

## **Forbidden Flowers Of Mother India: A Girl Child**

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### **Abstract**

*The Indian girls are worshipped before attaining menstruation on every religious occasions girl child is served with sweets and given gifts. In Indian religious scripts women are considered as goddess of Gyan(knowledge) Saraswati, goddess of wealth (Laxmi), goddess for abolition of evil (Durga) and many more. They have been praised and respected on paper but in practice they are been abused and humiliated at every juncture of life. The present paper reflects on the discrepancies in the law and Hippocratic social system.*

### **Introduction**

A girl child has attained an important position in religious scripts. In Indian cultural practices Kumarika (before attaining menstruation) is worshipped during important religious rituals. Before any religious rituals Kumarika bhojan is arranged where they are served with lot of sweets and also given gifts, during Navaratra festival on the eighth day mostly they are worshipped. Even before starting and after completion of Namada Parikrama Kanya Bhojan program is arranged at large scale. But same Kumarika after attaining menstruation at the age of 9-10 yrs her life gets completely changed she is not allowed to move freely with her male friends, she is been told to live under the guidance and supervision of elders. She is been escorted where ever she goes. She loose her worship hood soon after menstruation begins and her real struggle as a women begins where she gets a secondary treatment throughout her life.

### **Social Status of Girl Child**

1. Sexratio: According to 2011 census  
833 girls per 1000 boys in Maharashtra, at National level it is 943 per 1000 male for all age group and 919 for 0-6 age group. In Maharashtra it is 929 for all age group and 894 for 0-6 age group.
2. Female Foeticide  
According to a documentary "Agents of Death: Female foeticide in Maharashtra published by The Hindu, 400000 sex selective abortions take place in India, 1095 female foetuses are killed every day in India.
3. Mean age at Marriage The SRS 2014 showed that, the women's mean age at marriage at all India level was 22.3 years. But still in rural, tribal and among urban poor it is below age 21 even child marriages are prevalent.
4. Mortality Rate

In 2014, the Infant Mortality (IMR) for females was 40 while that for males was 37.

5. Literacy Rate

As per Census 2011, the literacy rate at all India level is 72.98% and the literacy rate for females and males are 64.63% and 80.9% respectively.

6. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

During 2014 -15, at Primary level for females and Enrolment Statistics males are 101.4 and 98.9 respectively; at middle class level the corresponding figures In 2014-15, there are 93 girls per 100 boys in primary class, 95 in middle class, 91 in are 95.3 and 87.7; at higher secondary level, the status is at 65.8 and 63.8 respectively.

As per M/o Human Resource Development, the average annual drop-out rate for Drop-out Rates females at Primary, Upper Primary and Secondary levels are 4.1, 4.5 and 17.8 respectively vis –a– vis the respective figures of 4.5, 3.1 and 17.9 for males.

7. Health Status

1. As per the survey conducted by ICDS per 100 boys 55 girls are found malnourished.
2. Most of the adolescent girls are facing gynaecological morbidities and are found malnourished which results into malnourished women.

8. Girl child labour

1. House maid servant is assisted by her daughter at work place. Girls assist their mother in every house hold activities as compared to boys.
2. In Brick kiln industry girl child labour is highly prevalent. Girls in brick kiln industry lack with basic education, health and hygiene services. Even during menstruation girls are supposed to carry out work assigned to them no rest is allowed to them during menstruation.

9. Violence against girls

1. In every second girls in India face one or the other form of violence like rape, acid attack, sexual, physical and mental harassment, dowry deaths, domestic violence, and many other forms of violence.

The above data reveals that girls in our country are not safe and suffer from discrimination at every juncture of life and hence to protect them from social evils various laws have been passed. But these laws too are having discrepancies.

### **Discrepancies in Law**

1. According to Hindu Marriage Act minimum age for marriage is 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys. But if the marriage takes place below the prescribed age by law it is valid until and unless somebody has challenged it. It means that a girl child below the age of 18 if married and if she or on her behalf nobody complains then the marriage is valid.
2. According to the provisions of Article 375 it states that if the age of girl is less than 18 years but more than 16 years then she has no objection to maintain physical relations, then Law too has no objection. This indicates that a girl child legally cannot be married

below 18 years of age but if the marriage takes place and if she has no objection then everything is fine.

3. According to the provision with regard to “Rape” also there is variation. The provision says that if the girl is above 15 years of age and married and if her husband is having sexual relation with her it is not governed by the definition of Rape.

### PCPNDT ACT

According to PCPNDT ACT sex determination and sex selection termination of pregnancy is prohibited. Even though there is severe punishment for both Doctor and patient it is observed that people are violating PCPNDT ACT, families of first girl child go for sex determination test of second child is common throughout India and even in progressive Maharashtra. According to Beti Bachao and Beti Padao campaign nearly 470000 girls are missing. This shows that in our country girl child is not permitted to enjoy constitutional provision of right to survival they are killed in mother’s womb itself. This is a cruel violence against girl child. A study conducted by Lek Ladki Abhiyan observed that the sex determination and sex selection abortion is found more prevalent among educated, economically and socially well off families because this test requires good amount of money. Sex selection abortions are closely associated with dowry practice and hence land lords to prevent common civil code they are not allowing a girl child to bom in their families.

### **Nakusa**

The meaning of Nakusa means unwanted girl child. Naming a girl child Nakusa is found common among economically poor families. When a series of girls are born the last born girl child is named Nakusa where there is a belief that the next child born would be definitely boy. In Satara district nearly 1278 Nakusa were renamed but still family members and people around call them by Nakusa it is a kind of stigma attached to them and it is an abusing word been used to call them. This practice indicates the strong desire of a male child in our Indian society.

### **Social Work Intervention**

1. Women in India are considered as a second sex. Even Simon De Bouvereir in her book Second Sex a Bible for Women has mentioned that women are not born but are primed. Right from birth girl child face discrimination and grows up as a woman with discrimination. For example Among Kanjarbhat (nomadic tribe community) an in human Virginity test is followed even among educated families and if any family denies Virginity test that particular family gets out casted. Among other communities too there is Virginity test by asking girls to return home before getting dark and not to develop intimacy with boys this practice is too indirectly Virginity test. There are various new movements are initiated to bring gender equity and raise voice for the protection of rights of woman like Me Too, Occupy it, Right to Pee, Happy to bleed, Temple entry but all

these movements are limited for Celebrities and for higher class woman. Social work institutions can help students to understand these movements with social work perspectives and can reach to grass root level to create awareness about helping woman to understand that they are human being and should resist against violation of their basic human rights. These movements should become common woman's movement and every woman should feel that they should connect with these movements.

2. To rectify above mentioned discrepancies in law, reframing and designing new policies for Girls and woman social work institutions can play a key role by conducting research and helping policy formulators to incorporate the necessary suggestions and making our laws and policies gender neutral.
3. As far as Hindu Marriage Act is concerned the legal age for a girl child to marry is 18 and for boy it is 21. Secondly it is also been said that biologically a girl should conceive after completion of 21 yrs of age. Among Indian families it is necessary that within a year of marital age a girl should be a mother otherwise she will be considered as an impotent. It is also been found that family members tries for second marriage of their son. Some families are waiting for their daughters to complete 18 yrs and immediately they arrange for their marriage now within few days a girl gets matured to marry and settle a family, whether she becomes capable enough to carry out all the familial responsibilities, whether she is capable enough to take proper decisions, whether she is aware about her body, whether she has proper knowledge about sexual relation, and last is whether she is ready to be a mother. Getting married at age of 18 has major educational loss to our nation. If we consider that women constitute nearly half of the population of our country but very few women contributes in economic development, then how our nation can develop without proper development of Indian women. All these facts and realities need to be taken up by Social Work colleges and should contribute in raising the legal age for girl to marry from 18 to 21 so that both girl and boy will be of same age this will help in one way to bring gender equity.

### **Social Work Intervention**

Social work profession play a vital role in dealing with social issues, women issue is one among them. Social work profession has found most suitable to minimize the severity of social problems at large scale too. The methods, techniques and tools of social work are found most effective in dealing issues related to girls. Social work institutions can play a major role by placing students for concurrent fieldwork placement, block placement training. Few minor and major research projects can be undertaken in the field of girl's issues and suggestions can be given to government to reframe and frame new policies for making the life of girls in India more human and comfortable.

### **Conclusion**

It is been remarkably observed that girl child in India experience discrimination throughout her life in reality but in religious scripts she is been worshipped. Even after providing her right to survival by constitution of India she is been killed in the mother's womb by violating PCPNDT Act. This show in our country girl child birth is forbidden by our society. Even though various Laws are been passed to protect girl child but these Laws too are having discrepancies. To give justice and remove discrepancies from Law social work institutions can play a major role. Field activities carried out at different level can take up various activities to create gender equity. Social work educators can carry out research to make necessary recommendation in order to correct and prevent discrepancies in protection Laws to girl child in India.

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