



UPSC & STATE PCS CURRENT AFFAIRS · UJIYARI.COM

EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Beyond Beti Bachao — What Real Gender Equity for India's Girls Requires

THE HINDU

24 January 2026

SUBJECTS COVERED

SOCIAL ISSUES

POLITY

GS PAPERS

GS1

GS2

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator •

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

Free UPSC & State PCS Resources

ujiyari.com

Beyond Beti Bachao — What Real Gender Equity for India's Girls Requires

 The Hindu

24 January 2026

GS1

GS2

 The Hindu

MAINS RELEVANCE:

GS Paper 1

GS Paper 2



INTERVIEW ANGLE

""National Girl Child Day 2026 marks 11 years of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme. The Sex Ratio at Birth has improved from 918 to 934. Is this sufficient? What structural barriers remain for India's girl children? Is the welfare-to-rights shift in gender policy adequate?""

WHY IN NEWS

National Girl Child Day (January 24, 2026) marks 11 years of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme, which has improved India's Sex Ratio at Birth from 918 to approximately 934 girls per 1,000 boys. The day provokes reflection on whether India's approach to gender equity has shifted sufficiently from welfare to rights.

THE GAP BETWEEN A SLOGAN AND A TRANSFORMATION

“Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao.” Save the daughter, educate the daughter. It is a good slogan — emotionally resonant, directly addressing two of the most visible manifestations of gender discrimination in India: sex-selective abortion and girls' school dropout.

But eleven years into the scheme, and a generation after India first began grappling seriously with its skewed sex ratio, the question deserves to be asked plainly: **has BBBP delivered a transformation, or has it delivered improved statistics?**

The answer matters because statistics and transformation are not the same thing.

WHAT BBBP HAS ACHIEVED

The Sex Ratio at Birth has improved from 918 (2014–15) to approximately 934 girls per 1,000 boys. That is a real improvement — 16 points in a decade, in an area where change is historically slow and resistant to policy intervention. The reasons:

Better enforcement of the PC-PNDT Act (pre-conception and pre-natal sex determination prohibition)

Community mobilisation and social norm change — the “selfie with daughter” moment was genuinely viral and reflected genuine sentiment

Increased birth registration of girl children

Awareness campaigns that reduced the social stigma around giving birth to daughters

Girls’ enrolment in primary and upper-primary schools has also risen — though this predates BBBP and is part of a longer trend driven by the Mid-Day Meal scheme, RTE Act, and girls’ toilet construction.

WHAT HAS NOT CHANGED

An SRB of 934 is still far short of the biological natural ratio of approximately 952. The deficit — 18 points — represents hundreds of thousands of “missing girls” every year. India still has one of the most skewed sex ratios among major nations.

More importantly, improving the SRB does not address what happens to girls after they are born:

Child marriage remains stubbornly persistent. India accounts for the world’s largest number of child brides. The states with the highest rates — Rajasthan, West Bengal, Bihar, Assam — have not seen commensurate declines. Child marriage traps girls in cycles of poverty, limits their education, increases maternal and infant mortality, and perpetuates the same gender norms across generations.

Secondary school dropout remains higher for girls. The barriers are well-documented: distance to school (safety), early marriage pressure, lack of separate sanitation, household work burden. BBBP has not directly addressed most of these.

Nutrition: Adolescent anaemia among girls remains extremely high. Dietary discrimination — girls eating last and least in many households — continues. Anaemia affects cognitive development, educational performance, and maternal outcomes.

Digital divide: The post-COVID era has cemented a gendered digital divide. Boys have greater access to smartphones for online education. Girls in rural India have been more severely affected by learning loss from school closures.

Violence: National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data consistently shows high rates of crimes against women and girls, including under POCSO. The legal framework is reasonably strong; enforcement and conviction rates are less so.

THE WELFARE-VS-RIGHTS PROBLEM

India’s approach to gender equity has historically been framed as **welfare** — what the state will do for women and girls. BBBP is a welfare scheme: it changes the state’s messaging, provides some financial incentives, and deploys administrative machinery for a specific goal.

A **rights** framework is different. Rights are entitlements that can be legally claimed and enforced. The gap between India’s constitutional guarantees (Articles 14, 15, 21) and the lived reality of girl children is a rights gap, not merely a welfare gap.

What a rights-based approach would demand:

- Full implementation of the Forest Rights Act — which affects tribal girl children’s economic security
- Genuine enforcement of child marriage law, not just campaigns
- Effective implementation of the Women’s Reservation Act at the state level — girl children growing up seeing women in political power changes aspirations
- Accountability mechanisms when PC-PNDT is violated

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women’s Reservation Act, 2023) — 33% reservation for women in Lok Sabha and state assemblies — is the most structurally significant policy intervention for gender equity in India in decades. When it is implemented (awaiting delimitation and Census), it will alter the political incentive structure in ways that affect all gender policies.

EDUCATION AS THE HINGE

ASER’s data makes clear that girls in India face not just an access problem in education but a **quality and completion problem**. Access has largely been achieved at the primary level. The challenge is:

- Keeping girls in school through secondary level
- Ensuring they are actually learning while in school
- Connecting education to economic opportunity

NEP 2020’s emphasis on mother-tongue instruction, flexible entry-exit in higher education, and vocational integration addresses some of these structurally — but implementation is uneven across states.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF GENDER

Son preference in India is not primarily a cultural problem — it is an economic problem. Where daughters are valued as economic liabilities (dowry), where women’s labour is unpaid (household work), and where women’s inheritance rights are legally available but socially contested, the preference for sons has a rational economic logic.

The durable solution to gender discrimination runs through **economic empowerment**: women’s property rights (actually implemented), women’s labour force participation (which has been declining in India and needs structural attention), and financial inclusion (Jan Dhan, Mudra — which have made genuine inroads).

“Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao” addresses symptoms. Addressing causes requires the harder work of economic transformation.

UPSC RELEVANCE

BBBP launched January 22, 2015, Panipat; SRB 918 → ~934; PC-PNDT Act 1994; SSY (Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana) 2015; POCSO Act 2012; Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006; Article 15(3); Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam 2023; NCRB data on crimes against women; ASER by Pratham.

Women in India — status, challenges, progress; son preference and its causes; child marriage; gender discrimination in education. **GS-2:** Welfare vs rights-based approach to gender policy; women's political representation; implementation gaps in gender schemes.

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

BBBP — PROGRESS AND GAPS:

SRB at launch (2014-15): **918** | Current: **~934** | Natural: **~952**

India still has significant “missing girls” — gap from natural SRB

Child marriage: India has the **world's largest number of child brides**

NCRB: High rates of crimes against women and girls continue

Anaemia in adolescent girls: Extremely high nationally; dietary discrimination

GENDER GAPS IN INDIA:

Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR): One of lowest in world for middle-income countries (~25-30%); declining trend reversed somewhat since 2017

Women in Parliament: ~15% pre-2023 Act; Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (2023) aims for 33%

Gender Pay Gap: Women earn less than men across all sectors

GPI (Gender Parity Index): India achieved GPI >1.0 at primary level; gap at secondary level

KEY LAWS FOR WOMEN/GIRLS:

PC-PNDT Act, 1994 (amended 2003): Bans sex determination

Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 | **POCSO Act, 2012** | **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005**

Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006: Min. age 18 (girls); amendment pending to raise to 21

Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023: 33% reservation in Lok Sabha + state assemblies

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

CEDAW: Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979); India ratified 1993

SDG 5: Gender equality; India tracked under National Indicator Framework

NFHS-5 (2019-21): Tracks maternal mortality, anaemia, child marriage rates

Jan Dhan Yojana: ~56% of accounts held by women — major financial inclusion step

Mudra Yojana: ~70% of beneficiaries are women entrepreneurs

Sources: The Hindu, PIB, NFHS

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

 [linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

Published on ujjari.com · Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs