



# Rashtra Mahila

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## Editor's Column

It is indeed a sad commentary on the Indian psyche that even after twenty years of the enactment of the Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, banning sex-selective abortions, followed by several amendments to make it more stringent, we are still confronted with the shocking revelation of discovering hundreds of aborted female foetuses in two wells situated on the premises of a private nursing home at Patiala in the Punjab.

Such reports have confirmed our worst fears; that long years of spending liberally on advertisements urging to save the 'girl child' and government incentives and disincentives with regard to two-child norms have had little impact on entrenched gender prejudices.

Therefore, the sex-ratio in India has remained almost static, during

the last twenty years. India has an average sex-ratio of 933 women to 1000 men, whereas women outnumber men by 5-6 percent in most parts of the world. The Punjab, in particular, has the lowest sex-ratio in the country 847:1000.

The skewed sex-ratio has proved categorically that affluence (Punjab

FOCUS

MISSING  
GIRLS

has the highest per capita income) and education do not necessarily improve the sex-ratio and has very little impact on the mindset of the people, who still prefer a 'male heir' to a girl child.

Hence, government instead of undertaking aggressive propaganda (which obviously has not worked) must direct their energies to proactive legislations and gender-

budgeting. Laws that help enhance the value of women would be more effective than propaganda and disincentives to overcome this social evil.

The Government has already taken several measures to combat this problem by insisting on joint pattas of land and property, making changes in the inheritance laws, offering attractive monetary benefits to girl children, reducing stamp duty on property bought by women, etc.

However, economic empowerment, leading to social equity, could be just one of the ways to stop female foeticide and infanticide. But, in the final analysis, an attitudinal shift against male-oriented bias and a change in the society's mindset towards the girl child will be able to stop this menace.

## Well Done NCW

Member Malini Bhattacharya went to Amta-II, Block under Jaipur Thana in Howrah District to visit Kundaliya, where a year ago four SC women had been severely beaten up by the residents of a neighbouring village, as a result of which two of them died. The member had earlier written on this matter to the Chief Minister and the Governor of West Bengal insisting that relief and rehabilitation in accordance with Prevention of Atrocities of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Act be granted to them immediately. Ms. Bhattacharya pursued the matter for almost a year and now the District Administration has granted the families of the dead women Rs. 1,60,000/- each, while

the two injured women have received Rs. 15,000/- each. She visited the two injured and found that they were still unable to go to work. She felt that the amount of Rs. 15,000/- was somewhat inadequate as relief and would like NCW to recommend a higher sum. However, she was also told by a Panchayat Member living in the village that he has arranged a monthly pension for them. The injured are being treated at the Block Health Centre. It was the persistent intervention of the NCW that finally led to some rehabilitation measures from the State Government.

## Maria Shriver Visits NCW

Ms. Maria Shriver, wife of California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger recently visited the National Commission for Women and spent three hours with Chairperson Girija Vyas and Commission members hoping to identify issues common to women in India and the US.

On a private visit to India, Ms. Shriver had formally requested the NCW for a meeting, which was arranged by the US embassy officials here.

Ms. Shriver's first question to NCW members was whether Indian women faced domestic violence, a major issue also in the US.

She appeared disturbed on hearing of female foeticide, child brides, and other education and health issues facing Indian women. When the Chairperson told her about NCW's recent mission to help women cheated in NRI marriages, Ms. Shriver

wondered if she could be of help, at least for such women in California.

However, she was disappointed to learn from American embassy officials that neither the US nor India was a signatory to the Hague treaty that entitles spouses to legal action against

a cheating partner living in another country.

Ms. Shriver was also interested to know when the Indian Parliament intended to pass the Sexual Harassment Bill, and whether there was a lot of sexual harassment in India.



*Ms. Maria Shriver talking to NCW Chairperson Dr. Girija Vyas*

## IMPORTANT DECISIONS

### No Dowry Case in the Event of Mutual Compromise

● In a landmark judgment, the Bombay High Court has held that in cases relating to dowry harassment, criminal prosecution against the husband and the in-laws can be dropped in the event of a mutual compromise between the man and his wife.

Section 320 of the Criminal Procedure Code allows certain criminal offences like cheating, fraud, defamation criminal assault and minor theft to be compounded, or settled, if the complainant and the accused settle the case mutually.

### Govt. Proposes Amendments in Law to Curb Foeticide

● The Ministry of women and child development has recommended amendments in the Pre-Natal

Diagnostic Techniques Act and Rules to check female foeticide.

The Ministry wants to make magistrates and divisional commissioners accountable for low male-female ratio in their areas and setting up of an 'appropriate authority' comprising retired judges, NGOs and others to monitor foeticide.

Officials have also pointed out that punishment should be increased and IT returns of clinics be cross-checked with the number of ultrasound tests done by them.

### CBSE for Helpline for Girls

● Alarmed by the rising sexual harassment cases among school children, CBSE has asked schools to create a helpline for women and girls students. Nodal offices and committees will be constituted to act as a redressal cell, adopt preventive

measures and also initiate immediate administrative action against the guilty.

The board has directed schools to act tough with the guilty as far as the nature of punishment is concerned. It is also said that the name of the harasser and the action taken against him should be made public by putting it up on notice boards.

### Capital's Top Medical Colleges May Get Rape Crisis Centres Soon

● A proposal to introduce rape crisis intervention centres (RCICs) in the Capital's medical colleges has been put forward by the Indian medical Association (IMA) in association with UNICEF. The institutes include Lady Hardinge Medical College, University Medical College, Maulana Azad Medical College, AIIMS and Safdarjung Hospital.

## Members' Visits

- Member Malini Bhattacharya attended the Regional Meeting of the Planning Commission in Kolkata to discuss the Draft Approach Paper to the 11th Plan. She also held a meeting with the Chairperson of the Complaints Committee on Sexual Harassment at workplace of Vidhanchandra Krishi Vishwavidyalaya, Nadia, to discuss their recently constituted Committee, its parameters and its rules and regulations. Later, she inspected the Rainbow Project and education project for street children being run at Loreto House, Sealdah.

She also visited Berhampur in Murshidabad district to inquire into the alleged torture and attempted murder of Jaishree Bhaskar by her husband and in laws. Later, she went to Julfia in East Vishnupur, South 24 Parganas to attend a Public Hearing on Child Marriage and Domestic Violence organized by NISHTHA with NCW assistance. There was one case where on hearing about the public hearing the in-laws of a young girl had taken her away to prevent her from attending the hearing. She was subsequently found dead under suspicious circumstances. A case has been lodged and the member has asked the organization to send her the papers so that the case may be followed up.

Ms. Bhattacharya looked into the case of Manjari Seksaria who said that her husband Gaurav Seksaria has submitted a petition in the High Court for divorce and had used the agreement signed by both parties in submitting the petition after tampering with the text.

- Member Neeva Konwar went to Trivandrum to attend a meeting organized by National Legal Services Authority on Trafficking and HIV/AIDS and access to social justice to victims/survivors attended by parliamentarians, members of the judiciary and NGOs.

Ms. Konwar spoke on trafficking & HIV/AIDS and on the sensitization of judiciary for giving justice to trafficking and AIDS survivors. Member Malini Bhattacharya spoken on reaching legal services to victims of trafficking & HIV/AIDS.

Member Neeva Konwar attended a seminar on empowerment of women organized by National Daksh Samiti at Shankar Dev Kala Shetra

Auditorium in Guwahati. Mr. Tarun Gogoi, CM of Assam inaugurated the function. Speaking on the occasion. Ms. Konwar explained the aims and objectives of NCW and appealed to the ladies to come forward to get financial assistance from NCW to organize awareness camps, public hearings and Parivarik Mahila Lok Adalats with NCW's support.

She also attended the annual meeting organized by State Commission for Women. She visited Nirmal Ashraya, a destitute home run by an NGO with the assistance from the state social welfare department.

Later, she attended the Regional Workshop on 'Declining Sex Ratio in North East Region' organized by Saptarshi Circle sponsored by NCW.

- Member Manju S. Hembrom attended a meeting on *Riti Riwaz Avm Rajya Ka Kanoon Me Mahilayon Ka Adhikar* at Ranchi. The participants of this meeting were lawyers, wives of IAS officers, legal advisers, representatives of NGOs. During the discussion, the member briefed the gathering about the programmes launched by the NCW for the upliftment of the status of women as well as programmes related to prevention of female foeticide, Chalo Gaon Ki Ore, the Dowry Act, Rule 125 of rape cases. She also observed that since there was no State Women's Commission in the state nothing was being done towards the betterment of women and the society.

Later, she met the Chief Minister, Shri Arjun Munda along with a women's delegation and requested him to constitute a Women's Commission and Mahila Adalats in the state to eradicate the problems related to women.

Member Manju Hembrom inspected the Roorkee Jail and met all officials of the jail including the Jailor. There were four female prisoners and she heard their problems. Ms. Hembrom observed that female prisoners were sitting idle and she suggested that they should be given vocational training according to their interest and knowledge within the premises of the jail. Later, she visited the Govt. Hospital and met the doctors. There were around 150 beds for the patients. The atmosphere and facilities of the hospital was satisfactory.

## Govt. Plans to Help Girls at Birth

The Delhi Government plans to deposit Rs. 5,000 in the name of every girl child born in a government hospital or maternity home starting from September this year.

Under the scheme aimed at enhancing enrollment rate of girls in schools, the money will be given to the girl, along with interest amount, when she attains 18-years of age. But the long term fixed deposit can be only encashed if she has attended Class X as a regular student.

The financial assistance under the scheme would be restricted up to only two girls in a family. It has been further proposed that only those parents can apply for the scheme, who are bonafide residents of the National Capital Territory of Delhi for at least five years preceding the date of submission of an application. The parents will have to show proof of residence like a voter identity card or ration card. The application should be submitted within 60 days of the birth of a girl along with a joint photograph of the parents and child.

## NCW Seeks Report on Alleged 'Sati'

Taking suo moto cognizance of media reports of a woman allegedly committing 'sati' in Madhya Pradesh, the National Commission for Women

sought a report from the Chief Secretary within ten days of the incident.

NCW Chairperson Dr. Girija Vyas said the Commission was coordinating with the state government officials to ascertain facts about the incident in which Janakrani (45), a tribal woman, reportedly jumped into the funeral pyre of her husband and died in Tulsipur village at Sagar district .

## Foeticide Cases : NCW Wants Fast-Track Justice

In the wake of over 50 female foetuses having been recovered from two wells of Patran in Patiala, the National Commission for Women Chairperson has asked the Punjab government to set up fast-track courts to try female foeticide cases.

She said that the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act should be amended as it was unable to deal with such cases due to advancement in technology. Except for Kerala, all the other states were facing the problem of female foeticide, she added.

Asserting that the matter should be thoroughly probed, she said that NCERT should introduce special chapters on female foeticide in textbooks. This problem should also be discussed during training period of IAS and PCS officers, she added.

## NCW for Fresh Probe into Alwar Rape Case

The National Commission for Women has ordered a fresh probe into the alleged rape of a minor girl by the son of an influential political leader in Alwar.

The development comes after the victim approached the Commission claiming that she was "intimidated and pressurised" by the accused's father, into giving a "favourable" statement before the police and the magistrate.

NCW Chairperson Dr. Girija Vyas has asked the Director General of Police to re-investigate the case after hearing the girl's statement.

### Do You Know?

According to the National Crime Records Bureau, in India, a woman is raped every half hour and killed every 75 minutes, usually burnt to death for not bringing a large dowry; a case of cruelty by husband or relatives occurs every nine minutes and a kidnapping and abduction occurs every 23 minutes.

The report, based on 2004 data, also noted that crime against children increased by 24 per cent in 2004 over the previous year.

Foeticide cases - usually a female foetus - rose by 50 per cent. According to the report, New Delhi is the most unsafe place for women. In 2004, it accounted for 30 per cent of all rapes recorded in 35 major cities.

Conviction rates in India for serious crimes like rape are low because victims are often reluctant to speak out due to social stigma and because of shoddy investigation by the police.

for further information visit our website at : [www.ncw.nic.in](http://www.ncw.nic.in)

## Complaint Against Dainik Jagaran

Member Malini Bhattacharya has drawn attention of the Press Council towards an advertisement of Bajaj Motorcycle appearing in *Dainik Jagaran*. The Commission has opined that the advertisement in question was a direct encouragement to dowry prohibited under the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.

On consideration of the material, the Chairman of the Press Council has written to the Editor of *Dainik Jagaran* that since the impugned advertisement has a tendency to encourage social evils, the newspapers should observe due caution in accepting advertisements that may militate against social ethos and the provisions of law.