



SEX SELECTION AND PRE - BIRTH ELIMINATION OF GIRL CHILD

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ABSTRACT

The history of human culture is replete with examples of systematic oppression of women. One form of oppression of women is the practice of female infanticide. In a country like India, where son preference is principally the product of an ingrained social prejudice that “man is superior to woman” girls and women still occupy a marginal position in society, whereas male heir offers countless advantages. The tradition of female infanticide, which has virtually disappeared, is being progressively replaced by female foeticide, indicating a trend towards the transfer of gender discrimination from the post to the prenatal stage. This hassled to growing daughter discrimination that is materialized in different ways: infanticide, sex-selective abortion, under-reporting of births, excess female infant mortality. Therefore it is essential to find such causes which have supported such practices for many decades and still continue to suppress the status of women in Indian society. This paper will discuss the social reflections on the custom of female infanticide in India, in general, in Tamil Nadu in particular.

Keywords: *Infanticide, Sex-ratio, Tradition.*

1. Introduction

The preference for a son continues to be a prevalent norm in the traditional Indian family. This is one of the important reasons for the declining sex ratio. Sex selection and its consequent female infanticide and foeticide relics an issue for many countries today, most notably India. It is calculated that India has the most important number of women due to the patriarchal customs which perpetuate male preference and promote the selective elimination of females through practices such as infanticide and sex-selective abortion. Sex ratio is an important social indicator to measure the extent of the prevailing equity between males and females in a society at a given point of time.¹ Nobel Laureate and Economist Amartya Sen noted, “A societal and enriching divide across India, splitting the country” in half, with respect to female mortality and gender bias before birth. In fact, in 2003 he also commented that “Sex bias in motility” calls for exhaustive study today in the same way that sex prejudice in mortality- the earlier source of “missing women” – did more than a decade ago...². He argued for more research into the conventional edifying values that enable female difficult.² In India, even if the 2011 survey showed an insignificant increase in the overall population sex ratio, which rose from 927 females per 1000 males in 1991 to 940 in 2011, the proportion of girls to boys as captured by the sex ratio of those aged 0-6



years has continued to decline, falling from 976 in 1961 to 940 in 2011. The Supreme Court of India was announced in 2007, as the female foeticide awareness year, but after the four years of the declaration, the child sex ratio in India is declining over the period and at the lowest since 1947 from 946 girls to 918 girls per 1000 boys on the ground of a son preference.³ The South Indian state of Tamil Nadu is a relative addition to the list of Indian states to experience the phenomenon of “missing Women”.⁴ India is a traditional civilization and deeply embedded in the culture. It is ridden by superstitious beliefs as well as practices on the one hand, and patriarchal male domination on the other hand; results in the subjugation and domination of women. These circumstances perpetrated the practice of this primitive and dangerous custom which is rampant even today. Therefore, the rising tide of violence and neglect against the girl child needs to be stemmed by those who cherish the emancipation and empowerment of the women. In the era of science and technology, people are being remedied from rarest of rare diseases by medical science; this boon a medical science is being misused. Today, people are carrying out abortion knowing the female sex by Ultra-Sonography, Amniotes are and other techniques. Hence, this paper attempts to analyze the female sex ratio, responses of government, and reasons for Female Infanticide to Foeticide in Tamil Nadu.

2. Objectives

1. The present object aims to study the declining trends in sex ratio in Tamil Nadu according to the census 2011.
2. To study the socio-economic and cultural reasons responsible for female foeticide and infanticide.
3. To study the welfare measures of the Government of Tamil Nadu and to suggest suitable measures to improve the survival chances of the girls in Tamil Nadu.

3. Methodology

This research paper is designed as a quantitative study. To understand the determinants of the gender divide in sex partiality. The researcher collected the data from the reports of the Census of India and Tamil Nadu. The researcher also used internet sources for collecting the secondary data on sex ratio from the official website of Tamil Nadu Government.

1. What are the determinants of the gender divide in sex preference?
2. What are the programs and schemes imposed by the government in response to the decline in child sex ratio?
3. To what extent has the Act succeeded or failed to arrest the persistent Declining Child Sex Ratio?
4. What is the role played by the socio-cultural context in the discrimination against female children and girls?

4. Patriarchal set up

Families set up in India, continue to be patriarchal where the status of male members is higher to the female members. In addition to a mother on generous birth to a male child mechanically rises in status. Traditionally, only a male heir can carry onward the family's name. In the absence of a male heir, it is apparent that the family name is lost perpetually; therefore the preference for a male child is intensely rooted. The Patriarchy comprises two elements; its structure in the hierarchical organization of social institutions and social relationships. It thus relegates power to the certain individual, groups or class and some form of subservience to others. The maintenance of this hierarchical structure and authority needs recognition with numerous. The patriarchal



thought serves to emphasize this acceptance. It is a reason of inequality and subordination, which is conventional by those who are in a Subordinate position, relatively often this is legitimized through religion and formal legislation.⁵

5. What is Female Infanticide and Foeticide?

1.1. Female Foeticide:

The Female foeticide or sex-selective abortion is the elimination of the female fetus in the womb itself. Aborting a female foetus after sex determination test or pre-natal diagnostic test which includes is following: a. Ultra-sonography, b. Foetoscopy, c. Placental tissue sampling, d. Amniocentesis.⁶ The practice that commenced in India under the influence of the deeply rooted patriarchy, that is, to prove the strength of man over women, has also been influenced by poverty and dowry.

1.2. Female Infanticide:

An additional form of eliminating the girl child has been the practice of female infanticide. "Female Infanticide is the international killing of a baby girl due to the preference for male babies and from low value associated with the birth of females."⁷ Eradication of girls since the family hierarchy still facing they are born clearly indicates the passionate need for a boy child. In the countries, where "female foeticide has become unbridled, the core factor is the need to continue the family line through the male born into it". Sons are seen as the main source of income. Even though women today "can easily rub shoulders with men, almost in every field they set their mind to, the common misconception still remains that it is the male who will help run the house, and look after his parents". Though parents respired a sigh of relief for a job well done in receiving their 'daughter' settled. This strong preference for sons which results in a life-endangering deprivation of daughters is not considered abhorrent ethnically and in a social context.⁸ Compared to Infanticide, Foeticide is probably a more acceptable means of disposing of the unwanted girl children. Infanticide can be "an overly barbaric and inhumane practice" while "foeticide that is carried out by skilled professionals is a medical practice" that uses scientific techniques and skills and reduces the guilt factor associated with the entire exercise.

Gita Arvamudan compares the prevalence of female infanticide and foeticide in India to a 'holocaust' and 'serial killing'. She says, "...a whole femininity is getting exterminated silently and smoothly executed crime which leaves no waves in its lake ... on some parts...(of India) almost two generations of women have been execution."⁹ Rekha Pande points out, "In India elders still bless newlyweds with words that imply: "May you bear many sons". To facilitate simple-sounding go-ahead has an ugly underbelly, evident in the legacy of biases against the girl child, the vilest form of which is female infanticide. In the present day, advanced skill provides stylish methods of sex selection, the advertisements for which are crude and direct: "spend only Rs. 500 now, save Rs.5, 00,000 (no Dowry) later".¹⁰ T.V. Sekher and Neelambar Hatti in the article, "Discrimination of female children in Modern India: from conception through childhood," says that the deep-rooted mind of people even in modern society. According to research, there are the main three reasons for discrimination against a female child are infanticide, neglect the girls, and unwanted abortion. To supervise the position government should proceed with effective steps.¹¹



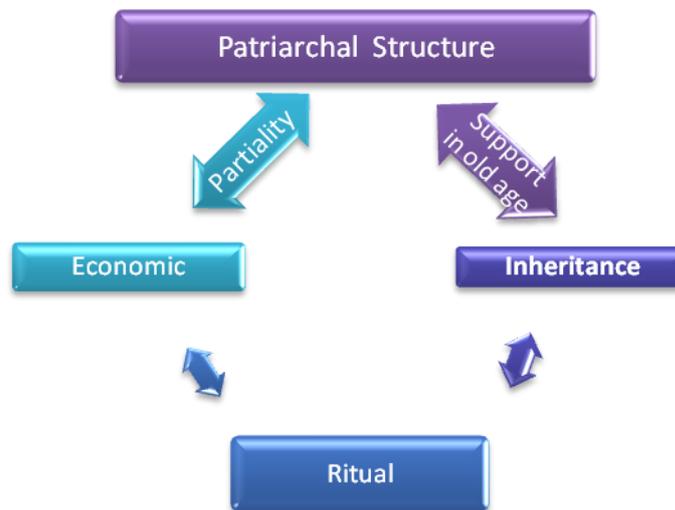
7. Gender Discrimination

Gender issues are an age-old in a tradition-bound country like India, both in social as well as economic sectors. This country is lagging behind many rapidly progressing nations of the world. Indian society is predominated by the Hindu society is patriarchal, in nature. And in this social base, women are considered as subordinates to men and are traditionally discriminated in many spheres of their daily life. This happens primarily because of their culture that has determined the role and social status of women and also because of the fact that they are economically dependent on one hand they cannot break the tradition and on the other hand they are unable to do so because of their economic helplessness. This is naturally happening, because of certain coherent factors like social, economic, religion us and now, Female Infanticide replaces to Female Foeticide. Gender discrimination is there in many spheres of life. A girl child is considered as an economic and social burden on her parents and she suffers right from her birth, surprisingly even from the mother's womb if the pregnancy is deflected during the gestation period. After birth she is undernourished as compared to a senior male child of the same mother, her education is neglected, due importance is not given on her health condition and then resides permanently in the home of her husband. In the present day determination of sex at gestation period and medical termination of female fetuses, girl infanticide, dowry torture and dowry deaths are very common and it is often raised that the women are responsible for their own plight since they discriminate themselves by the way of depriving their own daughters and socializing them in that direction. This is, of course not because of their nature but it is their mindset that is characterized by the culture of which they belong to. If at all both, the male and females unite themselves together and exploit their work in a righteous way for the well-being of themselves without any gender bias, no doubt, a new moon would appear soon and India would march ahead without any break. In India, the social system is characterized by male dominance over women. In the context of the family, it becomes "a system originating in the household wherein the father dominates". This structure is reproduced. It is a social structure where male dominance over female (both as an individual and a group) is seen in all spheres of life.¹²

8. Some of the important reasons for Female Infanticide and Foeticide

Sex Ratio is an important demographic characteristic, and social indicator to measure the extent of prevailing equality between men and women in a society and mainly reflect the sex differentials in mortality. Contrary to the universal pattern, sex ratio unfavorable to women in India.

Several reasons are cited for the consistently low levels of sex ratio and their further decline over the decades in India. Some of the important reasons discussed in the literature for the decline of sex ratio in India are:



Multidirectional Cycle Diagram: This Diagram mentioned in several reasons for son preference.

1.1. Partiality: During India is patriarchal society, it is considered the “pious obligation” of a “son” to take care of his parents, but no such expectation is placed upon daughters. “After marriage, a daughter is usually regarded as part of her husband’s household and is generally expected to take care of her in-laws, but not her parents”. Preference for sons over daughters is cited as the number of one reason for sex-selective abortions in India.¹³

1.2. Inheritance: The communication of family property and name is the first main cause for desiring a son. Every family feels to have a son to take over the family property and name. Considering only property here, it is noticeable that sons could be of little value as heirs to a family having little or no property.¹⁴

1.3. Support in old age: Economic support for the parents, when they grow old, or in case of earlier disability, for rural households with landed property, there is a clear inverse correlation between the income level and child sex ratio which is especially evident in South Indian society. Besides, there is a gender-based wage level which resulted to have a son to earn more money than a girl child. In most cases, women enter in the domestic non-paid services which an unsophisticated society gives little or the not at all, so they are regarded as a liability than asserts.¹⁵

1.4. Ritual: In Indian society, the funeral ceremonies of the parents play an important role in the prestige and status of the family which could be done by the presence of a son. Manu Smirti implemented greatly within the Indian society. According to Manu, A man cannot attain “*moksha*” (redemption) unless he has a son to light his funeral pyre. These socio-ritual factors including illiteracy and orthodox society norms lead to a craving for a male baby, discarding the female one after another.¹⁶

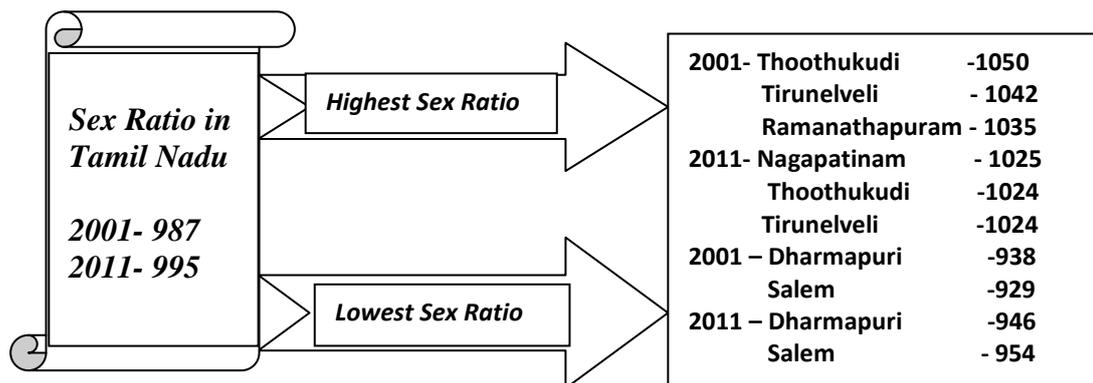
1.5. Economic aspects: Financial interests since a family must provide a dowry for the marriage of a daughter while no payment is necessary for a son’s marriage. The marriage of a son is considered, in fact, financially advantageous to a family, as his bride brings wealth with her in the form of her dowry. The various explanations that have been advanced may be usefully divided into factors associated with son preference and those associated with daughter aversion. The reasons for son preference include, among others, the need for



sons to carry the family name, to perform life-cycle rituals, social status and provision of financial support in old age. In the Indian context, a daughter is an economic burden and once married will not contribute financially to the natal family. The investments in her upbringing and dowry are hence viewed as a drain on her natal family.

9. Sex Ratio in Tamil Nadu

The data was showing that the sex ratio for children below 6 years (i.e. a number of girls for every 1,000 boys) dropped from 2001 and 2011 (1.1). The sex ratio for Tamil Nadu has increased from 987 in 2001 to 995 in 2011.



Sex Ratio in Tamil Nadu State: 2001 and 2011

The lowest sex ratio i.e., 946 was now reported in Dharmapuri districts, but it was improved compared to the 2001 Census. Salem district has the second lowest sex ratio of 954. However, it is significant to note that the Salem districts were reported as the lowest sex ratio (929) in 2001 has improved to 954 in 2011. Salem district has the second lowest sex ratio of 954. However, it is significant to note that the Salem districts were reported as the lowest sex ratio (929) in 2001 has improved to 954 in 2011. The highest sex ratio has been noticed in “Thoothukudi” (1050) followed by Tirunelveli (1042) and Ramanathapuram district (1035) in 2001. In 2011 the highest sex ratio has been noticed in Nagapattinam (1025), Thoothukudi (1024) and Tirunelveli district (1024). The lowest sex ratio i.e., 946 was now reported in Dharmapuri districts, but it was improved compared to the 2001 Census. Salem district has the second lowest sex ratio of 954. However, it is significant to note that the Salem districts were reported as the lowest sex ratio (929) in 2001 has improved to 954 in 2011. According to the 1991 census, there were 974 females per thousands of males. The first decade of the 21st century resulted in the overall gender ratio improving from 987 in 2001 to 995 in 2011.¹⁷ As a result of this declining sex ratio, millions of girls/women are missing in India. It is an alarming scenario and if this trend continues, violence against women increases and there would be forced polyandry. The demographic balance would be permanently damaged.

10. Schemes of Tamil Nadu Government

In 1992 the Tamil Nadu Government recognized the occurrence of daughter eradication and announced several schemes to eradicate it. These include (i) the “Cradle Baby Scheme” which allows families to dispense over unwanted female babies to the government, (ii) official action against eradicator of infanticide and foeticide, and (iii) the “Girl Child Protection Scheme” which provides economic incentives to families with only daughters.



11. Cradle Baby Scheme

In the “Cradle baby Scheme” as a replacement for of resorting to female infanticide, parents who were “unresponsive to take up their female babies” could place them in secret in cradles situated in noon meal centers, Public Health Centers, preferred Orphanages and NGOs. Subsequently to their situation in the cradle, babies were to be found for adoption.¹⁸This allows families namelessly to give their child up for adoption without having to go through the formal procedure. In this system has been praised for perhaps economy the lives of thousands of infant girls but also criticized by privileges groups, who say that the system encourages the infant to ignore and also reinforces the low status in which women are held. Nearly two decades on, still as little is known about the implementation of the method, it continues to draw analysis from common society. This is followed by an explanation of the scheme an investigation of its implementations, the reaction of different actors that female children who would if not have been killed are certainly up for adoption. “Civil Society Activists,” are not happy with the scheme, because they feel that it only encourages parents to throw away a female child is welcome in families such a scheme will be needed. The scheme was originally introduced in three districts such as Salem, Dindigul, and Madurai. During such a case, any children are dying by the time they were found in the morning. More fundamentally NGO’s and activists have criticized the scheme on the grounds that it absolves parents of their responsibility towards their daughters. However, activists shout the planned has failed to challenge the root beginning of female infanticide by promoting the neglect of girls and allowing parents to shift reliability to the state. Around 4,441 babies including 769 male babies have been rescued from the year 1992 to March 2014. The Tamil Nadu Government has provided a sum of Rs.38.07 lakh in the Budget estimate in 2014-2015 for the Cradle Baby Scheme.¹⁹

12. Legal Circumstance in opposition to Female Infanticide and Foeticide

At present, “Female Infanticide and Foeticide,” are the defect for the country as social immorality, because after Independence a number of laws have been implemented, to prevent female atrocities and many programmers are set up for women empowerment and good. The organization of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the state to adopt events of positive discrimination in support of women for neutralizing the increasing Socio, Economic, Educational and Political disadvantages faced by them. Women have got an adequate position in the constitution, “Laws and the Criminal Justice System”, however today it is very perceptive to maintain the self-respect of a woman and her rights. The Government of India has realized that violence of techniques for the purpose of the sex of the fetus leading to female foeticide is prejudiced in opposition to the female sex and also affects the dignity and status of women. A number of “Acts have been Implemented” for preventing exploitation of women in which “Hindu Marriage Act 1955”, “Dowry (prohibition) Act 1961”, “Prostitution (Prohibition) Act 1986”, “Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act 1994”, and “Domestic Violence (Protection of Women) Act 2005” etc.²⁰

13. Contemporary Situation

The current circumstances of female prejudice is very difficult in analysis of India’s common and monetary range; the interaction of intellectual and monetary factors, besides with the brunt of strategy initiatives, has



produced an assorted circumstances, in turn, this difficulty offers ways to better understand the mechanisms at work, and to inform the policy debate on the struggle against gender discrimination.

In conclusion, it is suggested that merely framing of laws would not solve the menace of female foeticide waiting it is properly implemented by the suitable authorities. There should be a concerted action between the legislature, which makes the laws after analyzing the problem and judiciary which is given the task of interpreting the law made. Punishments should be made stricter, and the guilty should not escape. All people in the society should join hands and fight towards prejudice caused on the way to women and aim at an overall development of women in all spheres. Media should work for the attainment of rights of women, making the people sensitive towards this issue and ensuring that the state performs the duties imposed upon it. We all, as members of the society, save Female child as they are the future of tomorrow and development of Female child would directly lead to progress of the country.

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