

FEMALE INFANTICIDE IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

**Dr. D.JENIFA¹, Dr.T.KALA²,
Dr.R.VIMALA³ and Dr.C.MABEL JOSHALINE⁴**

1 Assistant Professor, Department of History

2 Assistant Professor & Head, Department of History

4 Assistant Professor, Department of Rural Development Science

Arul Anandar College, Karumathur

3 Assistant Professor & Head, MSS Walkf Board College, Madurai

Introduction

Female infanticide is the act of deliberate killing of a female child within few months of its birth by using organic or inorganic chemicals. Practice of Female infanticide involves a broad range of location –specific and socio cultural motivated causes. India is a Patriarchal and male dominant society. It means men hold primary power in the roles of political leadership, moral authority and special privilege. Men have the control of the property and hold power in the domain of the family. This Patrilineal society gives men to inherit the property and title. This Patriarchal nature of Indian society's cultural bias prefers son and contributed to frequent cases of female infanticide. World Economic Forum (WEF) has released Gender Gap Index 2019. It shows that India has occupied 112th Position which covered 153 Economies. In 2018, India was in 108th position. India has moved downwards four places within one year. The wide gender gap in India due to Social, Religious and Historical connections. Census 2001 revealed the widening gap in the ratio of females to males that there were 933 females to that of 1000 males. Government of India has introduced many welfare scheme for women after that it has slightly improved in 2011 that there were 940 females to that of 1000 males. Female infanticide and foeticide are the main reason for this disparity. State Government and Central Government of India, Human Rights Organisations struggle against to put an end to these acts with financial incentives, education and severe punishment. But still it continues in various parts of India.

History of Female infanticide

Female infanticide has a vast and depth history. Many scholars have recorded female infanticide in British rule. The First female infanticide case was registered in India dates to 1789 when Jonathan Duncan was a Governor of Bombay, this practice prevailed in a Rajput clan. Jonathan Duncan tried to stamp out this practice. The Female infanticide Prevention Act, 1870 was the first act of British Government to curtail this practice it was amended in 1897, 'Female infanticide (Prevention) Act 1897. As per British records this evil practices prevailed in Northern part of India but after Independence, the practice recorded in many districts in Tamil Nadu. Madurai was one among that. It was came into limelight in 1986. This practice prevailed on the caste group of 'Pramalai Kallar'. Over the past three decades, Usilampatti Taluk of Madurai has attracted huge attention for this practice. In spite of many actions taken by state government ally with central government to curtail this atrocities, this evil practice still exists. In recent reports are reveal it. The complete eradication of female infanticide is the need

of the Digital era. The field of Education, science and technology have faced dramatic change but still the prevalence of this barbaric practice is questioning the conscience of the society. Some important factors are responsible for the prevalence of this practice. So this factors should reanalyse and the policies of government should reframe.

Preference of son

International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) has done on research in India used the data from the National Family Health Survey. According to that, the results are, In India, the preference of son is still exist but not universal. Many mothers prefer balance of daughters and sons. Mother's education is the most important factor in reducing son preference and Media also plays the vital role to reduce the preference of son. But economic development and wealth don't have any contribution to reduce son preference. In 2016 Government of India released the sex ratio data. According to that India's sex ratio at birth had fallen from 946 to 887. It is the lowest since Independence, even as per capita income increased nearly 10 times.

Inadequate Efforts of Government

According to WHO, the 'natural sex ratio' at birth is about 105 boys to every 100 girls, need a few extra boys for balance since men die earlier. But India's current ratio doesn't match it. In 2015, Government of India has introduced, 'Beti Bachao Beti Padho Yojana (Save the Daughter Educate the Daughter)'. But Major part of the funds of this scheme allocated to spend on media related activities, less than 25% of the funds disbursed to states. Female infanticide came in to limelight in early 1990's. It prompted the then Chief Minister J.Jeyalitha to introduce the Cradle Baby scheme in 1992. Families which were not willing to get a girl child could leave them in cradles placed in hospitals and later they were handed over in to specialised adoption agencies suggested by child welfare committees. At present Tamilnadu has ten reception centers in various districts. They give the shelter for these unwanted babies. Since its launch the scheme has saved 5,128 infants including 4,111 girls. But Cradle baby scheme has been declining in the past decade. In the reception center of Salem district had received average of 92 babies in every year from 2001 to 2010. But the same center received one infant in 2017. It's also the indication of female infanticide. Tamilnadu Health Management Information System said that the sex ratio at birth in Tamilnadu was 923 in 2011 – 2012 but it was 911 in 2016-2017.

Women's Literacy

It is the general belief that education is the key instrument for the prevention of the practice of female infanticide. Lack of education directly affects the sex ratio. Female literacy rate in India is 65.46% (Census of India), it is below the average of World female literacy rate 79.7%. Many states have large difference between urban and rural in female literacy rate. Compare with urban, rural has less women literacy rate. So rural women have less awareness, it leads to the increasing of female infanticide.

Practices of Dowry

It is the tradition follow by India society for the parents of the bride give a dowry to the bride groom and his family in the form of gold, money or valuable goods. So family with several

daughters has to face a great financial burden. Increases of literacy rate didn't curtail this practice. Sharadha Srinivasa (2005), stated that in South India, Dowries changing and rising. This social custom has the great contribution for the practice of female infanticide.

Conclusion

The practice of female infanticide is adversely affecting the child sex ratio in India. Practice of female infanticide has clearly verified the increasing of preference of son and this also interconnected with the illiteracy of the women. In 2016, the Madras high court's Madurai bench insisted that the Tamil nadu state government to educate the parents then there is no need to run the cradle baby scheme. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child reported on Cradle baby scheme that every child has a right to be cared by her biological parents which the state should ensure that. So the right kind of education along with moral values is the most essential element to eradicate the evil practice of female infanticide. Government of India should conduct awareness campaigns in schools and colleges. To educate the younger generation both men and women is an important step in order to protect the future generation as well as lifting the social status of women.

References

1. Majumdar D.N, Races and Cultures of India, Bombay,Asia Publishing house, 1974
2. Muthulakshmi R, Female Infanticide: Its Causes and Solutions, New Delhi, Discovery Publishing House, 2011
3. Basham A.L, The wonder that was India, London, Picador, 2004, Third Revised Edition.
4. <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2017/12/role-of-patriarchy-and-status-of-women-in-indian-society/>
5. <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/india-slips-four-ranks-on-world-economic-forums-global-gender-gap-index-2020-11576574974188.html>
6. <https://www.census2011.co.in/sexratio.php>
7. [http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/eng/Jonathan_Duncan_\(Governor_of_Bombay\)](http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/eng/Jonathan_Duncan_(Governor_of_Bombay))
8. <http://worldwidejournals.co.in/index.php/ijar/article/download/5261/5246>
9. India Today, June 15, 1986
10. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/madurai/parents-kill-month-old-baby-girl-near-usilampatti-bury-it/articleshow/74501675.cms>
11. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/UNFPA_Publication-39764.pdf
12. <https://archive.indiaspend.com/cover-story/in-india-as-income-rises-fewer-girls-are-born-20106>
13. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/essay/you-should-be-worrying-about-the-woman-shortage#:~:targetText=The%20World%20Health%20Organization%20says,balance%2C%20because%20men%20die%20earlier.>
14. <https://www.epw.in/engage/article/beti-bachao-eradicate-female-infanticide-violence-against-women-girls-abortion>

15. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/tns-cradle-scheme-left-with-empty-cribs/articleshow/63457015.cms>
16. <https://www.womensweb.in/2015/10/women-education-in-india/>
17. <http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/essay/women-education-in-rural-india-meaning-need-and-barriers/34972>
18. 18. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/223126295_Daughters_or_Dowries_The_Changing_Nature_of_Dowry_Practice_in_South_India
19. The Times of India, March 26, 2018