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THE PARADOX OF MODERNITY

A study of girl discrimination in urban Punjab, India

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Abstract

This study has brought attention to the paradox of modernity, in which certain elements of tradition tend to survive the forces of modernisation and may even, as in this case, be amplified in society. The study demonstrated that modernity, when seen from a gendered perspective generates processes and results that favour men, not women. It has also argued that India is in a transition period, between the traditional and modern India, where old norms and expectations clash with modern ideas. The paradox of modernity was illustrated by the phenomenon of sex selection favouring sons over daughters at birth. With the purpose of examining attitudes towards son preference among urban middle class youth, the study has highlighted a situation in which modern and traditional views coexist in a sometimes paradoxical and contradictory manner.

The analysis was based on field work conducted in Punjab in northern India, September - October 2004. Primary data was collected through focus groups discussions with university students and semi structured interviews with various other actors. The essay identified themes which are crucial components in the phenomenon of sex selection, themes which exemplify the paradox of modernity.

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1. Introduction and research problem

Modernisation, as a multifaceted process of transformation, has changed the fabric of Indian society in many ways. Over the last 50 years since Independence, India has showed remarkable progress, economically as well as socially, in reduced poverty and dramatically increased literacy rates. India has grown to the 11th largest economy in the world, and is predicted to be the third largest by 2035 after USA and China (Wilson and Purushothaman, 2003). Modernisation has set the scenes for new attitudes, behaviours and values; extended families have become nuclear, people shifted from rural to urban areas, and materialism infringed on spiritualism.

Classical modernisation theorists argue that modernity will lead to better conditions for all people, and therefore give it a positive connotation. Modernisation stands for transition from old to new and brings choices and alternatives. However, this is by no means a given outcome. Instead this study will argue that some attitudes and values remain, despite forces of modernity, and may even be amplified in society. It will demonstrate that modernity, when seen from a gendered perspective, and is a patriarchal construction, generates processes and results that favour men, not women. The study will further argue that India is in a transition period, between the traditional and modern India, where old norms and expectations clash with modern ideas.

This will be illustrated by examining the phenomenon of 'missing girls' (Sen, 1990) in India, where sex selection favouring boys as a result of a strong son preference has become the harsh reality. Indicated by a skewed sex ratio (number of women of every thousand men) one can distinguish a systematic discrimination of women. The conclusions in this essay rest on an analysis of a field study in Punjab in India, where the sex ratio is unusual adverse, even as compared to the already low Indian national average.

The discussion here has an urban focus, since it is in cities and towns were modernisation has its immediate impact, and consequently the foremost effects. It is in urban areas where values such as described above are adopted at an early stage. This new urban mindset creates a situation where modern behaviours coexist with traditional values, and where the paradox of modernity is most visible.

2. Purpose and research questions

The main question posed in this thesis is formulated as *how people's attitudes change or remain in a society that modernises*. These attitudes could relate to different spheres in society; politics, economics, culture, and intellectual only to mention a few. This thesis will, however, mainly focus on the attitudes that come as a result of social change. At empirical level this study will address *how the patriarchal tradition of son preference survives among modernised, educated populations in India*. Hence, the aim of the essay is to examine whether the attitudes towards son preference may be changing among the young urban middle class population in India. Despite economic success and material welfare, modern India still has a very strong preference for sons. The study examines whether the patriarchy, in the process of modernisation, upholds those oppressive structures that prevent girl children from being born.

To find answers to this ambition, the research has dealt with the following questions:

- *To which extent and in which ways do young people support or resist son preference?*
- *With reference to which cultural, social and economic factors are the various forms of son preference resisted or legitimated?*
- *To which extent do attitudes among the young reflect support for a neo-patriarchal family system?*
- *How come these attitudes remain in the India while adopting other modern practices?*

3. Methodology

This third chapter will discuss the methodological choices and perspectives this thesis relies on. It starts with a session on the methodological point of departure. This is followed by a brief section which discusses the essay's validity and reliability, i.e. whether it answers the questions it intends to, and whether its results could be repeated by other independent studies. This part also covers a critical review of the primary sources used. Considering the sensitivity of the topic the ethical aspects will be reflected on in a separate section. The chapter ends with a paragraph with a description on how the data has been analysed.

3.1 Methodological point of departure

The methodology chosen to investigate the problem is multiple and consists of two different parts; focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, which were conducted in Punjab, India during September – October 2004. When possible, a tape recorder was used in the interviews and discussions. Although most of the interviewed allowed tape recorder, a few did not give permission. Neither did these informants not want to be quoted or named in the study. One of the interviews was conducted over email due to time constraints. In addition to these, information has been collected at several conferences and workshops on related topics.[1] For the theoretical framework as well as the collection of background data, various written sources have been employed, including national statistics from the Indian Census.

The focus group discussions were carried out with university students in the age group of 18-22 years. There were four groups with 20 students in total; three groups with female and one with male participants. The discussions focused on topics such as family, marriage, expectations from family and society, influence on decisions, abortions and son preference, to capture attitudes and sentiments towards the issue of sex selection from a gendered modernity perspective. The sessions were characterised by lively debates, where the students have discussed among themselves, the interviewer only serving as facilitator. The method of focus group discussion has, as all methods, its advantages and disadvantages. One of its strengths is that the group dynamic creates a forum for discussion that allows an open interaction between the participants. Moreover, a focus group brings out a multiplicity of views with a range of opinions (Gibbs, 1997). Limitations with focus group discussion include less control of the interaction, risk of unstructured talks and difficult settings for recording (ibid). In a group there is always someone that takes the lead, which generates a risk that the others follow the dominant opinion. Measures were taken to involve all participants in the discussions, to ensure active participation of all members of the group. However, the participants have shown a diversity of opinions and have not, at least not in the author's perception, shown any signs of following any leader in the groups.

Focus group discussions can not stand alone and have to be combined with other techniques. Therefore, 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with various actors on the sex

[1] Two Human Rights trainings in Punjab with Human Rights Law Network, one workshop on the topic of 'Sex selection and pre-birth elimination of females' with Voluntary Health Association in Punjab, and one conference on the Two Child Norm in New Delhi.

selection arena to get a multi-facetted view of the set of problems. Of the 15, six were from various non-governmental organisations, four from the academic field, three from donor agencies, and one from the Government of India represented by the Planning Commission. Also included in the set of interviews is a personal consultation with a victim of violence against women, with its roots in son preference and sex selection.

Secondary sources, as in literature, articles, brochures and various internet based material have been carefully scanned in order to get a variety of views. In Delhi, the libraries of India International Centre and Institute of Economic Growth were used. The literature studies were combined with materials and statistics collected from Jagori[2] in Delhi and the Population Research Centre in Chandigarh.

3.2 Validity, reliability and generalisation of results

The university students are all from Punjab University in Chandigarh, from the faculties of Law, Psychology and Education, identified through modules of human rights training. They were randomly chosen, and asked to form groups of at least five members. Participation in the focus group discussions has been voluntary and the members' anonymity protected. The university students were met either at public places, such as cafes, or at the university campus. The sample, as university students, comes from a rather privileged part of society, and their views may not represent the opinions of the general public. Only a small part of the female population in India, 2,9 %, study in graduate or higher-level studies past high school (Census of India, 2001). The sample of informants does however fill its purpose of representing the young, modern, urban India, which this thesis aims at covering. In fact, considering that this analysis focuses on modernisation, interacting with the segment of society that modernisation affects directly increases the significance of the sample.

When conducting interviews there is always a risk that the interviewer influences the respondents, resulting in answers assumed by the respondents to be correct rather than reflecting their actual opinion (Kvale, 1997). There is moreover a possibility that the students in the focus groups have influenced each other, or have followed the dominant position. The focus groups have been rather small, ranging from 3 to 7 participants. In the most favourable situation, the focus group should consist of 8-12 members (Grudens-Schuck et al, 2004).

[2] Delhi-based NGO working with gender issues in India.

Although small, it is the author's view that the sample's size is large enough for the purpose. Alternative methods could have been employed, but to capture the attitudes and sentiments, the group dynamic, created by the focus group environment, is crucial. An idea from one participant can easily trigger off a reaction from another, leading to a greater variety of opinions than regular one-to-one interviews would be able to give.

Initially, the informants were selected in light of their expertise and prominence in their field. However, as the study progressed, informants tended to be identified through a snowballing approach. This method gives on the one hand easy access to a large number of persons, but could on the other hand lead to a narrow sample, since the respondents tend to refer to other people with similar opinions. Some of the informants may have normative interests as specialists on gender issues, and may therefore not present a neutral perspective of the problem. They were however chosen because of their roles as experts on gender issues, and do not claim to represent an un-biased view. The sample of informants is not statistical or representative, and no generalisations can be drawn from the results. The main purpose, however, is not to find a general model that is applicable everywhere, but rather to illustrate occurrence of the modernity paradox in India.

It can always be discussed whether the researcher can remain objective and if it is possible to separate fact and values. Although it is difficult, or perhaps even impossible, to be complete objective, the goal has been to analyse the material with an unprejudiced mind. I am aware that I carry ideas and ideologies from a Western background, and that I may interpret the data accordingly. Moreover, as a woman, I could easily identify myself with the female students interviewed, which might give implications for the analysis. I do not, however, perceive these as factors that will interfere with my objectivity as a researcher. All researchers carry a set of values that will colour their interpretation of the context studied, and no one enter the research field without opinions and set of standards. It is important however, that these are systematically reflected upon to clarify the bias the researcher brings to the study.

3.3 Ethical considerations

Considering the sensitivity of the topic, the questions have been carefully formulated in order not to do harm in any possible way. For example, instead of asking the respondents or informants if they themselves have performed sex selective abortions, questions were raised

concerning their awareness and knowledge of its existence and frequency. However, people were surprisingly open to discuss these issues, and there were no resistance in answering questions. Sex selection is, in certain segments of society, considered as norm and therefore expected. It is justified by a range of economical, cultural, religious or social arguments, and hence regarded as standard.

The results are presented without possibility of tracing the sources to protect the personal integrity so that no one will get the feeling of being insulted or exposed. The main objective of the study is neither to make judgements on the practice nor to label it right or wrong, but rather discuss the phenomenon of a skewed sex ratio in the perspective of gender and modernity.

3.4 Method of analysis

The empirical material in this study has been analysed through an *ad hoc* method, i.e. a combination of approaches (Kvale, 1997). This method of analysis allows for the researcher to use her/his creative skills in finding a solution most suitable. The first stage in the analysis of the empirical data has dealt with the transcriptions of the focus group discussions and interviews. As mentioned earlier, tape recorder has been used for these; in other cases extensive notes were taken. The recordings from the focus groups were difficult to transcribe as the groups consist of several people, sometimes simultaneously talking. These had to be carefully re-listened to, for completion of the transcriptions. After reading and thereafter rereading the transcriptions, the raw data was coded and organised into categories. Themes, which link the empirical data to the theoretical framework, were identified and discussed separately. The final step included the process of analysis and conclusion drawing, and to find evidence that support or reject the hypothesis.

4. Outline

The following section, Chapter 5, will describe the background of the topic of sex selection, where an account of the current situation is included. This is followed by an overview in Chapter 6 of the concept used in the analysis, which outlines the definitions to clarify the thesis' main terminology. Chapter 7 presents a discussion on the theoretical framework

applied in the analysis. Here, classical modernisation theories will be criticised through a feminist perspective to illustrate the modernity paradox in India. The section for the presentation of the empirical data, Chapter 8, begins with a paragraph on the context studied, and its implications for the analysis. The main themes identified in the collected material will thereafter be highlighted and analysed through the theoretical perspective chosen. Chapter 9 presents a summary of argument, in which main findings from the preceding chapters will be included. This discussion aims at verifying the occurrence of the paradox of modernity in young, urban India. The concluding parts of the thesis will indicate possible areas for future research on the topic, and critically review the results by elaborating with other positions, in this case, the post-modern approach.

5. Background of India's adverse sex ratio

The Government of India report 'Towards Equality' from 1975 can be seen as the beginning of a series of critical scholars who noticed the issue of India's reversed sex ratio. Development Economist Amartya Sen brought attention to the topic in the early 1990s by stressing that there are more than 100 million women missing worldwide. By using the Sub-Saharan sex ratio[3], Sen concluded that over 40 million of these women are Indian (Sen, 1990). Following in his footsteps various researchers have studied the problem, of which many have discussed in the terms of the 'endangered half' of India's population (Croll 1999, Miller 1997, Philip & Bagchi 2000). These discuss the notion that the birth of a daughter is considered as a calamity, and hence India's daughters are in danger.

In India the sex ratio, presented in number of women per every thousand men, is skewed. When nature decides, more boys than girls are conceived (105-106 boys born for every 100 baby girls). Since male mortality is higher, this result in the population as a whole having more women than men. This pattern is visible in most societies, irrespective of income or development (Sudha and Rajan, 1998:6). Western countries present a ratio in adulthood of 1,050 females for every 1,000 men, and the Sub-Saharan region in Africa a ratio of 1,022. In India, the national average is 933 women per 1,000 men (Census of India, 2001). Punjab, the

[3] Sub Saharan ratio chosen in preference of Western, due to similarities in conditions with India.

Indian state that will be in focus of this study, demonstrates an even more masculine sex ratio of 874 (ibid, 2001).

Whereas the total sex ratio (SR) may be affected by such factors as labour migration or war, the former very relevant in the Punjab with a large number of Sikh males abroad, the child sex ratio (CSR), examining the 0-6 age group, gives a better picture. An adverse CSR may, however, be the effect of other factors than sex selective abortions, e.g. undercounting of females, abandonment of girls or poor birth registration of females (Sudha and Rajan, 1998). Numerous studies, however, show that such features only play a minor role in the Punjabi context. The Indian average CSR is 927, whereas the child sex ratio in Punjab is alarmingly low 793/1,000 (Census of India, 2001).

Sex selection[4], whether by infanticide or foeticide, as a result of strong son preference is a recognised problem in India. The governmental response is a legal initiative through the introduction of the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulations and Prevention) Act (PNDT), which was passed in 1994 and amended in 2003. The Act came as a result from an intensive public debate, and after the release of figures exposing a systematic discrimination of females.[5] It bans sex determination tests, requires mandatory registration of clinics and operates to prevent misuse of techniques leading to sex selection. The PNDT Act has been criticised to have too many loopholes and of being poorly implemented.

6. Concepts

As with any study, it is important to have a clear understanding of the concepts discussed. On an overall level this study will discuss in terms of gender & modernity, i.e. how women perceive modernity. These and some other crucial concepts will be examined below.

[4] The concept 'sex selection' summarizes the phenomenon of female infanticide (elimination of girl child after her birth) and female foeticide (selective abortion of female foetuses). It is important to underline that this study does not touch upon the question of right to abortion. The scrutiny of sex selection should not be seen as an anti-abortion claim, and should not be confused with so called 'pro life' positions.

[5] In 1984, a UNICEF report revealed that out of 8,000 abortions made in Bombay, 7,999 were of female foetuses.

6.1 Modernisation

A discussion based on the concept of modernisation calls for a definition of the same. The modernisation referred to here is the broad trends leading to social change, as in new identities, roles and attitudes. Using Development Economist Martinussen (1997:56) perspective, modernisation may be described as a process '…concerned primarily with how traditional values, attitudes, practices and social structures break down, and are replaced with modern ones'. Modernisation, often interpreted as Westernisation, assumes that 'social changes occur in an integrated fashion' (Tessler and Hawkins, 1979:474), i.e. modernisation is a universal phenomenon with the same consequences and effects regardless of where it is initiated.

Modernisation comes in different shapes and affects various areas in society; political, economic or social, only to mention a few. Although this thesis will briefly cover a few aspects of economic modernisation, the main focus is on social modernisation. Terms such as social modernisation will here refer to attitudes and values that come as a result of social change, may it be concerning family structure or female education. This definition of modernisation has its limitations, but it is in the author's view that what the thesis looses in generalisability is gained in validity.

However, the principle of this study is that if modernisation rests on patriarchal premises, where men dominate and women are inferior, a strong socialisation of gender roles takes place. This is what creates a gendered process, where men and women receive modernisation differently. It is moreover important to stress, even though to some extent obvious, that these roles are socially constructed and hence changeable. This study will discuss the paradox of modernity. The term refers to the situation that can arise when a society has one foot in each world; the traditional and the modern. It refers to the situation occurs when the two worlds clash, in this case illustrated by traditional family structure and preferences colliding with modern values of individualism, rights and equality. Giddens refers to this as detraditionalisation, in which traditional behavioural patterns continue 'long after the social contexts that historically gave them meaning have been discontinued' (Fuller, 1995). Values on son preference that were justified in traditional India are carried over to the modern era, despite great contextual changes. The son preference is, however, still legitimised on the same grounds as before.

6.2 Son preference

The concept of son preference used in this study is linked to the pattern of privileging sons over daughters in a way that is consistent with a patriarchal family system. Son preference rests on the premise that there are more benefits in raising a son than a daughter; economic, cultural as well as social. In India, as a patriarchal (a social organisation in which women have a subordinate position to men), patrilinear (linage and inheritance through the male line) and patrilocal (a system where married couples live in the household of the husband's family) society, the son can not only ensure financial stability, but moreover provide old age support, perform important rituals, and act as physical protector.

6.3 Neo-patriarchy

Neo-patriarchy is about how the patriarchy in a society remains in modernisation, only in a different shape. It is defined as 'the by-product of the encounter between modernity and tradition' (Sharabi, 1988), and refers to how patriarchal views are reinforced in society. The rigid constructions of gender in India have not been confronted by modernity, despite attempts of challenging the patriarchal structure. Recent gender studies show that the patriarchal traditions of Asia, and especially India, seem to be far more flexible than what has previously been assumed. Rather than being disrupted by the modernisation process, patriarchies seem to survive by being transformed into various forms of neo-patriarchies (Moghadam, 1993).

6.4 Patriarchal bargain

Patriarchal bargain, i.e. how women operate in a set of accepted rules in which they negotiate and make compromises with their men, is one way of explaining the phenomenon of India's adverse sex ratio (Kandiyoti, 1998). Applied to sex selection this negotiation is at the cost of other women, i.e. the unborn girl children. In a family with asymmetric patriarchal structures, the woman can raise her status by ensuring a male child. Young brides have limited bargaining power in the family structure, but can, by guaranteeing the birth of a son gain influence.

7. A theoretical overview of modernity and its gendered aspects

The theoretical framework for this study rests on the premises that modernity not always leads to gender equality, and could have rather opposite effect and reinforce patriarchal structures in form of a neo-patriarchy. This section starts with an introduction to classical modernisation theory, followed by the feminist critique adopted in the analysis. The chapter ends with a concise description of gender and modernity in the case of India, on a general level.

7.1 Classical modernisation theory

The concept of modernisation is based on Durkheim's view that the world could be divided into two parts; the traditional and the modern. It emerged after Second World War, and is a process in which the development gap between the traditional world and modern is to be closed. Traditional societies are characterised by backwardness, religious authorities and rigid kinship structures. Relationships in traditional societies are considered as familial and emotional, not allowing anyone outside the immediate clan to be involved or benefit from these. A modern society, on the other hand, is equal to a developed society, and is based on the Enlightenment values of secularism, rationality, scientism and optimism (Chatterjee and Riley, 2001). Life in a modern society is characterised by individualism and freedom to choose. Classical modernisation theories further assume that all traditional societies aspire to develop into a modern, and hence desire to replicate the paths and processes.

The family unit is a central part in modernisation theory. In traditional societies the family is extended and multifunctional, and is involved in most of the decisions concerning a family member. It is patriarchal in structure, headed by the oldest man, who is influential in all activities of the household. Reverse, a modern family is small and nuclear. When services are provided by external actors, e.g. old age homes, child day care centres and youth recreation centres, in combination of a high degree of individualism, the need for immediate support in form of an extend family has decreased. Whether this development is positive or negative is one of the clashes the debate brings; modern society imagines this as a relief, whereas traditional consider this as a loss of the family's function.

Modernisation theory has not escaped criticism. One major critique is that modernisation is not a universal force that affects people in the same manner. The local context, external and/or

internal forces or other factors may influence the modernisation process in any direction. Jefferey and Jefferey (1997:169) express this in the following:

> '… [modernisation theories] assume that modern institutions have the same meaning wherever they are created, and will always be associated with the same kinds of attitudes in those whose lives are lived in their ambience'.

This critique against the universality of modernisation is picked up by feminist scholars, who scrutinise modernity through a gender lens.

7.2 Gender and modernity

In the 1970s there was a growing awareness and consensus that development has to be viewed through a multidimensional perspective, by introducing other variables such as race, ethnicity and gender into the debate. Esther Boserup brought attention to the lack of gender perspective in the development and modernisation debate in her groundbreaking 'Women's role in Economic Development' (1970), where she argued that earlier research had underestimated the role of women in production and that modernisation did not advantage women in large (Braig et al, 2002). Hindered by factors such as lack of access to resources, lack of education and confinement within families, women were excluded from the advantages modernisation brought the other half of the population. Following Boserup, schools as Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), Gender and Development (GAD), among others rose, all with different solutions on how to incorporate gender in the development debate. All were criticised to use an 'add women and stir' approach, i.e. instead of rethinking the concepts of modernisation and development, they used the same methods as earlier, and only added the component of 'women' (Beneria, 1995). During this period the feminist discourse moreover shifted from focusing on **women** to **gender**. Marxist-feminist focused on exploitation, inequalities and the market, and linked capitalism and patriarchy (Beneria, 1995), whereas liberal feminists focused on freedom and the right to be liberated from oppressive gender roles. Contemporary research on gender and modernity links to other areas such as gender and multiculturalism and ethnicity, by the method of mainstreaming.

Feminist critics argue that modernity is a patriarchal construction; set by men, for men. Modernity is constructed of asymmetric power relations and hierarchical structures based on gender (Beneria, 1995). This is called the 'gendered aspect of modernity'; meaning that men and women perceive and are affected by modernity differently (Yoko, Akio and Yumiko 2003). They moreover mean that the opportunities created by modernity are limited to the

patriarchal world. The debate includes the dichotomies of traditional/modern, inner/outer, private/public, and community/individual, where women are seen as bearers and preserves of tradition (ibid). Modernity works in two ways; it could lead to either liberation or constraints, the latter in the sense that it creates clashes between the old and the new roles women obtain. This analysis will show that many young, urban women in India stand with one foot in the traditional world, and the other in the modern, with conflicting values on what is expected and appropriate.

In a patriarchal structure, the family is headed by the senior male. All decisions, as described above, run through the patriarch. These decisions could concern distribution of money, household duties, work, education, and mobility, among others. In these structures women are considered to have a natural and physiological need to have and raise children. Furthermore, since the public sphere is reserved for men only, the private sphere, including domestic labour, is kept for the women.

Education, as a key component in the gender and modernity debate, often results in families having fewer children and that these participate in the workforce in larger numbers. Thus, the household's total income increases and the possibility of influence in the intra-household decision making process amplifies. Consequently, this could lead to a breakdown of strict gender roles, where women's leverage in the family rises. This chain of events, predicted to be trigged off by educating women, does not however occur in all societies. It is these barriers and obstacles that are, in the author's opinion, interesting to analyse.

Modernity brings about new attitudes and behaviours. For example, it can lead to increases the age of marriage, reduces fertility rates, and brings higher levels of abortion. In India, these are all visible in society, but in conjunction with an adverse sex ratio. These linkages are, however, not always the case. Similar changes, i.e. reduction in fertility rates and increase in abortion rates, have occurred in other geographical areas such as Japan and Europe, but without change in sex ratio (Patel, 2004).

7.3 Economic modernisation and its impact on India's women

As pointed out above, this essay will primarily concern the aspects of social modernisation and the effects on Indian women. However, since there are strong linkages between social and economic development, a brief overview of the latter hereby follows.

India opened up its economy to the world in 1991 through a liberalisation package including extensive privatisations and reductions of trade barriers. Attracted by foreign investments the labour intensive export processing sector grew. Even though this provided other non-farm job opportunities for women, in particular those who were excluded from the agricultural sector as a consequence of Green Revolution, it did not automatically eradicate the gender inequality on the labour market. Instead, the New Economic Policies focused on cheap female labour which further marginalised and devaluated Indian women.

In Europe and North America modernisation, through the industrial revolution, women were moved from agricultural work and household duties into factories and jobs in the tertiary sector. India has not followed this trend or pattern. Banerjee (2002:53) argues that this could be explained by what she calls 'the nature of women's labour supply'; that Indian women enter the labour market on unequal conditions in form of lower literacy rates, restrictions in mobility and stereotyped gender roles. Families and society seem to have constraints on women's choice of jobs, where some jobs are considered more appropriate than other for women.

Modernisation is not only measured in economic terms. As described above, modernisation has impact on non-economic arenas in form of social values and attitudes. These will be further examined in the next chapter.

8. Presentation of empirical data

Although this section will, as the heading suggests, focus on the presentation of the empirical data, it will begin with a brief introduction of Punjab and its characteristics that have resulted in a strong son preference. Thereafter the main themes, identified from the empirical material

collected through the fieldwork in India, will be put forward. All of these themes will be separately discussed and linked to the theoretical framework of social modernisation.

8.1 The Punjab[6]

The studied area is located in the northern parts of India, bordering Pakistan. It is an agrarian-based society with a relatively homogenous culture, dominated by the Sikhs (59,9%). With only 6% of the population living below poverty line, compared to national average of 26%, Punjab is considered as one of India's most economically prosperous areas (Census of India, 2001). Punjab hosts well developed infrastructure, electricity supply network and high standard schools. Social indicators, however, lag behind the rest of India, and the performance on various areas such as nutrition and health are bleak.

The feudal society of Punjab became India's bread-basket after entering the Green Revolution in the 1970s. The Green Revolution was a governmental initiative to fuel the Indian agricultural sector, by introducing new techniques and fertilizers to ensure food stability. In various interviews conducted in Punjab the respondents mentioned Green Revolution as a reason for the strong male preference in Punjab, arguing that it has brought women from the public sphere back to the private, a phenomenon that can be described as 'the ideology of domesticity' (Hall, 1995). Vandana Shiva (1988:96) supports these statements arguing that it was a 'masculine paradigm of food production under the label of Green Revolution'. Male-based land reforms and limited work opportunities for women outside the agricultural sector led to concentration of income of men (Sudha and Rajan, 1998).

Analysing the strong son preference in Punjab, historical reasons such as invasions and conflicts are raised. Punjab is sometimes referred to as the gateway to India, where almost all foreign invasions went through. This generated a need for sons, as warriors, to protect society and its women. The birth of girl children meant increased burdens, since they could not contribute as soldiers in the battlefield, and would therefore only drain the family's resources.

As pointed out above, Sikhism is the dominant religion in Punjab, attracting nearly 60% of the state's population. This leads us into the discussion whether there are linkages between

[6] Punjab is in this case represented by Chandigarh, seeing that it is the location of Punjab University. Chandigarh is a separate Union Territory, but moreover the shared capital of Punjab and Haryana. Chandigarh demonstrates an even more adverse sex ratio of 773/1000, the second lowest in India after Daman & Diu (Census of India, 2001).

religion and sex selection. Although the Sikhs show a slightly more adverse sex ratio in comparison with other religions (except for the Jains, who all over India display the lowest), all religions in Punjab demonstrate a skewed sex ratio. Sikhs have a ratio of 780/1000, whereas Punjabi Hindus 821/1000 (Census of India, 2001). Thus, religion can not be excluded as an influential factor, but cannot alone explain the phenomenon. The response from the Sikh community in Punjab, with its main centre in the Golden Temple in Amritsar, is the issuing of a so called *hukumnama*, a religious order which condemns the practice. However, this seem to have had limited effects on the practice of sex selection. According to the Census 2001 every 5th female in Punjab is missing or has not survived because of her gender (Dagar, 2001).

8.2 Main themes

The following main themes have been identified through the compiled empirical data. Each of these subsections will begin with a paragraph on what modernity is expected to bring, according to classical theory. This will be followed by a brief description of the Punjab experience, and end with the possible obstacles and barriers for the assumed developments not taking place.

8.2.1 Son preference

Although the main goal of this study is not to identify the underlying causes for sex selection as such, but explain why it seems unaffected by modernisation, it is important to elaborate on some of these factors in order to understand the set of problems. Son preference rests on socio-cultural grounds and is justified by all kinds of variables. These deep-rooted patriarchal norms and expectations are seen as universal and hence, normal. All interviewed (respondents as well as informants) were asked to discuss possible causes for sex selection. The university students named dowry, ritual aspects, men as main breadwinner, property rights, men as the carrier of the family name, old age support, responsibility and protection of women, as main causes. The informants added aspects such as the patriarchal structure, sex selection as a population control programme, availability of technique, lack of a national social security system and the Punjabi-specific explanations mentioned above.

Dowry was the factor that the sample addressed as the most crucial for sex selection. Compulsory, expected and institutionalised were terms mentioned in connection with dowry. The issue of dowry is however somewhat complicated, since there are no clear linkages to sex

selection. There are societies, e.g. China, where sex selection happens without any dowry custom. Moreover, in China expenses for a son's marriage is 3-4 times higher than for a daughter, and still sons are preferred (Das Gupta et al, 2003). Whereas some students interviewed express that they were not going to bring anything as a dowry in their future marriage, others stated that is compulsory and that *'we have learned this system and we have to adjust'*.

Access to modern technology was another factor identified as critical for the further decline in the Indian sex ratio. Sen (2003) argues that availability to medical resources can not alone explain the incidence of sex selection, finding evidence in comparing Indian states. Accessibility and availability to technique is not greater in Punjab than in states with a sounder sex ratio. 'New technology is not a cause of son preference – it merely intensifies the manifestation of gender bias where the bias is already strong' (Das Gupta et al, 2003).

According to the sample, there is a changing mindset in India, at least in urban areas, on son preference. The failure of sons to take full responsibility, e.g. insufficient old-age support, and a notion that the daughters are greater 'caring characters', have resulted in a different state of mind. However, as one student expressed it: *'Although changes are taking place we cannot deny the fact that boys are still preferred'*.

Son preference is not exclusively observed in India, but also in societies in East Asia, North Africa, Middle East or in other South Asian countries. The impact of its occurrence in India, however, has immense effects, since India hosts nearly 1/6 of the world's total population.

8.2.2 Family structure and composition

'Small family, happy family' is a popular slogan in India, where a small family depicts a modern and affluent unit, and a large family is considered as backward. The Two Child Norm, a governmental initiative to control India's population, gives incentives to follow the small family model. This policy disallows persons having more than two children to participate in local democratic bodies, so called Panchayati Raj institutions. Some states have extended the norm to put limitations on access to hospitals, ration card and education.

Modernity is assumed to bring lower fertility in a society, also applicable to the Indian context. Over the last decades Indian fertility has decreased from 6 children born per woman in 1971

to the 2,85 in 2004. In India, however, sex selection seems to increase with lower fertility and small families, evident in the case of Punjab (NFHS, 2001).

In India the extended or joint family, a multigenerational family system in which parents and their children's families live under the same roof, has been the norm for a long time. The tradition of taking care of the older in the family, and lack of social security net are some reasons for accepting the joint family norm in Indian society. Nowadays, with the rise of individualism, nuclear families are becoming increasingly common, especially in urban areas. The sample expressed an almost universal aspiration to live in nuclear families, as joint families were equivalent with *'too much responsibility'*. A few of them, although in minority, uttered a wish to live in joint families, since it would give them security, be socially more satisfying and provide services not offered in nuclear families.

Studies have shown that there seem to be a connection between family structure and the adverse sex ratio in India. Larsen and Hatti (2004) suggest that a joint family may decrease the bargaining possibilities for women, which in turn could lead to sons being preferred over daughters.

> '… it appears that the joint family structure and its lesser space for bargaining have restricted the bargaining power of women. The incorporation of these new values in a traditional family structure seems to take place under the cooperative, normative, framework of that family structure. As a consequence, the already low bargaining power and low position of women declines further and the consequent undesirability of girls increases as opposed to being challenged by the new values. Low bargaining power for women in combination with the new values and an overall improvement in welfare seem to further restrict the space for daughters in a family.' (ibid 2004:13)

Statistics from National Family Health Survey (2001:82) for Punjab reveal a slight preference for sons. 82,7% of the urban sample in the NFHS survey expressed a desire for at least one son. At the same time 76,7% wants at least one daughter. When the sample were asked about the desirable sex composition of their future family, they all answered either that they had no preference, or that they wanted girls. However, one female university student expressed that the decision would not be hers, or her future-to-be husband's, but rather her in-laws'.

8.2.3 Female work participation

When examining the aspect of women's work participation, classical modernisation theories argue that a rise in female paid employment will lead to lower fertility rates and greater decision-making power in the family, and hence could be seen as a key indicator for women's

situation (Moghadam, 1993). Counter to this, feminist critics argue that there has been a feminisation of labour and that modernisation has brought machines that replaced women. Women were domesticated, i.e. brought from the public back into the private domains. In addition, the other major traditional industrial occupations for women outside agriculture, such as the textile and food processing industries, shrunk its possibilities to absorb women (Banerjee, 2002). Hence many of these women were pushed into the informal sector or to the Export Processing Zones, with low wages and poor work conditions.

In Punjab the female work participation rate four-folded from 4,4% to 18,7% between the Censuses of 1991 and 2001, during a period where the CSR declined further (Indian Census 2001). Although this represents a large increase, most of the women work in rural agricultural settings, and is therefore not relevant to this urban case study. Moreover, it is not only work participation that has to be taken into consideration when examining women's status. The National Health Survey for Punjab (2001) suggests that the empowering effects of female work participation depend on variables such as type of occupation, continuity and level on income. Many of the jobs where urban women are involved are on short-term basis, and do not contribute substantially to the total income of the family.

One could assume that the sample, as university students, all want to work after graduating. However, their views of the future in terms of work were diverse. For example, students from teachers training college were more reliant on family's and husband's decisions, whereas the female law students expressed a strong opinion about working independent. Traditional attitudes towards female work participation were explicitly expressed by one of the male students in the statement: *'It is OK if she wants to do something as a hobby'*. Even the young women expressed contradictory views, on the one hand aspiring to earn an independent income, but on the other say that *'he* [the husband] *has to be able to give me a comfortable life'* or *'he has to earn enough to take care of me'*.

8.2.4 Urbanisation

Shifting from rural to an urban setting can have positive effects on the female's position in the family. The son's centrality in the family can be reduced and more flexible systems on gender roles adopted (Das Gupta et al, 2003). In rural areas, rules of inheritance play a crucial part, as wealth is measured in land and property. These rules are often in favour of men, based on a patriarchal distribution of wealth. Urbanisation decreases the importance of land and hence

the structure of inheritance changes in urban areas. However, in the Indian case there seem to be a disconnection between urbanisation and gender equality, and the expected effects have not occurred. Despite urbanisation there are still a lot of norms and expectations on what are socially acceptable manners for urban women in India.

The sex ratio in India is at its worst in urban areas such as Delhi and Chandigarh. These are all affluent and modern parts of India, that given its economic as well as social development should bring changes in the gender bias. Among the respondents there seemed to be a lack of awareness about this link. They said that sex selection was mainly a rural phenomenon, and that *'in urban centres, equality is not much of a problem'*.

8.2.5 Education

As described above, theories on modernisation include education of females as a key component for women's progress in society. Studies have showed that the woman's level of education is crucial for not only women's development, but society as a whole. Education of women has multiple effects, and triggers off benefits on various levels. It predicts to lead to increased political participation and greater decision-making power, simultaneously as it decreases fertility, lower the rates of malnutrition and raises the status if women's health. Furthermore, educated mothers are more likely to educate their own children.

In Punjab female literacy is 63,55 %, and thereby scores higher than national average of 54,16% (Census of India, 2001). But has education increased women's status in Punjab? Sudha and Rajan (1998:14) use the same argument as for work participation, arguing that education domesticates women rather than liberates them. They suggest that the labour market is not ready to absorb educated women, and these women are, therefore, more likely to remain at home.

Although the sample is university educated, they have limited influence on their education. Some of them had not chosen their main focus themselves, and others had a few to choose from, subjects 'suitable for women'. The female law students were the most independent in the sample, and had selected their education themselves, but had come across statements like *'law is not a girl's field'*. Pam Rajput, a retired professor from Punjab University and a feminist writer, distinguish between education and literacy, saying it is *'not merely education,*

it is about literacy about her rights'. Modernity does not only need to bring education as such, but a modern education with updated curriculum including the concepts of gender equality.

Female university students face other obstacles and barriers in their education. For instance, when Indian women are in marriageable age their education is likely to come to an end. Although this was not an immediate threat for any of the students in the sample, they all referred to other female students who have had to finish their studies due to marriage.

8.2.6 Individualism and autonomy

Modernisation brings increased social mobility for both men and women in a society. However, women in urban Punjab still face many restrictions in mobility, which in turn decreases their autonomy. According to NFHS (2001), many Punjabi women need permission to go to market. Statistics show that only one fifth of women in the age of 25-29 years in Punjab can visit a friend or a relative without permission from their family.

All female respondents had restrictions in mobility and expressed concerns that their brothers or male friends have more freedoms. The restrictions are justified by safety reasons; that the world is not safe enough for young women, who therefore have to stay within the four walls of the home. These restrictions were met by irritation from the sample group: *'You don't question this, and we cannot do anything about it even though it is frustrating'*. There was a consensus in the groups that if they themselves have daughters in the future, they will give them more freedoms, particularly in terms of education and in-house-rules.

When discussing these restrictions with the students, it was often pointed out that the protection of the female was not only for the female's sense of security, but to protect the family's honour and pride. It is considered as a shame for the family if, for example, the daughter is sexually harassed. Yet again, there are different social rules for young men and women, in what is considered proper manners.

8.2.7 Marriage

As a component in the picture of a modern woman, the possibility to choose her own marriage partner can be included. India has a long tradition of arranged marriages where the parents, with or without the agreement of the parts involved, select partner and organise the wedding. Nowadays 'love-marriages' are more common, although mostly concentrated to

urban areas. Approval from parents is still needed in most cases. In India, a marriage is not only between two persons, but perhaps even more the unification of two families. Thus, the family cohesion is considered as more important than the individual opinion.

All participants in the focus groups expressed a wish to choose their future partner themselves, but were all aware that their parents probably would be involved in the decision. The qualifications of future husbands/wives were widely discussed, including some of the 'rules', e.g. not marry outside religion and caste. A Hindu girl marrying a Muslim boy would be an impossible scenario, according to the sample interviewed. However, this is by no means any general opinion in Indian society, as many cross-religious marriages are taking place.

Marriage in traditional India occurs at an early age for both parties involved. Modernity, however, can lead to a higher age of marriage, evident in Punjab, which has the second highest marriage age for women after Kerala (Das Gupta, 1987). This, and the practice of love-marriages as described above, are two modern values adopted, whereas other attitude changes are absent.

When scrutinising marriage through the modernisation lens, it is worth mentioning some of the devastating effects sex selection can have on marriageable women's situation all over India. When a deficit of women arises due to sex selection, women are put in an even more vulnerable position. Trafficking, i.e. commercialisation of and trade with women, has increased tremendously. Young women from poorer areas in India, such as Bihar or Orissa, are sold to areas in Punjab where there are not enough women in marriageable age. Other consequences of the deficit of women include the custom of one woman marrying several men, often brothers. All these practices further devalue the woman's status, and put her in an even more marginalised position in the family structure.

9. Analysis

In this final section, the arguments for verifying the essay's central hypothesis on the paradox of modernity are presented. It will discuss the phenomenon of sex selection in terms of gender and modernity, patriarchal bargaining and neo-patriarchy, all central concepts in the

conclusions. This section will moreover touch briefly on possible solutions to the problem. This final chapter ends with indications of where further research is needed, and with some concluding thoughts.

9.1 India in transition

The essay has, by using the phenomenon of India's adverse sex ratio, illustrated what this study refers to as the 'paradox of modernity'. The paradox arises when leftovers from traditional society are carried over to the modern, and clash with new perspectives. Consequences of modernity, whether translated into urbanisation, changes in family structure or increased female work participation, appear not to have had all those effects on Indian society as may have been predicted by theory. However, the social transformation needed to challenge the rigid gender constructions is perhaps still to come. This has been demonstrated by using a feminist critical approach to modernisation, in which men and women perceive modernity and its effects differently. The discussion has moreover tried to demonstrate that India is in a transition period 'where old norms are being rejected and new norms have not been fully accepted or defined' (Desai 1992:139).

The essay has identified themes which are crucial components in the phenomenon of sex selection. Several of these features seem to have survived modernisation, and thereby allowing sex selection to continue in modern India. Modernisation appears to have created a well-educated, materialistic middle-class, who, with the help of high availability of technique and immoral doctors, can eliminate unwanted elements. Syeda Hameed, a member of the Planning Commission in Government of India, labels this as *'arrogance of prosperity'*. Modernity in Punjab has, according to Hameed, taken its form in Western-style clothes, vacations to Europe and a 'show-off mentality', but not changes in social attitudes. This view was also expressed up by Veena Kumar, a senior lawyer at HRLN, Chandigarh, saying that *'modernity is only on surface, not in a real sense. These young women are full of paradoxes'*. These paradoxes are observable in all of the themes identified. Take the example of education were Punjab on the one hand shows a rate of literacy greater than national average, but simultaneously offers only limited choices as to what is appropriate for women. These young women aspire to enter the labour market, but see their role as limited as the notion that the man is the main breadwinner still is prevalent. The same contradiction is noticeable in the discussion on son preference in which conflicting messages are delivered. Although the

sample almost unanimously expressed that they would have no preferences for either sex of their children in future family, they were aware of the societal benefits of producing a son, and that they, once they are married, probably would have to discuss this with their husband, parents and in-laws. It is evident that all the segments of Indian society have not been able to keep pace in the modernisation process.

Historically, changes in women's status come as a result of macro level processes, such as industrialisation and urbanisation, combined with successful social movements (Moghadam, 1993). In India, and especially in Punjab, initiatives taken by women's movements have been comparatively weak and insufficient. Sudha and Rajan (1998:9-10) conclude that 'on the broadest level of generalisation, the process of development [modernisation] in India has been mostly to women's detriment'. Women do not only benefit less from modernisation, but simultaneously suffer more from its negative effects.

The component of women's involvement in the decisions concerning sex selection can be analysed through a gendered perspective. As touched upon before, women may gain power within the family if giving birth to a son. By this patriarchal bargaining, the woman becomes an active agent in deciding the composition of her family. But does she really have any choice? Only responding to a patriarchal demand, her choices appear quite limited. The importance of having actual choices is a vital element in the development process, and it is in the choices and alternatives were the real power lies. Moreover 'empowerment is sometimes described as being about the ability to make choices, but it must also involve being able to shape what choices are on offer' (Reeves and Baden, 2000). This all creates a neo-patriarchy, in which the woman is depicted as having choices, and hence participate voluntary. This only further fuels the stereotypes of the gender roles, now legitimised by the woman's 'active agency'. Sharabi (in Chelab, 2004) discusses in term of a superficial modernisation, compared to the modernisation processes in the West that was characterised by a 'relentless and systematic modernisation in which social and political relations, as well as mental and psychological orientations, were radically changed'.[7] In a changing society son preference seems to become a powerful marker of a threatened patriarchal order. As the sex ratio indicates, these modernising families are resorting to new and dangerously effective ways of practicing son preference. At the same time, neo-patriarchy in India does not remain

[7] Sharabi (2004) uses this discussion for the Middle East, but it is the author's belief that this could be applied in the Indian context as well.

uncontested, for instance, some of the ways in which son preference are practiced are illegal or highly controversial.

9.2 The future of sex selection

One future scenario of sex selection is that it will follow the supply and demand theory, where a commodity in scarcity increases in value when demand reacts to the low supply. Applied to the issue, it suggests that when the deficit of women is large enough, e.g. when there is not a sufficient amount of women in marriageable age for the young men to marry, women's value will increase. These theories moreover assume that the trend of dowry will reverse, and transform back to bride-price, another old custom, in which the bridegroom's family have to present gifts to the bride's. Whether this is a possible development is widely debated, and often criticised. Reinuka Dagar, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Development and Communication in Chandigarh expresses this in *'You cannot use economic models to explain social phenomenon'*.

Whereas the supply-demand argument suggests a natural correction to the problem, another possible scenario is that the gender gap will be further widened. Today, sex selection is primarily an urban phenomenon. Considering that urban trends tend to be picked up by rural communities, there may in fact be a risk that the behaviour will escalate. This 'imitation' of urban practises in rural areas resembles the phenomenon referred to as 'sanskritisation' or 'brahminisation', which is already visible in India and refers to the replication of high-caste practices among lower castes. Rural areas adopt manners from the urban population in their ambition of upward class mobilisation, in which sex selection is one component.

Although both the supply-demand and 'sanskritisation' scenarios are possible, it should at this stage be obvious that the problem of sex selection is highly complex and cannot be perceived in vacuum as an isolated phenomenon. While this means that the future is very difficult to predict, one could perhaps still argue that as long as the problem is seen in a very simplistic manner rather than for what it is – i.e. a multifaceted phenomenon emerging from cultural and religious practices as well as economic considerations and overall social structures – it is likely to persist in one form or another. If this is agreed, the Government of India would need to adjust its policies and legislation so as to better meet the needs of modern India. Whereas Indian society may have adopted some modern values, the country still hosts traditional

institutions. The Government needs to evaluate and modernise segments such as property rights, laws of inheritance, and employment opportunities for women, to mention a few.

> 'Urbanisation, female education and employment can only slowly change these incentives [son preference] without more direct efforts by the state and civil society to increase the flexibility of the kinship system such that daughters and sons can be perceived as being more equally valuable' (Das Gupta et al, 2003).

The semi-modern India seems to have adopted the notion that women's rights are a Western profound and therefore not applicable to the Indian context. Laws and regulations, such as the PNDT Act, can not alone transform these deeply entrenched accepted wisdoms. Multi-prone initiatives, involving all segments of society, are needed.

In conclusion, it is difficult to see any solution in the nearer future to the systematic discrimination of girl children taking place in Punjab and elsewhere in India. To produce a son creates a win-win situation for all (surviving) actors; the woman gains status through bargaining with the patriarchy, the man feel pride and has someone who will carry on the family name or take care of business, the in-laws are ensured support, and finally the doctors earn fast cash by performing multiple abortions.

9.3 Concluding thoughts

This essay has visualised the paradox of modernity in India, by looking deeper into the issue of sex selection. The conclusions drawn rest on the idea that sex selection is allowed to survive in modern India, since society has not completely untied itself from its traditional past. India has adopted some modern values, but left others out. India appears, to a certain extent, to have misinterpreted the core of modernisation, by embracing consumerism and materialism, but left out equality and rights. A modern world is something else than one where 'we all go to Mc Donald's together' (Nussbaum, 2001:32).

As discussed in the opening chapters, the sample this study relies on may be considered as too small and that no generalisations of the results can be made. Hence, further research on sex ratio and its (dis)connection with modernisation is needed. Comparative studies, examining other modernised areas of India, could be one area of interest to further examine. This study cannot itself give any exhaustive answers to why son preference has survived modernisation in Punjab. It has, however, outlined some of the crucial areas where traditional and modern

clash, and thereby illustrated the occurrence of the paradox that modernity can produce, which is the main purpose of this essay.

Finally, it must be considered that the 'paradox of modernity', a term used throughout the analysis to explain sex selection in urban India, may also be used to describe the complexity of the problem at a more abstract level. Considering that modernity is about world views as much as it describes social development, it becomes necessary to contemplate over the possibility that the paradox emerges from my very modern approach of coming to terms with the issue of sex selection and is not just a result of the clash between modern and traditional India. In fact, this whole analysis is based on assumptions significant to modernity – i.e. that social, as well as natural, phenomenon follow logical pattern and act in a universally rational manner along the lines of cause and effect. The persistent practice of sex selection becomes paradoxical as it does not fit into these assumptions in a satisfactory way. Thus, while it has been argued that this paradox emerges within Indian society in the clash between traditional and modern, it seems just as reasonable to argue that the paradox stems from my modern approach to study a society which does not seem to follow logical patterns. To me, as a modern researcher, the views expressed by my interviewees are both contradictive and paradoxical, but are they so in an Indian setting as well, or do they only become so when I try to fit them into my modern view of how the world operates? If the latter is the case the 'paradox of modernity' may just as well be a symptom of modern research's incapability of explaining non-modern social phenomena as a way of explaining sex selection in urban India. What we have then is another dimension to the 'paradox of modernity'. The reason is that I am as trapped in my modern world views as my interviewees are trapped in their view. To fully understand the problem of sex selection (and believing that full understanding is possible may in itself be a sign of modernity) and the views offered by my interviewees, I must therefore myself break free from my 'modern trap', just like I expect Indian society to break away from its traditions. This is, of course, highly problematic, and it further suggests that I must infringe on the assumptions and research methods that are developed to give my research credibility in the modern academic world. While this is a serious problem, it is not unique to this study, but can in fact be raised against most social research.

'Girls have to adjust. There are traditions embedded in our minds'[8]

[8] Female student at Focus Group Discussion, 13 September 2004

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Appendix 1. List of interviews

Name	Organisation	Date
Mrs Yasmin Zaveri Roy	Sida, New Delhi	various
Mrs Roopa Chatterjee	Jagori, New Delhi	09/09/2004
Dr Navinder Kumar	Population Research Centre	13/09/2004
Anonymous	UNFPA	20/09/2004
Anonymous	UNICEF	21/09/2004
Dr Pam Rajput	Centre for Women Studies and Development, Punjab University	22/09/2004
Mrs Simrat Sidhu	--	23/09/2004
Dr Reinuka Dagar	IDC – Institute for Development and Communication, Chandigarh	23/09/2004
Dr Man Mohan Sharma	VHA – Voluntary Health Association	23/09/2004
Dr Sabu George	CWDS, New Delhi	27/09/2004
Mrs Ritu Menon	Women Unlimited, New Delhi	30/09/2004
Dr Veena Kumari	HRLN, Chandigarh	06/10/2004
Mrs Shomona Khanna	LRCW – Legal Research Centre for Women	12/10/2004
Dr Syeda Hameed	The Planning Commission, Government of India	19/10/2004
Dr S Sharma and S.C Gulati	IEG – Institute of Economic Growth	19/10/2004

Focus Group Discussions		
Group 1, female		13/09/2004
Group 2, female		22/09/2004
Group 3, male		06/10/2004
Group 4, female		20/10/2004

Conferences, seminars		
Human Rights Student Convention	HRLN, Chandigarh	10/09/2004
Human Rights Training	HRLN, Chandigarh	11/09/2004
Workshop on Gender and Media	VHA, Chandigarh	05/10/2004
Conference on the Two Child Norm	HRLN, New Delhi	07/10/2004

Appendix 2. Discussion Points Focus Groups (students)

No of students:
Name and age of students:

Family relations

- Do you live in an extended/joint family?
- Do you have close contact with your family?
- Has your family always lived in the city/urban area, or have they migrated there recently?
- Do you have influence on decisions taken in your family? How much influence does your family have on decisions that concern you? *Discuss different issues such as clothing, hobbies, friends, boyfriends, marriage, household duties etc.*

Family composition

- Are you in favour for arranged or 'love marriage'?
- What does your ideal family composition look like, i.e. how many children, boys and girls, age gap etc.?
- Is this discussed in the family, or is it primarily a concern for husband and wife only?
- Are boys and girls treated the same by parents, grand parents, school etc.?
- Are there different expectations on boys and girls from parents, grand parents, school etc.?
- Do your parents expect you to work or to be a housewife after graduating?
- If you had a daughter, would you expect her to work or to be a housewife?
- Do you expect your children to take care of you when you grow old? If yes, do you have the same expectations for sons and daughters?
- Do you think your children will live in joint or nuclear families?

Abortion

- What is your opinion on abortion?
- Is this abortion an issue you can discuss openly with your family, friends, doctor?
- Is it easy and unproblematic to take a pre-natal sex determination test?
- Is it common that people do these tests followed by abortion?

Other issues

- Dowry; is it practised in your family/community? Are there differences between castes or communities? Is it considered as a problem?
- Are you/your family religious?
- Missing girls – are you familiar with the term? Why, in your opinion, is it practised?

Appendix 3. Questionnaire Semi-structured Interviews

Name:
Organisation:
Date:
Place:

- How is your organisation working with the issue of sex selection?
- In which geographical areas are you active?
- What are the underlying causes for this practice?
- How can, in your opinion, this tradition still continue to be so prominent in well-off areas such as Punjab? Theories claim that increased economic welfare, modernisation and urbanisation are all supposed to lead to gender equality. Why is this not the case in Punjab?
- What is the Government of India doing on this? What is lacking in their approach?
- What are the consequences and future scenario?
- What measures does one need to take to tackle the problem in order to change the trend?