



Human rights of a girl child

Babila Chauhan

Department of Economics, G.N.G. College, Yamuna Nagar, Haryana, India

Abstract

Human Rights are universal and civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights belonging to all human beings. Children and young people also have human rights as minors and the rights to the need for special care and protection. Because girl children are particularly subject to certain human rights violations, therefore require additional protection. In many cultures and societies, the girl child is denied her human rights and sometimes her basic needs. She is at increased risk of sexual abuse and exploitation and other harmful practices that adversely affect her survival, growth and abilities. Therefore protection of her rights and elimination of all forms of discrimination against her is highly recommended.

Keywords: human rights, political, economic, social and cultural rights

Introduction

Girl Child in Indian Society

We claim to have a rich ancient cultural heritage where it was proclaimed श्यत्रनार्यस्तुपूज्यन्तेरमन्ते तत्र देवता Women and girls to had respectful place in society. But even then girls had no access to education or they were not sent to gurukuls. During the time of foreign invaders like Afghans, Mughals the condition of girl's and women got miserable. In modern society, we claim to respect girl child and worship her as 'durga' and shakti. But how far do we mean it? Even today, there are several sections of the Indian Society where the girl child is treated as burden. Where several privileges are given to the boys, girls and often confined to house and given very little or no opportunities to learn and grow in life. Girls are discriminated from earliest stages of life in matter of nutrition, health care and education, family care and protection. In some families, daughters are considered to be economic burden because large dowries need to be given at their marriages.

Human Rights of Children and the girl Child

All forms of discrimination against women 1979 and in particular UNICEF assisted country programmes seek to ensure basic education for all girls, healthcare for adolescent girls and protection of girls from abuse and exploitation. The Child is defined as a person in the 0 to 18 years age group. In order to promote awareness and to encourage states to act towards the protection and the assurance of children's rights, the United Nations declared 1979 the "International Year of the Child". The convention on the Rights of the child adopted by the UN general Assembly in 1989, sets forth the basic human rights of children. These rights include non-discrimination, the right to survival and development of potential; protection from harmful practices. Rights of the children are also contained in other human right documents including 'universal declaration, the covenants and other International Human Rights Treaties and Declarations. UNICEF works to protect and promote the rights of all

children. Yet taking care of gender inequalities, the organisation has developed specific responses to reach girls.

Our Indian constitution captures the essence of human spirit and celebrates the finest principles of equality, justice and human dignity. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was set up in March 2007 under the Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005, an Act of Parliament (December 2005). NCPCR is a statutory body under the CPCR Act, 2005 under the administrative control of the Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India. The Commission's Mandate is to ensure that all Laws, Policies, Programs and Administrative Mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Rationale for Human Rights of girl child

Special reference to India

This is not to say that boys are not exploited and forced to work. But the agony of the girl is further compounded by the fact that she is born a girl if she is allowed to born at all.

i) Female Foeticide

The problem of girl and her being unwanted begins even before she is born. She is not allowed to be born to start enjoying all her other rights. Govt. of India passed a registration in 1996 banning sex-selective abortions but this law has done a little to save lives of unborn girls.

ii) Poor Health & Malnourishment

There is no guarantee that she will be born and will survive. If she survives, would she be given adequate nutrition, healthcare and environment to grow? It is highly doubtful. The infant mortality rate is 57 of every 1000 children before they reach the age of one year. Girls are often fed less particularly when there are less food resources. A diet low in calories, proteins and nutrients negatively affects girls growth

and development. They are also at increased risk of childhood mortality.

iii) Large gender gap in education

Girls from poor and rural households are more sufferers. Customary attitudes about educating boys over girls as boys support the family financially whereas girls are financial burdens are the main hurdles. 'Good girls' are not supposed to cross the threshold of house and should be confined to household works only.

iv) Child Marriages

In India 47% of women are married before 18 years of age, child marriage is a form of sexual abuse that separates the girl from her friends, isolates them socially, restricts education and makes them prone to violence from husband and in-laws. Child brides face health risks and even deaths due to early pregnancies.

v) Girl Child Labour

Girls work mostly in agriculture and there is no law to ban children working in agriculture. They are in our own homes as domestic labour; being the first to wake up and the last to sleep, insulted, abused, suspected for theft, friendless and lonely.

vi) Child Trafficking

Girls become victims of physical, psychological and sexual violence. They do not get safe and healthy working environment. Sometimes they are not safe even at their homes and from their family members.

Basic Human Rights of Girl-Child

Right to Life

a) Right to be born

Can an unborn child be victim of murder?

"An nation that destroys the life of an unborn girl, child who has been created for living and loving and nurturing, who has been created in the image of god, is in tremendous poverty."- Mother Teresa

In India, medical termination of pregnancy Act (MTP Act) permits abortions of the life of the mother is in danger. Violating the unborn child rights, killing of unborn girl child is homicide. Human rights of unborn girl child should be protected by any state.

b) Right to live

A girl child has all the rights to live in society once she is born, and that too with dignity and without any discrimination.

1. Right to freedom from cultural practices, customs and traditions harmful to child.
2. Right to protection from all physical or mental abuse.
3. Right to protection from all economic and sexual exploitation, prostitution and trafficking.
4. Right to freedom from child and early marriage.
5. Right to equal rights to inheritance.
6. Right to a healthy and safe environment.

Right to Education

The role of education is extremely important as it goes a long

way in empowering women. And the process of education should begin early in life. All girl children should be sent to school to receive quality education. But East and South Asian countries have the largest gender gaps in education. We have customary attitude giving preference to education of boys over girls. Whereas investment in girls education has spill-over benefits like heal their families, low fertility rate, low infant mortality rate, improved social and economic status are among them.

What must be done?

1. No modern and cultured nation can be called civilized if it experiences violence on its 'unborn' and 'new-borns.' It is therefore important to have a sustained campaign that works towards improving the status of girls and women, for this.
 - a) The government must ensure that it provides protection and security to children. The departments of women and child welfare, panchayati Raj, Police and education institutions should be specially designed and instructed in this direction.
 - b) Change in Mindset of People: How can we claim to be called 'developing' when our minds are not developing. Its high time now to realise that girls are not burdens on the family and as human beings they have equal access to life and all opportunities to grow.
 - c) There is need for strict laws against female foeticide and child-exploitation both physically and sexually.
2. The role of education is extremely important and is the key to empowering girls enabling them to become active citizens and to lead productive life with more choices. Educated girls are able to take right decisions in life and improve social and economical status of the society. Therefore, need of the hour is to make efforts to increase number of girls going to school. Government owes the responsibility to provide infrastructure for the same and society owes moral responsibility of providing them equal access to education.
3. There must be a strong and effective campaign against child labour and it should be abolished totally. The people must abide by the law and not employ girls as domestic servants.
4. Similarly, there should be commitment from the society and the government to stop child marriage at any cost.
5. Girl child has all the rights to live with dignity. She should be protected from sexual exploitation at homes or elsewhere. These girl child victims should not be treated as criminals by the society rather they owe special attention and special care.

Conclusion

There is an urgent need of changing mindset of patriarchal society which views as liabilities. It needs to be established that girls are in no way less than boys. When given the chance to nurture their talent and skills, girls tend to excel in different areas of life. Therefore, it is important that government and non-government organisations working in association should spread and popularise the message of saving and educating girl child. The campaign like 'Betibachao-Betipadao' should be fully supported by the society. It is the duty of society to

provide girls an environment where they can feel equal, free, safe and secured.

Rights of the girl child as human being can be protected if we perform our duties for the society as human beings.

References

1. Human Rights in a Developing Society-by Sankar Sen
2. Human Rights and Development-by Dr. Parul Aggarwal
3. Human Rights-Upender Baxi
4. Protection of girls and their rights- Shanta Sinha