CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Human history has been marked with events of recurrent aggression by power seeking people who strive to exploit the weakness and ignorance of other people. Thus, powerful section of the society forming only a minority, exercises control over the weaker section which represents a majority of the people. Differences in colour, race, religion, caste and also sex form the bases of domination and exploitation. This subjugation and exploitation of the majority at the hands of the aggressive minority was introduced and perpetuated by long established social customs, norms and traditions. It is also important to note here that the aggressive minority itself has been instrumental in evolving these institutions to protect its hegemony and dominance. These institutions help them in preventing the exploited ones from opening their eyes and casting off their ignorance.

As noted above, one such instance of insubordination and exploitation can be seen in the form of discrimination against females in the society, and also within the family. Ever since the emergence of mankind on the earth, women have been considered inferior to men, and therefore differential roles were assigned to men and women. This brings the concept of ‘gender’ to fore. While ‘sex’ denotes the biological differences between men and women, ‘gender’ is the social construct. In fact, gender denotes a hierarchical division between men and women embedded in both social institutions and social practices (Jackson and Scott, 2002: 1-2). Gender is, thus, a social structural phenomenon, and is produced, negotiated and sustained at the level of everyday interaction in the society. In other words, gender refers to social
division and cultural distinction between women and men as well as the characteristics commonly associated with femininity and masculinity. However, gender cannot be viewed in isolation from the wider social relations. In fact, gender intersects with other social divisions and inequalities such as caste, class, race and sexuality, and, therefore, the meanings of masculinity and femininity vary both within, as well as between societies.

Gender bias is an inherent characteristic of a patriarchal society. As of now most of the societies of the world are based on patriarchal structure. Patriarchy is a form that demeans women in a variety of ways. This is more so in a developing country like India. According to Max Weber, patriarchy is a form of household organisation in which the father dominates other members of an extended kinship network and controls the economic production of the household. Patriarchy represents an extreme form of dominance of men over women. Gender bias is so pervasive and deep rooted in our society that it is quite difficult to eradicate the social menace. In almost every sphere of life – be it social, political and economic, we find the prevalence of some kind of discrimination against women. In the existing social customs and traditions the identity of a girl changes after marriage. For all practical purposes she is identified as a member of the family of her in-laws. Likewise, her involvement in economic and political spheres of life is very restricted as compared to her male counterpart.

Females who constitute nearly half of our population have literally no voice in the society. Several provisions have been made in our constitution yet they have not been able to eradicate the gender bias which inflicts the society. Apart from several other consequences gender bias has implications for long-standing deficit of females in our population and, almost an interrupted decrease in female-male ratio. The percentage of women folk in the sphere of education, their participation in economic and policy making function is quite
Bias against Girl Child in India – Regional Pattern and Perspective

discouraging. United Nations and similar other national and international bodies have framed different, laws for women development and reduction/elimination of gender bias. However, no perceptible improvement has been achieved so far particularly in Indian context.

The term ‘gender bias’ can be defined in terms of a situation ‘wherein men and women are treated differently, in a way that is unfair’ (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English). The Media Dictionary defines ‘gender bias’ as “a situation in which men or women are treated differently because of their sex”. Gender bias is a preference towards, or prejudice against, one gender over the other. It can be conscious and unconscious. It is true that women and men differ from one another in term of physical attributes. However, when it comes to efficiency with regard to same work which involves intellectual capability both are equal. In a patriarchal society, women are nevertheless considered inferior to men. This is what constitutes gender bias.

Gender bias can operate in several ways. Women may be discriminated against in the workplace; discriminating employers may prefer males to female applicants. Alternatively, women may not be hired in well-paying jobs, not because the employer discriminates against them, but because he (or she) does not find them suitable for such jobs. This could happen if the job requires skills, and women are less skilled than males. This will get reflected in lower incomes among females. If women are less skilled than males, then the responsibility for this kind of discrimination lies within the household, where the parents train, or educate, the boy child more than the girl child. While less schooling means less of human capital, there is another reason why females may earn less income. In particular, they may own less of income generating physical capital. Cultivable land is obviously one of the most important income generating assets in rural India.
There are several interpretation and explanation of difference between men and women in the society. They can be grouped in three broad categories. While the first can be discussed under the heading of religious interpretation, the other two from part of what can be described as scientific and sociological explanations.

Religious definitions and interpretations claim that men and women have innate attributes that cannot be changed with time. According to the religious interpretations genital and physical difference between men and women imply that they posses different qualities. According to this interpretation difference between men and women were originally made explicit in and are encoded in religious texts. Almost all the interpretations derived from religious texts consider, the body of a women inherently inferior and sinful and, therefore, fit to be controlled by men.

According to the religious text in Hinduism women are sinful creatures by existence. The ancient Greeks also were convinced that men were the measure of perfection while women were fundamentally imperfect.

In the eyes of Buddhists women’s innate nature is bad. They hold that women are wrathful and slanderous. Their passions are insatiable, for they act according to their inborn nature. Thus, the very nature of women demands that they be controlled and disciplined by men.

Christianity maintains that God created man first, and woman next, and therefore, man is the exemplary human, whereas women is a secondary and dependent being. Same way, Islam too believes that men were created to rule over and manage the lives and affairs of women. Men are in charge of women in so far as God has made the one excel over the other and in so far as they spend of their property. Like Hinduism, Islam also associates women’s bodies with impurity.
From the foregoing discussion, it is apparent that division based on gender does not necessarily mean the biological differences between men and women. Gender is a social construct and refers to the differential roles assigned by the society to men and women.

“Masculinity and femininity are not aspects of biology and physiology. Neither are they god given. Instead they are parts of systems of thought and action which human being have constructed over centuries (Geetha, 2002:51).

Several theoretical strands are available on the history and development of ‘masculinity’ and femininity in the society. Geetha (2002) has presented a very good account of the theoretical framework available on the subject. These are concerned mainly with ‘the questions of how, why and when did men and women come to be viewed as essentially different being’ (Geetha, 2002:51). The forthcoming discussion on the history of masculinity and femininity is largely drawn from Geetha’s work.

Marxist explanation came in existence at that time when capitalism was becoming a dominant mode of production in Europe. Marxist theory advocated that in order to understand reality we should view all the phenomena in totality. That is why gender should be examined in totality and not in isolation from other socio-economic aspects of life. Male female roles, according to Marxist theory, is not merely the function of, rather it is deep-rooted in, attributes in social and economic spheres. According to this theory, all activities of mankind are divided into two groups — production and reproduction. Production incorporates all activities that satisfy our basic needs — such as food, clothing and shelter. On the other hand reproduction is related to child bearing process. It is based on emotional ties between two individual and is related to family sphere. Initially human societies were egalitarian in nature. There was no difference between different segments of population including men and women. At that time women enjoyed a dominant position and men occupied only a subservient position. She had all freedom for her life and life partner. In
the prevailing system, it was only she who knew the biological father of her children. Gradually with passage of time, division of labour based on gender came into existence. The production activities were shifted to outside the family sphere and women became bound to household activities. She was now dependent on men. This division of labour brought the concept of ‘owner’ and slave. In production, persons who owned resources became owner and labour class became slaves. Same way in reproduction process, female’s role was confined to process of bearing, caring and training the children. The children were then expected to become the part of production process. When the economic activities became the exclusive domain of men, women came under the control of men. The concept of private property came in existence and men controlled all activities of women. Even men used women as a gift for others. At that time women become subjugated and subordinate.

Gender bias is one of the most crucial and widely prevalent forms of inequality between different sections in a society including that of ours. In patriarchy, the male dominated social ethos subordinates women to men in various manners. Patriarchy is not just a matter of the differential distribution of power. It is, in fact, built into the very mechanics of production with a division of labour that enables men’s participation in the public sphere. This participation enables men to exercise access to resources and control over the female folks who are confined to the four walls of the households looking after domestic chores. The patriarchal system accords an inferior position to women vis-à-vis men in the society. In a child-oriented society, the system leads to gender based differentials in the treatment of children within the family, and promotes preference for sons. The term bias against girl child, in fact, refers to this situation of inequality between a son and a daughter in a family. In patriarchal structure a daughter is considered as inferior. As a result, there is a strong preference for sons. This preference operates at both pre and post natal stages. It is quite shocking to note that no other country in the world prevents a
Bias against Girl Child in India – Regional Pattern and Perspective

doctor from disclosing the sex of an unborn foetus, except India. This is because once parents get to know that they are carrying a girl child, many opt for an abortion. The perception that the women are inferior to men is so pervasive that it runs through the mind of every Indian coming from wide range of social and economic background.

In patriarchy, a son is considered as a prized entity who contributes to family income when he joins workforce. In addition, he is a provider of security to parents in their old age. He also augments family wealth through dowry. A daughter, on the other hand, is considered a liability because she depletes family resources by taking away dowry at the time of her marriage. The gender based inequality is reflected not only in such matter as education opportunities to develop talent, but also in the more elementary areas of nutrition, access to health care and overall well-being (Dereze and Sen, 2005). This is true not only during childhood but also during the child bearing age span. The inequality between men and women ultimately results in sex differentials in the prospects of survival. With more women dying in each age bracket than men, the population in such societies is invariably characterized by a huge and growing deficit of females. Even though the mortality conditions of women vis-à-vis men at the aggregate level have improved during the recent past, the persisting gender bias can be seen in sex differentials in infant and childhood mortality and in such practices as female feticide. With the advent of medical technology parents are now able to decide not only the size of the family but also its composition. In the wake of a strong son-preference, parents go in for termination of pregnancy once the foetus is detected to be a female. Widespread elimination of unwanted daughters even prior to their births has led to a continuous decline in the sex ratio of children throughout the country.

There is a striking regional variation in the nature of gender relations from one part of the country to the other. In the northern states, gender bias is more conspicuous than that in the southern states of India. Even in the states
located in the eastern parts gender bias appears to be less aggressive. Evidently, the north and north-western states rank very high in terms of development. Despite this discrimination against females is a more glaring social practice.

The elimination of girl child is one form of bias against girl child. This elimination occurs at both pre-natal (i.e. in the form of female foeticide) and post-natal stages (i.e. in the form of a higher mortality rate among the girls than that among the boys). Bias against girl child is also reflected in differential access to opportunities for career building. This is manifested in the gap between the enrolment ratio of boys and girls in academic institutions.

Girls are discriminated against within the household wherein less household resources are spent on them compared to what is spent on the boys. It is quite a common event in our society where girls are made to spend more time in household chores while boys are provided opportunity to spend their time on learning skills that make them economically productive. This is manifested in boys having more schooling than girls. Like differences in opportunity for acquiring skills, girls are discriminated against in the physical capital they own. This could be seen in the fact that inherited land goes more to boys than girls.

Evidences available indicate that bias against girl child is a social reality in Indian context, and is prevalent either in overt or covert manner with varying magnitude across different segments of the population as well as across different regions. A more intriguing feature of our social ethos is the fact that bias against girl child is prevalent not only in middle or low income groups but also in highly income groups. In fact, development appears to be almost inconsequential in eroding gender inequality. Instead, development has aggravated and added new dimensions/ form to bias against girl child. Use of modern technique for pre natal sex selection is one such example. The present
study intends to investigate into the spatiality of bias against girl child in India and its socio-economic correlates using district level data.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Gender related indicators are frequently used as indicators of the status of women. Gender bias is a social evil, and therefore, has been studied by scholars belonging to different branches of social sciences including geography, demography, sociology etc. Indian society has been characterized by gender bias in all forms since a long time. It can be seen in the form of low and declining sex ratio, differential mortality rates, differentials in literacy rates, levels of educational attainment and participation in gainful economic activities.

As stated already one of the manifestations of gender bias is the imbalances in the sex composition of population in India. Declining sex ratio is a very good manifestation of gender bias that exists in our society. A low and declining sex ratio in India’s population has been a matter of much investigation and speculation among scholars. A generally lower sex ratio in the developed states has been attributed to male selective in-migration from under developed areas in search of better job avenues. However, what has attracted a serious attention of the scholars is the fact that these states report low sex ratio also in the age segments which are least affected by migration. This has been attributed to both female foeticide and sex differentials in mortality of children. Raju (1991) in her study on the situations in Haryana and Punjab has found that development does not bring about parity between sexes. According to her, if this happened, then these states would have least gender disparities. The fact that these two states are located in the northern socio-cultural space in India seems to offer an explanation for their ‘deviant’ behaviour. According to her, there is enough food to go around, one would
expect both male and female children to benefit from it, but compared with east and south India, in the north and the north-west India where the average per-capita availability of food is higher even for the relatively poor households, this does not happen.

Jatrina (2003) argued that gender bias in nutrition reflects behavioural mechanisms of those who care for children or who influence the care and through which sex-biased attitudes and practices might operate to affect the outcome and better nutritional status of boys as compared to girls. Not even nutrition, the duration of breastfeeding is much shorter for girls than for boys in Haryana, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. One reason for the shorter period of breastfeeding for girls is the parent’s desire to have another child sooner after the birth of a girl than after the birth of a boy in hope of having a boy for the next birth. Although the intent of parents may not always be to provide less adequate nutrition to daughters by weaning them earlier, the effect is same.

Sharma (2010) also gave the same view in the context of nutritional intake for girls and boys. He used HFHS data supporting this finding in Haryana state. In connection with Gender differences in the nutritional status among the 0-5 year old children, Sharma found that girls in Haryana have much lower value for many of the health and nutritional variables than boys. In Haryana, parents consider their daughter to be less valuable and provide inferior care in terms of food allocation. According to the author, the median duration of any breastfeeding in Haryana is 25.8 months for male children and 23.5 months for female children.

Not only in differentials nutritional intake but also time investment in the case of children between son and a daughter vary. In the words of Barcellos et al. (2011) families spend more time with children when the baby is a boy than when the baby is a girl. Women lag behind men in many domains there is equivocal evidence on whether these lower outcomes are the result of the lower
parental investments in girls. Differentials in nutritional intake and time investment can be seen in sex differentials in mortality among children.

Singh and Ram (2003) also in their study on Gender Differential in Mortality in India found that in the age groups 1-4 and 5-14 females are at disadvantage in terms of nutrition, care, and proper support. With regard to the disparity in mortality between males and females, they argue that the policy makers will have to focus on the age groups below 35 years of age where female mortality is high in comparison to the male mortality. It is clear that female mortality is relatively higher than males in reproductive ages. The reason behind this is lack of adequate access to maternal health care and the fact that medical facilities are not focussed on women.

James (2001) has analysed field level data from NFHS in Andhra Pradesh in connection with child survival. He has brought out several interesting findings. According to the NFHS data consistently show that the discrimination against the female children is more intense among the poor, illiterate and lower caste families in contrast to the finding of many other studies. This is also substantiated from the analysis of work participation of women, where working mother experienced higher levels of female child morality than non-working mothers, since work participation in the rural areas is often associated with high levels of poverty. The econometric analysis has also led to similar conclusion.

Arnold et al. (1996) have argued that in India death rate among girls is higher in comparison to her male counterpart, even though they are biologically stronger than the boys. It is, therefore, obvious that socio-economic factors are responsible for this survival disadvantage for girls in India. They have argued that preferential treatment of children based on sex particularly in case of nutrition is the underlying reason for differential survival chances. There is some evidence, as well, of sex differences in immunization coverage and
access to health care facilities in case of illness, although the differences are not very significant.

Of late, technological progress has added a newer dimension to bias against girl child. A nation cannot progress without the progress of science and technology. So, technological advancement should not be criticized, as what matters most is its manifestation and beneficial application. In this context, Das and Sinha (2002) have viewed that amniocentesis is a phenomenal development in medical science, which can detect a number of genetic disorders of the foetus and, thus, in turn, can help prevent the birth of an unhealthy child. It can also help us save the life of the mother if there is a deformity in the foetus that is likely to put the life of mother in danger at a later stage or pregnancy. But when the same procedure is used merely for the detection of the sex of a child, it is a disastrous and abusive use of the technology. So, the question of the attitude of the people and how they would like to perceive the sex-determination tests is a matter of great concern. Unless we rectify our tradition-bound attitude towards women, there is no point in blaming the process and the doctors who are involved the process.

Saravanan (2002) has also argued that among more educated people the practice of infanticide is more conspicuous in patriarchal structure. In patriarchal structure women have low status in comparison to men. The lower status of women is one of the main reasons for these ruthless killing of infant girls. Dowry, given at the time of the daughter’s marriage, has influenced the status of women. The daughter is considered to be a liability as her contribution to the family is negligible or at best temporary, up to the time she is married and sent to another family.

Krishnamoorthy (2003) in a paper entitled *Sex Selective Abortions in India: Level and Socio-Economic Differentials* argued that sex selective abortion is prevalent among women of all levels of education and the incidence
increases with rising level of education. Further the incidence of sex selective abortion is high among women enjoying high standard of life. This suggests an undesirable rising trend in sex selective abortion with improvement in economic conditions that may soon revert the increasing trend in overall sex ratio. Further research and programme interventions are badly needed to counter this possible rise in sex selective abortion without affecting the rate of improvement in women’s education and standard of living.

With the process of development and modernization the world over, fertility rates have undergone a systematic decline. Even in developing countries including India, though with time lag, birth rates have recorded an appreciable decline. In this regard, Bhat and Zavier (2002) have argued that declining fertility does not reduce gender bias. Rather bias against girl child is found to intensify with growing norms of small family size. This goes against the generally held view that the process of social and economic progress reduces the magnitude of gender inequality in a society. In order to resolve this problem, the authors have proposed that the two trends could be reconciled by splitting the hypothesized intensification effect of fertility decline into two parts: son preference effect and technological effect. While the parity and son-preference effects of fertility decline would reduce the sex bias, the increasing ability of parents to eliminate children of unwanted sex would intensify the sex bias.

In another study published in the same year, the first author of the paper (i.e. Bhat, 2002) has given a detailed account of changing sex composition of population and the missing females in India. The paper is entitled ‘On the trail of ‘missing’ Indian females’. Bhat used multi-variants analysis of the data on sex composition. Based on data from the NFHS the study has shown that education, urbanization and Media exposure reduce son preference. But other studies have argued for a contrary scenario. According to the author it was
probably because the effects were measured in terms of preferences revealed in actual behaviour. Studies on revealed preferences could be misleading if differential access to technologies that can convert desire into reality is not taken into account.

Bose (2001) has also highlighted effects of the misuse of medical technology on child sex ratio in India. Strikingly, although overall sex ratio has increased during the recent past, child sex ratio has continued its declining trend. The increase in sex ratio of seven plus population may be the result of better enumeration of women as well as improved mortality conditions. But persisting decline in child sex ratio shows the real picture of society which is based on patriarchy. Under the desire of son preference people to go for sex determination tests even for the first pregnancy and repeat it for every pregnancy till the test is positive (meaning thereby, a male foetus). Premi (2001) concludes that it is surprising that overall sex ratio has increased but reverse result is found in the context of child sex ratio. In his paper, he argued that overall sex ratio has improved in favour of female due to improved female health. The main reason behind the decline in child sex ratio is further increase in sex ratio at birth (SRB), which is directly related to female foeticide. The leading states with extremely adverse child sex ratio are Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhal and Rajasthan. All these states, it may be noted, belong to the north and north-western parts of the country where patriarchy exists in the most vulgar form.

Bandewar (2003) in his paper entitled Abortion Service and Providers Perceptions: Gender Dimensions also has argued that decreasing sex ratio among children is one of the indicators suggesting increasing incidence of sex selective abortion i.e. female foeticide. Contradictions arise when providers hold women entirely responsible for the increasing incidence of female foeticide. The author argues that somewhere providers have missed out on the
fact that women are part of the large social system, which is patriarchal and gender biased.

Dagar (2002) has suggested that preponderance of males over females i.e. an adverse sex ratio in the population at a given time could occur through any or a combination of three processes. First, through the process of female foeticide because women do not have the right to life. Second, in the form of female infanticide as they are killed subsequent to birth. And finally, through a higher death rate as they are discriminated against in survival conditions after birth. The first of the three processes is manifest in existing sex ratio at birth (SRB). It is the SRB or sex ratio among children at a later stage that reveal the nature of discrimination that the females face in a society. In other words, sex ratio at birth and subsequently female-male ratio in different age groups reveals the role of socio-cultural factors in determining female life chances. Adverse sex ratio at birth indicates that even prior to birth; certain factors influence the sex of the foetus. This could be at the time of conception, gestation or delivery. Thus it is only the sex ratio at birth that can point at the misuse of prenatal diagnostic techniques to determine male child preference. Persisting gender bias and son preference has led to growing masculinity at birth. This is reflected in further deterioration in child sex ratio.

Hassan (2000) argued that a wide gender inequality and female deprivation continue to be the main feature of the social system. According to him persisting sex bias and son preference are now manifested in widespread practice of female foeticide. If unchecked, he argue, this will result in further increase in the decline of females in the population. Some may argue that declining SR will ultimately lead to improvements in the status of women in the society, as if it was a question of ‘supply and demand’. The author argues that what such a proposition ignores is the fact that a growing SR imbalance will inevitably result in disastrous social consequences. The growing decline in the number of females, resulting from the abuse of medical technology, could
lead to such practices as polyandry which, in turn, would have serious health consequence. In the context of the declining sex ratios in India there are arguments that the ‘surviving girls are treated better’ since their ‘value’ goes up as they become more ‘scarce’ (Agnihotri, 2001). Those who espouse such ‘scarcity optimism’ overlook the ground reality in some of the north-western region which indicates otherwise. These regions are characterized by of highly masculine sex ratio and strong subordination of women which happen to be coterminous.

Several studies have indicated a nexus between affluence and the incidence of female foeticide. The findings of Unisa et al. (2007) also support the thesis concerning increased gender discrimination in better off societies. The study found that abortion seekers are women who are economically and socially well off. Most of the women who had gone for elimination of girl child had high standards of living, and were educated beyond higher secondary level with husbands in jobs. It has also been stressed that educated women who have frequent exposure to the media are the ones most likely to seek a sex selective abortion.

Sudha and Rajan (2003) also support the views concerning correspondence between prosperity level and gender discrimination. They argue that gender inequality operates in the domains of education, employment and marriage, allowing advancement for a small section of Indian women, but not transforming gender bias for the majority. In the short run therefore, while these biases remain, development does not promise to transform patriarchy or lessen female demographic disadvantage in India. As put it in the Indian patriarchy ideology, women are regarded more as a highly flexible resource of the household rather than full-fledged members of it.

Dreze et al. (1995) found that gender bias in child survival tends to be relatively low among poor households, among disadvantaged castes, and
among households with high levels of female labour force participation. According to the authors an examination of the relationship between parental literacy and gender bias in child survival can be misleading if it fails to take into account other relevant variables. Indeed, if gender bias is lower among poorer households, it would be quite possible, in principle, to find a positive bi-variate association between parental literacy and gender bias, even if literacy reduces gender bias at any given level of poverty. In an earlier study Dreze and Sen (1995) have analyzed female-male ratio in India in their study on ‘gender inequality and women’ under various heads such ‘gender and caste’, ‘child mortality’, ‘widowhood and gender relation’, ‘gender equality and social problem’.

Hassan (2007) also argues that huge deficit of female in the population in Haryana, a state which ranks very high in terms of levels of development, is due to a greater extent of elimination of girl child at pre-natal stages. Gorge and Dahiya (1998) in a study of six villages in rural Haryana have examined the practice of female foeticide. In their study, they have established the prevalence of female foeticide among the upper caste people. According to their study gender inequality is also reflected in the fertility behaviour of the people. The study found that the percentage of sterilised women increased as they had more surviving sons. Such a strong rising trend was not evident with increasing number of daughters. The study evidently proved a higher rate of pregnancy among women who had relatively less number of surviving sons than daughters. Within each family size, the current rate of pregnancy was five to six times higher for mother who had no sons as compared to mothers who had several sons. In another study Hassan et al (2008) have argued that development does not necessarily lead to elimination of gender inequality and a balanced sex ratio in a population. Based on district level data of Haryana, the authors indicate that gender inequality in the state increases with increase in the levels of development over space. It can, therefore, be argued that the process
of development in the state has not led to the establishment of ‘gender equality’ in society. In a study based on the district level data from varied secondary sources, Hassan (2010) has argued that gender discrimination in India can be seen over much of the north and north-west having diverse social and economic attributes. Using estimates of elimination of unwanted girl child at both pre natal and post natal stages, in still another study, Hassan (2010) has mapped the areas of overlapping marginalisation of girl child in India i.e. areas where elimination at both the stages are prevalent. The maps help locate clusters of districts belonging to both developed and underdeveloped states with extreme disadvantage to girl children. Obviously, though they differ very much in terms of levels of development, the socio-cultural processes lead to similar demographic outcome. It is therefore, worthwhile to look into this phenomenon. Not many works are available on this aspect. The present study intends to fill this gap.

The present Study: - In the light of the above discussion the present study is an attempt to examine the spatial manifestation of gender bias in India with particular reference to bias against girl child and its underlying socio-cultural practices in India. The study intends to examine the socio-cultural practices in diverse socio-economic situations that promote and sustain bias against girl child.

The study is based on both state and district-level data of 18 major states of India. These states taken together accommodate over 92 percent population of India and account for nearly 95 percent of the deficit of girl children under the age 7 years as per 2001 census.
OBJECTIVES

The present study aims at the following objectives:

1. To examine the spatial manifestation of gender bias particularly bias against girl child in India and its socio-economic and demographic content.

2. To identify the clusters belonging to diverse socio-economic conditions with extreme disadvantage to girl children using district level, data and

3. To examine the socio-cultural practices promoting bias against girl children in diverse socio-economic conditions.

Database and Methodology

The study is primarily based on secondary sources of data. Data would be drawn mainly from census publications. Data from National Family Health Survey (HFHS), DLHS-II, Statistical Abstract of various states and other Government publications have been used. In addition, estimates on vital rates derived by independent researchers will also be used in the study. In order to examine the nature of socio-cultural practices promoting bias against girl children, a primary survey of select villages from the two clusters from the developed and undeveloped realms in Haryana has been conducted.

For the primary survey, two villages have been selected from the districts located at two extremes of development levels but reporting extreme form of bias against girl. For this, two maps showing the incidence of prenatal sex selection as reflected in SRB and post natal elimination as reflected in sex differential mortality were superimposed and areas with the two form of elimination co existing gender bias shall be identified. From among them, one district –was selected. Likewise, on the basis of differential enrolment one district was identified with the lowest share of girls in school. Thereafter, on
Bias against Girl Child in India – Regional Pattern and Perspective

the basis of overall sex ratio, and child sex ratio, one village each which best represented the average condition at the district level was isolated. It was ensured that these villages, were sufficient in large. This is intended to ensure a fairly large number of children and events of births during the period preceding the study.

The study has conducted at three levels. In the first, an analysis has been done using state level data on indicators of gender bias, in general, and bias against girl child, in particular. Here an attempt has been made to identify a broad pattern of inter-linkages between development levels and magnitude of gender bias. In the second, the discussion is based on district level data in which attempt has been made to discern the spatial manifestation of bias against girl child. This part has also made an attempt to identify the clusters of extreme disadvantages to girl child from two extremes of development on the basis of district level data. Finally, at the third level, the discussion is based on data – both quantitative and qualitative – drawn from the primary survey of select villages.

For establishing relationships between bias against girl child, on the one hand and socio-economic indicators, on the other, suitable statistical techniques have been applied. Suitable cartographic techniques have also been used for representation of district level data.
METHODOLOGY FLOW CHART

Analysis

Level –I
State-level data
(Broad Patterns of Gender Bias And Socio-economic Development)

Level-II
District – Level data
(Bias against girl child and Its socio-economic correlates)

Identification of areas with all three forms of bias against girl child

Selection of districts on the basis of levels of development

District-I (Developed Realm)  
District-II (Less Developed Realm)

Filtering

Best Representative Villages

Identification of Village on the Basis of size of population and children aged 0-6 years.

Best Representative Villages

Identification of Village on the Basis of size of population and children aged 0-6 years.

Level-III Study of Selected Villages
List of Indicators: The study is concerned with the demographic manifestations of bias against girl child in India. It is based on both state and district level data pertaining to various social, economic and demographic aspects. The following are the indicators selected for the study:

1. Sex differentials in infant and child mortality rates, 2000-03 (state and district level).
2. Sex differentials in crude death rate, 2000-03 (state level).
4. Percentage share of women who received antenatal check up during first trimester, 2002-04 (state level).
5. Percentage girls marrying below legal age, 2002-04 (state level).
6. Female-male ratio in work participation rate, 2001 (state level).
7. Levels of urbanisation, 2001 (state and district level).
8. Per capita NSDP at current prices, 2000-03 (state level).
9. Percentage of population below poverty line, 2000-03 (state level).
11. Per capita value added by manufacturing, 2000-03 (state level).
12. Percentage villages electrified, 2000-03 (state level).
13. Percentage villages connected by roads, 2000-03 (state level).
14. Total literacy rate, 2001 (state and district level).
15. Total fertility rate, 2001 (state and district level).

Plan of Study: The study is spread over eight chapters. Chapter-I is devoted to the conceptual background of the problem, a detailed review of literature; available on the problem main objectives; nature, type and sources of data used and the methodology adopted for the study.

Chapter-II presents an historical account of the process of socio-economic development vis-à-vis changing women’s status in Indian society at the aggregate level.
Chapter-III provides a discussion on gender bias with particular reference to bias against girl child based on state level data. In this chapter attempt has also been made to identify the broad patterns of association between the indicators of gender bias and social-economic development.

Chapter-IV is devoted to the patterns of pre-natal and post natal elimination of girl child on the basis of district level estimates on sex ratio at birth (SRB) and sex differential in mortality rate respectively. This chapter also provides a discussion on the resultant patterns in sex composition of children in the age group 0-6 years.

Chapter-V is devoted to discrimination against girl child in the arena of education. For this, education at elementary level has been chosen. The chapter presents an account of sex differentials in enrolment ratio of children in India using district level data.

Chapter-VI is devoted to the interrelations between data on socio-economic and demographic indicators, on the one hand, and bias against girl child, on the other hand at the district-level. For this, suitable statistical techniques have been applied. In this chapter attempt has also been made to identify clusters with extreme disadvantage to girl child using data on elimination of girl child and differential enrolment ratio. This has formed the basis of discussion in the next chapter on the nature and practices of gender discrimination among children in select villages.

Chapter-VII provides a detailed account of the socio-cultural practices that promote bias against girl child in two select villages on the basis of data collected through primary survey.

Finally chapter-VIII includes the main conclusions and findings of the study.