

Transparent Journalism

The Gender Imbalance in India's Population

The gender imbalance in India is a significant issue with far-reaching implications for society. As of the 2021 Census, the sex ratio stood at 1020 males for every 1000 females, highlighting a persistent trend of gender disparity. By 2036, population of India is expected to reach 152.2 Crore, with a slightly improved female percentage of 48.8% as compared to 48.5 percent in 2011. The proportion of individuals under 15 years is projected to decrease from 2011 to 2036, likely due to declining fertility. The causes of this imbalance are complex and multifaceted, arising from cultural, social, and economic factors. The preference for male children has been entrenched in Indian society due to various factors, including dowry practices, family lineage, and the economic perception of men as providers. Despite legal prohibitions on gender-based abortions since the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act of 1994, the practice persists due to societal pressures and cultural norms. Social and economic factors contribute to gender imbalance, such as the economic burden associated with girl children, low educational attainment for girls, and the rise in human trafficking and gender-based violence. A skewed sex ratio can lead to increased competition for brides, fostering patriarchal practices like forced marriages or trafficking. Gender imbalance affects population dynamics and economic growth, leading to social unrest and decreased quality of life. Advancements in technology, data analytics, and social media campaigns have raised awareness about gender discrimination and promoted educational programs that promote the value of girls. To effectively tackle gender imbalance, a multi-faceted approach is essential, including rigorous enforcement of existing laws against gender-based sex selection, increasing penalties for non-compliance, and community engagement initiatives. Education plays a vital role in combating gender imbalance, ensuring girls have access to quality education and vocational training programs tailored for women.

-baljit singh brar

PunjabTimes Letter

The Power of Reading Books: A Gateway to the all Minds

"A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies; the man who never reads lives only one." - George R.R. Martin

Books are more than just ink on paper; they are gateways to infinite worlds, timeless knowledge, and endless imagination. Reading is one of the simplest yet most profound activities that can shape a person's character, broaden their perspectives, and enrich their lives. In a world dominated by screens, the magic of books remains unparalleled. Books offer us an escape from our daily lives while teaching us lessons that shape our understanding of the world. They allow us to experience adventures without leaving our rooms and give us wisdom that lasts a lifetime. Reading improves our ability to think critically and strengthen our imagination. When we read, we dive into the minds of authors, understanding their thoughts, beliefs, and perspectives. This exposure to diverse ideas not only makes us more knowledgeable but also more empathetic.

For students even adults, reading is the key to unlocking academic success and building its motives. It enhances vocabulary, improves comprehension skills, and boosts creativity. A habit of reading nurtures curiosity, which is essential for learning and growth. Beyond academics, books also instill values like perseverance, courage, and kindness. Books aren't just tools for learning; they are companions for life. Whether it's a heartwarming novel, a gripping mystery, or a thought-provoking biography, every book has the potential to leave a lasting impact on its reader. Fiction expands our imagination, while non-fiction helps us understand the realities of life. In today's fast-paced world, where distractions are everywhere, reading offers a moment of calm and reflection. It's like meditation for the mind—helping us slow down, focus, and reconnect with ourselves. Reading also improves mental health, reducing stress and fostering a sense of peace. The beauty of reading is that it's for everyone. You don't need fancy gadgets or expensive subscriptions—just a book and the willingness to explore. Libraries, bookstores, and even online platforms have made books more accessible than ever. As technology advances, the form of books might evolve, but their essence will remain unchanged. Whether it's a physical book with its comforting smell of paper or a digital one on a sleek screen, the joy of reading remains timeless. Let us cultivate a habit of reading—not just for ourselves but for the generations to come. When children see adults reading, they are inspired to pick up books too. This simple act of sharing stories and knowledge can create a culture of lifelong learners.

"Once you learn to read, you will be forever free." — Frederick Douglass

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"TV gives everyone an image, but radio gives birth to a million images in a million brains." -Peggy Noonan, American author

The above quote resonates today as radio will continue to stay for years to come. In an era dominated by artificial intelligence and social media, radio remains one of the most trusted and accessible communication platforms, especially for rural communities. As the world marks World Radio Day on February 13, 2025 with the theme "Radio and Climate Change," the role of radio has become more important in disseminating awareness and resilience to deal with the adverse effects of climate change within the communities they cater.

All India Radio (AIR), a public broadcaster that informs, educates, and entertains, has been actively playing a unique role in bridging the digital divide and supporting agricultural extension programs in India. "Kisanvani" is a radio program that provides information to farmers in India. The program is broadcast on All India Radio (AIR) stations across the country. It is supported by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare. The main goal of the "Kisanvani" program is to teach farmers about things like 'diffusion of innovation', 'Lab to land', 'knowledge and skill of modern and scientific techniques of agricultural practices to cope with climate change', 'horticulture', 'animal husbandry', 'poultry farming', 'fishery', 'rural banking and self-employment schemes', and allied activities.

Role of Community Radio in Disaster Management and Climate Change

Beyond national broadcasters, community radio stations play an essential role in reaching remote areas. Community radios help communities prepare for and respond to disasters and climate change by providing local information, raising awareness, and connecting people to resources. It plays an influential role in bridging information gaps, empowering local voices, and fostering social change. Unlike the mainstream media, which mainly focuses on broader national and global narratives, community radio serves as a grassroots platform, providing localized and relevant content to the needs of specific communities. The role of community radio becomes especially crucial during times of disaster, as the changing climate scenario intensifies risks. In

Book Title: Bannh Uthai Potli (Original Urdu: Mere Hisse Ki Duniya)
Author: Pritpal Singh Betab (Retd. IAS), Translated by: Harjit Singh Uppal
Publisher: Saptarshi Publication, Chandigarh, 2023, **Pages:** 284

Bannh Uthai Potli is the Punjabi translation of Mere Hisse Ki Duniya, an autobiography by the renowned Urdu poet and retired IAS officer, Pritpal Singh Betab. The book, translated by Harjit Singh Uppal, is an insightful narrative of Betab's life experiences, hardships, and reflections. It is not just a personal memoir but a socio-political commentary on the cultural and historical landscape of India,

PunjabTimes Book Review

especially Jammu and Kashmir. Betab, in his original Urdu work, confesses that he could not include all aspects of his life's struggles and realities but ensures that whatever he has shared is authentic and honest. He acknowledges the limitations of presenting the absolute truth but affirms that his narration is true to his memory, belief, and knowledge. His candid storytelling brings forth the complexities of life, relationships, and professional experiences.

The translation by Harjit Singh Uppal is commendable, as it captures the soul

How Community Radio amplifying awareness about climate change

PunjabTimes Op-ed



such situations, community radio offers timely, region-specific information, helping affected communities respond effectively and build resilience.

During Cyclone Fani (2019), Community Radio Namaskar in Konark, Odisha served as a critical platform for disseminating real-time warnings and safety measures. The station broadcasts updates on evacuation routes, safe shelter locations, and relief efforts. It served as a communication bridge between affected communities and authorities. Radio KadalOsai amplifies the voices of the fisherfolk in Tamil Nadu. The radio station primarily caters to the needs of fishermen, providing critical information like weather updates, fish prices, and market trends. The station also highlights potential fishing zones, empowering the community with valuable information that enhances their catch and supports sustainable fishing practices in the changing climatic conditions of the region.

In North India, Community Radio Connect FM 107.8 (an initiative of S M Sehgal Foundation) plays a significant role in promoting climate-smart agricultural practices through its live phone-in program, "Goon Ki Choupal". The program disseminates information to farmers on the benefits of mini sprinklers, drip irrigation, and soil health management—key factors in enhancing crop

resilience amid climate change. Listeners actively engage by calling to station's phone number 9813164542 to share their experiences, seek expert advice, and discuss challenges related to shifting agricultural patterns in a changing climate. Community radio stations have emerged as vital partners in disaster management and climate change adaptation across India, providing real-time information, raising awareness, empowering local communities, and promoting sustainable practices. Listeners, especially from rural and indigenous communities, possess a wealth of knowledge about agriculture and climate change issues. They have firsthand experience of its consequences, from unpredictable monsoons and prolonged droughts to climate-induced food shortages and industrial pollution. Through community radio, these voices are amplified, fostering a participatory approach to environmental solutions.

Listener-to-Learner Approach: Empowering Climate-Smart Communities

India currently has over 500 community radio stations serving diverse communities in various regions. Over the past decade, this number has grown significantly, surpassing 500. In this evolving landscape, the accountability of this community-led initiative has also expanded. They provide accurate information

and practical advice to their listeners on key local issues such as agriculture, water management, education, and health which they adapt in day-to-day practice. This reflects a positive shift from listeners to learners. Empowering farmers with real-time information on cli-



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mate-resilient farming techniques, weather forecasts, government schemes, and market trends.

Programs such as Tohfa-e-Kudrat-Jal, Jangal, Zameen, a flagship program of Community Radio Connect, have been airing since 2012 and focus on critical topics like water, soil, and forests. Broadcasting 24/7 the program played a key role in enhancing agricultural productivity across more than 300 villages spanning three districts—Alwar and Deeg in Rajasthan, and Nuh (Mewat) in Haryana.

Ratan Singh Prajapat, a listener from village Gurjarwas,

Naugaon, district Alwar, Rajasthan shared his experience that he cultivates crops such as vegetables, chilies, carrots, peas, cauliflower, onions, radishes, and coriander. He was worried about the depleting water levels in his region, after listening to Radio Connect's Jal Jungle Zameen program, he heard a discussion about how farming is possible even with less water. The agriculture expert explained that drip irrigation could help farmers grow crops using minimal water.

Hedecided to adopt the drip irrigation on one acre of his land. He cultivated vegetables using the drip system and soon realized that water consumption was significantly reduced and fertilizer use was more efficient, as water-soluble fertilizers reached the plants quickly. Also, electricity and time were saved too. Earlier, he worked tirelessly in the fields, but the crops did not grow well due to uneven water distribution. Previously, irrigation would take four to five days, but now, the same work was completed in just one to two hours. Now, Ratan Singh encourages neighbouring farmers to adopt drip irrigation for cultivating healthy, high-quality crops.

Dr. Abdul Rajak, a farmer from Rigarh village, Ferozpur block, Nuh, Haryana shared that due to climate change, traditional crops like gram

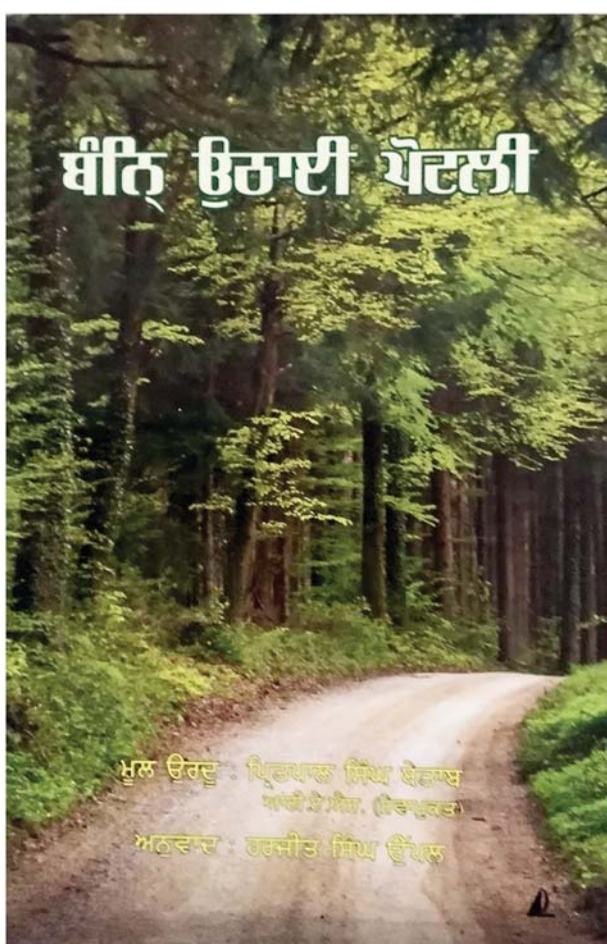
and peas, once widely cultivated in the region, have completely disappeared.

Fakat Hussain, Station In-Charge of Community Radio Connect, shared that the agriculture program on smart and sustainable agriculture practices is also narrowcast during farmers' meetings and KisanGoshtis (farmers' meeting), ensuring it reaches the farming community. Additionally, farmers express their interests and issues with us through phone calls and WhatsApp listener groups.

Pooja Oberoi Murada, Principal Lead, Outreach for Development S M Sehgal Foundation shared "We actively engage farmers, agricultural experts, local authorities, KrishiVigyanKendras, and community leaders by interviewing them on key agricultural issues and sharing their insights. This approach ensures that the program reflects the community's real challenges, solutions, and successes, making the content highly relatable and impactful. The program's content specifically addresses key climate change and agricultural issues faced by the local community, such as water conservation, climate-smart agriculture, and soil management. To further enhance the learning of the farming community, we have developed the game cards 'Khel Khel Mein Jaane Mitti Swasthya Ka Mahatva' (Learn the Importance of Soil Health through play cards). This interactive game is designed to engage farmers effectively, helping them easily understand the process and significance of soil testing. These communications for behavior change practices help them to adopt best practices".

As the world grapples with climate change, the role of radio in climate communication cannot be overstated. It serves as a bridge between scientific knowledge and grassroots realities, empowering communities with information that is timely, relevant, and actionable. Radio Connect and similar initiatives continue to demonstrate that radio is not just a medium of entertainment but a vital tool for social change, environmental stewardship, and community resilience.

"Bannh Uthai Potli" A Journey Through Life's Realities



Bannh Uthai Potli is more than an autobiography; it is a journey through time, emotions, and literature. Pritpal Singh Betab's honesty, combined with Harjit Singh Uppal's meticulous translation, makes this book a valuable addition to Punjabi literature. It is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding the life of a poet, an administrator, and an observer of history. In my personal opinion, a compelling and thought-provoking autobiography that leaves a lasting impact.

skillfully handled by Uppal. His passion for Urdu and Punjabi literature is evident in his ability to retain the essence of Betab's thoughts.

The autobiography is not just a chronological account of Betab's life but also a deep introspection of his personal and professional journey. It reflects on themes such as migration, cultural identity, bureaucracy, and literature. Betab's literary prowess, evident in his Urdu poetry, seeps into his prose, making the narrative engaging and thought-provoking. One of the remarkable aspects of Bannh Uthai Potli is Betab's ability to weave historical and political events into his personal story. The book sheds light on the socio-political conditions of Jammu and Kashmir, the impact of migration, and the struggles of a literary soul in the bureaucratic world. This book is a treasure for readers interested in autobiographies, Urdu-Punjabi literature, and historical narratives. It not only provides a glimpse into Betab's life but also offers an understanding of the socio-political fabric

of India, particularly Jammu and Kashmir. The book resonates with readers on multiple levels—personal, emotional, and intellectual.

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