

female foeticide in india

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



What is female foeticide?

The act of aborting or terminating a foetus while it's still in the womb, because it is female, is known as female foeticide. This can be done after determining the sex of the child before it's born, through ultrasound scans. Although, sex determination in India is illegal, the practice is rampant and has become a multi-million dollar industry. Coupled with prospective parents desperate for a boy child, and physicians who are carrying out these abortions, female foeticide has become a shameful and shocking reality of our nation. What is the main cause of female foeticide?

For centuries, families across many parts of India have regarded a male child as the preferred of the two sexes. There have been many social, financial, emotional and religious reasons for this preference and while times have changed, many of these reasons and beliefs continue to remain. Today, some of the key reasons that exist for the preference of a male child are as follows: The tradition of paying dowry at the time of a daughter's marriage is alive and kicking. This amount can be so huge that many parents will go to extreme lengths to avoid having a daughter in the first place. A son is seen as someone who can earn and care for his parents in their later years, while a daughter will get married and go away.

A son can carry on the family name, while a daughter becomes part of her husband's family. Girls are seen as consumers, whereas boys are seen as producers. Many families consider it a status symbol to have a son, and a point of shame to have a daughter. Often, the pressure to bear a male child on the woman is so great that she herself might choose to get sex

determination done and abort the baby if it's a girl. Illiteracy, poverty and the tag of 'burden' that is assigned to a girl child, makes the desire for a male child even stronger.

Modern technology has made it very easy to determine the sex of the child while it's still in the womb, giving parents-to-be the option of aborting the foetus and continuing to try to conceive till they get a male child. While sex determination has been banned by the Indian government, it does not stop families from going to great lengths to find out anyway. Not only are there plenty of scanning centres that reveal this information, many of the wealthier families fly the pregnant mother to neighbouring countries where sex determination is legal, to find out the gender of the baby. Once the gender of the baby is known, families that are keen to have a baby boy choose to abort the female foetus. The law on aborting is also strict, and the Indian government allows it only under certain circumstances.

Therefore, by determining the sex of the baby and aborting it because it's a girl, the parents as well as the participating physicians are breaking two major laws.

What impact does female foeticide have on the sex ratio?

Sex ratio refers to ratio of females to males in a given region. Practices like female foeticide and female infanticide (killing a baby girl after she is born) have had an adverse effect on the sex ratio of a nation and gives rise to further social evils. As per the Indian Census 2011 report, the sex ratio of India (females per 1000 males) is as follows: Average India sex ratio – 933

Rural sex ratio – 946

Urban sex ratio – 900

State with highest female sex ratio – Kerala – 1058

State with lowest female sex ratio – Haryana – 861

What are the long-term impacts of female foeticide?

The most important impact of female foeticide is the skewed ratio it gives rise to. The dearth of females leads to other complications like female trafficking, kidnappings and an increase in assault and rape against women. Female foeticide is a horrific and illegal practice that has got to be stopped. The way to do this is by implementation of stronger laws and bringing about a change in the mind-set of our countrymen – uphill tasks, but absolutely crucial nevertheless.