Chapter-VIII

Consequence of Female Foeticide
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Female foeticide is the result of an unholy alliance between the traditional preference for sons and modern medical technology, increasing greed of doctors, rising demand for dowry that makes daughters financial burdens, the ineffectiveness of the relevant legislation and the lack of any serious involvement of civil society in fighting this social menace. The issue of pre-birth determination and female foeticide was initially an ethical issue. According to a study published in Lancet Journal, the practice of aborting a female foetus accounts for about 0.5 million missing female births yearly (The Hindu, 2006)\(^1\)

Selective elimination of female foetuses and selection of male at a preconception stage contributes to more and more 'missing girls'. The legacy of continuing declining sex ratio has taken a new turn with the widespread use of new reproductive technologies (NRTs) in India. NRTs are based on the principle of selection of the desirable and rejection of the unwanted. Hundred million women have been missing due to femicide (female infanticide, ill-treatment and discrimination) leading to higher mortality rate among women.

President K.R. Naryanan, in his Republic Day address in 2002, referred specifically to female foeticide in the context deplorable status of women. He also referred to the increasing incidence of rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment at work places and trafficking of women. In the powerful words of the president.
"The crime statistics are indicative of women traumatized existence. No place is safe for them, not even in their mother's wombs. They are put to death before they are born."

While we decry the evil influence of western consumerism, female foeticide is prevalent almost exclusively in the Indian subcontinent. China, Taiwan and South Korea, has paid for the price for rapid decline in fertility combined with preference for a male child. All three countries have Confucian patriarchal society structure. In China, about 70 million men may live as frustrated bachelors (The Times of India, 2005).2

India recently woke-up from deep slumber when 2001 Census revealed a sharp decline in the sex ratio of children. In the 0-6 years age group the number of females per 1,000 males declined from 945 in 991 to 927 in 2001. After the pervious decade had witnessed an overall improvement in the skewed ratio of females to males, the sudden drop was prey of the increased incidence of sex selective abortion of female foeticide. (The Hindu, 2002).3 From the declining sex ratio in the age (0-6 years) it is clear that girls are missing. How and why are they are not their in society? Is it that sex selective abortion responsible for the unfavourable female-male ratio (Visaria, 2003).4 in his report estimates that 48 million women are missing from India's population which needs to be explained.

The issue of India's missing women has raised concern since the abnormal female deficit population sex ratio was first noted in the 1971 census. Since then the ratio has grown almost steadily more masculine, despite small unwinds in proportion to female in 1981 to 2001. (Sudha and Rajan, 2003).5 The 2001 census data suggest a continuation of an alarming trend. The sex ratio (number of 1000 male) has not only stayed low in several North India states but has actually deteriorated. Demographic, sociological and economic research has concentrated on analysing the reasons for the low and declining sex ratio.
Demographers have focused on the number of ‘missing women’ pointing to fertility decline and son preference as causes, sociologists have analysed son preference in terms of low status of women, caused by social practices of hypergamous and exogamous marriage system. Other sociological factor contributing to the dis-preference for women in their supposedly lower labour force participation and the consequent need for dowry as compensation. Women are socially constructed as the inferior, less valuable sex and are often projected as burden on the family while sons are considered valuable for various reasons (support to parents in old age, continuing the lineage, inheriting property), daughter are construed as being dispensable. Despite improvement in several social-indicator for women (lower mortality, better education, increasing labour force participation, relative economic independence) son preference has not declined. Recent literature has failed in focusing of low sex ratio with prosperity, pointing to the killing, role of technology in enhancing this negative trend (Kaur, 2004).\(^6\)

The deficit of women in India and the possible factors responsible for it have aroused a lot of attention among demographers, social scientists and women activists who have tried to understand the phenomena in terms of women under-enumerated in the census counts, sex-selective migration, sex ratio at birth, as well as sex differentials in mortality. Historically under enumeration, especially of child brides in certain regions, where child marriages are customary, has found favour with many analysts of census data, as one of the factors accounting for deficits of girls aged 10-14 years. On the other hand, there has been no evidence to support the likelihood of sex differentials in migration (implying greater out migration of women) or greater than the usual masculinity of sex ratio at birth. It is widely agreed that the sex ratio is a powerful indicator of the social health of any society. Many questions related to ‘missing girls’ were discussed at the workshop on ‘Missing girls in India’. Demographers debated the same data sets at length as they reached
contrasting conclusions with regard to son preference. While Mari Bhatt argued that son preference had declined in recent times, Staish, B. Agnihotri concluded quite the contrary. For Agnihotri son preference had not declined, rather daughter unwantedness or dislike has increased. (Tulsi Patel, 2004).7

Historically, the imbalance in sex ratio led to the competition for bridegrooms (and not brides who were scare) and payment of exorbitant dowry. The son was actually given to the highest bidder. Among the Jats in particular the scarcity of girls led to a widespread system of Polyandry (Panigrahi 1972).8

A further consequence of the requirement of women was that the daughters are often sold to higher castes and early marriage was practised in attempt to cope with the problem (Guttentage, 1983).9 Thus there are various socio-economic and health implication of declining sex ratio:

- Distorted sex ratio in society.
- An increase in sexual and social crimes against women, such as rape abduction of women for marriage, child marriage, bride selling, forced polyandry, etc. Sexual violence is likely to become more of a problem as the number of unmarried male increases. The various factors responsible for such criminal activities of unmarried youth would be to full fill their desires with a result of no social bond, and lack of responsibility.

Things have come to such a pass that in some village of Madhya Pradesh, no marriages have taken place for years because there are no girls and the boys are married by buying girls from faraway villages of Bihar by spending huge amount. In one district in Rajasthan, in 1997, the first “baraat” was received after 110 years and in another clan, there are only two female surviving children compared to 400 male children. A recent newspaper article says that in Hathin (Haryana), two decades of female foeticide have caught up with the people. Men are to the tactics of buying brides from other states like Assam and west Bengal. The price put on such a girl is much less than what
people pay for cattle! After marriage, they are condemned to a life of slavery (The Hindustan Times, 2003).  

Short falls in the ‘supply’ of women will lead to their being subject to greater restrictions, control and violence, as in China, where shortage of marriageable women in some areas has led to kidnapping and sale of women from other regions.

In China and South Korea, two other countries with a low sex ratio, the shortage of marriageable women in resulting in extreme measures to obtain girls. While the Chinese are resorting to abduction, kidnapping and even a return to the old practice of rearing a young girl child for subsequent marriage into the family, Koreans are importing ethnic Koreans from northern China and reaching out to the Philippines for wives (Gupta and Shuzhuo, 1999).  

other studies from China are pointing to ‘long distance’ marriages where poor women are migrating to more prosperous areas through marriage (Fan and Huang, 1998).

- Social imbalance with a decline in more values; purchasing brides from other states would affect the state’s culture.
- An increase in prostitution, sexual exploitation, and cases of STD and HIV/ AIDS.
- Physiological and psychological disorder, particularity among women. The health of women is affected because of repeated pregnancies and forced abortions.
- Undesirable effects on economy, women are vital part of India’s labour force, especially in rural areas and now in urban areas also. Further women unseen work is often valued in economic terms.
- An argument frequently used by the supporters of sex selective abortions is that the decline in sex ratio will result in an elevation of the
status of women and reform dowry system. However, there are no indications that the declining sex ratio over the past century has elevated the position of women or eliminated dowry system. In fact, ostentatious weddings and dowry has become the order of the day (Chandra, 2005).  

- Recently and almost exclusively in the popular media, attention has focused on not the determinants of few women, but the consequences of too many men. There is strong anecdotal evidence in linking the 'buying of girls for marriage' to the low sex ratio. Marriage needs both sexes in equal proportions; so what does the declining number of marriageable girls portray? The sex ratio, of 820 for Haryana and Punjab imply that there are only four women available for every five men, simply, this means that one of every five will not have a local girls to marry.

### Table 8.1

**Consequences of low sex ratio as seen by the respondents**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Consequence</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Increase in Inter-caste marriage</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Increase in Inter-region marriage</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Increase in sexual crime</td>
<td>275</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Decline in Dowry System</td>
<td>249</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Increase in selling of girls</td>
<td>230</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Increase the importance of local women</td>
<td>220</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Increase insecurity among the women</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Increase child (early) marriage</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Increase sex related diseases e.g. HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>156</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Increase national integration</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Decline in contribution of women in economic activities</td>
<td>94</td>
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Keeping in view the above background from various studies in this chapter, we would like to discuss the consequences of low sex ratio as pointed out by the respondents. On the basis of responses we classified different information into eleven categories as shown in Table 8.1. We have ranked these categories on the basis of score, because one respondent mentioned more than one consequences of low sex ratio. The first and foremost consequences of low sex ratio will be to increase in the number of inter-caste marriages which was replied by 68.4 per cent respondents. Increase in inter-region marriage was told by 66.21 per cent respondents. Other important consequences mentioned were increase in sexual crime, decline in dowry system, increase in selling of girls and increase in the importance of local women. Further, respondents pointed out that there will be increase in insecurity among the women, may lead to child marriage and increase in sexually transmitted diseases. The decline in sex ratio may also lead to decline in the contribution of women in economic activities because in present situation women’s contribution is very high. The positive response which we got out in the interest of nation is that marriages in other caste, religion and region may lead to national integration.

Given the declining juvenile sex ratio, a further shortfall in marriageable women in the low sex ratio areas of India is a foregone conclusion. How will communities handle the worsening shortage? What are the ‘social’ implications of this shortage for both men and women will more men be forced to remain bachelors? Will they resort to capturing and abducting women as in China or importing them for marriage as in South Korea? Will we see a return to polyandry with one women being shared among several brothers? What will be the impact on marriage payments? Will dowry decrease and we will see a spread of bride price and rise in its value? Will women be valued more due to their scarcity or treated worse if they are imported?
Few studies have examined the impact of the low sex ratio on marriage practices. The need for women productive and reproductive purpose, is being addressed through unconventional marriage that are uniting rural, illiterate Indians across boundaries of region, language, religions and even caste. In this study, we found that 68.49 per cent respondents mentioned that declining sex ratio would lead to increase in inter-caste marriages. Once a person crosses the boundaries of caste for marriages purpose than one can even cross the boundaries of once own region. We noted that 66.21 per cent respondents revealed that in case of scarcity of women they can go for inter-region marriage. Marriages are increasingly coming to note in which men from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan are marrying women from West Bengal, Assam, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. These Unusual marriages are consequences of a combination of factors: adverse sex ratio, acute poverty and the desire of parents to escape dowry. Poor parents are being driven to marry their daughters – hundreds of miles away from home while from the low sex ratio states of Haryana, Punjab, parts of UP and Rajasthan are ‘Importing’ ‘foreign’ women from the eastern and southern states as marriage partners.

Such marriages represent a hither to undocumented type that can not explained adequately within the frame work of categories available for understanding marriage and non-marriage transactions involving women i.e., sexual trafficking, buying of women for marriage and bride price marriage as a system of marriage. Payments are prevalent in many parts of the world and in several regions and among several groups in India and is hence differentiated from transaction in which women are purchased. Data on low sex ratio in the north, reveals that ‘across region’ marriage are not an entirely new phenomena (Gupta, 1997; Blanchet, 2003). The evidence provided by such marriage demands that conventional sociological assumptions about the ‘sacred’ and ‘pure’ nature of marriage in India be interrogated. The diversity of marriage
being accepted by otherwise conservative caste bound communities raises questions about the nature of changes that society is undergoing.

The low sex ratio (number of females per thousands males) in several India is leading to an alarming paucity of marriageable women with juvenile sex ratio in Punjab (793), Haryana (820) and several other states touching new lows, the future looks bleak for coming generations of young males. At the best of times, bachelorhood, like spinstershood, is not comfortable status. But in a predominantly agricultural society like ours it has several negative fall outs consequently the male youths are finding it extremely difficult to have female partners for marriages. The number of desperate youth is mounting rapidly and most of them are on the track of shaping gangs and indulging into rebellious and anti-social activities (George and Dahiya, 1988). According to the findings of this study we noted that 62.78 per cent respondents mentioned that decrease in the number of girls will lead to sexual crime like rape. Similarly 39.26 per cent respondents came out with the idea that it will increase the sense of insecurity among the women. The main sufferers and direct victims of such atrocities are again the women. In addition, the rapidly increasing number of male youth is also posing a big threat to the security of women. Such speculations appear to be in line with persisting colonial and post-colonial worries over the socially negative consequences of Third world maladies such as poverty and high population growth, perceived as posing a threat to the developed western world. As poverty and populations threats from AIDS, terrorism and now apparently the scourge of too many bachelors holds new changes (Time of India, 2004).17

The most disturbing and disastrous aspect of the problem of sex ratio is that is takes a long incubation period of over twenty years to manifest socially and is of self perpetuating in nature i.e. more the adverse sex ratio, more the unmarried males; more the atrocities on females especially the adolescent girls
and under such circumstances no couple would dare to be the parents of a girl child to shoulder the responsibilities of her safety and will try to avoid having a female child by all means. Thus it will be very difficult for the society to come out of the vicious cycle once it is established fully.

In north Indian society, which has a predominantly patriarchal mindset even the scarcity of women does not appear to be doing much for raising women’s value. As long as there are a few ‘eligible’ men, women’s families will vie for them with competitive dowry offerings. Since the low sex ratio is confined to certain regions, these areas are beginning to ‘import’ women from the better sex ratio areas. Thus Haryanvis and Punjabi are marrying women from Assam and west Bengal and even Tamilnadu (Times of India, 2004)\textsuperscript{18}

Two decades of female foeticide have caught up with the Harayanvis young men wanting to get married are left a begging. There are simply no bride available. The situation is so grim that families are forced to buy girls for any where between Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 30,000 from Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. They are then palmed off as members of their own \textit{biradaris}. “The scarcity of marriageable girls in our state is akin to the shortage of grain during famine”. A panchayat member in Bhali village in Rohtak district made a statement at the time of village panchayat election that “Tai, we will accept you Sarpanch, only if you find brides for us.” Most Panchayat are willing to turn a blind eye as long as the girl in not scheduled caste. “Our boys are now desperately willing to marry girls from caste, be it Kumhar, Lohar or even the backward classes. They will however not marry into SC/ST families.” A Panchayat member adds, “Polygamy is common in Haryana; men will marry twice and thrice to get a male child. But I won’t be surprised if, due to the shortage of brides, families reverse to the earlier practice of polyandry where one bride was shared by the male members of a family.”
Although barriers of region religion, caste and language have often been overcome by cross-region marriages. Many of these marriages are between Haryanvi men and Assamese women, others with Bihari women. Some of the women have been settled in Haryana villages from as long as 20 years while others have come in the last 5-10 years with the trend still continuing. The married women bring other sisters, cousins, neighbour’s daughters for marriage, creating fairly dense networks. Many women act as ‘go-between’, accompanying the grooms to their natal or neighbouring villages for getting the marriage performed. In our findings also we noted that 66.21 and 68.49 per cent respondents mentioned that inter-caste and inter-region marriages will be on the rise if sex ratio continue to decline.

The shortage of women can also potentially lead the system of fraternal Polyandry (Sharing of one or more wives by several brothers); although there have been others reasons for its prevalence in areas. Where it was culturally accepted (Berreman, 1975). Some parts of Punjab and Haryana practised a ‘surreptitious’ polyandry induced by the low sex ratio.

Thus, extreme poverty and the adverse sex ratio are responsible for bringing about such cross-regional cultural marriages. The girls are from poorer states, poorer districts and poorer villages. For both grooms and bride’s parents, the marriages involve less expenditure than a marriage within the community would. Two kinds of expenses are involved in marriages, expenses incurred during the marriage ceremony – feasting, gifts, etc and the dowry expenses. The parent of the girls, being extremely poor, are unable to fulfil the responsibility of arranging within community dowry marriages. With an across-region marriage, the families escape both dowry and marriage expenditure. As argued by several sociologist the scourges of son-preference and dowry have spread to almost all regions and sections of Indian society. Although, dowry plagues the southern and eastern regions as well sex rations
are some what better there. The two regions (north and west and south and east) are coping differently with the consequences of adverse sex ratio on one side, and poverty and dowry at the other. In the north, the dowry burden embedded in an overall patriarchal kinship system which becomes a death trap for woman and girl children. In the south and east, it is forcing families to send their daughters far away for marriage. These are not entire new trends as revealed by earlier evidence of such marriages between in Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, always a female deficient state, is reported to have ‘imported’ girls from Bengal for as long as century (Kaur, 2004).20

It is clear that the imbalance of the sexes created in the north and the west with consequences for the availability of marriageable women is being addressed through the ‘import’ of women from areas with a better sex ratio. The fact that women, can be ‘imported’ from ‘elsewhere’ prevents society from focusing on the consequences of the shortage.

Indian activists points out the nexus between dowry customs and daughter disadvantage, and, the irrational justification of solving one discrimination (dowry), by resorting to another (foeticide). It is believed that: “The day grooms become available without a hefty price tag attached to them, families would stop killing girls in the womb.”

Dowry is an integral part of marriage expenditure. Dowry in the form of giving jewellery and clothes had always been existing in the village. But the amount of dowry demand has been changing through time. Modernization and higher consume aspiration has resulted in the conceptual change of dowry. “The practice of demanding dowry is only for past 10-15 years in the village. But the practice of demanding cash and vehicle is only for the past five or six years, said the respondents.” Earlier, dowry was a form of gifts, voluntarily given by the girls’ parents whereas now it is demanded by groom. The consequences of fulfilling dowry demands of the husband’s family are, extreme
forms of violence against wives. In this situation a daughter is considered as an economic burden which leads to the practice of female foeticide. 56.84 per cent respondents expressed that low female ratio decrease the demand of dowry and on the other side, this situation will increase the sale of girls by poor parents as reported by 52.51 per cent respondents.

Another major problem is the one of dowry which is rooted in the system of arranged marriage and while it may provide the bride with security and facilitate upward social mobility, it also encourages the views that woman is a commodity. This tradition of dowry among other factors, also inculcates a preference for the birth of a son in the family and leads to deliberate killing of female infants by the parents, or harassment and killing of the girls in the family she is married. Some people are of the view that female foeticide is not a social evil. It is “gender cleansing” – the extermination of an entire generation of women, and by extension, all future generations as well. The sheer magnitude and brutality of the practice coupled with the guarantee of impunity are masked by the terms in which foeticide has been described to date as “A social evil” because “girls are viewed as a burden by society” and because “doctors are greedy” resulting in “shortage of girls” making it difficult for young men to find brides.

The tendency to get rid of daughters continues, in deed it has spread and deepened. The only difference is that the methods to eliminate them have changed over time, where a female was once killed after her birth, she is now killed even before she is born. With advances in medical technology, the sex of a foetus is determined during a mother’s pregnancy and female babies are selectively aborted. There is always neglect, threat and indifference towards survival of girl child in India. The patriarchal social structure, religious beliefs, huge dowry demands among landed castes, ostentatious marriages and extravagant spending in marriage and other rituals are responsible for the
practice of female foeticide and infanticide. Girl child in India is the victim of various kinds of socio-economic and sexual exploitations including violence, rape, sexual abuse and child prostitution. Seth (1995) reveals the special risks of a girl child. She identified two sets of risk factors (1) Before birth of a child there is probability of aborting her knowing her sex using primitive methods and modern termination of pregnancy by amniocentesis and female foeticide (II) After birth she is exploited by using her labour, discriminating her in food and health care. This discriminatory attitude against female child is first learnt in family. The sex role models are responsible for the girl child being treated differently from boys. The girls realize that they are unwanted both in their parents home and at their in-laws. They are ill treated for want of dowry, and, more of it they happen to be mother of girls child ‘only’ (Kulshereshtha, 1993).22

In Indian society requirement of giving dowry (Money, gold, clothing, domestic appliance) at the time of daughter’s marriage is a curse. Consequently some girls have to remain even unmarried where as others do not get husbands of their choice. Due to the custom of dowry, many women have sacrificed their lives and still many are forced to lead miserable lives. Majority of our respondents i.e. more than sixty per cent has considered dowry as one of the cause of female foeticide.

According to Manmohan Sharma, General Secretary, Voluntary Health Association of Punjab (VHAP), “Suicide of farmers in Punjab is a reality. The cause is not so much crop failure but the inability to repay debts incurred for a daughter’s marriage. Another fact that both Punjab and Haryana have agrarian nature of economy, which makes son further more desirable. Coupled with this is the reality that dowry demands are growing with rise in consumerism. The dowry trap pushes many family into debt. Rural families are forced to sell land, urban poor resort to selling their houses or getting into huge debts. Inevitably,
girls are seen as an unwelcome drain on family finances. It was accepted that parents have to spend huge sums of money to marry their daughters.

Daughter was considered as ‘Paraya Dhan’ because after marriage she would go to her in-laws and whatever the parents invest in her upbringing she would take to another family. The parents had to worry about safeguarding her virginity, good character and reputation till marriage. During interpersonal talks, the women told that an account of high dowry demands, dowry deaths and harassment to girls, and dominating role of bridegroom’s family in marriage negotiations, daughter’s marriage was a problem in spite of her high education and employment. That has been found the main impact for not welcoming the birth of a daughter. Women also told that that daughter’s parents did not find that respect and care in family as they got as parents of a son (S) upon marriage, a traditional blessing to the Hindu bride is: “May you be the mother of a hundred sons.” — A daughter is never mentioned.”

A common saying in the village which reveals the ignorance towards girls is “the villagers are happy when a cow give birth to a female calf but they are unhappy when a female infant is born.” (Veeraghavan, 1992). 23

As a result of 50 years of propaganda on the merits of a small norm family, there is today general awareness of family planning and the need for adopting a small family norm is normally acceptable. Men and women in Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh do accept the idea of a two child family and they are also aware of the technology of pre-birth sex determination test. As in most part of India, two sons constitute the cut-off point for accepting sterilization. The people seem to be quite puzzled that while the government wants a small family norm to be practised, it yet opposes the conduct of these tests and subsequent abortions (female-foeticide). They argue that since every family wants at least one son, if not two. The best way to ensure a small family is to go for the test and act according to the results. In the eyes of the people,
there is a dichotomy between the governments sustained advocacy of family planning and a small family norm, with legislation prohibiting the conduct of sex determination tests and sex selective determination abortions. This mix up is the creating of circumstances and neither the government nor the people can be blamed.

The third aspect of India’s population relates to decline in birth rate. The policy as enumerated in the sixth five year plan envisaged that not reproduction rate of one child be reached in the country by 2001. The policy also stressed on a two child norm. It was also noted that a positive association exists between the number of living children and current use of contraception, whereas the prevalence rates by sex composition of living children indicate son preference. In general, at each parity over one, current use of family planning is lowered for women with not sons and increases as the number of sons increases. However, the highest rate of current use, 70 percent occurs among women those who have two sons. Among the non-users who reported that they do not even intend to use, contraception in future, two thirds of women say that this is because they want more child in general or because they want a son.

Bose (1999) speaking on “what awaits the girls child in the 21th century Demographic Trend,” Elaborated on the ‘Unholy alliance between technology and tradition to perpetuate the gender bias. “Bose squarely blamed ignorance and the flawed family planning programmes for the rising demographic disparity.” Ninety five percent of the people who go for contraception are women”. He said, “every one here has been talking about one here has been talking about the missing women, I want to know where the missing women are” he also warned that where the practice of any profession (here medical) tend to reinforce social prejudices and cultural backwardness, the professional will have to accept the responsibility of regulating practices.
According to a report published in a National daily (Kaur, 1997), between 1981 and 1991 four million girls children joined the ‘missing’ bracket through sex-selected abortions or post natal murders. In India, especially in some states, there is a sex planning’ with in the matrix of patriarchal society instead of family planning which oppresses women further. Such sex planning’ is solely responsible for the declining sex ratio of Indian society. An Indian girl child suffers practical disparities and not the legal ones. Such practical disparities will continue to exist in the absence of internationalization of the institutional laws. Harmful effects on pregnancy tests, contraceptive pills, anti pregnancy injections and camps for mass sterilization of women with its unhygienic atmosphere, are always overlooked by the enthusiasts of the family planning policy. Most of the unnatural deaths of women are traceable to the misfortune of their sex and weaker biology.

There are a number of instances in the post when countries adapted temporarily some undesirable methods to solve their problems. Japan adopted abortion as one of the method of controlling its population growth to save its economy from distressing condition in the past world war II period. China has adopted same novel techniques to stop its gargantuan population growth. Can India save itself from the scourge of expansive population without paying the price in terms of such undesirable methods? It is mainly the preference for male children that is coming in the way of accepting the small family norms in India.

A declining sex ratio over time is not good for any society. For example, Punjab in India which had substantially low sex ratio give rise to illegal traffic of female. A similar phenomenon witnessed in frontier provinces. Paucity of females in a particular region gives rise to early marriage as many bridegrooms feels insecure in getting bride at a later age. In contrast, bride’s parents try to marry off their daughters early due to low cost. In this study on various factors
are affected age at marriage (Gulati, 1969)\textsuperscript{26} found low sex ratio to induce early marriage. In our study, we found that 50.23 per cent respondents mentioned that low sex ratio will lead to early marriages. If one looks at marriage practices in India, child marriage, even cradle marriages have been prevalent in northern region particularly, Rajasthan. Early age at of marriage not only gives rise to higher birth rates but also high death rates in the forms high infant and child mortality and high maternal mortality. Low age at marriage for female leads to a higher incidence of still births and foetal losses, particularly, if the age at conception is very low (Jain, 1975).\textsuperscript{27}

Our data indicated that generally, the sense of insecurity, 39.36 per cent respondents among the mothers about their daughter honour compels them to go for child marriages. 38.35 per cent reported this fact. It was observed that a large proportion of mothers were not aware of legal age at marriage and a vast majority of them were in favour of child marriage.

Several case studies on prostitutes prove the point of early marriage (at eleven and twelve) early child births, abuse at the hands of the husbands, turning to prostitution. We found that 38.35 per cent respondents favoured the decision of early marriage. The reason is that the decision of early marriage is taken so that marriage is solemnized in the presence of grand parents. Another reason stated by more number of mothers is because of good proposal that they marry their daughter early. One problem to wait till 18 years is that it becomes difficult to get good groom, so we decided that if any good proposals will come we will marry our daughters before 18 years of age. According to them as soon as girls attain puberty they become eligible for marriage.

Bose (1987)\textsuperscript{28} has identified four disturbing demographic aspects relating to girl child, namely, adverse ratio, high mortality, child mortality and low age at marriage on the basic of argument received in favour of child
marriage, following were most common reasons. Firstly, 'Unsafe environment' was the major concern of mother in rural areas.

The sex role models are responsible for the girl child being treated differently from boys. The girl realise that they are unwanted both in their parents home and at their in law place. They feel they are without roots and without sense of belongingness. They are ill treated for want of dowry, and more so it they happen to be mother of girl child ‘only’. It is reported that girls are more victims of sexual abuse than boys. (The ratio being 2.3:1) A high proportion of girl child of 14 years and above 14 years are sexually abused. Girl child are generally assaulted by more than one person. The sexual abuses of girl child are generally reported from lower socio-economic families and lower caste groups. As domestic servant girls are very often sexually harassed by their employers. The sexual abuse in case of girl is very often acquaintance-related sexual assault is common in the age group of 7-14 or more. It is not only common in metropolitan cities but also common in villages. The girls are often ‘used’ for begging and prostitution who are often victims of object poverty and circumstances. A girl child in Indian society is subjected to a variety of abuse, exploitation, violence and aggression in the hands of parents, relatives, siblings and society at large victimized by the sex maniacs and sex offenders. Rape is the worst form of crime against the girl child. Taking into account of the last five years it may be said that there are three cases of rapes in every four hours in India or there are 7,500 cases in a year. The percentage of such victims is higher (64.1 percent) in the age group to 16 to 30 years. The victims below 10 years account for about 2.6 percent and those between 10 and 16 years account for about 20.5 percent which indicate that the situation is quite alarming (Ahuja, 1992).29

In brief, women’s biological structure and a feeling of insecurity for daughters reported by 39.27 per cent respondents are also responsible for not
welcoming their birth. The responsibilities of parents especially of mothers increase as they grow. The reasons is that due to her biological structure she can be exploited by undesirable elements of the society even at her very tender age. Parents fear and a feeling of insecurity about their daughter in not baseless. Such incidents (rape, prostitution sexual harassment etc) happen in the family and in society at large. Culprits are not punished even if they are arrested. The greatest sufferer is the victim herself. The issue apart from its socio-economy dimensions is deeply linked with faulty laws and their weak application.

Most of the respondents views that “young girls, even small girls are not safe when they go out even their schools and colleges or to the place of work. The danger of eve-teasing, molestation and rape threaten them. With increasing social tensions, large number of young men with insecure futures or frustration commits, crimes against women which is becoming a serious problem. It is condemnable, that even policemen in uniform are committing rape with young girls. Cases of Matura and Ranizabee, who were victims of rape by policemen are well known all over the country. In this situation young girls find themselves insecure and defenceless.

Krishna (1982) and other observe that newspaper reports of India also testify the fail that girl children in the age group of 6 to 12 years have been victims of sexual abuse by the family members. Not only this, these reports also uncover the fact that small girl infants of even 0 to 5 years of age become victims of sexual violence-rape-by their own father, uncle a step father. While researching on abortion, Meenakshi Apte discovered that most cases of teenage pregnancies were incest victims (India today, 1992). Krishan (1991) states that 70 percent of prostitutes start their life after they have been disowned by the family members and society because of the girls having being raped. Social activists working with prostitutes corroborate this by stating that
almost all of these prostitutes were victims of abuse. Dube (1983) points out that “societies with adverse female sex ratio have indicated customs like polyandry, abduction and the purchase of women.”

As they expressed their anxiety about the security of girls. Thus it is not surprising that the threat of girls involving in sex or having affairs with boys of different caste is so contagious that no mother wants to keep her young daughter unmarried. According to them, 13 or 14 years means quite young and in villages mother of young girl remain constantly worried about he security of girls because of unsafe environment ‘Jamano kharaab chhe) They expressed their view like this “if a girl got involved in undesirable activities with a boy and as a result got pregnant and create bad situation for the family. Panigrahi (1963) reported that among Rajputs, it was found that higher the social status, more difficult it was to secure a suitable match for a daughter. This motivated people to indulge in practice of female infanticide. Shriniwasan (1992) reported that there is an increasing incidence of foeticide in urban area and infanticide in rural areas because of increasing difficulty in finding suitable match for girls.

The problem to find wives for the sons was reported by 52.51 per cent respondents. The scarcity of girls led to a widespread system of polyandry. However, female infanticide was practiced by a few rich jats of caste. The poorer jat got money when their daughters were ‘sold’ on premium. Similarly, many classes of Rajput found it difficult to get wives for their sons.

Consequently, there developed a system by which person made a regular trade. They kidnapped or purchased girls and sold them as wives to Rajput. In many cases girls of lower castes were voluntarily sold by their parents in the hope that they would be better looked after. Numerous instances of child stealing and wife buying came to light. The general feeling was that this would never stopped unless female foeticide was completely eradicated and supply of
... girls equalled the demand. A number of Rajputs who were unable to get wives indulged in prostitution or formed connection with women of lower caste.

Report in the national and vernacular median have been highlighting incidents of ‘sale of girls’ to the affluent but female deficient states of Haryana and Punjab (Tribune, August, 2003), September 1, 2003, Outlook, August 11, 2003, India Today October 13, 2003. In these transaction, the girl are generally from poor families from West Bengal, Assam, Orissa, Chattisgarh and even the southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Some of the journalistic reporting – correctly correlates many such marriage’ in the rural areas to the adverse sex ratio. However, the focus of the reports on sensational cases of sale and purchase of underage girls conceals the actual nature and range of marital and other transactions resulting from the poor sex ratio. Horrible stories of sale of girls have been received from different parts of the country. Many such incidents are reported from Rajasthan, Orissa, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. Parents sometimes sell young girls due to poverty or other economic compulsions. There are so many cases of young girls being married to old wealthy man in Hyderabad. There was a major scandal of young girls being sold to Arabs for money.

Widespread use of sex determination tests will adversely affect the sex ratio which is even now against females. Dube (1983) in her study of societies having an adverse female sex ratio points out that customs like polyandry, sharing wife (out side wedlock), abduction or purchase of women are prevalent in such societies. Besides it can be argued that adverse sex ratios may in fact lead to an increase in the incidence of rape, prostitution and greater controls over women (Nimkaff, 1951). These sex-selective abortions till the sex-ratio further against females, which is likely to bring abrupt serious demographic repercussions. Female foeticide is one of the pernicious practices which will make woman a “male-producing machine”. Though it has been
argued that adverse sex ratio would raise the status of women child marriage—another form of family violence on the girl child has been found to be both a cause and effect of the lower status of women in society. It is an acknowledged fact that child marriage is on the prime causes of over population which is one of the most prime problems of our country.

Dowry system is one such social evil which is a major cause of occurrence of many other social evils. Fear of inability to meet dowry demands leads to belling of girls, abandoning of girls, occasionally selling girls, foeticide, and infanticide by parents themselves. The inability of parents is a source of much humiliation by society. Also, a fear of losing one’s daughter in a dowry death or having to face physical and mental torture for not bringing adequate dowry also looms large. Norms of dowry further devalue women and the female child is considered an economic drain on her family in slum. Fathers often can only visualize the dowry they will have to pay to marry off their daughters. They say, “Who can afford to marry off two daughters in these expensive day. Even one daughter is one too many’. This devaluation and commoditization of women leads to an increase in violence towards them at all levels.

As Mira Shiva (2002) maintains many women opted for female foeticide not because they were heartless but became they were genuinely concerned about the fate of girls who are being increasingly subjected to eve-teasing, molestation and sexual harassment and, after marriage, exposed to the risk of bride burning and dowry death, in the unending demand for dowry from our emerging consumerist society.

As thing are, the child sex ratio is very likely to go down further in the years to come. The shortage of women will distort society, the crime against women will increase, polyandry will emerge on the scene and there will be growing conflict and violence. It is a horrendous scenario. The secretary of
family welfare, A.R. Nanda got into trouble for saying that population stabilization can wait, it is more important to correct the sex imbalance. Nanda was absolutely right. Population stabilization achieved through producing only two sons can not be our goal unless we apt for demographic imbalance and social disaster.

Though, people in rural areas are less aware about HIV/AIDS but it was noted that about 35.62 per cent respondents pointed out that low sex ratio will lead to the spread of HIV/AIDS, a diseases which is considered as very serious.

Another interesting fact which respondents pointed out was that low sex ration lead to increase in inter-caste and inter-region marriages which will ultimately lead to nation integration. Now some people are getting women from Assam, Bihar, Bengal and other parts of the country.

In the last, by keeping in view the totality of the consequences as reported by our respondents, we can conclude that declining sex ratio will create problems like early marriages, will bring more sense of insecurity among women, sale of girls and rise in sexual crime. The increasing inter-region marriages has also create a sense of insecurity among the married women who have came from other parts of the country, it is because their men folk will not treat them properly and can divorce at any moment. This would normally did not happen very easily in case of local girls because of support of girls family. The incidents of sexual crime will also increase because many young male will not be able to get married which will lead to sexual frustration and ultimately sexual crime.
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