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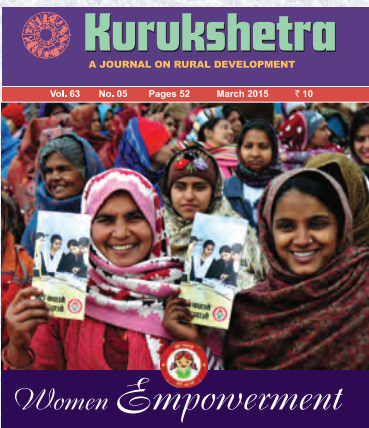
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Editorial

The fact that we are speaking of “Women’s Empowerment” shows that all is still not well with women, despite having broken through the glass ceiling in many fields. Women constitute about 35% of the workforce in software industry and enjoy the same status, wages and perks as men. They have also made great progress in various fields equaling and even surpassing men as doctors, teachers, engineers, managers, law enforcers and soldiers. However, it has to be kept in mind that many of these women who have made great strides, did it braving very adverse situations, shrugging of social criticism and at times have even risked getting ostracized.

But is the picture same in rural area ? Well, not so. A large number of women in rural area have remained untouched by empowerment. After more than six decades of independence women in rural areas continue to play second fiddle to men and are handicapped socially and economically cutting across the lines of caste, creed and economic status, and bonds of custom and tradition help keep them under the male yoke.

Ancient Indian scriptures show that women enjoyed a respectable position during that time and many ancient texts also talk about women scholars and sages. But gradually the patriarchy tightened its grip over the society and women were subjugated by men and this subjugation continues even today. It is precisely this subordinate position that necessitates women’s empowerment so that a change can be brought about in their socio-economic condition.

In rural India there is more need for empowerment. The factors which determine women’s empowerment are Education, Poverty, Health and Safety. Education here just does not mean merely teaching the three R’s – reading, writing & arithmetic, but to make them aware of their rights and also realize the discriminatory treatment given to them. Economic independence is a vital aspect of empowerment. For this linking Self Help Group Movement with Micro-credit facility will help reduce poverty and empower them. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is another means to provide job opportunities to women.

Health and nutritional needs of a woman are not just dependent on availability and access to these services, but are closely linked to her status in the society, which constantly deprives her from getting these needs appropriately addressed. Poverty and economic dependence, gender bias and discrimination and a number of other reasons have an adverse impact on the health of woman. The importance of bringing improvement in women’s health and nutritional status has been realized and recognized by the Government and several interventions were introduced, yet major development challenges still remain to be addressed.

The decline in the Child Sex Ratio (CSR) defined as number of girls per 1000 boys between 0-6 yrs of age, from 947 in 1991 to 927 in 2001 and further to 918 in 2011 is alarming. Realising the gravity of the situation the Government announced ‘*Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*’ initiative which has the objectives of —Prevention of gender biased sex selective elimination; Ensuring survival and protection of girl child; and Ensuring education and participation of the girl child.

Further in order to empower women any type of crime against women is to be rooted out, be it domestic violence, dowry death, rape or other forms of cruelty. So true empowerment means not only education and economic empowerment but also the fact that women are able to move in the world fearlessly. Further, unless women are a part of the decision-making process and are able to stand up to men in every walk of life, a country cannot be said to be fully developed and women cannot be fully empowered. □

THE DAUGHTER DISADVANTAGE

Francis Kuriakose and Deepa Kylasam Iyer

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 as shown in Table 1. A 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 socioeconomic 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. Patriarchal 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.

The Problem of the Missing Women

The problem of the 'missing women' has been analysed in the academic world in the recent decades. In an article published in the *British Medical Journal*

in 1992, Amartya Sen analysed the neglect of the girl child in Asia and Africa. Beyond female infanticide and sex selective abortion, he identified economic status and social standing as crucial variables that contributed to the women's survival and dignity. Nationwide reports of two female infanticide in 1986 and 1988 in Tamil Nadu in India captured the country's attention to the survival of the girl child. Backed by the feminist movement, Maharashtra brought out the first legislation banning misuse of PNDT for sex determination. A Union law followed in 1994 and has been amended twice.

Since the 2000s, there has been a focus beyond sex selective abortions to the continuing neglect in the life of the girl child. The need for a multi sectoral approach that includes information dissemination, behavior change communication



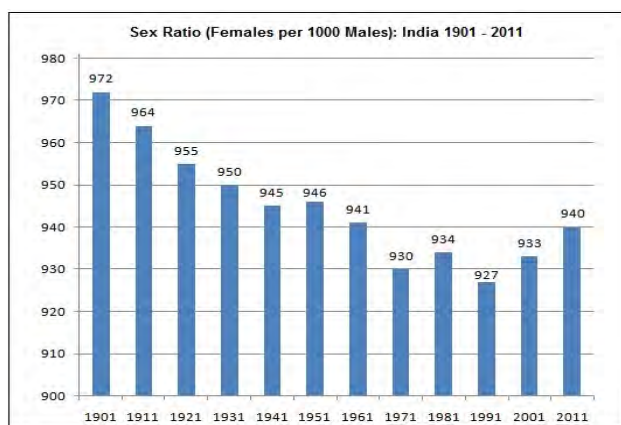
and community mobilization has been the core of the policy approach to save and nurture the girl child.

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 be 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, Swacchh 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 Panchayat level.

Table 1
Child Sex Ratio in India 1901-2011



Source: ENVIS Centre on Population and Environment

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 crores each once they submitted their multi sectoral 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 Panchayat 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.

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

implementation. 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.

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 Sectoral 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.

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.

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.

Conclusion

A convergence of policy environment between the Centre and the States as well as between various ministries is an appropriate strategy to tackle a deep rooted problem like the declining Child Sex Ratio. Concerted efforts at protecting the girl child at birth and continuing provision of services in nutrition and education should be strictly implemented. Making PRIs the focus of the programme is likely to yield better results because the service delivery and accountability is more effective at the decentralized level.

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BETI BACHAO, BETI PADHAO PROGRAMME: AN EAGLE'S EYE VIEW

Dr. Arpita Sharma

As Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru said, *“In order to awaken the people it is the women who have to awaken. Once she is on move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation also moves”*. The female crowds in rural area are deprived of minimum facilities of enlightenment and education. Women’s education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. There is a proverb saying *“Educate a man, you will educate but one, educate a women, you will educate a nation.”* It is to remember developmental trilogy Nutrition, Health and Education depend on Women to a large extent. Girls’ education has been a high priority for low income countries throughout the first decade of the 21st century. A wide range of interventions such as scholarships, stipends, conditional cash transfers, gender segregated toilets, recruitment and training of more female teachers have all made a positive contribution towards increasing the enrolment of girls into primary education. These interventions are helpful in empowering the girls. Women Empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional process which should enable women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. It consists of greater autonomy in decision making, greater ability to plan their lives, have greater control over the circumstances that influenced their lives and free them from shackles imposed on them by custom, belief and practice. Education can empower the female crowd in each and every fields of life.

Government initiatives for empowering girls through education:

Department of Education has initiated schemes to reduce the gender gap in the education of children, viz. :

[i] Early Child Care Education Centers: These Centers are set up to ensure better enrolment and retention of girls in the primary schools. Since the girl-child has the responsibility to look after the young siblings and is therefore deprived of school education, an ECCE centre attached to the school would ensure that girls would come to school. It is intended that if school-going girls have access to such centers, they would get enrolled in schools, and would be retained in schools. The scheme also envisages provision of good quality education to such girls. At the ECCE centers, the physical and psychological growth and development of all children in the 3-6 age group, is provided for. The education department at the district level has the responsibility for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Department of Social Welfare (through the Integrated Child Development Services Programme) has the responsibility for running the ECCE Centers.

[ii] National Programme on Education for Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL): Since education is a concurrent subject, this national programme



is also being implemented at the state level in some select districts and blocks since 2003. It is intended to increase the enrolment rates of girls belonging to SC/ST communities at the elementary stage. The scheme intends to focus attention on the educationally deprived sections and to encourage the enrolment, retention and quality education of the girls belonging to the SC/ST communities. It offers materials incentives such as stationery and introduces additional incentives like awards, remedial teaching and bridge courses as well as development of a model upper primary school in each cluster.

[iii] Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV):

The scheme draws its legitimacy from the thrust in national policy documents as well as international discourse that refers to bridging the 'gender gap.' Following this thrust, the scheme is being implemented in educationally backward blocks with a wider gender gap. The scheme is intended for girls belonging to the scheduled castes (SCs), scheduled tribes (STs), other backward classes (OBCs), religious minorities and below poverty line (BPL) households.

Women's education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside.

Funded by the Government of India, under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the basic idea behind the scheme is to give a second chance for mainstreaming rural girls belonging to deprived social backgrounds who could not study up to or beyond class V. The second opportunity consists of the facility to stay in a hostel while studying for the upper primary stage of elementary education namely classes VI to VIII. They are set up in areas where there are a minimum of 50 school going girls who are school drop-outs. As all the girls are primary school drop-outs, they are above 10 years of age and are mostly in their teens.

[iv] Innovative scheme for the adolescent girls:

In order to create and sustain the interest of girls in education, they are trained to produce items that can be used in their daily lives. They are also offered components of

empowerment strategies such as personal development, confidence building abilities, and life-skills oriented education.

[v] Mahila Samakhya (Education for Women's Equality)

was the first major scheme launched by the Central government that owed its genesis to the National Policy on Education (1986) recognizing the empowering potential of education and education as an agent of basic change in the status of women. The basic objectives of Mahila Samakhya are:

- [a] As a gender-based program, to create an ambience in the society for tolerance and mutual respect for women
- [b] To ensure that education becomes accessible to the socially and economically marginalized women and girls
- [c] To encourage and promote a gender-based discourse in society
- [d] To enhance the self-image and self-confidence of women and enable them to

critically analyze their role as individual women and as members of society so that they can begin to challenge that role collectively and initiate a process of social change

- [e] To collectively participate in decision making and seek equal rights and opportunities for a more egalitarian society
- [f] To enhance participation of women and girls in formal and non-formal education programs. Education Department of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, launched Mahila Samakhya as a major program for bringing about women's development as well as empowerment in 1989 on a pilot basis in 6 states of India, with funding from the Netherlands Government.

New and Innovative Programme *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*:

Child sex ratio, defined as number of girls per 1000 of boys between 0-6 years of age, has been on decline in India since 1961 – From 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001, and further to 919 in 2011. A 2012 UNICEF Report ranked India 41st among 195 countries. Haryana has the worst sex

ratio among all States in the country, standing at just 879 females per 1000 males. Keeping in mind this skewed figure, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme' on January 22, 2015 at Panipat in Haryana. Under the scheme, a multi-sectoral strategy governed by the core principles of respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of girls and women, including the ending of gender based violence will be adopted. The scheme started with Rs.100 crore initial corpus funds and is likely to move ahead with its well thought-out plan and direction. The welfare measures voiced are for protecting and planning the lives of the down trodden daughters of this country.

Objectives: The objectives of the scheme is [1] To prevent gender biased sex selective elimination by stern enforcement of all existing Legislations and Acts, 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. [2] To ensure access and availability of essential requirements related to nutrition, health, care, education and protection and elimination of discrimination of girl child which can lead to low self-esteem, lifelong deprivation and exclusion from the social mainstream. Appropriate initiatives will be taken to encourage girls to express their views and to be heard, to participate actively, effectively and equally at all levels of social, economic, and political leadership. The objectives will be achieved through convergence and coordination with concerned ministries, departments and district administration.

Dire Need for initiating *Beti Bachao and Beti Padhao* programme: The current Census (2011) data has revealed a declining trend in Child Sex Ratio (CSR) between 0-6 years with an all time low of 919. India has recorded considerable economic growth in the last decades. However, this could not be translated into improved gender indicators especially related to Sex Ratio and CSR. The issue of declining CSR is a major indicator

of women disempowerment as it begins before birth, manifests in gender biased sex selection and elimination and continues in various forms of discrimination towards girl child after birth in fulfilling her health, nutrition and educational needs. The practice of sex selective elimination of the female foetus due to easy availability and affordability of medical diagnostic tools has been a critical influencer of the skewed sex ratio. Further, there is little doubt that strong socio-cultural and religious biases, preferences for sons in almost all Indian communities has also shaped societal attitudes towards girls.

Gender Equality and Education: Gender respect should be taught at the school level more so from the home level by the parents. Also we need to address the associated problems in bringing up the girl child, her marriage expenses and discrimination in the society. If these are addressed properly there is no issue which will discriminate the girl from the boy in the society. We need not campaign door to door about the girl child and her safety. Let us all not forget that we live in a country where state of Kerala and its law extends the best of status to its girls. Also we should remember there are

India has recorded considerable economic growth in the last decades. However, this could not be translated into improved gender indicators especially related to Sex Ratio and CSR.

families, brothers and fathers who care exclusively for their girl children. They need to be rewarded, applauded and be taken as role models in the society. The girl child issue has to be attacked more smartly and encourage the future parents with a positive note. Among the list of immediate issues, few are very important, they are:

- [1] Education for women.
- [2] Health issues.
- [3] Campaigns on sensitization towards women and children.
- [4] Women safety cells.
- [5] Safety of women on public Transport system.
- [6] Cyber crime cells.
- [7] Crisis management centres.
- [8] Government and private hospitals for women.

- [9] Awards for best parents, Samaritans in the society .
- [10] Awards for daring girls standing up as role models in the society.

There is a need to connect with the communities first, right from the gram panchayat level to ensure gender equality. It should be noted that gender inequality in education is not always about low enrolment and completion rates of girls. In a small number of low income countries, girls enrolment and completion outstrips that of boys. This may happen where demand for boys' labour is higher. For example, poor rural families in Mongolia particularly those in highland areas often rely on boys to herd cattle, with the result that dropout rates are higher for boys than girls. For similar reasons, boys in Bangladesh are reportedly dropping out of school in much larger numbers than girls, a phenomenon that is reported as being the country's biggest gender challenge. Girls in Bangladesh now account for 60 per cent of enrolments in some schools, especially in rural areas. The above examples indicate that context specific gender policy interventions are required to address gender inequality in education. Gender equality policies should include not only enrolment targets but also equal access to quality education and chances for completion of education at each level of the education system.

New Innovative ideas for drastic change through *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* Programme:

- [1] **Information, Education and Knowledge [IEK]:** There is a need for coordinated and multi sectoral convergent action including Information, Education and Knowledge (IEK) should be incorporated in this programme. *"Information is like a deep well, fed by perennial spring and our mind is the little bucket that we drop in to it"*. We will get as much as we can assimilate. Thus, information, education and knowledge are power. We should impart IEK component on social, economic and psychological empowerment among the girls so that they build capacity in every field.
- [2] **Information Communication Technologies:** We can impart information, education and knowledge among the girls through new

and innovative ICTs. When Vivekananda was asked about the problems facing in India, he said there is one magic word for these. Give them education and they will solve their problem. For overall development of women's status it is essential to awaken them, educate them and empower them with latest information to all sections of society. Modern means of communications are very effective instruments of social change and even more so in recent times with the emergence of the social media and various other ICT tools like mobile phone based Applications etc., easily available to people. Effective use of media and communication offers numerous possibilities for reaching out to the billion plus population of our country. I have designed and developed puppet show, power point presentation, booklet and recorded message through mobile phone for imparting nutritional education among the women in my M.Sc. degree programme. Before and after implementing these ICTs I have administered knowledge test among the rural women to know their knowledge level. Findings showed that these ICTs have created drastic change among the rural women. Thus, we can impart Information, Education and knowledge among the rural women through these innovative ICTs. These ICTs create positive impact on teaching learning situation.

- [3] **Communication Campaign:** The core strategies of BBBP include evolving a sustained social mobilization and communication campaign to change societal norms, to create equal value for the girl child, positioning improvement in the CSR as a lead development indicator for good governance, Focusing on very low CSR or gender critical districts and cities for accelerated impact. As a part of the strategy, frontline worker teams as catalysts for social change, in partnership with local community, women's, youth groups (Ahimsa Messengers) will be mobilized and empowered along with developing capacity of Panchayati Raj Institutions and urban local bodies, especially women panchayat to create peer support for making panchayats and urban wards girl child friendly.

[4] **Community radio:** Participatory Communication is necessary for the empowerment of rural people. Community radio is local, Participatory and development medium for educating the girls. We can give the Non Formal Education among the girls through this innovative medium of communication. I have done efforts for empowering rural women through Community radio in my Doctorate degree programme. Firstly I have collected data on general information and needs of rural women. After that I have prioritized the needs of rural women. On the basis of these needs I have developed participatory community radio programme on social, economic and psychological issues of empowerment. Before and after implementation of these programme I have administered knowledge test among the rural women. Findings showed that these programme empowered the rural women socially, economically as well as psychologically.

[5] **Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) Campaigns:** Behaviour means knowledge, skill and attitude. It has great impact on our learning pattern. Thus, behaviour Change Communication (BCC) Campaigns and community mobilization initiatives towards improving CSR, promoting the value of the girl child and highlighting the importance of empowering girls with education. A campaign like the *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* can not only draw the attention of the masses to a grave concern like declining CSR but also lead to change of mindsets towards empowering daughters through education. The outcome of this Campaign is envisaged to ensure girls are born, loved and nurtured without discrimination, educated and raised to become empowered citizens of this country with equal rights.

[6] **Logo:** In order to devise a comprehensive strategy for a campaign like *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*, the first requirement is a logo for its branding that will ensure instant recognition across the nation. The best possible way of getting the logo designed is through a Logo Design Competition, inviting the creative minds to contribute. Wide publicity is being given to the competition through release of a pan India newspaper advertisement,

promotion through social media in a big way, websites of MoI&B, MWCD, MHRD, MHFW, PMO etc. so as to ensure that the information percolates to all encouraging people to participate in the competition.

Positive Impact of Girl's Education: UN and civil society research has consistently argued that investment in girls' education has significant benefits for girls, women, their families, wider communities and societies:

- [1] An extra year of primary school boosts girls' eventual wages by 10-20 per cent and an extra year of secondary school by 15-25 per cent.
- [2] When women and girls earn income, they reinvest 90 per cent into their families, as compared to only 30-40 per cent for a man.
- [3] Education gives girls the confidence to marry later, and gives women greater influence in household decisions. Educated women tend to have smaller families, their children are better nourished, more likely to survive and are far more likely to do well at school themselves.
- [4] Education also encourages active citizenship by giving girls and boys the knowledge to influence the direction of society and to engage in politics and democracy as adults.
- [5] These examples illustrate how education generates cumulative social benefits for people, particularly girls and women. However, there are disparities in access to, and the quality of education enjoyed by learners and in learning outcomes among populations and groups due to social, economic and cultural factors. Sixty nine million primary school-aged children still do not attend school. In the majority of low income countries girls have less access to education than boys at all levels of education. 759 million adults lacking literacy skills today, two-thirds are women, a statistic that reflects the depth of gender disparity in access to education. *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* Programme is one step towards empowering girls through education.

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GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Dr. Sheetal Sharma

Gender equal society and empowerment of women are crucial to sustainable development and prosperous society. No society can progress or develop successfully unless it provides equal opportunities to its members. Gender based inequality has been there almost in all the societies throughout the history. World over women are treated asymmetrically as compared to men. The quest for equality may not be new but the concerted efforts to achieve gender equality are certainly a feature of modern societies. Achieving gender equality and empowerment of women are essential for ensuring fundamental human rights. According to USAID (2012) gender equality “concerns women and men, and it involves working with men and boys, women and girls to bring about changes in attitudes, behaviours, roles and responsibilities at home, in the work place and in the community. Genuine equality means more than parity in numbers or laws on the books; it means expanding freedoms and improving overall quality of life so that equality is achieved without sacrificing gains for males or females”.

Gender Equality in India

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble,

Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women’s advancement in different spheres. From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards, there has been a marked shift in the approach to women’s issues from welfare to development. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels.

The UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality report mentions that in order to be empowered women should have equal capabilities, education and health status, equal access to resources and opportunities, for instance



property rights, ownership of land and employment opportunities. The report lists strategic priorities and suggests practical measures for achieving the Millennium Development Goal of gender equality and empowerment of women by 2015. The measures suggested in the report include: strengthening opportunities for post-primary education for girls; investing in improving infrastructure to reduce women's burdens; availability of loans and financial assistance for income generation; guaranteeing property and inheritance rights to women; increasing women's representation in national and local governmental bodies; providing basic health care to women; provision of combating violence against women and girls. Seeing the enormity of the issue and challenges for empowerment of women in India the government has identified a large number of specific actions to empower women.

The National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001 in India had the goal to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. The Policy is widely disseminated in order to encourage active participation of all stakeholders for achieving its goals. Specifically, the objectives of the National Policy for Empowerment of Women include:

- (i) Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential
- (ii) The *de-jure* and *de-facto* enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all spheres – political, economic, social, cultural and civil
- (iii) Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation
- (iv) Equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office etc.
- (v) Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women
- (vi) Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women.

- (vii) Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process.
- (viii) Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; and
- (ix) Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations.

Similarly, The National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) was launched by the Government of India (GoI) on International Women's Day in 2010 with the aim to strengthen overall processes that promote all-round Development of women. The mission had the mandate to strengthen the inter-sector convergence; facilitate the process of coordinating all the women's welfare and socio-economic development programmes across ministries and departments. In light with its mandate, the Mission has been named Mission Purna Shakti, implying a vision for holistic empowerment of Women. As expressed in the statement of the mission which is "To strengthen the processes which promote holistic development and empowerment of women, gender equality and gender justice through inter-sectoral convergence of programmes that impact women, forge synergy among various stakeholders and create an enabling environment conducive to social change", the mission aims to provide a single window service for all programmes run by the Government for Women under aegis of various Central Ministries.

The key strategies adopted by the National Mission for Empowerment of Women, 2010 are:

- Inter-sectoral convergence of schemes for women; monitoring and review of progress
- Strengthening institutional framework for greater efficiency in support to women
- Focused research, review of schemes, programmes and legislations, and gender audits for evidence based policy making
- Investment in skill and entrepreneurship development, micro-credit, vocational training and SHG development for economic empowerment of women
- Support to Panchayati Raj institutions; women's movements and community representatives for strengthening of local bodies 360 degree

approach on media and communication for behaviour change and social mobilization for gender equality

Following at the major domain areas of the National Mission for Empowerment of Women:

- Poverty Alleviation and Economic Empowerment of Women
- Social Empowerment And Education
- Health & Nutrition
- Gender Rights, Gender Based Violence and Law Enforcement
- Gender Budgeting, Gender Mainstreaming & Gender Audit
- Empowerment of Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups and Women in Difficult Circumstances

The focus areas of the mission are:

- Violence Against Women
- Declining Child Sex Ratio
- Prevention of Child Marriage
- Trafficking
- Health & Sanitation
- Drinking Water
- Gender Budgeting
- Right to Education
- Elected Women Representatives
- I.E.C Activities
- Drudgery Reduction
- Innovative Financial Inclusion
- Engendering Livelihood Programmes/Training Programmes

Apart from these there are a large number of important schemes run by government of India that have impacted lives of women and have contributed to their empowerment. Some of these schemes are:

- 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)

- National Literacy Mission (NLM)
- Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA)
- Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)
- The Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojna
- Total Sanitation Campaign
- Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme
- Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme
- Support for training and Empowerment Programme for Women (STEP)
- SWADHAR
- Janani Suraksha yojana
- Panchayat Mahila Evam Yuva Shakti Abhiyan
- Schemes for Leadership Development for Minority Women
- Science and Technology for Women
- Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana of NSTFDC

These initiatives have resulted in recognizing and reinforcing the significance of issue of gender equality and empowerment of women for sustainable development in social and economic spheres. But still there exists a wide gap between the goals enunciated in the Constitution, legislation, policies, plans, programmes, and related mechanisms and the reality of the status of women in India.

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP)

The Government of India introduced a new scheme called Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, (BBBP) which will help in generating awareness and improving the efficiency of delivery of welfare services meant for women with an initial corpus of Rs 100 crore. The Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme is for survival, protection & education of the girl child. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' programme, nationwide on January 22, 2015 from Panipat in Haryana, to address the declining child sex ratio and empower girl child in the country. The prime objective of this programme is to bring a change in people mindset towards girl child on or after her birth. Preventing determination of sex, female foeticide, 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 sexselection 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 term used to indicate the number of females per 1000 of 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, whereas the overall sex ratio showed an improvement 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.

Wide spread discrimination against girl children, adolescent girls and women continues to exist in almost all the parts of our country. The decline in the CSR is a major indicator of disempowerment of women and their subordinate status in the society. The skewed child sex ratio reflects degree of discrimination against girl child even before the birth when with the help of gender biased sex selection test the parents get the abortions done. Similarly there is discrimination of girl child in every walk of life even after birth. Social, cultural and religious practices discriminating against girls on the one hand, easy availability, affordability and subsequent misuse of diagnostic tools on the other hand, have been critical in increasing Sex Selective Elimination of girls. This has led to low Child Sex Ratio in the country. Social stereotyping and violence at the domestic and societal levels are some of the other forms in which gender inequality, male domination and patriarchy are manifest.

Yet another important indicator of empowerment of women is education. Level of literacy and educational attainment are important indicators of development of any given society. Rate of literacy and educational development are considered to be key variables that influence a large number of other social and economic factors that determine growth, such as rate of fertility, growth of population, rate of migration etc. Needless to reiterate that nothing is more important for sustainable development than the social, economic, and political empowerment of women. Education is the only sustainable route for achieving empowerment. A large number of studies have proved that women’s education leads to rise in their ability and capacity to control their lives and

surroundings. Education also leads to greater control over their lives and choices. The educational level of an individual contributes in improving quality of life and among women particularly it influences, health of infants, rate of infant mortality, nutritional level of children, quality of life of family in general and women in particular, life expectancy, and general wellbeing of the family. As said by Mahatma Gandhi, 'educate one man, you educate one person, but educate a woman and you educate a whole civilization'. High level of literacy and educational achievement, leads to greater development, awareness, and empowerment of women and girls. But, despite the established value of education, the scenario regarding educational attainment of women and girls in India is quite disappointing.

The statistics indicate the general tendency of discrimination against girl child in society. As girls grow there are various pressures upon them which may lead to their exit from the education system. Some of the main factors are lack of resources, preference for education of boys in the family if resources are limited, helping in household work, taking care of other members in the family and younger siblings, distance of school from home, taking up menial paid employment to support family income, teacher's unfair behavior, illness, lack of interest in studies, early marriage etc. Spending on the education of girls in rural areas particularly is seen as a waste of money and resources as there are no perceivable gains from her education. Thus all these factors and other reasons lead to decline in the percentage of girls and later women getting decent levels of education.

Both the CSR and rate of literacy among girls as compared to boys indicate an urgent need to address the issue of gender based discrimination against women and girls. Rather than addressing the issue at a mature and unrepairable stage the BBBP attempts to address the issue right from the stage of birth of the girl child. The Union Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley announced in his maiden Budget Speech in 2014 that "Government would focus on campaigns to sensitize people of this country towards the concerns of the girl child and women". He said that the process of sensitization must begin early and therefore the school curriculum must have a separate chapter on gender mainstreaming. Presenting

the union budget 2014-15 in the parliament, Finance Minister said that it is a "shame that while the country has emerged as a major player amongst the emerging market economies, the apathy towards girl child is still quite rampant in many parts of the country". The scheme, he said, will help in generating awareness and improve the efficiency of delivery of welfare services meant for women. At a time when the country is confronted with women safety issues, government proposed Rs. 150 crore to be spent by Ministry of Home Affairs on a scheme to increase the safety of women in large cities. Similarly, sharing the concerns of the members on Women's safety, the Finance Minister informed the House that Ministry of Road Transport and Highways will spend Rs. 50 crore on pilot testing a scheme for Safety of Women on Public Road Transport. The Finance Minister also proposed to set up Crisis Management Centres in all the districts of NCT of Delhi this year in all government and private hospitals. The funding will be provided from the Nirbhaya Fund, the Minister added.

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. The Scheme will have focussed intervention & multi-sectoral action in 100 districts with low Child Sex Ratio. The criteria/norms for selection/identification of 100 districts under the Beti Bachao Beti Padoo programme are as under:-

- i) 87 Districts have been selected from 23 States/UTs having Child Sex Ratio below the National average of 918.
- ii) 8 Districts have been selected from 8 States/UTs having Child Sex Ratio above National average of 918 but showing declining trend
- iii) 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.

On the occasion of International Day of the Girl Child, PM Narendra Modi described female foeticide 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. The PM also invited people to share their ideas on 'Beti

Bachao, Beti Padhao', programme on the Govt of India website. That PM said that "On International Day of the Girl Child we celebrate the achievements of our daughters. 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." Describing female foeticide as "a matter of deep shame and a cause of great concern", the PM said, "Let's work together to remove this menace from society."

Conclusion

The process (es) and product(s) of empowerment of women vary across time and space and is contingent upon the prevailing social, cultural, political and economic environment of any given society. For instance, during the colonial times, religious practices, caste system and patriarchy kept women in subordinate positions. The freedom and movement of women was restricted. Gender roles and responsibilities were largely determined by traditional and cultural ideologies. But after independence the situation of women started to change. Although one cannot claim an overwhelming change but things started to show signs of positive development. After independence India adopted different paths and strategies for national, social, economic and political development. The overall situation of women did improve but once again it could not be labeled as remarkable. Thus there are instance of empowerment and development of gender equality indicators but they remain concentrated in few pockets and among few sections of society only. In such a scenario, individual instances and experiences can best explain and be consolidated to develop a context-specific meaning of empowerment. Thus a meaningful notion of empowerment emerges inductively. In other words, the sum total of individual experiences can be used to formulate notion of empowerment embedded in given social and cultural context.

To conclude, the success of programs and policies for gender equality and empowerment of women such as BBBP is contingent upon a large number of actors and factors. It involves commitment on part of actors at all the levels, from the leaders, bureaucrats, communities, families, to the individuals concerned. Promoting gender equality and empowerment

of women needs to be incorporated as one of the important agenda in political dialogue and policy discussions. The effectiveness of programs is also dependent upon the process of implementation which involves accountability and monitoring as well. Along with these operational factors comprehending the socio-cultural reality of a particular region is must for ensuring success of gender equality programs aiming at empowerment of women. Women's conception of empowerment, nature and degree of freedom enjoyed, ability to make decisions, participation in everyday life, and related aspects life are defined by the traditional moorings. These norms are historically determined and culturally binding. At times breaking away from these norms in the name of empowerment creates new problems for women rather than serving any benefit. Empowerment of women more often than not is perceived as a threat/challenge to customs and culture of a given society. Any attempt to overthrow the custom can generate friction and antagonism among contenders. And more often than not the hierarchy and asymmetry of patriarchy remains unchallenged. As a result most of the efforts are thwarted as they confront enormous challenges and obstacles in the process of execution. Real empowerment of women can happen only if traditions are challenged and restructured according to changing times. In the contemporary global milieu there is a need to redefine the status and role of women. The process of empowerment of women can help in establishing an alternative setting. Imagining alternatives do not necessarily imply hostility towards the present and/or the predecessor. Rather the tradition should act as a guide and/or a framework out of which new practices can flourish. The approaches to empowerment of women and the success of programs and policies such as BBBP in question here rely upon the socio-cultural and institutional configuration of different communities in our society. A large number of dimensions such as prevalent norms, traditions, language, religion, meanings, identities and cultural practices are crucial in determining content and intent of programs and policies for empowerment of women.

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EDUCATION FOR EMPOWERMENT

Dr. K. Baby

Gender disparity manifests itself in various forms, the most obvious being the trend of continuously declining female ratio in the population in the last few decades. Social stereotyping and violence at the domestic and societal levels are some of the other manifestations. Discrimination against girl children, adolescent girls and women persists in parts of the country. The underlying causes of gender inequality are related to social and economic structure, which is based on informal and formal norms, and practices. Consequently, the access of women particularly those belonging to weaker sections including Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/Other backward Classes and minorities, majority of them are in the rural areas and in the informal, unorganized sector – to education, health and productive resources, among others, is inadequate. Therefore, they remain largely marginalized, poor and socially excluded. Empowerment is the process of obtaining basic opportunities for marginalized people, either directly by those people, or through the help of non-marginalized others who share their own access to these opportunities. It also includes actively thwarting attempts to deny

those opportunities. Empowerment also includes encouraging, and developing the skills for, self-sufficiency, with a focus on eliminating the future need for charity or welfare in the individuals of the group. This process can be difficult to start and to implement effectively. Women Empowerment is a process and includes the following components:

- Equal access to opportunities for using society's resources.
- Prohibition of gender discrimination in thought and practice.
- Freedom from violence.
- Economic independence.
- Participation in all decision-making bodies.
- Freedom of choice in matters relating to one's life.

Objectives

The objectives of empowerment Policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women through

- Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full



development of women to enable them to realize their full potential

- The de-jure and de-facto enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all spheres – political, economic, social, cultural and civil
- Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation
- Equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office etc.
- Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women
- Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child
- Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations.

Economic Empowerment

- **Eradication of Poverty**

Since women comprise the majority of the population below the poverty line and are very often in situations of extreme poverty, given the harsh realities of intra-household and social discrimination, macroeconomic policies and poverty eradication programmes will specifically address the needs and problems of such women. There will be improved implementation of programmes which are already women oriented with special targets for women. Steps will be taken for mobilization of poor women and convergence of services, by offering them a range of economic and social options, along with necessary support measures to enhance their capabilities

- **Micro Credit Mechanism**

In order to enhance women's access to credit for consumption and production, the establishment of new and strengthening of existing micro-credit mechanisms and micro-finance institution will be undertaken so that the outreach of credit is enhanced. Other supportive measures would be

taken to ensure adequate flow of credit through extant financial institutions and banks, so that all women below poverty line have easy access to credit.

Women Empowerment Methods

Women's perspectives will be included in designing and implementing macro-economic and social policies by institutionalizing their participation in such processes. Their contribution to socio-economic development as producers and workers will be recognized in the formal and informal sectors and appropriate policies relating to employment and to her working conditions will be drawn up through

Globalization

Globalization has presented new challenges for the realization of the goal of women's equality, the gender impact of which has not been systematically evaluated fully. However, from the micro-level studies that were commissioned by the Department of Women & Child Development, it is evident that there is a need for re-framing policies for access to employment and quality of employment. Benefits of the growing global economy have been unevenly distributed leading to wider economic disparities, the feminization of poverty, increased gender inequality through often deteriorating working conditions and unsafe working environment especially in the informal economy and rural areas.

Agricultural Development

In view of the critical role of women in the agriculture and allied sectors, as producers, concentrated efforts will be made to ensure that benefits of training, extension and various programmes will reach them in proportion to their numbers. The programmes for training women in soil conservation, social forestry, dairy development and other occupations allied to agriculture like horticulture, livestock including small animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries etc. will be expanded to benefit women workers in the agriculture sector.

- **Industrial Development**

The important role played by women in electronics, information technology and food

processing and agro industry and textiles has been crucial to the development of these sectors. They would be given comprehensive support in terms of labour legislation, social security and other support services to participate in various industrial sectors. Women at present cannot work in night shift in factories even if they wish to. Suitable measures will be taken to enable women to work on the night shift in factories. This will be accompanied with support services for security, transportation etc.

Social Empowerment Tools

- **Education**

Equal access to education for women and girls will be ensured. Special measures will be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy, create a gender-sensitive educational system, increase enrolment and retention rates of girls and improve the quality of education to facilitate life-long learning as well as development of occupation/vocation/technical skills by women. Reducing the gender gap in secondary and higher education would be a focus area. Sectoral time targets in existing policies will be achieved, with a special focus on girls and women, particularly those belonging to weaker sections.

- **Health**

A holistic approach to women's health which includes both nutrition and health services will be adopted and special attention will be given to the needs of women and the girl at all stages of the life cycle. The reduction of infant mortality and maternal mortality, which are sensitive indicators of human development, is a priority concern. Women should have access to comprehensive, affordable and quality health care.

- **Nutrition**

In view of the high risk of malnutrition and disease that women face at all the three critical stages viz., infancy and childhood, adolescent and reproductive phase, focused attention would be paid to meeting the nutritional needs of women at all stages of the life cycle. This is also important in view of the critical link between the health of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women with the health of infant and young children.

Special efforts will be made to tackle the problem of macro and micro nutrient deficiencies especially amongst pregnant and lactating women as it leads to various diseases and disabilities.

- **Internet**

The growing access of the web has allowed women to empower themselves by using various tools on the Internet. With the introduction of the World Wide Web, women have begun to use social networking sites like Face book and Twitter to start online activism. Through online activism, women are able to empower themselves by organizing campaigns and voicing their opinions for equality rights without feeling oppressed by members of society. In recent years, blogging has also become a powerful tool for the educational empowerment of women. With the easy accessibility and affordability of e-learning (electronic learning), women can now study from the comfort of their home anywhere, anytime. By empowering themselves educationally through new technologies like e-learning, women are also learning new skills that will come in handy in today's advancing globalized world.

- **Mass Media**

Media will be used to portray images consistent with human dignity of girls and women. The Policy will specifically strive to remove demeaning, degrading and negative conventional stereotypical images of women and violence against women. Private sector partners and media networks will be involved at all levels to ensure equal access for women particularly in the area of information and communication technologies. The media would be encouraged to develop codes of conduct, professional guidelines and other self regulatory mechanisms to remove gender stereotypes and promote balanced portrayals of women and men.

- **Legal Mechanism**

Legal empowerment happens when marginalised people or groups use the legal mobilisation i.e., law, legal systems and justice mechanisms to improve or transform their social, political or economic situations. Legal empowerment approaches are interested in understanding how they can use the law to advance interests and priorities of the marginalised.

- **Rights of the Girl Child**

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.

Barriers to the Empowerment

Many of the barriers to women's empowerment and equity lie ingrained in cultural norms. Gender-related barriers involve sexual harassment; unfair hiring practices, career progression, and unequal pay where women are paid less than men are for performing the same job. Such barriers make it difficult for women to advance in their workplace or receive fair compensation.

Education and Women Empowerment

In any society education has two basic functions to perform. While one relates to preserving and transferring the values of that society, the other relates to creating new values or changing existing ones to keep in tune with times. Both these functions have a special bearing on efforts to empower women. On the face of it, the two functions look as if they are diametrically opposed to one another, but in reality they should be complimentary to each other and a balance between the two should be brought about in a manner that fosters human progress. Since education is the most powerful instrument for value preservation as well as value transformation, it can play the most effective role in empowering women. The need of the hour is a strong system of value based education that upholds principles such as equity, ethics and empowerment. As of now, there is neither adequate 'quantitative' nor 'qualitative' representation to women in education. Women

not only need to occupy more spaces in education but also more meaningful spaces. If we are really committed to creating an environment that is conducive to women's empowerment.

Education is a potent tool in the emancipation and empowerment of women. It is indispensable that education enables women not only to gain more knowledge about the world outside of her hearth and home but helps her to get status, positive self esteem, and self confidence, necessary courage and inner strength to face challenges in life. Apparently it also facilitates them to procure a job and supplement the income of family and achieve social status. Education especially of women has a major impact on health and nutrition as an instrument of developing a sustainable strategy for population control. Moreover educated women can play an equally important role as men in nation building. Thus there is no denying fact that education empowers women.

Educated Girl- Educated Future

Women education in India plays a key role in the social and economic development of the country. Educating a woman uplifts her life as well as the quality of her life and her entire family. It is a fact that any educated woman will definitely support the education of her children especially a girl child and provide a better guidance to her children. An educated woman will easily imbibe an independent and progressive outlook in her children. More importantly, an educated woman in a society like India will assist in reducing the infant mortality rate and control the blossoming of the population. But it is a fact that since 1901 onwards and to date there had been a wide gap between male and female literacy in India due to the following reasons.

Low Literacy Rate

Women education is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. No single factor or cause can be held responsible for very low literacy rate of women in India. Subsequently it is associated with combination of many factors including social, cultural, economic, educational, demographic, political and administrative and so on. The following are the some of the important factors

The Literacy Rate in India 1901-2011

Census Year	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
1901	5.35	9.83	0.60
1911	5.92	10.56	1.05
1921	7.16	12.21	1.81
1931	9.50	15.59	2.93
1941	16.10	24.90	7.30
1951	16.67	24.95	9.45
1961	24.02	34.44	12.95
1971	29.45	39.45	18.69
1981	36.23	46.89	24.82
1991	42.84	52.74	32.17
2001	64.83	75.26	53.67
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

Source: Census of India, (2011)

which could be attributed for the present poor state of affairs of womenfolk in education.

- **The Lower Enrolment:** The lower enrolment of girls in schools is one of the foundational factors which stand as stumbling block for women empowerment in India.
- **Higher drop-out rate:** The incidence and prevalence of drop –outs among girls especially in rural, tribal and slums areas seem to be quite high.
- **Girl Child as Second Mother:** In many families girl children play the role of second mother by shouldering the responsibilities of household work such as looking after the sibling, fetching water, collecting firewood, bringing fodder for cattle, cleaning and cooking etc.
- **Cast System;** Children belonging to low caste families are forced to learn skills and work ways and not encouraged to go to school due to various factors in the sphere of strict instruction /threat from high caste communities for their selfish motives of keeping them as domestic servants and child labourers in the farms or factory.
- **Dowry system:** Dowry system and other social practices act as main causes of the neglect of the girl child and discrimination against girl child including the deprivation of right of education.
- **Child Labour Practice:** A large segment of child population in India is engaged in child labour practices. According to UN sources India is the most child labour populous nation in the globe with more than 50 million child labourers indulged in beedi works , carpet making , bricks, mining , quarrying ,glass, bangles, match and fireworks, gem polishing, handloom works. Saree, embroidery, coir industry, domestic works, construction etc. In most of these industries girl children are preferred for high productivity and low cost.
- **Poor School Environment for girls:** In general the school environment for girls in India is not really interesting and encouraging. There are still many schools with poor basic amenities such as drinking water, latrine and toilet facilities, improper building, and inadequate number of teachers' especially female teachers preferable for any parents for safety of their girl children from different types of exploitation and abuse.
- **Early Marriage:** There is high association of female literacy with female age at marriage. By and large the female age at marriage of 18 as prescribed by various legislations not at all followed in India .It is very much ignored and neglected by the families of parents with low literacy and illiteracy background.
- **Inferiority, subservience and domesticity:** The female child in Indian culture especially in rural, tribal and poor families is expected to develop the qualities of inferiority; subservience and domesticity which place severe limitations on her education and development
- **Poverty:** In many poverty stricken families, children especially girls are considered as economic assets as they bring income for livelihood as well to save from economic crises due to death or incapacity of parents like sick, handicapped and aged.
- **Ineffective Law Enforcing Machinery:** Indian constitution and various legislations pertaining to education to children assure free and compulsory education all children of this nation but unfortunately the enforcement machinery fail to discharge its duties and responsibilities to the satisfaction of the public interest and welfare of women.

Literacy Details in India 2011

Population	1,210,569,573 (2011 census)
Poverty (population living on less than US\$1.25 per day)	42%
Total expenditure on education as % of GNP	4.1
Primary school net enrolment / attendance ratio	95%
Primary school completion rate	90%
Total youth literacy rate (15 – 24 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female: 65% • Male: 81% • Total: 73%
Adult literacy rate (15 years and over)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female: 51% • Male: 75% • Total: 63%

Source: Census Report 2011

Conclusion

Women empowerment generally comprises of women's sense of self worth; their right to have

the power of control their own lives, both within and outside home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a just social and economic order nationally, internationally and universally. Educational attainment and economic participation are the key constituents in ensuring the empowerment of women. Educational attainment is essential for empowering women in all spheres of society, for without education of comparable quality and content given to boys and men, updated with existing knowledge and relevant to current needs, women will be able to have access to well-paid formal sector jobs and advance with men. The economic empowerment of women is a vital element of strong economic growth in any country. Empowering women enhances their ability to influence changes and to create a better society.

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MGNREGS AND ECONOMIC STATUS OF RURAL WOMEN- A FIELD STUDY

Samapti Saha

In the post liberalisation phase, the major problem confronted by India is the lack of an efficient mechanism, which enables all the sections in the society to get the benefits of economic growth and development. Like many other developing countries, India devotes much attention to alleviate poverty.

In India, 70 per cent of the population live in rural area and among them major percentage is dependent on agriculture related work. Most of them are agricultural wage earners, small and marginal farmers. Poor educational base, low productivity, low wages and unavailability of skill development facilities are the causes of poverty in the rural area. Hence, since 1970s Govt. of India, for poverty alleviation, has adopted different types of economic strategies and social securities and protection programmes like self-employment, wage employment, housing programmes and pension schemes.

Wage employment programmes are very important component of anti-poverty strategy. Through these programmes lots of poor unemployed people can engage themselves in the unskilled works. These wage employment programmes started from

the 6th and 7th five year plan but with the passage of time, the programmes were modified and came in different ways like Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) in 1989, Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) in 1993, Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) in 1999, and in 2001 a new form of these programmes was Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana (SGRY). But all the programmes in rural areas became inactive after introduction of the MGNREGA on 7th Sep. 2005. It provides right of employment to the rural people.

The objective of the Act is to provide to every rural household a guarantee of at least 100 days of employment during a financial year by providing unskilled manual work in rural areas to those members of rural household who volunteer to do such work.

In this Act woman workers receive the special attention. This is a scheme which provides wage earning right for all adult members (male and female) of the family who has job card. This Act mandates that at least one-third of the workers should be women. This Act provides for equal wages for men and women (in contrast with the private sector



where women often earn less). Besides this, child care facilities at the worksite are mandatory when more than five children under six years of the age are present. This is an important provision, given that in large parts of the country, there are no child care arrangements for working women. Women (single women) get the preference to work within 5km of their residence.

By getting equal wages women feel gender equality and get status in the family as well as in the society. This economic empowerment gives them confidence and power to take decision for any kind of challenge.

To examine the effects of MGNREGS on lives of women, researcher did the field survey on two types of G.P.s (one is nearer to district town Cooch Behar and other one is far from it). These two kinds of G.P.s are Madhupur and Takagach Rajarhut in Cooch Behar-II block in Cooch Behar district of West Bengal. From each G.P. 65 job card holders were selected randomly. Thus, total number of households surveyed was $(65 \times 2) = 130$.

Cooch Behar is a rural district town in W.B. where about 50.11 per cent people belong to SC community. This district is economically under developed and the economy of this district mainly depends on agriculture. Geographically, it is located in North-Eastern part of state and it's bound by the district of Jalpaiguri in the North, State of Assam in the East and the international boarder in the form of Indo-Bangladesh boundary in the South as well as West. Most of the Bangladesh-enclaves are situated here. The district carries multiple characters. As per 2011 census, 89.73 per cent of population in this district lives in rural areas and 10.27 per cent population lives in urban areas. So it is clear that overall development of Cooch Behar district depends on its rural areas' development. Gandhiji also said in his own words "if the village perishes India will perish too."

From this survey it has been seen that the job card holders mainly belong to vulnerable groups of society i.e. their main source of income is daily labour, agricultural labour, fishing, rickshaw and van puller, money from family members who migrate to other states or neighbouring country for daily labour work, building construction and small business.

From this occupational status, it is clear that they are in dire need to earn money where MGNREGS plays an important role in their lives. Women members of these households are equally ready to do work under MGNREGS.

In West Bengal, MGNREGA became operational from Feb.2006. In this state, MGNREGS had been introduced in three phases. In the first phase (2006), the scheme was introduced in ten districts, in the 2nd phase (2007), seven more districts including Cooch Behar district were brought under its coverage. In the 3rd phase (2008), remaining district Howrah was added.

For Cooch Behar district the scheme has been operational since the year 2007. So it is obvious that after placing demand, the job card holder's family will get the job under this scheme or otherwise instead of job, they will get unemployment allowance.

In the FY 2007-08 the highest no. of person days work was 15 which was taken only by one job card holder family and 8 JCH (job card holder) families got only 6 person days work. A total 17 families out of 130 families (in this field survey) i.e. 13.08 per cent families got a chance to do work under MGNREGS.

It can be said that the following consecutive FY the no. of person days work had increased and at the same time the no. of families' participation also increased to do the work under MGNREGS i.e. maximum person days was 20 and JCH's families participation was 24.62% in the FY 2008-09, maximum person days was 34 (but only one family got this chance) and JCH's families participation was 26.92% in the FY 2009-10, maximum person days was 34 and JCH's families participation was 28.46% in the FY 2010-11, maximum person days was 20 (no. of person days decreased from previous year because of change in Govt. after 34 years) and JCH's families participation was 29.23% in the FY 2011-12, maximum person days was 30 and JCH's families participation was 61.54% in the FY 2012-13. It can be said that after change of the Govt. in West Bengal, the implementation of MGNREGS is improving. But it is very negligible amount that within 100 days work JCH families only got 6days, 7days and 14days (considering these days because maximum families got those numbers of employment days) and above 15days only single family got this chance. If the one-third criteria of women participation is maintained in MGNREGS, then there might be more possibility for

Table: 1
Per JCH family's total number of employment generated days among 100 days from FY 2007-08 to 2012-13

No. of Person Days/Years	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Below 6days	1	6	4	5	4	5
6 days	8	3		3	8	14
7 days	3	4	11	6	12	20
8 days					1	6
9days				2		
10 days	1	3	3		5	5
12 days	1	2	3	5	3	5
14 days	2	5	2	3	3	14
15 days	1		2		1	6
16 days		1		1		1
17 days		3		1		
19 days		2	2			
20 days		3	1		1	
21 days			2			
24 days			2	6		1
25 days				3		1
28 days			1			1
30 days			1	1		1
34 days			1	1		
Total	17	32	35	37	38	80

Source: field survey

more families to enjoy the work under this scheme.

In fact the secondary data i.e. www.nregs.nic.in also shows that in W.B. as well as in Cooch Behar district share of employment for women under the scheme (MGNREGS) is very low. The following table shows the share of women in employment generation in West Bengal and Cooch Behar district:

Table: 2

Financial Years	Cooch Behar	West Bengal
2007-08	40.27	26.32
2008-09	20.75	26.56
2009-10	24.13	28.90
2010-11	22.08	31.63
2011-12	23.94	32.50
2012-13	24.53	33.68

The above table shows that one-third share of employment of women in MGNREGS work has not been maintained in W.B. till 2011-12 FY and in Cooch Behar, the same was not followed still 2012-13. In

the field survey conducted by the researcher, women folk brought out that there is a no provision of child care facility in their place of work.

From the table-1 it can be seen that no household gets 100 days work. Besides, they did not get job regularly. Very few families get work on regular basis and the job card holders don't even get the unemployment allowance after 15days of placing the demand for work as provided in the scheme. Rural population is not aware about the provision of unemployment allowance.

From the field survey it clearly emerges that there is a huge opportunity of economic independence of rural poor women in this Act but at ground level it does not have desired effect. Thus there is a considerable gap between ground level reality and written Act.

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PANCHAYATI RAJ AND WOMEN

Dr. MahiPal

The basic reason for women's development not picking up as desired has been non-involvement and participation of women in decision-making, implementation of decisions, their monitoring and evaluation. The result of such a state of affairs is the outcome of the census 2011 which showed a significant declining trend in the Child Sex Ratio(CSR) at an all time low of 918. The sharp decline pointed out by census called for immediate action to save the girl child. For this purpose, the government announced Beti Bachao, Beti Padho (BBBP) scheme to address the issue of declined in CSR through involvement of Panchayats and a mass campaign across the country and focussed intervention and multi-sectoral action in 100 gender critical districts. But this sort of approach of mobilizing people was also stressed upon by the Eight Plan when it says that "... the strategy for women's development will be on the formation and strengthening of grassroots levels women's groups which will articulate local women's needs and play an important role in decentralized planning and implementation." But fundamental issue is that: are women involved in the decision making at local level.

At least at local level, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 has made two important provisions for the involvement of women in decision making and preparation of plan for development. Let us elaborate it. This amendment has made a provision that at least one -third of women would be members and chairpersons of the Panchyats at three levels means at Gram Panchayat level, Panchayat Samiti level and Zila Panchayat level. These women also include from scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities. Secondly, Panchayats are also expected to prepare plans for economic development including the 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh Scheduled of the constitution. The rural plan prepared by Zilla Parishads would be forwarded to District Planning Committee for preparing a consolidated plan for the rural and urban areas of the district.

Now, this was the mandate given by the constitution for development of entire rural areas including women. Women would only be empowered if various developmental works which are undertaken are benefiting women. By now two decades have been elapsed when the 73rd amendment act was put into practice. But evaluation of the functioning



of the Panchayats revealed that not much progress has been made in the effective functioning of the Panchayats with some aberrations like Kerala. Now issue is : how well women's development plans would be formulated and implemented under Panchayati Raj Institutions in the country so that the issue not only declining CSR is arrested but overall women development take place in the country side. This paper deals with this question.

The single most important reason why decentralized planning has not benefitted women as nothing specific was mentioned about women though they have different set of problems and would require different prescriptions. At present, decentralized plan is not uniform in all the states. The state plan has two sectors: one is district sector and the other state sector. The schemes which could be prepared and planned at the district level and transferred to district sector. In some states a fund, called untied fund is also devolved from states to districts on the basis of formula. This fund is kept at the disposal of the district to use in the manner it likes. Most of the rural development programmes in states are implemented through District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs).

Decentralized Planning for the Development of Women

The real situation is that the decentralized planning which is also expected to incorporate the provisions for the development of women has not been prepared and implemented. It resulted into non- optimization of scarce resources in terms of people, money and material. The methodology of women's development in a decentralized approach is based on the concept of integrated area planning. It implies evolving a development scenario at the desired level keeping in view the needs of the people, growth potential, with available financial resources.

The objective of decentralized plan of women's development plan would be: to raise income level; to reduce poverty; to reduce social and political disabilities and finally to improve the quality of life. Three important aspects of women's development plan may be mentioned before outlining its components at local level.

1. First, integration of various women's development programmes being implemented by different departments at different levels.
2. Secondly, these programmes should be linked with the other development programmes at various levels.
3. Thirdly, village development plans, block development plans, zilla parishad plans and finally district development plans should be formulated keeping in view the needs of different areas.

Components of the Women's Development Plan

1. Economic Component:

- a. employment generation, (b) poverty elimination, (c) developing organizational and managerial skills, (d) entrepreneurship development.

2. Infrastructural development and its access:

- a.) marketing facilities, (b) provision of necessary inputs, (c) credit facilities, (d) schooling facilities, (e) training facilities, (f) other supportive services such as extension etc.

3. Social Component

- a) education (b) housing (c) provision of drinking water, (d) Toilet facilities (e) provision of fuel, (f) provision of fodder, (g) smokless chulahs, (h) bio-gas plants (h) welfare of aged and destitute, (i) awakening about social custom such as marriage, funeral etc.

4. Cultural Component

- a. Sports, music, dance, drama etc.
- b. Music, dance, drama etc.
- c. Literature.

5. Medical Component

- a) Child care and maternity facilities, (b) family welfare, (c) population control

6. Environment Component

- a) sanitation, (b) social forestry, (c) farm forestry.

7. Political Component

- a) political literacy, (b) general awareness, (c) dissemination of the success stories of women's contribution elsewhere (d) building leadership qualities among women

8. Structural Component

- a) Allotting land in their names

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

- (a) monitoring the flow of economic benefits,
- (b) monitoring the flow of social benefits,
- (c) monitoring the flow of infrastructural benefits,
- (d) monitoring the flow of other benefits.

Encompassing the above components, annual, five years and perspective plans may be prepared.

Prerequisites for such Exercise

1. Sound Data base at different levels
 - a. The basic units of data collection should be village panchayat, block and district.
 - b. The data collected at different levels shall encompass the following:
 - i. plan information
 - ii. monitoring information
 - iii. evaluation information

Periodicity of such of such information may be monthly, quarterly, half yearly and yearly. In some cases it may be weekly. Better would be to develop MIS for collecting information.

- b. Women contribute a lot to the society but invisibly. Their contribution is not documented. Therefore:
 - i. Full details about their participation in different activities must be documented.
 - ii. Details of land/asset ownership among women.
 - iii. Income and consumption levels of women and female child.

2. Financial Resources

Lack of adequate finance is one of the serious problems facing PRIs in their development plans. The Act has made it mandatory for establishment of finance commissions at the state levels for allocation of funds of different tiers of local bodies. It may be mentioned that the existing formula which gave weightage to different indicators allocating funds to districts under the district plan. The components of the formula are almost similar in all the states. It takes into account the total population, population of SC/ST, small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, agricultural backwardness,

irrigational backwardness, industrial backwardness, backwardness in respect of roads and drinking water, incidence of unemployment etc., as indicators of development. But the point to be noted here is that it did not have a separate component for women. How can one take into account their backwardness? Women have an entirely different set of problems than men. Their illiteracy, mortality rate, intensity of poverty must be tackled differently and not by clubbing with the aggregate. Thus, women's social disabilities may be made a criteria for resource allocation to different tiers of the Panchayati Raj institutions.

3. Capacity Building

Capacity building is a process of empowerment of people/communities/organizations to take up activities for their development. In fact, capacity building has two components namely competence and commitment. Competence denotes training which comprises three things knowledge, skill and attitudes. The commitment denotes not the *chalta hai* (namesake) syndrome, but the concern & commitment on the part of the trainers and others who are involved in the process of the capacity building for developing human resources engaged in local development. Capacity building may be taken up in action mode, which denotes engaging various institutions in imparting training to Panchayati Raj functionaries particularly women in collaboration of training institutions including National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, State Institute of Rural Development with the purpose to mobilize the Panchayats, officials, bankers, community based organizations and community for initiating collective action for local development in holistic manner.

The capacity building exercise may encompass political literacy, basic concepts about development planning, plan formulation, resource analysis, spatial planning, sectoral planning, infrastructure, service, poverty, budgeting and gender budgeting, people's participation, behavioural aspects, plan implementation, management and monitoring and soon should be imparted to elected women representatives at different levels.

4. Formation of Committees

For smooth planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation of women's development plans,

following committees may be constituted at different levels:

- a. women and child development committee
- b. planning committee
- c. social justice committee
- d. monitoring evaluation committee

Not less than one third of the members of these committees should be women. These committees will act as watch dog for women's development plans.

Constraints

As women are not as literate as their counterparts, assertive and politically motivated as their male counterparts, women's development plan formulation may be difficult task. The limitations of such exercise are:

Dominance of Male

One elected woman Sarpanch in West Bengal once said that "my husband will do whatever Panchayat work is necessary and I will endorse it." Further in the election "... most women candidates contested only because the male member in their family could not. Women hardly showed any interest in politics or in crossing over to public life." These examples reflect that women who have been treated as a liability for centuries, will find it difficult to get out of male domination and assert their social and economic rights. Besides, the officialdom is dominated by males.

Resistance from Government Departments

There is resistance from government departments both at the centre and the states to transfer women and child development related programmes to Panchayats.

Existence of Parallel Institutions

There are existence of parallel institutions of women's development such as women development corporation, women's development study centres, etc to shed power in favour of the Panchayats.

Removal of Constraints

Removal of constraints are possible provided following suggestions are implemented .

1. Awareness building about the PRIs vis-à-vis women role in these institutions.

2. Launching of political literacy campaign across the states.
3. Participation and involvement of NGOs to act as friend, guide and philosopher of women.
4. Participation and involvement of professional groups such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, social workers, technician and administrators in the women's development plan at decentralized levels.
5. Participation and involvement of universities, research organizations in strengthening the position of women by establishing new extension service centres in the villages. These could develop field work programme such as preparing micro, village or district levels plans as a part of curriculum of higher studies in different subjects. Universities, training and research institutions facilitate the planning process of the Panchayats through their faculty and other research fellows in the surrounding Gram Panchayats

To conclude, after more than six decades of planning in India women are far below their male counterparts because they have not been involved as participators and decision-makers in development. The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act enables women to take decision in the area of their concern as well as total development of rural area. A number of working groups on decentralized planning/block planning have submitted their report. They have evolved a methodology for decentralized planning. But little attention has been given to women's development programmes as a component of the local decentralized approach. So far only sectoral plans for women development implemented by different departments have been in vogue. Under the new Panchayati Raj system the plans are expected to be prepared and implemented by the Panchayats themselves. For a meaningful exercise of women's development plan a sound data base, more resources and assertiveness on the part of women are important. Involvement of NGOs and professionals are also important components for strengthening the processes of women's empowerment under the Panchayati Raj System.

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SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & FOCUS ON GIRL CHILD IMPERATIVE

Dhurjati Mukherjee

The recently launched 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' and 'Sukanya Samridhi Yojana' programmes by the Prime Minister have come at an opportune time to encourage birth and education of girls and tackle the abysmally low national child sex ratio of 918 girls for 1000 boys. While launching the programme, the Prime Minister criticized doctors for 'killing' girls and 'betraying' society and stated that if the discrimination does not end, it could cause a terrible crisis soon due to lack of girls in the country. The programmes were rightly launched from Panipat in Haryana that has the lowest child sex ratio in the country (837 girls to 1000 boys).

'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' Rs 100 crores scheme would be implemented in 100 districts and monitored by Ministry of Women and Child Development in coordination with Health and HRD Ministries. The objective would be to prevent gender-biased sex selection through stringent enforcement of existing laws, specially the implementation of the

Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Prohibition of the Sex Selection Act 1994 (PC& PNNT).

Apart from the broad objective, some of the other actions that are envisaged include a toilet in every girl school in 100 vulnerable districts, an innovation fund at the state level to encourage best practices in improving the child sex ratio and gender inequalities and district level awards to school strengthening girl child education.

The positive outlook of the present government is geared towards giving women and girls to a greater say and position in society and trying to curb discrimination. There are plans to encourage girls to express their views, to be heard, to participate effectively and equally at all levels of social, economic and political activity.

While these measures of the government are no doubt welcome, the other aspect of the problem is the increase in child trafficking that has forced



the Supreme Court to ask the Centre and states to consider setting up a multi-disciplinary board on the lines of the Narcotics Control Board. In this connection, one may refer to an NGO, *Prajwala*, which found that over two lakh women and girls were being pushed in the flesh trade every year in the country with Andhra Pradesh topping the list.

In its petition, the NGO stated: A disturbing fact is that the age of the children is progressing declining to meet the male demand for younger prostitutes. There is a widely held belief that sex with children, especially virgins, will cure sexually transmitted diseases and prevent one from contracting HIV/AIDS. One of every four victims rescued from prostitution is a child and 60 per cent of these children are HIV positive.

It also needs to be pointed out that increased alcoholism and drugs and promiscuous living standards have led to every night being a violation or disrespect for women, every evening a drunken brawl, a gambling sport and nobody's sister, wife or daughter is really free from the claws of depraved humanity. In fact, a leading national daily found out that 78 per cent of Delhi women were sexually harassed and the figures for other metros are not much different.

This has fuelled various movements – political, religious and regional – in different parts of the country. Added to this is the open show of vulgarity in films and TV advertisements where women are portrayed as objects of enjoyment. Women's sexuality is also exploited by commercial films to attract attention to products and services.

The law enforcing agencies are obviously finding it difficult to tackle the increasing incidence of rape and domestic violence. Moreover, if there is political pressure -- as politicians directly or indirectly protect most criminals -- the police become a silent spectator. One has to agree that there are thousands of such cases in remote villages where women and girls do not have the courage to report such incidents as political and money power rules in these places.

The national conviction rate of crimes against women has been found to be rather poor. According to available records for Bengal, cases registered under Section 498A were 19,700 in 2011, 19,881 in 2012 and 18,116 in 2013. The conviction rate was one of the lowest in the country at 6.3 per cent in 2013

compared to the national conviction rate of 10 per cent in 2011, 15 per cent in 2012 and 16 per cent last year, which clearly reveals that cases were hushed up or the complainant was forced to withdraw the case.

Meanwhile the increasing incidence of rapes in various parts of the country has shocked the civil society and the J. S. Verma committee had rightly attributed this to the deep-rooted gender bias of politicians. It had rightly pointed out: "It is shocking to note that even after the horrific incident of gang rape (referring to the *Nirbhaya case*), many political leaders, including members of Parliament/state legislatures, spiritual gurus, with large following and other eminent persons have been making statements reinforcing the gender bias".

There are also reports that night shelter is unsafe for women. The Factories Amendment Bill, tabled in Lok Sabha recently, which seeks to relax the bar on employing women in factories in night shifts, has come in for criticism due to increasing sexual assaults on women. Employing more women in police may be a viable solution to tackle this problem and most state governments are seriously considering this issue.

There is also a need to set up fast-track courts for speedy trial of cases against women and children. According to Law Ministry sources, only 212 fast track courts have been set up so far for this purpose in only 16 states but none has come up in Gujarat, Bihar and U. P., which has the largest number of rape victims. Though the Ministry allocated funds of Rs 60 crores annually, not all states have shown eagerness to create additional court infrastructure as it requires a matching grant from the states.

Given this state of affairs, one can easily discern the effect of modernization on society. The western culture has pervaded our society – not just in the metropolises but also in rural areas and has broken our traditional values. There is a need for deep introspection by social scientists about the reasons for such wanton spread of physical violence and torture on women and girls.

In this dark scenario, Maneka Gandhi has put up a novel proposal for setting up '*crisis centres*' in some of the affected districts of the country to help victims of sexual assault but the government has yet to approve the same. These '*one stop crisis*

centres', which was proposed to be named *Nirbhaya Centres* would go a long way in tackling the problem in rural and semi-urban areas of the country and, as such, needs serious consideration of the government. The centres could function from the respective district hospital in the districts and provide all kinds of support, including registering complaints from the victims of rape/assault or other crimes against women. According to estimates, around Rs 500 crores would be required to fund the scheme during the 12th Plan period.

Some time back, a Supreme Court bench headed by P. Sathasivam, dealing with a PIL, pointed out that under the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), India was bound to take steps to ensure a safe environment for women. Certain demands by way of dedicated women-manned police stations in all states to facilitate reporting of crimes against women, counselling centres at police stations to provide rehabilitative services and strengthening of the legal system to address issues of gender-based violence have been some significant suggestions put forth by the petitioner. Though some progress has been made, a lot still remains to be done in this regard.

The urgency of the government, obviously acting under pressure, should now yield some result. However, the following measures may be considered to control different forms of sexual assault:

- (i) Amendment of the Juvenile Justice Act to treat those over 15 years of age and charged with heinous sexual assault crimes as adults and try them in regular court of law.
- (ii) Modification of Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) where sexual intercourse by man with his own wife – wife not being under 15 years of age – is not considered rape but this age needs to be increased to 18 and the words “mutual consent” needs to be added
- (iii) Making the police force professional and unshackled from the control of political leaders to the extent possible.
- (iv) As per recommendations of the Supreme Court, separating criminal investigation wing from one maintaining law and order (*Prakash Singh's case (2006 [8] SCC 1)*).
- (v) Ensuring speedy trials through fast-track courts.

Apart from these legal measures, some other steps may be necessary which include:

- (i) Prohibiting night clubs to operate after 12 and strictly enforcing those youngsters below 21 years of age are not allowed to enter or stay after 9 or 10 p.m.
- (ii) Stricter regulations for films showing physical assault, murder, rape etc and this should be restricted as far as possible;
- (iii) Enforcing regulations on TV advertising so that unnecessary vulgarity and unrelated to the product is controlled.
- (iv) College and university hostels of both boys and girls should be strictly monitored.

To conclude, it needs to be reiterated that emancipation of women is not possible by opening pubs or discotheques but ensuring that girls become educated all over the country and do not drop out before reaching or passing Class X for which a movement has to be started. Simultaneously, imparting of skilled training from Class VIII onwards would help them to become self employed. Moreover, higher budgetary allocations are needed in the health sector to reach out to the opposite sex in the backward and remote areas as various surveys have revealed the pitiable conditions of pregnant and lactating women and girls.

The elitist control of our society has ensured that problems faced by the upper and middle income sections of society are raised effectively for redressal. The problems of the suffering masses – in this case the torture, oppression and poverty of women and girls – are discussed in seminars and workshops but there is no grass-root approach to the problem. One is inclined to ask how many of the members of the state women's commission or the National Women's Commission visits the countryside and help in ameliorating the conditions of the opposite sex.

The media has to take up the role along with the government and the NGOs in highlighting the true meaning of emancipation of crores of women, languishing in poverty, squalor and ignorance and spreading awareness all over the country.

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EMPOWERING WOMEN

Dr. Barna Ganguli

In the last five decades, the concept of women empowerment has undergone a major change from welfare oriented approach to equity approach. Empowerment as powerfully articulated goal of development interventions has become significant in recent years. While the status of women has advanced in some important aspects in the past decades, progress has been uneven and still inequalities between men and women have persisted.

The idea of Women Empowerment came forward when the Third International Women's Conference at Nairobi in 1985 introduced and defined "women empowerment- as a re-distribution of social power and control of resources in favor of Women" . The Government of India declared 2001, the year of Women's Empowerment and the National Policy for the Empowerment of women came into force the same year. According to Sen and Batliwala (2000) empowerment leads to a growing inherent capability, greater self confidence, and an inner transformation of one's consciousness that enables one to overcome external barrier. This view mainly emphasizes on two important aspects.

Firstly, it is a power to achieve desired goals. Secondly, idea of empowerment is more applicable to those who are powerless- whether they are male or female, or group of individuals, class or caste. Women empowerment is also defined as a change in the context of a women's life, which enables her increased capacity for leading a satisfying human life. It gets reflected both in external qualities (viz. health, mobility, education and awareness, status in the family, participation in decision making and also at the level of material security) and internal qualities (viz. self awareness and self confidence)

State of Women Empowerment:

Behaviour and talent are two of the core drivers of sustainable, long-term economic growth. If half of these talents are underdeveloped or underutilized, the economy will never grow as it could. Multiple studies have shown that healthy and educated women are more likely to have healthier and more educated children, creating a positive, virtuous cycle for the broader population. Research also shows the benefits of gender equality in politics: when women are more involved in decision-making, they



make different decisions—not necessarily better or worse—but decisions that reflect the needs of more members of society. Table 1 clearly portrays the low level of attainment of women in the diverse fields of achievement. Keeping aside the Political Empowerment, in other three indices, India’s rank is far below. Out of 142 countries, India’s rank is 114, which is a good indicator of its position in global scenario. The Political Empowerment ranks quite high, may be due to the 73rd and 74th Indian Constitutional Amendments providing greater opportunity to women to take active part in politics. But overall, the situation needs improvement.

Table 1: Global Gender Gap Rankings (India)

Gender Gap Sub Indices	2014		2012	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Economic Participation and Opportunity	134	0.4096	123	0.4588
Educational Attainment	126	0.8503	121	0.8525
Health and Survival	141	0.9366	134	0.9612
Political Empowerment	15	0.3855	17	0.3343
Overall Index	114	0.6455	105	0.6442

Source: World Economic Forum

Educational Achievement:

Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing an individual to think, take action and control work in an autonomous way. Empowerment includes control over resources (physical, human, intellectual and financial) and over ideology (beliefs, values and attitudes). Women Empowerment in India is entirely dependent on variables like geographical location (rural/urban), educational status, social status (caste and class) and age. Policies on women

empowerment exist at national, state and local levels in many sectors including health, education, economic opportunities, gender-based violence and political participation. But for holistic coverage of these schemes, proper implementation and monitoring is needed. Gender Discrimination is a devastating reality in developing countries. Women are subjugated at home, work place, market or any other public places. Thus, to overcome these atrocities against women they must be empowered with knowledge and skill.

Education as means of empowerment of women can bring about a positive attitudinal change. It is therefore, crucial for the socio-economic and political progress of India. If we give a glance to sex ratio and literacy rate of India, it emerges that Female Literacy Rate is showing an increasing trend and along with that even sex ratio which had shown shrinkage in midway is again showing an increasing trend. Secondly, both rural and urban female literacy rates are showing rising trend since 1961 (Table 2).

Numerous studies show that illiterate women have high levels of fertility, poor nutritional status, low earning potential and little autonomy within the household. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their lives. Compared to urban women, rural women have to face more challenges. Rigid social norms, traditional family structures, preference of boy child over girl child, all facilities provided to boy child etc. are common features in rural areas. Another hindrance in women empowerment is poverty. In a poor family, girls are the main victims; they are malnourished and are denied the opportunity of better education and

Table 2: Literacy Rate and Sex Ratio in India

Year	Literacy Rate			Female Literacy		Sex Ratio
	Total	Male	Female	Rural	Urban	
1961	28.3	40.4	15.4	10.1	40.5	941
1971	34.5	46.0	22.0	15.5	48.8	930
1981	43.6	56.4	29.8	21.7	56.3	934
1991	52.2	64.1	39.3	30.6	64.1	927
2001	64.8	75.3	53.7	46.6	73.0	933
2011	72.9	80.9	64.6	58.8	80.0	940

Source: Census, RGI, GOI

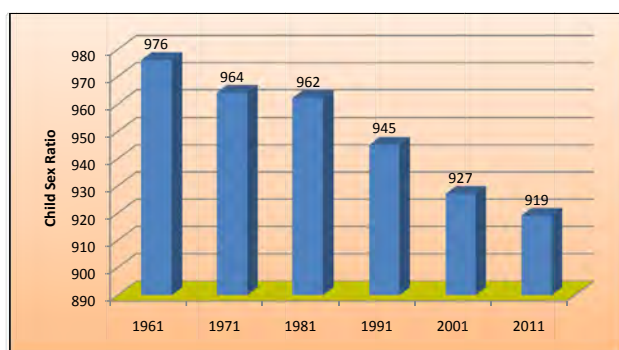
Note: Sex Ratio is defined as number of females per 1000 males in the population

other facilities. Thus to encourage the education of women at all levels and for dilution of gender bias in providing knowledge and education, government has taken several initiatives and the most recent one which has been initiated by the present government is Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao.

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao:

Girl child is an important asset for a nation and synchronized and convergent efforts are needed to ensure survival, protection and empowerment of the girl child, for which the Government has announced Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme. 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 started since 1961. The decline from 976 in 1961 to 927 in 2001 and further to 919 in 2011 is alarming. The decline in the CSR is a major indicator of injustice towards girl child. CSR reflects both, pre-birth discrimination apparent through gender biased sex selection, and post birth discrimination against girls. Social discrimination against girls on the one hand, easy availability, affordability and subsequent misuse of diagnostic tools on the other hand, have been critical in increasing Sex Selective Elimination of girls leading to low Child Sex Ratio.

Child Sex Ratio Scenario



Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao is a new scheme which will help in generating awareness and improving the efficiency of delivery of welfare services meant for women with an initial amount of ₹ 100 crore. The Union Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley announced in his maiden Budget Speech that government would focus on campaigns to sensitize people of this country towards the concerns of the girl child and women. He said that the process of sensitization must begin early and therefore, the

school curriculum must have a separate chapter on gender mainstreaming.

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao will be implemented through a national multimedia campaign and focused multi-sectoral actions in 100 selected districts, low in CSR, covering all States and Union Territories. Further, it has been decided by the Union Government that Ministry of Women and Child Development shall be the Nodal Ministry for implementing this joint Scheme which will be implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Human Resource Development.

The objectives of this scheme are:

- Prevent gender biased sex selective elimination.
- Ensure survival & protection of the girl child.
- Ensure education of the girl child.

Strategies for Implementation:

- To implement a sustained Social Mobilization and Communication Campaign to create equal value for the girl child & promote her education.
- Place the issue of decline in Child Sex Ratio (CSR)/Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) in public discourse, improvement of which would be an indicator for good governance.
- Focus on Gender Critical Districts and Cities, low on CSR for intensive and integrated action.
- Mobilize and train Panchayati Raj Institutions/ Urban local bodies/ Grassroot workers as catalysts for social change, in partnership with local community/women's/youth groups.
- Ensure service delivery structures/schemes and programmes are sufficiently responsive to issues of gender and children's rights.
- Enable inter-sectoral and inter-institutional convergence at District/Block/Grassroots level.

Targets for Accomplishment:

- Improve the SRB in 100 gender critical districts by 10 points in a year.
- Reduce Gender differentials in Under Five Child Mortality Rate from 8 points in 2011 to 4 points by 2017.
- Improve the Nutrition status of girls - by reducing number of underweight and anaemic girls under 5 years of age (from NFHS 3 levels).

- Ensure universalisation of ICDS, girls' attendance and equal care monitored, using joint ICDS-NRHM Mother Child Protection Cards.
- Increase the girl's enrolment in secondary education from 76 percent in 2013-14 to 79 percent by 2017.
- Provide girl's toilet in every school in 100 CSR districts by 2017.
- Promote a protective environment for Girl Children through implementation of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012.
- Train Elected Representatives/ Grassroots functionaries as Community Champions to mobilize communities to improve CSR & promote Girl's education.

Critical Components:

The Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative has two major components:

Media Campaign : The campaign will be aimed at ensuring girls are born, nurtured and educated without discrimination to become empowered citizens of this country with equal rights. The Campaign will interlink National, State and District level interventions with community level action in 100 districts, bringing together different stakeholders for accelerated impact.

Multi-Sectoral action in 100 selected districts (as a pilot) with adverse CSR, covering all States and UTs : Multi-Sectoral actions include measurable outcomes and indicators which will bring together concerned sectors, states and districts for urgent rigorous multi-sectoral action to improve the CSR. The States/UTs will adapt a flexible framework for multi-sectoral action through the State Task Forces for developing, implementing and monitoring State/District Plans of Action to achieve the State/District Specific Monitorable Targets.

Districts Identified:

The 100 districts have been identified on the basis of low Child Sex Ratio as per Census 2011 covering all States/UTs as a pilot with at least one district in each state. The three criteria for selection of districts namely are:

- districts below the national average (87 districts/23 states);

- districts above national average but shown declining trend (8 districts/8 states) and
- districts above national average and shown increasing trend (5 districts/5 states- selected so that these CSR levels can be maintained and other districts can imitate and learn from their experiences).

Outcome of the Scheme:

- Effective implementation of Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act to stop female foeticides and check the declining sex ratio
- Empowering the girl child through education and creating an enabling environment that provides equal access to education, health, employment/skill development etc.
- Enhancing the value of the girl child through awareness generation. The Media Campaign, geared towards achieving this, would underline the need to use communication that encourages equal value of the girls and emphasize that she is not a liability
- The scheme promotes the need for gender equality enshrined in the Constitution of India. It brings out how neglect of girls and discrimination throughout her life cycle leads to an unequal status in the society. It also aims to break myths about role of men and women so that negative attitudes and behaviours of the patriarchal society could be changed.

Conclusion:

The scheme would be evaluated at the end of the 12th Five Year Plan. This is indeed a new and innovative step taken by the Government of India to improve the condition of women in the society. Women cannot be empowered until and unless, holistic step is taken right from the birth and government's present endeavour will definitely bring some change in the gender disparity and will help women to come forward in the race of development.

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A MOVE FOR CHANGE

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We the Indian take legitimate pride in its cultural heritage wherein the women are accorded a very high pedestal. Because women in ancient India enjoyed equal status and rights like men, in all fields of life. Our history is testimony as works by ancient Indian grammarians such as Patanjali and Katyayana suggest that women were educated in the early Vedic period. Rigvedic verses suggest that during the period women married at a mature age and were probably free to select their life partners. There are examples of women sages and seers like Gargi and Maitreyi. But, down the history, women lost the pace of equality pushing them to the background. After independence, the Constitution not only grants equality to women but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Constitution of India guarantees equality (Article 14), no discrimination by state (Article 15(1), equality of opportunity (Article 16), equal pay for equal work (Article 39(d). The special provisions for women and children are to be made by the state in favour of women and children (Article 15 (3).

While census data indicate that India's overall

gender ratio is improving but its child gender ratio is on the decline. Between 1991 and 2011, the country's female-male gender ratio rose from 927:1,000 to 940:1,000, but its child gender ratio fell from 945:1,000 to 914: 1,000. The census of 2011 indicate that overall there are 38 million missing women. The boy-girl divide over the last few decades has widened to such an extent that today, in the age group of 0-6 years, there are 7.1 million fewer girls than boys as against 4.2 million in 1991. With child sex ratio slipping fast, Hon'ble Supreme Court in 2014 asked the State Governments if some "incentives" can be announced for families who "respect and honour" the girl child in a bid to the draw society away from the evil of female foeticide. Haryana is one of the crucial state as far as skewed sex ratio is concerned as sex ratio at birth till June 2014 averaged 806:1000 in Rewari district, 839:1000 in Gurgaon and 890:1000 in Faridabad. It is alleged that sex determination continued with the help of medical clinics despite the setting up of the National Inspection and Monitoring Committee (NIMC) under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994. The Central Government has



taken Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) as one of the major initiative of the government. Prime Minister launched twin programmes of “Beti bachao, beti padhao” and “Sukanya Samriddhi account” on 22nd January, 2015 from Panipat in Haryana in a bid to encourage birth and education of girls and tackle the abysmally low child sex ratio. There is a long-term strategy of the Government to accelerate the efforts. According to the Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi, Central Government will launch a mega scheme for saving and educating the girl child in 100 districts of the country that have the least child-sex ratio. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme will be based on a strong system of incentives and media advocacy to bring about an all-round change in attitudes.

Education is the most important tool of women empowerment. But, overall women could not keep a pace with their male counterparts. Women had to struggle hard to get the right of education in our country. This journey dates back to 1883, when Chandramukhi Basu and Kadambini Ganguly-Basu became the first female graduates of India. After independence, there is a significant progress as the women literacy has improved from 8.86 per cent in 1951 to 65.4 per cent in 2011. In the last 10 years, women have shown an impressive incremental increase of 11.8 per cent in comparison to 6.8 per cent for males. Among the States and Union Territories, the female literacy rate is the highest in Kerala at 92.0 per cent followed by Mizoram at 89.4 per cent. The growth of female literacy rate is 14.87 per cent as compared to 11.72 per cent of that of male literacy rate. But, the gap of gender inequality is still wider. According to the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for 2013, India has been ranked 132nd among the 148 countries in the Gender Inequality Index. In general, the number of girls enrolled in all levels, i.e. primary, secondary and higher education is less than their counterparts. In 2011, the dropout rate at Class 5 for girls was 24.4 per cent, while the dropout rate at Class 8 was 41.3 per cent. Overall, at the secondary level, the attendance rate for girls was 42.3 per cent as against 52.7 per cent for boys.

However, the female-male ratio in education has been steadily improving over the years. In

primary education, the Gender parity index (GPI) ratio has gone up from 0.76 in 1990-91 to 1.00 in 2009-10 showing 31.6 per cent increase and in secondary education the increase is from 0.60 in 1990-91 to 0.88 in 2009-10 thereby showing 46.7 per cent increase. The share of girls in the total enrolment at primary and upper primary level is 48.5 and 48.1 per cent, respectively.

Primary and secondary education can bring literacy to the women but real empowerment will come from higher education in different fields. Due to various constrains, only 26.6 per cent of adult women are able to reach a secondary or higher level of education, compared with 50.4 per cent of their male counterparts. Higher education is the key which will bring women to the role of decision maker and that will also enshrine them with real empowerment. Realizing the importance, Pandita Ramabai persuaded the Hunter Commission in 1882 for allowing women to become doctors and teachers. In 1944, Asima Chatterjee became the first Indian woman to earn a doctorate degree in science awarded by an Indian university. Women enrolment in higher education which was less than 10 per cent of the total enrolment on the eve of Independence has risen to 41.5 per cent in the academic year 2010-11. Among the states, Goa with 61.2 per cent topped in terms of women enrolment followed by Kerala (56.8%), Meghalaya (51.8%) and Nagaland (50.5%). But, the majority of women in the country are enrolled in non-professional graduate level courses. In 2010-11, 41.21 per cent of the women were enrolled in the Arts stream, followed by 19.14 per cent in the faculty of Science and 16.12 per cent in Commerce and Management. Further, the number of women enrolled in faculty of Education was 4.60 per cent, 3.85 per cent in medicine and 11.36 per cent in Engineering and Technology. The enrolment position of women students enrolled for Master’s level courses has been 12 per cent while a very small proportion, that’s 0.8 per cent of the total number of students had been enrolled for research.

Despite best efforts of the Central Government to improve the situation, a recent report by the Right to Education Forum showed 40 percent of schools in India still lack a functional common toilet. Further, 40 percent schools lack

separate toilet facilities for girls. A national study by AC Nielsen and NGO- Plan India highlight that as many as 23 per cent of girls in India drop out of school when they hit puberty. Still coping to the circumstance where girls remain in school, lack of facilities causes widespread absenteeism each month. The report further indicates that girls miss on an average of 50 days of school each year because of menstruation. Increasing the number of young girls in secondary education is widely seen as having a key role in closing the continued gender gap in India. Various studies highlight that girls in India face drastically reduced opportunities without a secondary education. Consequently, many are forced into early marriages or working on the lowest rungs of the employment ladder. Such statistics of gender inequality in education had a wider long-term impact on our economy.

The World Bank estimates that eliminating barriers that discriminate against women's working in certain sectors could increase labour productivity by as much as 25 per cent. According to National Sample Survey, the workforce participation rate of females in rural sector was 26.1 in 2009-10 while that for males was 54.7. In Urban sector, it was 13.8 for females and 54.3 for males. A total of 20.4 per cent women were employed in the organized sector in 2010 with 17.9 per cent working in the public sector and 24.5 per cent in the private. If women are ensured equal access to agricultural resources and financial credit, it would have a dramatic impact on our food security and overall economic growth. The data published in the World Factbook of Central Investigative Agency (CIA) suggest that if just 1 percent more girls were enrolled in schools in India the country's GDP would rise by an estimated \$5.5 billion.

Enhancing women's access to productive resources would have a huge impact on food security and economic growth. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, if women had the same access to productive resource as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 to 30 percent, raising total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 per cent. Women have been playing a significant role in agriculture and they comprise 43 per cent of the agricultural work force in developing

countries. Many historians believe that woman was the first cultivator of a crop on the land. Data of the 68th round of the National Sample Survey released in 2013 indicate that in comparison to 59 per cent men, 75 per cent women in rural areas work in agriculture. Environmental degradation increases women's time for labour intensive household tasks and decreases agricultural productivity. Although both rural women and men play a critical role in natural resource management but education of rural women in conservation, and knowledge of resources play a key role in shaping local biodiversity.

Measures to enforce women's access to political positions through quotas have been instituted in 87 countries, including India, where a 1993 constitutional amendment required that one-third of seats of Panchayati Raj Institutions and their presidencies be reserved for women. In the next five years, the global incomes of women will grow from US\$13 trillion to US\$18 trillion. The number of female CEOs of Fortune 500 companies has doubled in the last decade but in 2012 it is still only 4 per cent of the total. Our country is proud to have a woman President and a Prime Minister but the real change will only come when women will take the responsibility of decision makers at different levels of administration. Still, there are only 11 per cent of women Parliamentarians in our highest decision making body. But, education will certainly make the difference. Education and administrative skills could only help Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw to establish one of India's first biotech companies-Biocon. She was rated India's richest woman in 2006. Further, Lalita D. Gupte and Kalpana Morparia were the only businesswomen in India who made the list of the Forbes World's Most Powerful Women in 2006. While Gupte headed India's second-largest bank-ICICI Bank, Morparia is CEO of JP Morgan India. Women power have been exceptional in this country, there is need to encourage them so that the country had many twinkling and inspiring stars like Sunita William, Kalpna Chawla, Sania Mirza, Saina Nehwal in the modern times.

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ENHANCED USE OF UREA IN AGRICULTURE: PROBLEMS & SOLUTION

Dr. Veerendra Kumar

As of now Agriculture Scientists, Content Experts and farmers are of one view that enhanced use of urea in cultivation has resulted in the decreased land fertility. With the gradual increase in the urea quantity, the numbers of pests and plant diseases have also taken the ascending path. Lack of proper advisory on the urea, use for agronomists and farmers is also a matter of concern. Improper and unmindful use of urea has also resulted in the diminishing of “farmers friendly –earthworm” and other micro-organisms from the soil. The numerous micro-organisms present in the soil are in fact an invaluable asset gifted by the nature. These microbes are actively engaged in various oxidation-reduction processes undergoing in the soil leading to availability of various salts and minerals to plants as per requirement. Also, these microbes churn and grind the soil and facilitate the easy passage of air and sunlight and thereby increase the water bearing capacity of soil. Due to extensive use of urea problems like decreased soil fertility and lesser quality of farm products, bad weather variations and reduced

productivity are on the rise. Moreover, extensive urea use is also leading to water and air pollution too. The resultant is adverse effect on human health associated with either stable or reduced farm productivity. Improper and unmindful use of urea has also put a question mark on the success of “Green Revolution” which was once a necessity but with the high handed use of urea has brought to the notice its adverse effects. In the agricultural belt spread across the length and breadth of the country the use of three Plant nutrients- Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potash is being carried out in an unbalanced manner. Even in Some areas it is in the ratio of 9:2:1. For a healthy life we all need pure air, water, food, fodder, fuel, house and pollution free environment. All these requirements are somewhere connected with the modern agriculture more or less to a certain extent.

To enhance agricultural output, extensive use of urea is on the rise and this is leading to the receding land fertility and turning the cultivable land to barren lands. So what is needed is the mindful and proper use of urea. Of the used urea



only 35-40 percent is consumed by the plants and the rest either gets mixed with water or is evaporated and becomes part of the atmosphere.

Today India uses nearly 310 lakh tonnes of urea for agriculture of which 70 lakh tonnes come from import after paying huge amount of foreign exchange. It is estimated that to achieve a targeted food grain production of 320 million tonnes the required quantity of nutrients will be nearly 28.8 million tonnes. The chemical fertilisers will be able to provide only 21.6 million tonnes of nutrients. Hence to complete the rest required 7.2 million tonnes other sources like bio manures, bio-fertilisers, crop residues, green manures will have an important place.

In the present situation, to keep the soil fertility intact its further degradation needs to be checked hence its health has attained utmost importance. For this, the imbalanced, improper and unmindful urea use should be curtailed drastically. Otherwise the beneficial elements and micro-organisms of soil will become extinct and this will lead to an adverse effect on the oxidation reduction processes occurring in the soil. After it a large chunk of nutrients and salts will not be available to plants. Hence to achieve quality produce there should be proper use of urea. Thus there are ample possibilities for the consumption of nutrients other than urea. Despite excessive urea intake our harvest is not increasing. The clear cause of this is over exploitation of nutrients from soil, compact crop system and reduction of bio-mass as well as decrease in the micro-nutrients.

Inappropriate use of Urea in agriculture has also become a big menace for the environment. Due to it the higher quantity of Green House Gases like Methane and Nitrous Oxide Gases are generated from the Paddy fields in excess. The adverse effects of this are the climate change we are witnessing which is ultimately affecting the health of human as well as living beings. Prolonged use of similar fertilisers (mainly Urea) enhances Carbon emission. The farmer in the country want in alternative of the faulty use of Urea so that not only the Green House Gases could affect the environment on a lesser note but this could result in the decrease in the cost of agricultural input.

This is necessary for providing adequate and pure food as well as save environment to the future generation. We will have to rectify and improve environment friendly agricultural technology and will have to ensure judicious use of Urea in take in agriculture for which we need and adopt cost effected advance technology. Conservative agriculture, Neem coated Urea, water dissolvable mixed fertiliser system of rice intensification (SRI) technique of Paddy production, Aerobic Method for Paddy cropping, use of value added Nitrogen and Bio-fertiliser could play an important role in this regard these techniques need more popularisation among farmers so that better environment and agriculture could be more beneficial by use of conservating technology.

Adverse effects of excessive and unbalanced of use of Urea:

1. In the last many decades there have been continues rises in air and water pollution due to gradual Urea increase in agriculture which is affecting human health.
2. Excessive and continuous use of Urea in crops induces rapid plant growth which in turn makes plants fleshy and their felling on the ground. This results in lesser output and increased pest / disease attack on harvest.
3. Inappropriate urea use is reducing both the fertility and productivity of the soil. In future this problem could be more aggravated. Such disregard is not good for a agriculture based country.
4. Earthworms and other micro organisms present in the soil are the biggest free treasure given by the nature. These beneficial creatures provides nutrients to the soil through their biological processes churns and grinds the soil and facilitates the easy passage of air and sunlight and thereby increases the water bearing capacity of soil. Unfortunately are actively engaged in various oxidation-reduction processes undergoing in the soil leading to availability of various salts and minerals to plants as per requirement. Also these microbes in the extinction of earthworms from the soil.
5. Excessive urea use is leading to the loss of some secondary and micro-nutrient elements

- in the soil. It results in the adverse effect on the quality and produce of the crop.
6. In the event of a direct contact of seeds with urea the germination rate of seeds goes down.
 7. High end use of urea in Pulse crops or its use in highly fertile soil leads to effect adversely the gland formation in plant roots and their by on the atmospheric nitrogen stabilization process.
 8. The major chunk of soil in the fertile agricultural areas in the states like Punjab, Haryana and western UP has become acidic due to the excessive and unmindful use of similar kind of urea use.
 9. Excessive and unmindful use of urea is also deteriorating the problem of potable water as huge quantity of urea is getting mixed in the ground water, rivers, ponds and springs and pollution the water sources. Moreover crops are also getting intoxicated by these chemical fertilisers.
 10. Enhanced use of Urea is also adversely affecting the physical, chemical and biological quality of soil. Hence a big share of nutrients and mineral salts becomes unavailable to plants.
 11. Escalating Urea Prices and FALL IN Agricultural output due to its extensive use has affected the small and marginal farmers very badly as high prices of urea are beyond their reach. Urea residue affects respiratory and digestive system. Accumulation of high nitrogen content mainly Nitrate causes “Blue Baby Syndrome” in children. This disease is common in Paddy producing areas where the use of urea results in the large amount of nitrate mixing in ground water. Moreover, the Amines produced by these Nitrogen fertilisers are capable of causing Cancer in Human beings.
 12. The Green House gas coming out of Urea (Nitrous Oxide) destroys the Ozone layer in the atmosphere. Ozone layer helps in stopping the harmful ultraviolet rays erupting from the Sun. Ultraviolet rays causes skin cancer in humans.

Ways of curtailing the Urea Use in Soil:

Following are the progressive, cost effective and beneficial means that if applied can curtail the excessive, inappropriate and unbalanced urea use:

Use of Neem Coated Urea

Using Neem coated urea not only could enhance the harvest but through it that money could also be saved which one was supposed to spend on urea purchase. Since, Neem is a natural pesticide so using Neem coated urea on large scale will bring down the import of urea. Because, this leeches out the nitrogen of urea in the soil and reduces the denitrification process. Using nitrification and Urease blockers in agriculture affects the process of nitrification and denitrification directly or indirectly. Neem Cake, Thyo sulphate, zinc coated Urea, Calcium Carbide Urea, Neem Oil coated Urea and Dicyandiamide are most suitable for paddy cultivation.

Moreover, hydro-quinine acts as an important urease blocker during the water logged situations in reducing Methane Gas and Nitrous Oxide Emissions. After using the above nitrogen blockers in Paddy cropping the global warming potential urea was found lesser in quantity than compared to the conventional urea. In Wet soil the Nitrification blockers reduces the breaking rate of ammonium (NH_4+AN) nitrogen so the Nitric Oxide (NO_2) and Nitrates (NO_3A) are produced at slower speed thus the emission of nitrous oxide (N_2O) is also curtailed. So the nitrification blockers are helpful in reducing the nitrogen emission in the paddy cultivation. Nitrification blockers also adversely affect the methane emission from soil. Many Agricultural Scientists have also recommended the use of nitrification blockers for reducing the loss created by nitrogen fertilizers and increasing the nitrogen efficiency. Currently a number of nitrification blockers like Ammonium Thyosulphate, Thyourea, Dicyandiamide and nitripyrin are available in market and can be easily used. They have been found effective in bringing down the emission of nitrous oxide from the soil. However, due to high price and less availability so far these are not popular among the farmers. Hence economical and easily available nitrification blockers are the need of the hour.

Bio-fertilizers

Use of bio-fertilisers in obtaining higher produce is proving to be beneficial. The prominent among them are *Rhizobium* culture, *Aijetobactor*, *Ajospirillum*, PSB, Azola, Vascular mycorrhiza, Blue-Green Algae and Bio-Activators. For sustainable cultivation and retaining soil health the use of bio-fertilisers is highly necessary. Bio-fertilisers are cost effective and are available easily. An enhancement of 10-25% has been recorded in agricultural output after the use of bio-fertilisers. They are considered as the basic ingredient for the integrated nutrition fostering management. *Rhizobium* and *Aijetobactor* converts the Nitrogen present in the atmosphere (78 %) to compounds and deposit it in soil for the plant availability. PSB converts the un-dissolvable Phosphorus present in soil in dissolved form for plants consumption. This is also beneficial for the forthcoming crops. In addition, the bio-fertilisers produce growth fostering hormones near the plant roots (i.e. Rhizosphere) which have a positive and fruitful effect on the plants growth. Bio-fertilisers should be picked up according to the crop type. This should not be used with chemical fertilisers, insecticides, herbicides and pesticides. Before using the bio-fertilisers the user must check for the date of manufacturing, expiry date and the recommended crop. At the time of use these should be kept out of the contact with direct sunlight and hot air. The readymade packets of different kinds can be obtained free of cost from the Micro-biology laboratories of all the Agricultural Universities established in different states, Microbiology Department at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and the Krishi Vigyan Kendras. There use will definitely cut down the urea use and the Farmer will not have to pay extra. Also this will sustain the soil fertility.

Bio-manure

The bio-manure being used in the country consists of cow dung manure, compost manure, wormi-compost, Chicken manure, the decomposed hay laid below the Kettles, pig and goat manure and Gobar Gas manure. Normally one tonne of Cow dung and compost manure provides on an average 5kg of nitrogen, 2-5 kg Phosphorus and 5 kg Potash. Unfortunately we are capable of using

of only half of it. Cow dung is used by our farmer community as fuel in his kitchen. Now some biodynamic manures as cow urine, bone manure is also being used in agriculture. Manure from sugar mills, sewer and carpet residues can also be used for this purpose. Using earthworms a mixture of crop residue, weeds, vegetable leaves and animal faeces can be converted into wormi compost or earthworm manure. In this process organic residue is kept in a big heap and earthworms (*Iceania foetida*) are left in it. In around 45 days compost gets ready for use. Bio-manures on one hand improve the soil quality while on the other they increase the availability of primary, secondary and tertiary nutrients. In any crop only 30 percent of the mixed bio-manure is used while the rest is consumed by the next crops. Presence of wet content (humous) in bio-manures also increase the Phosphorus availability. Experiments show that a judicious mixture of bio-manures with chemical manures is capable of increasing the efficiency of fertilisers.

Integrated Nutrition management

Integrated Nutrition management means for a balanced nutrition to plants all the potential sources of nutrients like chemical fertilisers, bio-manures, bio-fertilisers and crop residues be mixed and used in a best possible way. This ensures the availability of main nutrients as well as micronutrients in a longer time frame and in a gradual manner. In the compact cropping system it is necessary to retain the soil fertility regularly. Urea with bio-manures, bio-fertilisers, crop residues, green manures, compost and wormi compost show good results. Hence to maintain the soil fertility use of bio fertilisers and bio manures along with urea becomes a necessity. So to reduce the excessive and improper use of urea integrated nutrition management is advised. This is a cost effective, environment friendly and sustainable venture. Thus to maintain a stable system for crop cultivation it becomes imperative to include alternative plant nutrients in the Integrated Nutrition management while curtailing the urea use. This not only will ensure food and nutrition security but also will enlarge the scope for Moreover, the use of toxic insecticides and urea will also come down. Unfortunately, in the absence

of adequate awareness and wider publicity, the Integrated Nutrition management (INM) is not much popular among the agriculturists.

Fertifortification

A major portion of world population is today in the grip of hunger as well as deficiency of micro-nutrients like Zinc, Iron, vitamin A and Iodine. Malnutrition is on the top of agenda for the UNICEF unit of United Nations Organisation. Resorting to conventional plant production and using biotechnology to produce crops rich in nutrients like Zinc and Iron is called bio-fortification. Use of Fertifortification technique is capable of inducing the quantity micro-nutrients in crops while using the Zinc & Sulphur coated urea. On one hand this increases the nitrogen usage efficiency and can Fertifortification cut down the urea share on the other. Being a viable, handy and cost effective method this is capable of providing results in a lesser period. Also, this can cut down the loss of soil quality caused by urea sprinkling on crops that results in nitrogen, gaseous stabilization and denitrification. Experiments done in the IARI New Delhi have shown that use of 1% Zinc coated urea can enhance substantial increase of Zinc in paddy grains. Hence, this technology needs proper awareness in the farmers as well as the extension workers. It will also be helpful in increasing the crop productivity, quality and income of the farmers too.

Effect of Zinc sulfate sprinkling on the paddy quality

Treatment	PR 113	PR 114	PR 115	PR 116	PR 117
Zinc content in Paddy grains (mg/kg)					
Untreated	23.2	22.8	24.3	25.5	25.5
Zinc sulfate sprinkling	28.8	28.8	29.4	30.9	28.0
Increase in %	24.1	25.9	20.9	18.6	19.3

Source-Dhaliwal et al (2010)

Use of Pulses Crop

Cultivation of pulses crop is a must once in a year. After harvest of Millet, Barley and Corn sow gram, red gram and barseem. The roots of pulse plant have rhizobium glands that work for nitrogen

fixation in the soil. For nitrogen fixation right crop cycle can also be adopted. Pulse crops should be grown along with food crops. Small and marginal farmers can also increase their land soil fertility by submerging neem leaves, mustard pallets and crop residue in the soil. Thus soil biomass can also be enhanced. Also, for achieving a sustainable and prosperous harvest the farmers could be motivated to think about this. Likewise, after the wheat harvesting farmers should grow green gram in their fields and after plucking the pulse containing fruits twice, the residue crop should be dumped in the soil. This enhances the soil biomass which later on decomposition supplies primary as well as secondary and micro-nutrients to the soil. This increases the soil fertility and improves the soil health too. The result is a bumper crop in future. Thus the water containing capacity and water availability for crops can also be increased.

Urea Quantity, Application Method and Timing

Use urea on time and in adequate and prescribed quantity. Get your soil tested and use urea as recommended. This will help to maintain a balance of soil health and fertility. The unnecessary urea use could also be curtailed this way. This facility is freely available in nearby Agricultural Universities, Agricultural Research centres and Krishi Vigyan Kendras. To take high produce use local manure and bio-fertilisers along with urea. If due to some reasons, soil is not tested then use fertilisers after regional advices only. In soils having lower biomass content mix 8-10 tonnes cow dung manure/compost in soil before 15-20 days of seed sowing.

For example, the one tonne produce of ground nut absorbs 58.1 kg nitrogen, 19.6 kg phosphorous and 30.1 kg potash. For good ground nut harvest 20 kg nitrogen, 50 kg phosphorous and 40 kg potash/hectare should be used in irrigated fields. Generally the soil in northern India is zinc and sulphur deficient. So to supplement nutrients 20 kg zinc sulfate and 200 kg gypsum per hectare should be mixed in the soil during the seed sowing. Use of gypsum is a must in calcium deficient soils. Gypsum can also be sprinkled around plant roots during the flower coming process. Sulphur deficiency in soil results in the less oil content and quality of groundnut seeds while calcium

deficiency causes improper graining of seeds. So for the nitrogen, phosphorous and potash supply ingroundnut crop use of Ammonium Sulphate, super phosphate and potassium sulfate has been found beneficial. For a good harvest use full quantity of fertilisers through seed drill in the irrigated and semi irrigated fields at the time of sowing. This soil is capable of using atmospheric nitrogen. Farmers are advised that if they are using compost and bio-fertilisers in their crops then reduce the nitrogen content by 20 kg/hectare from the recommended quantity. In alluvial soil the entire nitrogen should be used thrice while in heavy soil it should be given twice. Of which half quantity should be given through seed drill during seed sowing while the rest be given on the standing crop at the time of 1st irrigation.

Urea sprinkling by hand

To take good pea nut crop nitrogen sprinkling can be done by hand during its flower bearing process. This induces entire flowering and 8-10 days time is saved in the crop ripping process. Urea Sprinkling at the time of flower coming has a positive effect on the produce of pea foliage and the number of foliage is also reduced which results in curtailing the unnecessary expenditure of foliage plucking. The field also gets prepared for the next crop. In the same way hand sprinkling in wheat crop should be done after 40-45 days of sowing. In addition if there are signs of zinc deficiency in wheat crop then sprinkle a solution of 5kg zinc sulfate and 20- kg of urea dissolved in 1000 litre water for one hectare land. After 15 days, repeat this process.

Publicity and awareness drive

The adverse effects of urea can be brought down by giving proper and timely advice to farmers for its proper use. For this it is necessary to provide information to farmers on the proper and timely urea use processes. They should be told about the beneficial drip irrigation and fertigation technologies. This will ensure the optimum usage of urea to the crop. Environment will also get improved. Farmers must be made aware of the

adverse effects of unbalanced urea usage. For this Farmers Conference, Kisaan Mela, symposiums etc can be held. Government, Agricultural Scientists and farmers will have to sit together and think over on how to build such conditions in which to get maximum farm output how farmers can use irrigation means and nitrogen fertilisers in a judicious and balanced manner. Policies to avoid the possible threats caused by excessive and improper urea use must be devised only then we are able to lay a foundation of clean environment and sustainable harvesting. To draw farmers attention on this focal issue this need a complete and wider full fledged publicity drive.

Conclusion

Excessive and unbalanced urea use is a serious problem. The soil fertility and productivity is affected adversely in this manner. This in turn brings down the farmers over all income. In addition, increased use of urea also increases the water and air pollution. So it the utmost requirement that in growing crops urea should be used in a proper and balanced quantity and for the nutritional element management the inclusion of organic fertilizers should be coordinated. If we do not lay timely emphasis on the balanced urea use then the dark future of food scarcity looms large. So to counter this threat we need effective measures in this regard. In future to attain food grain supply, environment protection, quality of food products and its nutritional value we will have to use urea mindfully during crop cultivation. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi recently on the occasion of the foundation day of Indian Council of Agricultural Research has asked the scientists to go for new initiatives and new technologies in research works and later on transfer this to farmers. He has also referred to the Lab to Land Programme.

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[Translated by Sudhir Tiwari]

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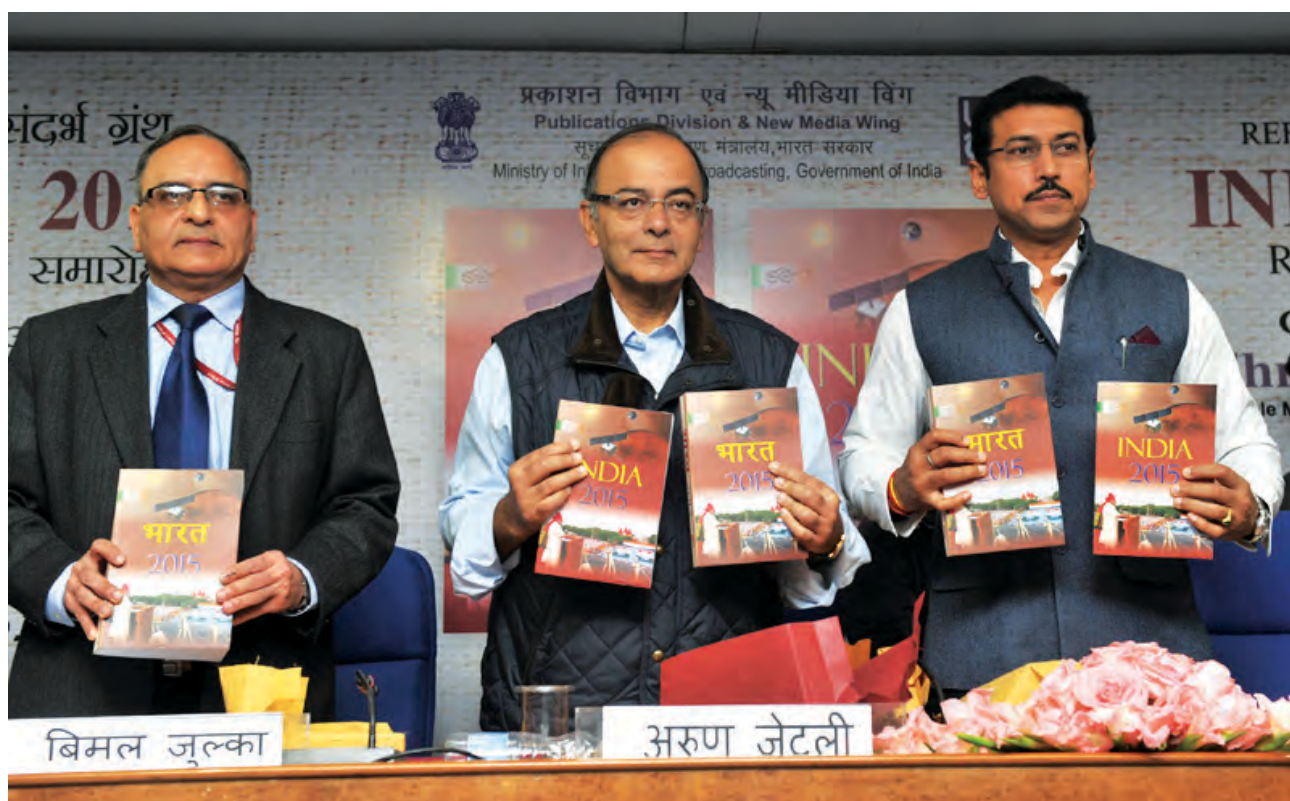
'INDIA- 2015 REFERENCE ANNUAL' RELEASED

The Union Minister for Finance, Corporate Affairs and Information & Broadcasting, Shri Arun Jaitley released 'India- 2015 Reference annual' in New Delhi on February 09, 2015. On the occasion, he said that the publication this Reference Annual book is a great tradition coming from years. He added that the book gives authentic information about 'this great country' year by year. He also said that the digital form of this book will soon be released by the Ministry so that the world could have access to the same at no cost.

He further said that there could not be a better document than this for anyone who wants to know the details about this country.

He said that this book will be a good addition to all our libraries.

Bharat – 2015/ India – 2015 Reference Annual is published by the Publications Division under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. It is an exhaustive and authentic repository of information about the activities, progress and achievements of various ministries and departments of the Government of India during the year. The Book covers all aspects of national life and development from rural to urban, industry to infrastructure, science and technology, art and culture, polity, economy, health, defense, education and mass communication. A separate chapter on the government's flagship programmes and new initiatives such as 'Swachh Bharat Mission', 'Make in India Campaign', 'Pradhan Mantri Jan DhanYojana' etc. have also been included.



The Union Minister for Finance, Corporate Affairs and Information & Broadcasting, Shri Arun Jaitley releasing 'India-2015 Reference Annual' The Minister of State for Information & Broadcasting, Col. Rajyavardhan Rathore and the Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Shri Bimal Julka are also seen.

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