

# Female Foeticide : A Cry Unheard



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## Abstract

One of the most heinous ways of discrimination against women in a society is through female foeticide. Female foeticide is perhaps one of the worst forms of violence against women where a woman is denied her most basic and fundamental right i.e. "the right to life" This present investigation is taken up to study the impact of educational programme on level of awareness regarding female foeticide. However, it must be realized that sex-determination is 'misuse' of genetic technology, implying that the identification, followed by the elimination of fetuses with physical or mental challenge. The findings of the study shall reveal the existing level of awareness regarding female foeticide and infanticide. This paper is an attempt to explore these heinous crimes, its factors and consequences that are leading to the degradation of women in Indian society.

**Keywords:** Female Foeticide, Infanticide, Adolescents, Educational Programme, Remedies

## Introduction

Women are murdered all over the world. But in India a most brutal form of killing females takes place regularly, even before they have the opportunity to be born. Female foeticide--the selective abortion of female fetuses--is killing upwards of one million females in India annually with far-ranging and tragic consequences. Eradication of Female Foeticide Delivered at Patiala on **December 17, 2006 Justice Y.K. Sabharwal, Chief Justice of India: A woman upon being told that her child is healthy and beautiful looks away sullenly. The nurse explains, "It's a girl, that's why."**

## Meaning of Female Foeticide

Although the act of aborting or terminating a fetus while it's still in the womb, because it is female, is known as female foeticide. This can be done after determining the sex of the child before it's born, through ultrasound scans. Sex determination in India is illegal, the practice is rampant and has become a multi-million dollar industry. Coupled with prospective parents desperate for a boy child, and physicians who are carrying out these abortions, female foeticide has become a shameful and shocking reality of our nation.

## Aim of the Study

The main objective of this study is

1. To explore the heinous crime in the form of female foeticide ,its causes and consequences which are leading to degeneration of Indian Women in present scenario.
2. To study the impact of educational program on level of awareness regarding female foeticide.
3. To study the Social Problems arising out of female foeticide.

## Causes Behind Female Foeticide

It has been widely accepted nowadays that girls are emotionally more attached to parents, more responsible in society and by no means less competent than boys. However withstanding all this, the typical orthodox Indian attitude pervading in the society, has always upheld the need of male child.

The tradition of paying dowry at the time of a daughter's marriage is alive and kicking. This amount can be so huge that many parents will go to extreme lengths to avoid having a daughter in the first place.

1. A son is seen as someone who can earn and care for his parents in their later years, while a daughter will get married and go away.
2. A son can carry on the family name, while a daughter becomes part of her husband's family.
3. Girls are seen as consumers, whereas boys are seen as producers.
4. Many families consider it a status symbol to have a son, and a point of shame to have a daughter.

5. Often, the pressure to bear a male child on the woman is so great that she herself might choose to get sex determination done and abort the baby if it's a girl.

6. Illiteracy, poverty and the tag of 'burden' that is assigned to a girl child, makes the desire for a male child even stronger. longer remained confined to the rural people but equally attracted the urban population too.

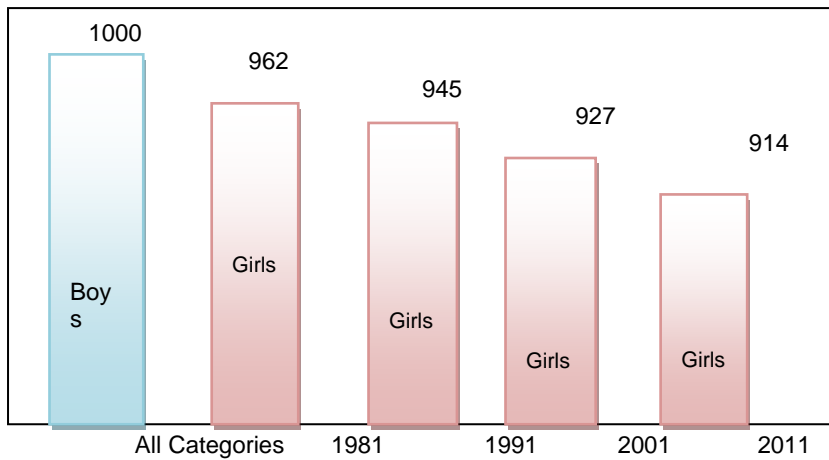
Ironically, female foeticide takes place in a country where people worship various forms of Goddesses, and where females are considered as Maa Laxmi's incarnation and where young girls are worshipped and people touch their feet for blessings. But even then, the intentional killing of the girl child continues.

**Impact of Female Foeticide**

Initially the girl child was put to death brutally, being throttled, poisoned or drowned in a bucket of water right after her birth. These had been the common practices followed particularly in the rural areas. However the evil of killing the girl child no

1. Skewed sex ratio: According to 2011 census, the child sex ratio in India was 919 females to 1000 males, which declined from 927 females to 1000 males in the previous decade. Haryana, which is supposed to be one of the richest states in India in sex ratio. Other states are Punjab, Delhi, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh etc. It is horrifying to state that illegal fetal sex determination and sex selective abortion have developed into a Rs. 1000 crore industry in India

**Child Sex Ratio 0-6 years Between 1981-2011**



1. Shortage of girls for marriage: "Baljeet Singh, a truck driver of Haryana, gave up hope of finding a girl for his marriage from his state Haryana. He was 30. He then got married to a young girl, half of his age, from a Muslim community in Assam.
2. Trafficking and prostitution: Girls are kidnapped or stolen. They are sold and resold at varied prices. Eventually, they end up being prostitutes.
3. Increasing number of child marriages: Many women from poverty zones or poverty-stricken families get married before 18 years in order to

4. Increase in polyandry: Munni, a young woman came, to Baghpat village, UP as a young bride, years ago. She was then forced to have sex with her two unmarried brothers-in-law and bear children from them as well. Today she is the mother of 3 sons from her husband and his brothers. Munni is still "unhappily married" but she has not filed any complaint.

**Legislations to Check the Problem of Female Foeticide**

In India in order to stop the indiscriminate abortion of female fetuses several laws have been enacted. The essential provisions relating to the prevention of Female Foeticide are laid down in:

**Indian Penal Code 1860**

Under the IPC adequate provisions have been made for the protection of mother and unborn child. Under **Section 312, 313 and 314**, the IPC provides to save the women from miscarriage. Any act intended, not in good faith to cause miscarriage is punishable under IPC. The punishment for this offence is further enhanced if the woman is 'quick with child'. The term 'Quickening' refers to the peculiar sensations experienced by a woman about the fourth or fifth month of pregnancy. The symptoms are

popularly ascribed to the first perception of the movement of the foetus.

**The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971**

The MTP Act is another attempt to prevent high rate of female foeticide in India. This Act aims in preventing large number of unsafe abortions. The Act clearly states that an abortion can be termed legal only when-Termination is done by a medical practitioner approved by the Act Termination is done at a place approved under the Act Termination is done for conditions and within the gestation prescribed by the Act Other requirements of the rules & regulations are complied with.

**The Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994**

The PCPNDT Act chiefly provides for :

1. Prohibition of sex selection, before and after conception.
2. Regulation of prenatal diagnostic techniques (e.g. aminocentesis and ultrasonography) for detection of genetic abnormalities, by restricting their use to registered institutions. The Act allows the use of these techniques only at a registered institutions. The Act allows the use of these techniques only at a registered place for a specified purpose and by a qualified person, registered for this purpose.
3. Prevention of misuse of such techniques for sex selection before or after conception.
4. Prohibition of advertisement of any technique for sex selection as well as sex determination.
5. Prohibition on sale of ultrasound machines to persons not registered under this Act.
6. Punishment for violations of the Act.

### The Supreme Court in the case of "Centre for Enquiry into Health and Allied Themes (CEHAT) and others v. Union of India"

which was filed under section 32 of the Constitution of India under PIL issued directions to Central Supervisory Board, all State Governments and Union Territories for proper and effective implementation of the PCPNDT Act - which mandates that sex selection by any person, by any means, before or after conception, is prohibited.

#### Steps Taken To Curb the Problem

Bringing about changes in the demand for sex determination is a long process and has to be tackled through women's education and empowerment including the right to property and land rights. The battle against sex selection has proved to be long drawn out. But some signs are visible that demonstrate that the fight can be won.

1. Lakhanpal, a small village in Punjab has turned the tide of male births for the first time. In a state that has the lowest sex ratio in the country, the village boasts of 1,400 girls for every 1000 boys.

2. Arvind Kumar, the collector of Hyderabad district has illustrated the true power of his position. Hyderabad had the lowest child sex ratio (0-6 years) in Andhra Pradesh. After taking over in 2004 he tracked down all 389 diagnostic clinics in the city and took action. 361 ultrasound scan centres were issued notices for non compliance with the PNDT Act. Licenses of 91 centres were cancelled. 83 machines were seized and 71 released after an undertaking and fine. Three suppliers were prosecuted for supplying machines to clinics with no registration licenses.
3. The Government has recently launched a "Save the Girl Child Campaign". One of its main objectives is to lessen the preference for a son by highlighting the achievements of young girls. To achieve the long-term vision, efforts are afloat to create an environment where sons and daughters are equally valued. The mass media must be involved in promoting a positive image of women. School and College girls should be made as the target audience. Various NGOs are already taking an active lead in this area.
4. An Indian American woman Purvi Patel has been sentenced to 20 years in prison following her conviction last month for female foeticide. In July 2013, she showed up at the emergency room of St. Joseph Regional Medical Centre in the town of Mishawaka, bleeding heavily. Doctors quickly realized she'd lost a pregnancy and she confessed that she'd left the foetus in a dumpster outside Moe's Southwest Grill in Granger, a restaurant Patel's parents owned.

There is an urgent need of undoing the historical and traditional wrongs of a gendered society; only then the hope of abolition of female infanticide and boy preference can positively adjust the figures in favour of the girl child in future. The skewed sex ratio has to find a balance in order to maintain the progress of the country.

### Top 5 Most Dangerous Countries For Women



### Measures To Eradicate This Social Problem

Some steps which are to be initiated in order to give a positive impetus to the curbing out of this social handicap are as follows:

1. The empowerment of women and strengthening of women's rights through campaigning against practices such as dowry, and ensuring strict implementation of existing legislation.

2. Ensuring the development of and access to good health care services, educational facilities and the like to women.
3. Wide publicity of the scale and seriousness of the practice of Female Foeticide and related issues by the media.
4. Simple methods of complaint registration, accessible to the poorest and most vulnerable women.
5. Regular assessment of indicators of status of women in society, such as sex ratio, and female mortality, literacy, and economic participation etc.
6. Inculcating a strong ethical code of conduct among medical professionals, beginning with their training as undergraduates.

All such steps are expected to be carried out sincerely and effectively. It is only by a combination of monitoring, education campaigns, and effective legal implementation and by advocating of a scientific, rational, and humanist approach the deep-seated attitudes and practices against women can be eroded.

### Conclusion

From an analysis of the above points it can thus be concluded that Female Foeticide is one of the gravest issues of the 21st century which needs to be addressed and tackled effectively by the human fraternity. Unless paid attention, Female Foeticide, if being carried on at the existing rate, is bound to bring forth several social problems in the near future. Owing to shortage of the female sex, there will be a sharp increase in the instances of rape, molestations and growth of homosexuality in the society. 'Prostitution might become a legally accepted profession'. And in addition to all such social problems, there will be a biological disturbance affecting one and all. Saving the girl child hence becomes absolutely important as in the long run man cannot strive alone.

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