# SEX RATIO IMBALANCE: MOTIVE IMPACT AND REPERCUSSION

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**Abstract:** In India, there is numerous substantiation that signifies extensive exercise of female birth intrusion. As a result, a disturbingly low ever sex ratio has been reported by the 2011 census. Odisha is one of the most affected of many such Indian states. Although, reasons for decline in the child sex ratio are many, but the most important is the presence of a strong son preference. There are age old as well as modern factors for this preference.

The socio-economic and cultural fundamentals, which has always been detrimental to the interest of our female population is believed to be a primary precursor in this issue. From the policy point of view the state along with the community needs to facilitate any change visualized in these fundamentals, by directing programmes in the spirit that the women brings human life up so we all should bring her up. Programmes that aim to reduce the excessive son preference and increase the value of daughters to their parents must be given priority.

**Key words:** Girl child, Feticide, Constitution, Reproductive rights, Patriarchy, Empowerment, Equality.

**Introduction**: Sex ratio is an important social indicator to measure the extent of the prevailing equity between males and females in a society at a given point of time. Changes in sex ratio largely reflect the underlying socio-economic and cultural patterns of a society in different ways. India is one of the few countries in the world where males outnumber females. This is a small attempt through this study to know and visualized this problem from a social point of view. Before going to this exact point we should focus on the status of the women from different period of time.

**Definition of sex ratio: Sex-ratio is** conventionally defined as the number of males per 1,000 females in the population of a society. More boys than girls are born each year, but the excess number of males at birth is gradually reduced by the higher male mortality rate, to an age-point where the number of women begins to exceed the number of men. In most countries, the overall sex-ratio is below 1,000, with women outnumbering men. However, since the Second World War the sex-ratio has been rising in many Western industrial societies, so that the excess of females is now confined to older age-groups.

**Table no – 1.1 Sex ratio of India & Odisha since 1951**

| Census year | India | Odisha |
|---|---|---|
| 1951 | 946 | 1022 |
| 1961 | 941 | 1001 |
| 1971 | 930 | 988 |
| 1981 | 934 | 982 |
| 1991 | 929 | 971 |
| 2001 | 933 | 972 |
| 2011 | 940 | 979 |

Source – census report

So this is all about the sex ratio report of 1951 onwards. By visualizing this data we can say that, if this series continues in future, after few days it will become half of the male population. Changes in sex ratio largely reflect the underlying socio-economic and cultural patterns of the society in different ways.

India is one of the countries in the world where males outnumber females. There are various synonyms used to describe the decline in sex ratio, like skewed sex ratio, imbalanced sex ratio, missing of girls, disturbances in sex ratio etc. All these highlight one common thing, that is, "Invisibility or Reduction in number of Females and Girls" in comparison to males of the country. It is evident that among the ten most populous countries of the world, India is at the lowest position among all in terms of sex ratio. Changes in the sex ratio largely reflect the underlying socio, economic, and cultural patterns of that society in different ways.

The available literature in this context suggests that a combination of factors is responsible for declining sex ratio. So let us discuss these reasons in the following way.

**Reasons For Low Sex Ratio: Male dominance & Patriarchy:** Our Indian society is a male dominated society where patriarchal families are found. Male person takes all decisions. There is no chance for women. In this way at the time of reproduction all decisions are taken by the male members rather than female which ultimately lead to sex selective abortion.

**Son preference:** As we know that our Indian society is a patriarchal society, so son preference is most prevalent in our society. It is a believe that, son will give salvation after the death of parents. Parents will attain heaven after their death. All rituals in the funeral ceremony of parents are performed by the son. Apart from these reasons there are some other

reasons like –Son supports the parents economically in old age, after marriage son brings dowry to the home, Son is responsible for continuation of the family line, Birth of son increases the status of parents in society, Son is only caretaker of parental property, Parents attain heaven after death only if they have a son and lastly and most importantly son performs the last rites of the parents. These types of culturally induced blind believe gives rise to son preference.

**Neglecting girl child:** The main factor behind the sex ratio imbalance is less interest for girl child. There are various reasons for neglecting girl child, like-

Parents feel insecure in old age if they have a girl child ,Girls are considered as an economic liability & wasteful expenditure because they get married and give their services to others ,Lacking of financial help from girl side in future to parents during any emergency, Female child considered as a symbol of low social status of parents in society, Social Insecurity, Parents have to give dowry to a daughter, Girls do not perform funeral rites of the parents, Parents always worry about the future of their female child, and Parents face mental and psychological pressure from girl child. In this way due to such type of unvalued reasons girls are neglected in their family.

**Dowry :** Dowry- the age old custom is responsible for sex ratio imbalance. To prevent dowry problem there are various legal provisions but still it continues in a large extent. Parents have to give a big amount of dowry at the time of the marriage of their daughter which is a great financial burden for them.

**Lack of security:** After 68 years of independence still women can't get equal freedom with men. Till now women can't go to outside of home at 9oclock in night. Women are facing a lot of problem like mental / physical violence in their domestic as well as official sphere. In the fear of social status they hesitate to raise voice against such type of violence.

**Impact Of Sex Ratio Imbalance:** If the balance of the social order will favor a certain gender then there is bound to be imbalance and to compensate this type of imbalance one gender will bear the burnt which will in turn affect an entire generation and will carry on for generations if not nipped at the bud. Certain issues which will arise out of this imbalance are briefly discussed below.

**Changing in marriage norms:** If the number of women is decreasing day by day, it will affect the marriage norms. There will be a long age gap between the groom and bride. It will ultimately lead to the involuntary bachelorhood for men.

**Polyandrous marriage:** Polyandrous marriage refers to the marriage of a woman with more than one man. If Gender imbalance is continuous the ultimate outcome will be this type of marriages in our society.

**Increasing in women trafficking:** Women rafficking are a matter of great concern. Due to the shortage of bride, women trafficking increases day by day. In the name of marriage women are taken from one place to another. But they are misused and working as a sex worker.

**Low Status of Women:** Sex ratio imbalance ultimately affects the status of women. It gives a derogatory status to women. Women are misused and engaged in different vulgar activities. It ultimately leads to male domination. Patriarchal society does not give freedom and empowerment to women.

**Public insecurity:** Women are facing various type of harassment in their domestic as well as working sphere. There are various laws and welfare measures for the safety of women but still women are suffering from various problems. Due to lack of awareness about legal actions and freedom, women can't raise voice against these types of activities.

India passed its first abortion-related law, the so-called Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1971, making abortion legal in most states, but specified legally acceptable reasons for abortion such as medical risk to mother and rape. The law also established physicians who can legally provide the procedure and the facilities where abortions can be performed, but did not anticipate female foeticide based on technology advances. With increasing availability of sex screening technologies in India through the 1980s in urban India, and claims of its misuse, the Government of India passed the Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PNDT) in 1994. This law was further amended into the Pre-Conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) (PCPNDT) Act in 2004 to deter and punish prenatal sex screening and female foeticide. However, there are concerns that PCPNDT Act has been poorly enforced by authorities.

According to the World Health Organization, Reproductive rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. They also include the right of all to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence.

Women's reproductive rights may include some or all of the following: the right to legal and safe abortion; the right to birth control; freedom from coerced sterilization and contraception; the right to access good-quality reproductive healthcare; and the right to education and access in order to make free and

informed reproductive choices. Reproductive rights may also include the right to receive education about sexually transmitted infections and other aspects of sexuality, and protection from practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM).

Reproductive rights were clarified and endorsed internationally in the Cairo Consensus that emerged from the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development.

Women and girls are at liberty to every human right be it civic, political, economic, social and cultural on equal footing with men, liberated from any type of prejudice. A balanced sex ratio is a perquisite for this making development a constant trait of any state or nation.

As suggestive measures we must eradicate this sense of son preference form our society, and ensure female autonomy. We must also propagate through various mediums the values of daughters among parents especially at grass root levels. Issues like female literacy and equal opportunities, economic empowerment must be diligently taken up and followed. Protection of women from various types of violence and reviewing of laws and policies for women must be evaluated and reviewed and lacunas rectified. And most importantly the society should be sensitized through workshops and seminars at both Urban and Rural levels.

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