

# Beti Bachao Beti Padhao: Laws And Acts In India Towards Girls Empowerment

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## ABSTRACT

The World is evolving at a breakneck speed. Women all throughout the world are defying preconceptions and accomplishing incredible things. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 2015, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme was introduced to address issues about gender discrimination and women empowerment in the country. In general, women account for almost half of India's entire population. A country is considered honoured only when its women are honoured. In our country laws have been made without discrimination against women. As a result women can enjoy high position in the society. But the actual status of women is far below than men and ground reality is something different. Domestic violence, Female infanticide and foeticide, child abuse, torturing, bride burning, dowry violence, marital rape, sexual assault etc., still poses great challenges and obstructs the path of empowering the women. Women's rights must be protected and opportunities to attain their full potential must be provided, not just for women empowerment but for national and international development. The present paper will discuss about the gender inequalities and stereotypes faced by women in India alongwith the laws and acts framed for empowering women. Further the paper will talk about the initiatives led by Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme for protecting the girl child and promoting women's empowerment in order to improve their status in the country.

**Keywords:** Women, Women Empowerment, Gender, Stereotypes and inequalities.

## INTRODUCTION

Women are asset of a nation. Women account for around half of the country's population, making them half power of the country. As a result, they require equal rights, facilities and opportunities in order to progress and contribute to the development of the nation. Education allows women to gain a better understanding of the world around them. Women can uplift the society by contributing many constructive roles in the family and community. Indian history depicts few powerful and empowered feminine Indian icons like Durga and Kali, Jhansi ki Rani, Savitribhai Phule, etc but still Indian mind-sets, attitudes and responses to women have been ambivalent and women are categorised as the inferior sex, a domestic chattel, inferior in intellect and a property of the master. Girl child discrimination and neglect can lead to low self – esteem, lifelong deprivation, and social marginalisation. Gender equality, women's empowerment, and elimination of violence against

women are all important components of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. But Everyday in newspaper and electronic media there is news of crime against women like rape, kidnapping, teasing, domestic violence and indecent exposure. Orthodox mindset and gender stereotypes creates gender imbalances in the society and obstruct the path of empowering women which in turn hampers the national and sustainable development. Some of the issues and challenges faced by the women in India are as under:

## ISSUES AND CHALLENGES THAT OBSTRUCT THE PATH OF EMPOWERING WOMEN

Throughout life women remains male dominated. She has become the victim of several social evils and are still facing the issues and challenges related to following:

1. Sexual harassment- Sexual exploitation of a girl child at home, streets, public places, transports,

offices etc., by the members of the family, friends or relatives.

2. Dowry and Bride burning – another form of domestic violence .When the bride’s family fails to offer appropriate dowry demanded by the groom and his family or when they are displeased with the dowry provided to them. The bride is ill-treated and, tragically, burned alive.
3. Female foeticide and female infanticide – Female foeticide is caused by a son’s preference. It is the process of determining the gender of a foetus and having a girl child aborted. Female infanticide is the practice of killing a girl child after a she is born.
4. Domestic violence – Any act of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence perpetrated by a family member or intimate partner is considered domestic violence. Women are the ones who are abused the most all throughout the world.
5. Early Child Marriage- Another issue that has deprived girls of education and empowerment is the early marriage of girls by their parents in order to avoid dowry.
6. Inadequate Nutrition- Inadequate nutrition in the childhood has a long-term impact on women, particularly those from middle-class and poor families.
7. Gender discrimination – Male dominance that forces women to be treated as objects and treated as a second-class citizens to men. Discrimination against girls is becoming increasingly common. There is also power and work inequality between men and women.
8. Disparity in Education –In the current day, women’s education levels are still lower than men’s. According to a Report published by National Survey of India, the Literacy rate of India in 2020 is 77.7 percent. The male literacy rate is 84.7% whereas female literacy rate is 70.3% indicating a significant disparity.
9. Poverty- Poverty is another obstruct in the way of women’s empowerment. As a result of this, Women are exploited as domestic helpers.

As a result, women’s empowerment is essential to safeguard the economic, social, and political standing of women, who are typically the underprivileged in society. Women’s legal, social, political and economic empowerment must be improved.

## **I. CONCEPT OF EMPOWERMENT**

The concept of Empowerment comes from the word ‘power’. In the broad sense, the term power is understood as the intelligence to do anything. Empowerment is seen as a process by which the powerless achieve good control over their circumstances. Empowerment is a process, from being unpowered to being empowered.

The **OXFORD AMERICAN DICTIONARY** defines ‘EMPOWERMENT’ as “to make someone stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights.”

### **I.1 CONCEPT OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

The concept of women empowerment is a global issue. To empower women simply mean to give power to women for freedom, choice, equality, a life with dignity. Women empowerment is a stage of gaining power that allows a woman to recognise her rights and carry out her obligations to herself and others in the most effective way possible.

According to International Encyclopaedia of women (1999) Empowerment enables women to gain relative strength as a result of having choices and bargaining power. It enables an access to and control over means and resources. Women’s empowerment refers to the development of women as more enlightened persons who are politically active, economically productive, and self-sufficient, and who are capable of making informed decisions about issues that impact them. Women are still continue to be exposed to inequalities at various levels. So the concept of women empowerment has become a burning question of the day and is being seen as useful weapon by the government, newspaper and electronic media and even by the court of the law. Women feels empowered only when there is gender justice and equality and when women rights are not violated.

### **I.2 TYPES OF EMPOWERMENT**

**1. SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT:** The term “Social empowerment” refers to the enabling forces that improve women’s social relations and positions in society. Discrimination in society due to disability, race, ethnicity, religion, or gender is addressed through social empowerment.

**2. EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT:** Education is widely regarded as the most important tool for socio-political and economic transformation. Women must receive free and obligatory education in order to be informed of their rights and responsibilities.

**3. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT:** Economic empowerment is an effective tool against poverty. Women should be made economically strong and secure with equal pay for equal work at par with men.

**4. POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT:** Political empowerment of women is an essential component which provides power to women to make decisions. Women’s participation at all levels of governmental institutions is the pre-requisite for women empowerment.

**5. LEGAL EMPOWERMENT:** The women should be given legal empowerment by enacting laws that protect their rights. Women’s equality is guaranteed by the Indian constitution, which also permits the government to implement policies that benefit women.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There are number of studies which highlights that gender violence and crime against women are the major obstacles in the path of women empowerment in India. A few of them are as follows:

Verma (2009) attempted to conceptualise the concepts, needs and context of the entire empowerment issue, as well as review the many approaches to women’s empowerment. In her paper, she states that in order to empower women, complete participation of those who are already empowered in the formulation, implementation, and assessment of action strategies is required. Her research provided a critical examination of alternative ideas and techniques for women’s development, liberation and empowerment.

Dutta P. (2014) have conducted a study in, “Bankura district of West Bengal on Women Empowerment”. According to her, “Women are facing violence not only outside home but within home. Only in West Bengal cases of domestic violence has been reported to increase by 18% in 2011-2012. She concluded that age, education of woman, access to formal credit, highest female education, household landholding, participation in SHG and caste as crucial in the determination of women’s empowerment at the community level.”

Tewari Shweta, (2017), conducted a study on “Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (save the Girl child and Educate her ), A geographical analysis of Child Sex Ratio of Mumbai”. The findings of the study revealed that the child sex ratio in Maharashtra has shown a declining trend since Census 1981 and loss of female child is higher in rural areas as compared to the urban. The study found that approximately 4.69 lakh girls are ‘missing’ in Maharashtra, indicating that the practice of combating sex determination is not taken seriously in the state. Further the study revealed that the medical services, Ultrasonography centres, son preference, male oriented society, gender bias are factors responsible for decline rate of female child.

Prathiba (2017) have suggested in her study that, “Women empowerment can be achieved through education, awareness of women’s rights, physical safety, and strict implementation of policies and laws, whereas crimes against women, such as domestic violence, acid attacks, child marriages, dowry, rapes, sexual harassment, and honour killings, obstruct it further disrupting a country’s economic, social and cultural development.”

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 lays emphasis on gender sensitization, which also envisages equitable and inclusive education for all, with a special focus on children and youth, especially girls from socially and economically disadvantaged groups. Further, NEP2020 proposes addressing the issue of gender disparity, with a particular focus on specific social reasons such as gender stereotyping as well as customs and beliefs that have perpetuated the unequal distribution of resources.

Keeping in view the above literature, the present study attempts to highlight the laws and acts

framed in the country to empower women. Also the paper focuses on the initiatives taken under national scheme i.e., Beti Bachao Beti Padhao for protection and empowerment of girl child.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

1. What are the laws and acts enforced by Government of India towards women empowerment?
2. What are the initiatives taken for proper implementation of these laws and acts?
3. What is the present status of implementation of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme?

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To explore various laws and acts related to women empowerment.
2. To highlight some initiatives taken under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme.
3. To suggest some recommendations for proper implementation of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is descriptive cum exploratory in nature. The available data is based on Secondary sources such as reports from the Crimes Record Bureau and National Commission for women etc.

### RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The Indian women still lag behind in the development process and still they are as a sort of thing .The Indian women are bound by traditional gender role. Manu's laws define her position and role as –

“As daughters, woman should be under the protection of her father; as wife under the protection of her husband and as widow under the protection of her son.”

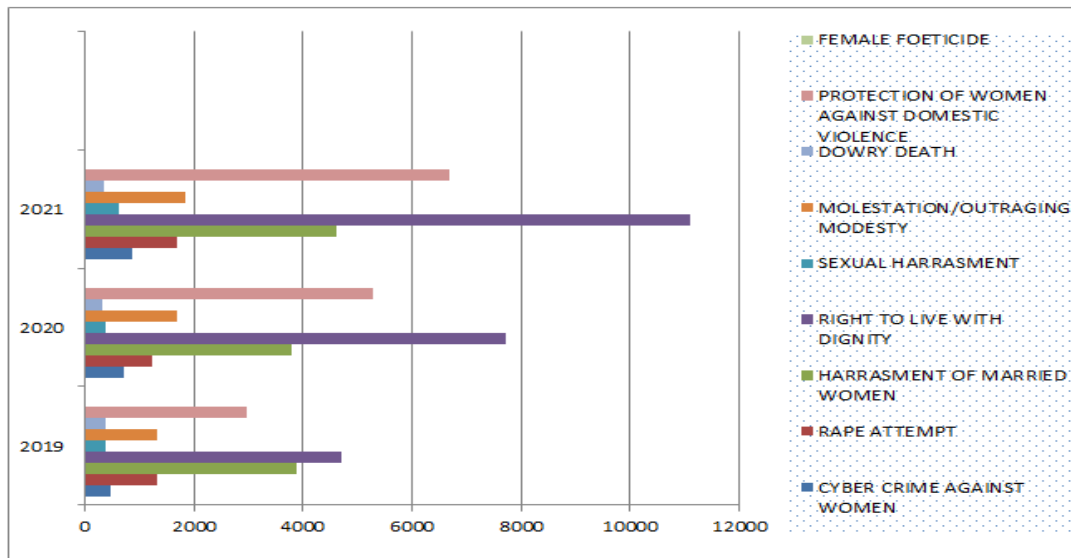
Crimes against women have increased 7.3percent from 2018-2019 as per National Crime Record Bureau's Report 2019.The majority of incidents were classified as “cruelty by husband or his relatives” (30.9%), followed by “assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty”(21.8%), “kidnapping and abduction of women”(17.9%) and “rape”(7.9%).According to the NC-RB study, the crime rate per lakh women population in 2019 is 62.4,more high than 58.8 in 2018.

There has been a considerable increase in reported cases of violence against women, even during the Covid-19 period of lockdown. Inside their homes, women were combating a shadow pandemic (UN WOMEN 2020). Domestic violence complaints doubled during India's statewide lockdown, according to the data from National Commission for Women( Vora et al.2020).

**Table 1:** Depicts the Nature-Wise Report of the Complaints Received by National Commission for Women (Ncw) in the Year 2019, 2020 And 2021.

S.NO.	NATURE OF CRIME	NO.OF CASES IN THE YEAR 2019	NO.OF CASES IN THE YEAR 2020	NO.OF CASES IN THE YEAR 2021
1.	Cyber Crime against women	459	704	863
2.	Dowry Death	373	330	341
3.	Harassment of married women/Dowry harassment	3883	3788	4613
4.	Outraging modesty /Molestation	1320	1679	1839
5.	Protection of women against domestic violence	2960	5297	6684
6.	Rape/Attempt to rape	1339	1236	1681
7.	Right to live with dignity	4694	7715	11088
8.	Sex selective abortions/Female foeticide	25	8	23
9.	Sexual Harassment	369	376	624

Source: <http://ncwapps.nic.in>



**Figure 1:** Bar Chart Represents The Nature-Wise Increased Complaints Received By National Commission For Women (Ncw) In The Year 2019, 2020, 2021.

The data provided in the above bar chart shows there is a constant rise in the crime and violence against women in one or other form. So, the protection of women and girl child and empowerment of women becomes a need of the hour. To overcome these issues various central, state govt. and NGO's have been working together for the empowerment of women and various laws and acts have been framed in this regard. Thus, the present paper discuss the laws and acts framed in India to empower girls in general and initiatives led by Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme in particular.

### Laws and Acts in India to Safeguard Girl Child and to Empower Women

The Indian constitution guarantees women's equality and permits states to implement measures of positive discrimination in their favour. India has developed policies, strategies and programmes aimed towards women's empowerment within a democratic framework. There are some special laws for women:-

- ▶ The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
- ▶ The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- ▶ The Maternity termination of pregnancy Act, 1971
- ▶ The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- ▶ The commission of Sati (Prevention), Act, 1987

- ▶ The National Commission for Women was set up in 1990
- ▶ The Pre-Conception & Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse), Act, 1994
- ▶ The National commission for Empowerment of Women, 2001
- ▶ The National Youth policy, 2003.
- ▶ The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
- ▶ The Right to Children to Free and Compulsory Education, Act, 2009.
- ▶ The Sexual harassment of women at work place (Prevention and protection) Act, 2013
- ▶ The National Youth Policy 2014
- ▶ The National Policy for Women Empowerment, 2016

Despite of all above laws and acts, women's status is decreasing day by day. According to Statistics, three female children are killed in every minute. Discrimination against girl child begins when she is still in her mother's womb. India is placed 140<sup>th</sup> out of 156 nations in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap report for 2021. Despite maintaining a constant record on gender equality, India's legal ranking in this area has dropped to 124<sup>th</sup> out of 190 nations in 2022, down from 123<sup>rd</sup> a year earlier and 117<sup>th</sup> in 2020. In the past few years, many measures and initiatives have been

taken by the government and some other organisations to improve the situation of girl child. The Indian Government has made it top priority to reduce the gender gap in the country, lowering the discrepancy between men and women. One such initiative was taken by the Govt. of India seven years ago with the launching of **BETI BACHAO BETI PADHAO (SAVE THE GIRL CHILD AND EDUCATE THE GIRL CHILD)**. To address the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and other issues related to women's empowerment Beti Bachao Beti Padhao programme was launched by honourable Prime Minister on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2015 at Panipat, Haryana. According to the data (CSR) in 2001, there were 933 girls for every 1000 boys for 0-6 years. In the year 2011, this number dropped to approximately 918 girls per 1000 boys. Moreover, the rising crimes against women is still another reason for launching of BBBP Scheme. It is a collaborative initiative by the Ministries of women and child Development, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Human Resource and Development.

#### **Objectives of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme:**

The objectives of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme are as follows:

- ▶ To celebrate the Girl child.
- ▶ To prevent Gender biased sex selective discrimination.
- ▶ To ensure survival and protection of the girl child.
- ▶ To ensure education and Participation of the girl child.

#### **Initiatives Taken Under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme for Protection and Empowerment of Girl Child**

Under the BBBP Scheme, several innovative initiatives have been undertaken by the districts for improving the child sex ratio and related issues of empowerment of women. Some of the innovative initiatives for the upliftment, betterment and empowerment of girl child are listed below:-

- ▶ **Digital Guddi-Gudda Board:** A digital platform for exhibiting gender disparity in birth rates and providing information on schemes and

programmes created for safeguarding the girl child.

- ▶ **Udaan- Sapneya Di Duniya De Rubaru (Udaan- Live your Dream For One Day)** – A programme that allows young women to spend a day with a professional they desire to be.
- ▶ **My Aim My Target Campaign-** A programme in which girls at higher secondary schools will be recognised for their outstanding academic achievements.
- ▶ **Lalshya Se Rubru-** An Internship programme for female college students aimed at assisting them in making informed career decisions.
- ▶ **Pahal –“Ek Kadam Nari Samman ki Aur”-** An initiative which is organized with multiple activities includes launch of dedicated caller tunes, signature campaign, oath taking and cultural bonanza on empowerment of girl child.
- ▶ **Ghar ki Pehchan Beti ke Naam-** Initiative started in 20 villages with low CSR .Under this the house is identified by the girl child by installing a name plate outside the houses.
- ▶ **Noor jeevan ka betiya campaign-** A journey towards constructive social development..A week long campaign with numerous theme-based interactive events organised in panchayats, schools, colleges, institutions level.
- ▶ **Kanya sambhardna Utsav-** An initiative in which District administration felicitate the girl child and her mother in order to raise awareness about the importance of girl child.
- ▶ **Bitiya and Birwa** – Under this each mother of a newly born girl child is celebrated and honoured with a plant.
- ▶ **Aao School chalein campaign-** An enrolment campaign that involves door-to-door visits and registrations to ensure that all girls are enrolled in school.
- ▶ **Apna Bacha Apna Vidyalaya-** A Special initiative in collaboration with Department of Education, Department of Information and Broadcasting and other stakeholders to ensure 100 percent enrolment of girls in schools of the district.

- ▶ **Lunch with laadli-** An initiative of District Administration in which the District Collector visits govt.schools to inspect the quality of mid-day meal and converse with girls during lunch in order to encourage them to continue their studies.
- ▶ **Collector ki class-** A programme that provides free career counselling and coaching to underprivileged girls in public schools and high institutions.
- ▶ **Pink card** –A special cabin has been set up for parents with a maximum of two daughters from 20 communities with a low child sex ratio. They can avail this to register for births, marriages, and driving License etc.
- ▶ **Bal cabinet-** A youth leadership programme in which female students are encouraged to participate in government cabinets and ministerial roles in order to discuss and resolve issues.
- ▶ **Sukanya Samridhi Yojana-** Sukanya Samridhi Yojana is a govt. backed small saving scheme for the benefit of girl child. The scheme is meant to meet the education and marriage expenses of a girl child.

### **ACHIEVEMENTS OF BETI BACHAO BETI PADAHO SCHEME SO FAR**

#### **With Regard to Sex Ratio at Birth**

- The National SRB Index has exhibited a strong increasing trend and significant progress from 918 in year 2014-15 to 934 in the year 2019-20.
- 422 districts Out of 640 districts covered under BBBP have shown improvement in SRB from 2014-15 to 2018-19.

#### **With Regard to Education**

- The National Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of girls in secondary schools improved from 77.45 to 81.32 in 2018-19.
- Proportion of schools with separate, functional toilets for girls rose from 92.1% in 2014-15 to 95.1% in 2018-19

#### **With Regard to Health**

- First trimester ANC registration has shown an improving trend from 61% in 2014-15 to 71% in 2019-20.(As per HMIS, MoH&FW)

- There is an improvement in institutional deliveries from 87% in 2014-15 to 94% in 2019-20.(As per HMIS, MoH&FW)

#### **With Regard to Attitudinal Change**

- The scheme has successfully engaged the community in defying long-held prejudices against girls and introducing unique activities to honour them. The BBBP logo has received a lot of positive feedback. People utilise logos on their school buses, buildings, stationary and transportation vehicles, among other things, to demonstrate their support to their cause.

#### **Difficulties in Achieving the Targets of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme**

Undoubtedly one can see a lot of improvements and key development after the implementation of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme. Still the Scheme is facing difficulty to gain momentum due to certain reasons. Such as:

- The Government machinery and the police are yet to get the magnitude of women atrocities seriously. They need to take strict action against atrocities faced by women.
- The successful implementation of scheme demands a full civic body support to achieve the targets of scheme. There is a less involvement of community members which also weakens the targets of scheme.
- There is an urgent need to change the mindset of people as besides various campaigns, awareness campaigns and orientation programmes, still people are showing a conservative and orthodox behaviour towards the birth of girl child.
- Dowry system and female foeticide practices are still prevails even in modern and educated societies. This weakens the implementation of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme. Strict action needs to be taken against this.
- Low reluctancy of parents for sending their daughters to school by keeping in mind the rising crimes, safety and security issues.
- Lack of awareness among health workers in some rural areas including ASHA workers, Aganwadi, ANM workers.

### **Recommendations for Successfully Achievement of Targets of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme**

Following are the suggestive recommendations for successfully achievement of targets of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao:

- Gender Sensitization programme should be organised to create awareness among people so that women enjoy their rights fully and can be treated at par with men.
- Training and capacity building programmes should be organized regularly for officials, health workers and different stakeholders so that they can contribute significantly towards achieving the targets of BBBP.
- Monitoring and regular reporting should be done from time to time for all the activities and initiatives conducted at District, Block and Panchayat level related to the scheme.
- Awareness campaign should be created timely about the issues related to girls and women's health, rights and empowerment.
- Felicitation programme should be organized in each village, panchayats, blocks and districts level to encourage girls for education by recognising meritorious girls and local women champions. Success stories of women champions should be shared at such programmes so that it becomes inspiration for others and women feel motivated and respected.
- Sensitization of parents and teachers through campaigns and workshops should be done on child sex ratio, domestic violence, education and health issues. Girls safety and security should be ensured in the school in order to improve the drop-out rate of girls.
- Gender equality considerations should be integrated into the curriculum, and facility of girls hostel should be provided in large in order to lower the drop-out rate of girls.
- Effective use of social media should be encouraged for making people aware about the scheme, its goals and achievements.

- There is a need to increase planned expenditure allocation for education and health related interventions.

### **CONCLUSION**

Women plays an integral role not only in family but also in the society. Still she lags behind in literacy, health facilities, economic and social freedom. Women empowerment is very important and crucial for the development of the country. It is a major concern for the society and the goal is to develop a culture of raising empowered women in the country. Women feels empowered only when there is gender justice and equality and when women rights are not violated. The ministry of India is also focusing for the development of women empowerment. Women empowerment has been declared as an important goal of Sustainable development by UNDP and there is an urgent need to work collaborately towards achievement of this goal. In this regard, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao has yielded many positive results and promotes the importance of girl education to carve a bright future for the country. There has been an encouraging improvement in the number of girls enrolled in schools and efforts are still in making for ensuring survival, protection and empowerment of the girl child. Various initiatives has been taken and in the process of taking for the successful achievement of targets of BBBP scheme so that violence and crimes against girl and women can be controlled and girls are born, nurtured and educated without discrimination.

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