

Female Feticide and Girl Child Abuse in Rajasthan

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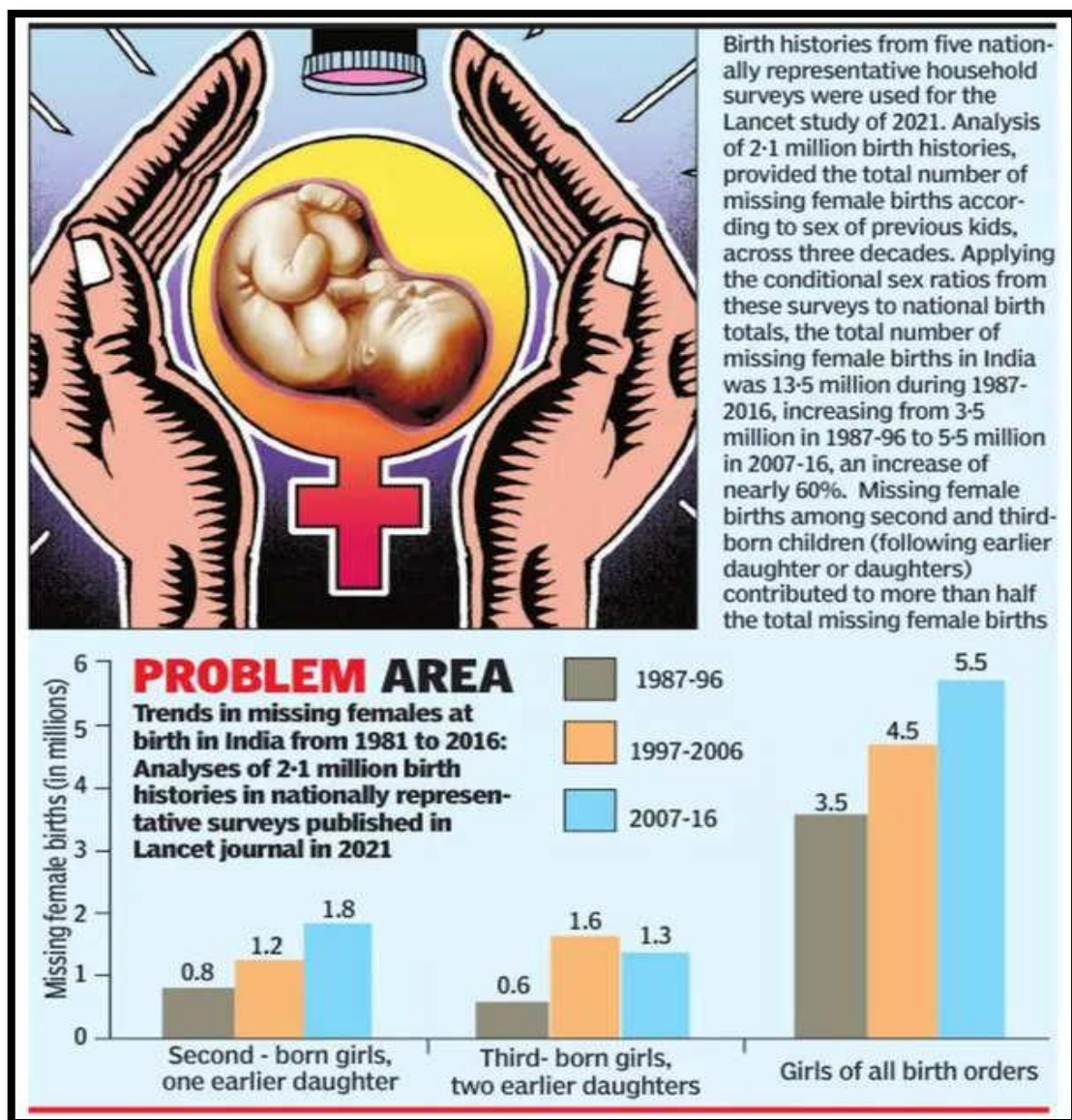
Abstract

In a developing country like India, female infanticide can be viewed as a social evil or curse and this still prevails in many parts of the country. The legal system of the country is strongly apposing this social curse and is able to control the same to a certain extent, but then again some of the social groups are still practicing female infanticide and selection based abortions. There are a number of causes for the same, poverty, unemployment, social and family pressure but as a matter of fact these problems are not sufficient enough to justify the killing of a living being. This present paper will evaluate the present scenario of female infanticide in the state of Rajasthan and also will try to present suggestive appraisals of the same.

Keywords: Female Infanticide, Rajasthan, Child Abuse.

Introduction

Gender selectiveness and discrimination based abortions are somewhat common in the developing country like India, there was a time when the British rule was prevailing in the country and they had laid down a number of rules and regulation pertaining to female infanticide, that law is still prevailing and strong enough to curb this social menace. But in the last five census i.e. 1971 to 2011 the sex ratio has declined to a substantial level, as a matter of fact this was supposed to increase i.e. the number of females per 1000 males. In the states like Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, etc. girl Childs are still being attacked and killed even before they are born. **Diaz, (2007)**in the business capital of India i.e. Mumbai 100 gender based abortions are performed every year and this is the average calculated from 1980s to till date.



Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/>

Interestingly, Bandewar (2003: 2075-2081) found that 64 per cent of the abortion service providers were against sex selective abortions; 10 per cent said they were against it but had to do it and the rest about 24 per cent approved the practice of sex selective abortions. Although there was not much variation among service providers working in public/private health care facilities or rural/urban location but difference was found among men and women service providers. About 28 per cent men approved of sex selective abortion practice whereas it was only 17 per cent in case of women providers. Thus it was higher percentage of women providers (68 per cent) compared to men (61 per cent) who were against such a practice.

Many talked of compulsions that women have at their ends to go for sexselection abortions. These arise either out of social norms fostering son preference or because their lives are put at stake in case they do not produce a son. Some also said that unwanted girls ran the risk of severe ill treatment at their natal homes causing them emotional and mental trauma. Hence the service provider sympathised with the woman's social needs for sex selective abortions (Economic and Political Weekly, 2003). Nearly 10,000 cases of female foeticide have been reported from Ahmedabad alone (Gangrade, 1988: 63-70).

Additional threat that causes grave concern is the development of new preselection techniques, such as, Electrophoresis, Ericsson's method, etc., which involve prior manipulation of the sex of the child. What will be the future of the female race is a moot question. There is dearth of empirical data on this subject. Sections 312-316 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) deal with miscarriage and death of an unborn child and depending on the severity and intention with which the crime is committed, the penalties range from seven years to life imprisonment for fourteen years and fine.

Scenario in Rajasthan

In the state of Rajasthan, more of official data is not available, rather the incidences of female infanticide are being reported continuously in newspapers and other sources. As a matter of fact some parts of the state use to report regular incidences. The researcher has gone through a trail of reports and research avenues and came to know that the sex ratio of the state is reflecting the common practice of female infanticide. In some of the major caste based groups like Gujars, Rajputs, Jats, etc. there was a clear deficiency of females (as recorded in the census of 1911, 1921 and even in 1991). For example, in the census of 1921 it was recorded that there were only 796 females per 1000 males, then in 1951 this ratio moved to 826 and further stabilized to 911 in 1981. As a matter of fact these data were recorded on an average basis but then again if the same has been categorized on the basis of groups and casts then the picture may get clearer. Then in the previous census i.e. 2011 researchers came to know that the female age group of 0-6 years has had gone down largely and even the sex ratio has gone down to 945 females per 1000 males. Then even in the earlier census i.e. 1991 and 1981, in most of the Indian states (along with Rajasthan) the sex ratio had gone down to a substantial level. Rather in some of the states, situation

was fiercer like in Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana and even in Gujarat. In such a scenario Kerala was one of the state where the sex ratio was more than any other Indian state. Then again taking reference from the previous census data it can be observed that in 1981 the females was highest i.e. 945 females per 1000 males and gradually it decreased to 909 in 2001. This situation was common for the state of Rajasthan as well.

The above given difference or imbalance in the sex ratio was because of the high mortality rate of female girl child and even the selective abortions by the parents this can also be stated in the form of female infanticide of girls. The effects of variation in sex ratio can be sensed in the changing social, economic and even cultural practices in the society.

Some Hard Facts

1	Every 3 rd girl child did not reach the age of 15 years
2	3 out of every 10 girls die at the time of birth
3	17 out of every 100 girls become the victim of gender selection by parents
4	Physical harassment and molestation at the childhood is more common for girls as compared to boys, and in most of the cases this is done by the known persons.
5	24 out of every 100 girls are being sexually abused at the age of 4.
6	19% of the girls die at the age of 6 due to negligence and malnutrition.
7	Dearth of girls is 30% higher than that of boys in Rajasthan.
8	The average literacy rate, by the age of 9 years is just 53%.

Source: www.cry.org

Literature Review

Patel, (2011) stated that as per the records of census 2011, there was a vast variation and even a decline in general sex ratio. The researcher found that in 1981 the ratio was high and the same declined in the later census. The main reasons of this decline was gender

selective abortion from the side of parents, gender discrimination at early childhood and even corruption in medical field. He also stated that this practise was not only common for urban areas rather in rural areas having a girl child is referenced as a curse. Literacy programs, education and many other important initiatives by the central and state government were not able to break this system.

Mazumdar (2015) the researcher conducted a study on the gender testing centres active in various parts of the country, he stated that such centres are running in states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and even in some parts of West Bengal. The reports published by the researcher also stated that there were code words for male and female infant, also they provide services like gender identification to illegal abortions and that too with no paper trails. Government is regularly tracking these centres and penalizing the same but then again the process is slow as compared to declining sex ratio in the society.

Kulkarni (2017) the researcher is a doctor and a senior member of Foundation for Research in Community Health in Mumbai, he stated that in most of the cases female Childs use to die because of ill health and malnutrition. He also stated that in the state of Maharashtra mere negligence of girl child galloped 13% of the total born girl child. Then he also found that 35% of the gynaecologists or their respective staff is in the practise of gender determination at one or the other level, due to this every year 10% of the girl child were not even able to take birth.

Aravamudan (2018) studied the census data for last five decades i.e. 1971 to 2011 and stated that in the previous census i.e. 2011 researchers came to know that the female age group of 0-6 years has had gone down largely and even the sex ratio has gone down to 945 females per 1000 males. Then even in the earlier census i.e. 1991 and 1981, in most of the Indian states (along with Rajasthan) the sex ratio had gone down to a substantial level. Rather in some of the states, situation was fiercer like in Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana and even in Gujarat. In such a scenario Kerala was one of the state where the sex ratio was more than any other Indian state.

Objective

The main objective of the study was to evaluate the scenario of Female Feticide in the state of Rajasthan also the study will suggest some of the ways and means to overcome this gender biasness in the country.

Research Methodology

Population and sample selection

This present study is a blend of primary and secondary data. As the researcher has considered the secondary data for the data related to components like sex ratio, gender discrimination, female infanticide, etc. and even primary data from the directly selected respondents.

The universe of the study was the state of Rajasthan and the researcher has considered a sample of 200 female respondents from Jaipur rural.

The researcher has considered systematic random sampling to select the data and the process was followed as stated in **G.C. Beri (2018)**.

Personal Interview method was adopted to communicate with the respondents and almost similar questions were asked to all the respondents.

Sources of Data

- As this study was based on secondary and primary data both, hence the researcher has tried to choose secondary from various sources, some of the important sources are mentioned below:
- Census Data from Census Reports of various years i.e. 1971 to 2011.
- Demographic data from different government websites.
- Authentic research papers from the reputed journals
- Newspaper articles and reports
- Magazines of social repute

Tools of study

- The researcher has used to basic tools of analysis like Percentages, Averages, trends, etc. and tried to find the data extracts.

Software used

- MS Excel
- SPSS Ver. 24.0

Data Analysis and Interpretation**Results of ANOVA (One Way) Test**

On the basis of Mother's Literacy	F	Sign
Family Pressure to have male child only	2.004	.708
Not having enough income to take the burden of girl	1.225	2.074
Illness is the main reason of child's death	.651	2.331
Malnutrition of mother is main cause of death of infants	.062	1.073
Gender selection is common practice	1.673	2.883
Not able to Lineage a girl child	1.618	2.550
Family feels burdened with a girl child	1.062	3.551
Tried to kill the girl child before birth	.068	2.703
On the basis of Family members		
Family Pressure to have male child only	1.093	2.317
Not having enough income to take the burden of girl	.013	1.442
Illness is the main reason of child's death	.870	2.618
Malnutrition of mother is main cause of death of infants	1.682	3.419
Gender selection is common practice	1.701	3.569
Not able to Lineage a girl child	.862	1.942
Family feels burdened with a girl child	1.443	2.617
Tried to kill the girl child before birth	1.062	2.508
On the Basis of Family Income		
Family Pressure to have male child only	2.061	3.672
Not having enough income to take the burden of girl	1.552	2.962
Illness is the main reason of child's death	1.032	3.562
Malnutrition of mother is main cause of death of infants	1.503	2.004
Gender selection is common practice	.302	2.452
Not able to Lineage a girl child	1.006	3.771

Family feels burdened with a girl child	1.637	2.512
Tried to kill the girl child before birth	2.662	4.782
On the Basis of Social Pressure		
Family Pressure to have male child only	1.673	2.520
Not having enough income to take the burden of girl	1.212	2.612
Illness is the main reason of child's death	1.503	2.004
Malnutrition of mother is main cause of death of infants	1.402	2.452
Gender selection is common practice	1.001	2.589
Not able to Lineage a girl child	.862	1.942
Family feels burdened with a girl child	.062	1.073
Tried to kill the girl child before birth	1.673	2.883

Interpretation

As stated in the above given analysis table, the researcher has considered the following components for study:

- Literacy Level of mother
- No. of Members in the family
- Income of the family and
- Social pressure on parents

As far as literacy of the mother is concerned this plays a vital role in the safety and security of girl child, the data shows that a mother faces a number of pressures from family and society to have a male child in the family and discourage to have female child. Some of the mothers who were less literate stated that they are not having enough courage to confront the misdeeds of the family members. Then there were some respondents who stated that they were not able to get proper nutrition at the time of pregnancy and as a result they lost their child, also even after birth they were not able to feed the infant as per the requirement. Then some of the less literate mother also stated that they were not able to arrange for dowry for the marriage of their girl child and even were not willing to lineage a

girl child. Rather some of the literate and somewhat educated mother stated that they are not willing to lose their child at any cost.

Then on the basis of the number of members in the family it was found that where the number of members is more they are not willing to get an extra child rather if the child is a boy then they are willing to accept and keep the child but not the female child. Some of the respondents stated that they will not be able to lineage an extra child as the number of family members is already high, but when asked about the male child then they kept silent. In some of the cases it was also recorded that the senior members of the family had tried to determine the gender and even tried to kill the same before birth.

Then the researcher has also evaluated the components on the basis of family income, in the rural areas generally the family income is low and they are not able to spend much amount on the upbringing of a new child, but if the child is male then they are happily willing to arrange and spend money for the same. Even in the high income families they are not willing to get a girl child in the family.

Then the social pressure is one such dimension that affects all the rich and poor families. But in the rural areas social pressure compels the families to do such things that they had never thought of and getting a child or getting a male child comes under the same category.

Conclusion

In the present scenario we are standing in 21st century and this is the age of information where all the agencies are capable of monitoring government schemes sitting at one place or on a computer. But then again female infanticide is one curse of the society that any of the agency is not able to deal with 100% precision. Social pressure, family pressure, self-selection of infants' gender and many other components are responsible for this social curse. As stated above the sex ratio is declining in the country and this is happening against the Female Infanticide Act of 1870 introduced by British and the same is effective enough to control and suppress the female infanticide. But then again it will work only when people are prosecuted and not be able to control the individual cases of the same.

The need of the hour is to develop a Multi-Dimensional Approach that is effective enough to cater the issues of gender discrimination, awareness spreading, stop abrupt killings of female child. Maintain the fertility regulation and also strengthen the legal framework in this regard.

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