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GENDER INEQUILITY AS MANIFESTED THROUGH DECLINE IN THE SEX RATIO: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

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Abstract: Gender disparity and inequality is detrimental in achieving the goals of human development. For inclusive development of a society, people should have equal access to all the choices they can make and should also have equality related to various opportunities. Sex Ratio is one of the tools to determine gender equality of the population. It is defined by the number of females per 1000 males in the population. Historically, sex ratio in India has remained favourable to males. In 2011 census, sex ratio in India increased to 940 from 934 as recorded in the 2001 census. Increase has also been noted in twenty nine states and Union territories of India. Only three major states i.e. Gujarat, Bihar and Jammu and Kashmir have shown a decline in the sex ratio in 2011 census. A change in child sex ratio (0-6 years) index reflects underlying socio-economic and cultural patterns of the society, especially its attitude towards the girl child. Though the sex ratio has increased in India but the child sex ratio, according to 2011 census, has declined in both rural and urban areas. Of all the Indian states the decline in child sex ratio is highest in Jammu and Kashmir. It has declined to 862 in 2011 from 941 as in 2001 census. The present paper tries to analyse the levels and trends of sex ratio and child sex ratio in Jammu and Kashmir. While doing the comparative study of various districts of Jammu and Kashmir in order to examine the pattern of declining child sex ratio, attempt has been made to trace out the factors which are responsible for variations in regional patterns in sex bias against female child.

Index Terms – Sex Ratio, Gender, Inequality, Disparity, Development.

Introduction:

As Aristotle said in ancient Greece, 'wealth is evidently not good we are seeking, for it is merely useful for the sake of something else'. In seeking that something else, human development shares a common vision with human rights. The goal is human freedom. And in pursuing capabilities and realizing rights, this freedom is vital. People must be free to exercise their choices and to participate in decision-making that affects their lives (Sen, 1999).

Disparities in the freedoms that men and women enjoy in different societies are not often reducible to differences in income and resources and presence of gender inequality, which is present almost everywhere in the world. Religious and cultural practices, based on a strong patriarchal ideology prevalent in the world, curtail women's mobility, influence their survival and prevent them from utilizing opportunities to enhance capabilities. They often face discrimination in spheres of education, nutrition, health, work and political participation in most of the countries. This is in spite of the equality among men and women granted for in their respective constitutions (Rustagi, 2008).

Over three decades now, the goals of gender equality and empowerment of women have been gaining acceptance internationally as well as nationally and a range of efforts are on to work towards attaining these. Some of the prominent international efforts began in 1975 with the first World Conference in Mexico. The fourth World Conference in Beijing in 1995 was a hallmark, when the international communities accepted the need for a strong gender perspective in all areas of development planning and implementation. More recently, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), specified in the 2000 millennium summit of the United Nations (UN), is another global initiative, which recognizes the centrality of gender equality and empowerment for achieving all other seven goals as well (Rustagi, 2008).

Gender inequality is also indicated in the recent Human Development Reports published by UNDP. The Gender Related Development Index (GDI), introduced in 1995, adjusts the HDI for inequalities in the achievements of men and women. The extent of inequality varies significantly; however for example, while in many countries men and women literacy rates are similar, in many other countries—including India, male rates are more than 15% higher than female rates. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), also introduced in 1995, and helps to assess gender inequality in economic and political opportunities, observed

great variation across the world in empowering women. Some developing countries outperform much richer industrial countries. So many countries have far to go in extending economic and political opportunities to women (UNDP, 2007).

The gender inequality is reflected not only in education or opportunity to develop talents, but also in more elementary fields of nutrition, health, and survival. India has an exceptionally low female-male ratio. The regional patterns of female-male ratios are consistent with what is known of the character of gender relations in different parts of the country. The decline in female-male ratio in India has not been at all even between different castes and religious communities. The decline appears to have been significantly more pronounced among disadvantaged castes. The two important factors for reducing the anti-female bias are—female education and women's ability to earn an independent income through paid employment. Furthermore there is a close connection between women's well-being and the women's agency in bringing about change in the fertility pattern.

Problem:

Gender disparity and inequality is detrimental in achieving the goals of human development. For inclusive development of a society, people should have equal access to all the choices they can make and should also have equality related to the opportunities. Sex Ratio is one of the tools to determine gender equality of the population.

India has an exceptionally low female-male ratio or Sex Ratio. This problem is not, of course, equally acute in every region of India. There are large variations in sex ratio between different states. According to Census of India 2011, it is particularly low in large parts of north India, especially the north-western states (e.g. 879 in Haryana, 895 in Punjab and 889 in Jammu and Kashmir), and comparatively high in the south (e.g. 996 in Tamil Nadu and 993 in Andhra Pradesh). In Kerala, the female-male ratio is well above unity; in fact, it is as high as 1084, a figure comparable to that of Europe and North America.

It has been observed that sex ratio in Jammu and Kashmir has remained favorable to males. Sex ratio has increased (as per 2011 census) in all the States and Union Territories of India except the three major states i.e. Gujarat, Bihar and Jammu and Kashmir. In 2011 census, sex ratio in Jammu and Kashmir decreased to 889 from 900 as recorded in the 2001 census. Child sex ratio (0-6 years), which reflects the socio-economic and cultural patterns underlying the society along with its attitude towards the girl child, has decreased at an alarming rate both in rural and urban setups. It is highest in Jammu and Kashmir. It has fallen to 862 in 2011 from 964 in 2001 census.

These regional patterns of sex ratios are consistent with what is known of the character of gender relations in different parts of the country. The north-western states, for instance, are notorious for highly unequal gender relations, some symptoms of which include the continued practice of female seclusion, very low female labour-force participation rates, a large gender gap in literacy rates, extremely restricted female property rights, strong boy preference in fertility decisions, widespread neglect of female children, and drastic separation of a married women from her natal family. In all these respects, the social standing of women is somewhat better in south India. And Kerala, of course, has a distinguished history of a more liberated position of women in society (Dreze and Sen, 1995). Important aspects of this history include a major success in the expansion of female literacy, considerable prominence of women in influential social and political activities, and a tradition of matrilineal inheritance for an important section of the population.

Of all the twenty two districts of Jammu and Kashmir, less than half districts have shown positive increase in sex ratio in 2011. But there is wide variation among the districts of Jammu and Kashmir regarding the change in sex ratio from 2001 to 2011. For example, Srinagar district has shown an increase of 56 points, whereas, on the other hand, another district, Leh, has shown decrease in sex ratio by 133 points. There are eight districts in Jammu and Kashmir (namely, Leh, Kupwara, Ganderbal, Badgam, Pulwama, Kargil, Poonch and Baramulla) that have shown decrease in sex ratio by more than 20 points.

Objectives:

1. To analyse the levels and trends of sex ratio and child sex ratio in Jammu and Kashmir State.
2. To do the comparative study of various districts of Jammu and Kashmir in order to examine the pattern of declining child sex ratio.
3. To trace out the factors which are responsible for variations in regional patterns in sex bias against female child.
4. To study an empirical linkage of sex ratio (especially child sex ratio) with the gap between male female literacy levels in different districts of Jammu and Kashmir.
5. To empirically examine the linkage of sex ratio (especially child sex ratio) with rural urban differences in different districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

Methodology:

The methodology adopted in the particular study is basically based on the secondary sources, i.e. the existing literatures on the concerned area. The secondary analysis is the reanalysis of the data that was originally compiled by another researcher for other purposes than the one the present researcher intends. The present research work is an analytical study of sex ratio and child sex ratio in different districts of Jammu and Kashmir State. So, the researcher relied on different sources like Planning Commission of India, NFHS-3, Census of India, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, and some other personal and organizational works conducted for different purposes. An attempt has been made to analyse the levels and trends of sex ratio and child sex ratio in Jammu and Kashmir. While doing the comparative study of various districts of Jammu and Kashmir in order to examine the pattern of declining child sex ratio, attempt has been made to trace out the factors which are responsible for variations in regional patterns in sex bias against female child. Here the researcher tries to establish the link between sex ratio and various other indicators of development in all the twenty two districts of Jammu and Kashmir. An empirical linkage of sex ratio (especially child sex ratio) with gap between male and female literacy and rural urban difference has been made.

Results and Discussions:

The state of Jammu and Kashmir, on the one hand, has shown improvement in various development indicators such as education, literacy and health and on the other, is also one of the States which has shown a steep declining trend in sex ratio. Sex ratio, which is an important indicator in determining the status of women in the society, depicts that in Jammu and Kashmir, society has been discriminating against women. Sex ratio in the State shows a declining trend by 17 points from 2001 to 2011. Even though there has been increase in the sex ratio after independence till 2001 but the positive change is very less ranging from 4 points to 14 points every ten years (See Table no. 1). The sex ratio in Jammu and Kashmir has always remained less than the Indian average.

Comparing the sex ratio figures with that of all other states of India, it was observed that the sex ratio in Jammu and Kashmir is on the second last position with Haryana at the last spot with 877 females per 1000 males.

Table No. 1
Sex Ratio in India and Jammu and Kashmir

Year	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
India	950	945	946	941	930	934	927	933	940
J&K	865	869	873	878	878	892	896	900	883

Source: Planning Commission of India, 2011

Of all the twenty two districts of Jammu and Kashmir only ten have shown increase in the trends of sex ratio while the twelve others have shown decrease from 2001 to 2011. Two districts i.e. Srinagar and Udhampur have increased the sex ratio levels by 59 and 24 points respectively. There are four districts that have increased upto 10 points. Leh is the only district which experienced extreme level of fall of 133 points in sex ratio from 2001 to 2011. The four districts of Kashmir i.e. Pulwama, Badgam, Ganderbal and Kupwara exhibit the decline of 30,37,43 and 71 points respectively (see Table No.2).

Table No. 2
District wise Sex Ratio and Child Sex Ratio (0-6 yrs)

District	Sex Ratio		Change in Sex Ratio (from 2001 to 2011)	Child Sex Ratio (0-6 years)		Change in Child Sex Ratio (from 2001 to 2011)
	2011	2001		2011	2001	
Kulgam	951	945	6	885	1000	-115
Shupiyan	951	950	1	878	1011	-133
Anantnag	927	911	16	841	946	-105
Kishtwar	920	904	16	924	977	-53
Doda	919	913	6	933	966	-33
Pulwama	912	942	-30	829	1028	-199
Ramban	902	889	13	925	953	-28
Srinagar	900	841	59	865	948	-84
Badgam	894	931	-37	832	977	-145
Poonch	893	919	26	893	959	-66
Kathua	890	898	-8	831	841	-10
Reasi	890	880	10	919	913	6
Bandipore	889	894	-5	892	974	-82
Samba	886	897	-11	779	805	-26
Baramula	885	905	-20	863	963	-100
Jammu	880	865	15	795	816	-21
Ganderbal	874	917	-43	863	1030	-167
Udhampur	870	846	24	886	931	-45
Rajouri	860	878	-18	865	905	-40
Kupwara	835	906	-71	879	1021	-142
Kargil	810	837	-27	977	980	-3
Leh	690	823	-133	946	955	-9
J&K	889	900	-11	862	941	-79

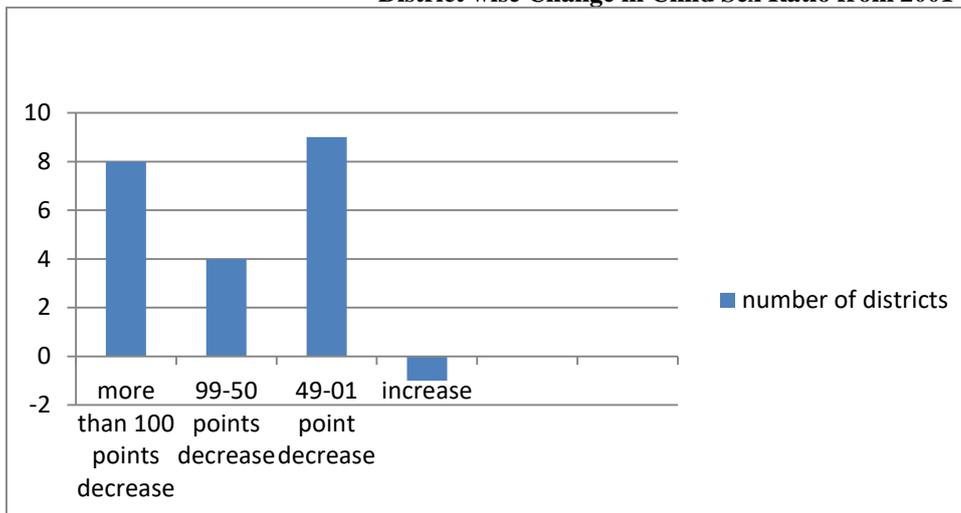
Source: Census of India 2011

Planning Commission of India 2011

Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Planning and Development Department, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, 2004-05

Table No.2 shows the decline in child sex ratio (0-6 years) in all the districts of Jammu and Kashmir except one (i.e. Reasi). The Table shows the declining trend of child sex ratio of girls in the state from 2001 to 2011. The child sex ratio in the age group of 0-6 years has dipped to 862 from 941 in Jammu and Kashmir from 2001 to 2011. In 2001, five districts of the Kashmir division (namely, Ganderbal, Pulwama, Kupwara, Shupiyan and Kulgam) had child sex ratio more than unity i.e. above 1000. All these five districts along with three more have shown a sharp decline in child sex ratio in 2011 (i.e. decline of more than 100 points). The eight districts (namely Pulwama at 829 with a decline of 199 points; Ganderbal at 863 with a decline of 167 points; Badgam at 832 with a decline of 145 points; Kupwara at 879 with a decline of 142 points; Shupiyan at 879 with a decline of 133 points; Kulgam at 885 with a decline of 115 points; Anantnag at 841 with a decline of 105 points and Baramula at 863 with a decline of 100 points from census 2001 to 2011) are considered as red alert districts of the state. About half of the districts of Jammu and Kashmir have witnessed decline in child sex ratio more than the state average of 79 points.

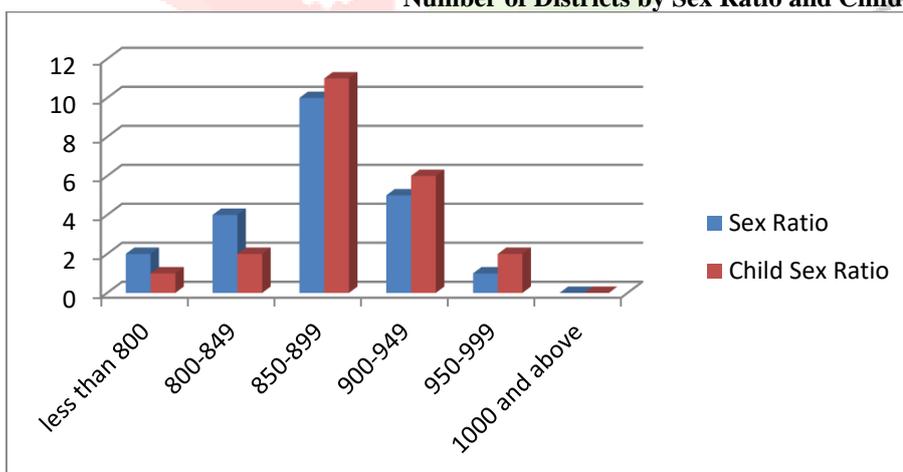
Figure No.1
District wise Change in Child Sex Ratio from 2001 to 2011



All districts of the state, except Reasi, have shown a decline in child sex ratio in the age group of 0-6 years in 2011. Only in the district of Reasi the child sex ratio has shown an increase of 6 points from 2001 to 2011. This particular district is also the only district of Jammu and Kashmir which has shown decrease in the overall literacy rate from 2001 to 2011 i.e. from 59.5 percent to 58.15 percent. The female literacy in the district of Reasi has witnessed a fall of 1.21 percent in 2011. On the other hand, Leh, which is one of the most literate district of Jammu and Kashmir depicts the maximum fall in the child sex ratio in 2011. These findings confirm that the higher level of literacy (especially female literacy) or an increase in the overall levels of literacy is not directly related to improvement in the child sex ratio. Thus it shows, higher the level of literacy, lower will be the child sex ratio indicating higher usage of sex determination test by literate population.

This may be because in these areas access to technology (including pre-natal diagnostic tests) and services coupled with purchasing power have played a negative role in improving the sex ratio (especially child sex ratio). The lack of infrastructure in less developed areas has allowed the girl child to survive. In other words, where the difference is less between rural and urban infrastructure in terms of roads and general mobility, the disparity in child sex ratio is higher. Those areas of Jammu and Kashmir where it is difficult to have access, are the districts which have better child sex ratio than other districts. As the benefits of development are reaching the areas, the people are using the technology to have pre-natal diagnostic tests and thus, widening the gender gap. Thus, it can be viewed as one of the adverse or negative outcome of development in Jammu and Kashmir. Results of inter-district empirical comparison of Jammu and Kashmir state of female literacy rates and sex ratio depicts that declining sex ratio is one of the dysfunctions of the development process.

Figure No. 2
Number of Districts by Sex Ratio and Child Sex Ratio



Moreover, the districts, namely Jammu and Samba, are the most literate districts of the state with total literacy rate of 83.45 percent and 81.41 percent respectively but they have less than 900 girls in the age group of 0-6 years in 2011. It may be because these districts are adjoining to the states of Punjab and Haryana, where access to modern technology is easily available. People of these districts have both access and money to misuse technology. Thus, it has rightly been said that sex selection is the instance of how technology in globalised economy had "dragged even the foetus to market place". Secondly, literacy rate in these districts are much higher than the rest of the districts in the state. This shows that most probably literacy or being educated may imbalance the sex ratio at birth. Hence, higher the level of female literacy lower will be the child sex ratio indicating higher usage of sex determination test by literate women (Bhargave and Hiremath, 2005). A pronounced preference of a male child has been found to be pervasive in Indian society, affecting both attitudes and behaviour with respect to children.

A decreasing trend is observed not only in the overall child sex ratio of urban areas of Jammu and Kashmir but also in rural areas. An alarming decline has been found during the period 1991 to 2001 as indicated in Table No.3. The number of girls in rural areas is 908 per 1000 boys compared with a grimmer 840 in urban areas. The difference in child sex ratio between rural and urban areas has been increasing in the recent times. In urban areas there are more advanced health facilities, high economic resources, income status and better educational facilities. In urban areas, the health advancement can adversely affect the female to male ratio by providing the couples facility of medical termination of pregnancies after the Pre Natal Sex Determination Test.

Table No. 3
District wise Rural Urban Sex Ratio and Rural Urban Child Sex Ratio (0-6 yrs)

District	Sex Ratio				Child Sex Ratio (0-6 years)			
	RURAL		URBAN		RURAL		URBAN	
	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001
Kulgam	959	951	917	867	885	1004	887	891
Shupiyani	965	950	756	954	882	1011	800	1008
Anantnag	936	936	902	842	841	1000	842	890
Kishtwar	927	924	817	968	926	986	868	843
Doda	930	918	795	727	939	970	831	854
Pulwama	935	952	789	883	824	1038	860	977
Ramban	911	888	733	728	927	956	827	897
Srinagar	942	913	899	835	924	1013	864	921
Badgam	910	940	791	854	832	1006	832	957
Poonch	907	932	746	745	893	964	884	849
Kathua	894	912	870	835	834	847	812	796
Reasi	889	907	802	739	920	934	894	786
Bandipore	898	909	845	841	893	975	883	968
Samba	904	937	802	776	778	814	784	778
Baramula	909	912	783	839	865	967	851	938
Jammu	905	902	856	828	774	828	823	799
Ganderbal	873	919	881	915	876	1022	798	1104
Udhampur	918	897	696	684	896	943	829	838
Rajouri	988	890	512	736	867	909	831	829
Kupwara	858	916	685	688	879	1026	879	886
Kargil	838	869	621	559	976	984	991	914
Leh	814	904	494	611	933	964	989	921
J&K	908	917	840	819	865	957	850	873

Source: Census of India 2011

Planning Commission of India 2011

Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Planning and Development Department, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, 2004-05

While comparing the data of sex ratio (2011) for all the districts of Jammu and Kashmir, it was observed that except one district (Ganderbal), in all other districts the sex ratio in rural areas is more than sex ratio in urban areas. Rural area sex ratio is more than 800 in all the districts of Jammu and Kashmir with least in Leh i.e. 814 (see Table no. 3). Sixteen districts have shown the sex ratio as more than 900 in rural areas while in urban areas only two districts of the state have been able to cross the mark of 900 (Anantnag at 902 and Kulgam at 917). Urban area of the five districts have sex ratio less than 700 which is a great matter of concern for the authorities (Kupwara at 685, Rajouri at 512, Udhampur at 685, Kargil at 621 and Leh at 494).

The inter district rural urban sex ratio depicts wide disparity in Jammu and Kashmir but the most alarming difference is in the intra district rural-urban gap in sex ratio. In Rajouri district, for example, the rural-urban gap is 476 points i.e. the rural sex ratio is 988 while the urban sex ratio is 512. Similarly, there are four other districts in Jammu and Kashmir that have more than 200 points gap between rural and urban sex ratios (Shupiyani with 201, Kargil with 217, Udhampur with 222 and Leh with 320 points gap between rural and urban sex ratios). Along with this there are nine other districts with gap between rural urban sex ratio as more than 100 points.

Table No.4
Gap between rural-urban sex ratio and number of districts (2011)

Gap between Rural Urban Sex Ratio	Number of Districts
More than 400 points	1
Between 399 to 200 points	4
Between 199 to 100 points	9
Between 99 to 50 points	2
Between 49 to 1 point	5
Less than 1 point	1

Source: Census of India 2011.

Similarly, while taking into consideration the child sex ratio (0-6 years), it was observed that Jammu (774) and Samba (778) are the two districts where the child sex ratio is below 800. Seven districts have crossed the mark of 900. In urban child sex ratio category, two districts fall under 800 and only two other districts out of the total have been able to cross 900.

While analysing the gap between rural-urban child sex ratio, it was observed that the gap is not as wide as in the case of sex ratio. Contrary to the case of sex ratio, where the rural areas depicted better sex ratio rates as compared to urban areas, child sex ratio in the urban areas is better or equal to that of rural areas. The maximum rural-urban child sex ratio gap is in the two districts of Doda and Ramban where it is higher than 108 and 100 points respectively.

Comparing the rural-urban sex ratio data of 2011 with that of 2001, it was found that there is decline in the rural sex ratio. Twelve districts have witnessed decline in the rural sex ratio from 2001 to 2011 while only eight districts depict decline in urban sex ratio in the same time period. But the decline in the urban areas is very sharp as compared to decline in the rural areas. There are six districts where the decline is more than 50 points from 2001 to 2011 with maximum decline in the district of Rajouri (224) followed by Kishtwar (151).

It was further observed while analysing the data related to rural child sex ratio that all the districts of Jammu and Kashmir experienced decline in the said ratio from 2001 to 2011. Decline is maximum in the eight districts of Kashmir division where it is more than 100 points. In these same districts which have witnessed the maximum fall, the rural child sex ratio was more than unity in 2001 (see Table No.3). Thus, once again proving the fact that as the process of development and progress has been initiated in these rural regions of the Kashmir region, the sex ratio has shown the steep declining trend. The use and access to technology is inversely related to child sex ratio.

While taking into consideration urban child sex ratio 2001, it was observed that in Ganderbal, urban child sex ratio was 1104 which declined to 306 points in 2011 to 798. Another major decline was experienced in the district of Shupian, where it was 1008 in 2001 and declined to 800 in 2011 i.e. down with 208. There are nine other districts which have shown an increase in the urban child sex ratio from 2001 to 2011. Maximum increase in it was observed in Reasi district where it increased from 786 to 894 in 2011 and where the female literacy has witnessed a fall of 1.21 percent during the same time period. Thus, proving it once again that the female literacy is not related to an increase in sex ratio.

Table No. 5
Number of Districts and Sex Ratio and Child Sex Ratio in Rural-Urban areas

Sex Ratio/Child Sex Ratio	Number of Districts			
	Sex Ratio		Child Sex Ratio	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Less than 700	0	5	0	0
700-749	0	2	0	0
750-799	0	5	2	2
800-849	2	4	4	10
850-899	5	4	9	8
Above 900	15	2	7	2

It is evident that human development does not mean more education, better health and a minimum income to live a reasonably decent life alone, it can never be complete without gender equality and attention to women's status. Declining Sex Ratio in Jammu and Kashmir reaffirms that economic prosperity in terms of a better per capita income need not necessarily lead to overall human development as reflected in the broad dimension of well-being. It is argued that with increase in family income and education of women, in particular, it would start a process that would ensure equal status to women, which would help increasing the sex ratio of the population which had occurred in some developed countries. But the ground reality is quite contrary in case of Jammu and Kashmir. Here, the process of development has been initiated in the field of agriculture and horticulture, infrastructural facilities such as power generation, roads, connectivity, transportation, health, employment generation, and educational facilities. But the increase in income and education of women has resulted in a biased attitude towards females, even before birth. In other words, we can say that one consequence of social and economic development could be fewer girls in the population compared to boys. This suggests that development in the form of education and reducing the gender gap in literacy does not automatically lead to more equal conditions for women and girls in terms of sex ratio. Increasing access to various aspects of modern life has imputed new values in the form of lower fertility and smaller family size, higher education and mobility, and higher mean age at marriage. These factors have been the main components in the process of an ongoing social change in Jammu and Kashmir and have contributed to the declining trend in sex ratio. Hence, declining Sex Ratio in Jammu and Kashmir must be understood in the light of changing social and economic development context.

Conclusion

The present research is a study of the declining sex ratio in Jammu and Kashmir particularly in the 0 to 6 age group. The phenomenon of declining sex ratio has become disturbing in some northern states of India including Jammu and Kashmir. It appears that the growth in incomes and education of women, variables that would grant women an equal status in society, have actually worked in a reverse direction in the state. Discrimination against females is engineered even before birth through female foeticide. It seems that education and incomes, which were supposed to result in the emancipation of women, have actually increased, not lowered, the bias in favour of the male child.

Though the improvement has been made in Jammu and Kashmir in the field of education, health, female literacy and female work participation but this change does not reflect improvement in Child Sex Ratio. The districts with high literacy have lower Child Sex Ratio than the districts with lowest literacy. Lowest female literacy in rural areas shows better Child Sex Ratio than higher literacy in urban areas. Increase in family income and female work participation shows a bias towards the girl child, even before birth.

Human development does not mean more education, better health and a minimum income to lead to reasonable better life; it can never be completed without gender equality. The decreasing Child Sex Ratio will impact the demographic and social system adversely. Hence, the declining Sex Ratio in Jammu and Kashmir must be understood in the light of the changing context of social and economic development.

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