

Empowering the Girl Child initiative of India : Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

Dr. Ananya Ghosh Roy

Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Education, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh

Email - agrc29@gmail.com

Abstract: *The term 'Empowerment of women refers to the process of providing equal rights, opportunities, responsibilities and power positions to women so that they are able to play a role on par with men in society'. In a society which is developed and prosperous, Gender equality and empowerment of women are crucial factors. A new born female is least welcome in the family though in India the tradition is to respect women from the early ages. Though the girls excel in the different fields of education, yet tradition, custom, and practices of society tends to place greater value on sons than on daughters and rather daughters are often viewed as an economic burden on the parents. This attitude of negligence on the part of the society thus comes in the way of the girl child to achieve her optimum potential. The dawn of the twenty first century however saw the Indian Women step into a new era of awareness, freedom and social responsibilities. But it is very sad to know that gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today. The government of India has been taking active part in removing gender based inequalities in India. One such effort is the introduction of the new scheme called Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, (BBBP) (Save the girl child, Educate the girl child) which will help in generating awareness and improving the efficiency of delivery of welfare services meant for women. This paper strives to look upon the various issues covered under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the girl child, Educate the girl child) scheme and the measures taken by the government for the improvement of the status of women.*

Key Words: *Empowerment, Discriminations, Inequalities, Population, Sex ratio.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

For a developed and prosperous country, gender equality and the empowerment of women play a very important role. A country cannot grow and flourish socially unless it gives equal opportunities to all its members. However, the inequalities in the society based on gender are prevalent in many societies of the world. Gender discrimination refers to the practice whereby one sex is given preferential treatment over the others (David Jary & July Jary)². The practice of giving social importance to the biological differences between men and women is there everywhere. In some societies, these differences are very much pronounced while in others, they are given less importance. In the Indian society also, gender play a very important role from time immemorial. The gradual progress of a human from womb to tomb is influenced greatly by gender biasness in India. Gender is such an important variable in Indian society, that it has the capability of making the life of a person heaven or hell. It is usually seen that discriminations begins with the fact that a girl is unwanted and therefore eliminated even before she can emerge into the world (Chaterjee 1987). A new born female is least welcome in the family though in India the tradition is to respect women from the early ages. Though the girls excel in the different fields of education, yet tradition, custom, and practices of society tends to place greater value on sons than on daughters and rather daughters are often viewed as an economic burden on the parents. This attitude of negligence on the part of the society thus comes in the way of the girl child to achieve her optimum potential. The dawn of the twenty first century however saw the Indian Women step into a new era of awareness, freedom and social responsibilities. But it is very sad to know that gender disabilities and discriminations are found in India even today.

2. GENDER EQUALITY IN INDIAN CONTEXT:

Gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of State Policy. The Constitution of India has granted equality to women and has empowered the State to adopt measures for the development of women. Different laws, policies, plans and programs within the framework of a democratic polity have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. To ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and to provide for them 'justice', the government undertook several legislative measures such as

- a) The Hindu Marriage Act (1955)
- b) The Hindu Succession Act (1956)
- c) The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956
- d) The suppression of immoral Traffic of women and girls Act, 1956
- e) The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.

- f) The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- g) The Factories Amendment Act, 1976
- h) The Family Court Act, 1984
- i) Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
- j) The Muslim Women's Protection of Rights on Divorce Act, 1986.
- k) P Pre-Conception Pre-Natal Diagnostic test, 1994
- l) Domestic Violence Act, 2005
- m) Sexual harassment at workplace (prevention, prohibition and redressal) Act, 2013 etc.

3. EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA:

In India the status of women has improved from the fifth five year plan (1974-78) onwards. In the recent years the Government of India has given higher importance to the empowerment of women. The Government established a special cell in 1976 with a view to provide due assistance to women in distress. The responsibility of the cell lies with the Commissioner of Police. The Central Government established "the National Commission for women" (NCW) in 1992 in order to check incidents of violence against women and to promote social, legal and economic equality of women. In addition to NCW, several states of India established "State Women's Commission" (SWC). After the 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India, women are given reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities, so that they can participate in the decision making process at the local levels. The National Policy for Empowerment of - Women, 2001 in India had the goal to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

4. DIFFERENT SCHEMES UNDERTAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA:

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)
- Public Distribution System for Food (PDS)
- Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDSS)
- National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)
- National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)
- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) (Education for All)
- National Literacy Mission (NLM)
- Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA)
- Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) (National Health Insurance Scheme)
- The Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojna -Total Sanitation Campaign (Indira Gandhi Motherhood Cooperation Scheme)
- Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme
- Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme
- Support for training and Empowerment Programme for Women (STEP)
- SWADHAR (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)
- Janani Suraksha yojana (Motherhood Protection Scheme)
- Panchayat Mahila Evam Yuva Shakti Abhiyan (Village council Women and Youth Empowerment Campaign)
- Schemes for Leadership Development for Minority Women
- Science and Technology for Women
- Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana of NSTFDC (Tribal Women Empowerment Campaign of NSTFDC)

Thus, the above mentioned initiatives show that the Government of India has tried to empower the women and address the issue of gender equality which has led to social and economic development. However in reality, there is still a huge gap between the goals enunciated in the Constitution, legislation, policies, plans, programs, and related mechanisms and the reality of the status of women in India.

Beti Bachao Beti Pado: The Beti Bachao Beti Pado (Save the girl child, Educate the girl child) is a latest scheme introduced by the Government of India. It was launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi nationwide on January 22, 2015 from Panipat in Haryana, to address the declining child sex ratio and empower girl child in the country. The

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, (BBBP) (Save the girl child, Educate the girl child) will help in generating awareness and improving the efficiency of delivery of welfare services meant for women with an initial corpus of Rs 100/child. The primary aim of this programme is to bring a change in the mindset of the people towards girl child on from the time of her birth. Preventing determination of sex, female feticide, ensuring safety of girls, their best possible care and providing quality education are integral part of this programme. Further, the objectives of the scheme is to prevent gender biased sex selection by stringent enforcement of existing laws especially by strengthening the implementation of Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994 (PC&PNDT Act) with stringent punishments for violations of the law. In Indian context gender inequality or disparity is manifest or visible in various ways. One of the most obvious indicators of this situation is the continuously declining female ratio in the population: in the last few decades.

Sex ratio is a term used to indicate the number of females per 1000 males. Sex ratio is an important indicator of the general status of women in any society. As per the Population Census of 2011 there are 940 females per 1000 of males. The Sex Ratio in the year 2011 shows an upward trend as compared to the data from the census of year 2001. As per the Census of 2001 there were 933 females to that of 1000 males. India had witnessed a steady decline in the sex ratio over number of decades, but in the last two decades there has been a marginal rise in the sex ratio in favour of women. But if we look at the Child Sex ratio there is a decline. “The trend of decline in the Child Sex Ratio (CSR), defined as number of girls per 1000 of boys between 0-6 years of age, has been unabated since 1961. The decline from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001 and further to 918 in 2011 is alarming”.

As per the study "Children in India 2012- A Statistical Appraisal" conducted by the Central Statistical Organisation, "During 2001- 2011, the share of children to total population has declined and the decline was sharper for female children than male children in the age group 0—6 years". The study further establishes that "Though, the overall sex ratio of the country is showing a trend of improvement, the child sex ratio is showing a declining trend, which is a matter of concern." According to the report, female child population in the age group of 0-6 years was 78.83 million in 2001 which declined to 75.84 million in 2011. The population of girl child was 15.88 per cent of the total female population of 496.5 million in 2001, which declined to 12.9 per cent of total number of 586.47 million women in 2011. Similarly the population of male children has also declined from 85.01 million in 2001 to 82.95 per cent in 2011. During the period, 1991-2011, the child sex ratio declined from 945 to 914, however it was seen that the overall sex ratio improved from 927 to 940. The study further adds that "Though the child sex ratio in rural India is 919 which is 17 points higher than that of urban India, the decline in Child Sex Ratio (0—6 years) during 2001—2011 in rural areas is more than three times as compared to the drop in urban India which is a matter of grave concern”.

The BBBP aims to address “the issue of declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) through a mass campaign across the country targeted at changing societal mindsets & creating awareness about the criticality of the issue”.(Dr.K.V.Naidu). The Scheme will have focused intervention & multi- Sectoral action in 100 districts with low Child Sex Ratio. The criteria/norms for selection/identification of 100 districts.

Table: 1 India: districts under

BetiBachao and BetiPadhaoProgramme (Save the girl child, Educate the girl child Programme)

Sl.No.	State	No. of Districts
1.	Haryana	12
2.	Punjab	11
3.	Uttar Pradesh	10
4.	Rajasthan	10
5.	Maharastra	10
6.	Jammu Kashmir	5
7.	Gujrat	5
8.	Delhi	5
9.	Other states	32
10.	Total	100

Source: Women and Child development department Govt. of India

Beti Bachao Beti Padao programe (Save the girl child, Educate the girl child Programme) are as under:

- i) The total of 87 Districts was selected from 23 States/ UTs having Child Sex Ratio below the National average of 918.

ii) There were 8 Districts that have been selected from 8 States/ UTs having Child Sex Ratio above National average of 918 but showing declining trend

iii) There were 5 Districts have been selected from 5 States/ UTs having Child Sex Ratio above National average of 918 and showing improving trend so that other parts of country can learn from them.

The Prime Minister of India on the occasion of International Day of the Girl Child, described female feticide as a "matter of deep shame" and asked the people to pledge to end gender-based discrimination and create an atmosphere of equality for girls. Different ideas from the people were also invited by the Prime Minister on 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao'(Save the girl child, Educate the girl child), programme on the Govt. of India website. The Prime Minister encouraged women by saying that "On International Day of the Girl Child we celebrate the achievements of our daughters. He further added that from the classroom to sports, they shine everywhere. Today let us pledge to create an atmosphere of equality for the girl child. There is no question of any discrimination based on gender." Showing deep concern about female feticide, the Prime Minister said that female feticide is "a matter of deep shame and a cause of great concern. Let's work together to remove this menace from society."

CONCLUSION:

The fact of the matter is that the Central and State governments have undertaken various legislative and other measures for promoting the welfare of women. However, it cannot be said that the intended purpose of the Governments is fulfilled and the targeted persons have received all the benefits. It is always seen that the educated, middle class and upper caste women of towns and cities are at an advantageous position of using these measures, whereas the vast mass of uneducated, lower class and lower caste women of rural areas are not even aware of most of these measures. As long as the problems of women remain as "women's problems" and not as societal problems, not much effort is made for the solution of these problems with the required speed. However, the attempts to provide such a type of socio-economic environment to women will definitely influence their social status and socio-economic conditions in the days to come.

REFERENCES:

1. Andra .B (1975). The Position of Women in India Society' Devaki Jain Publications Division Ministry of Information and Broadcanti Govt. of India.
2. Chaterjee,M.(1987)).A situation Analysis of women from birth to twenty. In the Report of the National Workshop on the Girl Child, New Delhi:NIPPED
3. C.N.Shankar Rao(2006). Principles of Sociology with an Introduction to Social Thought.New Delhi
4. Editor (2008) 'Bridging Gender Gopal the Hindu, November – 22, Visakhapatnam
5. John Mary. E (1996). Gender and Development in India 1970-1990 EPW Novel 23.
6. Jayanti .C 'Empowering Women' Yojana, June 2001.
7. Mridula B (1997) women in India some issues APH publishing corporation, New Delhi.
8. Narasimha .S (1999) 'Empowering women' Sage Publications, New Delhi.
9. Manohar .K.M (1983) 'Socio-Economic Status of India Women' Seva Publications, New Delhi.
10. Noeleen Heyzer (2008) Gender on qualities must be tackled it MDGs are to be achieved' the Hindu September – 24, Visakhapatnam.
11. Pan .D Chaudary (1992) 'Women welfare and Development' inter India Publications, New Delhi.
12. Pillai Jaya Kotari (1995) 'Women and Empowerment' Gyan Publications House, New Delhi.