

Girl child killed after birth?

Rajasthan Family Denies Killing Baby After Hasty Discharge From Hosp

Vimal Bhatia | TNN

Jaisalmer: The recently held census has revealed alarming details about skewed sex ratio in the nation. An incident in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer district can serve as an eye-opener to the ominous trend.

A family quietly went home after a baby girl was born at a hospital in the district's Devra village, 80 km from Jaisalmer, notorious for girl child killings. The family declared the baby dead after a few hours and buried her on March 31.

Villagers complained to the district authorities that the family killed the baby following which a case was registered.

The baby's mother is the only woman in this village of 300 families to have got married in 106 years. There are only 13 girls, all below 10 years, in the village.

The police exhumed the body on Saturday and a post-mortem was conducted.

Viscera samples have been sent for forensic examination.

"We suspect it's a murder and have ordered an inquiry," said district collector Giriraj Singh Kushwaha.

Principal medical officer at Jawahar Hospital Dr D D Khinchi said Banne Singh's wife Gulab Kanwar was admitted to the hospital on March 30. "She gave birth to a healthy girl child," said the doctor.

The next day, the family members took away the baby without a formal discharge from the hospital. "We were not informed before they took away the baby," Khinchi said.

Khushwaha said some neighbours called him up



claiming the girl was murdered. "I asked the SP to investigate the matter," said the district collector. Circle officer Kotwali Virendra Singh said: "We have conducted the post-mortem and registered a case of death under mysterious circumstances," said Singh.

He said the hospital administration has been asked to hand over the documents related to the girl's birth.

Dr Anil Mathur, who conducted the post-mortem, said the body had decomposed to

an extent that it was difficult to ascertain if the child was strangled.

"Whether the child was poisoned or not, which usually happens in a girl child killing case, would be clear after the viscera report," said Dr Mathur.

Banne Singh's father, Indra Singh, refuted allegations of murder and claimed the baby fell sick after she was brought home and died.

Indra Singh, an ex-sarpanch of Devra village, has been credited with defying tradition of girl child killings in his community.

He was the only one in this village who had welcomed a baraat (marriage procession) after 106 years in 1998. His daughter, Jayant Kanwar, the only girl here, got married at that time.



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Abortions at a high at 6.41 lakh

UP Tops Chart With 89,194 MTPs in 2008, Followed By TN

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: First the good news: the number of medical termination of pregnancies (MTP) or induced abortions has started to dip in India.

The bad news, however, is that the country still records a large number of such abortions — in 2008, India saw 6.41 lakh abortions across 12,510 institutions, approved to carry out MTP.

According to the Family Welfare Statistics in India 2009, brought out by the Union health ministry, India recorded 7.25 lakh MTPs in 2005, 7.21 lakh in 2006 and 6.82 lakh induced abortions in 2007.

According to the 2008 figures, the latest compiled data, Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest number of MTPs (89,194) followed by Tamil Nadu (63,875), Orissa (59,945), Assam (58,409) and Maharashtra (54,545).

The other states with high abortion numbers include West Bengal (46,753), Haryana (31,126), Delhi (30,846), Rajasthan (29,292), Gujarat (27,837) and Bihar (24,149).

While Punjab recorded 14,834 abortions, the Union territory of Chandigarh recorded 1,162. Madhya Pradesh had 19,385 MTPs, Kerala 14,227 and Karnataka 17,500.

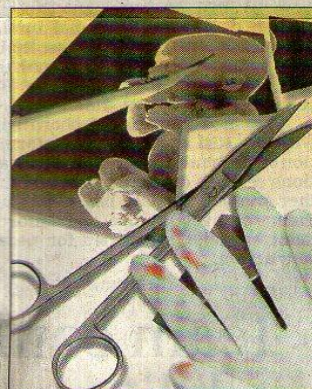
The states/UTs with the lowest abortion figures included Daman and Diu (42), Andaman and Nicobar Islands (94) and Goa (930).

The northeastern states recorded abortion numbers below 1,000. While Meghalaya recorded 344 MTPs, the figure for Mizoram was 524. Nagaland had 670 and Arunachal Pradesh 655 MTPs.

Union health secretary K Sujatha Rao told TOI, "We have been working with doctors to better train them in techniques of abortion so that MTPs can be made safer. At present 8% of maternal mortality in India is due to unsafe abortions. So reduction in abortion numbers as a whole will automatically decrease mortality figures."

Experts say the high number of abortions in India continues to be a major risk factor for women.

A recent international report had said that only two in five of



the estimated 6.4 million abortions that take place annually in India are safe.

The number of women aborting an unwanted child have dipped globally. But the rate of unsafe terminations continues to be almost as bad. The number of unsafe abortions performed still continues to be high and is killing 70,000 women a year, mostly in developing countries.

An additional five million women are treated annually for complications resulting from unsafe abortion, according to US-based Guttmacher Institute report called "Abortion Worldwide: A Decade of Uneven Progress."

According to the report, South-East Asia recorded the highest abortion rate in 2003 — 39 per 1,000 (23 per 1,000 unsafe and 16 per 1,000 safe).

Because abortion is legal in two of the world's most populous countries — China and India — only an estimated 28% of women of child-bearing age in Asia live in countries with restrictive abortion laws.

"Globally, there are an estimated 76 million unwanted pregnancies each year. The annual number of abortions in Asia fell slightly between 1995 and 2003, from 26.8 million to 25.9 million. In 2003, the majority of abortions occurred in Eastern Asia (10 million which includes China) and in South Central Asia (9.6 million which includes India). Of the 26 million abortions performed in 2003, about 16 million were safe and 10 million unsafe procedures," the international report said.

Parents skip insurance claim for girls

Manthan K Mehta | TNN

Mumbai: The prejudice against the girl child begins at birth. In 2009-10, parents across India filed medical insurance claims for more than 2.8 lakh boys within a year of their birth, but the same number for daughters was an abysmal 13,064.

The incongruity is a serious departure from the previous two years when the claims filed for the two sexes below the age of one were roughly on par, according to data compiled by the Insurance Information Bureau (IIB). Few can accurately explain this change in the nation's atti-

tudes, but one theory goes that the reason might be the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana, a Central scheme aimed at providing health-care to the country's poor.

"There has recently been a big jump in the number of policies and claims filed. This could partly be because of the implementation of the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana for BPL families," said an official of a prominent Third Party Administrator company. "The statistic probably confirms the perception that poor families, especially those hailing from rural India, are more interested in the health of the male child," said an official

of a prominent Third Party Administrator company.

Every year, the IIB, an independent body formed by the national Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority, collates data to make an assessment of the country's insurance sector. According to its figures for 2009-2010, out of 32.63 lakh health insurance claims filed in the financial year, a total of 3.02 lakh claims were for children below the age of one. Of this, more than 2.89 lakh claims were for the male child and only 13,064 for daughters.

This was in stark contrast to 2008-2009, when 15,586 and 12,843 claims were filed, respectively, for boys and girls in the same age group. In 2007-2008, the claims for the boy child were 8,818 and those for the girl child were 8,969.

JAAGO GUJARAT



save the girl child

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NGO to insure orphan girls

Pramod Panwar | TNN

Palanpur: Mahila Kala Nidhi Trust Kanodar (MKNT), an NGO working for orphan girls in Banaskantha district, has an important gift for orphan baby girls on the International Women's Day (IWD).

"Thanks to a TOI report dated February 20, 2011, which said parents skip insurance claim for the girls. We decided to do something after we came to know the shocking statistics —

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13,064 girls against over 2.8 lakh boys were insured for the medical claim during the year," said MKNT's Rashmi Hada, a philanthropist working for 'Save the girl child' scheme.

"If this is the national picture, what to say about the poor and orphan girl children then? MKNT took the report seriously and decided to launch scheme for orphan girl children," she said, adding, "So far, we have insured about half a dozen orphans of rescue homes in north Gujarat and on 101st IWD, we will declare our scheme."

Mother claims baby swapped, says no to girl

Till DNA Test Proved
Otherwise, Girl Not
Breastfed For A Week

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Surat: It took a DNA test for a cute little girl born a week ago, to finally get her parents. In a bizarre case, a woman accused the hospital staff of swapping her son after delivery with the daughter of another woman who was born at the same time. It took a DNA test to prove the allegations were false. But for those seven days till the test results were announced, the girl was not even breastfed by either mother.

On September 12, Premila Sahani alleged that her son was swapped with Sahe-

da Ansari's daughter. Both were admitted to the same room in the hospital and both kids were born within minutes of each other. The Suvidha Hospital staff insisted that Premila first gave birth to a daughter at 3.25 am while Saheda delivered a baby boy at 3.27 am. Sahani was unconscious for a while after delivery. When she woke up, she made the swapping allegation after being told that she had given birth to a daughter. The Sahani family approached the police. Both the newborns were then admitted to New Civil Hospital (NCH) till the investigations were completed.

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Initially, blood groups of the children were matched with their parents but the results were inconclusive. Hence a DNA test was carried out. When the results were announced it proved that Premila had indeed given birth to the girl child, while the boy was born to Saheda.

The custody of the children was given to the mothers only on Saturday, almost a week after their birth.

સાચો મહિલા સશક્તિકરણનો રસ્તો માત્ર આરક્ષણ નહીં, દસ કરોડ દીકરીઓના સંહારને રોકવામાં રહેલો છે. મહિલાઓને સંસદ અને વિધાનસભાઓમાં ત્રીસ ટકા અને પંચાયતોમાં ૫૦ ટકા આરક્ષણ આપવાથી ભારતની મહિલાઓનું સશક્તિકરણ થઈ જશે એમ માનનારા રાજનેતાઓ ભૂણહત્યાના નામે જન્મતાં જ કરાતી બેટીઓની હત્યાઓ પહેલાં રોકી તો બતાવે!

કન્યા ભૂણહત્યા તો અટકાવો!

વ એક અઠવાડિયું ભારતની સંસદમાં મહિલા આરક્ષણ વિધેયકના નામે જાતજાતના રાજકીય ખેલ ખેલાયા. રાજ્યસભામાં આ વિધેયક લાગુ પડતું નથી- કે પડવાનું નથી ત્યાં દેકારા-પડકાર વચ્ચે વિધેયક પસાર કરાયું. પણ આ વિધેયક લોકસભા અને દેશની પચાસ ટકા વિધાનસભાઓમાં પસાર થઈ કાયદો ન બને ત્યાં સુધી એ વિધેયક કાયદાની પોથીમાં અમલ વગર પડ્યું રહેવાનું છે. પણ મહિલા આરક્ષણના આઠાપાટા ખેલનારાઓ આમાં વ્યસ્ત હતા ત્યારે જન્મતાં જ બેટીની કરાતી હત્યા અંગે વિશ્વમાં મહિલાઓ અંગેની આપણી પ્રતિબદ્ધતાના લીરેલીરા ઉડાડતો અહેવાલ પ્રસિદ્ધ થયો એની આ મહિલા આરક્ષણ વિધેયકની ચર્ચા સમયે ગંભીર નોંધ પણ ન લેવાઈ.

મહિલાઓને સંસદ અને વિધાનસભાઓમાં ત્રીસ ટકા અને પંચાયતોમાં ૫૦ ટકા આરક્ષણ આપવાથી ભારતની મહિલાઓનું સશક્તિકરણ થઈ જશે એમ માનનારા રાજનેતાઓ, ચૂંટણીમાં મત મેળવવા આવું આ કરી રહ્યા છે. એમ ન ગણાવવું હોય તો, ભૂણહત્યાના નામે જન્મતા જ કરાતી બેટીઓની હત્યાઓ પહેલાં રોકી બતાવે! અને નીચે પ્રવર્તતી વૈશ્વિક પરિસ્થિતિનો જાહેરમાં જવાબ આપે! કારણ દીકરાના નામે દીકરીને જન્મતાં પહેલાં મારી નાખવાના રેકર્ડમાં આજે સંખ્યાની દૃષ્ટિએ આર્થિક રીતે ઝડપથી વિકસવાનો ગર્વ કરનાર એશિયાના બેઉ દેશો-ચીન અને ભારત મોખરે છે. આજથી બે સદી પહેલાં નોબેલ પારિતોષક વિજેતા અમર્ત્યસેને આ રીતે મારી નખાયેલ બેટીઓની સંખ્યા વિશ્વમાં માત્ર ને માત્ર દસ કરોડ ગણાવી હતી. નોંધનીય બાબત એ છે કે આ વીસ વર્ષમાં જ આ બેટીસંહાર વધવા પામ્યો છે. બીજી ખૂબીની વાત એ છે કે ભારત કે જ્યાં આ જાતિ સમસ્યા વ્યાપકપણે જોવા મળે છે એવા રાજ્યોમાં મહારાષ્ટ્ર, પંજાબ, હરિયાણા અને ગુજરાત મોખરે છે. આવા પ્રકારની ભૂણહત્યા માટે કરાતા ગર્ભપાત પર પ્રતિબંધ મૂકતો કાનૂન તો ભારતમાં ૧૯૮૪માં અમલમાં આવ્યો છે જ્યારે ચીનમાં ૧૯૮૫માં અમલમાં મુકાયો છે. કાનૂની પ્રતિબંધ હોવા છતાં 'પાંચ

હજાર રૂપિયા ખર્ચો અને પચાસ હજાર (દીકરીની ડિલિવરીના) બચાવો' એવી જાહેરાતો જોવા મળે છે. આવી જાતિહત્યા ચીન અને ભારત ઉપરાંત પૂર્વ એશિયાના દેશો-દક્ષિણ કોરિયા, સિંગાપોર અને તાઈવાનમાં પણ છે. આનું સીધું પરિણામ કેવું આવશે એ અંગે ચીનની સમાજશાસ્ત્રની એકેડેમીએ એવી આગાહી કરી છે કે ૨૦૧૦ પછી દર પાંચમાં એક ચીની યુવકને પરણવા માટે કન્યા નહીં મળે. ૨૦૨૦ સુધીમાં યુવતીઓની સંખ્યા કરતા યુવકોની સંખ્યા ત્રણ ગણી-ચાર કરોડ વધુ હશે જે જર્મની અને બ્રિટનના કુલ યુવકોની સંખ્યા બરાબર હશે. ચીનમાં સો



સનત મહેતા

લેખક ગુજરાત રાજ્યના પૂર્વ નાણાપ્રધાન છે.



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મહિલાઓની બરાબરીમાં પુરુષોની સંખ્યા છેલ્લાં વીસ વર્ષમાં ૧૦૮માંથી ૧૨૪ પર પહોંચી છે. અત્યાર સુધી ભૂણહત્યા માટેનું કારણ ગરીબી અને અજ્ઞાનતાને ગણાવાતું હતું, પણ ચીન અને ભારતે આ માન્યતા ખોટી પાડી છે. કારણ ચીનમાં આર્થિક સમૃદ્ધિ અને લગભગ સો ટકા સાક્ષરતા છતાં આ પ્રશ્ન આટલો બધો વર્ધ્યો છે. જ્યારે ભારતમાં ઉત્તર પશ્ચિમના પ્રમાણના ખૂબ ઊંચી માથાદીઠ આવક ધરાવતા પંજાબ અને હરિયાણામાં પુરુષ-સ્ત્રીની સંખ્યાની વિષમતા ચીનની બરાબરી કરી શકે તેવી છે. પણ બંને દેશોના કારણ જુદાં જુદાં છે. ચીનમાં આ વિષમતા- 'એક બાળક બસ'ની નીતિને કારણે, જ્યારે ભારતમાં સામાજિક પછાતપણાના કારણે છે. ભારતમાં પુત્રને મળતું સામાજિક પ્રાધાન્ય આના મૂળમાં છે. લગ્ન પછી દીકરી પરણીને પારકે ઘરે જાય છે. એટલે એને પરાયું ધન કે પડોશીના બગીચાને પાણી પાવા જેવું ગણાવાય છે.

મહિલાના સાચા સશક્તિકરણ પહેલાં આ જાતીય વિષમતાનો અંત આણી સ્ત્રી અને પુરુષની સંખ્યાને સરખી કરવી પડશે. ૧૯૯૯માં ભારત સરકારે ભારતની સ્ત્રીઓને પોતાને કયું બાળક જોઈએ છે- દીકરો કે દીકરી? તો તેત્રીસ ટકા મહિલાઓ- જેને એકેય બાળક નહોતું એણે 'દીકરો' જોઈએ એવો જવાબ આપ્યો હતો. બાકીના બે તૃતીયાંશે મુંગા રહેવાનું પસંદ કર્યું હતું. માત્ર બાકી રહેલાએ દીકરી માગી હતી. પાકિસ્તાનમાં આવા જ જવાબો મળ્યા હતા. નાનું કુટુંબ રાખવાની ઈચ્છા ધરાવતા ભારતીય કુટુંબોએ પ્રથમ દીકરી આવે તો સ્ત્રીકારીને બીજા સંતાનમાં પુત્રની ઈચ્છા રાખી છે. 'એક બાળક બસ'ની નીતિના અમલના કારણે છેલ્લા બે દાયકામાં ગુનાનું પ્રમાણ ચીનમાં બે ગણું થઈ ગયું છે. અને આમાં પરિણીત મહિલાને ઉઠાવી જવી, વૈશ્યાવૃત્તિ અને અત્યાચાર વધી રહ્યા છે. ૧૯૮૫થી ૨૦૦૩ સુધીમાં યોગ્ય પગલાં દ.કોરિયાએ 'અમારે પુત્ર જોઈએ, એવું કહેનાર મહિલાનું સુસંતાપીસ ટકા પ્રમાણ માત્ર સત્તર સુધી લાવી દીધું. અત્યારે આ પ્રમાણે ૧૧૦ કે ૧૦૦ પર આવી ગયું છે. ટૂંકમાં સંસદ અને

વિધાનસભાની બેઠકોમાં મહિલા આરક્ષણનો રસ્તો સસ્તો અને સરળ છે. જરૂર છે ભારતમાં દીકરીઓની કિંમત અને દરજ્જો વધારવાની, મહિલાઓની સાક્ષરતા વધારવાની, વારસાઈમાં દીકરીને સમાનતા આપવાની, બાળમૃત્યુ રોકવાની, માતૃત્વને સુયોગ્ય રૂપ આપવાની. આજે સમૃદ્ધ બન્યા પછી ચીન જાતીય વિષમતાના રોગથી પીડાય છે. સાચો મહિલા સશક્તિકરણનો રસ્તો માત્ર આરક્ષણ નહીં, દસ કરોડ દીકરીઓના સંહારને રોકવામાં રહેલો છે. આ આપણા ભાવિ સમાજની તંદુરસ્તી માટે પ્રથમ જરૂર છે. પહેલી જરૂર પહેલાં સંતોષવી જોઈએ.

'The killing of girls amounts to a genocide'

Over eight million girls are estimated to have been killed in the last decade alone leading to a dipping in the child sex ratio from 927 in 2001 to 914 in 2011. Sabu George is an activist who has been working on the issue of the girl child for over 25 years and tells Rema Nagarajan why there is a need to act immediately to boost the child sex ratio by the next Census in 2021.

■ Why do you insist that the killing of the girl child is a crime and not just a social evil?

It is not a few hundreds, the killing of girls is happening in millions. It is genocide. In China, an estimated 1.2 million girls are killed every year in their obsession for sons and the one-child policy. In India, an estimated 0.7 million girls are killed each year. In the coming decade, we will exceed

the Chinese in killing girls. We will then have the dubious distinction of being the country eliminating the largest number of girls every year along with the distinction of holding other dubious world records like having the largest proportion of starving children, highest maternal mortality and so on.

In recent history, Partition is considered to be the most

traumatic and violent event when over a million people were

killed. But it is an even bigger tragedy that an estimated eight million girls were killed in the last decade. In the coming decade, over 10 million girls will be killed if something is not done immediately. In a historical context, we haven't seen this magnitude of violence in our society or an



event of this magnitude in terms of future consequences.

■ Is the government doing enough to improve the sex ratio?

Obviously no. In 1991 it was evident from the Census that in Gujarat, Punjab and Haryana 5% of girls were eliminated. But nothing was done till 2001 when this went up to 10-15% of girls being

eliminated. The government and the country sat up and took notice, but little has been done. This is evident from the fact that even in parts of the country which were helping to keep the country's overall sex ratio high, we are seeing a huge drop in the sex ratio. This shows that the practice of killing the girl child, instead of being curbed, is actually spreading everywhere.

■ Why do you think the government does not do enough to curb sex selection?

Many people in the government and among the elite believe sex selection will bring down population growth. From the 1970s doctors and many policy makers have been advocating sex selection as a way to bring down population. Of the five million less children born in the last decade, boys accounted for two million of the

reduction and girls for three million. This means the relative decline of girls is more than 50% of the reduction rate of boys. Yet, no one seems to care that the population reduction has come at the cost of girls who are being systematically killed.

■ What, in your opinion, is the most effective way to improve the child sex ratio?

There is only one way and that is to implement the law. We have a strong law meant to punish those engaged in the practice of sex determination and sex selective abortion - the Pre-Conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act 1994. Doctors have always promoted sex determination. The government has to start with tackling the criminal malpractice among doctors. You have to make it tough and not at all worth their while to indulge in this malpractice.

Tribal girls sold in new bride barter scheme

Parth Shastri | TNN

Ahmedabad: Manjula, 31, was bought by a Patel man in Mehsana for Rs 50,000 from her tribal parents when she was 13.

After becoming a mother of two daughters and a son, the man kept her girls and threw her out with the son. Manjula is not allowed to even see the girls who became pawns for their father to get a wife from his own community.

In a district that is notorious for its preference for male children reflected in the alarmingly low sex ratio of 798 girls per 1,000 boys in 0-6 group as per census 2001, this unprecedented case of affection for the girl child is not an exception. Tribal

girls are now being exploited to produce female progeny to be bartered for a wife in the community through the sata-pata. In this system, which is prevalent in many communities, it is imperative to pledge a girl in marriage to the family which is giving away a bride.

INTERNATIONAL GIRL CHILD DAY

An extensive observation of social fallouts of the skewed sex ratio in Gujarat by Child Rights and You (CRY) with Buniyadi Adhikar Andolan (BAA) has revealed a huge number of girls exploited by affluent families as pawns.

Earlier, upper caste men used

to buy and marry tribal girls, but today some are simply lured to cohabit with them at a price. The girl has no clue about the bargain or the agent

who is paid Rs 50,000-75,000, of which only Rs 10,000-20,000 reaches the family.

The other case is of Shailla, 28, a brick kiln worker.

Her brother-in-law sold her for Rs 50,000 to a 26-year-old man from Mehsana when she was 13. The man whom she thought was

her husband, kept her in a shanty in his farm for 13 years and abused her. She ran away with her seven-year-old daughter, unaware that she was sold as a commodity only to bear the girl, and now lives in the fear that he will take away her daughter one day.

Pravin Singh, senior manager,



A TIMES OF INDIA ENDEAVOUR

CRY, told TOI they have reported some 200 such cases in the past 2-3 years. "There is high infestation

of middle-men selling women for marriage in districts like Patan, Himmatnagar and Mehsana. Here, a big number of girls have been bought from tribal belt of Banaskantha, Sabarkantha and Panchmahal," he said.

Singh says, "It is one of the manifestations of child trafficking in the country, and a pretty exploitative one. We are working to create a mass awareness drive against this form of exploitation so that the dominant castes are named and shamed."

Shailla herself is among the most vocal advocates against child marriages. "My priority is to keep my daughter away from the clutches of my husband. I want her to go to school and have enough to eat," she said.

Fewer female voters in Guj this year

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Gandhinagar: The proportion of female voters in Gujarat has gone down this year. This was revealed in the latest figures made available by the Election Commission (EC) of India's office in Gandhinagar. The figures are based on the survey carried out for registering new voters late last year. New electoral rolls were made public on Monday.

The survey shows that that as against every 1,000 male voters, there are 916 female voters in Gujarat, a deceleration over 2009, when the electoral list was published ahead of Lok Sabha elections. Then, there were 931 females against every 1,000 males. No reasons are being forwarded for the downfall.

The figures show that Surat dis-



School girls being told about electronic voting machine on National Voters' Day

trict has the lowest ratio of female voters, 828 against 1,000 males, followed by Surendranagar with 886 females. This is quite in contrast with districts with a higher tribal population like Dahod, Dang and Sabarkantha. In these three districts, the ratio of female voters vis-a-vis their

male counterparts is much higher. There are 1,005 females in Dang, 985 in Dahod and 953 in Sabarkantha for every 1,000 males.

One major reason for the low proportion of female voters in Surat is said to be presence of a huge migrant population in the city.

In Ahmedabad district, 909 females have been registered in the voter list against 1,000 males, which is lower than in 2009, when it was 919 females. "The proportion of female voters in Gujarat has gone down in almost all districts," an EC source told TOI, adding, "In the country, on an average there are 935 females against 1,000 males." The sex-ratio figures in Gujarat were made available ahead of the National Voter's Celebrations, which is scheduled for Tuesday.

Indians eye Dubai for cheap baby sex tests

Malathy Iyer | TNN

Mumbai: Colaba resident Sonal (name changed) surprised her gynaecologist when he refused to reveal the sex of her unborn child during a recent ultrasonography scan. Without batting an eyelid, she told him that sex determination was as easy as flying to Dubai. "She had read online about a Dubai diagnostic centre offering a genetic blood test to determine whether the foetus is a girl or boy in the seventh week of pregnancy," said the doctor.

Tickets to Dubai are cheap at Rs 4,000 each way and the pink-and-blue test costs around \$25. The website of laboratory firm Medsol states that it offers the tests in Dubai, Sharjah, Abu Dhabi and Al Ain. It appears that Sonal and many others have worked out an economical way of beating the Indian ban on sex determination during pregnancy. "Patients come to us with print-outs of such online advertisements and ask if these tests are good," said gynaecologist Dr Kiran Coelho, adding that it is well-known that such genetic tests are banned in India.

others have worked out an economical way of beating the Indian ban on sex determination during pregnancy. "Patients come to us with print-outs of such online advertisements and ask if these tests are good," said gynaecologist Dr Kiran Coelho, adding that it is well-known that such genetic tests are banned in India.

પુત્રીનો જન્મ થતાં પરિણીતા પર સાસરિયાંનો ત્રાસ

દહેજ પેટે એક લાખની માગણી કરી પરિણીતાને ઘરમાંથી કાઢી મૂક્યાની ફરિયાદ

ભારતર ન્યૂઝ. વડોદરા

શહેરના ભાંજલપુર વિસ્તારમાં રહેતી યુવાન પરિણીતાએ પુત્રીને જન્મ આપતાં તેની પર સાસરિયાંઓએ ત્રાસ ગુજારી તેમજ તેની પાસે દહેજ પેટે રૂ. ૧ લાખની માગણી કરી તેને ઘરમાંથી કાઢી મૂકી હોવા અંગેની ફરિયાદ ભાંજલપુર પોલીસ મથકે નોંધાઈ હતી.

ગોરાવ વિસ્તારની વિનોદવાટિકા સોસાયટીમાં રહેતાં અમિતા ગોરાંગભાઈ સોલંકીએ તાજેતરમાં સંતાનમાં પુત્રીને જન્મ આપ્યો હતો. પુત્રીનો જન્મ થતાં તેના પતિ સહિતના સાસરિયાંઓએ તેની પર ખોટા બ્લેમ રાખી તેની મારઝૂક કરી હતી. સાસરિયાંઓએ તે પુત્રીને કેમ જન્મ આપ્યો તેમ કહી તેની પાસે રૂ. ૧ લાખની દહેજની માગણી કરી હતી અને તેની પર શારીરિક-માનસિક ત્રાસ ગુજારી તેને ઘરમાંથી કાઢી મૂકી હતી. આ બનાવની અમીતાએ ભાંજલપુર પોલીસ મથકે ફરિયાદ નોંધાવતાં પોલીસે તેના પતિ ગોરાંગ

શંકરભાઈ સોલંકી તેમજ શંકરભાઈ શનાભાઈ, દિયાબહેન શંકરભાઈ, પર્મશ શંકરભાઈ અને શિરશ શંકરભાઈ વિરુદ્ધ ગુનો નોંધી વધુ તપાસ હાથ પરી છે.

Baby girl buried alive survives

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Surat: A 10-day-old baby girl who was buried alive miraculously survived in a village in Surat. The incident happened on Saturday on the outskirts of Vankaneda village of Palsana taluka, when a woman who went to answer nature's call near a canal heard the faint cries of an infant. Unable to trace the source of the sound, she returned with others.



MIRACLE BABY



A TIMES OF INDIA ENDEAVOUR

The sound was finally traced to a patch which looked freshly dug. On removing the soil, the villagers found a baby girl, alive and kicking, but with minor bruises on her body. A 108 ambulance was immediately called and the girl rushed to New Civil Hospital (NCH) in nearby Surat. The child is currently under treatment at NCH. Medicos at NCH said the baby is in good health and has not suffered major injuries. Initially, she was given breathing assistance.

Police believe the child must have been buried just one or two hours before she was rescued by the villagers. Even with availability of air, the child would have not survived for more than a couple of hours under pressure of the soil, police and doctors believe.

'Moms beaten at home led to death of 1.8m girl children'

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: The deaths of 1.8 million girl children in India over the past two decades have for the first time being linked to domestic violence against their mothers. After examining over 158,000 births that took place between 1985 and 2005, an international team of researchers found that spousal violence against wives increased the risk of death among female children, but not male children, in both the first year and the first five years of life.

According to lead author Jay Silverman, associate professor of society, human development from Harvard School of Public Health, "Being born a girl into a family in India in which your mother is abused makes it significantly less likely that you will survive early childhood. Shockingly, this violence does not pose a threat to your life if you are lucky to be born a boy". According to authors, this disparity is connected directly with the lower investment in girl children in areas like nutrition, immunisation and care for major causes of infant and child death like diarrhoea, etc.

This neglect of girl infants is likely to be most pronounced in families in which women are physically abused by their husbands. The study published in the January issue of the journal "Archives of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine" has been conducted jointly by Harvard School of Public Health, Indian Council of Medical Research, Boston University School of Public Health and the National Institute for Research in Reproductive Health in Mumbai.

MARATHA MAGIC

A'bad always saved the girl child!

Historically, ever since Ahmedabad was founded in 1411, it were the 14 gates (12 stand today) which provided protection to the walled area. The wall has largely crumbled but the gates still stand as grand reminders of the days when they symbolised safety.

Once inside the gates, the early Amdavadis got a feeling of safety and security. No invading army was ever able to plunder the city. More importantly, unlike other battles where rape of women used to follow a conquest, women and children were safe inside even if the armies were fighting.

If today, Ahmedabad is said to be the safest city for women and the Self-Employed Women's Association (Sewa) was born here, there is a long history to it. At Teen Darwaza is inscribed a 'farman' by the Maratha subedar Chinnaji Raghunath in 1812 declaring that women should be given equal rights in property. Raghunath had made this appeal to both Hindus and Muslims.

Ahmedabad was ruled by the Marathas from 1757 to 1818 after they defeated the Mughals. A copper plaque dated October 10, 1812, engraved in Devnagri script at Teen Darwaza reads, "Let the daughter get her due

share of father's property without any hitch. So is Lord Vishwanath's command. If you defy, the Hindu will have to answer Mahadev and the Mussalman will have to explain to Allah or Rasool." In 1780, the Marathas used to tax sons if they are inheriting ancestral property. Girls did not have to pay any tax. About 30 years later, a wealthy 'nagarsheth', Rao Bahadur Ranchodlal Chotalal, started the city's first girls high school in Raipur.

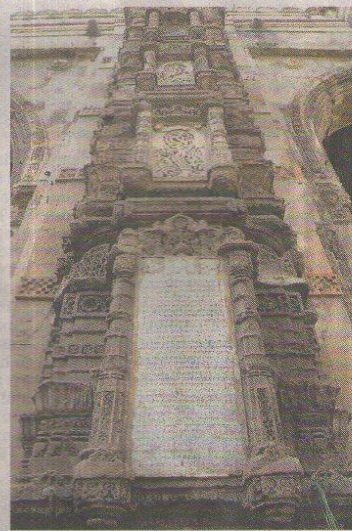
This was the moment of the transition for Ahmedabad. Girls education became the motto, inscribed as slogans in many house door panels and entrances of Jain temples. During the British rule later, Victorian carvings crept into the door panels depicting equality of sexes in education.

In 1920, when five girls were thrown out of school by their British teachers

for singing Vande Mataram, residents of Tankshal ni Pol and nearby pols donated their houses for opening more schools for girls. In 1934, Mahatma Gandhi inspired the setting up of Jyoti Sangh to engage women in the freedom movement. Jyoti Sangh was established by Mridulla Sarabhai and propagated by the gun-totting and fiery Charumati Yodha.



A TIMES OF INDIA ENDEAVOUR



The farman inscribed on Teen Darwaza

Prosperity has failed to help girl child

TIMES INSIGHT GROUP

New Delhi: With the provisional figures for the 2011 Census sounding an alarm over the falling child sex ratio, it's a good time to look at who really is responsible for this? Who's committing female foeticide and infanticide? Available figures show that contrary to popular perception, it's not the poorest and least literate people and communities who are responsible; to the contrary, the reverse is true.

The 2011 numbers show that the states with the worst child sex ratio (CSR) are not the most backward; the prosperous agrarian states of Haryana and Punjab bear that ignominy with the neighbouring industrial hubs of

Delhi and Chandigarh just slightly better. Uttar Pradesh has a better CSR than Maharashtra and Gujarat, while Bihar is even better than the national average. Since the CSR counts the number of girls for every 1,000 boys under the age of six, this is one trend that cannot be explained away by high out-migration.

Within states, rural areas tend to have a better CSR than urban areas. Disaggregated figures for 2011 are not yet available, but 2008 Sample Registration System numbers bear this out: rural areas had 918 girls for every 1,000 boys under four (the SRS uses a different definition of child), as opposed to 905 in urban areas. The rural-urban divide is a largely northern and eastern phenomenon with the sharpest divides in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh and also Gujarat.

There is little urban-rural difference in the southern states.

Breaking the numbers down further, the 150 most backward districts of India, as identified by the Central government, had far better CSRs than the rest, according to the 2001 census — they had an average of 947 as against 921 for the rest.

The gap between backward and non-backward districts was particularly high in states like Gujarat (923 to 873), Jammu & Kashmir (992 to 932), Madhya Pradesh (948 to 924), Rajasthan (936 to 905) and Orissa (964 to 937). This trend too was largely not seen in the southern states.

Nor is high literacy necessarily a good proxy for a healthy gender balance. The latest census numbers show that Maharashtra, with a literacy rate of almost 83%, has a CSR of 883, while Chhattisgarh, with just 71% literacy (61% for women) has a CSR of 964.

In 2001, the district-level data showed that the most literate dis-

tricts, which would also be those with greatest access to technology, had much worse CSRs than the least literate. The top 10 districts for literacy in UP had a CSR of 887 compared to the bottom 10 for whom the number was 937, a difference of 50. The same trend prevailed in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Bihar, Haryana and West Bengal. This indicates that mere education has not been enough to correct a deep societal and cultural bias that the India seems to have against girls.

At a caste and community level, tribal societies have always had much better CSRs. In 2011, this is borne out by the far higher CSRs of states that have a high tribal population — Mizoram, Meghalaya, Chhattisgarh and Arunachal Pradesh, have a better CSR than even Kerala, India's default model state.

► Girl child killers still getting away in Punjab, Haryana. P 8



A TIMES OF INDIA ENDEAVOUR

'Ban portable ultrasound machines'

Proposal By Union Health Ministry To Be Taken Up At Meeting In Mumbai On Jan 14

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: You must have heard of doctors being on-call. But, are you aware of diagnostic and imaging machine like a portable ultrasound?

An increasing number of portable ultrasound machines are being registered as being "on call", or the devices could be taken anywhere anytime to conduct an ultrasound test.

Delhi was the first state to register such "on-call" portable ultrasound machines, a trend that has now spread across the country.



The Union health ministry says the trend is in violation of the Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PC & PNDT Act), which allows ultrasound machines to be port-

Portable machines are being taken in two-wheelers to conduct the sex determination of an unborn child. We have found such machines hidden under beds in Haryana

Health Ministry official

ble only within the premises of hospital or clinic registered under the Act.

The ministry has mooted a proposal to ban such "on call" machines—a move crucial to save the girl child. It will be

taken up at the Central Supervisory Board (CSB) meeting in Mumbai on January 14. CSB is headed by Union health minister Ghulam Nabi Azad and his counterpart in the women and child welfare ministry Krishna Tirath.

The board is responsible for overlooking the stringent implementation of the PNDT Act that bans female feticide.

"When somebody registers a clinic, they have to on paper mention the doctor who will operate the machine and mention the model of the machine being used."

The person may have a portable ultrasound machine.

He or she then offers his or services to other clinics not having an ultrasound machine or to gynecologists visited by pregnant mothers, saying they would conduct ultrasound tests on demand and be on call," an official said.

The official added, "Such portable machines are being taken in two-wheelers to conduct the sex determination of an unborn child. We have found such machines hidden under beds in Haryana. According to the Act, even if a portable machine is used, the vehicle needs to be registered and should be a mobile clinic providing a bouquet of medical services."

Infant girl found dead in SSG Hospital

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Vadodara: A five-month-old baby girl was found dead under suspicious circumstances in the bath-room of paediatrics ward of SSG Hospital here on Friday morning. The girl identified as Zainab Sheikh was found in a bucket full of water. The cops have registered a complaint of accidental death, but they suspect that the girl was murdered by someone. The incident led to chaos in the paediatrics

department that remains abuzz with ailing children and their parents all day.

Zainab was suffering from kidney problems and her resistance power had also lowered that led to frequent illness. She was admitted to SSG Hospital on Monday. Her mother Shabana, who used to stay with her in the ward, told the police that she didn't know how her daughter reached the bathroom.

But, the cops are not ready to buy the theory. "How can a five-month-old baby reach bathroom on its own. Someone has carried her to the bathroom and drowned her in the buck-

et. We are questioning Shabana in detail," said a police official.

According to hospital authorities, Shabana was not in good mental health. "I was told that Shabana's mental condition was not well. All I can say is that no hospital staff is involved in the incident," said Dr Babubhai Patel, residential medical officer (RMO), SSG.

Sources said that the deceased's father Sikandar was a casual labourer and the family's financial condition is poor. Interestingly, Zainab was born to the couple after 10 long years of their marriage. Sources said that the couple had also adopted a girl of one of their relatives some time ago. "The girl was suffering from hydro nephrosis and her weight was also below normal," said a hospital official.



A TIMES OF INDIA ENDEAVOUR

Girls not safe even in India's paradise

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

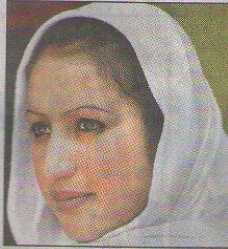
New Delhi: India's paradise on earth, Jammu and Kashmir, isn't all that heavenly a place for a girl child.

The state, which is also home to Union health minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, has seen the single largest decline in sex ratio in the country, according to provisional Census 2011 as compared to Census 2001.

While in 2001, the number of girls per 1,000 boys (aged between 0-6) stood at 941, the latest Census found that it has plummeted to 859. At present, there are 82 fewer girls in the state per 1,000 boys. No other state is even remotely close to J&K's dismal record. Maharashtra is second in that list.

But, in absolute numbers, it has 30 fewer girls per 1,000 boys as compared to 2001. Experts are now questioning J&K's seriousness in implementing the all important Pre-conception & Pre-natal Diagnostics Techniques (PC & PNDT) Act.

Ever since the Act came into force, the state, which supposedly has only 84 regis-



WHERE HAVE THE GIRLS GONE?

tered ultrasound clinics, has not sealed a single one. Similarly, the number of court cases ever filed by the state against doctors involved in sex determination is a cipher, and consequently, it has a nil conviction rate.

J&K was one of the 17 states summoned by the health ministry on Wednesday for a crucial meeting, chaired by Union health secretary K Chandramouli. Speaking to TOI, Yashpal Sharma, mission director of J&K's National Rural Health Mission, who attended the meeting, said, "We admit that the picture in the state isn't encouraging. We are increasing checks in nursing

homes and clinics and also not allowing purchase of ultrasound machines until the owners are registered ultrasonologists."

He said, "Usually, the client and service-providers are hand in glove. If clients fail to get a sex-selection test done in the state, they go to neighbouring states. We're holding a meeting on April 22, to be attended by district collectors and chief medical officers, on how to better implement PNDT Act."

When TOI contacted the state's former health secretary R K Jerath, he initially contradicted the Census figures but later accepted them. First, he said, "the state has been serious about tackling its adverse sex ratio. The state also has its own separate Act for this purpose."

But when pointed out the abysmal sex-ratio, he admitted, "The problem is actually in Jammu. The preference for a male child, the case in several parts of India, affects us too." A ministry note said, "J&K, Maharashtra and Haryana have had the worst 30-year decline in child sex ratios."

Worst district, best sex ratio

True To Trend, Haryana's Most Backward Mewat Has 906 Girls Against State's 877

Sukhbir Siwach | TNN

Chandigarh: Haryana's most backward district, Mewat, has the highest sex ratio in the state, which ranked lowest in the country on that count. According to Census 2011, Mewat's sex ratio, 906 females for every 1,000 males, is much above Haryana's (877:1000). Mewat has the lowest literacy rate at 56.14% compared to the state average of 76.64%.

Census figures show districts with higher literacy rate in Haryana have poor sex ratio. Districts in the National Capital Region—Gurgaon, Sonapat, and Panipat—have the lowest sex ratio in the state despite being more developed. Gurgaon and Sonapat recorded the lowest sex ratio at 853:1,000 followed by 861:1,000 in Panipat.

Mewat is followed by Fatehabad (903:1,000) and Rewari (898:1,000) in sex ratio, both above the state average. In the 0-6 age group, Mewat recorded the highest child sex ratio (903:1,000) and Jhajjar the lowest (774:1,000). Gurgaon though has the highest literacy rate at 84.44% more than the state average while it's only 69.13% in Fatehabad. Gurgaon also boasts of the

highest female literacy rate (77.64%) while in Mewat it's the lowest (37.58%). Fatehabad too fares poorly at 59.29%. Gurgaon is among districts with the lowest gender gap in literacy (12.63%), while Mewat recorded the highest gap at 35.40%.

Maximum improvement in sex ratio in 0-6 age group was seen in Kurukshetra. It rose from 771 in 2001 to 817 in 2011. Five districts of Haryana—Jhajjar, Mahendragarh, Rewari, Bhiwani and Faridabad—have child sex ratio in the 0-6 year age group lower than 2001, said Neerja Sekhar, Haryana's director, Census operations. Twenty districts have below 880 sex ratio in

the 0-6 age group. Khazan Singh Sangwan, dean of social sciences at Rohtak's Maharshi Dayanand University, said, "Sex ratio and prosperity coupled with education and urbanization are adversely related with each other. Sex ratio is found to be better among backward classes and the poor." Mewat has a better sex ratio though it is backward on all counts.

Almost entire district is rural, he said. Singh said affluent and educated sections have more access to methods and means used in female foeticide.



5 Maha docs in the dock for carrying out sex tests

Prafulla Marpakwar | TNN

Mumbai: In the first-ever stringent action against medical practitioners carrying out illegal sex determination, the Maharashtra Medical Council (MMC) on Monday suspended the registration of five doctors who had violated the law on this count. The doctors will remain suspended till the pendency of the criminal complaints against them.

Invoking the provisions of the MMC Act and the Pre-Conception And Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act (PCNDT), disciplinary action was launched against Madhav Trimbak-
rao Sanap and Sayyad Tarak Ahmad Sayyad from Beed, Bhausaheb Haribhau Katkar and Keertikumar Vasant Argade from Kolhapur and Mohankumar Bhandopant Nagane from Pune. This is the first time since

the enactment of the PCNDT Act in 1994 that such stern action has been taken against erring medical practitioners—in all these years, none of those booked for doing sex determination tests had their licences suspended during the pendency of the court case.

Under Section 23 (2) of the act, the registered medical practitioner is reported by the appropriate authority to the state medical council for taking necessary action, including suspension of the registration, till the court case is disposed of. If the practitioner is convicted, his or her name is removed from the register of the council for a period of five years for the first offence and permanently if there is a subsequent offence. "If the doctors are convicted, we will cancel their registration for five years," said a senior MMC official.

IMA felicitates parents of daughters

Pramod Panwar | TNN

Palanpur: The Indian Medical Association's (IMA) Palanpur chapter felicitated 13 parents who have a girl child and no sons, here on Sunday.

"We want to spread awareness among the people about the skewed sex ratio in the state," said Dr Mihir Pandya, secretary of IMA's Palanpur chapter. "The last census report had projected a dismal scenario with Unjha in Mehsana dis-

trict at the bottom in the state having just 744 females per 1,000 males."

The chairman of Save The Girl Project, Dr Surendra Gupta, said, "Provisional data released by the census office for 2011 shows that the child sex ratio (0-6 years) has declined to 914 girls for every 1,000 boys

as compared to 927 in 2001." The problem needs to be addressed nationally. The census figures reveal

the Indian average. With the exception of Himachal Pradesh, no state in the north had a child sex ratio above 900, he said.

"We need to spread awareness to save the girl child," said Rashmi Hada, president, Mahila Kalanidhi Kamodar. "We recently launched a project to provide medical insurance facilities to orphan girls living in rescue homes in Mehsana, Patan, Sabarkatha and Banaskantha districts."

JAAGO GUJARAT



save the girl child

A TIMES OF INDIA ENDEAVOUR

that Jammu & Kashmir had a better child sex ratio than

With 1.21bn, India home to 17.5% of world's population

New Delhi: India's population has risen to 1.21 billion people over the last 10 years — an increase of 181 million — according to the new census released on Thursday.

Significantly, the growth has been slower for the first time in nine decades. In 1981-91, the population growth rate was 23.87%. The population, which accounts for 17.5% of the world's numbers, comprises 623.7 million males and 586.5 million females, the provisional 2011 Census report said. China is the most populous nation, accounting for 19.4% of the global population. India's headcount is almost equal to the combined population of the US, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Japan.

The population has increased by more than 181 million during the decade 2001-2011, the report said. The growth rate in 2011 is 17.64% in comparison to 21.15% in 2001. The 2001-2011 period is the first decade — with the exception of 1911-1921 — which has actually added lesser population compared to the previous decade, registrar general of India and census commissioner of India C Chandramouli said in the presence of home secretary Gopal K Pillai.

Among states and Union Territories, Uttar Pradesh is the most populous, with 199 million people, and Lakshadweep the least populated at 64,429. In fact, the combined population of UP and Maharashtra is bigger than that of

the US. The highest population density is in Delhi's north-east district (37,346 people per sq km) while the lowest is in Dibang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh (just one person per sq km).

The population may have risen to 1.21 billion, but the gender imbalance is the worst since Independence, indicating a persisting preference for male children, according to the latest census data. "The percentage decadal growth during 2001-2011 has registered the sharpest decline since Independence — a decrease of 3.90 percentage points," Chandramouli said. These, however, are only preliminary figures and the final population count will be released next year, he added.

According to the figures, there has been a decline in the number of children under the age of six, down five million since 2001 to 158.8 million. Chandramouli said the child sex ratio in 2001 was 927 females per 1,000 males born, which has declined to 914 females per 1,000 males in 2011. This indicates a continued trend of preference for male children over female. "This is a matter of grave concern," Chandramouli said.

However, the overall sex ratio showed a marginal improvement, with 940 women counted for every 1,000 men compared to 933 in the 2001 census. The census 2011 was done in two phases — house-listing and housing census and then population enumeration. AGENCIES

Now, we are six crore Gujaratis!

In 0-6 Age Group, Sex Ratio Rises To 886 Per 1,000 Boys

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: While the sex ratio in India has dipped to a historic low of 914 girls per 1,000 boys in the 0-6 age-group, the numbers in Gujarat have a happy story to tell. The ratio in Gujarat has marginally improved from 883 to 886, according to 2011 census report. In fact, Gujarat is one of the six states that has recorded an improvement in the sex ratio.

Also, we are no longer 'paanch crore Gujaratis' any more. The population in the state has jumped from 5.07 crore to 6.03 crore. The state's population has recorded a 19.17 per cent rise over the last one decade, reaching 6,03,83,628. The growth rate is higher than the national average of 17.64 per cent. The number of women per 1,000 men in Gujarat has dropped from 920 in 2001 to 918 in 2011 while population of women aged seven years and above too has registered a drop from 927 to 923.

The rise in sex ratio in the age group of 0-6 years has been mentioned as a cause of cheer in the report because most of the states that have shown improvement had reported an alarming dip in sex ratio in 2001. In Gujarat, the ratio had dipped from 928 in 1991 to 883 in 2001. "While the increase in the sex ratio

GUJ'S VITAL STATS

► Population rises to 6.03cr from 5.07cr — growth rate 19.1%	LITERACY UP ► Literacy rate 79.31% as compared 69.14% in 2001
► 3.15cr men & 2.89cr women	► 70.73% literate among women, 87.2% among men
► 918 women per 1,000 men	

Sex ratio worst in Daman & Diu

Union territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli are at the bottom of the sex ratio with 618 and 775 females per 1000 males respectively. Haryana has 877 females to 1000 males. The national average is 940.

is marginal, we are happy that there is an improvement. It is an encouraging sign and we will help increase the number of girls by bringing down the infant mortality rate which is currently 47 per 1,000 live births," said health minister Jaynarayan Vyas.

Another matter of big cheer is that Gujarat's overall literacy rate has shown significant decadal improvement from 69.1 per cent to 79.3 per cent. In this field, Gujarat has done much better than most states — just half a dozen states, led by Kerala with 93.9 per cent literacy, have performed better.



A TIMES OF INDIA ENDEAVOUR

Govt scheme to arrest infant mortality fails to deliver

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Gandhinagar: The government has failed to achieve the infant mortality rate (IMR) target set under Chiranjeevi project, five years after it was launched. Besides, in at least 93 talukas, the empanelled private medical practitioners are yet to actually join the project.

Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) pointed this out in its report tabled in the state assembly on Friday. The Gujarat government launched Chiranjeevi project as a special intervention programme for reduction of infant mortality rate from 57 deaths per 1,000 live births to 30 deaths per 1,000 live births and maternal mortality rate from 3.89

THE CHIRANJEEVI PROJECT FILES

Year	Allocation	Actual expenditure
2006-07	4.12	8.87
2007-08	45.00	23.49
2008-09	31.06	24.00
2009-10	54.00	29.20
Total	134.18	85.56

Figures in ₹ crore

Programme lacked proper fund utilisation and system of checks and balances

deaths per 1,000 live births to 1 death per 1,000 live births. This goal was to be achieved by the end of 2010.

For this, the project envisaged obtaining services of empanelled private doctors to increase institutional deliveries,

especially in rural areas. Yet, years after in 93 of 231 talukas in the states, the empanelled doctors were not available.

The CAG report stated that health department provided funds to the State Health Society (SHS) and Chief District

Health Officers (CDHOs) for carrying out programme activities. While the department was allocating the funds directly to CDHOs, the SHS were also releasing the funds to district health society.

A part of the funds was also provided by project administrators. Integrated Tribal Development Project. Since funds under the programme were provided through three different sources, the department had no consolidated details on the actual release.

In the absence of a centralised monitoring authority and availability, a huge amount lay unutilised. Of the total Rs 134.18 crore released for the project, 36 per cent (Rs 48.30 crore) was not utilised as on March 31, 2010.

Central board revamped for stricter ban on fetus sex test

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: Finally, the Union health ministry has woken up to the plummeting sex ratio. Union health minister Ghulam Nabi Azad has reconstituted an all-new central supervisory board (CSB) to ensure a stringent implementation of the Pre-conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994 (PC & PNDT Act) that bans female feticide.

Though the board is supposed to meet every six months to review actions taken under the Act, the earlier CSB hadn't met even once since 2007.

The new board—under the chairmanship of Azad and minister of state for women and child welfare Krishna Tirath—is slated to meet in the last week of May.



However, a crucial meeting of health secretaries of states that have poor girl child population will be held on April 20 for an in-depth review of the implementation of the PC & PNDT Act, and to chalk out a concerted action plan

to curb sex selection. Union health minister K Chandramouli, who is also a member of the CSB, said: "The law does not need to be changed, but needs to be better implemented. States haven't done enough to impose this Act. It is also a difficult Act to impose since we can't follow ev-

eryone to see why they are entering ultrasound clinics. Doctors also need to exercise caution."

He added, "Female feticide is more common among educated middle-class than poor rural families. The new sex ratio is a cause for serious concern. We

will have to specially focus in states like Punjab, Haryana and Delhi."

Plans are also afoot to restart the helpline, where people can report prenatal sex-selection activities. The ministry had set up a toll-free telephone number: 1800-110-500 in 2008 to lodge complaint anonymously. Three years on, the number has become defunct.

A few years ago, an Indo-Canadian scientist had reported in the "The Lancet" that pre-natal selection and selective abortion was causing a loss of 500,000 girls annually in India. In India, for every 1,000 male babies born, there were only 927 girls (2001 Census). The figure has further dipped to 914 girls, according to the 2011 Census.

The new CSB will have two medical geneticists, gynecologists and obstetricians, pediatricians, social scientists and representatives of women welfare organizations and three women MPs.

Female sex ratio improves in Vadodara

Central Gujarat Too Sees Significant Improvement

Sachin Sharma | TNN

Vadodara: While the marginal fall in the female sex ratio in the state in the provisional Census of India 2011 figures may be a cause for concern, Vadodara has a reason to feel proud.

The district has shown a considerable increase in the ratio and has even improved its ranking on this count among the districts in the state.

The figures in the 2001 census had indicated that for every 1000 males in Vadodara district, there were 919 females. The provisional data for the 2011 census indicates that the number has risen significantly and now stands at 934. The overall statistics for Gujarat, in contrast, indicate that the number has fallen from 920 to 918.

Vadodara was ranked 22nd in the sex ratio in the 2001 census. The ranking has jumped to 15th in the provisional statistics released recently.

The provisional figures indicate that the district has a population of 41,57,568. Of these, 21,50,229 are males while 20,07,339 are females. The district was the third largest populated district in the state in 2001 and has retained the ranking in 2011.

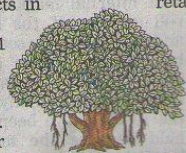
All the five districts in central Gujarat have shown considerable improvement when it comes to the female population ratio. Dahod that was ranked fourth on this front in 2001 with a ratio of 985 improved its sex ratio to 986 and is now ranked third in the state.

Panchmahal improved its ranking from 12 to 10 with the ratio there rising from 938 to 94.



Kheda jumped seven ranks from 19 to 12 as its sex ratio improved from 923 to 937.

Anand that was ranked 24 in the state earlier now stands at 22 with the ratio improving from 910 to 921.



Blooming Baroda
Root For Your City
A TIMES OF INDIA ENDEAVOUR

Once-a-month ring to prevent pregnancy

Malathy Iyer | TNN

Mumbai: It promises freedom, not only from unwanted pregnancy, but also the daily regimen of pill popping. Welcome to the latest contraceptive—the vaginal ring—a do-it-yourself, hormone-releasing, flexible circular object now available in the country's urban hubs.

In this country of 1.2 billion people, a huge number of pregnancies are unplanned. The National Family Health Survey-3 says 44% of India's women of reproductive age don't use any con-

traception. In such circumstances, the contraceptive market has huge potential. However, while some experts say the ring could be what the modern Indian woman is looking for, others say it would be economically out of reach of those who need it most.

The latest avatar of hormone-based contraceptives needs to be vaginally inserted just once a month, instead of being orally

taken daily, as in the case of the pill. It also has fewer side-effects.

The new female contraceptive, the vaginal ring, keeps introducing estrogen and progesterone into the blood through the vaginal lining, to prevent ovulation.

Dr Rekha Daver, who heads the gynaecology department of the state government-run JJ Group of Hospitals, said, "The ring is too expensive to be acces-

sible to the majority who need contraceptives." The ring was introduced in the Indian market in November 2009 and costs a little less than Rs 800.

However, some doctors feel it is the contraceptive for the modern Indian women. Dr Mandakini Parihar, who has a clinic in Chembur and teaches at K J Somaiyya Medical School, Sion, said, "The most effective way of stabilizing the population is to have woman-centric contraceptive choices. While women in our country prefer tubectomy (in the public sector) and pills (in the pri-

vate sector), the ring now offers a choice of low-hormone doses with few side-effects."

Parihar said that over women who have visited her clinic in the past three months have converted to the ring. "They are happy with the freedom it offers vis-a-vis the contraceptive pill," she said.

However, a senior doctor wondered if Indian women "who favour tampons would use a foreign object".

► Modern Indian women comfortable with idea, P 6



'Ultrasounds to blame for skewed sex ratio in India'

Malathy Iyer | TNN

Mumbai: An overwhelming majority of the 117 million "missing" girls in Asia are from India and China, the United Nations has observed. And it has laid the blame for this phenomenon squarely on the ultrasonography machine, which has been a topic of debate and heartburn across the country.

The country's child-sex ratio of 914 girls for every 1,000 boys under the age of six is poorer even than Vietnam's figure of 899 girls.

The statistics released by the United Nations Population Fund on Thursday offer some cold comfort;

China appears even more casual about the future of its girl child - with only 847 girls born for every 1,000 boys - but the United Nations mentioning India and China in the same breath does not speak too highly of India's efforts in this sphere,

say experts.

The UN observation comes at a time when the state government, the Bombay High Court and activists have been racking their heads to tackle the skewed child sex ratio. The UNFPA says that 102 to 106 boys should be born for every 100 girls. But the fact that fewer girls are born every successive years, say health activists,

means that technology is being misused to determine the sex of the unborn child and thereafter to abort it if it's a girl.

UN's observation about ultrasound machines underlines

this.

C Laxmi, who runs Sparrows, said that the UN observation was the result of work done by various health groups in exposing how ultrasound was being misused to determine the gender of the unborn child. "In the

1980s, we raised our voice against amniocentesis. The Maharashtra government and then the rest of the country banned it except for medical emergencies," she said. Now, a review of a two decades showed that little had changed for the girl child. "Everything we fought for was forgotten. So we realized we need to make a louder noise about sonography's misuse so that the authorities hear us," she added.

Doctors are, predictably, not happy with the UN observation that marks their tool as the culprit. "Ultrasound has been around for decades. If it's such a widely used tool for sex determination then girls should have disappeared in larger numbers by now," said Indian radiological & imaging association president Dr Jignesh Thakker.

Stating that doctors are "sitting ducks" for activists, Thakker says that the missing girls issue is more about a society that wants a girl child. "It's about a mindset that needs to be changed and not technology," he added.



ગુજરાતમાં દર વર્ષે અડધા ટકાના દરે વધતું શહેરીકરણ

(પ્રતિનિધિ દ્વારા)

ગાંધીનગર, ગુરુવાર

ગુજરાતમાં દર વર્ષે ૦.૫૨ ટકાના દરે શહેરીકરણ વધી રહ્યું છે. ૨૦૦૧થી ૨૦૧૧ના દસકામાં કુલ ૫.૨ ટકા શહેરીકરણ વધીને શહેરોમાં ૪૨.૬ ટકા વસતિ રહેતી થઈ છે, અર્થાત્ રાજ્યની

૬૫,૮૩,૬૨૮ જનસંખ્યામાંથી ૨,૫૭,૧૨,૮૧૧ લોકો શહેરોમાં વસે છે. શહેરીકરણ વધતા સ્વાભાવિક રીતે ગામડામાં વસતિ ઘટી છે, ૨૦૦૧માં ૬૨.૬ ટકા લોકો ગામડામાં રહેતા હતા, હવે ૫૭.૪ ટકા લોકો ગામડામાં રહે છે.

૨૦૧૧ની સ્થિતિએ રાજ્યની ૪૨.૬ ટકા વસતિ શહેરોમાં અને ૫૭.૪ ટકા વસતિ ગામડામાં વસે છે

રાજ્યના ૮ મહાનગરો યાને ૨૦૧૧ની સ્થિતિએ ૧,૪૭,૨૨,૩૬૩ લોકો વસે છે, એટલે કે રાજ્યની કુલ વસતિના ૨૪.૩૮ ટકા લોકો આ ૮ મહાનગરોમાં વસે છે. મેગાસિટી મુમ્બાઈમાં ૨૦૦૧માં ૪૫ લાખ લોકો વસતા હતા, હવે ૨૦૧૧ની સ્થિતિએ ૫૫,૭૦,૫૮૫ લોકો રાજ્યના આ સૌથી મોટા મહાનગરમાં વસે છે. દસ વર્ષમાં વધુ ૧૦ લાખની વસતિ આ શહેરમાં વધી છે. જ્યારે પાટનગર ગાંધીનગરના

મ્યુનિસિપલ કોર્પોરેશન હદના વિસ્તાર કે જ્યાં આ વખતે પહેલી વાર ચૂંટણી યોજાઈ રહી છે ત્યાં કુલ ૨,૮૨,૭૫૨ લોકો છે.

રાજ્યમાં વસતિ વૃદ્ધિની બાબત ૨૦૦૧માં નંબર વન રહેલો સુરત જિલ્લો ૨૦૧૧માં અવ્વલ નંબરે જ છે, જ્યાં વસતિ વૃદ્ધિનો દર ૪૨.૧૮ ટકા છે, જે અગાઉ ૫૪.૩ ટકા હતો. ૨૦૦૧ના ભૂકંપ પછી કચ્છ જિલ્લામાં મોટાપાયે ઔદ્યોગિકીકરણ થયું છે અને તેને લીધે ૨૦૦૧માં આ જિલ્લાનો વસતિ

સમગ્ર રાજ્યમાં કચ્છ અને દાહોદ- આ બે જિલ્લા એવાં છે, જ્યાં વસતિ વૃદ્ધિ દર વધ્યો છે, બાકી બધા ૨૪ જિલ્લામાં વસતિ વૃદ્ધિનો દર ઘટ્યો છે.

૮ મહાનગરોની વસતિ

અમદાવાદ	૫૫,૭૦,૫૮૫
સુરત	૪૪,૬૨,૦૦૨
વડોદરા	૧૬,૬૬,૭૦૩
રાજકોટ	૧૨,૮૬,૮૮૫
ભાવનગર	૫,૮૩,૭૬૮
જામનગર	૫,૨૮,૩૦૮
જૂનાગઢ	૩,૨૦,૨૫૦
ગાંધીનગર	૨,૮૨,૭૫૨
કુલ વસતિ	૧,૪૭,૨૨,૩૬૩
આ ૮ શહેરોમાં ૨૪.૩૮ ટકા વસતિ વસે છે.	

	૨૦૦૧	૨૦૧૧
ગુજરાતની વસતિ	૫,૦૬,૭૧,૦૧૭	૬,૦૩,૮૩,૬૨૮
શહેરોની વસતિ	૧,૮૮,૩૦,૨૫૦ (૩૭.૪ ટકા)	૨,૫૭,૧૨,૮૧૧ (૪૨.૬ ટકા)
ગ્રામીણ વસતિ	૩,૧૭,૪૦,૭૬૭ (૬૨.૬ ટકા)	૩,૪૬,૭૦,૮૧૭ (૫૭.૪ ટકા)

વૃદ્ધિ દર ૨૫.૪ ટકા હતો, તે ૬.૬૩ ટકા વધીને હવે ૩૨.૦૩ ટકા થયો છે. આવી જ રીતે દાહોદ જિલ્લાનો વસતિ વૃદ્ધિ દર ૨૦૦૧માં ૨૮.૪૪ ટકા હતો, તે ૧.૫૧ ટકા વધીને ૨૦૧૧માં ૨૯.૯૫ ટકા થયો છે.

Indians flock to Thailand to ensure male child

Rachel Rickard Straus | TNN

Aamita from Delhi has a dark secret. Last year, without telling her friends or family, she boarded a plane to Thailand to undergo IVF treatment. Already a mother of two girls, Aamita is perfectly fertile and would have no problem conceiving again. But she wanted a boy.

Gender selection is illegal in India, but a growing number of women like Aamita are finding a way round the ban by going to

Thailand where there are no laws against it. Here doctors use a method called preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), which involves producing embryos through IVF and implanting only those of the desired gender into the womb. Results are nearly 100% accurate.

One gender selection clinic in Bangkok reports a significant increase in enquiries from India in the last year, while another claims web enquiries from Indian couples have doubled in the past ten



months. At around US \$8,500 plus flights, it's not cheap, but increasingly it seems a price couples are willing to pay. Aamita, 35, explains her decision, "I already had two grown-up girls and never thought I want-

ed another baby. But one day I felt I don't have a complete family. My daughters are missing the chance to have a brother. I didn't want to keep going for an abortion. My husband thought I was mad but I went by myself to a clinic in Bangkok. I was there for just a week. It was an easy experience, more like a holiday."

Couples from around the world flock to Thailand for cheap, reliable gender selection treatment. But while half of those from the UK, Australia, Europe and the US are looking to have girls to balance their families, Indian couples have only one motivation. "I don't remember an Indian couple ever asking for a

girl," says Richard Burtan-Sanchez, International Patient Consultant at Gender Selection Bangkok. Indian couples want male heirs. Pooja from Delhi cites an example: "A Page 3 couple went for gender selection, but they won't tell anyone. They're embarrassed that although they're modern in every other way, well travelled, open-minded—she wears short skirts—they still want a son. There's a lot of money in the family, so they want an heir to carry on the family name."

* Names changed upon request

► '80 per cent inquiries are from men', P 8

'80% PDG inquiries are from men'

Rachel Rickard Straus | TNN

Not everyone has as good an experience with preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD). Many Indian women turn up in Thailand terrified as their husbands arrange the procedure and leave their wives in the dark right until the last minute.

"With Indian couples, around 80 per cent of enquiries are from the husband and not wife," says Sanchez-Burton. Some men don't tell their wives until very late in the process. "We've had many frantic emails from Indian women asking, can you please tell me what's going to happen? It's the men who want an heir and are being proactive, while the women are not so keen on IVF and are happier to have a girl."

Priya from Delhi had to go to Bangkok twice and called the process very tedious. But she weighed her options and decided going to Thailand was the lesser evil. "The stress of abortion if it is not a boy is too much. So it is easy to go with

WHAT IS PGD?

Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD) involves the genetic investigation of early stage embryos that have been produced through in-vitro fertilization (IVF) to determine their gender. Through IVF, egg cells are fertilized by sperm outside the body. The embryos created are then cultured in the laboratory for three days, when they will have developed into approximately eight cells. Then one or two cells are removed for testing under a powerful microscope, to identify the gender. Embryos of the desired gender are then planted into the womb.

this choice." Others who can't afford the cost of treatment in Thailand are still resorting to traditional methods of gender selection in India, even though they are all banned. And while PGD involves choosing embryos before conception, traditional methods involve killing the foetus at a much later stage in its devel-

opment. These include having an ultrasound, amniocentesis or foetal blood test to determine the gender.

Women then have abortions if they discover they do not have the gender they want. Lab director Dr SPS Virk at Virk Hospital in Jalandhar says: "Most people know now that gender selection is illegal, but we still get enquiries. We have to politely say it's not available. Out of a hundred phone calls, 10-15 ask about having a son. They know it's banned but they're desperate."

Dr Richa Jagtap at Morpheus Juhu Fertility Center in Mumbai says some doctors still break the law. According to the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act 1994, gender selection is banned in India. But some doctors still find code words to secretly reveal to couples whether they are expecting a girl or a boy. "A member of a prominent women's group who refused to be named said, "Why do people bother going all the way to Thailand? It's possible to get gender selection in India.

NRLs fare no better on sex ratio front

Proportion Of Girls At Birth Lower Than Whites, Blacks In US & UK

Rema Nagarajan | 716

It isn't just at home that India in particular, and Asia generally, have a problem of a low sex ratio. The sex ratio at birth among Indians and other Asian communities in the US is much lower than among the white and the black communities. This is a trend that was also found among Indians in the UK.

The US trend was revealed in a paper published recently in the journal *Prenatal Diagnosis*, which compared the sex ratios of blacks, Chinese, Filipinos, Asian Indians and Koreans, relative to the whites.

This was done by reviewing all US live births from 1975 to 2002 using National Centre for Health Statistics birth certificates in 4-year intervals. However, separate figures for Indians and



HOME TRUTHS ABROAD

Koreans were available only from 1991. In 1999-2002, the sex ratio at birth among Indians was 938 girls to 1,000 boys compared to 952 for the whites and 969 for the blacks, which was the highest.

In 2007, a study at Oxford University by Sylvie Dubuc had shown that for children born to India-born mothers, between 1990 and 2005, the sex ratio was between 926 and 962 girls for every 1,000 boys.

In cases where there was a third

child, the ratio was even more skewed, 884 girls for 1,000 boys. Dubuc, who studied birth rates of different ethnic groups in England and Wales, found that in the 1970s, 971 girls were born for every 1,000 boys among those of Indian origin. But between 2000 and 2005,

there were just

877 girls for every 1,000 boys. Dubuc wrote that the most plausible explanation for this trend was sex-selective abortion.

The US study clearly shows that Indians are not alone in this practice as several other Asian communities too have skewed sex ratio at birth suggesting prenatal gender selection by these populations.

However, the Indian community recorded the least fall in sex ratio among the Asians and thus seemed

the most virtuous in comparison.

In the absence of extrinsic factors, the sex ratio at birth is widely considered to be consistent across human populations ranging from 935 to 971 girls per 1,000 boys. The sex ratio for all US births from 1975 to 2002 was 952. However, in China, India, Korea and some other countries it was found to be less than 926 and this has been interpreted as having arisen through prenatal gender selection.

Between 1999 and 2002, the sex ratio at birth of the Indian community in the US was 938, but other Asian groups like the Chinese with 928, Filipinos with 931 and Koreans with 934 fared even worse.

On the other hand, Indians have recorded the steepest decline in sex ratio for the first birth. It was 976 in 1991-94, which was higher than even the black and the white communities. It fell to 943 by 1999-2002. In contrast, sex ratio at birth for second and third children in the Indian community has actually improved over this period.

This could mean that sex selection is now happening right from the first birth and the pressure to select for subsequent children has hence come down compared to the past.

Saving daughters through sane counsel

Radha Sharma | 71N

Ahmedabad: After Gujarat hit national headlines with a skewed sex ratio of 883 girls per 1,000 boys as per census 2001, and the resultant crackdown on sex-determination tests, there are doctors who would either refuse to tell the sex of the baby or disclose it for a hefty fee.

But Ahmedabad-based gynaecologist Dr Mahesh Jariwala is taking a different path. He took upon a four-year project to try and convince the couples, who wanted to know the sex of the child, to carry on the pregnancy.

"I wanted to give as many girls as possible a chance to be born," says Jariwala who charged the cou-

200 couples wanting sex-determination tests counselled



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ples Rs 1,000 each for the counselling session which has worked wonders, according to an analysis of the data shown alongside.

He says most doctors, who agree to carrying out these tests, do so just in order to retain the case. "Out of 200 couples who wanted to

135 had one daughter

- ▶ 122 were convinced against test, continued with pregnancy
- ▶ 13 were lost in follow-up
- ▶ 58 got another daughter
- ▶ 63 got sons

22 couples had two daughters

- ▶ 5 were convinced against test, continued with pregnancy
- ▶ 17 were lost in follow-up
- ▶ 3 got sons
- ▶ 2 got daughters, were adopted by childless relatives

18 couples had one son

- ▶ 18 continued the pregnancy
- ▶ 12 got sons
- ▶ 5 got daughters
- ▶ 1 miscarriage

25 couples had two boys or one girl and one boy

- ▶ 25 terminated the pregnancy
- ▶ 25 wanted to know sex of foetus only for curiosity

EXTREME ADVICE: If Dr Jariwala failed to convince a couple with one daughter against going for a sex determination test, he would whip out a knife and tell them: "So you don't want a second daughter? Go kill the first one and keep the pregnancy. At the end of it, you would still have either one son or one daughter."

know the sex of their child, 25 were such who had already made up their mind to go for an abortion and they wanted to satisfy their cu-

riosity. After the counselling, 70% couples agreed to carry on with the pregnancy and had babies," says Dr Jariwala.

Ganesh pandal urges devotees to 'Save the girl child'

A Seven-minute Play Is Being Staged To Create Awareness

Darshana Chaturvedi | TNN

Vadodara: A Ganesh 'pandal' is using the festive occasion to send across a social message in Godhra. A seven-minute play is being staged at one of the pandals on the theme 'Save the Girl Child.' The play has attracted many devotees who come for the darshan of Elephant-headed God. Through the play, organisers are trying to sow a seed in the minds of the viewers on the importance of a girl child and that it should be allowed to live and loved like a male child.

Organiser Kalpesh Patel, who is the man behind this theme, had made up his mind six months ago to address the issue of female foeticide and infanticide during Ganeshotsav. Patel, an insurance agent, has also penned and directed the play. "This is an issue which

needs to be addressed and people should be motivated to discuss the topic to spread awareness. Going by the recent figures of the state there are 920 girls to 1,000 boys. Female foeticide and infanticide is still prevalent and practiced in our state," Patel said.

Narrating the script of the seven-minute play, Patel shared that it opens with voice over of Gujarat's brand ambassador Amitabh Bachchan, welcoming the visitors. It is followed by chief minister Narendra Modi urging people to think about girl child issues.

The play begins with two girls playing when suddenly

one of them breaks into tears. The elder one while consoling her young friend tries to find out the problem. "This young girl then innocently shares that her mother who is pregnant was crying since the foetus in her womb is of a girl child and that this has angered her father. The elder one then says that her mother too was in the same sit-



A play being staged at a Ganesh pandal in Godhra

uation when she was carrying her in the womb," shared Patel.

The story moves to flashback showing the elder girl's mother being taken to a sonography clinic to determine the gender of the foetus. "The mother shares her grief with her sister. When the mother is taken to abort the foetus, police arrive and stop the doctor from aborting it. It was the elder girl's sister who had called police and helped in

stopping the crime. So, the girl lives to tell her own story," Patel added. In the end, a 'Beti bachao, beti vadhao' message is flashed. "The play has captured the attention of many in Godhra. After the play, when visitors clap and pass on encouraging remarks it feels good that the message has hit the masses. People have started talking on this issue and that is what I wanted," Patel told TOI.



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AN OPEN LETTER FROM DESTINY'S CHILD

Ashleshia Khurana

Dear Ma,

I often think about you, as I lie here in my hospital cradle. I miss the warmth of your womb where I lay snug and safe for nine months. Feeding from you as your foetus. Feeling along with you, your happiness and pain as I tossed and tumbled inside you. I heard the sounds of music you listened to and jiggled with it in my own way within the space you so generously provided me. I am sorry but I didn't mean to hurt you when I gave you that occasional kick from within, it was just my way of assuring you that I was okay and I existed.

It was not my intention to hurt you at all when I made way out, but your body had given signs that it was time for me to come and join you in your world outside. I cried because you cried. My favourite moment was when you first held me close; nothing will ever feel that good again.

There has been a lot of buzz around here since the time I have been brought to this new place. People bend over me in curiosity and give sweet smiles. I have also been photographed and featured in newspapers. I wonder if any of them reached you and if you recognized me. The people looking after me are called doctors. They are helping me get healthier by giving me something called antibiotics. I am also given infant nutrition but it doesn't taste even half as good as what you fed me. Last fortnight, they brought in another girl like me who was forgotten in a train by her mother, by mistake. The poor child refused to have anything for 16 hours until she was happily with her mother.

Then last week, I got new company. This baby weighs twice my weight and is really cute. That's what all the nurses say. She was wrapped

in a cloth and left behind on the main road! I wonder why parents are becoming so forgetful these days. But you know what, when she was brought in here, another mother of an infant offered to feed her. I suppose breast milk does not differentiate between children. If her parents don't come looking for her, maybe she will be my best friend at Nari Saurakshan Gruh, where both of us will be growing up till our parents find us. I hear they celebrate all festivals and ho-

lidays and have good health and educational programmes.

But I would rather celebrate my birthday with you. Will you be able to find me by then?

I am looked after lovingly by the inmates of that institution. Instead of one mother I have many. But you know what? I miss you. Do you miss me too? I hope you do.

Today is a very special day for girls, I hear. The town has been fasting, observing Navratri

before Ram Navmi, praying for health, wealth and happiness from all the avatars of goddesses. Little girls like me are called 'Kanjaks' meaning incarnations of goddesses. They will be invited at homes and people will wash their feet and bow in front of them asking to be blessed. The little giggling girls will be given goodies and gifts. If I could talk and someone asked me what I wanted for a gift, I would most certainly ask to be united with you.

They say I am a survivor, some had people buried me alive but I called out loud from below the earth mounds and made it. They have named me after one of the sporting champions in town and I hope to make my mark in this world, as she has. I will. And just as her parents are so proud of her, I hope you and Papa will be too.

Hugs and kisses,
Destiny's child.

ashindia@hotmail.com



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Rajasthan government goes after firms making ultrasound scanners

Move Aimed To Curb Rising Female Foeticide In State

Rema Nagarajan / TNN

New Delhi: In a move aimed at curbing female foeticide, Rajasthan authorities have initiated legal action against companies that make and market ultrasound machines used to determine the sex of the fetus.

The Supreme Court had held that all companies need to register the sale of every ultrasound machine. The directive later became part of the PCPNDT law in 2003. "We found that 23 suppli-

ers/manufacturers hadn't registered the sale of a single machine in the three quarters from April to December 2009. They are supposed to register what machine they sold and to whom at the end of every quarter. We sent them notices but got no response. We collected the bill of sales from various districts as evidence of the machines sold in order to fix responsibility and on Thursday, we filed a complaint in court," said Ritesh Tiwari, the legal advisor of the State PCPNDT Cell.

The health department on Thursday filed a complaint in the court of the chief judicial magistrate of Jaipur against manufacturers and suppliers of ultrasound machines across Rajasthan for not registering the sale of machines as stipulated by law.



This is the first time that any state government has decided to take steps against the companies selling ultrasound machines.

Earlier, action had been taken mostly against doctors caught conducting sex-determination tests. The companies named in the complaint under the Pre-conception and Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex selection) Act-1994 (PCPNDT Act) include some of the major global players in diagnostics — Wipro GE Health Care, Erbis Engineering Co Ltd, Pioneer Medical System, Philips Electronics India Ltd, Maestros Mediline Systems Ltd and Triviron health care.

In a statement, the state health department said the decision to move court was taken by principal secretary (health) Dr Pratim B Yashwant. The complaint was filed by officer in charge of the state PCPNDT Cell, Hardayal Singh.

Population growth rate declines to 19.17% from 22.66% in 2001

If growth rate had stayed at 22.66%, the count would have been 6,21,53,069

Urban population is now 42.6%, a sharp rise from 37.4% in 2001

Census shows rapid urbanisation in Guj

Vadodara's Population Grows By 11.8% In Past 10 Yrs

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Gandhinagar: Diamond city Surat's population grew from 28.12 lakh in 2001 to 44.62 lakh in 2011 — a phenomenal rise of 58.68 per cent.

Another city, which witnessed rapid growth in population, is Rajkot — 28.21 per cent — while Ahmedabad's population rose by 23.12 per cent, from 45.25 lakh to 55.71 lakh.

Gujarat has also become more urban with the population in cities growing from 37.4 per cent in 2001 to 42.6 per cent in 2011. The growth in rural population has dropped from 62.6 per cent to 57.4 per cent.

State census 2011 figures were released by chief secretary A K Joti here on Thursday. Additional chief secretary (planning) V N Maurya attributed the spiral in Surat's population to "immigration" from other parts of Gujarat as well as other states of India.

Population of Ahmedabad and Rajkot includes the freshly merged areas in the municipal corporation limits. Vadodara's population rose by just 11.8 per cent while Bhavnagar grew by 14.67 per cent.

Surprisingly, Kutch, a district devastated by the killer earthquake on January 26, 2001, has witnessed a big rise in population, suggesting increase in industrial activities, particularly in areas near Kandla and Mundra ports. Kutch's population rose by 32.03 per cent in the last one decade, from 15.83 lakh to 20.90 lakh. Similarly, Ahmedabad's peripheries have grown sharply because of industrial development and urbanisation. Ahmedabad district's population rose by 42.19 per cent.

The migration theory has failed to explain the population rise in Dahod district, where the tribals move to other parts of the state looking for jobs. The district witnessed 29.25 per cent increase in population. Another backward district, Banaskantha, also saw a 24.43 per cent rise in population. Failure of family welfare programmes, apparently, was one of the main reasons for the population growth in some back-

We are 6 crores now

	Gujarat	India
Persons	6,03,83,628	1,21,01,93,422
Male	3,14,82,282	62,37,24,248
Female	2,89,01,346	58,64,69,174

Big leap in Gujarat's urbanisation

	2001	2011
Rural	3,17,40,757 (52.6%)	3,46,70,817 (57.4%)
Urban	1,89,30,250 (37.4%)	2,57,12,811 (42.6%)

Literacy rate shoots up

In the past decade, nearly 1.21 crore more Gujaratis learnt to read and write. The jump in literacy rate in tribal districts too is remarkable. Literacy in tribal district of Dahod rose by nearly 15 per cent while Dangs saw a 17 per cent growth. In backward district of Banaskantha, literacy rate rose to 66.39 per cent from 50.97 per cent in 2001. Tapi also posted 69.23 per cent literacy — a gain of 12 per cent from

2001. District-wise literacy figures show that 18 districts have a higher percentage than the all-India average. Urbanised Ahmedabad and Surat top the list of most literate districts with 86.65 per cent literacy in 7 and above age group.

Year	Persons	Males	Females
1951	21.82	30.32	12.87
1961	31.47	42.49	19.74
1971	36.95	47.6	25.56
1981	44.92	55.95	33.2
1991	61.29	73.13	48.64
2001	69.14	79.66	57.8
2011	79.31	87.23	70.73

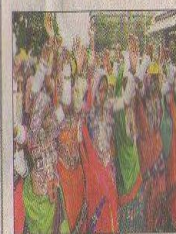
Child sex ratio rises

Hope sustains as Gujarat records marginal improvement in child sex ratio from 883 girls per 1,000 boys in 2001 to 886 in 2011. Mehsana, a district with lowest sex ratio of 801 girls in 2001, has recorded maximum improvement of 44 points. Surat is now the district with lowest sex ratio of 836 — a drop of 23 points from 859 of 2001. Tribal districts continue to boast of higher number of girl children. However, Dahod, which had a healthy sex ratio of 967, has recorded a drop of 30 points.

DISTRICTS RANKED AS PER CHILD SEX RATIO IN 0-6 AGE GROUP

Top five		Worst five	
District	Sex ratio	District	Sex ratio
Dangs	963	Surat	836
Tapi	944	Mehsana	845
Dahod	937	Gandhinagar	847
Narmada	937	Rajkot	854
Valsad	926	Ahmedabad	859

Only 918 women for 1000 men

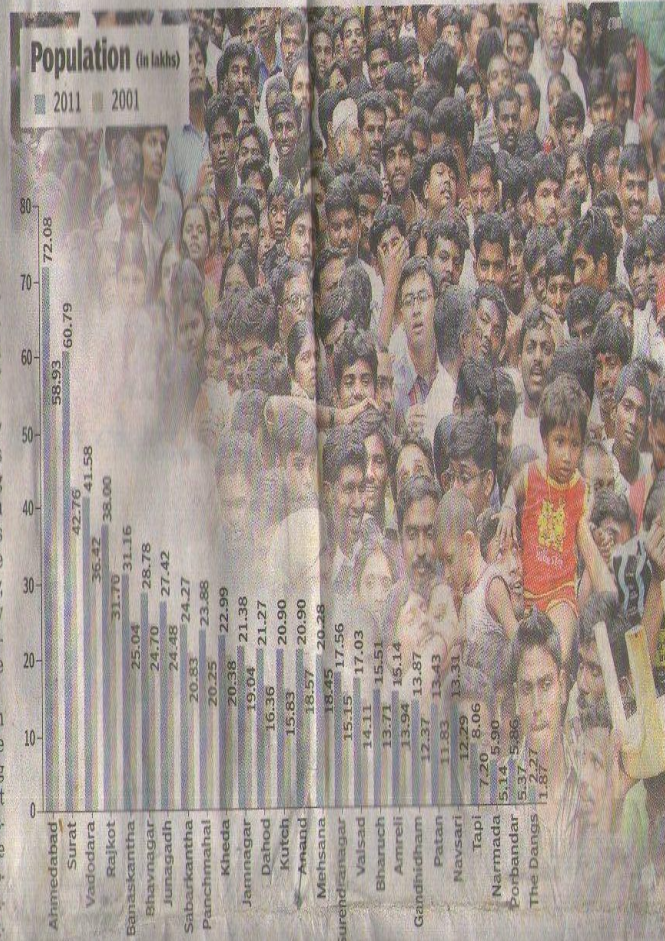


Gujarat has lost more women in the past decade as sex ratio slips from 920 per 1,000 males in 2001 to 918 in 2011. This is far below the sex ratio of India which is 940. Tribal districts shine as Dangs and Tapi recorded over 1,000 women per 1000 men. Kutch is the biggest loser of women where sex ratio has gone down by 35 points. In Surat, where single men come from other states for employment, the ratio has gone down by 23 points.

... BUT TRIBALS SHOW THE WAY

Dangs and Tapi have more women than men

District	Dangs	Tapi
Sex ratio per 1,000 men	1,007	1,004



Mehsana, the shame of India!

North Gujarat Town Has Lowest Child Sex Ratio In The Country

Radha Sharma & Bharat Yagnik | TNN

Ahmedabad: Mehsana town has notched the shameful distinction of having the lowest child sex ratio among urban centres in India.

With only 760 girls per 1,000 boys in the 0-6 year age group, Mehsana has hit the lowest ebb on the gender index, according to just-released Census 2011 figures.

The town, with a population of 1.9 lakh, has 7,753 girls against 10,203 boys in the 0-6 year age group. With a literacy rate of 90% and dominated by influential and affluent Patels, this is clearly a reflection of a strong bias against the girl child in this north Gujarat town. The Census figures are available for towns with more than one lakh population.

Mehsana is the only city from Gujarat that figures in the list having a child sex ratio less than 800. Mehsana is followed by twin cities Sonapat and Bahadurgarh of Haryana that have child sex ratio of 784 girls per

COUNTRY'S WORST FIVE

City	Child sex ratio*
Mehsana (Gujarat)	760
Sonapat (Haryana)	784
Bahadurgarh (Haryana)	784
Agra (Uttar Pradesh)	790
Rohtak (Haryana)	793
Shamli (Uttar Pradesh)	798

*Girls per 1,000 boys in 0-6 age group

(Figures as per data of child sex ratio in urban agglomerations or cities with over one lakh population, Census 2011)



1,000 boys. In fact, Haryana has three cities with less than 800 child sex ratio, the third one being Rohtak (793 girls). Agra, in Uttar Pradesh, too reflects little love for the girl child - it has only 790 girls per 1,000 boys.



A TIMES OF INDIA ENDEAVOUR

Unfortunatly, Mehsana's national infamy is a continuation of the alarming situation unearthed in

2001, when it was revealed that the district had an alarmingly low child sex ratio of 801 girls per 1,000 boys. While the district has improved its tally in 2011 to 845, the main town continues to languish. Gujarat's sex ratio has only marginally improved from 883 girls per thousand boys in 2001 to 886 in 2011.

Social activist Prakash Modi of Young Citizen Group says that getting a sex determination test on the sly is easy for most well-off

families in the north Gujarat region where the gender bias is strong.

Mehsana district collector Rajkumar Beniwal says there are 90 registered sonography machines in the town. Of these, seven machines were sealed in the past under Pre-Conception Pre Natal Diagnostics Test Act. Beniwal has been sending letters to each pregnant mother urging them not to discriminate between a boy and a girl and also informing them that sex determination is illegal.

Community leaders say significant efforts were undertaken in the past but more effort will be required to bring a social change. "The Patel community introduced fee waivers for educating the girl child and promoting awareness against sex determination. But the damage done in the past continues to reflect even now. Obviously, we have to make more efforts to bring a social change," says Anil Patel, former minister and president of Umiya Mataji Mandir Sansthan, the trust of the local deity revered by Patels.

MSU student's crusade to save girl child

Neha Panchal Uses Many Mediums To Reach Out To Women

Tushar Tere | TNN

Ashwin Rajput

Vadodara: You may have come across posters on auto-rickshaws or billboards that read 'Save the Girl Child' or 'Be Proud of Having Girl Child' and thought it was a state government campaign. But the campaign against terminating female foetus is being run by a young student of MS University (MSU).

Neha Panchal, a post-graduate student at the department of extension and communication, has taken up the task of promoting the Save the Girl Child campaign using different media. Panchal has undertaken the campaign as a part of her college project.

But, it has become more than an academic project for Neha, who has started campaigning actively in different areas of the city. She has also appealed to the state government to start a counselling centre at her department.

Neha holds talks with women and men from underprivileged section, slums and middle-class segment and convinces them about the importance of girl child. She has already met hundreds of citizens. Neha has also begun a community titled Save the Girl Child Campaign on Facebook and she has decided to organise a symposium-cum-exhibition to promote the cause.

"I chose the girl child issue as it is one of the most important problems our country is facing. The skewed sex-ratio in our country, especially Gujarat, is hampering the growth of



Neha Panchal talks with residents in the city

our economy. After all, girls can contribute equally to the nation," Neha told TOI.

"My aim is to interact with maximum number of people and convey them the benefits of hav-

ing girl child. A section in our society still thinks that girl child is a liability and I want to remove that misconception. I want to work more in this area," added Neha who is pur-

suing the project under guidance of associate professor, Dr Anuradha Mathu.

The 22-year-old student designs brochures and billboard posters

on her own apart from producing small audio advertisements for FM radio. "We will also make a small documentary

film that will be aired on cable television. An advertisement is being currently aired on some cable networks," Neha said.



A TIMES OF INDIA ENDEAVOUR

Just 6% of Dr Deaths convicted

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: Only around 6% of cases filed against doctors involved in sex-selection practices in 17 states with the most skewed sex ratio have ended up in convictions till date.

According to the Union health ministry's latest data prepared for a meeting of health secretaries of the 17 states on Wednesday, a total of 805 cases have been filed in court against doctors till March 31 ever since the revised Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PC and PNDT Act) came into force. Only 55 convictions have been recorded since then.



The rest of the cases are either in progress or dropped for 'poor investigation and insufficient evidence against the accused'. Convictions were highest in Haryana (23), followed by

Punjab (22), Gujarat (4), Maharashtra (3), Delhi (2) and Chandigarh (1). Interestingly, the highest number of cases against doctors was filed in Rajasthan (161), but none has resulted in conviction.

Maharashtra filed 139 cases, Punjab 112, Gujarat 82, Madhya Pradesh 70, Delhi 61, UP and Haryana 54, Andhra Pradesh 19, Bihar 10, Uttaranchal 9, Chhattisgarh 5, Jharkhand 3 and Chandigarh 2. Gujarat leads the pack in sealing of ultrasound machines (168), followed by Haryana (133). While Maharashtra sealed 82 machines, Rajasthan sealed 76, Orissa 68, Delhi 48, Punjab 26, UP 37, Jharkhand 13 and Andhra Pradesh 12. "On Wednesday, the meeting will emphasize on following up on court cases, building a strong case for prosecution and putting in place the mechanism for legal assistance and engaging with state legal services authorities apart from training workshops for judiciary and public prosecutors," an official said.

Union health minister Ghulam Nabi Azad has been very proactive in rectifying the nation's shameful sex ratio. An official added, "India's conviction rates are shockingly low as doctors who carry out the search

Images/Posters/Slogans of Save Girl Child



बेटी और पेड़

Save Girls Child, Save Nation, Save Future

Share if You Agree & Let Every1 Know



बेटी
पेड़ से बोली
भाई, तुम्हारी और मेरी
किस्मत एक जैसी है
मुझे गर्भ के भीतर
मारा जाता है
और तुम्हें
गर्भ के बाहर।
पेड़ ने
बेटी के दर्द को

आत्मसात करते हुए कहा
बहन, हम दोनों मिलकर
मनुष्य को कैसे समझाएँ, कि
स्वयं के पैर पर
कुल्हाड़ी मारना
बुद्धिमानी नहीं है
बेटी/ पृथ्वी की
उर्वरा है
और पेड़
नूतनता।

- atulpandey

बेटी

जब-जब जन्म लेती है बेटी,
खुशियाँ साथ लाती है बेटी।

ईश्वर की सौगात ही बेटी,
सुबह की पहली किरण है बेटी।

तारों की शीतल छाया है बेटी,
आंगन की चिड़िया है बेटी।

त्याग और समर्पण सिखाती है बेटी,
नये नये रिश्ते बनाती है बेटी।

जिस घर जाए, उजाला लाती है बेटी,
बार-बार याद आती है बेटी।

बेटी की कीमत उनसे पूछो,
जिनके पास नहीं है बेटी।



Save The Girl Child

मैं औरत हं...!!
 मैं प्यार करती हूं
 मनुहार करती हूं...
 मैं पालनहार हूं ...
 पर गुहार भी करती हूं...
 मैं सृजन जानती हूं...
 तो विनाश भी करती हूं
 संसार रचती हूं...
 इसलिए जननी हूं
 मैं सत्य हूं...सुन्दर हूं..शिव भी हूं...
 मैं ही मां हूं..बेटो हूं...बेहन भी... और
 तुम्हारी प्रिया भी...
 तुम कहते हो..
 मैं यौवन और श्रृंगार हूं..
 लेकिन
 मैं मृगीचिका भी...
 मैं सृष्टि हूं...
 मैं सम्पूर्ण हूं...
 गर्व है मुझे
 मैं औरत हं...!!
 - योगेश राणा



बोये जाते हैं बेटे, उग जाती हैं
बेटियाँ, खाद पानी बेटों में पर
लहराती हैं बेटियाँ , ऐवरेस्ट पर
भेजे जाते हैं बेटे, पर चढ़ जाती
हैं बेटियाँ, रुलाते हैं बेटे, और
रोती हैं बेटियाँ, कई तरह से
गिराते हैं बेटे, पर संभल जाती हैं
बेटियाँ, पढ़ाई करते हैं बेटे पर
सफलता पाती हैं बेटियाँ , कुछ
भी कहो पर अच्छी हैं बेटियाँ ।

बस एक सवाल.....

मातृशक्ति यदि नहीं बची तो
बाक़ी यहाँ रहेगा कौन ?
प्रसव वेदना, लालन-पालन
सब दुःख-दर्द सहेगा कौन ?
मानव हो तो दानवता को
त्यागो फिर ये उत्तर दो-
इस नन्हीं सी जान के दुश्मन को
इंसान कहेगा कौन ?



बेटी बचाओ

अगर रख सको तो
एक निशानी हूं मैं,
खो दो तो सिर्फ
एक कहानी हूं मैं।

यह है स्नेहा शेखावत। दिल्ली में राजपथ
पर गुरुवार को आयोजित 63वें गणतंत्र दिवस
समारोह में पहली बार एक महिला अधिकारी
ने वायु सेना की टुकड़ी का नेतृत्व किया।

गर्भ में कन्याओं को मार देने वालो जागो !!*Vinay*





Stop

Female

Foeticide

**Family Is
Incomplete
Without**



A 'GIRL' Child



SPECIAL SMS



People love to have a
MOTHER, a **WIFE** and
ofcourse a
GIRLFRIEND too...
Then why not a
DAUGHTER...?
Strange... but true.

मैं गौरव हूँ
मैं सम्मान हूँ
मैं भी इन्सान हूँ
मैं भविष्य हूँ
मैं ही वर्तमान हूँ
मैं बेटी हूँ

पर कहाँ गयीं 71 लाख* बेटियाँ ?
बिगड़ रहा है सामाजिक संतुलन!!

भारतीय जनगणना 2011 के अनुसार हर 1000 लड़कों की तुलना में 914 लड़कियाँ (0-6 वर्ष) ही हैं। यह एक बेहद गंभीर समस्या है।

हमारा विश्वास है कि बेटियों का जन्म गौरवशाली एवं महत्वपूर्ण है। आईए, आप और हम अजन्मे बच्चे की लिंग जाँच एवं चयन के खिलाफ आवाज उठाएं और गर्व से कहें 'लेट गर्ल्स बी बॉर्न'।

*भारतीय जनगणना 2011 के अनुसार 0 से 6 वर्ष के लड़के और लड़कियों की कुल संख्या में अंतर।

Let Girls Be Born
A Plan India Initiative



अधिक जानकारी के लिए लॉग आन करें www.planindia.org

"A baby is God's opinion that life should go on." Carl Sandburg

Pretty dresses Little Curls, Oh thank heaven for little girls!

"The beauty of a girl cannot be mimicked, fabricated or created by human means, it only occurs naturally." Pam Callaghan

"Our daughter is the knot that ties the family together".

**"A baby girl...one of the most beautiful miracles in life,
one of the greatest joys we can ever know, and one of the reasons why there is a little extra sunshine,
laughter and happiness in your world today." Author: unknown**

**"Little girls dance their way into your heart, whirling on the tips of angel wings, scattering gold dust
and kisses in our paths"**

"Little Girls are Heavens Flowers"

"Daughters are flowers that are forever in bloom."

"Girls are giggles with freckles all over them"

a son is son till he gets a wife

a daughter is a daughter for life

GIRLS ARE ANGELS SAVE THEM

· Girls are great, Don't destroy their fate







**सफल राष्ट्र का प्रण,
हर बेटी को जीवन**



भारत सरकार
स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

