

Social aspects of the declining girl ratios

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Abstract

This article is a brief overview of the problems faced by Indian women since decades of social intolerance that has led to the gulf in the male: female sex ratio in our country.

Key words: Girl child; sex ratio; PNDT; rules; dowry

In every part of the world, women have to fight to be treated as human beings and against their exploitation, but India is the only country that has a code of conduct named "Manu Smriti". This states "Na stri- swatantryarhati": means, women have no right to be independent. In India, the family system is based on a patriarchal system and women are second priority. Casteism is also stated in the Manu Smriti and rules regarding how to treat the lower castes are also mentioned in it. Every man and woman is restricted to marrying women and men from the same caste. After marriage, women adopt all rules and regulations of their husband's house. Parents of the bride give their daughter, along with vardakshina and bear all marriage expenses. Parents of the bride have to give gifts for their daughter's peaceful future. All *vidhis* in the marriage are designed to ensure that the girl has to live under her husband's pressure.

In addition to this, the biggest rule of female exploitation is, "Yonisuchita", meaning character. Pride, reputation of the family and the female are always connected with her character; this rule is not applicable for males. For facing the patriarchal family system, pyramid of castes, marriage restriction, yonisuchita rules etc, rules and regulations are imposed from one generation to the next generation. A woman is another's property, *kanyadaan* is auspicious, an heir is a must for the family, the character of the female is like glass, caste is the most important factor, and in childhood,

the father, in the adolescent age, the husband and when older, the son, look after the female; these are the social issues that a woman faces. All important decisions of life are taken under the influence of these thoughts, e.g. marriage, birth etc. decisions are taken in the family, although they are related to a person, if they are taken on a personal level, they have to face strong opposition. Families impose these important decisions of man and woman under the influence of casteism, traditions, and superstitions.

It is based on these beliefs that even equipments of science and technology are used for making these traditional thoughts and beliefs stronger. Thus decisions of personal life are not taken as per the latest science and technology; in fact, scientific equipments are used to encourage traditional thoughts. Because of this, a whole generation is going through a mindset of confused divided thoughts and differences in their practical use. Though there are different laws laid down these questions are difficult to solve. The Indian community is stuck between a divided mindset and a cross ethics system. Here, we can see a male oriented family system that is based on female exploitation. There is also a tradition of changing the name of the girl after marriage, so that she is unable to take her maiden family's name or her name further.

In India, a census has been undertaken every 10 years. With the exception of 1981, the female rate has been continuously decreasing. In the year 2001 there was a huge loss in the female ratio while comparing with 1991. The lack of attention given to teen-age girls, girl deaths, malnutrition of girls, and deaths of mothers are some important reasons for the decrease in the female ratio. One more important reason for this fall is embryo testing and female embryo killing.

Before birth, girls are being killed, and there is a negative

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approach developed towards females. A girl means others' property, tension of dowry, financial loss to the family, and a general belief that all expenses that are incurred on a girl are of no use.

According to the census committee, the states that are showing a good rate of progress are actually the states where the girl ratio has diminished. The key factor seen in these states is that there is a larger superior class. This is the region where cultivation of cash crops is undertaken on mass basis, where a larger amount of land is covered under water and irrigation. In India in the developed states like Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Chandigarh, Gujarat, Uttaranchal, Diu-Daman, Nagar Haveli, Maharashtra are showing low female rate.

According to the numbers attached, the decreased number of females in different states can be seen. From these numbers, the following points can be observed:

1. Every year 10 lakh female embryos get destroyed in the womb.
2. In this profession there are more than 30000 people who are performing ultrasound examinations.
3. This business has turnover of more than 500 crores.
4. Only in India are there only 650 sonography technicians and 36000 sonography centers. In Maharashtra 6240 sonography centers are functioning.
5. In comparison with Marathwada and Konkan, the machines are predominantly (approximately 76%) in western Maharashtra.
6. In Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur, Solapur, Beed, Nagar, Jalgaon, Usmanabad districts of western Maharashtra, the female ratio is decreasing at a threatening rate.
7. Kolhapur has the lowest female population district in Maharashtra, where in Panhala taluka 775 girls against 1000 boys are surviving.
8. In western Maharashtra in many well-known communities, it is difficult to find a girl for marriage.

During 1985 to 1988, in Maharashtra, female oriented organizations realized the seriousness of this question for the first time. During the year 1985 in Mumbai, Dr. Sanjeev Kulkarni from Dharwad wrote a thesis of 200 sonography and abortion centers and revealed, how under the law of abortion, while misusing sonography machines, female embryos were destroyed illegally. Taking heed of this thesis, female oriented organizations leveraged the Maharashtra Government, put political pressure and forced to bring an embryo testing restriction law in Maharashtra during the year 1988. After the 2000 census a special report was published under the heading "Missing girls"; in this report special attention was given to the states and districts where the birth rate was low, besides other special factors. Because of this, the community realized that this problem was not only a community issue but also a serious crime. Under the

leadership of Mr. Saboo George, voluntary organizations in Maharashtra filed a petition regarding the amendment in the 1994 law in the Supreme Court. The work on the said petition was conducted for more than 2 years in the Supreme Court and in 1994; the Supreme Court gave instructions to Parliament to make important changes the existing law, and to add other regulations. The name of this law as we all know has been changed to Pre and Post conception embryo testing restriction act 1994 amended 2003.

In Maharashtra more than 6000 centers were registered. For the implementation of this law adequate authorities were appointed and in order to help these authorities, district body consultative committees were established.

In the year 2003 for the operation of the Maharashtra District body PCPNDT law, a consultative committee was established. I was appointed as legal expert for the district consultative committee. During the years 2003 - 2009 with the initiative of this organization, cases were filed against 50 doctors using 28 decoy cases. Lek Ladki Movement was started in the Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur, Solapur, Nagar and Beed districts, where the female ratio is very less and this movement received financial support from the Indian government. In a period of 8 months, strong action had been taken in 6 districts. The organization has successfully conveyed the seriousness of this issue to several social and health bodies, such as Anganwadi workers, health instructors, Talathis, Gramsevakas, local representatives, PCPNDT consultative committee members, as well as the people. Through this system, strong control has been established over the medical sector of these 6 districts by checking sonography centers on a regular basis. Legal notices to more than 200 sonography centers have been sent for violating the Act.

In order to activate the youth for balancing the female ratio, it is necessary to show them the seriousness of this issue. The current 40 plus generation of adults got married by giving and accepting dowry. But the young generation should not misuse technology under the bad influence of traditions and downgraded beliefs. There should be an attitude of equality from a woman's perspective. They have to quell dowry practices. Females also can live independent and safer life as males, and just like the birth of a boy, the birth of a girl should also be celebrated. Females should also be given a hereditary right to property. The young generation must keep track of population increase and control the family. A sensitive thought must be created in the younger generation, so that a developed and thought oriented atmosphere would be created.

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