

## A critical analysis of sex ratio in Indian scenario with special reference to Orissa

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### ABSTRACT

In India, the demographic imbalances are growing at a faster rate than the other country. The declining trend in the juvenile sex ratio raise questions about the presumed interlink between development and women's empowerment. Improvement in health, education and higher work force participation of women has no impact in translating into a higher value for girl children and women. This simply raises a finger towards gender distribution of prosperity and the gender balance in empowerment flowing from prosperity. In this attempt has been made to answer the question raised above by analyzing the various factors responsible for this problem separately.

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The predominance of female deficiency has been a striking feature of our population throughout the whole of the regular census history. The census figures indicate that there has been a steady fall in the proportion of females in the entire successive census except a small rise in 1951, 1971 and 2001 census. Further it also indicates that while the females outnumber males in Kerala, in the states like Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Delhi, it has been constantly low. The states like Orissa, Manipur, Tamil Nadu and Mizoram have much lower sex ratio after 1981. The higher sex ratio in southern states and lower in case of northern states has been an enduring feature of the social life of our people for an indefinitely long time. The recent demographic trend (2001 census) while shows slight increase in sex ratio from 927 to 933 at the same time it also highlights the worrisome decline in the juvenile sex ratio(0-6 years) in several states. The overall juvenile sex ratio dropped from 945 to 933 in between 1991 and 2001. Urban areas, which tend to be characterized by higher per capita income and higher literacy rates revealed the worst sex ratios.

At the all-India level there has been continuous declining of sex ratio (FMR) *i.e.* number of females per

thousand males since 1901, except some marginal increase in 1951 and 1981. In 2001 the FMR has slightly improved to the extent of 933.

The reasons put forward for the declining sex ratios are –

- Differential mortality rates,
- Discrimination against female children leading to female mortality,
- Sex selective abortions and infanticides,
- Unequal access for women to life sustaining inputs like food, nutrition and health, leading again to differential mortality,
- Depleting and degrading status of women in some societies because of social and cultural factors and violation of human rights.

Declining trend in sex ratio (FMR) in India as well as in Orissa has been a matter of serious concern for the last few decades, although the state's figure is better than that of India. Juvenile sex ratio also shows a similar trend as already studied by Agnihotri (2000 and 2002). For the improvement of sex ratio, various rules and steps are being taken by the Governments both at the state and national levels. In this context, the present paper makes an attempt to find out possible association of sex ratio (over all) with factors such as child sex ratio, work participation rate, literacy rate, differential mortality rate and human development index. Further, a longitudinal study of sex ratio of the State of Orissa and also the country as a whole has been undertaken.

In the study of sex ratios in the country, it is sometimes hypothesized that there is a link between

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