

## **FEMALE FETICIDE: THE TRUE PICTURE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In today's world, when girls have reached to the heights of the moon and Mount Everest is also not a difficult deal to crack by any female. This is a time, when one has to take an action in order to remove this ill in the society. The number of females in India has decreased to a considerable limit and it is projected that if this scenario continues then in the next 20 years, females would be the most hidden word in the country. Though many reasons are found to be the cause of this problem but there is a solution to every problem and it needs to be curbed.*

**Keywords:** Female, feticide, dowry, sex ratio.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Indian families are considered incomplete without at least two children in a family. In the rural areas of the country, families are found to be having children upto four to five also, though with the advancement of birth control policies so launched by the Indian government, the families in the urban areas have been made aware of the importance of having only two children in a family but the Indian society seems to be in continuous efforts of having a boy to ensure having a successor for their family name. Indians have many Goddesses in their Hindu religion specially and they pray these Goddesses to wish for money from their Laxmi mata, intellectual knowledge from Saraswati mata and prosperity from Durga mata but they are not found to be wishing for a girl as a child in their family. The birth of a girl child is still found to be an inauspicious event if a girl is born in a family. The Indian government has prohibited the gender detection before birth else Indian society would have been left very less sex ratio if the gender determination would not have been banned in India. Though these sex determination techniques are still prevalent but not at large anymore (under Pre - Conception and Pre- Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994) the declining sex ratio has been arrested since 20 September, 1994. The detection of the gender of the fetus and section of the gender has become a punishable offence in the eyes of Indian Law. In many parts of the country, the desire of having a son is so prevalent that the socio economic status is also determined by the infant boys in the family. The desire of having a son is driven by such intense pressure that the expecting mothers are forced to adopt abortions in case the second child is also happened to be a girl child. At the same time, this kind of pressure is more intense in case the first child in the family is already a girl child. During the earlier times, the elderly lady in the village used to made estimate about the gender of the unborn child but those estimates were at times accurate and wrong in few cases which with the technological advancement has almost eradicated.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

Many studies have been done earlier to study the impact of pre conception and pre natal sex determination and the impact of these on the sex ratio. Niger (2012) studied the accuracy of results so given by the ultra sound machine regarding the gender of the unborn child and mis-diagnosis was also there and the effect was analysed. LuoJia Hu (2011) analysed the impact of pre natal sex selection on girls' well-being in India and it was found that the increase of gender selection is associated with reduction in malnutrition in girls. Jayachandran, S. (2014) discussed the methods of how economic development can be achieved by removing gender gaps and help the country grow faster. Raju, E. (2014) has focused on gender discrimination in India on the basis of demographic, social and economic and political context, it broadly discusses issues of gender inequality, women empowerment and reproductive health of women in India. Karim (2014) studied the importance of removing gender discrimination and gender inequality. The level of gender inequality has been studied in India and the potential reasons behind the same have been examined and various methods have been suggested to eradicate or decrease this indifference in the society. Batra and Thomas (2016) analysed the causes of gender inequality in India and have outlined the possible policies and practices to reduce gender inequality. Various types of gender discrimination has also been examined. Klausen and Wink (2003) found that the disparities in gender association is the highest in families which are strongly linked to socioeconomic status of the same. Specifically, the poorer families are sometimes forced to ration food as the daughters are found to be less preferred than sons, the reason behind this is that the poorest families are less bound by the cultural expectations and norms than other class of families. In another study by Klausen (2001) it was found that the practice of preferring sons is more prevalent in poorest families than in poor families.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

The research has been conducted using the secondary data available on various authentic websites, news journals, research papers and data by UNICEF.

## **NEED OF THE STUDY:**

The study has been conducted to analyse the reasons behind the declining sex ratio in India and the reasons behind the gender discrimination done in Indian families. There is a need to study the impact of declining sex ratio and suggestions have been made in order to improve the same.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:**

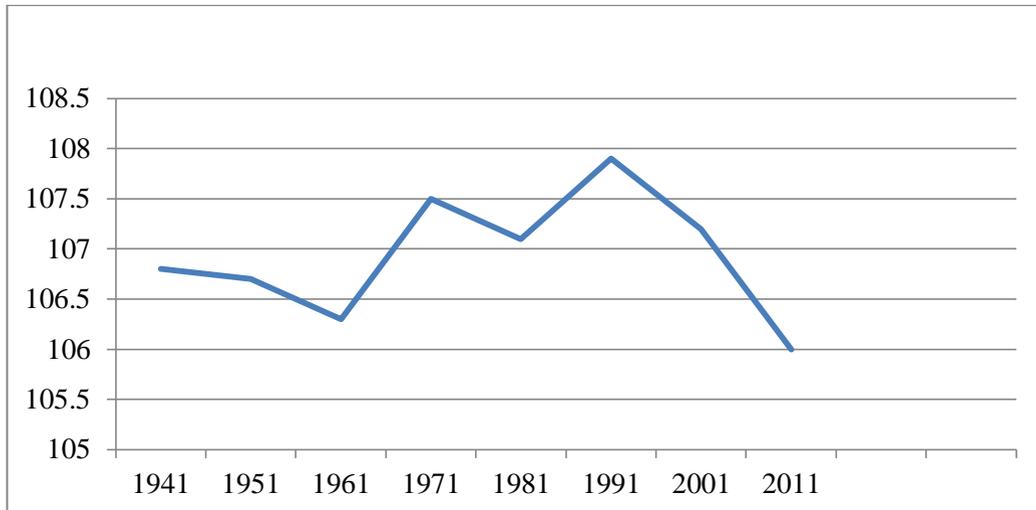
- 1.To analyse the current status of sex ratio in India.
- 2.To examine the various reasons behind the declining sex ratio and suggest some remedies thereof.

## **SOURCE OF DATA:**

The data has been collected using secondary sources, journals, newspapers, magazines, data by UNICEF and CENSUS population of INDIA.

## **DISCUSSION:**

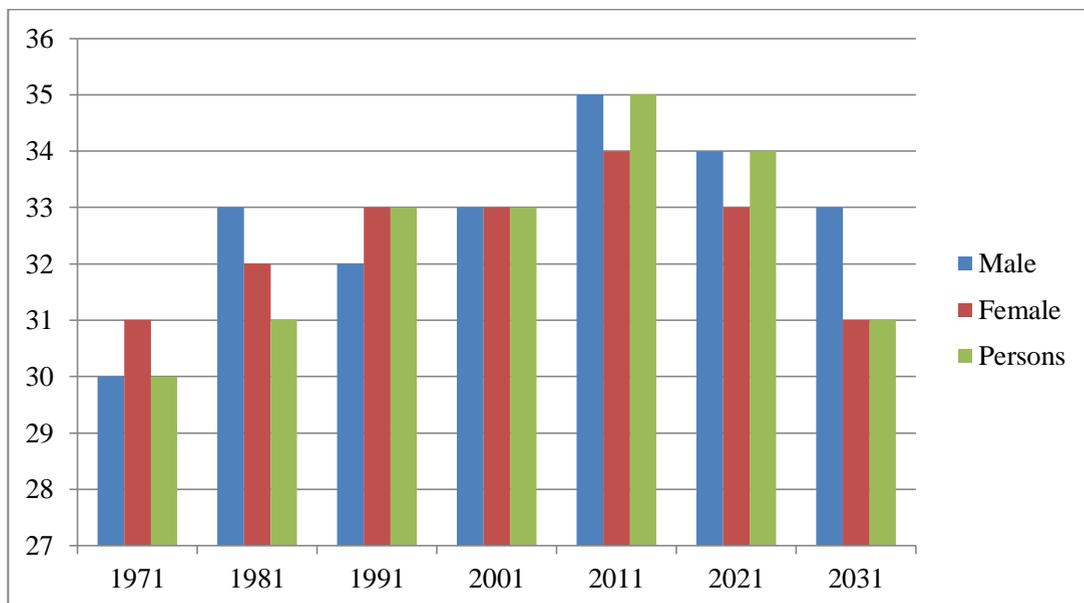
The figure 1.1 clearly shows that the sex ratio in India has been fluctuating since 1941. With the advancement in technology in 1979, i.e. with the introduction of ultrasound machinery, the sex ratio deteriorated to a high extent. Its use expanded in 1980's and became widespread in 2000's. It has been estimated that 10 million female fetuses may have been illegally aborted in India since 1990's and 5,00,000 girls being lost annually due to female foeticide<sup>8</sup>. MacPherson estimates that 1,00,000 abortions every year continue to be performed in India solely because of selective abortions.



**Fig. 1.1: Sex ratio in India (males per 100 females)**

The rate of illegal abortions in India has shown tremendous increase in the past few years. In a report, it has been found that this decline in the sex ratio will continue to decline by 2031. The sex ratio has come down from the level of 961 in 1971 to 939 in 2011 and it is further projected to decrease to 904 in 2021 and 898 in 2031. The report further suggests that the population of female to male youths have been declined since 2001<sup>10</sup>.

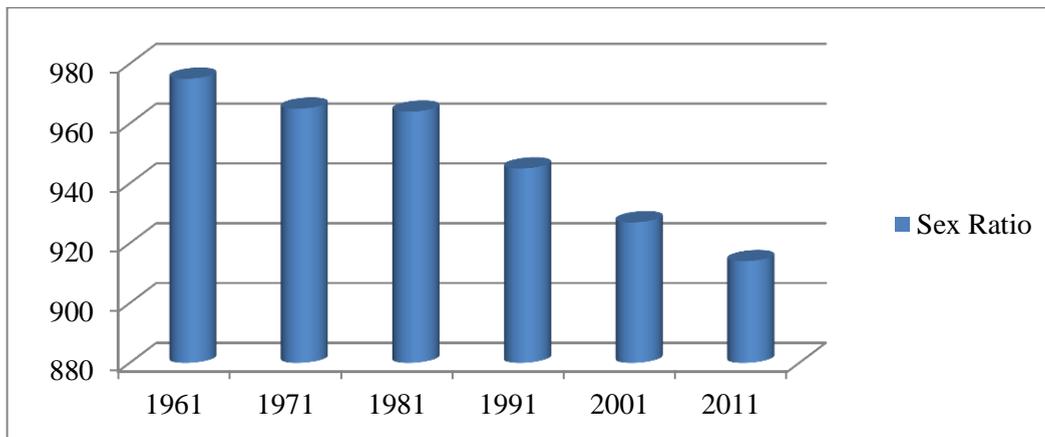
As shown in the fig.1.2 the proportion of youth in the age group of 15-34 years to total population has been declining at a steady rate and is further projected to decline in the coming years and this can be a very dangerous situation in the forthcoming years.



**Fig. 1.2: Showing population of youth (15-34 years) to total population**

According to the 2011 CENSUS, the worst sex ratio in India is found in Haryana with 861 females to 1000 males.

The number of girls born in India since 1961 has been falling to a great extent, it is found that the sex ratio was 975 in 1961, decreasing to 965 in 1971, 964 in 1981, 945 to 1000 males in 1991, which further increased to 927 in 2001 and 914 in 2011.



**Fig. 1.3 showing the decline in the number of girls born in India since 1961**

### **REASONS BEHIND DECLINE:**

There have been many reasons behind the decline in the sex ratio in the previous years and many reasons have been found behind the same. Some of the major reasons are:

- a) **UNEDUCATION:** The literacy rate in India has a literacy rate of 74% including 82% of men and 65% of women. This clearly indicates that the level of illiteracy and the importance of having a girl child in a family can be made understood to only educated class people. The lower level of education hinders the birth of a girl child and increases female feticides.
- b) **DOWRY SYSTEM:** Ever since ages, the dowry system has been prevalent in our Indian society. Marrying a girl to someone accompanied by certain “gifts” has been transformed to a huge sum of dowry in cash and kind. The girls are considered burden in the society because of this reason. The family feels the burden of marrying a girl and giving dowry to the family of the boy.
- c) **SUCCESSOR OF THE FAMILY:** The boy has to stay in the same family where he was born and so he carries the same name of his parents for life. So, it is believed that the boy will be the successor of the family and will continue with the family name for life. In the Indian marriages, a girl changes her surname and adopts the surname of the boy’s family.
- d) **STATUS SYMBOL:** The so called “benefits” attached to having a boy makes it a status symbol to have a boy in the Indian culture. A family is not even considered complete till the time they have a son in their family. Having a son is a status symbol whereas a girl is considered as a matter of shame.
- e) **SUPPORT IN OLD AGE:** As the boy has to stay with his parents and take care of them so he becomes the support for the family in the old age. He is considered as a support system for the family (both financially and mentally). It is considered as the “duty” of the son to take care of the family in their old age.

### **SUGGESTIONS:**

- a) **NO TO DOWRY:** There is a dire need to stop this dowry system, till the time this system is not stopped, girls will be continued to be considered as a burden for the family. It is a need of the hour. The youth can bring this change in this society by refusing to accept dowry in their marriages.
- b) **EDUCATION:** Higher the level of education, higher will be their perspective. The change in the mindset can be there in the minds of the youths by educating them about the value of a girl and informing them that the girls are also an equal and important part of the family.
- c) **TREATING EQUALLY:** The people in the rural areas and specially the uneducated class need to be made aware that they need to consider the boys and girls equally and should not

consider the girls inferior to boys. By giving them equal rights and equal opportunity to study and work, this difference can be curbed.

### **CONCLUSION:**

This world is a creation of GOD and HE has deliberately made both boys and girls, in order to maintain a balance. The human beings need to understand this and they need to stop manipulating with the nature and accept the well-being of a child rather than just trying to fulfill their own wishes. A society without a girl would be the same as the rainbow without colours. The girls are the reason of wisdom in the society and one must change their perspective and start considering them equally and give them their equal right to live with dignity and respect. Female feticide should be stopped and the birth of a girl child should also be celebrated as the birth of a boy in the family. If this scenario is not stopped in time, there may be a time when boys won't get girls to get married and then successor of the family or taking care of the elders would be an impossible thing.

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