

Gender Biases in Tribal Households; a Case of Karnataka

Dr.G.Valentina

1.0 Abstract

Social Development of tribals is still in a questionable status though many privileges are accorded to the community in a village in terms of schools, hostels, scope for economic activities. Pitiably, the aspect of this community is that people are not aware of the privileges extended to them by Government of India. They are still dependent notwithstanding 70 years of independence and have still not thought and found ways to become independent and self-sustainable. The nagging reason is that they are grouped into customs and social evils sinking them into the mire pit of superstitions standing in the way of their development. Present article is based on a village study research in the state of Karnataka, Gulbarga district undertaken by the National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayat Raj. The article captures the saga of a small baby girl who is unaware of the uncouth world around her which does not welcome her and is waiting to consume her.

1.1. A. Socio-Economic Aspects of the Village

State of Karnataka, District Gulbarga, Taluka Chincholi, Village Vantichinta, Thanda - Vantichinta hoists a small Tribal Population of 1000 tribal habitations. This is an undeveloped Tribal Village, situated fifteen kilometres away from the main road and only a bus approaches the village twice in a day. Three villages and ten tandas together constitute Venkatapuram Gram Panchayat and there are 140 families in Venkatapuram village. The Gram Panchayat meets once every month to solve problems related to housing, water, and road access and Gram Panchayat has 19 members.

People in Gram Panchayat depend on forest produce for their livelihoods and are involved in collection and sale of forest products like Gum Kraya, Tendu leaves, beedi leaves, Mohua (ippapuvvu). Forest produce like Tendu leaves and Beedi Leaves are found in large quantities for income generation activities. Men in tribal communities do not work and so onus of building economics for family lies on women. Tribals are usually shy and do not engage much in interaction with outsiders, they are silent and take time to understand. Men, mostly indulge in intoxication while women go for work. Tribal Women of present times do not adorn themselves in traditional attire but are dressed in normal traditional saris but elderly tribal women are decked in traditional gypsy dress, adorning themselves with their traditional ornaments and engage in making tribal jewellery called as 'kasuthi', as most of the women have "an hands" on experience on making ornaments, women from the village make ornaments by value adding the products and market them in locally.

There is one school in the village with 136 students attending school, there are eight classes addressed by two teachers and one headmaster. Out of 136 students, 68 constitute boys and 71 constitute the girls. However it is seen that on an average only 50% of the students attend school. As per the new education policy the school has seen to it that there are no failures in the school and all the children are promoted to the next class irrespective of their performance. For higher education from class 9th to 10th, children in the village go to another village called Koncharam situated 5 Kilometers from the village. The school has a management committee

comprising of nine members and one school development management committee in the school. Adjacent to the school there is an ashramashala belonging to social welfare

Table -1 Number of students enrolled in the school

Sl.No	Boys	Girls	Total
1	09	08	17
2	07	06	13
3	13	13	26
4	07	09	16
5	08	11	19
6	10	09	19
7	07	07	14
8	04	06	10
Total	65	69	134

department. In which students from class 1 to 5 are given food where nearly 30 students take food on a regular basis but no one stays in the hostel through it is residential.

1.1 B. MGNREGA works in the village

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act envisages 90 days of guaranteed employment in the village as workers apply for jobs. However works observed in the village are very sloppy. There are 130 job cards available in the village and works like construction of Drains, Check Dams and Side Drains are considered under the program. Gram Panchayat finalizes the works for the year and also prepares the budget each year around Rs.95 lakhs per year. However villagers claimed that they were never given any works ever since the year 2009. Passbook perusal revealed that villagers got work for only four months in the year 2009 subsequently after which till this date no such works were accorded to them. In an informal discussion it was revealed that Job cards are taken away from village people and the panchayat undertakes the responsibility of completing the works by utilizing machines and there is an understanding between villagers and panchayat, because of which villagers receive 10% of the money for no work done and the

rest is enjoyed by panchayat members. An interface between villagers and panchayat raised following issues:

1. Most people in the village had no Job Cards with them
2. There is dissatisfaction amongst villagers that they were never given any works
3. Panchayat claims that MGNREGA works are publicized in villages despite which people from the village do not participate
4. Non-renewal of job cards and non-registration of bank accounts by villagers has been a hindrance in implementing MGNREGA works and subsequent remuneration to villagers.

In the given situation NIRD has intervened and requested panchayat members to renew their MGNREGA Pass books and open their accounts so as to enable the workers to take up MGNREGA works in lean season that follows. In MGNREGA the workers earn a sum of Rs 125/- per day and the wage payments are same for men and women.

1.1. C. Potential for economic activities in the village

i. entrepreneurship; It was also interesting to note in the village that farm owners have started practicing payments in bulk to workers paying lump sum amount of Rs. 40,000/- to the worker in MGNREGA by paying it in two rounds of Rs.20,000/-+20,000/- each in two seasons. A new scheme on entrepreneurship development has been commissioned by government of Karnataka by name Udyogini which entitles an aspiring person to get Rs. 35,000/- to start an enterprise, wherein Rs.25,000/- is received as loan component and Rs.10,000/- is subsidy component under the program.

ii. Water Bodies for Fish Ponds; Two water bodies Dharmasagar and Antavaramare located in the village with proposals to execute fish pond in these two water bodies along with the conversion of ponds originally utilized for irrigating agriculture land as water is available in the ponds for 8 to 9 months during the year facilitating entrepreneurship in fish rearing.

iii. Large space is available for starting vermin composting technology in the village which is dumped with agriculture waste.

1.2 The Interlude

In such a socio economic background lives a poor Tribal household in a small house built by utilising appropriate housing technologies from locally available stones. The stones are perched one over the other to making the walls and they are cluttered by red mud seeming to have been 'red washed' (instead of white washed), with the splatter of rain of the season. These stone walls stand upright giving a gloomy look in the thanda located 30 km away from the city. What happened in the village, no one in our entourage knew. Men and women squatted near entrance of the house and did not utter even a single word but sat staring into morning skies as though searching for something. The entourage from NIRD & PR was unable to guess what went wrong.

Gradually the entourage crept closer to the house as transect walk culminated in the village, and from a distance heard cries of a small child who could be over three months of age. And the baby seems to be crying relentlessly for quite some time as though asking to be relieved from some pain. And the pain for what and from where no one knew. The mother was trying her level best to stop the child from crying but there was no way that it seems to be working. But concern of the people, squatted around the house made the home even gloomier giving an impression of something drastic to have happened.

Crux of the situation is understood as that, a socially backward and economically poor tribal family is forced to become gender biased and become gender biased. According to voices of the people 'a boy – a male child is the only concern of the family'; having a male child in the family is celebrated, as he is considered to take the generation forward; while the girl child is destined to leave the parents' house after a certain age. The myth further goes on that, no family lineages are built with her and she is stigmatised as a burden to the family as she cannot contribute to the visible economy of the family. So goes the saga in vantichinta village, Chincholi Taluka, Gulbarga district in Karnataka state where a young tribal woman had the fortune of giving birth to three girl children in a row. The eldest is 8 years old; younger daughter is 6 years old while the youngest is just eight months old. Perceptions of a third girl child in a row in the family and the lacuna of a male child were much invigorated by Tribal society and the family. Guilt has befallen on the family of having a third girl child of a curse and growing insecurity of taking care of girl children was surmounting on the family. However a decision to try for a fourth child in the family was not

ruled out keeping in view the thought of being blessed by a male child at least the next time. The father in law is worried since his only son is blessed with three Girl children. Then comes the question - which will enlighten the name of the family if the family does not have a male child. How will the generation run? Who will take care of the family? Who will take care of the old parents? Who will serve them in their old age? With this frame work in her mind set and being bogged by chaos, the mother took the girl child to health centre for immunising the child in her usual course. The baby was bubbly, pretty and cute, upon seeing the child and learning that she happens to be the third girl child in the family a critical suggestion came from other women waiting in health centre - to sell the child. Distraught over the discussions of giving birth to a third girl child ever since the child was born, the mother agreed to get rid of the baby to give a fourth trial for a male child. Sequential focus on these thoughts and discussions prepared the women to set the baby girl for sale who gave her consent and searched for an event to disburse the baby with the premise that in present day world of expenses it is very difficult to up bring a girl child and the family being poor will not be able to provide all her necessities.

Gradually the information diffused in the village and she became the object of discussion firstly in the hospital and then in the village and soon in the police station and the newspapers. All the villagers who advised her on having a male child made a bee line to enquire, for what she hit the newspapers for and discussing the story amongst them mulled over it again and again with whoever was curious to know about it. The perturbed husband sat near the entrance of his house with hands on his head not knowing what to do. Heaps of people wasted their time around the family in distress,

squatting near his house, and there was an aura of spectacular gloom and silence, except for occasional cries of the baby who was crying for some space and air to breath.

The baby was sick with cold and congestion in her chest and was restless for breath. The family was poor and found it difficult to even meet her health expenses but there was a need to attend to her as the family feared allegations of sabotage to kill the child by neglecting her health and calling it a natural death. Fearing such circumstances the police posted a woman constable to guard the child who lived in their house for all the twenty four hours. The baby was crying and lamenting as though she is promising the family that she will do her best in keeping the promise to take the role of a male child and take care of the family in the future. The father was much worried about the child as she was not responding to the medicines and any anomaly would amount to him being a party to his wife for his negligence in getting rid of the child and he may have to go behind the bars. Fearing so he went and brought some money on credit even though it meant a higher rate of interest for attending to the health of the child. The bewildered father in law has no words in his mouth and became silent to the core. But soon by the tender mercies of the family the baby girl is alive and has started kicking, crawling and walking but the relief due to her is still much in the waiting and is not fully accorded to her.

1.3 Social sentiments of Tribal Community

Soon the other women in the village joined the discussion from their understanding and started conversing on the role of a woman in the household, in agriculture, in general housekeeping, and also economic development of the family. They also consciously stated that once the boy gets married they are tagged to their wives and serve them to satisfy them and

establish their own families desert the families and there is no one to take care of the elders of the family. They are also conscious and clear that a girl child, though she goes away after the marriage, she will move compassionately by addressing and attending to the problems of the parents. Despite such heartfelt confessions, discussions, experiencing and assessing the realities, yet there is a deep and inner feeling in the women that a male child carries the lineage of the family and keeps the name of the family and proclaim that every household should have a male child and they are not able to compromise a situation in which there is no male child in the family.

1.4 Rehabilitation

As the issue attracted the attention of elected representatives they immediately came to the rescue of the family and offered financial assistance for building a house on a small patch of land belonging to the family. Subsequently they laid the basement expending Rs.25, 000/- and left the rest of the construction to the family to fend for themselves. The village Secretary took the responsibility to construct the house but could neither complete it nor did he submit the estimate for the works to be undertaken for its logical completion. Things stood where they were even after eight months of its initiation and the Panchayat Secretary's term of office is completed and he has laid down his office and there is no way that expenditure statements can be forced out from him. As a leader of the masses he lacked all compassion to settle the issue and accord the right privileges which the government has extended to the family. The issue had to be reworked by NIRD & PR in its Village Level Action Research Study. In its intervention, NIRD has drawn an action plan to make an assessment of the expenditure on the existing structure and get the next instalment of Rs.

25,000/- released for the completion of the work.

A solace though for the family that the government has recognised the need of the family and the thought that a small construction on a patch of family land would suffice, and the family will now not think of selling the girl child is a presumption. Will according such privileges stop the sale of the girl child? Will this break the barriers of gender bias? Will the girl child be no more discriminated? Will the girl child be accorded all the rights due to her? This is a million dollar question.

Assumption that the family is socially and economically backward and is selling the baby for economic reasons is an eye wash and the government according the money for the construction of the house does not address the problem. Where are the tribal agencies, where are the tribal welfare departments? Where are the tribal educational agencies? Is it not their turn to chip in to educate and bring awareness in the tribal communities, on the privileges accorded by the government to them and empower them to their utility?

There are deep fissures in the society. The society itself instigates and stigmatises the birth of a girl child and at the same time it pacifies the events rising fingers on those weaklings who out of frustration take a step while the same society backs out instead of lending its support on such occasions.

1.5 Response from NIRD & PR Academic Forum

Sharing this instance in educated academic platform at NIRD study forum, it sparked off a serious discussion. The intellectual community said -if the family is poor and cannot take care of the baby – why can't the baby be given for adoption to a family which does not have children? When the family cannot take care of

the baby girl, is there anything wrong? The baby girl will have a better future and will get all the emotional love and privileges from the family that adopts. Some others blurted emotionally - when such is the case why not the same be the treatment for the Boy Child? Such academic spurts may support such advances of giving the girl child for adoption. These remarks are made without realising the fact that, in its garb there can be many stories of the sale of girl children and this can become a commercial racket of setting the Girl Child for sale initially, and latter even without her reaching puberty will push her into human trafficking and other vices disturbing the dynamics in the society and over burdening existing social problems.

If not the sale of the Girl Child does it mean simple abandonment? Stunning evidences are seen in the state of then Andhra Pradesh and now Telangana 'Women welfare Department', where 98 % of the children that have been abandoned are the Girl Children in the age group of 0 to 2 years. It is a very happy moment to see twenty to thirty children in a common hall being taken care of by the Ayahs, who bathe, dress, feed and clean them. Being a Government body it takes the responsibility to take care of all such children and arranges for adoption of the children using legal platforms. Given a utopian thinking that such instances are made legal, the private agencies and the poor rural communities will take advantage of the situation and only girl children will become its obvious representatives and victims too. Since the society is gender biased and knowing the consequences, the institutions will be forced to adopt such practices. The obvious discontinuation of the activity by the missionaries and other NGOs in the recent past is an amalgamation of the premises that the girl children are sold out on a cost to foreign

parents and it is a commercial activity indulged in by the cream of the society. But till date reports and experiences strengthen the facts that the adopted children are given a good life and had a good future, whether in India or abroad.

1.6 Review of Gauri's Case after 6 months – A case of the sale of Girl Child

Not much has happened ever since the first visit of the NIRD team into the village. As promised the construction of the house sanctioned to the girl child Gauri the state Government. Considering the pathetic state of the family the government of Karnataka came forward to construct a small house in the name of the child (on the family's land) and released Rs.25, 000/- for the same. Upon enquiry it was reported that the previous panchayat secretary has initiated the construction work which was constructed until the basement and later abandoned. It is also learnt that the chairman has not submitted the expenditure statement and as a result, the works could not be continued subsequently and in the meantime the Gram Panchayat secretary's term of office was over and he laid down his office and left.

NIRD discussed the issue in detail and requested the Gram Panchayat to make an assessment of the construction that has been completed as on date and provide financial statement on it while seeking approval of the next instalment of Rs.25,000/- to resume the construction of the house.

1.7A Discussions on girl child in India:

Discussions Available on the girl child exhibit drastic disclosures; as per an official report - NEW DELHI, India is the most dangerous place in the world to be a baby girl. A newly released data shows that an Indian girl child

aged 1-5 years is 75% more likely to die than an Indian boy. This is the worst gender differential in child mortality for any country in the world. The Newly released United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) data for 150 countries covering over 40 years shows that India and China are the only two countries in the world where female infant mortality is higher than male infant mortality in the 2000s.

According to P Arokiasamy (1), professor of development studies at Mumbai's International Institute for Population Studies "Higher female mortality from age 1 onwards clearly indicated sustained discrimination, "as per his study on gender differentials in child mortality in India. He further stated that "Such neglect and discrimination can be in three areas: food and nutrition, healthcare and emotional wellbeing. Of these, neglect of the healthcare of the girl child is the most direct determinant of mortality," Studies have also shown that health-related neglect may involve waiting longer before taking a sick girl to a doctor than a sick boy, and is also reflected in lower rates of immunization for girls than boys. Such is the gender concern in the people in India which is male centric.

At the policy level, draft approach paper of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2) (2007-2012) prepared by the Planning Commission emphatically stated that 'Development of the child is at the centre of the Eleventh Plan'.

If we see the other side of the coin, female literacy rate in our country is still 53.87% and one third of the girls are malnourished. Reproductive age group women are anemic and suffering from various diseases contracted due to gender discrimination and limited access to health services.

Confirming these discussions the Census 2011 (12) is an eye opener as it records an all-time

low Child Sex Ratio (CSR) of 918, (number of girls per thousand boys) in the age group of 0-6 years. The declining sex ratio is a cause for concern and its persistence has serious implications for our society in the future. This is an alarming situation with possibilities for altering the demographic profile of the country. Providing education to a girl child is another intervention to empower large section of population. Education has its role to play the desired impact on the socio-cultural aspects of the country and pave the way for inclusive and sustained growth.

1.8 Girl Child Rights in India

In this garb if we look at the policy initiatives, the government of India has enunciated certain rights to the girl child wither are they and who knows these rights and who has taken the responsibility to diffuse them in the society, no one knows.

Government of India has taken many steps to enhance the status of girl child by enacting certain rights for the girl child some are the following:

- Sex determination tests during pregnancy abolished
- Child marriages declared illegal by the law.
- Prenatal and Antenatal care has been made compulsory for all pregnant women to fight malnutrition, illiteracy, poverty and infant mortality.
- Introduction of "Save the Girl Child" scheme by the government.
- According free and compulsory primary school education for both boys and girls till they attain the age of 14.
- Reservation of 1/3 seats in the local government for women.
- Legalising Anti-MTP, anti-sati laws, anti-dowry Act by legislature to enhance the

status of women and employment opportunities.

- Implementation of Five Year Plans with a focus on education status in the backward states
- Supply of school uniforms, midday meals and educational materials and repayments to girl's from SC and ST caste families.
- Initiating Balwadi-cum-crèches and primary school facility for girls.
- Organizing "Operation Blackboard" and other programmes for teacher's education
- Encouraging Open Learning System for in the backward areas.
- Declaration to accord equal treatments and opportunities for girl children
- Introduction of SHG activity in order to provide sustainable livelihood for girls from rural areas.

1.9 Government Interventions from the Learning's

To arrest this declining trend and ensure women's education, a national programme, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) (4). In a joint collaboration of three Ministries – Ministry of Women & Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resources development. Its objectives are: to protect a girl child of her right to be born and her right to life, and to empower her with education and life skills. Interestingly, the place selected for the launch of the programme carries significance, as Haryana shows its worst performers on Child Sex Ratio which stands at 877 females per 1000 males, and in case of 0-6 years, it is as low as 830, as per Census 2011. The programme focuses on creating awareness on safe motherhood, delivery and importance of giving birth to a girl child. It envisages awareness on registration at the Health

Centre's of pregnancy in the first trimester for pre-natal and post-natal care and counseling of mothers. To initiate this, the community watch groups involving women panchayat members, trained teachers, youth groups, and other local leaders be identified to act as facilitators.

Further to ensure enrolment of girls in schools, the programme envisages activating School Management Committees for universal enrolment of girls through special drives like the creation of Balika Manches, or Girls' Forum, to help bring back drop outs. the programme also provisions for incentives and awards to SMCs which enroll 100% girls at the primary level and also retains them in the first year, and for transition of 100% girls from class V into class VI, from class VIII to class IX and from class X to class XI. This campaign is also expected to bring positive reinforcements in favour of a girl child as;

- Providers of old age security to parents
- Benefits of simple weddings to protect parents from financial burden of dowry
- Equal property rights for daughters and sons and
- Prevention of early and child marriage.

Another programme to counter these ills is the "Dhanalaxmi scheme floated by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The Ministry floated the scheme to make cash transfer to the family of the girl child in order to meet the basic needs such as immunization, birth registration, school enrollment and maintenance up to the Class VIII and the Right to Education Act endorses free and necessary education to girl child.

Two most Important Schemes announced for Girls in the year 2015 to improve the girl child ratio are Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save Girl Child, Educate Girl

Child) and SukanyaSamridhiYojana (girl child prosperity scheme).

The programme has been conceptualized with the Objectives to(5) :

- Prevent gender biased sex selective elimination.
- Ensure survival & protection of Girl Child.
- Ensure education of the Girl Child.
- Improve the Nutrition Status of Girl Child.
- Promote a protective environment for Girl Child.

BetiBachaoBetiPadhao (Save Girl Child,

Educate Girl Child):(6) This programme was also launched under the leadership of Prime Minister NaredraModi on 22 january,2015 on *International Day of Girl Child* in Panipat, Haryana to promote Gender equity and prosperity. In order to promote this programme the action plan is drawn by ;

- a.) Promoting early registration of pregnancy and institutional delivery.
- b.) Ensure display of gudda-guddi board in Panchayatsshowing number of new born boys and girls every month.
- c.) Make Panchayats responsible for child marriage.
- d.) Create parliamentary forum of MPs representing 100 districts.

SukanyaSamridhiYojana (Girl child prosperity scheme) was launched by the Prime Minister Shri.NarendraModi. The programme envisages deposit of a small amount under the scheme of BetiBachaoBetiPadhao campaign (7).

However this scheme is restricted to only two girl children per each family. As the child attains ten years of age the parents can open an account with a minimum amount of Rs.1000/- and maximum of Rs.1.5 Lakhs. This amount fetches an interest at the rate of 9.1 percent and can be utilized to receive Income Tax rebate.

The account will remain operative for 21 years or until the marriage of the girl child and mandatory to attain 18 years of age. After the child attains the age of 18 years a partial withdrawal of fifty percent of the amount is admissible to meet the requirements of higher education.

Best practices of NGOs

Taking a cue from the incident and existing programmes of the concerned Government departments some of the best practices of the NGOs also can be considered to develop models from various programmes like the following;

CARE's Girls' Education Programme (GEP) (9) has been in operation for more than ten years and the programme. It has been launched to achieve CARE's long term goal of increasing the abilities of 2 million women, girls, and other marginalised people. Thus GEP's has facilitated to themprove opportunities for girls and women through their participation and accessing quality education for girls, the poor, marginalised and vulnerable communities. The programme has also tried to sort out the multi-tiered bottlenecks interfacing access to quality education. This intervention is achieved by conducting the programme in partnership with the government of India and developing a number of alternative approaches to schooling including formal school system. Another NGO by name Udaan (Flight), piloted in Uttar Pradesh in the year 1999 in the district for older girls that are out-of-school in the 9-14 age groups. This programme enables the students to complete primary education in 11 months in a residential mode. This programme was initiated in Hardoi district of UP. Through this accelerated learning model, 95 percent graduated by passing the government's grade-5 examination, 80 percent enrolled in grade 6 to continue their education in formal schools and

30 percent of the first class joined grade 7. The success of this model has been replicated by CARE in a tribal dominated Mayurbhanj district of the state of Orissa. This programme targets the most disadvantaged tribal girls residing in remote inaccessible habitations. These Lessons have now been initiated in Bihar and Haryana states.

Girls' Education Programme named Udaan-Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBV) floated in the state of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha & Haryana (8), these are a special residential schools started by the government under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) for older girls from socially disadvantaged communities who have never been enrolled in any school or had to drop out from primary school. In this project CARE has taken the responsibility to build the capacity of KGBV (11) teachers in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat in order to deliver quality education. While KGBV provides training in mathematics, computers and language to addresses knowledge and skill gaps, to adopt inclusive methods of instruction. These interventions of CARE in schools has led to high student achievement rates, better student/teacher relationships, and increased student self-confidence. In Uttar Pradesh, about 90 percent of KGBV girls (assessed over a two-year period) achieved language competence, 72 percent achieved competence in mathematics, further, exposure to computers increased levels of confidence amongst the girls, acquiring new spirit of questioning and logical reasoning. This is a learner-centered approach.

Girls' Leadership critical Initiative is another invention of CARE to fight against poverty. This programme aims to enable girls to develop leadership skills and work with their families, communities and countries to overcome poverty after completing their primary

education. Girls in this age are chosen as this age range is a critical in their transition between childhood and adulthood and with the onset of puberty, many girls get married and assume the responsibilities of the home this intervention is specifically made to empower women in the process of achieving sustainable reductions in poverty. Another intervention on Join My Village programme (10) intensifies on maternal and newborn health with a focus on integrating gender interventions by engaging individuals and households within the village in the delivery of public health services, inculcating a sense of ownership by the community. The project also involves men partners in maternal and newborn health care programmes.

Similarly Realisation of Citizenship through Good Governance is another programme floated for women empowerment by understanding knowledge gaps that women face while realising their rights as voters.

ICDS, another largest initiative of Government of India is mandated to providing holistic services to children on Pre-School Education, Health and immunization through Anganwadicenters (AWC). The overall objective of the programme is to ensure that children belonging to marginalised lower caste people in the age group 3 to 8 have a smooth transition from home to formal schools. Linking home, preschool (Anganwadi) and formal school for making the environment child centred, facilitate transition and promote learning. Further developing 50 model sites along with the government is the objective of the programme and to serve as demonstration sites. The key strategies of the project is development of locally relevant child centred curriculum, training of parents and teachers and mobilizing communities and stakeholders.

1.10 Suggestions

Learning's from the incident are suggestive of the following;

- There is a deep gender bias in the rural villages which needs to be addressed. Men and women need to be educated on gender concerns.
- Girls and boys should be treated equally and socialised at home and also by the peers.
- Education of the girl child is a must.
- Privileges extended by Government to girl child should be canvassed and advocated by Government and civil society and bring awareness amongst the poor and the government should incentivise all such organisations.
- There are schools, ashrams, scholarships, reservations in educational as well as employment sectors, specific privileges for girl children and many more should all be in the ambit for dissemination of officials where ever there are such backward communities.
- BALmelas and BALSansad should be encouraged as is done in the state of Rajasthan.
- Mock drills, special sensitisation programmes to be encouraged for the teachers.
- Films, SHG activity and participation in discussions should be made forth coming from women.
- Awareness on saving schemes for girl children should be publicised.
- Gender budgeting interventions should be stirred up and strengthened.
- Social Impact Assessments of projects should be done and its impacts should be educated to people and updated on line.
- Every indulgence in gender exploitation should be ostracised socially.

1.11 Conclusion:

Today sex ratios displayed by India are on the down trend showing 923 girls for 1000 boys.

Instances of foeticide according the reports are on the rise in the communities which can afford the sex detection technology. But in the Tribal Communities when a girl child is born there are reports wherein she is either neglected and allowed to die on its own or fed with paddy with husk to choke her throat leading to natural death. Similar is the case with enrolments in primary and secondary education. There are villages where women are not found for marital purposes. Further distorted figures in the sex ratio may emerge in future census. This is an awakening call. There may be many such stories in Indian communities not having seen the light of its expression. Amalgamation of such attitudes and the associated actions are the expressions of the evil face called gender bias. Swinging into action arresting the process is the only solution which helps in a paradigm shift.

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