



(Let a Bird Stretch its Wings and Fly Let her be born and stop female foeticide) "Female Foeticide: Who Is To Be Blamed?"

KEYWORDS

Female foeticide, patriarchal set up, medical for termination of pregnancy (MTP), adverse sex ratio.

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ABSTRACT

There is no denying the fact that women are the deprived section of the society. Despite the fact that so much has been done to upgrade their condition; many legal reforms have come into existence; so that women may find a better place in society; their level can be uplifted, still their condition is still miserable. They are not at par with men in each and every field. The crimes against women are still on the rise and that day is not far away when women would find their existence on this planet entirely in jeopardy. The scenario is very bleak; there are no prospects of a bright future for them; their life is in troubled water and if they are not fended off from external and internal assaults, their life would be no better than a creature who struggles for his existence. Women are the victims of patriarchy; a system of society where only males take precedence over everything. Among various problems that she faces there is one menace of female foeticide which is the most heinous one. Female foeticide means killing the baby girl before her birth; it is like cutting a plant before it can flourish and attain full growth.

Female sex ratio as per Census 2011- STATE/UT SEX RATIO

Haryana	877
Delhi	866
Chandigarh	816
Daman Diu	618
Dagar Nagar Haveli	775

The table above shows the appalling sex ratio of girls in the states of India. The situation is very grave and is becoming graver. Time is approaching fast when girls would entirely extinct from this world. All over the world and particularly in India the plight of women is worsening day by day. Among various problems that women face, as Gandhi said,

"Of all the evils for which man has made himself responsible, none is so degrading, so shocking or so brutal as his abuse of the better half of humanity to me, the female sex, not the weaker sex. It is the nobler of the two, for it is even today the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith and knowledge."¹

There was a time when the prestige of our country India was so glorious that the world used to look at us and wonder. Indian Vedantic philosophy has not guided its own people rather the people all over the world have been seeking guidance from it. But due to certain vices, now the scenario is so unpleasant, the image of the country has been defiled and the stains of dishonor are shining with a villain's grin. Once the people of the country used to honour the girls as they consider them 'Devi'; a goddess, worthy to be worshipped but what is happening all around us? The newspapers carry news almost from each and every corner of the country where a girl is raped, her honor, her virginity all chewed away by some lusty men. Men often forget that women are individuals who have every right to live their life. The memory of Delhi rape case victim is still alive in every Indian's memory. What a shame! Gandhi highlighting the importance of women has rightly said,

"To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to

woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then, indeed, is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her, man could not be. If nonviolence is the law of our being, the future is with woman. Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman?"²

It is however a pity that man considers his superiority over women but Gandhi has deflated man's superiority as an illusion and defined him as a barbarian who commits crimes against women.

Aristotle provides women a degraded place: "The relationship between the male and the female is *by nature* such that the male is higher, the female lower, that the male rules and the female is ruled."³ Right from the times immemorial women's life is the life of deprivation. She has been marginalized; she has been raped by the sex starved men, she has been slain for dowry, she has been discriminated on the basis of gender by her own parents. The criminal activities do not end with only rapes, dowry, violence, domestic violence, rape within a marriage, honour killing; there are numerous instances of the multi-dimensional crimes which are never on low ebb. Among these female foeticide is one such heinous crime. Female foeticide means killing the baby girl in mother's foetus and snatching her right to live which has been bestowed by God on her. Is it not a crime? Is it not a murder? How can we call ourselves civilized human beings; worthy of super human intelligence and wisdom? Perhaps the modern man is glad in befooling himself with the false notions of intellectual progress although the reality is quite the contrary.

Due to female foeticide the sex ratio of girls is mitigating day by day. This practice has come under severe criticism from all the corners of the world. Earlier the girls after their birth were put to death; a practice which was known as female infanticide, a practice which was in vogue in the Rajput reign in India. But with the advancement and progress in science and Technology, the situation has aggravated more. Now with the help of new devices and tests, it is feasible to peep into the stomach of a lady. Tests like Ultra- sound, CT scan, MRI, foetoscopy, Sonography etc. help in diagnosing the sex of the foetus. Consequently parents, who are averse to the

girl child, go for aborting the child before its birth. Doctors are equal partners in committing this crime. They, just for the sake of money, carry out medical for termination of pregnancy (MTP). Although it is a crime under section 307 IPC of attempt to murder. Pre-natal sex-determination was banned in India in 1994, under the Pre-conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act.

There are many reasons for female foeticide. The wish for a male child is the most prominent one. In India, it is mostly believed that only a boy can continue the family lineage. Parents think that Girls are to be married and once they are married, they have their own family to support and look after for. Their family name can only be carried on if only they have a male member. This wish plays havoc with the woman's health as she is subjected to harsh medical treatment in the form of female foeticide. To get a daughter married, one has to amass a huge amount of dowry and how can a poor man collect such a huge dowry to satisfy the lust of husband and in-laws, that is why a girl is not allowed to see the light of the world. Srivastava et al (2005) found that parents are of the opinion that upbringing of the girl child is very expensive and it is the most futile investment as a daughter has to be married of. ⁴

Moreover illiteracy is another major reason of female foeticide. An illiterate man fails to understand that both a boy and girl are equal. Both are the gifts from God. They should be treated equally. A poor man believes that a boy can help in earning the bread for the family. It is generally believed that daughter brings nothing but misfortunes with her lot. So parents prefer to abort her instead of giving birth to her. Whatever the reasons the parents may furnish, it is an agreeable point that their doing can never be justified on any point. Legally as well as morally they are sinners. They are criminal as it is equal to killing a living person. The reasons for taking such a step may seem convincing in the case of dowry but still no one has the right to kill any other person. Not only the parents who go for it rather the doctor, relatives, friends who aid directly or obliquely share equal responsibility.

Ashu (2012) reported that 78% of women favoured female foeticide. 64% women feel that the parents should decide if they want a girl or a boy so that they can have one girl and one boy. As far as mother-in-laws are concerned, 12% believe that female foeticides are not wrong and 78% neither approved of female foeticide nor did they call it wrong, 77% of daughter in-laws disapproved of female foeticide. Six villages of Ludhiana were covered in the study.⁵

Some of the most gender ratios, indicating gross violation of women's rights, are found in South and East Asian countries such as India and China. Sex ratio of Rajasthan dipped to 883 girls per 1,000 boys in 2011 from 901 girls to 1000 boys in 2001. Female foeticide would adversely impact the society and would add to the number of crimes. Unequal sex ratio would multiply chances of rape, prostitution, violence against women, sale purchase of women, women bondages and slavery system etc. As a result of this vice, the eligible number of men to be married would be more than the girls. Men would find themselves in soup as they would find no brides for them. This would compel them to take resort to buy brides for them. Cases of women trafficking are being reported all over the country. Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are the worst hit areas. Child marriages would give rise to number of problems like child pregnancies which would have a devastating consequence. As the sex ratio of girls is on the low ebb as a consequence of female foeticide, the number of girls would dramatically lessen. Population of country would decline. There would be no girls who would give birth to children as a result of this vice.

The Problem of female foeticide should be solved on the top priority basis. Government is already putting its efforts in this regard. Female foeticide is declared as a legal crime. Pre-natal Sex determination test is also illegal. Awareness is being spread by media and Indian Film Industry to end this practice. Aamir Khan's first ever episode of his show "Satyamev Jayate" was "Daughters Are Precious". Indian people have to come out of Manu's philosophy, "No act is to be done according to her own will by a young girl, a young woman, or even by an old woman, though in their own houses."⁶

One can pray that God bestows humans with the wisdom so that he ceases the atrocities against women:

To kill their smile is a sin

Let them live and be born

Teach your kith and kin

To save girls they are sworn.

(Self-Composed)

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