social bondage to make their way in life as productive citizens. But countless others still endure shackled lives and some of the new stereotypes promoted through films and entertainment media have made life even more insecure for them.

Women enjoyed a very good position during the early periods of Indian history. Among the earlier settlers in the Indian subcontinent, the position of women was reasonably on par with that of men. However, after the arrival of Aryans the situation started changing. They took women from the subjugated people as their wives. Among the pre-Aryan settlers, women fought in the battlefield together with men folk. By the time of Rig-Veda, however, the presence of women in the army began to be considered a weakness rather than strength Polygamy existed during Rig-Veda time. The tradition continued in the later Vedic literature also. The birth of a daughter was taken as insult while the birth of a son was described as the light of highest heaven. Thus, the essential attitude towards a daughter which still prevails in Indian society seems to have taken shape long ago.

As of now most of the societies of the world are based on patriarchal structure. In patriarchy female are demeaned in a variety of ways. In a patriarchal structure, male is the principal decision maker who controls the social-economic as well as demographic practices. Even within a family a father dominates all the family members and regulates their activities. Patriarchy treats men superior to women. The customs and traditions favouring men over women are deep rooted in our society which is based on patriarchal structure. In patriarchy, lineage is traced through male line. Girls after marriage not only change their residence but also their identity. In patriarchal structure, a daughter is identified as a member of the family of her in-laws after marriage. At the same time a son contributes to family income when in he enters workforce and provides security to parents in their old age.

The term bias against girl child, in fact, refers to this situation of inequality between a son and a daughter in a family. In patriarchal structure a daughter is considered as inferior. As a result, there is a strong preference for sons. This preference operates at both pre and post natal stages. It is quite shocking to note that no other country in the world prevents a bias against girl child in India. The perception that the women are inferior to men is so pervasive that it runs through the mind of every Indian coming from wide range of social and economic background. A son is considered as a prized entity who contributes to family income when he joins workforce. In addition, he is a provider of security to parents in their old age. He also augments family wealth through dowry. A daughter, on the other hand, is considered a liability because she depletes family resources by taking away dowry at the time of her marriage. The gender based inequality is reflected not only in such matter as education opportunities to develop talent, but also in the more elementary areas of nutrition, access to health care and overall well-being (Dereze and Sen, 2005). This is true not only during childhood but also during the child bearing age span.

The last two censuses of India in 2001 and 2011, registered a declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) in India. CSR is defined as 'the number of females per 1000 males in 0-6 years of human population'. The rate of decline in CSR was 13 and 18 points respectively. According to a UN data, CSR dropped from 964 in 1971 to 918 in 2011. There was a steady decline of CSR in two thirds of India's 664 districts. 2011 study in Lancet conclusively proved that between 1980 and 2010, 12 million girls were selectively aborted in India.

The girl child faces persistent threats to life and security due to the socio-economic structure of India. Despite the improvement in Maternal Mortality Rates (MMR), declining CSR continues to be a worrying problem. Absence of stringent implementation of legislations like Pre Natal Diagnostics Techniques Act 1994 (PNDT) and The Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 also lead to the persistence of the problem. Beyond sex selective abortion and female infanticide, daughters are seen as a financial liability and a social burden. The perception of the girl child induces various forms of neglect related to nutrition, health, education and employment. Several customs along with unscientific beliefs and practices increase crime against girls and women in the form of sexual assault, trafficking, wife sharing and other practices.

All forms of discrimination against the girl child and violation of her rights shall be eliminated by undertaking strong measures both preventive and punitive within and outside the family. These would relate specifically to strict enforcement of laws against prenatal sex selection and the practices of female foeticide, female infanticide, child marriage, child abuse and child prostitution etc. Removal of discrimination in the treatment of the girl child within the family and outside and projection of a positive image of the girl child will be actively fostered. There will be special emphasis on the needs of the girl child and earmarking of substantial investments in the areas relating to food and nutrition, health and education, and in vocational education. In implementing programmes for eliminating child labour, there will be a special focus on girl children.

Many initiatives have been taken by the governments, nongovernmental organizations to ensure free and safe living of girl child in India. Independence of the country in 1947 from British rule heralded the introduction of laws relating to improvement in the condition of women. Our constitution provided equality to men and women and also gave special protection to women to realize their interests effectively. The law also gives women equal rights in the matter of adoption, maternity benefits, equal pay, good working conditions etc.



Figure 1: Progeny: Having five daughters after more than 5,000 pregnant women

The inequality between men and women ultimately results in sex differentials in the prospects of survival. With more women dying in each age bracket than men, the population in such societies is invariably characterized by a huge and growing deficit of females. Even though the mortality conditions of women vis-à-vis men at the aggregate level have improved during the recent past, the persisting gender bias can be seen in sex differentials in infant and childhood mortality and in such practices as female feticide [1]. With the advent of medical technology parents are now able to decide not only the size of the family but also its composition. In the wake of a strong son-preference, parents go in for termination of pregnancy once the foetus is detected to be a female. Widespread elimination of unwanted daughters even prior to their births has led to a continuous decline in the sex ratio of children throughout the country.

India is a signatory to all of the international instruments, beside this; India has taken a number of steps for ensuring the growth of the girl children. The Constitution of India offers all citizens, including girl children, certain basic Fundamental Rights- and provided services and opportunities to grow and develop in a safe and secure environment. But still some of the above said problems exist in some places of India affecting the whole concept of girl child empowerment. For that no single organization can be pointed out as the reason instead it should be a team effort to see our girl child live safe and securely in mother India.

2. BETI BACHAO, BETI PADHAO SCHEME

In this context, the Government of India (GoI) brought out an inter-ministerial scheme to reverse the declining CSR and improve gender inequality through education, creating awareness and improving public service delivery in women's schemes'. Along with the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), the other ministries involved were Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Human Resource Development and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

After the new GoI came into power, on 24 July 2014, the MWCD declared that protecting and educating the girl child would a top priority. During the Independence Day speech delivered by the Prime Minister (PM), four schemes were picked out as those under top priority in which Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP) was also included along with Jan Dhan Yojana, Swachh Bharat Campaign and Make in India Campaign. Later in the year on 31 October 2014, a district action plan was revealed in the inaugural address of the Minister of MWCD with the District Collectors. This action plan revealed one of the policy targets was reducing Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) at birth by 10 base points per year. To achieve this, early registration of pregnancy, 100% institutional deliveries and birth registration were envisaged. The Sarpanch was to be the nodal officer at the Panchayats level.

At the district level, strict implementation of Pre Natal Diagnostics Technology (PNDT) Act was to be done. Each district was to be given a budgetary allocation of Rs 100 corers each once they submitted their multi sectorial plan to implement the policy. The district collectors were introduced to the policy challenges through three workshops and two consultative meetings with the MWCD. The second policy target of educating the girls was to be done through a multi-pronged strategy. Preventing child marriage through compulsory birth registration and monitoring, economic incentives to encourage girl's schooling and stringent implementation of The Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, were the suggested modus operandi. The Zila Panchayats was to be the focus of BBBP.

At the national level, a media policy was evolved in which wide publicity on the issue was to be given through billboards, campaigns, commercial films and 'nukkad natak'. A policy for incentivizing promotional activities undertaken by citizens was also put in place. BBBP was launched on 22 January 2015 in Panipat in Haryana, a state that has one of the worst SRB of 775 girls per 1000 boys by the PM. Two days later, the national Girl Child Day was celebrated. During the Republic Day Parade on 26 January, BBBP was reiterated as one of the national emergencies by the PM.

The four main objectives of the scheme are (i) to prevent sex selective abortion by stringent monitoring of PNDT Act (ii) to improve CSR through compulsory registration of pregnancy, institutional delivery and registration of births (iii) to ensure participation of girl in health and education programmes by providing monetary and non-monetary incentives for the family (iv) to create a nurturing and safe environment for the girl child by ensuring her access to all the entitlements available to her.



Source: Times of India, Kota

Figure 2: Harassed woman stages protest, in-laws 'Disappear'

The core strategies of the programme were to mobilize an awareness and community campaign, to empower Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) to be the nodal agencies of programme implementation, to enable service delivery by putting in place institutions and delivery mechanism and to create an inter-ministerial convergence for the programme .In order to implement the scheme, 100 gender critical districts were selected out of which 87 had a CSR below the national average, eight districts where it was above the national average, but showing a declining trend, and five districts where it was above the national average and showing an improvement. The last five districts were selected in order to maintain CSR and make them models for the other districts[2].

Implementation of the Policy the BBBP has been included in as a priority policy to be implemented in 100 select districts of India with an estimated cost of Rs 200 crores. Out of this, 100 crores has been through budgetary allocation. Another 100 crores is to be allocated from the planned outlay of 'Care and Protection of the Girl Child- A Multi Sectorial Approach' of the 12th Five Year Plan (FYP). The allocations would be released towards the Consolidated Fund of each state after the action plan by the State has been approved by the MWCD. Additional resources can be raised through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by the States.

Monitoring of the policy is to be done at three levels. The national level monitoring is done by Secretary, MWCD by heading a Task force. This would be on a quarterly basis. The State level monitoring is done through a Task Force headed by the State Secretary. The district level monitoring is done with respect to the district action plan.

Evaluation of the policy would be done at the end of the 12th FYP. The auditing is subject to the mandate of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India. There is also provision in the scheme for social audit to be done by civil society groups and direct feedback mechanism to the public institution.

Convergence with other policies BBBP is to be seen in convergence with other national policies that have been recently initiated to protect women and the girl child. Ministry of Home Affairs has decided to spend Rs 150 crores to improve the safety of women in large cities. In the Union Budget of 2014-15, the Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways was given Rs 50 crores for pilot projects to safeguard women in public transport[3].

On 22 January 2015, Sukanya Samridhi Yojna (SSY), a cash deposit scheme for the girl child was launched. Under this programme, a girl child below 10 years will have bank accounts. Parents need to deposit only Rs 1,000 at the time of her birth, followed by any amount in multiples of 100 thereafter, for the girl to get Rs 1,50,000 when she is 18 years old. The account could be opened in any post office or authorised branches of commercial banks. As an incentive, a higher rate of interest of 9.1% and income tax rebate was given to such bank accounts.



Source: Rajasthan Patrika, Kota

Figure 3: Rajasthan is in the third place in marriage of minors.

Various State level programmes and schemes are already in place, giving adequate thrust to the safety and education of the girl child. For instance, West Bengal has a periodic money transfer scheme like SSY. Haryana launched a cash transfer programme called 'Haryana Kanya Kosh' in which the State government transfers Rs 21,000 in a bank account for every girl child born so that she could have Rs 1,00,000 at the age of 18. Punjab has a compulsory registration of pregnant women in the first trimester. It also has a 100% scholarship scheme for Scheduled Caste (SC) girls for education and vocational training. Tamil Nadu has Amma Baby Care Kit given to new mothers free of cost.

It is true that there is the need of mothers' protection of their daughters to save them from the lustful men, even their own kith and kin. Sohini (UN) and Laila (TLB) after their mother's death become victims of molestation. The writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Kamala Markandaya and R.K. Narayan insist on the need for parental protection and domestic safety for the girl children in a society where a girl child is still looked upon as a pleasure-giving object or an object of allurements. Despite the provision in the judicature for severe punishment for the rapists the girls are afraid to report it as she is afraid of the press and for being ostracized by the society. Overpowered by shame the victim refuses to state the incident (Devasia 25).

A young girl is required to lead her life under her father's restriction. After marriage, husband has all control over her. In old age, she has to follow the instruction of her son. She cannot do any work at any time independently even in her own house. Remarkable improvement has occurred in the status of women in some parts of the world in recent decades particularly in the developed west. However, norms that restrict women to the home are still powerful in many of the less developed countries including India. In such societies, there are well defined rules and norms defining activities that are deemed appropriate for women. Women in such societies are, by and large, excluded from outdoor activities. In India, a woman is ill-treated even when she has been considered as a goddess. There is no equality between men and women.

3.CONCLUSION

Girl Children are the most vulnerable section of society. They are physically, mentally and socially immature and depend on others for survival. The vulnerability and dependency has been a matter of universal concern. Their development is threatened by several dangers including exploitation, abuse, ignorance, material want and social and political intrigue. In order to protect girl children from these the government and the civil society have been playing a vital role. It seeks to protect children everywhere against exploitation, neglect and abuse. Fundamental rights and Directive principles of state policies are related with children, they state that everyone entitled to all the rights and freedom set forth therein without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, birth or other status. Further, it states that girl child needs special care and legal protection before and after birth. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Respect of rights of all individuals in the society is the foundation of liberty, justice, development and peace in the world. The success of programs and policies for empowering girl child such as BBBP Yojana depend upon a large number of stakeholders including civil society. Empowering Girl Child needs to be incorporated as one of the important agenda in political dialogue and policy discussion. Real Empowerment of girl child and women can only happen if we redefine the status and role of women in the country and that can make a big difference. So we can say that a girl child is not curse for parents rather she is a blessing which God has given to parents in the form of a GIRL.

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RECOMMENDATION

[1] Girl child is a gift of God. It is not a curse. The female child will shine like gold if you give a good treatment. They are the future of the country.

[2] Whole problem is with never ending expectations with son, and it is the basic reality of decreasing sex ratio in spite of so called education and enlightenment. Let us stop appearing ignorant about this. Reality is always troublesome.

[3] Change in the thoughts of people is necessary to change the old age thinking of the society, and for that male should stop thinking that they are superior to females and at the same time females too should think that they are no less to men. However it is not possible but can be achieved slowly and gradually.

[4] What I recommend is that instead of blaming the government, the society and the culture, it is better that we aware the mothers the elder women of the society to guide the flower buds; the young girls to be strong and confident to face the society and male domination strongly We all have to think broadly that girls are not curse rather blessings for parents as they are also the future of country.

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Research Scholar, Change agent, Social rights champion, and Dynamic housewife. I Ekta Dhariwal, am humbled to hear how society has chosen to describe me. Following in the footsteps of my grandfather in law Rikhab Chand Dhariwal, I envision an equal society where each individual is motivated to succeed irrespective of color, sex, caste or creed. Gender inequality, triple talaq, violation against women and late marriage are issues that are very close to my heart. Identifying critical challenges and devising sustainable solutions, I am committed to empower girls and women everywhere. Campaigning independently at the Girls College, we won 8 out of 12 seats in college election. As founder of the "Dhariwal Social Media Cell", I directed a documentary on Late Shri Rikhab Chand Dhariwal, state industrial minister of Rajasthan, to inspire Rajasthan's youth and for this I received Sumitra Women Entrepreneurship Award. As a women who balances being a housewife and a social change agent, I wake up each morning hoping making a positive impact and change lives around me. I urge you to do the same.