CHAPTER 7
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present study—“Sex Ratio and Sex Discriminatory Selection: A Micro-Demographic Study of Punjabi Communities of Gurdaspur District (Punjab)” deals with the important national issue of the country presently that is sex ratio and sex discriminatory selection. The map of Punjab looked as if it had been dipped in blood. The child sex ratio is calculated as the number of girls per 1000 boys in the 0-6 age group. Since more boys than girls are born in the world over under normal circumstances, there should normally be 950 girls to every 1000 boys in the below 6 age group. Anything below this indicates some kind of anti-female intervention. That is just a genteel way of saying they are being killed either before or soon after they are born. Girl babies were dying in hundreds.

Every 10 years, the census of India comes out with a damning statistics: the country’s abysmal female-male ratio. As per the 2001 census, there were 933 females for every 1,000 males in the country.

The first chapter discusses the introduction of sex ratio and reasons behind sex discriminatory selection of the foetus. It shows the present scenario of sex ratio of the country, states and Punjab in particular. One of the major concerns of India’s demographic situation is its declining sex ratio. According to 1991 census, there were 927 females every thousand males in India. According to 2001 census, female ratio has increased 933 females per 1000 males. What is surprising is that despite of considerable improvement in life expectancy of the females in India, the sex ratio in the country is declining, at present females in India have longer life expectancy than the male for the first time. The decline in India’s sex ratio is perhaps signaling the dangers of female foeticide. Ever since pre-birth sex determination has become possible the female foetus is perhaps being aborted due to strong desire to have a son. If it is so, it is more dangerous than female infanticide of the historic times.

In India, the Census of 2001 has clearly brought to light the widening gap in the ratio of girls to boys, confirming a trend that has been in place since 1901.
This is most pronounced in the youngest age group, 0-6, indicating the scale of injustice as well as the long-term social and economic consequences implied. India is, thus, a country where the natural biological sex ratio of slightly more females than males in the population is reversed, particularly in the youngest age group. Although there has been a heightened consciousness of the problem, census figures show that the sex ratio of the age group 0-6 has declined at a disturbing pace since 1981 while the overall sex ratio has risen slightly. The child sex ratios have continued to decline despite improvements in general welfare and female status and point to deeply rooted structures of gender inequality. Alongside the ongoing process of modernisation and smaller families, it appears that a substantial number of younger couples fear bringing up daughters and deliberately choose not to.

The Census results also show marked declines in areas and social groups that earlier showed more equal conditions. This indicates that discrimination against daughters has spread to new regions and from higher social strata to lower, suggesting a necessity to analyse the structural characteristics of the problem. In order to understand the economic, social, and cultural realities behind the disturbing census figures comparative case studies from different parts of India are needed. Such areas where declining child sex ratios are a relatively recent phenomenon, demonstrating the spread of the phenomenon, are of special interest. The argument that an adverse sex ratio will lead to a shortage in the supply of women, which will drive up their value since demand will remain high, is also clearly untenable. The sex ratio in India has been noted to be adverse to females, and more or less steadily worsening, since the first recorded Census of 1881. The population sex ratio of India declined from 972 females per 1000 males in 1901 to 929 per 1000 in 1991. In the same period, the status of Indian women has been steadily eroding, despite gains made in some sectors by some groups of women. A "shortage" of women does not lead to their increasing valuation, but to greater restrictions and control over them. The increasing intensity of violence against women in all domains of life is testimony to this. In Punjab, there are 790 women for 1,000 males. Some girl children are killed in the
womb, others perished as infants, while many women succumb in a desperate bid to have a male child. The lopsided sex ratio further marginalises women. Pressured into serving as fertility machines, women are trafficked illicitly or even shared among brothers and kinsmen. Punjab has the lowest child sex ratio in the country (793). It has witnessed a decrease of 82 points, which is the highest among states, although almost all the states show some degree of regression; Sikkim, Mizoram, Tripura, Lakshadweep and Kerala have witnessed some increase. Punjab’s districts show some appalling rates of regression. None of the districts show a positive trend. As a matter of fact, the lowest decline is as high as 48 points. Fatehgarh Sahib witnessed the highest decline of 120 points, and Moga, the lowest of 48 points. The decline is above the state average, in as many as nine districts. However, its extent and area varies. In some districts, urban areas show a greater adversity in sex ratio as in Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Kapurthala, Jalandhar, Nawanshahr, Moga, and Bathinda. In all the other districts, rural areas present a higher degree of decline.

The root of son preference in India lies in deeply entrenched social, cultural, and economic discrimination against women and girls. The Atharvaveda says, “The birth of a daughter, grant it elsewhere, here grant a son”. This saying in the Holy Scripture sums up the Indian attitude towards female children who are subjected to multifarious travails inflicted by the society on them. The girl children in India have been the most vulnerable for centuries and, are even today, vulnerable to the insults of deprivation as well as discrimination. Whatever the natural biological laws of human reproduction had given mankind for balancing its natural sex ratio, has been taken away by manmade laws, customs, traditions, religious beliefs and sophisticated medical technology, resulting in a lower status in society for girls as well as women. For too long have they been left on the back burner, facing discrimination throughout their entire journey from cradle to the grave. In particular, peculiar to South Asia, and certainly to India, tradition, values and customs encrusted over time have resulted in the insatiable desire for sons, with families having totally marginalized the joy and pleasure in giving birth to a
baby girl. The predominant system of patrilineal descent and inheritance legitimate and propel the desire for sons.

Female foeticide over the last 15 years distorted sex ratios as birth in several Asian countries. Foetal sex determination clinics have been established in India over the last 20 years in northern and western cities. Parents tend to be calculative in choosing the sex of the next child and the decision is based on the birth order, sex sequence of previous children and number of sons. Transfer of reproductive technology to India is resulting in reinforcement of patriarchal values as professional medical organizations seem to be indifferent to ethical misconduct.

At marriage, daughter leave their natal home and must bring a dowry to their husband’s family, to which they are also expected to contribute economically, whether in the forms of paid or unpaid work. Sons are expected to support their parent in old age, and therefore are viewed as a source of social security. The patriarchal structure and values are ingrained for centuries and the practice of getting rid of daughters is known to exist. A son’s birth is a means of privileging the mother. Thus the dilemma of being the second sex and yet craving for the first is resolved through the practice of patriarchy. Majority of the Indian women would be shattered to only have successive daughters. The birth of a son is perceived as an opportunity for upward mobility while the birth of a daughter is believed to result in downward economic mobility of the household and the family. May you be the mother of a hundred sons." That’s a popular wedding blessing in many parts of India. It aptly captures a notorious feature of Indian society: son preference. This is accompanied by a cruel aversion for daughters. When the punishment is light, women in Indian live with monstrous inequalities, when the society is at its gruesome worst, girl children are snuffed out in the womb.

Ways and means of conceiving a son are mentioned in Indian folklore, traditional medical systems and in Kama Sutra. Sonless women and couples try various medical religious and shamanic means to have a son.
The saying may even my enemy not have a daughter and jako maar rayo kartar (one whom the maker [God] is slow poisoning) comes from the pain and suffering a daughter’s birth and upbringing can cause to her parents and her paternal and even the maternal grandparents. Marriage ties of children are preferably arranged between households of comparable status and position which in turn support conditions circumstance and perpetuate all forms of capital accumulation.

The second chapter is a review of literature in which researcher had tried to incorporate related past studies on the various topics such as: falling sex ratio: matter of concern, sex-determination: the technology, sex-selective abortion: when desire meets technology, female infanticide: a penniless move to fulfill desire, son preference: the desire, daughter: as a burden, women: the battered half to enrich and support the present study.

The third chapter deals with the theoretical and conceptual framework. In which theories have been discussed on sex ratio, theories on gender equality and feminist theories are discussed. Concepts like sex ratio, sex selective discrimination, foeticide, infanticide, nuclear family, joint family, demography, community, dowry etc have been discussed.

The fourth chapter draws attention to the research design of the study which is the important part of any kind of research to be conducted. Following aims and objectives and hypotheses were formulated for the present study:

Aims and objectives:

- To determine the position of the females in terms of gender discrimination and its effects.
- To study the possible factors or attributes responsible for a low or high sex ratio.
- In terms of spacing, the kind of measures used to avoid possible conception and unwanted pregnancies.
- To determine whether the community envisages deliberate attempts to manipulate its sex ratio, particularly the means of deliberate manipulation i.e. female foeticide and infanticide.
- To assess the demographic consequences of son preference i.e. sex differential in mortality, increase in fertility and imbalanced sex ratio.
To determine the parental preferences for a particular sex of the offspring and the rationale behind them.

To analyse the major factors responsible for gender discrimination, female disadvantage, and male preference.

Hypotheses:

i) Ours is a patrilocal and patriarchal community, which is culturally biased towards female child. A community has a functional role to play in matters of sex discrimination.

ii) Female foeticides and infanticide are most often practiced in societies where it is believed that having a female child is culturally and economically less advantageous than having a male child.

iii) Sons carry out religious ceremonies and traditional customs. Family lineage and family name is also carried out by sons only.

iv) The desire to have a son is reason for the imbalanced sex ratio? Is there deliberate manipulation of sex-ratio? At what level it is operational? At prenatal or postnatal?

v) The decline in child sex-ratio is alarmingly high in the states and communities that are economically and educationally much better off.

The present study was conducted in Sri. Hargobindpur, a town of Gurdaspur district of Punjab. As the status of other districts in the matter of sex ratio, Gurdaspur district has lowest urban child sex ratio in Punjab. The fifth chapter gives an overview about the geographical details of the area. It also describes about the life, language, fairs and festivals of the people of the area. The communities studied by the researcher have been also discussed in detail.

The sixth chapter deals with the analysis of data based on the formulated hypothesis.

The first hypothesis discusses the patriarchal and patrilocal society. To understand the patriarchal society, family and marriage system have been discussed. Majority of the families are nuclear families and joint families are few. While discussing about the marriage. Most of the marriages are arranged by parents only. Number of marriages by choice is very less. Sons are still given the chance to choose brides for themselves but daughters are not. Majority of the women are married off between the age group of 18 to 24. Very few are married before 18 and after 24. Lot many things are taken care by parents while choosing a groom for their daughters. Marriages being central to life for women in most
parts of India, parents are seized with a daughter’s marriage. Her home, her identity, and her prestige come through her marriage and in turn permeate the prestige for her natal family and the conjugal one. In being raised as a preferable bride, things are easier for her and her family members. The daughters’ groom does not come cheap. Matters of marriages are also matters of money and status. He has to be at least equal if not somewhat better (in education, income, social standing of his family, family’s wealth, etc) than her; and dowry can catch this match. The shift to small family size, evident in India more recently, has not, however, been accompanied by a shift at the same time in the economic and social pressures to have sons and avoid daughter. As was stated by women in study, they desire and want few children while ensuring that at least one if not two of those children are sons. This has also led to increased acceptance and use of sex discriminatory selection tests to achieve parental preferences to have sons while not exceeding the desired number of children.

In order that a daughter is desired as a marriage partner her upbringing is accordingly fine tuned by the parents who then fell greatly relieved. Conversely all hell is let loose. People often said a daughter has to be carefully looked after because she has to go to another house. If she has any physical deficiency, her chances of marriage the route into another (conjugal) house, the ultimate destination, shrinks. That is why often girls with serious illness are neglected with an unstated intention, i.e. let her die rather than be a problem later on when a match for her marriage is to be looked for.

While talking about the rights cherished by the women of the society researcher decided to ask about the decision making process in the family regarding the matters of financial, fertility and going for a abortion or not. In all three matters majority of respondents admitted that both husband and wife take the final decision. Although their decision is influenced by the elders of the family and also by societies norms and values.

In nuclear families women tend to be more part of decision making and as discussed earlier, this was one of the benefits of the nuclear family, which was articulated. One example of the differences between joint and nuclear families
was expressed as; “men do not ask women’s opinions about matters of the family. Decision making power is in the hands of the husband or the head of the family. In a few families, in divided (nuclear) families, men are taking advice from or involve women in decision making related to major family issues”. Not participating in or being kept from decision making takes away the ability to influence that decision and also limits bargaining power in other decisions. Greater participation also means more space for bargaining. Participation in one area of decision-making strengthens the bargaining position in other areas. When women participate more in the decision making process, chances that such an iterative effect will be positive are greater.

Discussion on the preference of son shows that majority of women wants at least jodi of sons in their family. Few are satisfied with one son and one daughter. But none wants a family without a son if there is no daughter it is fine with most of the respondents but a son is must for every family. Majority of them wants their first child, second child and third child to be son only. In case of families already having daughter child the desire to have a son is increased to the extent that females are ready to go for as many abortion they can till they have a baby of their choice. In case of celebrating the birthday of their children. Daughters of the family are not considered to be important for it. Birthdays of the son of the family are celebrated but daughters are mostly ignored in this matter. In matters of diet and nutrition given to the pregnant women respondents told that they are given nutritious diet when they are pregnant. Few agreed to be given balanced diet, or diet prescribed by doctors or dais. In case of maternal care given to the mothers in case of birth of different sex of the baby. Respondents told that most of the women are mistreated given less rest and care when they give birth to a daughter as compared to when son is born. While asking about the importance of daughters of the family most of the respondents thinks that daughters are better emotional support than the sons. Most of them have never given it a thought that what will happen to the society if there would be less females. Majority of them are happy if they have no daughter in the family. After knowing about the fact maximum numbers of respondents still
were not aware of the decreasing number of females. They are not bothered what would happen if there were no females and no brides. They still want a son as their child. A son is the most preferred child.

The second hypothesis deals with the preference given to the sons and their value, and reasons for dislike of the daughters. Most of the families wants to have sons in their families and very few wants a daughter. It is thought that sons are important for a family for variety of reasons. As discussed earlier despite the spread of schooling among girls in recent decades the patriarchal social structure survives. Women derive value and status only as mothers of sons. Their happiness and social status in the conjugal homes is dependent on producing sons. Women have internalized these roles and values to such an extent that even when they say that daughters take better care of parents or are more emotionally attached to the mothers, these statements have a ring of hollowness because in spite of such feelings more sons than daughters are desired. In the pursuit of sons, they have become with some pressure from the families, consumers of the new technology of ultrasound, which allows them to choose and bear sons. The possibility of delinking availing legal abortion services form finding and reveling the sex of the foetus provides an opportunity to abort the child of an unwanted sex. In case of having a daughter in the family it is being thought that daughters are burden on the family, they can easily bring dishonour to the family name. There is common saying in Punjab ‘dhiyaan te baap di pug nu daag la dendiyan hun jadki munde baap da sar uccha karde hun’ (Daughters can easily stain the fathers turban, while a son always raises his fathers’ head with pride). The excessive care and caution in raising a daughter, once born, begins early. Dowry and the subsequent flow of gifts goes on much longer, often beyond the lifetime of her parents. It is important to point out her that even among castes practicing bride wealth, the flow of gifts after the wedding is usually from the bride’s kin to the groom’s. As an infant and toddler, a girl is like fine china, parents take care that she turns out fair and beautiful. The fragile and handle with care item in a china shop is to remain a desirable bride for prospective in-laws. She belongs to another family and not where she is born. By
corollary, any mishandling by the trustees (parents/stewards) is likely to reduce the chances for her making it big in the marriage market.

The other reason for dislike for daughters is that parents have to be very careful regarding the security of their daughters. The sexuality of girls is closely guarded. She is likened to an-earthen pot that should neither be dropped nor chipped. Unlike boys girls are to be kept under a constant vigil. Wild girls are not good girl. They have to be escorted (if not physically at least in terms of knowing their movement and of late by giving them a mobile phone to trace their movements) whenever they move out of the vicinity of the household. An older family member or male siblings are the family has to provide protection for girl until she is married off. Fathers or brothers drop and pick up the small and teenage girls of the family when they visit friends, relatives, go for movies, to restaurants etc. Once they are college going, they are on their own for college purposes, but are escorted by a family male mother or old servant when they go elsewhere. Such a vigil is necessitated more in urban areas and is increasingly needed in some rural areas and big towns as well. Most of the respondents do not want daughters because they have seen tortures by in-laws and their husbands and they do not want that their daughters should also suffer the same. Although discrimination regarding the matters of food, clothes, going out with friends, pocket money is their but most of the respondent deny to it that they do the same with their daughters. This discrimination against the girls is the cause of son preference. A strong preference for a son automatically assigns lower status to girls, which very often results in the discrimination against them. Discrimination at time leads to mistreatment, aggression and neglect. The discrimination of the girl child taken an extreme, violent and cannibalistic form when a child is killed either before or after birth, merely because of the fact that she is a ‘female’. It is not only in the early years of life that girls face such hostility. When girls grow up, they quite often face the traumatic experience of rape, wife-beating, bride burning etc. These acts, against the will of women, are enacted with a purpose. These are not manifestations of prejudices only but demonstrate ‘commodification’ of woman who can be put to use according to requirement. Some of these afore
mentioned acts of inhuman torture of women are comparatively of recent origin and endemic to modern society. The acts of aggression against women in traditional society and their persistence in contemporary society demolish the view that the status of women has improved, as a result of modern and secular influences.

The third hypothesis deals with the importance of a son in the religion and that only he can carry out the family name forward. It is believed by all the respondents that sons are important to carry out the religious ceremonies. They are important to carry out the family lineage which a daughter cannot. The need to have sons is reinforced in religion as well. Sons were required for both secular and religious purpose. The sutras and smritis emphasise the importance of a son for the spiritual welfare of a man. The principal purposes served by the birth of the son were that he enabled the father to pay off the debt he owed to his ancestors and secure immortality and the heavenly world. The son enables the father to pay off the debt he owes to his ancestors. The son offers pandas to the ancestors and thus helps in giving salvation. The necessity of having a son is strengthened further when a son is required to perform the rite of lighting the funeral pyre of the father when a son is and observe the ancestral (sraddha) rites for the father after his death. Daughters are not allowed by religious law to perform any Vedic rites. They cannot do the last rites of their parents in case there is no son in the family any other male family member of the family should do that. Therefore for begetting a son, any numbers of girls born before him are sacrificed. As discussed earlier males are given priority in many festivals there are festivals which are celebrated just for the sake of and well being of the male members of the family for example Karwa chauth, Raksha Bandhan etc. It is socio cultural and religious justifications support such a negative attitude that people indulge willingly in heinous acts of female foeticide and female infanticide. These acts have social approval and persist act of being fatalistic.

The fourth hypothesis deals with the deliberate manipulation of sex ratio by traditional and both technological means. They do not use much of contraceptives for precautions most of them rely on safe days method. Few use
contraceptives like condom, oral pills and intra uterine devices etc. It is seen that to have the desired sex majority of respondents can do whatever is suggested to them or available to them in the first hand for example, from going to the religious places known for granting a male child, eating medicines given by babas’ wearing tawizs, eating particular food items, practicing few practices told by elders or vaid hakims, finally going for sex determination tests and then aborting the female foetuses. They are hardly effected after doing this sin and are ready to do it till the time they have desired number of sons in the family. Going for an ultrasound is more common among the respondents to detect the sex of the baby. Amniocentesis is a scientific technique that was supposed to be used mainly to detect genetic abnormalities, which has become very popular for the detection of the sex of the foetus. But this boon of science is turned out to abuse for sex ratio of the country by the son hungry society. The contention that selective neglect or infanticide affect mainly higher birth order girls and that therefore the gender imbalance in demographic rates and indicators should decline with decreasing fertility and mortality is clearly not upheld in this study. In fact, the ideational shift to controlled fertility that includes acceptance of modern means of contraception has, in India, also meant a growing societal acceptance of medical technologies surrounding conception, pre-natal sex discriminatory selection, and abortion. Abortion selectively directed against female foetuses is acceptable to large sections of society in the name of ‘population control’, or couples’ greater reproductive choice. The secular societal trend that increasingly devalues female lives remains largely unquestioned.

The last hypothesis discusses that is there any impact of economically sound and educated people on sex ratio. Most of the respondents are educated very few are under matric. Few are matriculate. +2 , graduate few are post graduate and teaching in schools or colleges. Most of them wants that their kids and partner should be educated. They thought that a women should be educated because education brings independence in them and makes them self reliant, capable of taking decisions. But when the question arises about having a son or daughter their response are no different than any illiterate respondent they want
a male child in their family and do not hesitate to go for an abortion of a female foetus as long as they have a male child. So it is clear there is no impact of education on sex ratio. The mentality of the people is same whether they are illiterate or educated, poor or rich. The researcher has tried to go into the depth to see to what extent people can go to have the sex of their choice and the results are shocking as discussed in the study.

The analysis clearly points to a collusion of culture or social norms and technology that is all pervasive. On the one hand the son preference is so strongly entrenched in Indian society especially in the region and on the other hand the well-being and status of girls is so precarious once they are married, that couples avoid having girls at all costs. Facilities conducting sex detection tests with ultrasound machines have proliferated and are found even in some of the relatively large villages.

At the same time, the awareness about a ban on sex determination tests is fairly widespread among women in our study area. Many women also felt that the ban should be removed and couples should have the choice to decide the sex composition of their children. Women were very well aware that the services are easily available from private providers and are within easy access.

The sex selective discrimination by active elimination of female foetus and passive elimination of female child leading to their death and the role of different background characteristics like women’s childhood experience, autonomy, married life and sex preference and family size leads to dispreference of women. The study shows that there exists extreme sex selective discrimination against girl child through conception to their rearing and bearing. Also extreme discrimination by women sometimes results into the sex discriminatory selective abortion in the society in the desire for male child. Therefore, it can be said that there exists women’s life course impact on the discrimination against girl child. Women who herself had a worst childhood experience (in terms of discrimination in all spheres including childhood status, food, education, mobility etc.), had less autonomy in various dimensions (such as decision-making, monetary, mobility, fertility etc), feels high instability in her married life or perceive a sad married life
is more responsible for the discrimination against girl child from conception through her childhood leading to a vicious cycle of gender deprivation and gender discrimination.

A son preference expressed in such remarks as: “According to tradition one son and one daughter is the ideal. With one daughter we need a son. A son is needed for heading the household or for agriculture work. With only daughters the land will go to the daughter’s husband’s side”, or “The ideal family is one son and one daughter. The son continues the bloodline and is old-age support. The daughter is important to expand the social network”. However, while not one respondent in the second study area talked about attaining the preferred gender composition of their families through the traditional way of repeated births until a son is born, this is still the method parents’ use in the first study area. This was expressed in statements like: “A son is necessary to take care of us in old age and also to perform ceremonies when we have passed away. First we had three daughters and then we finally had a son. Now everybody shows more affection to him”.

It can be concluded from the present study that majority of the respondents approved of female foeticide under one pretext or the other. Dowry was cited as the main reason behind it. Daughters were unable to provide social security to their parents in old age and thus were considered an unnecessary investment. At the same time, respondents were apprehensive of finding a suitable match for their female children. Female foeticide is intrinsically linked to the ‘Dowry system’; to bring an end to abortions of female foetuses it is essential for Indian communities to bring an end to the ritual of Dowry. The study makes it clear that a woman, whether educated or uneducated, rich or poor, is not conscious of her own identity, which is as indispensable for progress as a man’s. She is unable to recognise her role in resolving her problems because of the prevalence of systems like dowry, etc. In the end, it may be concluded that the banning of this test, though an essential and urgently required step, is not the final solution to the problem. In the long run, social prejudices against women have to be overcome by improving her overall status in society.
The study reveals that:

- Nearly three-fourths of the women in the area knew about the sex determination test, and female foeticide is favoured both in the area.
- Women are aware of the health problems resulting from such decisions but favour it for socio-economic reasons: a girl is considered as a liability on account of dowry; her education does not add anything to the income of her parental family. A son is preferred for social as well as economic reasons.
- The socioeconomic pressures are such that even those who consider abortion to be a sin, are prepared to abort a female foetus.
- The case studies in the area reveal that middle class women of the area are obsessed with the idea of a two-child family and that one of the two children must be a son.

Most of the respondents were seen saying that a son would bring in wealth when they grow up. A daughter would take it away after marriage. Too many children would erode the family's prosperity. So they had to strategize. They had to make sure they had the optimum number of children of the desired sex. They believe that their own education and comfortable financial status helped them to strategize better. They used scientific advancement to their benefit and made sure no unwanted daughters were born.

The trend towards greater spread and acceptance of pre-natal sex discriminatory selection techniques despite legislative proscription, combined with persistent female disfavour in mortality ratios, combines to produce a scenario that is not likely to ameliorate in the near future. These demographic phenomena are themselves only symptoms of the worsening situation of women in the Indian socio-economic developmental context. Any policy measures must not focus exclusively on regulating or banning technology used to women's detriment, but must also address the root causes of devaluation of Indian women, or they will not succeed in eradicating discriminatory practices but will drive them underground where they will continue to flourish. We know what the world looks like with half of its population devalued – with half of its population
treated as inferior and insignificant. To believe that it is better to kill a female foetus than to give birth to an unwanted female child is not only short sighted but also fatalistic.

There is truly no clue what the world would look like if girls and women could express themselves and be “everything they can be.” At a minimum, everyone would live in a more peaceful and humane world: a world with greater social justice, economic progress, lower population growth and better health. One thing is clear, and it is unequivocally clear – the world would be a lot better place than the one in which everyone is living today.