

Friday 12 October 2012

## ‘Accord equal status to girl child’



Vijayawada: Expressing concern over status of girl child in the society, several speakers at a meeting organised by the local Vasavya MahilaMandali, in connection with the International Girl Child Day celebrations, called for making concerted efforts to accord equal status to girls on par with boys.

Former MP Chennupati Vidya presided over the meeting attended by AIR Station director Krishna Kumari, SERP Project Manager, Hyderabad R Aruna, IKP Project Officer Ramakrishna, German freelance journalist Thomas Berger, former AIR station director PrayagaVedavati, B Keerthi and Dr P Deeksha.

The speakers unveiled a poster highlighting the fact that man is responsible for the sex of the child. Setting the agenda for the meeting, Chennupati Vidya regretted that the society was regressing. It is a shame that even in the 21st century, child marriages are taking place, she said. She appealed to the speakers to present their views on how the girl child can acquire equal status in the society.

Krishna Kumari, AIR Station Director, said that it was sad that 47 per cent of girls in the country were getting married at an early age. Khappanchayats have decided that all girls should be married off at an early age to prevent atrocities on them, she recalled. She exhorted people to extend proper education to the girl child and empower her to live her life on her terms and protect herself. "Putting restrictions won't solve problems," she said.

R Aruna, SERP Project Manager, underlined the need for a massive movement for the uplift of girl child from village level. The boy- girl ratio in the country has reached to a low of 1000:926 which may lead to more atrocities on girls, she added.

The situation of girl child in States like Rajasthan and Haryana is pathetic. Since the boy-girl ratio is far below, they have been importing poor girls from remote areas of various States, Aruna said.

Observing that NirmalaPuraskars were being given to villages for maintaining best sanitation levels, she pointed out 'in fact these awards should be given to villages where there were no child marriages.'

Dr P Deeksha underlines the need for infusing confidence among the girl child. 'Every girl child should feel proud of her birth. Let us not make her feel guilty,' she said.

Divena, a participant at the meet narrated how her early marriage ruined her life and how she lost her childhood.

Ramakrishna, IKP Project Officer, said that Indira KrantiPatham was organising a programme for adolescent girls in the name of 'KishoraBalika'.

Thomas Berger, a German journalist who participated in the meet said that he was shocked to know the incidence of violence against girls. "India has the distinction of having a woman Prime Minister as early as 1966, but Germany has woman Head of the Government only in 2004. All these achievements are individual achievements, he observed.

The condition of the girl child remains pathetic in the country, he said. "Right to Education is a forward step in India," he added. She said that women got a golden chance of 50 per cent reservation in the local body elections and they should take it as challenge to solve the problems in villages.

"The elected women whichever party they belonged to must insist on conducting 'gramasabha' to solve problems of the village," she said. Satyavati proposed a vote of thanks.