"God smiled when He made daughters, because He knew that with the choicest treasures, He had created love and happiness for every Mom and Dad. Be proud to be a Daughter”.

In an age when women have made progress in almost every field and are being empowered as an outcome of identity and equality, gender disparities exist in terms of education, health, nutrition and employment opportunities in our country. This is most unfortunate. From conception till death, a female is discriminated in every sphere of life. The female finds herself crushed between tradition and modernity and identity and equality.

In the male dominated patriarchal society, women are viewed as a burden by parents. In our traditional societies, while a childless women is perceived as incomplete, one who has given birth to daughters is partially complete. Only the one, who has produced a son enjoys status of sorts. The problem is inextricably interwined to the institution of dowry. A boy means income and a girl means “outgo” and therefore, a loss. The mortality of a female considered as “beast of burden”, is engineered right from the pre-natal stage itself. Unacceptability of an unborn female is depicted from the ongoing phenomenon of female foeticide despite stringent laws to ban pre-natal sex-determination. To check this menace, Maharashtra first enacted legislation in 1989, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan followed suit. However, female foeticide continues with impunity.

There are reports of surprise checks and rechecks leading to the cancellation of licences of such centers by the government. The recent conviction of two doctors conducting sex-determination in a Haryana based clinic, is the first instance of conviction as violative of PNDT Act, 1994. This is because of the acceptance of the birth of the unwanted girl child among some sections. This is, no doubt, a happy augury. What is disturbing, however, is
the continued discrimination against the female child at various levels though because of some awakening through freedom, equality and empowerment of women, thing seems to be changing. Even today, the birth of a girl child in the family, is not celebrated as is done when a boy is born. Gender equality demands that the birth of a girl, especially the second one in the family, should not be viewed as moment of grief and sorrow.

Fifty million women are missing in south Asia. They are missing because of the increasing number of cases of foeticide, dowry deaths, honour killings and other acts of violence being inflicted on them. India enjoys the ignominy of being in the forefront of crimes against women. This spiral of violence is sustained by glaring, one would say criminal, short-falls in investigatory agencies as also because of the growing judicial bias against women, who have been forced to seek legal redress.

This disparity can be explained in the context of a hangover of our traditional society when women were viewed as reproductive agents, conditioned to a subservient role, fed last and with a low social value. The typical subservient role of Indian woman will change only by creating a national public awareness on gender equality. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956, Section-6 of the Act which gives the daughter, a right to be a coparcener equal to her brothers in her father’s copacenary is one of the steps towards providing the female a fundamental right to equality and dignity.

The whole theme has been woven into eleven chapters. Their comprehensiveness shows in details given in them. They deal with ideas and propositions, status of women in India in past and present, Gender-bias-a wrong attitude towards a girl child, socio-legal reasons responsible for it; future consequences of the lowest sex-ratio in the country as well as in four Asian Countries e.g. Pakistan, China, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh; a study into the rich state of Punjab regarding the high practice of female foeticide in present and female infanticide in past.

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For my research work, I have collected the material from several centers of research and well known institutes viz. Delhi University Library, Parliamentary Library Delhi, A.C. Joshi Library, P.U. Chandigarh, N.H.R.C. Library Delhi, P.A.U. Basic Sciences Department Ludhiana, Department of Laws Library, P.U. Chandigarh, P.U. Extension Library, Ludhiana.