

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme: A March towards Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

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Abstract

The gender equality in terms of survival and education is essential for equitable economic development of any nation and is a basic human right. In Indian Patriarchal society, gender discrimination is deeply rooted which can be seen even in the form of female foeticide due to preference of son over daughter. After birth, the discrimination continues and is reflected in the opportunities in education, health facilities and other areas of life in the Indian families. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme was launched in 2015 to combat this discrimination and spread awareness about the rights of the girl child. The present paper evaluates the BBBP Scheme and its impact on gender equality and women empowerment. It was observed that the scheme brought some changes in Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and level of education of the girl child. The BBBP scheme is successful to some extent to bring awareness about the human rights of girl child through community participation to support their education, growth and development.

Keywords: Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme, CSR, Human Rights, Gender Equality, Women empowerment.

Introduction

India is an UN member and has set its own targets to meet 2030 Agenda via many schemes. The Beti bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) - Save the Girl Child Educate the Girl Child Scheme, one of them, launched by the Government of India in 2015 is an initiative to address the declining CSR and related issues of women empowerment mainly education over a life –cycle continuum. It is a tri-ministerial effort of Ministries of women and Child Development; Health and Family Welfare and Human Resource Development. The scheme was launched seeing the sharp declining CSR in 2011 census data which was all time low with 918 girls per 1000 boys. The CSR has been declining from 976 in 1961, 964 in 1971, 962 in 1981, 945 in 1991 927 in 2001 and further to 918 in 2011 which is very alarming situation since CSR is major indicator of the failing level of equality and empowerment. In its 2012 report the UNICEF found India at 41st position among 195 countries.

Objectives of the study:

The study aims:

- 1) To study the purpose and need Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme
- 2) To explore its connection with human rights

3) To analyse its impact on gender equality and women empowerment

The Main hypotheses are:

- 1) The BBBP scheme has a positive impact on the CSR and girls' enrollment in the various educational institutions
- 2) There is a direct link between CSR and girls education to gender equality and empowerment resulting in the overall development of the nation.

Theoretical Orientation

Any research on the parameters and achieving gender equality needs to be studied with reference to overall women empowerment and development of the nation which will ultimately result into positive social change. In Patriarchal Indian Society, women experience Discrimination, Exploitation and Oppression (DEO) before birth in the form of female foeticide which continues after birth in the form of health facilities, education, sexual division of labour within their own families as well as in the work place and larger society outside the four walls of the homes. The structural principles of gender relations perpetuate DEO through socialization and form a social system of social institutional asymmetry. This institutional asymmetry is sustained and maintained by the normatively sanctioned institutions of oppression in form of traditional customs and practices. Thus, the social change within the structure of gender relations needs to be qualitative and quantitative in nature. While legal –formal sanctions has been made to 'correct' this asymmetry, but the actual transformations into a social system of equal gender relations seems to be a long drawn process (Sahoo: 2008 and 2022).

Research Methodology

The present study is exploratory in nature. The data has been collected from the secondary sources like journals, online articles, government websites, books, encyclopaedia, etc.

Discussion and Findings

The Census of India 2011 data showed a significantly declining CSR between 0-6 years of age with an all-time low ration of 918 girls per 1000 males. This is a serious issue which is an indicator of women disempowerment as it reflects both, pre- birth discrimination, manifested through gender based sex-selection, and post-birth discrimination against girls (in form of their health, nutrition, educational needs). The visibly sharp gender gap over five decades was a call for urgent action. Thus, the BBBP was launched by The Prime Minister of India on January 22, 2015 at Panipat in Haryana, with the objective of bringing behavioural changes in the society towards birth and rights of girl child over a life cycle continuum.

The specific objectives of the scheme are:1) Prevention of gender-biased sex selective elimination; 2) ensuring survival and protection of the girl child; 3) ensuring education and participation of the girl child. The joint venture of the three ministries named Ministry of women and Child Development (WCD); Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (HFW) and Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD), these sectoral interventions under the programme are as follows:-

Ministry of WCD promotes registration of pregnancies in the first trimester in Anganwadi Centres in rural areas; undertake training of stakeholders; community mobilization and sensitization; involvement of gender champions; reward and recognition of institutions and frontline workers.

Ministry of HFD monitors implementation of Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994; increased institutional deliveries; registration of births; strengthening PNDT Cells; setting up Monitoring Committees.

Ministry of HRD focuses on universal enrolment of girls; decrease drop-out rate; girl -child friendly standards in schools; strict implementation of Right to Education (RTE); construction of functional toilets for girls.

Initially 100 villages were selected for coverage in the first phase (2014-15), followed by an additional 61 districts (low on CSR) in the phase (2015-2016). The Prime Minister of India had officially announced the expansion of BBBP Schemes on 8th march, 2018 at Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan , covering all 640 district as per Census 2011 through multi-sectoral intervention and district media and advocacy in 405 districts. The rest of the 235 districts are covered under media advocacy and outreach. The BBBP Scheme is being administered through District Appropriate Administrative Authority and funds are directly transferred to the concerned district. (www.bbbpindia.gov.in/pages/aboutus)

Government Interventions under BBBP for Positive Environment

The Government of India has initiated some innovative interventions for positive ecosystem and girl friendly environment-

The Visibility of the Issue in public domain:

By displaying birth statistics in public places through gudda guddi boards like digital gidda guddi display boards in offices and public place in some districts of Maharashtra.

Brand Visibility of BBBP logo:

All the Government buildings, public offices, official/public vehicles, public transport, school buses are using BBBP logo.

Breaking gender stereotypes and challenging son-centric rituals:

Celebration of birth of girl child, dedicating special day on the value of girl child, linking plantation drives symbolizing nurturing and care for girl child, prevention of child marriage.

Local Champions:

Some districts like Sikar (Rajasthan), Una (Himachal Pradesh) Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh) have utilised the potential of local champions on BBBP who represent diverse field like sports academics, law, students, etc. These local champions work at block level to sensitize the community about importance of gender equality and women empowerment as well as spreading the message of BBBP.

Enabling Girl's Education

Through enrolments campaigns / drives focussing on girl child education namely “ School Chalein Hum” in Jalgoan district of Maharashtra; “Aao School Chalein” in district Sikar, Rajasthan; “Apna Baccha Apna Vidhyalaya” and “Collector ki Class” in Jhunjhunu district, Rajasthan; Udaan in Mansa district, Punjab.

Reward and Recognition

By Felicitation of Best Panchayats, parents to value their daughters, community members, local champions for their exemplary work, meritorious girls.

Prevention of child marriage

Campaigning is being undertaken by states and districts to prevent child marriage. (www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID)

National Girl Child Day Celebration

Initiated by Ministry of WCD, 24th January is celebrated as National Girl Child Day with the objective to provide support and opportunities to the girl child of the country. It also aims at promoting awareness about the rights of the girl child and to increase awareness on the importance of girl's education and their health and nutrition.

Achievements of BBBP

Since the launch of the BBBP scheme, there has been a significant increase in CSR by 16 points from 918 in 2014-15 to 934 in 2019-20. Enrolment Ratio of girls at secondary level has improved though marginally from 77.45 to 81.32. The percentage of schools with functional girls toilets has shown improvement from 92.1% in 2014-15 to 95.1% in 2018-19.

The scheme has resulted in increasing the level of awareness and sensitization of the people regarding prevalence of gender bias and role of community in eradicating it. It has further drawn attention about the serious issue of declining CSR which has created gender imbalance in the Indian society.

The society can play responsible

The Indian society can play responsible by giving equal importance to girls with boys. The right to birth and education are basic human rights of women as humans. The society and its people can and should -

- Celebrate the girl child in the family and community
- Take pride in daughters and oppose of mentality of 'Bojh' and 'Paraya Dhan'
- Find ways to promote equality between boys and girls
- Secure admission to and retention of girl child in schools
- Engage men and boys to challenge gender stereotypes and roles
- Educate and sensitize our sons to respect women and girls as equal members of the society
- Report any incident of sex determination test
- Strive to make neighborhood safe and violence – free for women and girls
- Oppose dowry and child marriage within the family and community
- Advocate simple weddings
- Support women's right to own and inherit property
- Encourage women to get out, pursue higher studies, work, do business, access public spaces freely, etc.
- Mind his language and be sensitive to women and girls

Conclusion

Since the time immortal, there has been gender inequality in Indian society. There has always been son preference over the daughter in the patriarchal social system. The girls have been denied their basic human rights including right to birth. The women equality and empowerment were never given priority due to their secondary position in the society. Post Independent India, saw many attempt like Constitutional provisions, laws, schemes to correct the gender based asymmetry. The scheme like BBBP is one of them which is bringing positive visible attitudinal changes. The present study has found the

positive impact of BBBP on CSR and girls enrolment in educational institutions. With proper implementation and long constant actions on BBBP targets, the march towards gender equality and women empowerment can be accelerated. The paper advocates that there is a direct link between the gender equality and development of any nation.

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