

## Pic(k) of the week



Part IV of the Directive Principles of State Policy emphasizes on equal pay for equal work for both men and women. In the picture is a female daily wage worker who has not received her dues and is therefore wrapped in sorrow. Pic by Aditi Soni

## Fair colour ruling child adoption

ADITI SONI

Bangalore— Colour of the child is still a major determining factor while adoption, despite of change in the mindset of today's generation. In a survey done by this reporter, four out of five people prefer a fair child as compared to the dusky or dark one.

"What's fair for southern people maybe dark for Northern people. But fair child seems the mandatory condition for every Indian couple adopting a baby", said President of Karnataka State Council for Child Welfare, Dr. Aloma Lobo.

"I always wished to have a fair baby girl. But unfortunately, I was not blessed with one. So, I think I will fulfill my wish at the time of adoption, said Pallavi, who is planning to adopt a baby soon.

But since last few years, adoption trends have changed. Initially the 'male' child used to be a major preference, yet it seems to have changed now. Besides skin color, couples still prefer male to the female child. "If it's not my biological baby, I have complete right to choose what kind of baby I

want. Because if it's my own blood group, I have no other choice, but to accept the baby, said Rupa, who is planning to adopt a baby from 'Ashraya', an adoption agency in Bangalore. "What's wrong if I want a male child, after all that is what the society respects till today?", she added.

"It's mostly North Indian people who demand for male child. Rather

with any Indian child, irrespective of sex or colour. "I am a single parent and want to adopt an Indian baby. I have been living in Goa from past 15 years and will love to adopt a baby. I have no problems of sex but he or she should be physically fit", said Catherine, who is a resident of London.

Dr. Aloma finds that though Indian parents never ask for mentally or physically challenged children, there "might be one stray case".

In all there are 14 adoption agencies in Karnataka. Every month about 15 to 18 adoptions take place,

but it also varies from agency to agency." Every year 60-65 adoption cases come up in our agency," said Priya, a member of Vathsalya Charitable Trust, whereas in some agencies adoption is as less as one adoption per month.

"In past years, people preferred male and fair child. But today, as sex discrimination is getting erased, same is expected out of racial discrimination too," said Prama, who has adopted two girls and is a biological mother of a son.

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in South Indian states like Bangalore and Kerala, they prefer females, with an exception always there," said Dr. Lobo. "In a month, five out of the six South Indian families that come for adoption, are comfortable with a girl child. But the other 4 couples from areas like Delhi, Jaipur will demand for male child only," said Poonam, part of the Karnataka State Council for Child Welfare.

But all this happens mostly in 'in country' adoption cases. 'Inter country' cases are comfortable

## School 'se' chale hum

*Most girls in Golahalli village drop out from schools once they attain puberty*

SUPRIYA KHANDEKAR

Bangalore—Most girls in Golahalli village drop out from schools soon after they attain puberty. This is usually at the age of 11-15, thus not all girls study even till the 10th standard. "Many families who are not well to do don't even send their girls to the Anganwadi," says Umadevi, a housewife whose children study in the Anganwadi. Girl child education in the village is not as progressive as it looks. Though a lot of the villagers declare that all the girls are going to school, many girls were seen working at homes, carrying water and carrying bricks.

Asha, a 13 year old had been missing school since she had reached puberty. She said she has been going to the government school till now and will continue till the 10th standard. She now stays at home preparing for a functions and helping her mother in household chores like in cooking and decorating the house. She admitted that a lot of girls stop coming to school after the seventh or eighth standard and help their mothers at home. She said that she would be missing school for three

to four days and not more than that.

Although this issue seems trivial, it has a big impact as these girls do not receive even the basic education. There are not many like Asha who can study till they want to. Manju, Asha's mother agreed and said that most of the families stop sending their girls to school after fifth standard. She said that they train them in farmwork and

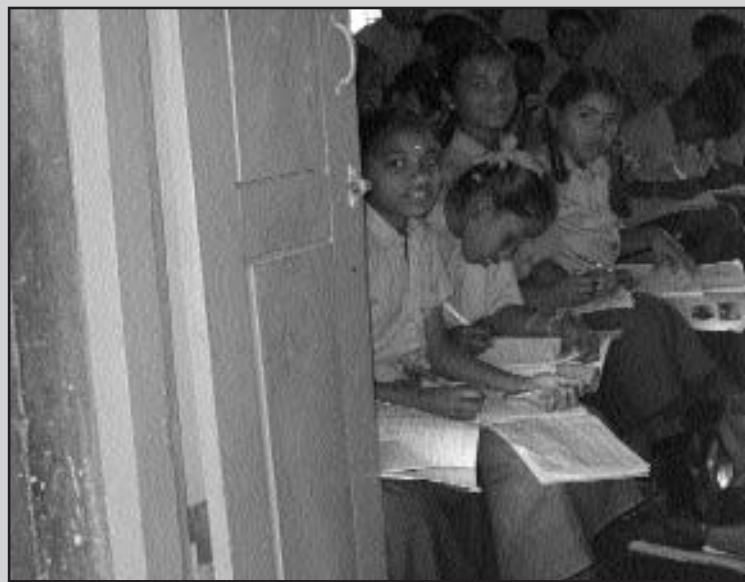
household chores and get them married. The ones who send them to school till tenth standard get them married soon after that. She herself agreed with hesitation that she would also get her daughter married once she finishes tenth.

Asha further adds that in her class of 30 students only 12 are girls and out of which very few attend school regularly. Her batch had more girls in the lower classes but eventually very few are left now, she said. She does not remember the exact number but she said that some of them are helping their parents on the farms.

Shanti, an eight year old, has never been to school. She was seen at a pan shop buying bidi for her father. She works with her mother



Girl missing school and working Pic by Aditi Soni



Girls at Golahalli primary school

Pic by author

and even helps her father in his construction work. She said that neither she nor her elder sister (now married) have ever gone to school. She said that she never even felt like going to school, as she was always busy at work. Her parents never told her that she should also study, she added.

Yamuna is amongst the very few women who have studied till graduation. She sends her two children (one of them is a girl) to the government school and wants her daughter to be educated like her. She said that the school is providing free meals (rice, sambhar, vegetable), one teacher for two classes and the teaching is very good. She said that despite this people are not motivated enough to educate their daughters.

Though she said many want to educate but cannot (do so) because of financial crisis and they end up keeping the daughters at home for work.

The Golahalli primary government school had many girl students. The Headmistress, Vasantamma said that they have more girls in the school than boys, but refused to show any statistical data on the same. She said that the various facilities provided by the government motivate a lot of villagers to send their children to schools regularly. The school gives free meals, uniforms, and textbooks along with the regular TT and DT vaccinations. She said that she did not have any clue if parents stop sending their daughters to school after puberty.

## Women achievers from small towns

Women in Indian villages have always been facing discrimination along with the persistent troubles of poverty. But there are exceptions who become benchmarks for others, some of them are:

### K. V. Rabiya

She was born in a poor Muslim family in a remote village, Vellilakkadu in Kerala. She lost the use of her legs when she was a first year student, despite the handicap she has built up a movement of community service and started her own voluntary organisation called CHALANAM. She earned the Kannagi Stree Shakti Puraskar in 1999.

### Chinnapillai

Born in Pullisery village in Madurai, she has been deeply involved in organising and working with co-agricultural labourers for various agricultural operations. She was the founder of a number of Kalanjams (savings and credit groups) and Vaigai VattaraKalanjiam. Appantirupathy, is the First Federation of Rural Women Savings and Credit Group in India by her.

### Kamala Bai

She was born in 1923 at Kuchaman, Rajasthan. She was married at a tender age of 12 and was widowed barely two years thereafter. She joined an orphanage for ladies. At the age of thirty, she started her own Adarsh Mahila Vidyalyaya for tribal girls.