

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

1. Background and Conceptual framework

The declaration of the ICPD (International Conference on Population and Development) in 1994 at Cairo, Beijing: Platform for World Women 1995, and Millennium Development Goals directly or indirectly strengthened the status of women in terms of Equity and Equality in relation to gender biasness, health, violence against girls and women, education and other related developmental issues. However, the changing or declining sex ratio indicates the real status of women in Gujarat and other parts of India. Declining sex ratio refers to a situation where males outnumber females. Sex ratio is an important social indicator to measure the extent of prevailing equity between males and females, and gender discrimination in a society at a given point of time. It is defined as number of females per thousand males. According to the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI), a research institute engaged with scientific study of populations, sex ratio indicates the proportion of men and women in a certain society. Usually, the sex ratio is indicated as the number of men per 100 women. This can be done according to age, age-group or the total population. In most countries, the natural sex ratio at birth is around 105 or 106 men, per 100 women. More boys are being born than girls, but in the higher age groups, the sex ratio is usually lower, this is caused by a higher mortality of men (Bronsema, 1990). In India, the sex ratio is indicated in a different way; here the sex ratio is seen as the number of women per 1000 men.

Changes in sex ratio largely reflect the underlying socio-economic and cultural patterns of the society in different ways. According to 2001 census, sex ratio of India is 933 females per thousand males. This sex ratio can be seen with two-

perspectives. Firstly, this sex ratio show a marginal improvement of 6 points from the sex ratio of 927 recorded in 1991(census2001).Secondly if we consider the past hundred years, we find the sex ratio has shown an alarming decline. It was 972 in 1901 as against 933 in 2001. In a “normal world,” the female population equals or slightly surpasses the number of males. Except in India, that is, where the situation is just the opposite, where the gender ratio — or the number of females to males is known to be among the most imbalanced in the world.

Although China has the most severe shortage of girls compared to boys of any country in the world today, in India, the 2001 census revealed disturbing news: the proportion of girls aged 0-6 years dropped from 945:1000 to 927: 1000 since the previous census done 10 years earlier. This means that 35 million fewer females than males were registered in India over this particular decade. The census also revealed that the phenomenon had reached high proportions in states, which had no prior history or practice of female infanticide, or where forms of discrimination against girls were not strongly evident earlier. Masculine sex ratio in the South Asia region was raised as an issue of concern with the mention of ‘missing women’ in this region to the tune of about 11 percent (Sen, 1990). Sen’s mention of 100 million women missing was moderated to a level of 60 million by Coale (1991) without dispute with Sen, regarding its large social implications. Subsequent studies have provided evidence that it is the excessive female mortality before birth, at birth, in infancy and in childhood, which mainly account for the imbalance in sex ratios and the missing of a large number of female children in Asia. Quite recently, Croll (2002) has raised the question of millions of girls not making it to adulthood and urged to focus attention on daughter-discrimination, family planning, girlhood, children differentiated by their gendered value, their birth order and sibling configuration, particularly in South Asia. Masculine sex ratio in Indian population has been a matter of concern for decades and considerable attention is being given to understand the different dimensions of female deficit as well as their regional pattern. This overall masculinity of sex ratio later was traced to the masculinity in child sex ratios given the greater hostility to girl children during the early years of their life.

2. The Declining sex ratio: A Social Problem

India is one of the countries in the world where males outnumber females. There are various synonyms used to describe the decline in sex ratio, like skewed sex ratio, imbalanced sex ratio, missing of girls, disturbances in sex ratio etc. All these highlight one common thing, that is, “Invisibility or Reduction in number of Females and Girls” in comparison to males of the country. It is evident that among the ten most populous countries of the world, India is at the lowest position among all in terms of sex ratio. In many developing countries like India, more girls die between age group (0-4 and 0-6), and a wide contrast with the developed countries where deaths of boys are higher than those of girls. Sex differentials in childhood mortality are particularly important in understanding sex ratio and child sex ratio because traditional bias associated with son preference is another important reason for decline in sex ratio. In India and other developing countries, the death rates for girls are higher than the death rates for boys, which indicate the social, demographical, and economical, cultural patterns that discriminate against girls. The extent of gender discrimination against females in India has generated a lot of interest among social scientists. The higher child mortality for girls than that of boys, and female foeticide presents the females at a disadvantage in Indian society. It is observed that there are some regional differentials in childhood mortality and thus led to gender discrimination. The high male sex ratio of the Indian population had been a matter of concern for many decades. Considerable attentions have been given to different dimensions of female deficits in India persisting regional variations. Some of the demographers like Sen. 1990; Agnihotri 2000; Das gupta, Bhat1995; and Miller 1981 have highlighted these issues. Visaria (1961) and Natarajan (1971) in their respective study discussed the numerical imbalances between the male and female sexes. The results of 2001 Census have set off a further debate on the issue and have narrowed down the focus to the changes in the juvenile or child sex ratio. Changes in the sex ratio of children, aged 0-6 years, are better indicators of status of girl child in Asian environment which is known to be more hostile to females in their early age. It also reflects the sum total of intra-household gender relations. In most parts of the

globe, fewer females are born; yet females, as compared to their male counterparts, typically survive longer to exceed the males numerically at any given point of time. However, this demographic attribute eludes India where males decisively out-number the females and women constitute less than half of the total population. Sex ratio is a direct indicator of women's status and welfare. The change in sex ratio is analyzed in a framework that underlies (relatively) greater deprivation and discrimination of females, as opposed to males, in the south Asian cultural set-up. The major determinants, of numerical imbalances revolve around factors such as under enumeration of women, fertility, mortality and migration. Under-enumeration of females, as compared to their male counterparts typically encountered in south Asia due to lower status of women, also makes census sex composition more masculine. Though such enumeration bias is relatively greater at certain ages such as early childhood and widowhood, it is rather being artificial than real, it does not depict the grim reality and warrants interventions that can generate better awareness about the need for accurate age reporting as well as recording. While the 2001 Indian census shows that the overall male-female sex ratio has marginally improved from 927 women per 1000 men to 933 per 1000 during the last decade, the girl: boy ratio in the youngest age group fell from 945/1000 to 927/1000. The regional disparities also appear to have increased. The northern states generally exhibit a worsening trend in male-female sex ratio as compared to the southern states. The Census evidence suggests a clear cultural preference for male children, particularly among north Indians. The sharpest decline for the age group 0-6 years is observed in the northern states, particularly in Haryana (820/1000) and in Punjab (793/1000). The census lists 'sex-selective female abortions', 'female infanticide', and 'female neglect' typically through giving girls less food and medical care than boys- as an important reason commonly put forward "for this skewed sex ratio. The new figures point to the use of new technologies to determine the gender composition is another factor for such disturbances in sex ratio. Furthermore, as social norms are changing toward smaller families, the availability of, and access to, new technologies provide an easy way for parents to achieve such goals. Amartya Sen has called it a 'technological revolution of a reactionary kind. These factors are

responsible for the adverse consequences like maximum mortality of girl child; undernourishment of girls; lack of educational qualification among girls and women, lack of women participation in women oriented jobs due to imbalance in sex ratio between males and females; lack of self sufficiency among women; scarcity of girls for marriage which is leading to purchasing of the girls at time of marriage; increase in crime against women like rape etc.

3. Historical perspective: Status of women in India

The status and position of women in India, has been a debatable question, as it reflects the paradoxical nature of Indian society and its culture where women on one hand are considered to be deities and on the other side they are considered to be subordinate to men in all spheres of life. The democratic system of India ensures equality for women and men in every sphere of life and activity. Women in India have been given equality of opportunity in all matters relating to education, employment, and legal status; and they can aspire to grace the highest office of the State. However, this is truly not representative of women in general in the country, yet. Though, legally and constitutionally, all women have equal rights in every walk of life, a vast majority of them is still illiterate and unskillful. This is a contradictory situation, which must be understood and seen in its historical perspective. This will help us to judge the correct status of women in Indian society from past to present eras. The status of women and their activities can be divided into three main historical periods, the ancient, the medieval and the modern. During ancient period, women enjoyed considerable respect in all spheres of life. The period between 1500-1000 B.C. is known as the early Vedic or Rig Vedic period. In this period, women did not enjoy total freedom and equality in relation to man. It is evident from the available data that many liberal attitudes and practices pertaining to women existed during this period; women in this (Vedic) period were not allowed to take part in religious and social activities. In this period, social and cultural norms and values were not much influential as compared to other periods where social institutions, culture, religious beliefs and

norms governed and limited the status of women. The daughter was not considered a liability. Girls were also allowed to take up vedic studies. The Rig Vedic Aryans were patriarchal, where husband was considered superior to his wife. In short, it can be said that to an extent women in the early Vedic period lived in a liberal social atmosphere. The period of the epics dated broadly to 12th century B.C. The two great epics Ramayana and Mahabharata have played a key role in moulding the beliefs of the Hindus, as well as their attitude towards women. These two epics have a strong influence on Indian society even today. Now, girls are being brought up to follow footsteps of Sita and Draupadi. Sita is considered as the ideal Hindu woman. Similarly, Draupadi the central female character of Mahabharata is famous for her great sense of independence and courage. So in short we can say that in this period also women maintained their own identity and status in the society. During the period of Buddhism and Jainism, women were treated with far greater respect than they were during the later Vedic period. Both these religions gave maximum opportunities for women to participate in social and religious activities as compared to other religions, which led to a deterioration of women's status in society. The late Vedic period witnessed decline in the status of women. This was primarily due to the increasing importance given to sons as the carriers of family lineage, and as inheritors of the family property. In this period, women began to confine themselves to domestic spheres. The age of DharmaShastras (Codes of Conduct) served as the base for prescribing behavioral norms for women also. These belong to a large body of secular literature, compiled in 500-200B.C. This period saw the exclusion of women from both economic and religious spheres. Since education was virtually denied to women, they had to be dependent on men for their survival and maintenance. The concept that women were inferior to men gained ground, and women were pushed to a state of absolute gloom and ignorance. This period was also characterized by consolidation of religious customs with caste system assuming rigid proportions. The two main DharmaShastras Manusmriti and Yagnavalkyasmriti laid down these codes of conducts, which imposed heavy restrictions on women's mobility and freedom. This period witnessed evil

practices such as early marriage, denial of education to girls, and Satipratha, which led to decline in the status of women from that period to till today.

The 11th century that is the medieval period, saw the emergence of Islam, which created hopes of promoting interest for the upliftment of status of Indian women. But Islam introduced certain values and practices, which did not help to enhance the status of women. Islam introduced purdah system, which resulted in the isolation of women from men, and also from other social and religious activities. During this period, practices such as polygamy, sati, child marriage etc. gained further momentum. Women were denied the right to education and they were secluded from other activities. In short, medieval period also witnessed a faster deterioration of women.

The modern period began with start of the 19th century. The British came to India 17th century. For nearly 200 years; despite the presence of East India Company no real effort was made to address questions of social inequality or social oppression. Social evils such as sati, suppression of widows, denial of education to women, and child marriage, flourished unchecked. With the dawn of the 19th century, an era of change began, and it was in this period that many efforts were made both by the British rulers and progressive sections of Indian society to put an end to social evils. The British period which was started continued up to 1947 set in motion an era of social reforms which resulted in imposing a ban on all social evils like sati pratha, purdha pratha, etc. during this period (British period). Many Indian social reformers such as Raja Rammohan Roy, and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar made their efforts which led the British to pass Widow Remarriage Act, the Sati Prohibition Act and Child Marriage Restrain Act. Women's education also received greater support from these Indian reformers in the 19th century. After India got her independence in 1947, the constitution of India laid the foundation for creating a social order where men and women were treated as equals and where gender discrimination was abolished. The government of India implemented a number of laws for liberating the women from oppressive social customs. These include law relating to divorce, inheritance, equal wages; maternity benefits etc. Though significant improvements have taken place in the

position of women in the 50 years following independence, the women still continue to suffer from problems such as illiteracy, violence and poor health. It is correct that a number of laws have been passed to change the condition of women. However, the socio-culture setup of Indian society prohibited change in the status of women and prescribed roles for men and women, and projected women as weaker than men. This led to gender discrimination. In short, we can conclude that the status of women from ancient to contemporary period witnessed isolation and unequal status in comparison to men until now. This is due to the cultural set up of Indian society. This unequal status results in deteriorating condition of women in all sphere of life, like poor health of women, illiteracy, low profiles job for women, decline in the number of female child (decline in sex ratio) are some of the major harmful results of gender discrimination and unequal status of women in our society. The present research work aims at identifying the factors which are responsible for the declining status of women and gender discrimination in general, and with special reference to declining female ratio in Gujarat state.

4. An overall view of sex ratio: National Scenario

Changes in the sex ratio largely reflect the underlying socio, economic, and cultural patterns of that society in different ways. According to 2001 census, sex ratio of India was 933 females per thousand males. This sex ratio can be seen with two-perspectives. Firstly this sex ratio shows a marginal improvement of 6 points from the sex ratio of 927 recorded in 1991(census2001).Secondly if we consider the past hundred years; the sex ratio has shown an alarming decline. It was 972 in 1901 as against 933 in 2001. Another aspect related to sex ratio is “Child Sex Ratio (CSR)” which includes children of age group (0-6) years. Child sex ratio refers to number of girls in the age group (0-6) per thousand male children in the same age group. Declining in CSR is the most alarming issue as compared to overall sex ratio. It is evident that in 2001 CSR was 927 whereas in 1991 it was about 945.It shows a decline of 18 points. It is found that some states of India like Punjab, Haryana, H.P, Delhi and Gujarat etc. show an overall decline in sex ratio

as well CSR. The 2001 Census revealed that, there were 49 districts in the country, where, for every 1000 male children aged 0-6 years there were less than 850 female children. The majority in these districts were located in the three northern and western states of Punjab, Haryana, and Gujarat (Census of India, 2001). The juvenile sex ratio declined by 9 per cent in Haryana (from 902 in 1981 to 820 in 2001) and by nearly 13 per cent in Punjab (from 908 to 793 between 1981 and 2001). Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat states also experienced a decline in the juvenile sex ratio of the order of 7.5 per cent, which is higher than the national average of around 4.5 per cent. Thus, an almost adjacent belt extending from northwest India to parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat experienced severe decline in the juvenile sex ratio in recent decades in comparison to southern states where condition of women is better than other regions. The decline of 60 to 83 points in the juvenile sex ratio between 1991 and 2001 or in a span of just one decade (observed in many of these districts) cannot be explained solely by the practice of long drawn discrimination against girls in this region because at no other time in the history of census has the sex ratio of children declined so drastically (UNFPA, 2003).

5. Trends in sex ratio of Gujarat

(Table: 1) Trends in sex of Gujarat

Sr.	State/Districts	Sex Ratio since (Number of females per 1000 males)											
		1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
24	Gujarat	954	946	944	945	941	952	940	934	942	934	920	918
01	Kachchh	995	1034	1059	1066	1095	1079	1041	1012	999	964	942	907
02	Banaskantha	925	921	919	934	948	951	947	941	947	934	930	936
03	Patan	951	944	949	967	968	971	956	957	963	944	932	935
04	Mahesana	956	948	955	973	971	1003	974	961	974	951	927	925
05	Sabarkantha	996	982	994	964	967	973	954	965	976	965	947	950
06	Gandhinagar	952	935	923	943	913	992	961	936	943	935	913	920
07	Ahmadabad	947	913	864	889	825	836	852	863	888	897	892	903
08	Surendarnagar	968	934	957	964	956	958	943	941	934	921	924	929
09	Rajkot	970	978	984	974	977	988	963	947	947	946	930	924
10	Jamnagar	968	981	982	991	988	986	952	942	949	949	941	938
11	Porbandar	956	964	962	960	962	1001	962	952	967	960	946	947
12	Junagadh	955	963	962	960	962	976	949	933	954	960	955	952
13	Amreli	952	952	950	956	955	974	959	957	980	985	987	964
14	Bhavnagar	947	947	943	949	947	955	936	944	954	944	937	931
15	Anand	897	865	872	875	896	906	890	880	905	912	910	921
16	Kheda	897	866	872	875	896	918	914	907	924	924	923	937
17	PanchMahals	975	958	951	931	938	922	925	930	942	934	938	945
18	Dohad	975	958	951	931	938	954	954	964	984	976	985	986
19	Vodadara	914	905	904	902	899	914	906	900	915	913	919	934
20	Narmada	953	935	937	918	927	938	952	961	954	947	949	960
21	Bharuch	960	940	943	921	932	946	945	944	938	925	921	924
22	The Dangs	938	887	888	848	848	877	913	946	970	983	987	1007
23	Navsari	992	990	988	982	977	1041	1030	1002	975	958	955	961
24	Valsad	992	990	988	982	977	1001	1005	992	989	957	920	926
25	Surat	992	990	988	982	977	973	967	943	908	882	810	788
26	Tapi	992	990	988	982	977	959	972	957	989	987	996	1004

(Source: Census of India 2001 and Provisional Data of Census 2011)

(Table: 2) Trends in sex ratio of CSR (Gujarat)

Year	Child Sex Ratio (CSR)
1961	956
1971	948
1981	947
1991	928
2001	883
2011	886

(Source: Census of India 2001 and Provisional Data of Census 2011)

The above table shows and highlights trends in the overall sex ratio of Gujarat state with its districts. The trends of sex ratio in Gujarat can be understood at two different levels. The first level includes “Pre- Independence Phase” and the second level includes “Post- Independence Phase”. The census for 1901-1941 represents pre independence phase. The sex ratio trend in this phase shows a declining pattern in the OSR at state level i.e. in 1901 it was 954 which were highest in that phase and later it started declining i.e. in 1921 it was 944; 1931 it was 945; and in 1941 it was 941 respectively. The census for 1951-2011 represents post independence phase. The sex ratio trend in this phase shows the same pattern as of pre independence phase i.e. declining trend in the sex ratio. The census year 1951 only witnessed the highest sex ratio of 952 whereas other census years witnessed decline in overall sex ratio. In the census year 1961 it was 940, in 1971(934), in 1981 (942), in 1991 (934), in 2001 (920) and in 2011 it was calculated 918 respectively. It has been observed from the above description that at both the levels sex ratio has shown a declining trend. But if we compare the pre phase with post phase we find that the trend in the overall sex ratio was much better in post phase. This shows fluctuation in the sex ratio of Gujarat. Similarly, if we study the trends in overall sex ratio of Gujarat at various districts levels we find the same trends which we have observed above. If we analyze trends in sex ratio district wise, we will get the clear picture of the variations in the trend of sex ratio of Gujarat. In year 1901, two districts in Gujarat showed a sex ratio less than 900 (Anand, Kheda) .No district was there in the group of 1000+ sex ratio. Sex ratios of remaining 23 districts were in the group of 900 to 1000. In 1911, one more district namely the Dangs was added with Anand and Kheda in group of less than 900 sex ratio pattern. Kachchh was the only district in that running year (1911) which was under the group of 1000+ sex ratio and other 21 districts were in the group of 900 to 1000 sex ratio pattern. During census of 1921, 1931, and 1941 highlighted another trend in the sex ratio model .Two districts, Ahemdabad and Vadodara were added to the group of less than900 sex ratio with Anand, Kheda, and Dang. The same districts continue in the group 900 to 1000 and 1000+ sex ratio.

Census year 1951 witnessed an overall high sex ratio pattern in group of 1000+ and 900 to 1000. Only two districts (Ahmedabad and Dang) were there in the group of less than 900 range. Five districts namely, Kachchh, Mahesana, Porbandar, Navsari, and Valsad were in the thousand plus group and remaining districts were in the 900 to 1000. Census year of 1961 to 2001 witnessed a declining sex ratio. Anand, Ahmedabad and Surat continue to be in category of less than 900. Kachchh, Navsari, Valsad were in 1000+ group only upto 1971. After that no district was identified in 1000+ group. Thus we can say that from 1901 to 2001 Gujarat has shown decline in sex ratio trend, except in the year 1951 in which sex ratio was highest. Kachchh has shown a remarkable high sex ratio from 1911 to 1971. Navsari and Valsad also showed a good sex ratio till 1971. If we see the trends of 2011 census we find that in Surat sex ratio was found to be less than 900. Dangs and Tapi were above 1000+ and the remaining 22 districts were found to be in the category of in between 900-1000 sex ratio per 1000 males

If we see Gujarat state with the same perspective of “after” and “before” Independence, we find the same declining trend in CSR. It has been noted that in 1991, its CSR was 928 and in 2001 it was 878. This shows a decline of 56 females per 1000 males decline in CSR of Gujarat. But, the 2011 census has shown an increasing trend in CSR with 886 girls per 1000 boys in the age group of 0-6 years.