

Beti Bachao Beti Parhao: An Indian government initiative to promote gender equality

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Abstract

Both in the public and private realms, Indian society is patriarchal and hierarchical, with women viewed as second-class citizens and males as superiors. Patriarchy is a social and ideological structure in which men are considered superior to women in terms of resource management and decision-making. It produces disparities and hierarchies that hurt girls and women, as well as families and societies. Women are frequently considered to be the property of their male counterparts. They are not allowed to make any decisions concerning their families or even their own life. Because of women's inferior place in society, as well as some traditional Indian customs, beliefs, culture, religious rituals, and so on, the birth of a girl child in a family is regarded as a curse. One of the main causes for their ignorance of the girl kid is the practice of dowry in India. Furthermore, traditional thinking, which views solely the male kid as the family's responsibility bearer, inhibits people from appreciating the birth of a girl child. As a result, incidents of female foeticide, infanticide, and other forms of homicide are on the rise in India, resulting in an unbalanced sex ratio or a drop in the child sex ratio. Moreover, a lack of appreciation of the importance of girl's education is also present. One of the reasons is that society's portrayal of women's goals as good wives and mother of male progeny has led to a lack of awareness concerning girls' education. Hence, an attempt has been made in this article to analyse the Central government's scheme of "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao," which has been adopted by the government in order to ensure a balanced sex ratio and improved literacy rate of girl child in India.

Keywords: Child sex ratio, girl child, discriminations, literacy rate, women 'right.

INTRODUCTION

Both men and women have various roles in society, with women's duties being viewed as inferior by society, while men's roles are viewed as superior. The socialisation process differs from one boy to a girl. Individuals can learn or acquire different traditions, practises, beliefs, laws, regulations, values, attitudes, and ways of thinking from society through the process of socialisation, and their personalities are shaped as a result of this learning. The ideals that boys and girls are taught are profoundly discriminating towards female youngsters. Furthermore, greater positions in societies or social institutions are typically allocated to males. In both the public and private spheres,

Indian society is patriarchal and hierarchical, with women viewed as second-class citizens and males as superiors. Patriarchy is a social and ideological structure in which men are considered superior to women in terms of resource management and decision-making. It produces disparities and hierarchies that hurt girls and women, as well as families and societies. The majority of the time, women are viewed as the property of their male counterparts. They are not permitted to make any decisions regarding their families or even in regards to their own lives. Women's reproductive rights are also infringed by their families, as any decision about reproduction is

made for them by their husbands, rather than by them.

Women's rights are frequently violated in India due to their inferior status. The United Nations defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (Singh, 2015). During his remarks at the Inter-Agency Videoconference for a World Free of Violence Against Women (1999), then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan branded acts of violence against women as "the most heinous" of human rights breaches (Banerjee, 2014:34). "Violence against women" is a common occurrence. It transcends caste, creed, religion, locality, and so on (Sharma et al., 2005). Women's rights violations are also widespread in India. It is primarily due to the patriarchal structure that exists in Indian society. Sati Pratha (tradition), rape, domestic violence, wife beating, dowry harassment and death, sexual harassment, honour killings, female infanticide, acid attacks, eve-teasing, molestation, kidnapping, and other types of violence against women have existed for centuries. Women's violence isn't new; it's just taken on different forms. Women are exploited for a variety of reasons but primarily because their unawareness of their rights (Das, 2005). Despite the fact that women make up half of the population and are an inextricable component of society, they continue to battle for equal rights in contemporary civilization. Amidst the establishment of a number of national and international organisations, violence against women persists. The success and improvement of India's women's situation is also critical to the country's overall growth.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao: Its importance and the grounds for its adoption:

The right to education is also denied to girl child as the purpose of her life is reduced by society to being a decent wife and mother to a male child. In Indian society, families prefer to spend money on their daughters' marriage rather than her education. On the other hand, the education of male children is given top priority since they regard the male kid as their future and believe

that he alone will be responsible for the family (Sudhakar, 2018-19). But significantly, education can play a significant impact in increasing women's overall well-being. The education of girls should be prioritised. Women who have received an education will be aware of their rights and responsibilities. Not only in the family, but also in society, education will assist them in becoming decision-makers. Education will facilitate them in obtaining better jobs both in private and public agencies. Rather than spending money on a "dowry," parents should encourage their daughters in obtaining higher education, which will assure a stable future for them. The government and various volunteer organisations, have also been working tirelessly to promote the education of girls and women, which is progressively paying off. But strangely India's, 2011 census data reveal that women have a literacy rate of 65.46 percent whereas men have a literacy rate of 82.14 percent. In this patriarchal society because of women's lesser standing, most families place a lower value on their daughters' education and ultimately lead to the overall negative impact on nation's development. Besides, a girl child's fight begins even before she is born. Female foeticide is a concerning practise in India, where low-cost abortion technology allows families to prioritise sons over daughters. If she is allowed to be born, she is regarded in Indian society as 'fortunate.' Discrimination and oppression continue to be a part of the girl child's life even after their birth.

As, a result, in such context, to address the issue, Prime Minister Narendra Modi started the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) programme, which focuses on the education and protection of girl children (Parmar and Sharma, 2020). PM Narendra Modi launched the BBBP campaign in Panipat, Haryana, because it was one of the districts with the lowest Child Sex Ratio in the country (Parmar and Sharma, 2020). Besides, the CSR figure clearly depicts the level of girl and woman empowerment in any country, and India was rated 41st out of 195 countries in UNICEF's study in 2012, indicating a downward trend in India's CSR and a lowering level of empowerment (Parmar and Sharma, 2020). The predilection for sons in Indian society is still strong, which is one of the key reasons for the dropping and unbalanced child sex ratio (Dhanaraj and Sudha, 2019). According to the Economic Survey, India's yearning for a male kid has resulted in the birth of 21 million

"unwanted" girls aged 0 to 25 (Deepalakshmi, 2018). It is because; while the average Indian family likes to have two children, some families have up to five children if the last child is not a boy. (Deepalakshmi, 2018). The chief economic advisor Arvind Subramanian led the economic survey of 2017-18 says, "Families where a son is born are more likely to stop having children than families where a girl is born. This is suggestive of parents employing 'stopping rules'" (Dhanaraj and Sudha, 2019). Punjab and Haryana have the highest male kid preference, while Meghalaya has the lowest. According to the National Family and Health Survey, more than 2 million women go missing each year across all age categories owing to sex-selective abortion, sickness, neglect, or inadequate nourishment (Deepalakshmi, 2018). The natural "sex ratio at birth" (SRB), according to the World Health Organization, is 1.05. This means that there are on average 105 men for every 100 females at birth (Dhanaraj and Sudha, 2019). In Indian families with several children, the first child's sex ratio is 1.07, which is quite near to the biologically established natural sex ratio (Dhanaraj and Sudha, 2019). According to the survey, the sex ratio of the last kid for first-borns is 1.82, which is highly skewed towards males (Dhanaraj and Sudha, 2019).

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme is a central initiative launched by the PM on 22nd of January in 2015 at national, state, district and community level for creating awareness in the society or saving and educating the girl child to empower the woman of India. The termed empowerment can be defined as a multi-dimensional process that assists to lead a better life by overcoming the obstacles they face (Parmar and Sharma, 2020). The scheme's goals are to avoid gender-based sex discrimination, to secure the girl child's survival and growth, and to ensure the girl child's education and participation. Through multi-sectoral initiatives, the system has been expanded to cover all of the country's districts. Along with the BBBP programme, the Sukanya Samridhi Yojana was introduced to address the financial aspects of a female child's overall success by paying expenses such as health, education, and so on (Parmar and Sharma, 2020). The Sukanya Samridhi account, a savings system particularly for girl children, has been introduced, where parents or guardians of the kid can save money for their daughters to be

utilised for their education or marriage (Dhanaraj and Sudha, 2019). This account has no tax deductions, and it was conceptualised as a way to address the issue of girl children being considered a financial burden (Dhanaraj and Sudha, 2019). This yojana is advocating for the girl child's education and encourages parents to educate their daughters. Its main goals are to promote gender equality, protect girls, and provide medical assistance to them (Dhanaraj and Sudha, 2019). Only the girl child, after reaching the age of 18, is allowed to withdraw money from this account (Dhanaraj and Sudha, 2019).

The goal behind the adoption of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme was to addressing the declining of Child Sex Ratio (CSR) as the CSR had fallen down from 945 in 1991 to 918 in 2011, which was a highly concerning issue and to create better awareness among people with regard to welfare schemes intended for girls. (Devi et al., 2021 ; Parmar and Sharma, 2020). The BBBP programme began in 100 districts and has since been expanded to many other districts across the country and under this scheme the government has been attempting to provide improved protection, nourishment, and education for girls through this scheme.

Conclusion:

The subordination of women has been a part of India's history, and we are still far behind in providing an egalitarian society that is fair to our girls. It is vital to empower women for the betterment of our country by providing them with equal rights so that they can live a happy life; free of discrimination. The scheme will help to resist the constant declining of sex ratio and hence will boost government's initiative of women empowerment by eliminating discriminations against the girl child. Besides, when a girl obtains education, she will be equipped to become financially self-sufficient also; hence in long run the scheme will be able to ensure economic rights of women. However, there is still the lack of understanding of the scheme, which needs to be addressed for the successful implementation of the scheme (Devi et al., 2021). Under this Scheme, competent monitoring and supervision should be in force. The BBBP scheme is to an extent successful because the rights of girls are now recognised by

the majority of society. However, in this current technologically growing society, there is still a need for social mobilisation and rapid communication regarding the equal worth of the girl child and her education. Furthermore, all people, particularly youth and women's groups, must be made more aware of, appreciative of, and supportive of this social change and greater social integration. Both private and public sphere the participation of women should be vitally encouraged. It is the responsibility of society to establish an enabling environment for women to realise their full potential, with the support of beneficial government policies and social programmes. The BBBP scheme will help to achieve universal education and improve the education of girls, resulting in a lower dropout rate. Besides, there is a noticeable shift in people's attitudes toward gender inequity. Prenatal gender selection has decreased significantly and the living standards of girl children have improved significantly as a result of different actions carried out under the auspices of the BBBP campaign (Parmar and Sharma, 2020).

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