

# A Study on Child Protection Schemes Implemented by the Government of India

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**Abstract:** India has globally become a force to reckon with and this makes each one of us very proud. But there still are some ugly truths that need our attention and it's high time that we stop turning a deaf year towards them. Female infanticide is one such social issue. Female infanticide is a heinous crime. In simple terms, it is a deliberate attempt to kill newborn female children within one year of their birth. It is a century old phenomena caused by social evils likes poverty, illiteracy, child marriage, dowry system, births to unmarried women, female genital mutilation, famine, maternal illness, sex-selective abortion, etc. These barbaric practices are still rampant in India, forcing people to commit social evils like female infanticide, female feticide, and sex-selective abortion. This paper used both primary and secondary information. The research paper is done in doctrinal method. The primary sources of information are taken from the books and statutes and secondary sources of information are taken from the articles of the journals, working papers, thesis and presentation papers

**Keywords:** Female infanticide, child, government schemes, Indian Penal Code, villages

## I. INTRODUCTION

Female infanticide is the intentional killing of infant girls. In addition to the active methods undertaken to eliminate baby girls soon after birth, neglect and discrimination leading to death and sex-selective abortion are also means by which many female children die each year. These phenomena are most prevalent in patriarchal societies in which the status of women is low and a preference for sons is built into the cultural ideology. This practice involves a wide range of location-specific and culturally motivated causes. Mostly this kind of practise can be seen in rural areas rather than in urban areas. India and China are the most populous countries which are on the top level of female infanticide. Many government programs and humans right organizations have come up in abolishing female infanticide. In India most female infanticide state is Tamil Nadu, especially Dharmapuri, Salem, Dindugal, Madurai and so on.

## BIRTH OF FEMALE INFANTICIDE IN INDIA

During 19th-century vogue for explanations rooted in evolution and its premise of natural selection, the biological differences between men and women meant that many more children could be gained among the elites through support for male offspring, whose fecundity was naturally much greater: the line would spread and grow more extensively. Harris believes this to be a fallacious explanation because the elites had sufficient wealth easily to support both male and female children. And thus, people saw female infanticide as a way to restrict population growth on olden days.

## CRIMINAL OFFENCE:

Section 315 of the Indian Penal Code defines infanticide as the killing of an infant in the 0–1 age group. The Code differentiates between this and numerous other crimes against children, including foeticide and murder. Others, such as the collaboration of Renu Dube, Reena Dube and Rashmi Bhatnagar, who describe themselves as "postcolonial feminists", adopt a broader scope for *infanticide*, applying it from foeticide through to femicide at an unspecified age.



Barbara Miller, an anthropologist, has "for convenience" used the term to refer to all non-accidental deaths of children up to the age of around 15–16, which is culturally considered to be the age when childhood ends in rural India. She notes that the act of infanticide can be "outright", such as a physical beating, or take a "passive" form through actions such as neglect and starvation. Neonaticide, being the killing of a child within 24 hours of birth, is sometimes considered as a separate study. (Anand)

Studies of systematic infanticide based on gender have tended to concentrate on female children but there are instances where male children are targeted, one historic example of which was in Japan. Eleanor Scott, an archaeologist who has specialised in the study of infant deaths and their cultural associations, notes that the tendency to concentrate on the female examples is misplaced and driven by the desire of 19th-century cultural anthropologists to explain the evolution of lineages and systems of marriage. Scott also notes that the Netsilik Inuit "are in fact the only society for which there is any real qualitative data about the existence of the practice of female infanticide." (Dyer)

### **FEMALE INFANTICIDE IN TAMIL NADU**

Female infanticide in Tamil Nadu, South India, has recently received widespread attention within India and abroad. The paper contains reflections based on over a decade of fieldwork and study of this phenomenon, and information gathered from NGOs, activists and officials. It discusses the recent history of the practice of female infanticide, and the circumstances, which forced the state government in 1992 to acknowledge its existence. Activities to prevent female infanticide, such as the 'Girl Child Protection Scheme' and coercive actions against those committing female infanticide, by the state government and non-governmental organizations are critically reviewed. The unwantedness of girl children manifests itself not only in female infanticide, but also in selective abortion of female fetuses and neglect of girl children, leading to excess female child mortality. Prevention and eradication of female infanticide calls for sustained and long-term efforts due to ameliorate the subordinate status of women. Under the circumstances, the tendency of several governments to deny, the phenomenon, remain silent about it, or engage in interventions which stand little chance of succeeding is cause for concern. (Perwez, "Female Infanticide and the Civilizing Mission in Postcolonial India: A Case Study from Tamil Nadu C. 1980–2006")

The current practice of female infanticide in Tamil Nadu has become much more widely acknowledged in recent years. As late as 1989, Indian demographers were claiming that female infanticide did not occur in South India. A few nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and others have also maintained that this is only a recent social phenomenon in Tamil Nadu. However, the fact that during the 19th century the British reported the existence of female infanticide in Tamil Nadu among certain communities, for example, the Kallars and the Todas, suggests the plausibility of a long history of the practice. In discussions I had with rural communities, including in the districts of undivided North Arcot, Madurai and Salem, people revealed that the practice has been around for about 50 years. There were also people who asserted that the practice has continued for several generations. The most surprising aspect about female infanticide is that the traditional methods of killing are remarkably similar whether in north, central or south Tamil Nadu. (Perwez, "Towards an Understanding of the Field within the Field: Researching Female Infanticide by Researching NGOs in Tamil Nadu")

### **METHODS DONE TO KILL BABIES:**

In almost all the villages in these districts, women adopt cold-blooded methods to kill off their female children. Some kill their babies by swaddling them in a wet cloth, or making them swallow rice and milk. Some cut their throats; others put the babies under a fan to suffocate them. Many of the women of Ommallur village in Salem district say they murdered their infants, barely a week after they were born, by feeding them sap from the poisonous calitropis plant. (Robinson) A small dowry is believed to bring shame upon the family. Because even a modest dowry price can bring financial hardship on a family, female infanticide is often considered the only option. The hierarchy of castes is such that one's "purity" is believed to decrease with lower social status. Women are considered more "polluted" than the men of their castes because of menstruation and childbirth, which are considered to be dirty and "polluting". The low status of women is further aggravated by their inaccess to education. Less than two out of five women in India are literate, and 41% of Indian girls under the age of fourteen do not attend school. Because women are accorded such low



value in Indian society, the female children who are allowed to live are at great risk of neglect and discrimination.(Doherty)

### **REASONS FOR FEMALE INFANTICIDE IN TAMIL NADU**

Extreme poverty with an inability to afford raising a child is one of the reasons given for female infanticide in India. Such poverty has been a major reason for high infanticide rates in various cultures, throughout history, including England, France and India. The dowry system in India is another reason that is given for female infanticide. Although India has taken steps to abolish the dowry system, the practice persists, and for poorer families in rural regions female infanticide and gender selective abortion is attributed to the fear of being unable to raise a suitable dowry and then being socially ostracised. Other major reasons given for infanticide, both female and male, include unwanted children, such as those conceived after rape, deformed children born to impoverished families, and those born to unmarried mothers lacking reliable, safe and affordable birth control. Relationship difficulties, low income, lack of support coupled with mental illness such as postpartum depression have also been reported as reasons for female infanticide in India. ("Reframing Female Infanticide:")

Elaine Rose in 1999 reported that disproportionately high female mortality is correlated to poverty, infrastructure and means to feed one's family, and that there has been an increase in the ratio of the probability that a girl survives to the probability that a boy survives with favourable rainfall each year and the consequent ability to irrigate farms in rural India. Ian Darnton-Hill et al. state that the effect of malnutrition, particularly micronutrient and vitamin deficiency, depends on sex, and it adversely impacts female infant mortality. (Sterck and Korstjens)

### **STATE RESPONSE:**

In 1992 the Government of India started the "baby cradle scheme". This allows families anonymously to give their child up for adoption without having to go through the formal procedure. ("Reframing Female Infanticide:") The scheme has been praised for possibly saving the lives of thousands of baby girls but also criticised by human rights groups, who say that the scheme encourages child abandonment and also reinforces the low status in which women are held.<sup>[58]</sup> The scheme, which was piloted in Tamil Nadu, saw cradles placed outside state-operated health facilities. The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu added another incentive, giving money to families that had more than one daughter. 136 baby girls were given for adoption during the first four years of the scheme. In 2000, 1,218 cases of female infanticide were reported, the scheme was deemed a failure and it was abandoned. It was reinstated in the following year. (Grey)

In 1991 the Girl Child Protection Scheme was launched. This operates as a long-term financial incentive, with rural families having to meet certain obligations such as sterilisation of the mother. Once the obligations are met, the state puts aside ₹2000 in a state-run fund. The fund, which should grow to ₹10,000, is released to the daughter when she is 20: she can use it either to marry or to pursue higher education. (Sterck and Korstjens)

### **KALLAR CASTE**

In today's investigations reveal that over the last 10 to 15 years, female infanticide has come to be increasingly accepted among Madurai district's Kallars (a 2-lakh strong martial sub-caste) as the only way out of the dowry problem. Said S. Muthuramalingam, who has a small farm in Paraipatti village: "The practice has grown among the Kallars during the last 10 years, and has become very widespread after 1980." (Eberhard and Dumont) The Kallar group of Madurai district is concentrated in Usilampatti taluk and its 300 villages, and accounts for nearly 80 per cent of the taluk's 2.65 lakh population. The statistics are shocked in the way that nearly 600 female births in the Kallar group are recorded in the Usilampatti government hospital every year, and out of these an estimated 570 babies vanish with their mothers no sooner than they can open their eyes to the world. Hospital sources estimate that nearly 80 per cent of these vanishing babies — more than 450 — become victims of infanticide. Besides this, deliveries also occur in primary health centres and in the private nursing homes and maternity hospitals that have mushroomed in the taluk, for which no comprehensive records are available, Said Dr Sugandhi Natarajan, who runs one of these private nursing homes: "We get about 12 to 15 delivery cases a year even in our small nursing home, and roughly seven of them deliver female children. (Bayly)



In our community, if a male child unfortunately dies for some reason, we don't take gruel for a year. It is a great financial loss. And if we fail to kill a daughter, again we skip a meal a day in sorrow, and thus also save some money for her marriage." This basic view of woman as a born liability because of the dowry evil has taken deep root among the Kallars and the Thevars. This, in a state ruled by a chief minister who swears by the greatness of womanhood, in a country that had a woman prime minister for close to two decades, in the age of women's liberation.(Dumont)

If a Kallar father doesn't force his wife to kill their second daughter, it usually means that the first daughter must have died a natural death. Our two other daughters died, and we are left only with our son and this baby." If the practice of female infanticide is uniformly prevalent among the Kallars, the gruesome methods used vary. One method of killing a baby is by stuffing a few grains of coarse paddy into its mouth. The infant breathes the grain into its windpipe and chokes to death. But in some cases paddy doesn't work. The family had to take recourse to a juicy extract from the *madar* (*calotropis gigantea*) plant. In some families the husband grows a *madar* plant from the time his wife conceives so he can minister the poison if a daughter is born.(Annamalai)

#### **FROM THE STATISTICAL DATA:**

In each of the more than 300 Kallar villages in Usilampatti taluk, with populations ranging from 500 to 1,500, 20 to 50 girl babies have been killed in the last five years in the face of the excruciatingly cruel dowry problem. In Chulivechanpatti, which has a population of 300, at least three girl babies have been killed during the last six months. And the parents freely admit to their crime. "Over 50 female babies would have been killed in our village during the last five to seven years", says the data.(Kawano)

Going by a rough calculation, nearly 6,000 female babies must have been poisoned to death in Usilampatti taluk in the last decade. Few such deaths are recorded. And births are registered only if the deliveries take place in the hospitals. According to the law, the deaths of these babies under suspicious circumstances should be reported to the village administrative officers and the panchayats or other local bodies. But in most cases, the households keep the information to themselves, although what is happening is common knowledge. As a matter of practice the first child is not killed, even if it is a daughter, but with the second female child there begins a series of killings. Family planning is yet to catch up with the Kallars. It is not that they don't want children.(Balasanov) They wish keenly for boys because they can then get dowry. N. Nallasamy, who teaches at the elementary school in Chulivechanpatti, observes: "There is also this widespread belief among the Kallars that if you kill a daughter, your next child will be a son."The widespread practice of female infanticide is now getting reflected in the changing male-female ratio among the Kallars. Revealed a Madurai district official who did not want to be identified that Men are now 52 per cent of the Kallar population. Till ten years ago it was women who were 52 per cent.(Buu and Li)

#### **PREVENTION AND MEASURES FOR FEMALE INFANTICIDE IN TAMIL NADU**

Comprehensive studies conducted by UNICEF as well as Indian social scientists reveal an organised pattern of discrimination against young girls and older women in India. Their revelations are startling. India is the only country in the world where the ratio of women to men has been declining over the years. The sex ratio declined from 972 females per 1,000 males in 1901 to 935 in 1981. (Perwez, "Female Infanticide and the Civilizing Mission in Postcolonial India: A Case Study from Tamil Nadu C. 1980-2006")And India is one of a handful of countries where female infant mortality exceeds that of the male-notwithstanding the fact that the female child is biologically stronger at birth. Girl babies are breast-fed less frequently, and for a shorter duration than boy babies. When they grow up, they are provided less nutrition than their brothers. A recent survey of infants, toddlers and preschoolers showed that within their combined age groups, 71 per cent of females suffered from severe malnutrition, as against 28 per cent of the males. A related statistic reveals that boys are taken to hospital for treatment of common diseases in twice the number as girls.(Perwez, "Towards an Understanding of the Field within the Field: Researching Female Infanticide by Researching NGOs in Tamil Nadu") Boys do not fall ill more frequently than girls, they are merely provided more health care by parents who value sons more than daughters. In the widening gender gap in India the female literacy rate -24.88 per cent- is barely half that of males 74 per cent. And the gap continues to widen. In the 6-14 age group, nearly 84 per cent of boys are enrolled in schools, as against 54 per cent in the case of girls. It is not a pretty picture. The



plight of India's girls aged 15 and under - about 140 million of them – cries out desperately for caring and sensitive attention. They form 20 percent of the nation's population but are denied adequate food and care because their parents are themselves the victims and prisoners of brutal tradition and economic circumstance in which the female shoulders a horrifying responsibility.(Bhuvaneshwaran et al.) For her sins, she is burned as an adult bride over dowry demands or, if she is a child bride, condemned to a lifetime of penurious widowhood upon the death of a husband even before her marriage is consummated. **the main aim is to study government measures to control female infanticide.**

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- To critically study about the female infanticide in Tamil Nadu.
- To understand the cause for female infanticide
- To study the problems due to female infanticide

#### **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Comprehensive studies conducted by UNICEF as well as Indian social scientists reveal an organised pattern of discrimination against young girls and older women in India. Their revelations are startling. India is the only country in the world where the ratio of women to men has been declining over the years. The sex ratio declined from 972 females per 1,000 males in 1901 to 935 in 1981. And India is one of a handful of countries where female infant mortality exceeds that of the male-notwithstanding the fact that the female child is biologically stronger at birth. Girl babies are breast-fed less frequently, and for a shorter duration than boy babies. When they grow up, they are provided less nutrition than their brothers. A recent survey of infants, toddlers and preschoolers showed that within their combined age groups, 71 percent of females suffered from severe malnutrition, as against 28 per cent of the males. If a Kallar father doesn't force his wife to kill their second daughter, it usually means that the first daughter must have died a natural death. Our two other daughters died, and we are left only with our son and this baby." If the practice of female infanticide is uniformly prevalent among the Kallars, the gruesome methods used vary. One method of killing a baby is by stuffing a few grains of coarse paddy into its mouth. The infant breathes the grain into its windpipe and chokes to death. But in some cases paddy doesn't work. The family had to take recourse to a juicy extract from the *madar* (*calotropis gigantea*) plant. In some families the husband grows a *madar* plant from the time his wife conceives so he can minister the poison if a daughter is born. The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) wrote in their 2005 report, *Women in an Insecure World*, that at a time when the number of casualties in war had fallen, a "secret genocide" was being carried out against women. According to DCAF the demographic shortfall of women who have died for gender related issues is in the same range as the 191 million estimated dead from all conflicts in the 20th century. In 2012, the documentary *It's a Girl: The Three Deadliest Words in the World* was released. This focused on female infanticide in China and in India. Minister of Tamil Nadu added another incentive, giving money to families that had more than one daughter. 136 baby girls were given for adoption during the first four years of the scheme. In 2000, 1,218 cases of female infanticide were reported, the scheme was deemed a failure and it was abandoned. It was reinstated in the following year. In impoverished villages and communities in Tamil Nadu, that have no access to family planning measures, female infanticide is almost socially accepted. According to government officials the number of cases of female infanticide in Tamil Nadu stands at 3,000 each year. Three districts of Dharmapuri, Salem and Madurai have been identified by health officials as problem areas in the state. In Dharmapuri alone, close to 1,300 children are killed every year. Salem comes second with over 1,000 such killings. In Salem district, a second girl-child has very little chances of surviving. In impoverished villages and communities, with no access to family planning measures, the murder of a girl-child has acquired an almost social sanction.

#### **III. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This paper used both primary and secondary information. The research paper is done in doctrinal method. The primary sources of information are taken from the books and statutes and secondary sources of information are taken from the articles of the journals, working papers, thesis and presentation papers.





#### IV. DISCUSSION

The Marriage Law and Women's Protection Law prohibit female infanticide, and the latter prohibits discrimination against women who give birth to daughters. The Sex Selective Abortion Law and Maternal Health Care Law of 1994 were created to put an end to sex selective abortions, and the latter prohibits the use of medical technology to determine the gender of a fetus. Unfortunately, however, the practice continues in India despite these efforts. In 1991 the Girl Child Protection Scheme was launched. This operates as a long-term financial incentive, with rural families having to meet certain obligations such as sterilisation of the mother. Once the obligations are met, the state puts aside ₹2000 in a state-run fund. The fund, which should grow to ₹10,000, is released to the daughter when she is 20: she can use it either to marry or to pursue higher education.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Female infanticide is a horrible manifestation of the anti-female bias that continues to pollute societies throughout the world. Even in technologically advanced and educated societies, the brutal practice continues. The successful eradication of the practice of female infanticide seems an arduous task. In order to combat the phenomenon, careful consideration of the location-specific and cultural factors leading to the practice is necessary. The education of both men and women, social strategies to improve the status of women, and access to family counseling and healthcare may provide means of eliminating female infanticide, as well as elevating the value assigned to women around the globe. In 1992 the Government of India started the "baby cradle scheme". This allows families anonymously to give their child up for adoption without having to go through the formal procedure. The scheme has been praised for possibly saving the lives of thousands of baby girls but also criticised by human rights groups, who say that the scheme encourages child abandonment and also reinforces the low status in which women are held. The scheme, which was piloted in Tamil Nadu, saw cradles placed outside state-operated health facilities. The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu added another incentive, giving money to families that had more than one daughter. 136 baby girls were given for adoption during the first four years of the scheme. In 2000, 1,218 cases of female infanticide were reported, the scheme was deemed a failure and it was abandoned. It was reinstated in the following year.

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