



SEX RATIO: THREAT TO FAMILY INSTITUTION IN NORTH INDIA

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Abstract

Sex Ratio is a biggest threat for the family institution. Female foeticide is also one of the factor behind it. Female foeticide, the selective abortion of female foetuses is killing upwards of one million females in India annually with far-ranging and tragic consequences. In some areas, the sex ratio of females to males has dropped to less than 900:1000. Not only females face inequality in this culture, they are even denied the right to be born. The empirical data poses a question: “Why do large numbers of families selectively abort baby girls”? In our patriarchy society girl is perceived as a social and economic burden. This paper will argue that it has not only increased the sex ratio gap but also posed significant threat to the institution of family consequently separate identity of women is also jeopardised.

“Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenges of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance”
(Kofi Annan.)

Introduction

Sex ratios an alarming situation in India especially in north part of India. Female foeticide is also one of the major factors for imbalance sex ratio in North India. In this paper north Indian States are taken into consideration. In North India Punjab and Haryana are in worst situation. It is perceived traditionally that Girls are burden to parents and society. Sons are taken as proud for the family since they can offer security to their families in old age and can perform

the rites for the souls of deceased parents and ancestors, Because of poverty, People prefer son assuming that he will help them financially. Dowry system can also be another big reason of not accepting girl child. Traditionally girl has to give dowry to bridegrooms so it's a burden for parents. To get rid of increased financial burden such practices of female foeticide is expected Although female infanticide has long been committed in India, yet female foeticide

is a relatively new practice, emerging concurrently with the advent of technological advancements in prenatal sex determination on a large scale in the 1980s. Pre-natal sex detection technologies have been misused, allowing the selective abortions of female offspring to proliferate. Legally, however, female foeticide is a penal offence under law yet a large number of cases of female foeticide are reported in the print media. However, abortion is legal in India yet, it is a crime to abort a pregnancy solely because the foetus is girl. Strict laws and penalties are in place for violators. These laws, however, have not stemmed the tide of this abhorrent practice.



If such situation keeps on increasing day by day, then It can lead to many other problems in the society. If at this stage this issue was not taken care, then that day is not far away when Punjab, Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan will be in serious crisis. To deal with this problem This Paper would like to explain the concept of the institution of family; how this problem can lead to a major challenge in the society; how women can lose their identity.

How this problem can be a threat to family institution. There are many definitions given by think tankers from time to time. Robert Lowie puts it as “Family is a group based on material relation rights and duties and parenthood, common habitations and reciprocal relation between parents and children.” In general, we can say: “Family is an important institution of the society. It is based on marriage which has full commitments of rights and duties of parenthood. Family is one kind of social micro unit. Woman is an integral part of the family. Without her the institution of family is incomplete rather non-existent. Society at large is severely affected in case of regressive step taken by the institution of family such as female foeticide. To understand this concept, it is important to understand the concept of food chain. As we all know that each species on this earth has some natural bearings. If the food chain breaks down our earth will be destroyed. Similarly, if we break the chain of society by killing baby girl before birth this will be broken. Female foeticide is a direct threat to the institution of family. **“A family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction”**- Mardock

Historical Overview

The Britishers first discovered female infanticide in 1789 in India. Since the Rajput's had a warrior-ruler ideology, they consciously avoided avenues of mobility other than conquest. The latter became difficult after the British rulers established firm control. Consequently, they did not have extra sources of income other than land. This being so, they found it difficult to meet the heavy revenue demands of the British and also pay the large dowry to the girls and large expenditure on marriages to make happy girls' in-laws. Female infanticide offered a solution to the problem and the Rajput's of high status in the North-Western provinces resorted to it extensively. Traditionally a custom of dowry and economic burden scared our society and always avoid to have girl child. When a boy born sweets are distributed among relatives and friends. Sadness prevails all around if girl child is born in the family. Many stories listen time from our elders that sometime girls were killed at the time of birth by the elder female or male members. Before the invention of new technologies of sex detection machines girls were killed at the time of birth or by neglecting them so child mortality rate was high.

Objectives:

- To analyse the reasons behind declining sex ratio in Haryana and Punjab
- To assess the effects of declining sex ratio and threat to women identity
- To study the long-term effect of demographic behaviour and threat to family Institution of society
- To examine the root cause of crimes against women due to declining sex ratio?

Research Problem:

In the contemporary times, the problem of declining sex ratio has been observed in the state of Haryana and Punjab. The female foeticide has been declared by legislation a crime. Despite preventive legislation, female foeticide is a common practice particularly among those parents who prefer to have a son than a girl. Consequently, the gap between female and male ration has been demographically increasing. In Haryana the problem is identified that due to this gap, boys entail to look for bride from the neighbouring states. The menace of purchasing wife is quite prevalent in the state of Haryana. This obnoxious trend has reduced the identity of women as a commercial commodity who can be purchased or sold without impunity. Such regressive practices have posed several social and cultural challenges in the society at large. It has produced critical hurdle to the identity of women.

Research Methodology

Research based on 2011 censuses data. Books, articles and websites are used as secondary sources, have been explored. Observations are made on the basis of the present literature available compiled through survey reports.

Hypothesis

H1 If sex ration keeps on declining in Northern India then it will lead to threat of family institution

H2 Imbalance between men and women can lead to threat to the women identity

H3 Sex ration can aggravate problems of domestic violence, killing and rape against women.

Data Analysis

The paper tries to argue that historically the general neglect of female children or killing them before their birth has become more prevalent in the north-west part of India. It has taken the form of female foeticide since late 1980s. And new invented technologies and small size family concept added fuel to the fire. Female foeticide is a major problem existing in the society. It distorted sex ratio in India but it hit badly in north Indian States. It has raised an alarming situation because it is a directly threat to a family institution and identity of women too. Woman is an integral part of the family institution.

A woman who is trying hard to become economically independent in this men dominated society has to face lot of social taboos. To deal with this problem, this paper tried to explain the concept of family institution how this problem can lead to a major challenge in the society how women can lose their identity. Family is a very important component of any society there are many definitions given by think tankers from time to time. As per Robert Lowie "Family is a group based on material relation rights and duties and parenthood, common habitations and reciprocal relation between parents and children" "In General, we can say Family is an institution which is an important part of any society. It is based on marriage which has full commitments of rights and duties of parenthood. Family is one kind of social micro unit. Most of the time, when a person thinks of the definition of a family, the image of a mother, father and children is what comes into the mind. That is a one type of family, However, there are more definitions that can be used to define a family such as a Joint family, nuclear family single-parent family means one parent and a child or children. Extended family is a nuclear family or single-parent family lives with any extended family members. Women is a very important person of a family.

Functions of family are of two types i.e. essential functions and non-essential functions. Essential functions includes sexual reproduction, placement, and socialisation and non-essential functions comprise of economy, care of aged, education, health and recreation, political control, religious, physical protection, social and cultural. How these important functions are performed by a family. The steps taken by the family institution has bearings on the society. This paper would like to raise a very important issue that how society affected by

the female foeticide. This paper would like to correlate this problem with the food chain. As, we all know that each species on this earth has some relevance if the food chain break down our earth will be destroyed. Similarly if we break the chain of society, the base of society is in danger. Once we break it there will be no existence of society. Female foeticide is a direct threat to family institution.

Threat to family institution:

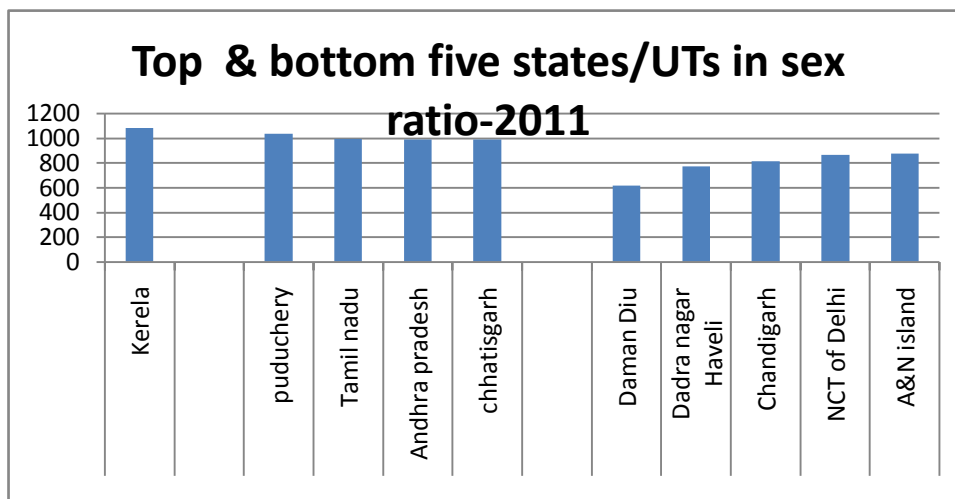
"Female foeticide is an extreme manifestation of violence against women. Female foetuses are selectively aborted. As a result, about 10 lakh girls are missing from the Indian population," **WCD minister Renuka Chowdhury**

In the present scenario the desire to get a son has become so strong as parents are ready to kill a daughter in the womb. Female foeticide has become easy with the advancement of technology. The detection of pregnancies and health of the foetus is monitored by latest machines, it is easy to get rid of unwanted pregnancies. Data indicates that in the last two decades 10 million girls are killed in India consequently the negative impact has been noticed in the sex ratio.

As per the latest Census 2011, the total female sex ratio in India is 940 per 1000 males and the female child sex ratio is 944 girl children per every 1000 boy children of the same age group. Sex Ratio in Haryana 832/1000, Punjab, 895/1000 as compare to Indian Average is 940/1000. Sex ratio is defined as the number of females per 1000 males in the population and is an important social indicator to measure the extent of prevailing equity between males and females in a society at a given point of time. It may be noted that the sex ratio is expected to be almost at parity in nature. According to experts, sex differential in mortality, sex selective out migration, skewed sex ratio at birth are the major contributory factors that influence changes in sex ratio. In India, sex ratio is skewed in favour of males and has continued to rise and expand in various forms. This has drawn wide attention of policy makers and planners to reverse the trend to bring it back to parity. Many literature and survey has been done on this issue. The high masculine sex ratios of the Indian population had been a matter of concern for many decades. Considerable attention has been paid to different dimensions of female deficits in India and persisting regional variations (Sen 1990; Agnihotri 2000; Dasgupta and

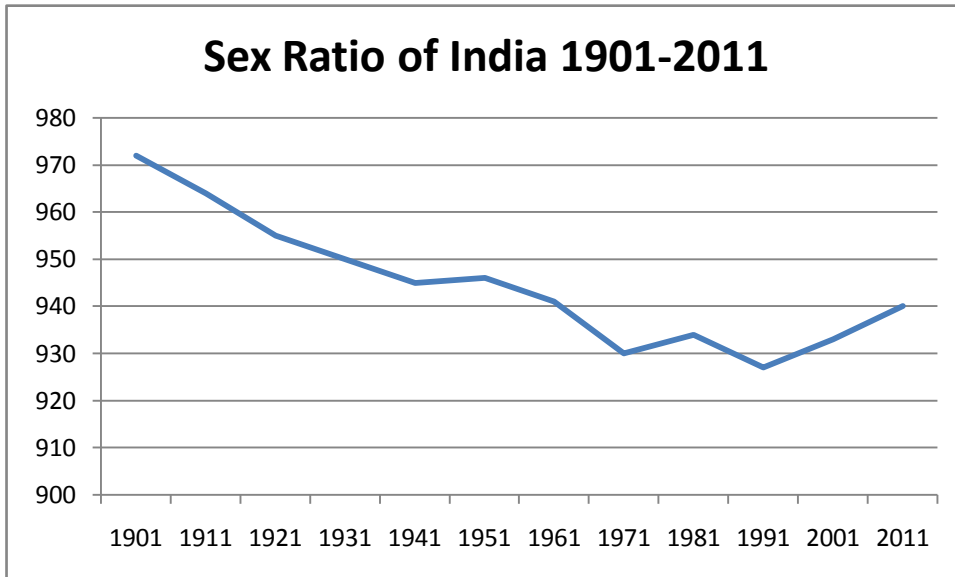
Bhat1995; Miller 1981 and 1989), since the numerical imbalances between the male and female sexes were pointed out in the seventies (Visaria1971; Natarajan 1972)

Recent data as per 2011 censuses shows that total population of India is 1,21,01,93,422 which consists of 62,37,24,248 males and 58,64,69,174 females with the sex ratio of 940 females per 1000 males. Madhya Pradesh has a total population of 7,25,97,565 with 3,76,12,920 males and 3,49,84,645 females with sex ratio of 930. As per Census 2011, top five states/Union territories which have the highest sex ratio are Kerala (1,084) followed by Puducherry (1,038), Tamil Nadu (995), Andhra Pradesh (992) and Chhattisgarh (991). Five states which have the lowest sex ratio are Daman & Diu (618), Dadra & Nagar Haveli (775), Chandigarh (818), NCT of Delhi (866) and Andaman & Nicobar Islands (878).



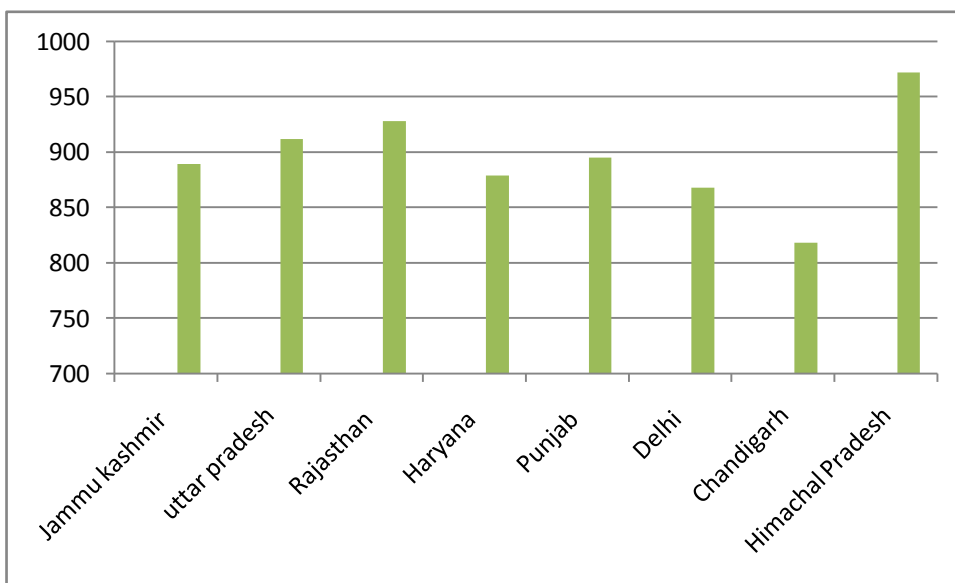
<http://censusindia.gov.in/2011>

The reason for high number of incidence of female foeticide in India includes a deep rooted traditional preference of son. Another concern of the society is about continued practice of dowry and safety of girl and exploitation and abuse of women and girl child. Large scale of killing female foeticide has led to gender imbalance in Indian population. It might lead to many other social problems in the society.



From this graph we can observe that the sex ratio is showing sharp declining. This declining trend is due to unrestricted control on the female foeticide. Having implemented *ladli yojana* by the government of India to prevent female foeticide noticed upward trend. Ministry of Health has also imposed ban on detection of sex and *ladli yojana*. Despite law enforcement 10 million girls were killed in the womb in India.

Recent Government also implemented *beti bachayotipadhayojana*. Any explanations regarding the status of women regardless of the legal and political framework which has given all kinds of support to the patriarchal structures of society and thereby devalued women's power will be misleading.



<http://censusindia.gov.in/2011>

Until the 1980s, women and girls were dying either of neglect or were killed soon after they were born. Today, the horrifying reality is that 'advances' in medical technology, they are now eliminated while still in the womb. Female foeticide has become an organized crime and the ultrasound machine has mutated into an instrument of murder. The importance of sex preference is demonstrated in data on 'ideal family size' and 'ideal wanted family size'. The pre-assumption from the North-South comparison and comparisons from other low fertility societies has been that fertility decline in India would have to involve a natural progression from the north Indian kind of regime of low women's status, high son preference and high fertility to the southern pattern of relative gender equality, low sex preference and lower fertility.

According to medical research, 10 million female births in India may have been lost to abortion and sex selection in the past 20 years. This journal indicated that prenatal selection and selective abortion was causing the loss of 500,000 girls a year. Their research was based on a national survey of 1.1m households in 1998. The researchers said the "girl deficit" was more common among educated women but did not vary according to religion

Increasing gap of a girl child would pose numerous problems in the society. More men and less women brings imbalance into the society and this kind of imbalance could be a threat to the identity of women themselves. Demand and supply gap could lead to problems in the society challenge to family institution and identity of women. women will be used as a commodity to fulfil the demands of the society. The sorry state of affairs is that when people will not get suitable partner, they will purchase women from other states. Jat boys of marriageable age from Haryana travel 3,000 kilometres across the country to find for themselves a bride Shortage of girl child in the state of Haryana in India due to high rate of female foeticide. Bridegroom search for bride from other state such as Kerala, Bihar to change their single status This trend has already been started. In some parts of India auctioning of women has set in. Rich people will buy or sell it like a commodity. Old age men will marry to young girls. It will further aggravate problems for future men also. Partly, behaviour of women who wants son desperately is responsible for such depressive situation Here I would like to put stress on another factor which is becoming very prominent that many boys remain singles in their life, to be observed particularly in the state of Haryana and Punjab. they have to rely upon other states. Sometime they are not capable to get from outside also and many men remains unmarried so it's a threat to a family institution which is

the most important component of the society.

Our religion is also another factor for this problem. To justify this crime of female infanticide and female foeticide our religious scriptures also gives the permission to leave a woman who is incapable to give birth to a girl child.

“Vandyashtamay.....” – 9/80. A barren wife may be superseded in the 8th year; she whose children die may be superseded in the 10th year and she who bears only daughters may be superseded in the 11th year; but she who is quarrelsome may be superseded without delay. (Manu smriti)

It becomes difficult to change the mindset of people. Even though scientifically proved that a woman is not responsible to determine the sex of the baby. It is always determined by the men. The sex of a baby is determined by the two sex chromosomes inherited from the parents. A baby will normally inherit one sex chromosome from the mother, and one from the father. A woman has two X chromosomes, so she can give either of her X chromosomes. The father can give either his X or Y chromosome. So, father is a main determinant of Sex of the child.

The conservative nature of our society aggravates this problem a lot. This paper tried to understand that why conservativeness and rigidity becomes so significant leaving aside the feelings of human beings. Old-fashioned rituals and ceremonies erected several problems in the society as result of which the rate of killing, rape, domestic violence and suicides of women in India is increasing. If it goes on like this there will be imbalance in supply and demand. it has raised other problems as women is used as commodity and personal property. They can use them as they want.

We notice the dictum of religious scriptures from the following quotation:

. “Devra...sapinda.....” – 9/58. On failure to produce offspring with her husband, she may obtain offspring by cohabitation with her brother-in-law [devar] or with some other relative [sapinda] on her in-law’s side. (Manu smriti)

According to this, women is always held responsible for being not capable to produce despite of men physical weakness. They can produce baby by establishing relations with younger or

elder brother in law. And this has been observed in Punjab and Haryana. a woman purchased on the name of wedding used by all the men of family. In few villages of Haryana very old men are married to very young girls.

Omar Abdullah also shown worries about this alarming situation and asked the civil society to play their important role in reversing the alarming trend. . Jammu and Kashmir are only behind Haryana and Punjab in child sex ration in 0 to 6 years age group. The state was better off with 963 females in 1981 and it gradually dropped to 941 females in 2001, dipping further to 862 females in 2011.

Moreover, selective abortions following the SD test after the twelfth week of pregnancy is gross misuse of a liberal legislation. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, permits abortion up to the twelfth week of pregnancy. However, amniocentesis can be performed only during the fourteenth and sixteenth week of pregnancy and an abortion thereafter can be conducted only between the fifteenth and eighteenth week of pregnancy

In economic terms, even if one goes by the logic of demand and supply, one must not forget that scarcity of women. It leads to social problems and raise crimes such as rape, abduction and forced polyandry against women would increase. This is a real an alarming situation for India and worst situations in north India

In an empirical study done by the Sabu McGeorge and Ranbir S Dahiya on female foeticide in Haryana, practice of female foeticide was obtained. These strengthen some of the findings presented like caste differentials in foeticide. In this study they throw light on the fact that foeticide is not an isolated phenomenon but one of several ways patriarchy demeans women; others being violence against women [Jejeebhoy and Cook 1997], anti-women inheritance practices. customary marriage conventions which result in a significant proportion of women being married before 18 years, and coercion of widows to undergo levirate marriages facilitated by state administrative directives. However, for brevity, only data on sex ratio distortions and information related to abuse of medical technology by doctors are presented here.

So many studies and many examples have been found which shows that the domestic violence and rape cases are also one of the reasons related to the female foeticide. This is a serious issue. Government should take major steps to overcome this situation.

There is urgent need for the government to implement programmes like ladli yojana and discourage female foeticide. Unequal number of male and females in the Indian society has created imbalance resulting into several social problems

Initiatives taken by the Government:

The government of India has taken several initiatives in this regard and launched various programmes and schemes for the benefit of a girl child.

Pre-natal sex-determination was banned in India in 1994, under the *Pre-conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act*. The act aims to prevent sex-selective abortion, which, according to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, "has its roots in India's long history of strong patriarchal influence in all spheres of life

`Ladli Scheme` is a scheme that aims to alter the position of the girl kid in family or the public. It also aims to help modify the people's mindsets for appropriate taking care of the girl kid and as well to offer the girl child their birth rights as stated in the Constitution of India . It has been observed that daughter take care of old parents whereas boys are found to be neglecting them. LADLI YOJNA was launched on the birthday of late Shri Rajiv Gandhi in 2008. By this scheme, the daughter is entitled for free education. For her upbringing a lack of rupees is given till the age of 18. This money is an additional incentive and can be utilised for her marriage. Some parents consider daughter a financial liability, this amount is a big relief for them.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao has also been initiated by the Present Government also. There is need to do a lot for this alarming issue. Some initiatives have taken place. But Government, Academics, scholars, Researchers and NGOs and should take some progressive step towards improving sex ratio specially in North India.

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