Child sex Ratio: Variation among SCs, STs and Non-SCs & STs

Maharashtra: A Case Study

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Abstract- Changes in Child Sex Ratio are a direct reflection of the socio-economic and cultural patterns of the society, especially its attitude towards the girl child. As per Census 2011, on the one side almost all other indicators like literacy, growth rate, life expectancy, and overall sex ratio have shown a positive trend, while on the other side Child Sex Ratio presents a contrasting picture. After Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra has shown the greatest decline in Child Sex Ratio from previous census, by 30 points. And also from 1991 the decline in Maharashtra is continuous. Though this very state is considered as one of developed state of India, why there is such a trend is really putting a question in its development perspective. In this paper it will be strived to find out as to why in spite of highly urbanised characteristics, good literacy rate, and higher per capita income than national average; Maharashtra is suffering from lowest condition of female position.

Index Terms- Child sex ratio, SCs and STs Variation, Maharashtra CSR

INTRODUCTION

"The true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children –their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born."

-UNICEF (2007)

India, home to 164.5 million children in the age group 0-6 years constitutes 13.12% of the total population. This huge child population which will become tomorrow's future of this very country is suffering from the imbalance of sex ratio. In the census history of the country, this is the first time that such dismally low Child Sex Ratio has been noted. On the one side almost all other indicators like literacy, growth rate, life expectancy, and overall sex ratio have shown a positive trend, while on the other side Child Sex Ratio presents a contrasting picture.

Since the measure of Sex Ratio is distorted by Sex selective migration and the higher longevity of female in comparison to male, therefore child sex ratio is a better way to judge the condition of females in the Indian society. Changes in Child Sex Ratio are a direct reflection of the socio-economic and cultural patterns of the society, especially its attitude towards the girl child. The Indian society is represented through many parameters varying from gender, religion, caste layers, rich-poor gap, rural-urban gap etc. But it is the level of gender disparity which is a true mirror to reflect the society, because it is prevailing in all other groups. Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) which is part of each above parameter are backward in comparison to others. Thus the evaluation of Child Sex Ratio among

Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and NON-SCs & STs will reveal a clear image to judge the society from twin perspective with a single eye.

As per Census 2011, after Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra has shown the greatest decline in Child Sex Ratio from previous census, by 30 points. And also from 1991 the decline in Maharashtra is continuous. Though this very state is considered as one of developed state of India, why there is such a trend is really putting a question in its development perspective. In this paper it will be strived to find out as to why in spite of highly urbanised characteristics, good literacy rate, and higher per capita income than national average; Maharashtra is suffering from one of the lowest situation of female position.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The diversity of India cannot be seen only in terms of language, culture, religion and others but also in terms of its socio-economic indicators. Sex ratio is one such parameter which shows considerable variations by regions, religions, prosperity classes, social groups e.g. scheduled castes and tribes, location i.e. urban or rural and even by age groups (Siddhanta et al 2008). Since the overall sex ratio is distorted by the migration figure and higher longevity of females, child sex ratio is a better demonstration of Indian society.

The naturally accepted sex ratio at birth is 105 Males per 100 females; this is due to high rate of mortality for males. As said by (Siddhanta et al 2008), in the absence of any interference, there is always an excess of male mortality

during infancy since the female foetus and the female infant is biologically stronger compared to her male counterpart (Waldron, 1987). This biological advantage wanes during the subsequent years of life due to the inequality faced by the girl child in access to food, nutrition, health-care and other life sustaining resources. India has a cultural preference for male child (Inchani and Lai, 2008).

There were many reasons cited by scholars for low child sex ratio in India. Raju (2011) mentioned selective undercount of girls, fewer abortions and retention of male foetuses, more girls were initial reasons but now, the widespread awareness about the availability of and access to the technology that makes it possible to detect the sex of the unborn child (amniocentesis) which is seen as a major contributing factor having an unbalancing impact on the sex ratios at birth (SRB) which eventually reflect in CSRs.

The most disturbing aspect of 2011 census data by far is the growing imbalance between the sexes in the youngest age group (0-6) which is indicative of female foeticide (Bose, 2011). He further said we have an odd situation where the urban middle class does not want daughters and the rural masses also do not want daughters. As a reason there is an emergence of excess female child mortality based on behavioural as opposed to the biological reasons. Mayer (1999) has raised the issue of historical, cultural, ecological, and sociological causes which resulted into general neglect of girl child. Consistent evidence suggests that females are more likely than males to be under enumerated in the censuses of India Griffiths (2000). Arnolds et al (2002) has put forward that the ubiquitous availability of technology amniocentesis and ultrasound has played a biggest role in reducing Child sex ratio through sex selective abortions. Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Tripura have high use of ultrasound technology in performing illegal abortions. Raju (2011) reasoned that the nexus between the medical fraternity, health workers and others in the system that makes sex-selective abortion an easy task. Krisnaji (2000) has said that sex selective abortion is more prevalent in urban areas. Related research enquires whether pre-natal sex selection techniques are spreading in India to weed out unwanted daughters before birth, rather than the age-old post-natal methods (infanticide and neglect) hitherto used (Sudha, 2003)

Kishor (1993) talked about regional variation in Sex Ratio. She said, the north has more disparity than the south. There is disparity in sex ratio among various social groups in India. Siddhanta et al (2008) has argued that the social group Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were considered as poor, marginalised and labour supplying class which a different needs look because they are in a better position than others. They also stated that STs are in a better position than the SCs and NON- SCs & STs.

DATABASE:

The data has been taken from Census of India, 2011.

METHODOLOGY:

Child Sex-ratio (0-6 years) has been calculated as the number of females in age-group 0-6 years per 1000 males in the same age-group in the population.

$$\text{Child Sex-ratio} = \frac{\text{Number of female children (0-6)}}{\text{Number of male children (0-6)}} \times 1000$$

After this, a gap between the "Normal Sex Ratio" (generally accepted as 950 females per 1000 males) and SCs STs and NON-SCs & STs has been calculated. Graphs and Choropleths have been prepared to show the disparity among the districts of Maharashtra.

DISCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS:

The 2011 census figure shows that the gap between number of males and females stood at highest ever in the census history of India, 6.98 million. It is also clearly reflected that on the one side literacy, growth rate, and overall Sex Ratio have shown a positive increment in comparison to past census but on the other side the decline in child sex ratio has upheld a distressing picture.

In India, the continuous decline of child sex ratio since 1981 shows that the country is achieving other targets and progressing both in terms of economic and social parameters, but the condition of women especially girl child is still not improving, rather distressing in terms of choice for female child. In a patriarchal Indian society the preference for male child has been for many centuries and still persists. Every religion in India, be it Hinduism or Islam or Buddhism or Jainism or any other, have depicted the society to be revolving around a male figure in the mythologies that has been passed down and celebrated through generations. The strength of the female being has always been undermined and subdued.

But the present modern society which believes in the right of equality in every aspect of human existence has complete authority to question whether it is being just in taking care of both the sections or not. Child Sex Ratio though does not tell the upper stage of equality between man and women but it truly reflects the state of mind of society at its very basic level. The situation is alarming not because only there is inequality between males and females but because the human interference through so called technological innovations have distorted the normally accepted figure of 105 males per 100 females. The main credit for this goes to

the double jeopardise condition for girl child in the form of both pre-natal and post natal risk of dislike.

This dislike is manifested through various means-

- Female foeticide
- Sex selective abortion
- Neglect of girl child leads to high rate of female mortality
- Discriminatory treatment in terms of nutrition and access to healthcare and
- Under-enumeration of girl child

There are various reason for giving preference to a male child over a female child. The main were

- Patriarchal nature of society
- High cost of expenditures by parents of girl at the time of marriage in terms of dowry and arrangements cost
- Kinship structure of society where only male are considered as the heir of the clan
- Old age security lies with sons

As per census 2011, Maharashtra after Jammu and Kashmir has shown largest decline in Child sex ratio by 30 points. This is a state which is considered as one of the developed state of India. It has second highest urbanisation figure at 45.2% urban population and the per capita income is also very high. But in terms of Child Sex Ratio it is showing a very dismal picture.
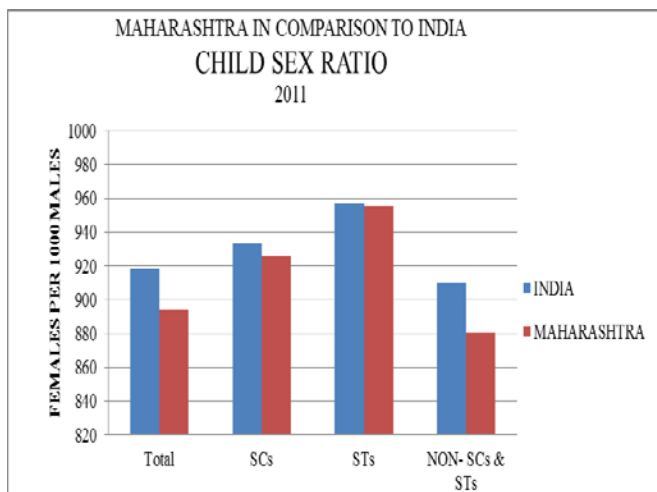

In all groups of society Maharashtra has underperformed than national average Child Sex Ratio. The absolute gap among total population with the total national average is 25 females per 1000 males. The national average itself has fallen this year to a minimal figure of 919 and the figure of Maharashtra at 894 is really alarming. Among SCs, STs and

NON- SCs & STs, STs have very good Child Sex Ratio in India as 957 while Maharashtra has 955. Both these figures are above normally accepted Child Sex Ratio of 950. In case of SCs also the CSR is low only 926 but the situation is worst when it come to the figure of NON- SCs & STs, only 880. The conditions in terms of girl child right to live are really worrying for NON-SCs & STs group which forms the largest chunk approx. 88% population.
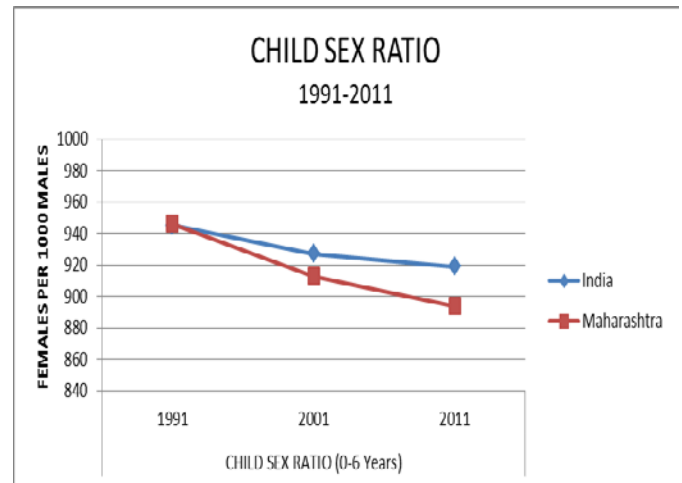

From the above graph we can say in Maharashtra the decline in child Sex Ratio is more than the national average. It was in 1991 coincides with the national average but in subsequent years the decline is rapid.
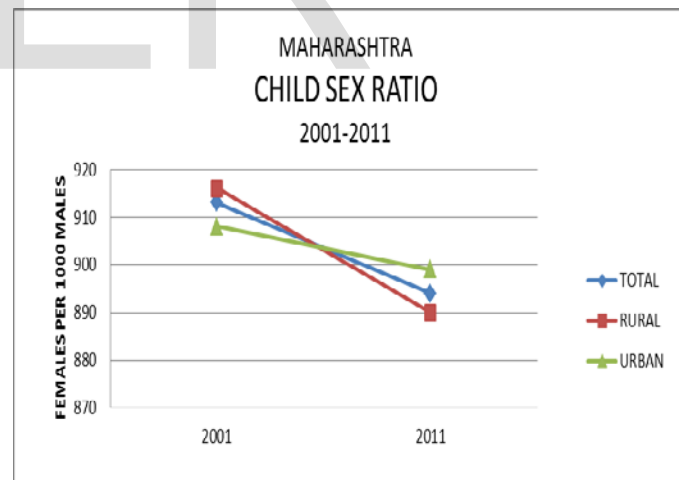

Maharashtra's nearly half of its population resides in urban areas where the child Sex Ratio decline is lesser than the rural areas. The main reason for this is the rise of financial condition in rural areas and the awareness and reach among people with new technology of abortion. The major population of this state, the rural and the urban middle class both has accepted the norm of small family which is seen through the decline in growth rate but in their small family the space for girl child has also reduced drastically.
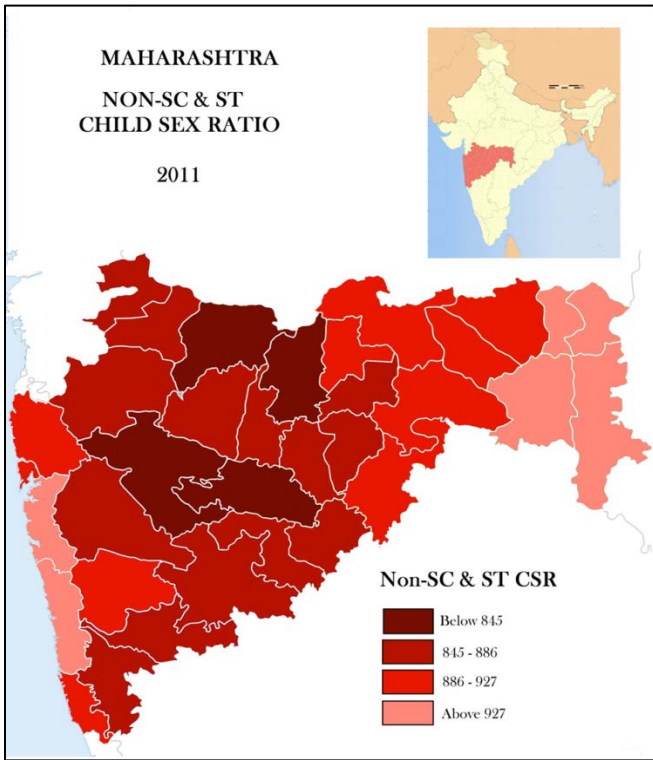
DISTRICT LEVEL ANALYSIS
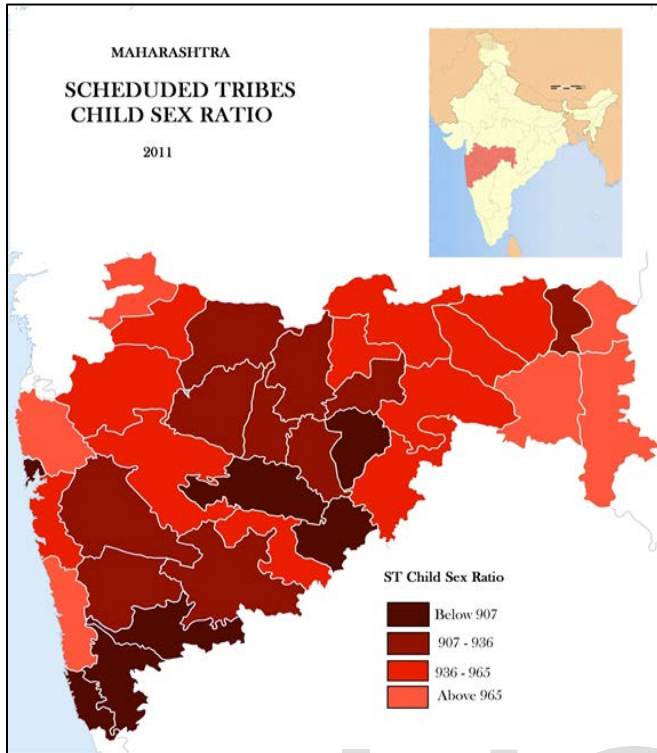
Maharashtra has 9.4 % STs Population which mainly concentrated in its eastern parts. The above figure reflects that the Child Sex Ratio is in favour of girl child in eastern districts Gondia, Chandrapur and Gadchiroli. These are also the most backward districts of Maharashtra. The other two district having are Thane and Ratnagiri. In all these districts both the technology and accessibility has not reached. Some of districts have very low sex ratio even lower than others like in Mumbai Suburban, Sindhudurg, Kolhapur, Sangli, Latur, Bid and Hingoli. These districts are more urban in nature and with the mainstreaming of STs with other groups, they have also accepted the drawbacks of their society and the male preference has increased.
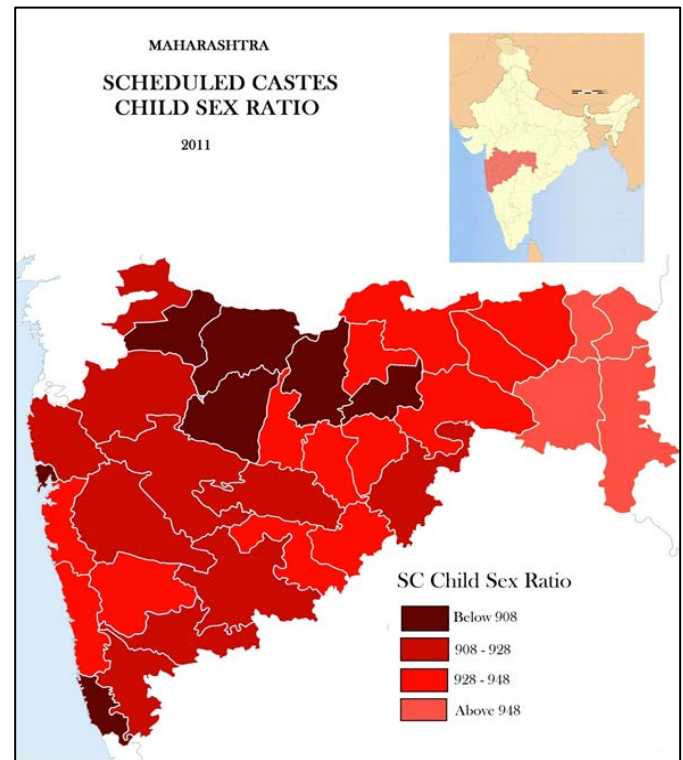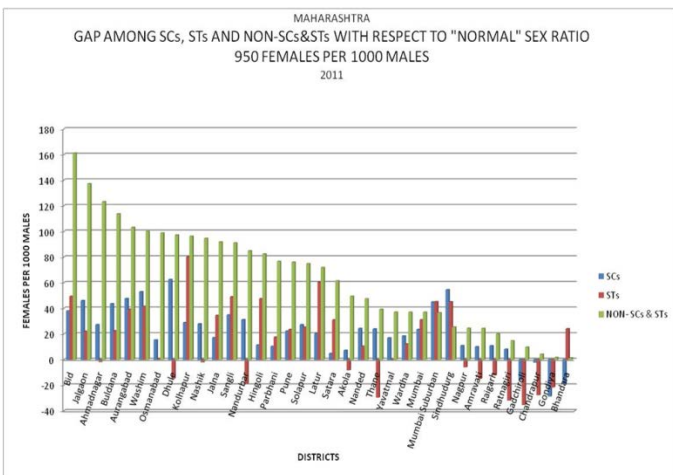
Among SCs which constitutes 11.84% of Maharashtra's Population, the whole Marathwada and Vidarbha region is showing Child Sex Ratio above and in some districts near to normal 950. Only some districts like Raigad, Ratnagiri and Satara are eastern districts which are showing favourable conditions for their girl child. Some districts have very alarming scenario like Mumbai Sub-urban, Sindhudurg, Dhule, Jalgaon, Aurangabad, Buldhana and Washim. With the aspiration to follow the Sanskritization and uplift their position in society, they have also associated themselves with patriarchy and male son preference.

In the NON-SCs & STs category the condition is very worse in Maharashtra. No district has even touched the figure of 950. Some districts like Bid, Ahmednagar, Jalgaon and Buldhana have very low Child Sex Ratio, even lower than 845. The situation is really alarming in these districts. Since this social group constitutes nearly 78% of Maharashtra's population and so their situation in respect to girl child is very pathetic. The average child sex ratio is only 880 which is even worse than some of the districts of Haryana and Punjab which have lowest sex ratio in India.
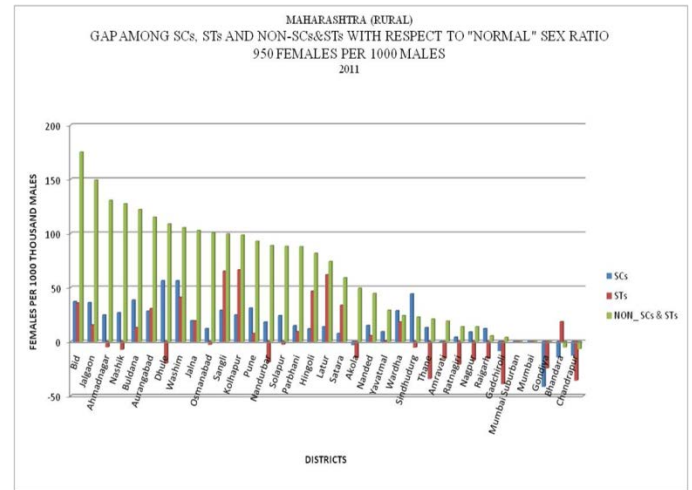
Child sex ratio figure of SCs and STs are worse than Non-SCs & STs. Besides this in all other districts the gap is greater in Non- SCs & STs category than SCs and STs.

In rural Maharashtra, the same trend is visible. The gap is prominent mostly among NON- SCs & STs. STs in most of the district have favourable atmosphere for the birth of girl child.
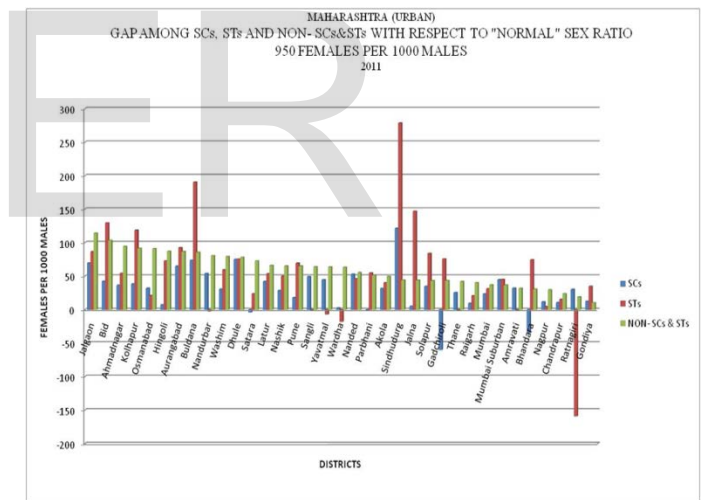
Since Maharashtra is among the most urbanised state of India, but the gap among SCs, STs and Non-SCs & STs are not too high in urban areas in comparison to rural. This can be understood as all are performing low in the urban Maharashtra. The urban situation needs special attention as the STs which have shown a positive trend in rural Maharashtra is also showing a negative trend in almost all districts. Even in some districts the gap is higher than the NON- SCs & STs and SCs. This trend is because of their fast emerging nature to follow the already so called developed groups. They are accepting not only the socio-economic way of their life but also accepting their maladies about son preference.

GAP AMONG SCs, STs AND NON-SCs &STs WITH RESPECT TO "NORMAL" SEX RATIO 950 FEMALES PER 1000 MALES

With respect to the normally accepted figure of 950, there is large gap among SCs, STs and NON-SCs & STs.


The gap among Non- SCs & STs are highest than SCs and STs. Among SCs and STs, STs are in far better position than SCs. The situation in Bid, Ahmednagar, Buldana, and Aurangabad are very vulnerable. Some of the backward districts like Bhandara, Gondiya, Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Ratnagiri have good sex ratio especially among SCs and STs. In district like Mumbai Suburban and Sindhudurg, the

SUMMING UP…….

From the above analysis we can come at following types of inferences:

1. The STs have better Child Sex ratio than the SCs and both these are in a far better position than the NON- SCs & STs and SCs.
2. Rural Maharashtra has more distorting figure than urban counterpart.
3. SCs are falling into trap faster than the STs
4. STs in urban areas have even lower child sex Ratio than SCs and NON- SCs & STs
5. The underdeveloped parts of Maharashtra are in a better position than developed areas
6. Maharashtra is a highly urbanised state in India, it means child sex ratio decreases with increase in rate of urbanisation

Thus we can say that there are two groups in Maharashtra the urban middle class and the rural masses. Both these groups don't want girl child. The patriarchal nature of Indian society is not different in Maharashtra; even we can say the condition is worse here. The spread of dowry system of marriage along with the tradition of society that girl has move to her in-laws home create a condition unfavourable for girl child. Even high literacy of Maharashtra 82.3% is not able to change the framework of mind of the people.

As per one study the child sex ratio in rural India started decline as women complete secondary school education and graduate level education. Maharashtra is no different from this. Even in most of the cases the demand for male child comes from the women first both from the educated and the non-educated ones.

The recent technological advancement has distorted this figure more. Though legislation has been made to stop this, but with every law people find a new technique. The practice of ultrasound for sex determination in mobile van is an addition to this. It is not like that in pasts there is no demand for male child, but they do not have the options at that time. They have to continue giving birth to girl child until a male was born. And the family structure was like 3:1, 4:1, 5:1, 6:1, 7:2, 6:2 etc. (girl: boy). But the concept of small family which spread fast in every parts and the society taking into accounts its benefit, adopted this concept with the same pace. To fulfil this requirement people started using technology like Amniocentesis and Ultrasound to detect the sex of a child in the foetus itself. The trend for female selective abortion is common. Though government has passed various laws like the PNDT (Prenatal Diagnostics Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse)) Act to stop the practice but still it is rampant. As Raju (2011) said that the nexus between the medical fraternity, health workers and others in the system that makes sex-selective abortion an easy task.

The other way is the neglect of girl child in terms of nutritional and health care access, which makes their life vulnerable, finally leads to death. According to 2008 Sample Registration System Data, death rate among girls among age group 1-4 years was nearly 40% higher compared to boys.

CONCLUSION

In short we can say the birth of girl child is not welcomed and even if the birth takes place, the neglect of the child makes the situation so uneven that sustenance of her life becomes a matter of concern. Murder occurs in two ways; first when killing is in a foetus and the other through neglect i.e. post birth. The favouring of the male child by the mass populace not only disturbs the fabric of the society but also the environ of the basic unit of Indian society- the household itself. The only solution of this problem is to educate the society about the potential of the girls, who in no sphere any bit less than the males. Stringent law with proper implementation can also be proved as productive in checking the mere practice of sex selective abortion for small gains.

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