CHAPTER 8

8.1 MADHYA PRADESH

Madhya Pradesh, a large State in Central India has for a long time been clubbed with Chhattisgarh and other Northern States in its mistreatment of the girl child. For a long time the sex ratio in Madhya Pradesh has been unfavourable to women.

Over the last two Censuses, there is a percentile change which is the reason for worry. Though cases have been filed, nothing positive has come out of such cases in such a drastic manner as to change the trend.

This Chapter seeks to analyse the history, changes in sex ratio, probable causes and also seeks to look at some of the cases which have been filed across Madhya Pradesh under the Preconception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994.

In doing so the Objective sought to be achieved is to study a sample of cases filed in Madhya Pradesh to find gaps in the implementation process.

A recent United Nations study has pointed out the worsening trend in gender based sex selection practices, elimination of girl child during pregnancy in the country. The study says that though the north-west region, which has been traditionally infested with the malady has reached a plateau as far as the Child Sex Ratio (CSR) in the age group of 0-6 is concerned, the problem has spread slowly across the country. The report, which was recently released by UN-Women and authored by Mary E John of Centre for Women’s Studies, points out the shift in the 2011 census where the practice reached its peak in the north-west region, and was spreading in large parts of the country. The report says that the provisional results of Census 2011 have added new twists to the saga.

The national level CSR improved from 933 girls per 1000 boys in 2001 to 943 in 2011. In worst affected areas there was a slight improvement. In Uttar Pradesh it
improved from 898 to 912, in Punjab from 876 to 895, in Haryana 861 to 879 and in Delhi 821 to 868. The report says that the malady has spread across states in every zone. “Whatever the extent and nature of positive change in north-west India, CSRs are falling in large parts of western, central and eastern India which includes Madhya Pradesh” the report says.¹

A total of 221 cases of foeticide were reported in the country during 2013 as compared to 210 cases in the year 2012 indicating a rise of 5.2%. Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have reported 79 cases, 34 cases, 21 cases and 17 cases respectively of such crimes

Things have come to such a pass that in some villages 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 for paltry sums.

Strong male preference and the consequent elimination of the female child have continued to increase rather than decline with the spread of education. This has been helped by the techniques of elimination of the girl child becoming more scientific with the progress in science and technology. Female infanticide now in most places has been replaced by female foeticide and in fact sadly, female foeticide has made inroads into areas where traditionally there were no instances of female infanticide. The moral guilt attached to elimination of the girl child after she is born is not felt equally if the child is eliminated while still in the womb.

It is important to highlight here the importance of state-specific analyses of the problem. Many a nuance of the state level decline is not revealed in the national perspective.² Demographic changes in Madhya Pradesh describe changes in marriage customs that may indicate why sex ratio has been declining. The origin of dowry is found in our past. According to Sonia Dalmia and Pareena G. Lawrence (2005), the Hindu Law of Mitakshara encouraged the custom of dowry in ancient India which guaranteed a son’s inheritance to his parents’ property at birth, but the girls were not entitled to the parental possessions. In such a situation, the system of giving daughter a handsome amount of money at an appropriate time, usually at her marriage, was a

¹ Gender-based sex selection practice on the rise, Deccan Herald, July 29, 2014
kind of compensation to the inheritance system. Followed, the daughter did not have any right over her parents’ property. It helped preventing division in the family belongings, particularly the immovable ones like land, house etc. as dowry generally consisted of movable properties.

There were three upper caste practices in India namely Kanyadhana, Varadakshina and Stridhana which also supports dowry. Gifts to virgin bride was called Kanyadhana, whereas voluntary gifts given by the bride’s father to the groom was conceived as varadakshina and voluntary gifts given by the relatives and others to the bride was Stridhana (P. Srinivasan and Gary R. Lee : 2004). In all, these were contributions to the groom and his family from the bride’s side, no matter they were voluntary or non-voluntary.

The modern India could not go far from ancient India in the sense that girls are not treated equal to boys and dowry is considered to be an integral part of marriage even today. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 did a little to eliminate it from our society.

The three highest paying dowry states were noted to be Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh with a percentage of 94, 88 and 80 respectively. If not in the form of dowry, whether backward classes, middle class or the affluent class in Madhya Pradesh, in all cases, the bride’s family bears the major portion of the wedding costs, and it is they who seek loans and sell land.

However, dowry or poverty due to huge dowries cannot be the only consideration. Just as poverty is not the only reason for sex ratio imbalances globally or in India, in Madhya Pradesh too, poverty does not play a role. Some of the wealthiest areas are where discrimination is manifest the most. Gwalior is one such example. From this district come several cases of sex selection.

Gwalior in spite of being one of the major cities of Madhya Pradesh and a hub for education reported a decrease in the sex ratio at birth from 807 to 804 in 2014-15 to be the lowest in the state followed by Jabalpur (821), another major city of the state. The trend in the state shows that neither poverty nor illiteracy could be the

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reason for the increase in the incidents of female foeticide. In fact, figures show that
the developed regions show alarming situation may be because they are well aware of
the sex selection techniques which is neither easily available in the backward areas
nor is affordable to poor. We can therefore, rule out poverty or illiteracy as the
contributing factors.\(^4\)

Thus, with changing times, the position of the girl child has weakened.
Though dowry remains a huge consideration in many communities, the sex ratio
according to the Annual Health Survey as reported in 2014-15 is highest in Dindori
(1003) followed by Mandla (992) and Sheopur (987).

In order to achieve the objectives related to women 11 five years plan lays
down following monitorable targets:-

- Raise the sex ratio for age group of 0-6 from 927 in 2001 to 935 by 2011- 12 and to
  950 by 2016-17

- Ensure that at least 33% of the direct and indirect beneficiaries of all government
  schemes are women and girl children;

### 8.2 Sex Ratio in Madhya Pradesh

Sex ratio has witnessed an increasing trend in Madhya Pradesh for aggregate
area and in the rural-urban distribution as well. The aggregate figures indicate that the
sex ratio has increased steadily from 912 to 919 to 930 across the last three decadal
censuses of 1991, 2001 and 2011 respectively. In Madhya Pradesh, an upward trend
from 921 in 1991, 927 in 2001 and finally 936 in 2011 has been observed in regard to
rural sex ratio. The urban areas of the state have charted an increase as well from 887
in 1991, 898 in 2001 and 916 in 2011. From the provisional data it can be said that the
numerical increase, in absolute terms, has been greater in the urban areas vis-à-vis the
rural segment of the state. But still the sex ratio in the urban areas remains less
compared to the rural areas.

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\(^4\) Annual Health Survey, April-March 2014-15
8.3 Sex Ratio of Madhya Pradesh and Neighbouring States

The sex ratio figures registered in Madhya Pradesh and its bordering states of Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh shows that Chattisgarh is in the first position with a rural sex ratio of 1,002 and an urban figure which stands at 956 whereas Uttar Pradesh has recorded the lowest rural sex ratio of 914 and Gujarat the lowest urban sex ratio of 880. Madhya Pradesh is in second position in regard to total sex ratio of 930, fourth in terms of rural sex ratio of 936 and in second position in terms of urban sex ratio which stands at 916.

8.4 Sex Ratio in Districts of Madhya Pradesh

The top five districts present sex ratio figures greater than the state average of 930. In first place is Balaghat with a ratio of 1,021 followed by Alirajpur (1,009), Mandla (1,005), Dindori (1,004) and Jhabua (989). The lowest sex ratio figures are recorded in Bhind at a mere 838 followed by Morena (839), Gwalior (862), Datia (875) and Shivpuri (877).

While the sex ratio is a good indicator to see if sex selection is being carried out, it is not a perfect one. Since the sex ratio only discusses the ration between existing males and females, other factors such as improved health systems, lower maternal mortality rates and longer female longevity influence the larger number of women. To determine whether sex selection is taking place, we need to look at the juvenile sex ratio i.e. the sex ratio of those from age 0-6 years of age.

8.5 Child Sex Ratio in Madhya Pradesh
Statement below provides an overview of the child sex ratio for the state of Madhya Pradesh across the three consecutive Censuses of 1991, 2001 and 2011 respectively. The total child sex ratio has continuously declined from 941 in 1991 to 932 in 2001 and 912 in 2011. The figures for rural-urban segregation at the state level indicates a sharper decline for urban Madhya Pradesh of 36 points (931 in 1991 to 895 in 2011) vis-à-vis that observed in rural areas of 27 points (944 in 1991 to 917 in 2011).

### Child Sex Ratio of Madhya Pradesh and Neighbouring States

Statement below gives an overview of the performance of Madhya Pradesh, across all three segments for child sex ratio, when compared with its bordering states of Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. Chhattisgarh is the best performing state recording the highest child sex ratio in both rural (972) and urban (932). Maharashtra has fared the worst in regard to rural child sex ratio (880) whereas Gujarat is the lowest ranked in urban child sex ratio (852). Madhya Pradesh has secured the second rank both for rural child sex ratio (917) and urban child sex ratio (895).

### Ranking of Districts by Child Sex Ratio, Rural

The ranking of the districts by child sex ratio for rural Madhya Pradesh is seen that Alirajpur has progressed to rank 1 in 2011 vis-à-vis rank 5 in 2001. The second
position is secured by Mandla which is an improvement from rank 3 secured by the district in 2001. The worst two districts as per provisional 2011 figures are reported as Bhind at rank 49 and Morena in rank 50.

### 8.8 Ranking of Districts by Child Sex Ratio, Urban

For child sex ratio in urban Madhya Pradesh, Dindori has secured rank 1, which has remained unchanged since Census 2001 and Chhindwara has followed in second position which is an improvement from rank 9 secured by the district in 2001. Two districts which have fared the worst in terms of urban child sex ratio are reported as Gwalior at rank 49, which is a further decline from its rank 48 in 2001, and Morena at rank 50 which is a drop from rank 49 secured in 2001. Dindori is the only district whose rank remained unchanged from 2001 to 2011 since it secured the top-most rank in both the years.

### 8.9 Top and Bottom Five Districts by Child Sex Ratio, Total, Rural and Urban

In the context of total child sex ratio, it has been observed that the top five districts have reported figures higher than the state average of 912. Alirajpur has registered the highest child sex ratio at 971 followed by Dindori (970) whereas the low ranked districts include Morena (825) and Gwalior (832) in ascending order.

The top five districts in terms of rural child sex ratio include Alirajpur (973) in first position followed by Mandla (970), Dindori (969) is seen in middle position while Balaghat (967) and Seoni (959) have secured the fourth and fifth positions respectively. The rural districts with the lowest child sex ratio are Morena (826), Bhind (832), Gwalior (836), Datia (851) and Rewa (885).

Data for urban child sex ratio in Madhya Pradesh reveals that the best performing districts include Dindori (981) in first position followed by Chhindwara (945), Alirajpur (940), Betul (938) and Ratlam (932). The bottom five districts with lowest child sex ratio figures include Morena (822), Gwalior (828), Bhind (844), Datia (854) and Narsimhapur (868).

As the figures indicate there are variations in the child sex ratio and sex ratio at birth throughout the State. Whatever are the contributing factors for the increasing
number of sex selection incidents especially in urban, literate areas, what is required is the strict implementation of schemes, right and immediate action to be taken by the authorizes persons and stringent action against the culprits.

Much has been done and there is much more expected from Madhya Pradesh, where so many positive measures are being undertaken. Census 2021 will be the final reckoning in show whether the law has succeeded or failed.