

# Female infanticide in india sociology essay



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Sex-selective infanticide has increased in present day patriarchal India. The bias infanticide is the practice of terminating a pregnancy based on the predicted sex of the fetus (Goodkind 53). The preference of male children has led to over millions of female deaths and abortions; the cause of the rising of female infanticide in India is due to the influences of over population, the dowry system, economic statuses, caste systems, social norms, women's role, cultural beliefs, religion, etc. Most of these practices are due to the value or devaluation of women in some parts of the world. The system, custom, and tradition of these patriarchal societies lead to the neglect of girl children, which is what is happening today in India.

Sex-selective abortion was unusual before the late 20th century, because of the difficulty of determining the sex of the fetus before birth. But due to new and improved technology introduced in India like the ultrasound, it has made the selection an easier task. The process began in the political text during the emergency in the 1970's. The examination of the text in India, was up to debate whether " it was in order to demonstrate that the effect of conjuncture between the overt rhetoric of over population covert discourse of femicide is that female populations are targeted for extermination" (Bhatnager 3). (this is awkward, idk how to fix/rephrase). During the years of the Emergency, Amniocentesis was introduced in 1974. It was " to ascertain birth defects in a sample population," but " was quickly appropriated by medical entrepreneurs. An epidemic of sex-selective abortions followed." (Karlekar) Female infanticides are oppressing female mother and women in general. "[T]hose women who undergo sex determination tests and abort on knowing that the fetus is female are actively taking a decision against

equality and the right to life for girls. In many cases, of course, the women are not independent agents but merely victims of a dominant family ideology based on preference for male children" (Karlekar). 10, 000 female fetuses are killed every year in India (Bhatnager 2), and every year its being more and more accepted by the community. Families are trying to find an easy way out where they don't have to live with a life long debt.

As known, India is one of the most overpopulated countries, but unlike Africa, the Caribbean and other, there's a higher percentage of males than females. Due to Hindu beliefs and the strict caste system, young girls were being murdered daily. When demographic statistics were first collected in the nineteenth century, it was discovered that in " some villages, no girl babies were found at all; in a total of thirty others, there were 343 boys to 54 girls. ... [I]n Bombay, the number of girls alive in 1834 was 603." (Rummel 65-66.) The significant decrease in the female population occurs after birth and before the age of 4. From 1978 to 1983... of 12 million girls born each year only 9 million lived to be 15. (Balakrishnan 276). 1991 the ration from women to men was 945 to 1000, 2001 was 927 to 1000. This decline was attributed to regressive manifestations of patriarchy in a modernizing society, and not simply to ancient traditions, like the religious obligations in Hinduism. Amniocentesis, increased female infanticide; and although sex-discriminatory abortion is illegal and expensive, it's practiced. From the year " 1978 to 1983, 78, 000 were reported killed, or 13, 000 female fetuses annually aborted following the use of amniocentesis as a sex determination test" (Bhatnager 3). A portrayal of a gendercide against women.

" In Jaipur, capital of the western state of Rajasthan, prenatal sex determination tests result in an estimated 3, 500 abortions of female fetuses annually," according to a medical-college study. (Dahlburg) Most strikingly, according to UNICEF, " A report from Bombay in 1984 on abortions after prenatal sex determination stated that 7, 999 out of 8, 000 of the aborted fetuses were females. Sex determination has become a lucrative business." (Zeng Yi 297.)

Gender has become secondary interest to a nation focused on religious and caste controversies. A study of Tamil Nadu by the Community Service Guild of Madras found that " female infanticide is rampant" in the state, though only among Hindu (rather than Muslem or Christian) families. " Of the 1, 250 families covered by the study, 740 had only one girl child and 249 agreed directly that they had done away with the unwanted girl child. More than 213 of the families had more than one male child whereas half the respondents had only one daughter" (Karlekar).

Religion and economic status intertwined as one. Due to what caste you're in determines your economic status within society. In the Hindu religion once a young girl is set of to marry, she becomes " property" of her husband's family, but before those arrangements occur, the wife's family would have to hold a well planned wedding. One way of these families avoiding themselves from getting into a situation like this is not having and girl child at all. During this whole festivity " the family of a prospective bride must pay enormous sums of money to the family in which the woman will live after marriage. Though formally outlawed, the institution is still pervasive. " The combination of dowry and wedding expenses usually add up to more than a million

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rupees ([US] \$35, 000). In India the average civil servant earns about 100, 000 rupees (\$3, 500) a year. Given these figures combined with the low status of women, it seems not so illogical that the poorer Indian families would want only male children." (Porras) Murders of women whose families are deemed to have paid insufficient dowry have become increasingly common.

The modern holocaust of feminicide signifies not only the serial killing of female fetuses also girl-child murder by negligence through discriminatory practices such as uneven food allocations causing nutritional deficiencies, uneven access to medical care, family resources, and minimum survival needs (Bhatnager, 3). The bias against females in India is related to the fact that " sons are called upon to provide the income; they are the ones who do most of the work in the fields. In this way sons are looked to as a type of insurance. With this perspective, it becomes clearer that the high value given to males decreases the value given to females" (Porras). "[A]nother disturbing finding," namely " that, despite the increased ability to command essential food and medical resources associated with development, female children [in India] do not improve their survival chances relative to male children with gains in development. Relatively high levels of agricultural development decrease the life chances of females while leaving males' life chances unaffected; urbanization increases the life chances of males more than females. ... Clearly, gender-based discrimination in the allocation of resources persists and even increases, even when availability of resources is not a constraint." (Kishor 262.) In Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh [states], it is usual for girls and women to eat less than men and boys and to have their

meal after the men and boys had finished eating. Greater mobility outside the home provides boys with the opportunity to eat sweets and fruit from saved-up pocket money or from money given to buy articles for food consumption. In case of illness, it is usually boys who have preference in health care (Karlekar).

It's Ironic that although Indians have defied knowledge as the goddess Saraswati, Indian women have been regulated to educational subservience throughout India's history. Education is power, which is in male's hands. In 1947 the ratio of literacy from women to men was 6% to 22.6%, in 1961 15.3 to 40.4, 1981 28.5% to 76, and in 2001 from 33.6% to 60.3%(ADD MORE, SOURCE?).

" In rural India, the centuries-old practice of female infanticide can still be considered a wise course of action." (Dahlburg) According to census statistics, " from 972 females for every 1,000 males in 1901 ... the gender imbalance has tilted to 929 females per 1,000 males. ... In the nearly 300 poor hamlets of the Usilampatti area of Tamil Nadu [state], as many as 196 girls died under suspicious circumstances [in 1993] ... Some were fed dry, unhulled rice that punctured their windpipes, or were made to swallow poisonous powdered fertilizer. Others were smothered with a wet towel, strangled or allowed to starve to death." A case from Tamil Nadu:

" Lakshmi already had one daughter, so when she gave birth to a second girl, she killed her. For the three days of her second child's short life, Lakshmi admits, she refused to nurse her. To silence the infant's famished cries, the impoverished village woman squeezed the milky sap from an oleander

shrub, mixed it with castor oil, and forced the poisonous potion down the newborn's throat. The baby bled from the nose, then died soon afterward. Female neighbors buried her in a small hole near Lakshmi's square thatched hut of sunbaked mud. They sympathized with Lakshmi, and in the same circumstances, some would probably have done what she did. For despite the risk of execution by hanging and about 16 months of a much-ballyhooed government scheme to assist families with daughters, in some hamlets of ... Tamil Nadu, murdering girls is still sometimes believed to be a wiser course than raising them. 'A daughter is always liabilities. How can I bring up a second?' Lakshmi, 28, answered firmly when asked by a visitor how she could have taken her own child's life eight years ago. 'Instead of her suffering the way I do, I thought it was better to get rid of her.'" (Dahlburg)

Indian state governments have sometimes taken measures to diminish the slaughter of infant girls and abortions of female fetuses. " The leaders of Tamil Nadu are holding out a tempting carrot to couples in the state with one or two daughters and no sons: if one parent undergoes sterilization, the government will give the family [U. S.] \$160 in aid per child. The money will be paid in instalments as the girl goes through school. She will also get a small gold ring and on her 20th birthday, a lump sum of \$650 to serve as her dowry or defray the expenses of higher education. Four thousand families enrolled in the first year," with 6, 000 to 8, 000 expected to join annually (as of 1994) (Dahlburg). Such programs have, however, barely begun to address the scale of the catastrophe.