

Declining Child Sex Ratio in India: Popular Media like Films Need to Contribute

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Editorial

Son preference and discrimination against the girl child is almost universal in India and manifest it in many ways. Sex ratio is an important social indicator to measure the extent of prevailing equity between males and females in society. It is also a sensitive indicator of development. According to 2011 census, India recorded a sex ratio of 940 females per 1000 males. The sex ratio for the 0-6 year age group known as Child Sex Ratio (CSR) is powerful indicator of social health of any society. *The CSR has been on the decline since 1991 and currently is the worst since independence. From 945 girls for every 1000 boys in 1991, it went down to 927 in 2001 and to 918 in 2011 [1].* The declining trend in the child sex ratio is particularly worrisome, as it points to increased incidence of sex selection and elimination of girls, which is a result of the widespread illegal use of prenatal sex determination tests [2].

Saving the girl child is need of the hour. It is important to promote a positive image of the girl child and to break the silence around the issue and impress upon people that times have changed. Awareness regarding the declining child sex ratio must be top priority. To create awareness is all about using a medium, which is not only the most popular, but also available to everyone. The question is how one uses the medium. Any medium can be used for a good purpose or a bad one. Film medium is one of the very strong mediums in many parts of the world. In India also film media is most widely used media for entertainment. This media can be also used for the purpose of creating waves of awareness about the declining sex ratio and to avoid female infanticide.

Few filmmakers from Indian Film Industry came forward to tackle the sensitive issue of female infanticide on big screen. The film "Matrubhumi: A Nation without Women" (2005), produced by Boney

Kapoor and directed by Manish Jha is most widely appreciated Indian film on this issue. "Matrubhumi: A Nation without Women", explores the hypothetical consequences of widespread female infanticide. The film is a horrifying tale of gender discrimination and violence against women in India [3]. Another film "Tamanna" (1997), directed by Mahesh Bhatt, a story of female infanticide and revenge of abandoned girl is enacted against on one of the most unusual backdrops in the Indian cinema.

Some of the films in regional languages are also based on female infanticide. The Marathi film known as "Aai Shappath" is based on a story of women who runs away from her husband's house to save her girl child from infanticide. Another film in Tamil known as "Kamali" also deals with the problem of female infanticide. Short films and documentary films are also contributing in creating awareness about the sensitive issue. "Atmajaa", is a widely acclaimed short film produced by NGO in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Documentary film by Poojita Chowdhury "Sand in My Nostrils", dealing with female infanticide is also well appreciated.

All these films are noteworthy for tackling difficult theme of declining sex ratio and female infanticide. Other filmmakers also need to contribute in this issue.

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