

Imagine without Girl!

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Introduction The status of girl and women in any society can be measure with the help of indicators that include demography, educational economic and other socio cultural aspects. India has witnessed since from 69 years of Independence mixed and paradoxical scenario regarding status of girl and women, as highlighted by some indicators. Since women and girls are not a homogeneous category across the country, their status varies across patriarchal and matriarchal belts of India.

As per census figures while the child sex ratio in India in 2001 stood at 927 girls for every 1000 boys, which dropped drastically to 918 girls for 1000 boys in 2011. The ratio is significant higher in certain states such as Punjab and Haryana(118 and 120 respectively as per 2011 census). Mizoram has the highest sex ratio (0-6 years) of 971 followed by Meghalaya with 970. Haryana is at the bottom with ratio of 830 followed by Punjab with 846. As per 2012 children's fund (UNICEF) report India ranked 41 among 195 countries.

Even though amidst uproar of technological development, gender equality and enforcement of law, female infants are still found dumped in trash or continued to be killed in the womb. The social evil is deep rooted in Indian ethos and the most shocking fact is that the innovative and hard high end technologies are brutally killing the girl child. UN figures out that about 750,000 thousand girls are aborted every year in India. In India social practices have greatly influenced the health and wellbeing of a girl child resulting in a higher mortality rate. It is believed that every year 12 million girls are born in the country but unfortunately only one third of them survive. Some are killed in the womb, some at the time of birth, some die due to ill health and some due to poor nutritional status. Only a few numbers of girls are able to survive till their 15th birthday.

Apart from erring doctors, experts reiterate that the Indian laws against foetal determination too are rather weak. Under pressure from activists the government outlawed the use of ultrasounds to reveal foetal gender in 1994. The penalties were upped in 2002 three years in jail and a 230 US dollar fine for the first offence and five years imprisonment and 1,160US dollar penalty for the second offence. But despite this easy accessibility to modern technologies such ultrasonography and amniocentesis to determine the gender of foetuses has fuelled the trend of foeticide. If the foetus is found to be a girl, families have no qualms about getting it aborted.

Shockingly punitive action against offenders of female foeticide has been so abysmal that in the last 13 years of the existence of the pre conception and pre natal diagnostics techniques (PC/PNDT) act 1994, only 406 cases have been registered against offenders all over the country. Out of these, only two convictions have taken place. The misuse of reproductive technologies for elimination of female foetuses.

The between illegal and unethical medical practitioners and families with an aversion for daughters has been addressed through the various facets of this legislation that was created after country- wide consultation with women's groups, rights based organisations ,ethical medical practitioners, the people forums, schools, intellectual parents. One of the most progressive elements of this law is that it keeps a clear distinction between the right to abortion and sex selective abortions thereby upholding reproductive rights of women.

There is no audit of the records of the PCPNDT Act and no review of the judgements by any government authorities. In such scenario where there is a lack of will to implement the Act,it cannot be dismissed as a failed legislation. In Punjab, Haryana and Maharashtra where there have been substantive convictions the positive impact on the child sex ratio in terms of increase in the number of girls born has been noticed.

There are so many problems faced by girl child in India. Extreme poor condition often think that girl child cause more economic hardship to them as they will to have to arrange for huge dowry for her marriage. And poor families discriminate in food distribution between male and female. For this reason majority of the girl children have malnourished and anaemia. Some women they don't have time to breast feeding and also infant food. They neglects of the infant health (Immunization).

Illiteracy is leading cause of female foeticide. They are ignorant people and not able to judge their action in the right perspective. Implementing the PCPNDT Act has already delivered positive results wherever it has been sincerely enforced and monitored. So along with the emphasis in education for girls, employment and property rights for them, the ban on sex determination should continue and be applied more rigorously.

Therefore to meaningfully address the phenomena of declining sex ratio there is a need to work in a collaborative manner with all stake holders for rectifying the social manace in a substantial manner. Further there is a need to adopt multiple methodologies for instance street plays,theatre, dance, drama, debates and lectures to convince to all societal agencies about valuing the girl child as an asset and not to treat her as liability. In addition print and audio and audio materials need to strengthen the dissemination of success stories of girl and women achievers across state s to promote self esteem and self confidence among parents that daughters can also scale heights given an opportunity. All materials accessed by students at different school stages can consciously weed out gender bias and stereotypes.

The nation cannot afford to ignore the needs of the girl child any further discriminate against her. The need of her to realize our responsibilities and give halt to this evil crime.

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