

FEMALE FOETIDICE– ACULTURALBLEMISH

We are all the citizens of a country which can rightly boast of a proud past, a past, a culture in which there was never any discrimination on the basis of sex. Woman in this country has always been looked upon as more important than man. Look at our nomenclature: Sita — Ram, Radhey –Sham, the names of the women take precedence over those of men. No auspicious ceremony is supposed to be complete without the presence of a woman. Lord Rama had to get a golden statue of Sita made so that the auspicious Yajna could be completed.

It is this country where the unmarried girl is looked upon as ‘Kanjak’ — a divine being, fit to be worshipped, a rather than being looked upon as an object of lust or sex. In some of our functions like Durga Puja, Ashtami, etc. small kanjaks are invited, their feet are washed by the elders of the household, they are served with halva-puri in the presence of the deities and then given a send-off with a ‘dakshina’. This is as true today as it was hundred years ago.

The practice of female foeticide is a curse on our intellect, our wisdom and our total ethos. It is a sin, a blasphemy against our ancient cultural values. It is fraught with dangerous consequences. The Act, 1994 states that the determination of the sex of an unborn child is illegal. “The Pre-Natal Diagnostic the doctor, the woman and the motivator is three years imprisonment, Rs. 10000 fine and suspension of the doctor’s licence.” But in spite of all the measures like this, the sex-ratio of girls versus boys is decreasing with every passing decade.

This national ratio has come down from 945 females to 1000 males in 1991 to 927 females to 1000 males in 2001. In Punjabi it has fallen from 882 in the year 1991 to 875 in the year 2001.

Punjab itself is having the lowest female sex ratio and it is expected that it would have less than 850 females per 1000 males by the year 2011. According to unconfirmed sources, there have been more than two crore female foeticide cases in the whole of India during the last decade. More than 50,000 cases are said to have been reported in Punjab in recent years.

The sex ration of female child to male child in the age group of 0-6 years in the state of Punjab only was 875 per 1000 children in the year 1991, and it came down to 793 during 2001.

If we analyse some other states also, we find that around 80 female children decline per 1000 male children during every decade. This means there is an 8% decline in one decade.

We must analyse the factors responsible for all this. It is sometimes felt that one big single factor standing in the way is the woman herself. Who is responsible for the ill treatment of the newly wed girls in the family? It is the traditional “Saas” who is herself a woman, who most shamelessly forgets that “Saas bhi Kabhi Bahu thi”? Who goes to the ultrasound clinics for the fertility or sex tests? Who goes in for foeticide? Who carries this foetus and who destroys it? Who lacks the courage to face the society and tell the society boldly, “It’s my baby : I’m going to keep it. I shall not commit this sin. I’ll not murder the mother of mankind.” Why can’t a pregnant lady, called upon to murder her female unborn child, tell her husband, “If your great grandfather or grandmother had adopted the same policy, you would not have been born !”

It is unfortunate that the Indian psyche appears to be heavily loaded against the birth of a female child. Somebody has to have the guts to change it. Why can’t some bold reformers declare that their last rites would be performed only by their daughters, not sons? What’s wrong in that?

It is indeed a sad truth that many of those resorting to female foeticide are those, who are regular visitors to the holy shrines of Mata Vaishno Devi, Jawala Ji, and Chintpurni and like. One feels like weeping at this terrible hypocrisy. On the one hand people are crying hoarse with slogans like Jai Mata di, Jaikara Sheranwali Mata da, Sanche Darbar Ki Jai, etc., but on the other hand, they are killing the infant ‘Mata’ even before she is born.

In such a sad state of affairs one can only pray :

‘May knowledge grow from more to more,

And more of wisdom in us dwell,

That mind and soul proclaiming well,

May make one music as before.”