



## “FEMALE FOETICIDE A CURSE ON HUMANITY”

**Dr. L. Eshwarappa**

M.A., M.Phil.,PhD. Associate Professor of Sociology, S.J.M.V's BAJSS Arts and Commerce College for Women, Ranebennur.Dist: Haveri, State-Karnataka.

### ABSTRACT

According to the Census of 2011, the overall sex ratio at the national level has increased by 7 points since the 2001 census to reach 940 females per 1000 males, this is lower than 1961 when the figure stood at 941 females per 1000 males.

Despite introducing several laws on female foeticide and schemes to encourage the families to have a girl child, the sex ratio in India has gone down. The child sex ratio has gone to 914 females per 1000 males which is the lowest record since independence. These numbers clearly state that the Indian society still prefers boys over girls such that they could have a security for their future. The ratio has gone down to 914 from 927 when the last census was taken. The monotonic decline in the sex ratio over the last decade, despite the improving socio economic characteristics reinforces the existence of gender discriminatory practices which starts even before birth; which requires the urgent attention of public policy, as improving literacy and economic value of women is necessary but not sufficient for enhancing the relative life chances of girl child.

Based on the analysis 2011 census report and other secondary sources the following findings are observed in my studies.

1. Skewed sex ratio at birth is primarily due to sex selective abortions.
2. Practice of sex selection is relatively more among urban, educated and well off households.
3. Post-natal sex selection has influence on sex differential in child survival, and female child survival is threatened at higher order births and more specifically in the absence of siblings.
4. Urban share in distortion in sex ratio at birth is much higher in relation to rural areas.

### KEYWORDS :

The Indian sex ratio has shown a secular decline since the beginning of the twentieth century excepting some reverse trend of improvement during 1951, 1981, 2001 and 2011. Along with rise in population size, there is evidence of masculinity in sex ratio in general as well as in child sex ratio in particular. Although the masculinity of sex ratio is a reality from the very beginning and more so in case of child population in India (Seth 1996), the concern regarding this phenomenon with the onset of this century is because of the startling figures exposed by the 2011 Census (Table-1). Not only has the child sex ratio in the age group 0-6 years declined from 946 (1951) to 914 within a decade at the national level, but also masculinity of the child sex ratios are more intense in particular regions. The sharpest decline in the sex ratio of the 0-6 year group was found in Haryana (830/1000) and Punjab (846/1000). The Census evidence points towards a strict cultural preference for male children as observed from the pattern that emerges across regions. The two kinds of explanation put forward for this deviant pattern are in terms of the practice of female infanticide, and sex-selective abortion as well as female child neglect, none of which is described in terms of its precise magnitude on its bearing on masculinity of sex ratios. While these could be the immediate causes resulting in the distortion of sex ratios, the prime motivation for practice of such measures stems from the preferential sex composition of children. With the ongoing pace of fertility transition, couples are rather forced to achieve a desired sex composition of children within a limited allowance for the number of children. This is mentioned as another dimension intensifying preferential fertility regulation leading to the distortion in sex ratios. With the changing social norms towards smaller family size, the availability and access to new technologies provides an easy way for parents to realise their desired goals. Prof Amartya Sen describes this particular situation as 'technological revolution of a reactionary kind'.

**Table 1: Number Of Females Per 1000 Males In India (1901-2011)**

Years	Sex Ratio
1901	927
1911	964
1921	955
1931	950
1941	945
1951	946
1961	941
1971	940
1981	934
1991	929
2001	933
2011	914

Source: Registrar General of India

There have been discussions concerning the issue of female deficit ever since the first Census of British India in 1872. In fact, one scholar considers the female deficit to be about 5 million and speculates the reason behind this based on the findings of 1981 Census (Saraswathi, 1988). The skewed sex ratios in the early Census periods were attributed to under-count of women; however, in recent periods it is traced to the masculine sex ratio at birth. The child sex ratio has registered a fourteen-point decline in rural areas and thirty-two points in urban areas, at the national level. The most disturbing aspect of the decline is in the rural areas of twenty states and union territories as per the 2011 Census. Such decline is extremely steep in Haryana followed by Punjab, Chandigarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal (Table 2). Although a marginal increase in general sex ratio at the national level was observed between 1981 and 2001, the child sex ratio continued to decline over the last five decades (976 in 1961 to 927 in 2001). The present review attempts at identifying and presenting the several threads of linkage with the masculinity of sex ratios.

### OBJECTIVES:

More specifically, the present study has been under taken with the following objectives:

- To identify the main causes of decline in child sex ratio.
- To examine the consequences of decline in sex ratio.
- To explicate the factors which influence sex ratio are foeticide, infanticide, abortions, discriminations, violence against women etc.,

### METHODOLOGY:

It was pre-decided that the study should be confined to empirical research, dealing with sex ratio at birth (SRB) and child sex ratio (0-6 years) in India. Hence, published and unpublished researches including journal articles, books, mimeographed reports, unpublished papers and other relevant literature have been identified as far as accessible through library/internet search. Since the task was aimed at researching the phenomenon of pre-natal sex selection, female infanticide and the consequential fall in sex ratios, research materials exclusively focusing on gender discrimination were considered beyond the purview of this work. Also newspaper articles and reports appearing in the electronic media were not included in this analysis.

### Causes and Consequences

1. Distortion in sex ratio is a result of intensification in sex preference. The assumption of increasing welfare and socio-economic development leading to loss of cultural significance has proved to be invalid.
2. Simultaneous qualifying of low fertility norm and preference for sons has led to masculinity in sex ratios.
3. Execution of fertility regulation and choice facilitated by

improved technology for sex determination.

4. Unchanged economic valuation of sons and daughters and their rigid societal role sustains the desire for sons against daughters.
5. Existing practices of dowry, restrictive right over married daughters by the natal family as well as investment in girl children without any return for parents make preference for sons inevitable.

#### Consequences and intervention

1. The presumed consequence of the continued trend of sex ratio bias in children is in terms of marriage squeeze and increased vulnerability of women.
2. Lesser number with better capability might alter the gender balance leading to a changed mindset regarding valuation of girl children.

#### Remedies & Suggestions

- i. Women should be treated equal at home.
- ii. To fight against violence on women, a complaint must be registered in the concern office.
- iii. The Police department, Government, and Law should support and respond to women's sufferings.
- iv. The attitude of man towards women should change.
- v. To prohibit gender detection.
- vi. Proper atmosphere must be created to see that the law reaches/helps people.
- vii. Central and State Governments should strictly implement PNDT law as per the Supreme Court order of 13 March, 2013.
- viii. The attitude of the society looking at women with contempt should change. Anyone who detects the gender of the foetus must be punished strictly under PCPNDT with 3 years of imprisonment and Rs 50000/- penalty etc.,.
- ix. While the problem won't be solved immediately, it must be addressed immediately. It may sound apocalyptic, but if an effective change in culture and attitude cannot be promoted quickly, there will soon be no babies to abort.
- x. Effective implementation of "Beti bachvo and beti padavo" aandholana.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Agnihotri, Satish B. Changes in Sex Ratio Patterns in Orissa: 1991-2001: Is there an epicentre of female deficit?
- [2] Asha A Bhende and Tara Kanitkar Principles of Population Studies, Himalaya Publishing House, Mumbai.
- [3] Clark, Shelley Son Preference and Sex Composition of Children: Evidence from India Demography.
- [4] C.N. Shankar Rao, Sociology of Indian Society -S.Chand & Company LTD. New Delhi.
- [5] Gupta, Hari Shanker Sex Preference and Fertility in Haryana Population Geography.
- [6] Hans Raj Fundamentals of Demography, Surjeet Publication, Delhi.
- [7] Jayaraj, D. Sex Ratio at Birth: An Exploratory Analysis of its Determinants Working Paper No. 157, Madras Institute of Development Studies.
- [8] Kulkarni, Sanjeev Sex Determination Tests and Female Feticide in the City of Bombay Foundation for Research in Community Health.
- [9] M.L. Jhingran, B.K. Bhatta, J.N. Desai Demography
- [10] Rajashekhar. S. Population Studies, Bramara Prakashana, Shimoga.