



## FEMALE FOETICIDE AND GENDER INEQUALITY : A BAN TO WOMAN EMPOWERMENT

English

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### ABSTRACT

Women are the one who constitute the half of a human population. But irrespective of that fact they have been discriminated, harassed and exploited without judging upon their country, religion, caste or creed. Everywhere women are vexed with many provocations. Female foeticide is unfortunately one of the worst mediums of violence against women where the birth of another woman is denied. The most basic and fundamental right, "the right to life" is vetoed to her. Execution of female child has been a quotidian characteristic of the Indian "Patriarchal" society. This practice first came into as "Female Infanticide" i.e. a mother killing her baby within a year of her birth. This practice raged due to lacking in the scientific discoveries and unavailability of modern equipment and progressive technology such as the ruinous sex determining instruments. After a certain time, with an ample availability and substantial supply of such sex determination technologies in the health institutions, hospitals and maternity clinics, hundreds of occurrence of female foeticide were surfaced. Hence, it seems that the foetus-gender determination tests that leads to the identification of the sex of the unborn child has made the ill-practice of "murdering" the female child disregarded and unchallenging than before. The practice that was initiated in India under the influence of the deeply rooted patriarchy, had been able to prove the strength of a man over a woman, and has also been influenced by poverty and dowry.

The practice of the female foeticide in India has immensely contributed to Gender Inequality. Female Foeticide in the present 21st century India is one of the biggest challenges against the laws of the welfare of women's empowerment in particular. Uprooting this practice is the crucial need of the times and thus it is becoming a veritable perturbation.

This article thus emphasizes on the condition of female foeticide and also connects it to another major issue i.e. Gender Inequality.

### KEYWORDS

Female infanticide; female foeticide; gender inequality; ban to woman empowerment;

### INTRODUCTION

Sex - based discrimination has been studied widely in the context of male child preference in South and Southeast Asian countries. Partiality is manifested in the care given to boys over girls. Sex - selective abortions is a common phenomenon for many of the common people. The prodigy of female foeticide in India is not newly introduced, where female foetuses are selectively "rejected" after pre-natal gender/sex determination. In some parts of the country, the sex ratio of girls to boys has dropped to less than 700:1000. The long age-old tradition of son preference, coupled with new advanced medical technology now gives to the status conscious Indian families, the choice between paying for a large dowry of their daughter and aborting her before she's born. With the advancement of medical technology, new techniques can now be "misused", to get rid of her before birth. Through ultrasound scans and amniocentesis, the sex of the foetus can be determined during the pregnancy of the woman and then the foetus is aborted if found to be a female. In Indian society, female foeticide has grasped as a fuelled up social problem during the last few years. The girl child in India is treated right from her birth as an additional burden, an extra mouth to feed and a liability and another man's property. The birth of a son is regarded as essential holy deed in Hinduism and many prayers and rich offerings are made in temples in the hope of having a male child.

*"Women have equal rights with men upon earth; in religion and society they are a very important element. Divine Justice demands that the rights of both sexes should be equally respected since neither is superior to the other in the eyes of Heaven."*

The sex ratio has consistently been in favour of boys since the 20th century to still continue though we frequently get to hear "men & women are equal."

### FEMALE FOETICIDE AND FEMALE INFANTICIDE THROUGH SEX DETERMINATION IN INDIA

Female foeticide is the process of aborting the female baby in the mother's womb. Whereas female infanticide is killing a baby girl after she is already born. The practice of killing the female child after her birth has been prevailing in our society for a decade. But foeticide is the legacy and contribution of the progress made by the improvement of medical science. "Amniocentesis" was introduced in the year 1975 to detect foetal abnormalities. But it soon began to be used for determining the sex of the unborn baby. Ultrasound scanning, being a non-protruding technique, gained popularity in hotfoot and is now handy in some of the most remote rural areas as well. Both techniques are now "illegally" used for sex determination with the objective of

aborting the foetus if it turns out to be 'Female'. With the dawn of privatization and commercialization, the use of improved pre-natal diagnostic technologies is growing into a profitable business in India. The misemployment of technology simply fortifies the secondary status given to girl children in such a way that they are slaughtered even before they are born. Compared to infanticide, foeticide is probably a more acceptable means of dumping the unwanted girl child. Infanticide can be patently a bestial and ruthless practice while foeticide is executed by adept professionals and is a medical practice that uses reoriented scientific expertise and ability and reduces the guilt factor connected with the spoilt practice. The ephemeral census of 2011 and the recent news reports data designate a stern demographic image of declining female to male ratio. The most affected states are progressive states of India like Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Gujarat.

### What are the main causes of declining sex ratio in Indian society?

It is due to Female Foeticide and Female Infanticide. Foeticide is a contravention of an unborn child. It also has insinuation on the health of the Mother. At a broader level, it affects status of women. It also has serious ecological and demographical upshot. It is a crucial problem that affects the life and health of society.

### FEMALE FOETICIDE AND GENDER INEQUALITY

It seems that the sex determination tests which are leading to the identification of the gender of the unborn child has made the practice of killing the female foetus unnoticed and gripped than it was before. The inhumane practice strengthened its roots in India under the influence of the deeply rooted patriarchy, to prove the durability of a man over a woman. Female foeticide in India has immensely contributed to Gender Inequality. The belief that the maximum occurrence of Female Foeticide was committed among the rural people, the poor, the uneducated and those unable to pay the dowry has been proved wrong at the present span of time. The practice of Female Foeticide now, is seen increasingly switching from the country's rural, poor and uneducated to the urban, substantial and educated classes as well. It seems to be mirroring an escalating trend and rather getting further soar even with the modification in the living standard of the average of India's population, growth in per capita income, rise in the rational and democratic thinking and improvement in the educational and cultural strata of the society. Evolution of past to the present society, vicious efforts had been put into action by the social workers, reformers and philanthropists to put an end to the practice of brutally diminishing the life of the female foetus, either in the form of Female Infanticide or Foeticide. In spite of all their hard work the practice has been continued and constituting a big threat to the mankind by fabricating an unendurable disparity in male-female population of the

country. The Indian Laws are not adequate and operative to restrain the jeopardy created by the drill of Female Foeticide. Even the Law imposing interventions are seen as ineffective and fragile as that of the Law itself to plaid the emergent practice of Female Foeticide in the country. With Judiciary's avowed obligation to exterminate Female Foeticide by gruelling all those responsible for the terrible crime has remained persistent. Selective abortions of the female foetuses have become a common trend and led to disrupt the male-female ratio in the country over a period of time. Female Foeticide in present times is India's biggest challenge in contradiction of the Laws of the land in general and "Women's Empowerment" in specific. Abolition of this practice is the burning need of the hour and thus becomes a unaffected anxiety of each one of us.

### CONCLUSION

Days are not so far, when there may be advent of the circumstances where brides will not be obtainable for the marriage of the sons to maintain extraction and endure the human race of even those people who believe on long standing tradition of son preference, and proudly proclaim -

*"Only sons can offer Pyre Pindadana, Mukhagni and not the daughters".*

Therefore, it is felt that the mind sets of the people should be rehabilitated right from now towards the prominence of the girl child in the family in both rural and urban area. There is an exigent need to amend the demographic configuration of India's population and to grab this heartless form of vehemence against women. The representation of any Law is not ample; Laws must be abided by and pragmatic rigorously, before any transformation in the prestige of women can take place. In spite of the Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, smany prevalence of Female Foeticide are taking place in many parts of India. There is still absolute dispute as to who will serve as the overseer to control the misconduct of the practice of Female Foeticide. Endorsing gender balanced society comprises aiming behavioural variations in society which in turn involves a long term community based intrusion, cognizance programmes, programmes to uphold girl children's right, addressing myths related to sons/ daughters and concerted efforts to change the mind set of people. Apart from the above, a feeling has to be indoctrinated in the minds of the people that she is the *daughter*, she is the *sister*, she is a *life partner*, and she is the *Mother: the birth-giver of a man*.

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