



Female Feticides- A Concern

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ABSTRACT

Science and technology has come as blessings to mankind, but the inventors of technology might not have an idea that it would be used adversely also. Repercussions of sonography technology are palpable in modern times where the parents are curious over selecting the sex of their proposed child. The modern and educated community opts for technology to discover the sex of their child whereas different cultures and communities consider diverse method of folk practices to ensure that the proposed child to be born is a son. Parents leave no stone unturned to ensure that a female child is not born and if diagnosed at an early stage that they are conceiving a baby girl they would happily abort the fetus. Aborting a female fetus is becoming a modern lifestyle of the rich and the orthodox society though legally female feticide is an offence in India. This paper examines the trends prevalent in female feticide in India. The paper aims to provide a multidisciplinary perspective to the curbing of female feticide.

KEYWORDS : female feticide, Sonography, abortion, law

Introduction:

It remains no more a special news when over the early morning tea we read in the newspaper about girls being born to die, or thrown in dustbins and abandoned carelessly. It is stigma on mankind that for ages we have accepted the concept that female foeticide is a routine occurrence and how we justify favoritism of son in family reflects the feudal mentality of literate and illiterate.

The concrete origins of female feticide in India can be traced back to the 1970s. Abortion was prevalent even then and British had started working on laws for curbing abortion. Growing population was looked at as a root cause for several socio-economic issues prevalent in Indian society then. Families yet preferred to have a male child but tried to abort girl child. The seeds of family planning concept were being sowed to control the growing population but on the other hand the family was reluctant to opt for planning and curbing the family until the woman conceived a male child, which again was threat that encountered the Government's efforts to control the growing population. As such the Government hospitals initiated the practice of aborting female fetuses ignorant to the fact that this could lead to adverse practices in the society. 1990s boomed with ultrasound techniques that was meant to detect problems if any in fetus for healthy birth of the baby, but this technique was widely used to detect the sex of the child and then get aborted if it was a female child. This practice spread like fire through 1980's, 1990's to an extent that several activists were against Governments such abortions and voiced this issue on national level, mandating the Government to pass the Preconception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, ensuring sex-selective abortion illegal in 1994.

In India Female foeticide is the abortion of a female foetus disregarding the legal methods. The female feticide frequency in India is surmised to be an approximation derived from its high birth sex ratio, which is the ratio of boys to girls at birth.

As per the 2001 report the declining sex ratio fell to alarming levels, as female feticide become universal and prevalent in the middle and higher socio-economic households, notably in north zone due to the deterring condition and discrimination in the status of women such as dowry, opting for male in family so as to carry the family's name to next generation, are issues and heinous practices operating sex selection abortions in India. Situations then and today have not changed much though we claim India to be a fast developing country embracing the western culture and its styles.

It is high time that the law in India needs to be reinforced to curb and control such of illegal practices, which has an adverse effect on the society but specifically on women.²

Even today in India, sex selective abortions and increase in the number of female infanticide cases have become a rampant social aspect that surpasses all religions, castes, class and communities. The fetus of baby girl is targeted even before her heart beats for the first time. It is an evident fact that technology that came as blessings to diagnose the congenital abnormalities of the foetus, for healthy human to be born are being misused for determining the sex of the foetus with the sole common goal of aborting it if it is identified to be a female child. Female foeticide evidently prevails as a social threat of international connotation of ultrasound technology and capitalist modernity in the so called modernized and developing concept of globalization.

The illegal desires of the family and spouse are fulfilled at the cost of the wife, daughter-in-law or the women of the house who sometimes on her own and sometimes due to pressure of family, friends and society opts to go for an abortion at the cost of her life post 12 weeks. Such instances trigger a curious hunt for researchers that -what is it that has made the society so ruthless that they are ready to kill two lives at a time?

Sex Ratio of India: Sex Ratio is a defined as the number of females per 1000 males.

As per the indiaonlinepages.com the population and sex ratio of India in 2011 & 2017 is as follows:⁴

Current Population of India in 2017	1,349,492,357 (1.34 billion)	
Male/Female population	Population & Sex Ratio of India 2017	Population & Sex Ratio of India 2011
Total Male Population in India	696,877,853 (696 million)	623,700,000 (623.7 million)
Total No of Females in India	652,614,503 (652 million)	586,500,000 (586.5 million)
Sex Ratio	945 females per 1,000 males	940 females for every 1,000 males

The discrimination and biasness towards selective sex reflects even after the birth of the female child as the literacy rate of India as per 2011 Population Census is 74.04%, with male literacy rate at 82.14% and female at 65.46%. The sex ratio of India stands at 940. Haryana with 861 has the very low female sex ratio. In 2011 the rural sex ratio of India was 947 whereas the urban sex ratio was 926. The union territory of Chandigarh has counts 818 females for every 1000 males whereas Punjab has witnessed a growth rate of added 48 counts from 798 (2001) to 846 (2011) in its child sex ratio. In Union Territories of India, Daman and Diu has the lowest female sex ratio.

Abandoning girls or not allowing their birth has hit a low in the census of sex ratio in India which shows that sex ratio to be as low as 818:1000.

Himachal Pradesh stands among the 10 states that have the poor sex ratio in the nation. 24 panchayats in Una district adjacent to Punjab has marked the lowest sex ratio (0-6) below 500, and the comprehensive sex ratio of the district is 875:1000 which being the lowest urges for prompt strategies to arrest any existing trends that promote female feticide.⁶

Punjab has overall sex ratio of 909 against 1000 female as Una district have 875, Kangra-876, Hamirpur-887, Solan-899, Bilaspur-900, Mandi-916, Shimla-925, Sirmour-928, Chamba- 953, Kullu-962, Kinnaur-963 and Lahaul Spiti-1033.

As per the the Civil Registration Data, out of 5, 25,278 children born in Haryana state from January to December 2016, there were 2, 76,414 boys and 2, 48,864 girls, marking the sex ratio at birth to touch the 900 mark.

Predilection for Male child: Aborting female fetus or abandoning girls after birth is a clear evidence of the impassioned aspiration of male child in family. Sons are looked as the carriers of family names from generation to generations and respected as sole and core bread earners of the family. Women have left no field untouched and have come out to be the best leaders and earners in the world but still a typical notion prevails in the family atmosphere that males are the head of the family and they are the only capable of taking care of wife, children and parents. Birth of a daughter is a stigma on the family, burden on the shoulders of parents that gets lightened with her marriage, moreover respect is earned by parents if the daughter is married and settled in a good family.

In a business family sons are groomed and bought up with the concept that they have to take over the family business as a sort of a self-fulfilling prognosis. Joint orthodox families with ancestral properties assume that males stay with the family and the property remains within the family without been distributed outside the family. The ingrained perception that girls have to one day leave their parental family and they become aliens to their birth family is still deep rooted and core cause of female discrimination.

Hatred to female child: Dowry, social insecurity, dowry and marriage of girls are few core reasons why parents abort a female fetus. Families are ready to have two or more sons but do not wish to have a single daughter. Daughters are not considered as bread earners and it assumed that educating a daughter is waste of money as it would only benefit her in-laws after her marriage. Incidences like rape, domestic violence, acid attacks, and teasing have always left the parents in fear. There has been a patriarchal thinking since the beginning of the civilizations. So parents have to be cautious of their daughter's security. Social insecurity is also a major reason. Daughters are considered to be property that will belong to someone else after her marriage.

Conclusion:

From a small number of 933 in 2001, the bar has been raised to 940 in the 2011 Census of India. Although this improvement is fair enough in a developing economy, but still there is a long way to go. India suffers from a huge inequality of male female child ratio resulting in a poor sex ratio in some regions. With an overall improvement in sex ratio, the states of South India has shown major signs of improvement in comparison to states of Haryana and Punjab, where sex ratio is far low than national average figure.

Though few states in India like Pondicherry and Kerala (1084) have noted highest female sex ratio in India but yet lots needs to be done. A United Nations report warned the dropping counts of females in India to be reached an "emergency" level. It further analyzed lack of women in the nation as a core reason for increasing crimes such as the kidnapping and trafficking of women. Prime Minister Narendra

Modi's "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" program to extricate and empower the girl child is turning towards success. The Government of India social campaign that targets to engender attention and boost the competence of welfare services meant for girls. The scheme has been launched with a primary corpus of ₹100 crore (US\$15 million).

In India the state of Kerala and union territory of Puducherry are the only 2 regions where sex ratio is above 1000 or exceeds female to male ratio. Assam, Mizoram, and Nagaland are another 3 states which display indications of improvement in their sex ratio. Such improvements in sex ratio signify a healthy growth rate among female to male population in India but these are only a handful states and in majority states the sex ratio is still a concern.

The initiative of the state of Maharashtra to enact the PNDD (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act-1994 to ban pre-natal sex determination and the analogous measures at the national level resulted in the enactment of the Central pre-natal diagnostic techniques (Regulation and prevention of misuse) Act 1994. In a petition the Supreme Court has issued notices to the Indian government, states and union territories to tighten the implementation of laws to censor pre-natal sex-selection tests and sex-selective abortions in the nation.

The codified and uncoded laws globally are based on the general concept as has been adhered in the religion and ethics as inviolability or sanctity of life to be a standard of implicit protection especially sentient life contemplated to be holy, sacred, or alternatively worth not to be breached. This applies to both born and unborn because they are holy and worthy of life but the sole objective of the law nullifies due to lacunae in the law and deficiency of appropriate and timely implementation. The dwindling sex ratio in India portrays the feeble implementation of laws and clearly reflects that law has failed to reach its sole object of enactment.

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