

“Raising a daughter is like watering your neighbors’ garden”

A research into the social demographic consequences of female deficit in the Indian society.



Masterthesis

Human Geography: globalization and development

Author: Anniek de Pril

Supervisor: Jackie van de Walle

Nijmegen, 2008

*Daughter, the day you were born
My womb was aching.
I did not fancy meat or fish
My womb was aching.
Daughter, the day you were born.
It was an August night,
The mother-in-law and the husband's sister
Refused to light a lamp,
Even my lord
Spoke to me roughly.
The day you are married, daughter,
The father's heart will be eased,
Grand will seem the birth
That brought the gods to our house.
The wedding is over
The red is on your head
The dowry cost nine lakhs.
Break up the pitchers in the court
Even on an enemy I wouldn't wish a daughter.
Had I known a girl was in my womb
I would have drunk hot peppers.
The peppers would have killed the child,
How free of cares I should have been.*

[Archer, 1984, in Fruzzetti, 1993]

PREFACE

One year ago, I was looking for a topic to write my thesis about. It had to be something that 'grabbed' me; I wanted to be personally moved by the issue that I was going to spend so much time working on. When I read about the practice of female feticide and infanticide in India, I knew I had found this topic. How was it possible that people murdered their own babies? This was something completely beyond my imagination. I was interested to find out what it would be like to live in a country with an overrepresentation of men. I read some more articles about this topic, and felt that this was a topic so shocking, yet also so interesting, that I could imagine myself spending a couple of months working on this topic. Little did I know, that this 'couple of months' eventually turned out to be a year!

January 2008, I packed my bags, said my family, friends and boyfriend goodbye, and left for Chandigarh, India. For three months, I was going to do research on female feticide and the declining sex ratio in the states of Punjab and Haryana. As soon as I walked down the stairs of the airplane, I felt the eyes of many Indian men staring at me. The first days it was somewhat flattering, felt like I was some kind of movie star. After a couple of days however, the constant gaze and (dirty) comments began to bug me. So this is what it feels like, to be in a country where there are way more men than women...

It is safe to say that in all aspects I will never forget the time I spend in India. I had some pretty rough times, but also very interesting and fun moments. After being back in the Netherlands for eight months now, the bad memories have begun to fade away, and the good ones remain. I will always remember how a young girl, who did not speak a single word of English, took my hand and showed me around her village!

Finishing my thesis also means finishing my time being a student. From a start with psychology seven years ago, to a bachelor in anthropology, and eventually this master in human geography, it is now time to start 'a grown up life', and look for a real job. I am interested to see what the future will bring!

At the end of this preface, there are some people I like to thank; first of all Jackie van de Walle, my supervisor, who helped and guided me along the process of doing research and writing this thesis. Also a big thanks to Judit and Damiaan from the 'schrijfcentrum' who have helped me structuring my thoughts and putting them on paper. To all the people in India who have helped me with my research, by sharing their stories with me, shukhriya! Thanks, to all my friends and my family who have provided the sometimes so much needed relaxation. Lieke, I want to thank you for promising me cakes in India, without you, India would not have been the same! Rens, thanks for always being there for me! And last but certainly not least, mum and dad, thanks for all the support, not only during this last year, but throughout my life, you are wonderful!

And for you, the reader of my thesis, I hope you will be as grabbed by this issue as I was, and still am!

Anniek de Pril, December 2008.

SUMMARY

In this thesis, attention is paid to a demographic problem that is currently taking place in India. In some states in India, mainly in the northwest of the country in the wealthier states like Punjab and Haryana, men highly outnumber women. In these states there are about 20% more men than women present. The reason why there are many more men than women, can be found in daughter elimination. For several reasons, which are explained in this thesis, people prefer to have sons over daughters. Social and cultural factors like gender inequality, the caste system, patrilineal kinship systems, religion and dowry all play a part in this preference for sons. The result of this widespread son preference is daughter elimination on a massive scale. After sex-determination tests, many parents decide to abort the fetus if it is female.

The presumption that is posed in this thesis is that this female deficit in the society will have its effects on the social demography of India. Therefore the question that was investigated in the thesis is: *To what extent does the declining sex ratio in India have consequences for the country's social demography?* In order to answer this question attention had been paid to other countries that also experienced this decline in the female-to-male sex ratio. China and South Korea both have the same kinship system as the northwestern part of India, and the main reason for the adverse sex ratio in these countries could also be found in son preference and gender inequality. The consequences of the declining sex ratio in these countries were seen as possible consequences for the Indian situation. Therefore, attention was paid to those consequences to find out if they also applied to the declining sex ratio in India.

In the first chapter of the thesis, a situation sketch of India is provided, so that one can develop a picture of the Indian context. Further, this chapter looks into the relevance of the research and the formulation of the research questions addressed in this thesis.

The second chapter of the thesis is the methodological chapter. In this chapter, attention is paid to the internship that has taken place in the states of Punjab and Haryana and to the research that has been done. The research methods used in this thesis, literature research, questionnaires and interviews, are discussed and the limitations to the research are outlined in this chapter.

In the third chapter, the important theories and concepts used in the thesis are discussed. First attention is paid to the concept of sex ratio and what it means that a sex ratio is declining. Second, the concept of daughter elimination is addressed. Different perspectives on this phenomenon are explained and compared to different causes of this practice that are mentioned in the literature and in the field. As a third concept, gender is explained in this chapter, and attention paid to the gender relations in India. Finally, attention is paid to the demographic and social consequences of the declining sex ratio that were found in China and South Korea.

In chapter four, the consequences that were found in China and South Korea are divided into three groups, marriage arrangements, consequences that specifically apply to men, and consequences that specifically apply to women. Attention is paid to whether these three aspects also apply to India. In the part about marriage arrangements, attention is paid to

marriage migration, changing marriage norms and violence and subordination in the household. The part about the consequences for men focuses on involuntary bachelorhood and social stratification between men and in the part about the consequences for women, the focus is on subordination of women and public insecurity. It was found that the consequences that the declining sex ratio had in China and South Korea, also applied to the northwestern part of India.

Chapter five ends with the conclusion that the declining sex ratio has consequences on the lives of Indian men and women, on a household level as well as on a state level. Marriage patterns are changing, men have trouble in finding a bride and the position of women is deteriorating. There are also suspicions that the consequences of the declining sex ratio reach even further and cause an increase in crime and violence, and that the declining sex ratio is causing a further spreading of the HIV/Aids virus. However, these suspicions need to be further examined. Whether these last two items are also consequences of the declining sex ratio or not, it is clear that the decline of the Indian sex ratio needs to come to a halt, to prevent these consequences from aggravating. In addition, the Indian mindset according to gender inequality and son preference needs to change to save the lives of many unborn girls in India.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	III
SUMMARY	IV
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VI
TABLE OF FIGURES	VIII
1 INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS.....	9
1.1 Introduction.....	9
1.2 Situation sketch of India.....	9
1.3 Relevance of the thesis.....	11
1.3.1 Social relevance.....	11
1.3.2 Theoretical relevance	12
1.4 Formulation of the problem	13
1.4.1 Perspectives on daughter elimination.....	13
1.4.2 Research questions	14
1.5 Structure.....	16
2 METHODOLOGY.....	17
2.1 Introduction.....	17
2.1.1 Internship at VHAP, Chandigarh.....	17
2.1.2 Independent research.....	19
2.2 Research methods	20
2.2.1 Literature research.....	20
2.2.2 Questionnaires.....	21
Paper self-administrated questionnaires	22
Respondents	22
Online self-administrated questionnaires	23
Respondents	23
2.2.3 Interviews.....	23
Respondents	24
2.3 Limitations	24
3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	26
3.1 Introduction.....	26
3.2 Sex ratio	26
3.2.1 Defining 'sex ratio'.....	27
3.2.2 Declining sex ratio.....	29
3.3 Daughter elimination	31
3.3.1 Defining 'daughter elimination'.....	31
3.3.2 Srinivasan's four perspectives	33
3.3.3 The causes of daughter elimination.....	35
Dowry.....	36
Religion.....	37
Caste system.....	39
Family planning programs	40
Advanced reproductive technologies	40
Son preference vs. daughter aversion	41

3.3.4	The spreading of daughter elimination	44
3.4	Gender	45
3.4.1	Defining 'gender'	45
3.4.2	Gender relations in India.....	47
3.5	Consequences of an adverse sex ratio in other countries.....	49
3.5.1	Migration	51
	Migration as a coping strategy	52
3.5.2	Social consequences.....	53
4	CONSEQUENCES OF THE DECLINING SEX RATIO	54
4.1	Introduction.....	54
4.2	Marriage arrangements in India	54
4.2.1	Marriage migration.....	55
4.2.2	Changing marriage norms	56
4.2.3	Violence and subordination in the household.....	58
4.3	Consequences for men.....	59
4.3.1	Involuntary bachelorhood	59
	Violence.....	60
	Drug and alcohol abuse.....	61
4.3.2	Social stratification.....	62
4.4	Consequences for women	63
4.4.1	Subordination of women	63
	Subordination on household level	64
	Subordination on national level	65
4.4.2	Public insecurity	66
5	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	68
5.1	Summaries and conclusions to the sub-questions	68
5.1.1	'How can the sex ratio in India be characterized?'	68
	Conclusion.....	68
5.1.2	'What are the backgrounds of daughter elimination in India?'.....	68
	Conclusion.....	70
5.1.3	'How can gender relations in the Indian society be characterized?'.....	70
	Conclusion.....	70
5.1.4	'What are the consequences of the adverse sex ratio in other countries?'.....	70
	Conclusion.....	71
5.1.5	'How does the declining sex ratio influence marriage arrangements in India?'	71
	Conclusion.....	72
5.1.6	'How does the declining sex ratio influence the life of men in India?'	72
	Conclusion.....	73
5.1.7	'How does the declining sex ratio influence the life of women in India?'.....	73
	Conclusion.....	74
5.2	Summary and conclusion to the research-question.....	74
	Conclusion.....	75
5.3	Recommendations	75
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	77
	SAMENVATTING	81

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: States and union territories of India.	10
Figure 2: Child sex ratio in India, divided by districts, for the year 1991 and 2001.....	12
Figure 3: Map of India. The purple area indicates Punjab, the blue area Haryana, and the yellow star shows the location of Chandigarh.....	16
Figure 4: District map of Punjab.	18
Figure 5: District map of Haryana.....	18
Figure 6: Meeting in a village in Patiala to address the adverse sex ratio, as part of the awareness campaign.	19
Figure 7: Age and sex distribution in India for the year 2005.....	27
Figure 8: Age and sex distribution in the Netherlands for the year 2005.	27
Figure 9: Per cent Infant and child death rates (0-4 years) by gender.....	28
Figure 10: Sex ratio (FMR), All ages and 0-6 years for select states, 1981-2001.	29
Figure 11: Decline in Child Sex Ratio 1991-2001.	30
Figure 12: Per cent deficit of women and girls (0-6 years) for selected states, 1981-2001.	31
Figure 13: Celebration of Lohri in favor of the girl child, in a village in Kurukshetra, Haryana.	38
Figure 14: Men watch the Lohri celebration in Kurukshetra from a distance.	48

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

1.1 Introduction

Lately news items about India often have shocking reports about 'Babies' bodies found in abandoned well' and 'Hospital mass grave found as India cracks down on female infanticide' (Page, in The Times Online). Those articles draw attention to a demographic and social tragedy that is taking place in India.

In those newspaper articles is referred to the practice of daughter elimination¹ that is happening in many Indian states. This practice is causing an imbalance between the numbers of males and females in the society. In many Indian states, men largely outnumber women. In the northwestern states of Punjab and Haryana, there are 20% more males than females. It seems likely that this demographical imbalance between males and females will have severe consequences for the Indian population.

When reading about this situation in India, I became fascinated by this phenomenon and different questions came to mind. What is causing this demographical imbalance in the Indian society? Why are people killing and aborting their daughters? Moreover, what will happen in a society where there are around 35 to 40 million² more men than women? In order to provide answers to these questions that fascinated me, I have gone to Punjab and Haryana, the states with the greatest imbalance in sex ratio, to do research on this phenomenon.

This thesis is the result of the three months I spend doing research on daughter elimination and the declining sex ratio in the northwest of India. These initial questions have formed the base of the research and the final questions that will be discussed in this thesis.

In this introductory chapter, a situation sketch of India will be provided, the relevance of the thesis will be discussed, and the problem and the research questions that were formulated for this thesis will be explained.

1.2 Situation sketch of India

India, located in South-Asia, is the seventh largest country, the second most populous country and the largest democracy in the world. The Federal Republic of India is divided into 28 states and 7 Union Territories. Although since 2007 India has a female president, Mrs. Prathiba Patil, the country remains to be highly patriarchal.

¹ Daughter elimination consists of female feticide, female infanticide and fatal neglect of female children (Srinivasan, 2006).

² These numbers come from the Census 2001, and calculation of Sen, 2003 and Retherford & Roy, 2003.



Figure 1: States and union territories of India.

Factsheet India

- Area: 3.287.590 km²
- Population: 1.147.995.904 (July 2008 est.)
- Population growth rate: 1,578% (2008 est.)
- Total fertility rate: 2.76 children born per woman (2008 est.)
- Life expectancy at birth: total 69.25, male 66.87, female 71.9 (2008 est.)
- Literacy rate: total 61%, male 73.4%, female 47.8% (2001)
- GDP per capita (PPP): \$2.700 (2007 est.)
- Population below poverty line: 25% (2007 est.)

(CIA, The World Factbook)

India is the second country in the world (after China) to cross the one billion people mark³. Between 1991 and 2001, the country's population grew with over 20%, but there was a dramatic decline in the child sex ratio⁴. The outcomes of the 2001 Census in India have underscored just how big this problem has become in the country. Especially in the

³ India crossed the one-million mark on August 15,1999, it is estimated that India's population will overtake China's by 2045 (Potter et al, 2004)

⁴ The child sex ratio is calculated as the number of girls per 1000 boys in the 0-6 year age group.

northwestern states of Punjab and Haryana, the deficit of young girls is extreme. In India as a whole, the female to male sex ratio in the 0-6 age group has dropped from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001. In Punjab and Haryana the sex ratio is as low as 820 (Haryana) and 793 (Punjab). This means that for every 1000 boys there are only about 800 girls.

Almost 70% of the 1.15 billion Indians live in rural areas, but in recent years, a lot of people have started migrating to urban areas, causing a rapid urbanization in India. Most people speak Hindi, English is used for business and administration and besides these two languages, the constitution recognizes another 21 official languages. Most Indian people are Hindu (over 80%), the rest of the population can be divided into Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jain, and Tribal. There is a small minority of Jews, Zoroastrians and Bahá'ís. Atheism is almost non-existent in India. The country itself is secular; there is no state-religion.

In India 60% of the population is working in agriculture. The IT industry is booming and main cause of the economic growth in India. After China, India is the fastest growing economy in the world. Although there is a rapid growth in the economy, around 25% of the population is estimated to live in poverty. The number of people living below the poverty line is around 2.5 times higher in rural areas, than in urban areas. The states along the Ganges River are among the poorest, the northwestern and southern states are among the most well off. These higher income states are also the states with a more adverse sex ratio.

1.3 Relevance of the thesis

1.3.1 Social relevance

Data on the demography of India show a disturbing trend: the deficit of young girls compared to young boys (0-6 years) is spreading. It seems likely that this trend reflects a rise in the practice of sex-selective abortion. The green areas on the map of Figure 2, reflect the areas with a healthy child sex ratio, with 950 or more girls per 1000 boys. The orange (between 800 and 849) and red (lower than 800) areas are the worst affected areas. As can be seen on the map, there were no orange or red areas in 1991. In 2001, there were 16 districts that had less than 800 girls per 1000 boys and another 30 districts in which the sex ratio was between 800 and 850. This map indicates that not only the child sex ratio is getting worse, but also that the area with a declining sex ratio is growing.

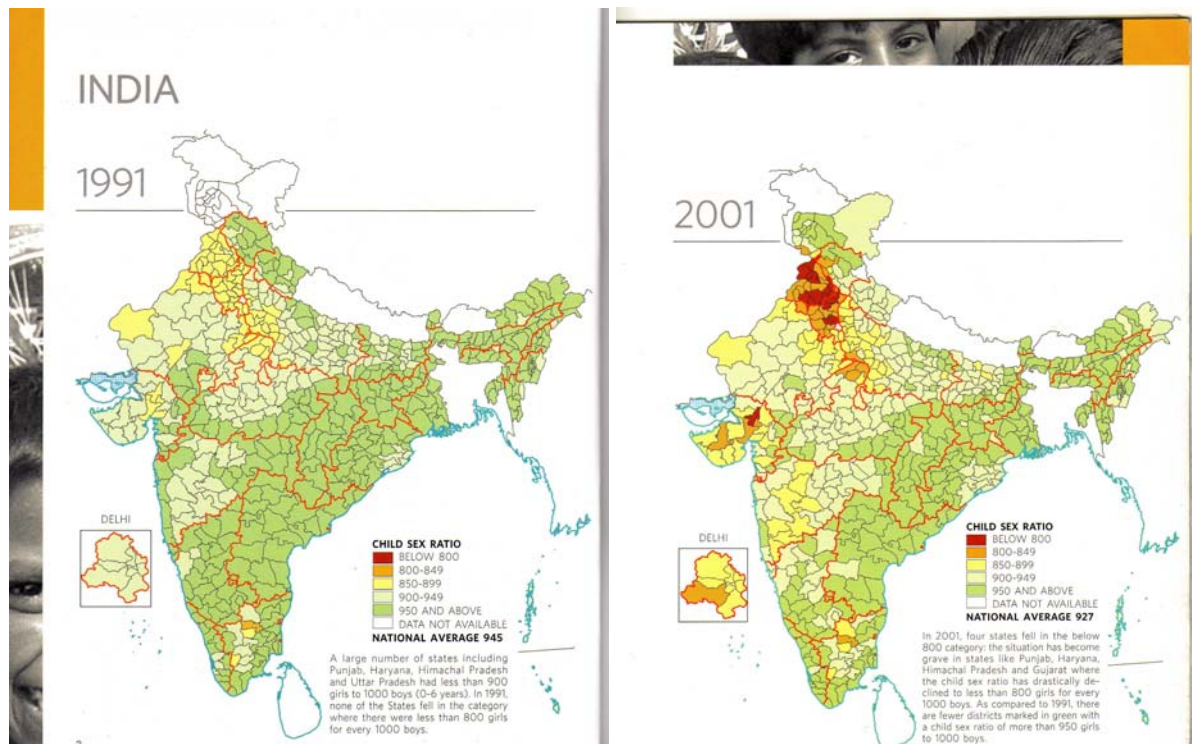


Figure 2: Child sex ratio in India, divided by districts, for the year 1991 and 2001.

There cannot be any doubt about the importance of the subject that is addressed in this thesis. Daughter elimination leads to a deficit of girls, this will lead to a deficit of young women and that will mean that there will not be enough women for all men to get married. This will have its impact on the lives of many men and women. All ways of daughter elimination need to stop in order to save the lives of many girls.

The adverse sex ratio that stems from daughter elimination will most likely cause social and demographical problems for the future. Already reports have been made that due to the declining sex ratio, it is getting harder for men to find a bride, and that the social position of women is deteriorating. There is an urgent need for a way to deal with these consequences of the declining sex ratio. By outlining the consequences of the declining sex ratio in the society, this thesis can contribute to finding a solution for the current situation. This thesis therefore aims to indicate to what extent the declining sex ratio influences the Indian society, so that fieldworkers can develop problem-oriented solutions, and that social scientists can fill in the theoretical gaps in the knowledge about the consequences of the declining sex ratio.

1.3.2 Theoretical relevance

The concept of sex ratio is a part of the research-field of population scientists. Population studies and demography have always been a part of human geography. Human geographers have paid attention to many demographic topics, but the declining sex ratio in India is one of the issues that remains to be slightly neglected in the literature on demography. Many topics that are related to the issue of daughter elimination and the declining sex ratio have been subjected to research; like marriage migration, sex ratio and sex ratio at birth, but there is a lack of information on the issue of daughter elimination and its consequences, from a social demographic point of view.

This thesis thus aims to contribute to increasing the social demographical knowledge available about daughter elimination and the resulting adverse sex ratio, and thus filling this theoretical gap. This knowledge is necessary in order to be able to find a solution on how to deal with the demographic catastrophe that is taking place in large parts of India.

1.4 Formulation of the problem

In this part of the introduction, the research questions and the aim of the research will be formulated. Before getting into the research-questions some perspectives on daughter elimination will be discussed, because these perspectives have led to a general point of view that will be taken in the thesis. Sharada Srinivasan is an assistant professor in International Development Studies at York University, Canada. Born in India she moved to the Netherlands to get her masters-degree and a Ph.D. in Development Studies at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. We both attended the workshop “Preventing Daughter Elimination in India” held in Mumbai in January 2008. For her Ph.D. she wrote about “Daughter Elimination in Tamil Nadu”, which includes an outline of different perspectives on daughter elimination. A summary of these perspectives will be provided in this introduction, because those perspectives have led to a general point of view from which this thesis can be read. After discussing these different perspectives, attention will be paid to the research-questions of the thesis.

1.4.1 Perspectives on daughter elimination

Srinivasan has done research on the topic of daughter elimination in Tamil Nadu, a state in the south of India. Tamil Nadu is one of the few southern states with an adverse sex ratio. In her thesis, she made a review of different approaches on female feticide. She discusses four different perspectives; the evolutionary, the political economy, the socio-cultural and the demographic perspective. These perspectives will be discussed further in chapter 3, when outlining the conceptual framework of the thesis.

When looking at the four perspectives Srinivasan discussed in her thesis, I found that all four of these perspectives have one thing that unites them. They all speak of a difference in the way men and women are valued or treated. Therefore, in my view, it is important to pay attention to this umbrella theme; gender. Gender differences seem to be at the root of all the ways daughter elimination can be looked at. In the evolutionary perspective, women are considered as a liability and as a threat to the survival chances of the early societies. According to the political economy perspective, it is better to invest in a son than in a daughter. The socio-cultural perspective focuses on gender differences on household level and the demographic perspective talks about gender differences in the desired family composition. Because of the overlapping theme of gender in all those perspectives, I think it is important to pay attention to gender when looking at daughter elimination in India and the resulting adverse sex ratio.

Gender relations play a role in every society, they indicate the incidence of domination and subordination between men and women (Millar, in Ultee, Arts and Flap, 2003), but especially when looking at the issue of female feticide in India, it is important to pay attention to how gender plays a part in this (Das Gupta, 1995). Therefore, this thesis will elaborate on gender

related aspects of daughter elimination and the declining sex ratio in India. In chapter three, more attention will be paid to the concept of gender.

“Daughter elimination is viewed as a family planning strategy to maximize the number of sons and/or an outcome of viewing daughters as an economic burden. While some view it as a primitive practice which would disappear in the later stages of development, others problematise it as an outcome of the violence of particular forms of development. A common theme running through all approaches is the anti-female bias which explains the lower economic and/or cultural value attached to women in general and daughters in particular. From a feminist point of view, while killing of all children is of course condemned, female infanticide, selective abortion and neglect are problematic because they are targeted more often and almost exclusively at females. Daughter elimination is conceived as taking discrimination against women to the extreme. Feminist interpretations of the practice view the phenomenon as an expression of male power. Female infanticide is a form of femicide in which female infants are permitted to die as a result of misogynous attitudes or social practices” (Radford, 1992 in Srinivasan, 2006 p. 16).

1.4.2 Research questions

The 2001 Census of India clearly showed a decline of the 0-6 female to male sex ratio in India. As stated before the main reason for this is daughter elimination on a large scale. Daughter elimination occurs widely in different parts of India, but the practice is most prevalent in Punjab and Haryana. The demographical gap between females and males that results from daughter elimination will have its consequences for the Indian society. In India the sex ratio is still declining, there are other countries in the world, who also have experienced a declining sex ratio. In order to find out what the consequences of the declining sex ratio might be for India, there will be looked at what the consequences of the declining sex ratio have been in those countries, and whether these consequences can also apply to India. This thesis aims to outline what the consequences of the declining sex ratio are and to what extent these consequences influence the social demography of India.

The central question of this thesis therefore is: *To what extent does the declining sex ratio in India have consequences for the country's social demography?*

In order to be able to answer this question the research question is divided into sub questions. The first three sub questions will provide a conceptual framework about the declining sex ratio in India. The fourth sub question looks into what the consequences of an adverse sex ratio have been in other countries, and the final three sub questions look into whether these consequences also apply to India.

Since this thesis aims to look into the consequences of the declining sex ratio on the Indian society, it is important to find out exactly what sex ratio is and what it means that the sex ratio is declining. Therefore the first sub question pays attention to this demographical issue:

How can the sex ratio in India be characterized?

As stated before in this introduction, the declining sex ratio in India is caused by daughter elimination on a massive scale. Before trying to find out what the different consequences of

the declining sex ratio are, it is necessary to find out more about the background of daughter elimination. Therefore the second sub question of this thesis is:

What are the backgrounds of daughter elimination in India?

Because this thesis is written with a focus on the relationships between men and women in India, it is important to elaborate on the topic of gender. More information about gender issues in India will be looked for when answering the third sub question:

How can gender relations in the Indian society be characterized?

These three sub questions provide a general conceptual framework for the thesis, in which the three most important aspects, that are necessary to understand the context of the declining sex ratio in India, will be explained. In order to find out to what extent the declining sex ratio has consequences for the social demography of India it is important to look at the implications of adverse sex ratios on other countries. Therefore the fourth sub question of the thesis is:

What are the consequences of the adverse sex ratio in other countries?

The final three sub questions are derived from the consequences that were found in China and South Korea, two other countries with an adverse sex ratio, that can be compared to North-India.

In the cases of China and South Korea, it was found that the adverse sex ratio caused a shift in marriage patterns and arrangements. In Punjab and Haryana, there are around 800 females per 1000 males. This means that one out of every five men will not be able to find a bride locally. In order to find out what the consequences of the declining sex ratio in India are for marriage arrangements, the fifth sub question is:

How does the declining sex ratio influence marriage arrangements in India?

Marriage influences both men and women, but in the cases of China and South Korea there were also consequences found that mainly applied to males or females only. In those two countries, it was found that the adverse sex ratio caused social stratification between men. In order to find out whether the same consequences also apply to India, the sixth sub question of the thesis is:

How does the declining sex ratio influence the life of men in India?

Consequences that only applied to women that were found in the cases of China and South Korea were an increase in violence against women and a greater subordination of women. To find out whether these consequences can also be found in India, the final sub question of this thesis is:

How does the declining sex ratio influence the life of women in India?

All of these questions contribute to answering the central question of this thesis. In the final chapter, the answers to these sub questions will be provided point by point, and the research question of the thesis will be answered.

1.5 Structure

In the second chapter of this thesis, the research methods that were used will be discussed and an explanation will be given for the choices that were made during the research. Chapter 3 will pay attention to the first four sub questions of the thesis. The concepts of sex ratio, daughter elimination and gender will be discussed and attention will be paid to the consequences of the declining sex ratio in China and South Korea. In chapter 4, the final three sub questions will be discussed in order to see whether the consequences found in China and South Korea also apply to India. Chapter 5 is the final chapter of the thesis, in which an answer to the research question will be provided.

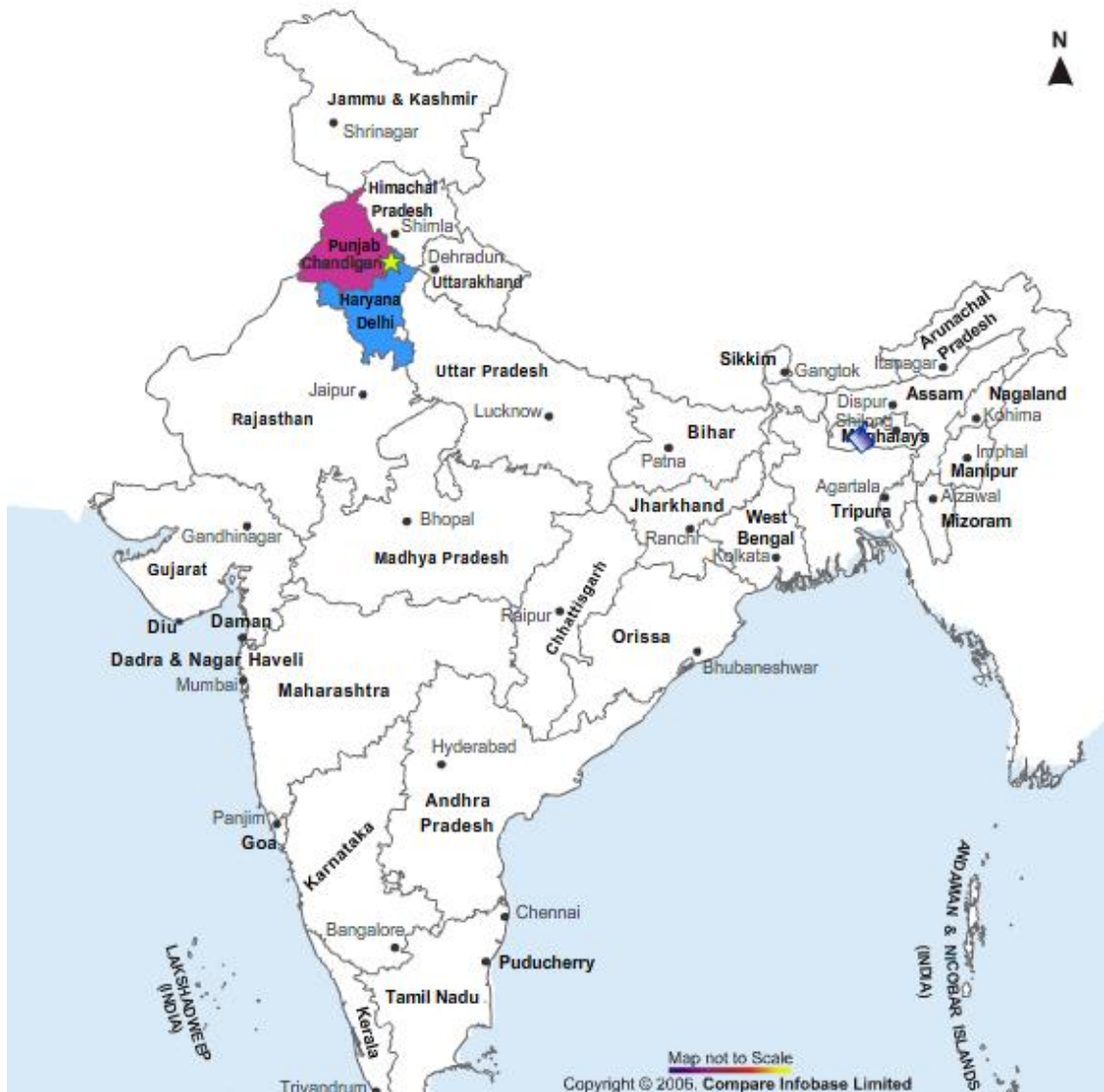


Figure 3: Map of India. The purple area indicates Punjab, the blue area Haryana, and the yellow star shows the location of Chandigarh.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the methodological decision of the thesis will be explained. The research for this thesis can be divided into two parts, one part of the research has been done by order of the Voluntary Health Association in Punjab (VHAP), and the other part of the research was done independent of VHAP. During the internship, several seminars and workshops have been visited, and in the independent part of the research, interviews and questionnaires were used to gather information. In the first part of this chapter the internship at VHAP will be discussed, afterwards the independent research and the research methods that were used will be discussed.

2.1.1 Internship at VHAP, Chandigarh

During the first three months of 2008, I was living in Chandigarh, India. Chandigarh is a Union Territory in itself, but also the capital of both Punjab and Haryana. Figure 3 shows the location of Chandigarh and both states. AIESEC, an international student organization, aiming to stimulate global cooperation and cultural understanding, helped finding this internship. The internship took place at the Voluntary Health Association of Punjab (VHAP). The Voluntary Health Association in India (VHAI) is a non-profit organization that initiates and supports health and development programs, VHAP is one of the 27 state level branches of VHAI. The job description of the internship with VHAP was to do research on female feticide in rural areas, gathering statistical data on the prevalence of female feticide, addressing the adverse sex ratio in selected areas in Punjab and Haryana and to participate in the campaign against sex selection and pre-birth elimination of the girl child. This initial job description as was provided by AIESEC was not met, and during the internship, the concern that it was not possible to acquire valid research data for the thesis kept growing. After two months of working for VHAP, the decision was thus made to leave VHAP and to spend the last month doing independent research. In paragraph 2.3, when discussing the limitations of the research, this decision will be further explained.

During those two months with VHAP, several villages in both Haryana and Punjab have been visited for meetings with the sarpanches (the head of the village) and their counselors. The intention was to visit a selected number of villages in both Punjab and Haryana. Villages were selected on base of their sex ratio, in both states two villages with a low sex ratio, two with a high sex ratio and the main city of the state were selected. VHAP however decided otherwise, because this research would be too time-consuming. On base of proximity, two districts in Haryana and two in Punjab were selected that had a child sex ratio (csr) lower than 800 and in all four of these districts, two villages were selected. The districts that were selected are Kurukshetra (csr 770) and Ambala (csr 784) in Haryana, and Fatehgarh Sahib (csr 754) and Patiala (csr 770) in Punjab. These districts can be found on the maps of Figure 4 and 5. For privacy reasons the names of the villages will not be provided.

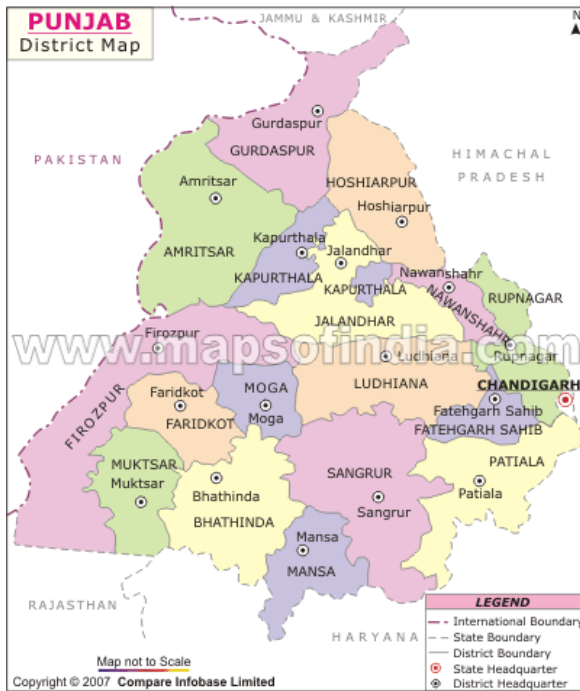


Figure 4: District map of Punjab.



Figure 5: District map of Haryana.

During the internship, several seminars on daughter elimination in India were attended. Although the majority of these seminars were held in Punjabi⁵, they were really interesting and helpful to get to understand the reality of daughter elimination and the declining sex ratio. The seminars took place at different places, some in Chandigarh, and others in rural health centers in Punjab and Haryana. One of the seminars attended, was a two-day ‘workshop on preventing daughter elimination in India’ held at the International Institute of Population Sciences (IIPS) in Mumbai. This meeting was hosted by both the IIPS and the Instituted for Social Sciences (ISS) in The Hague. Some of the authors used in this thesis, like Agnihotri, Bedi, Kaur and Srinivasan, also participated in this workshop.

Another part of the internship existed of gathering statistical data on the prevalence of female feticide in the rural areas of Punjab. During the visits of the villages and the meetings with the sarpanches, questions were asked about the number of residents in the village and the number of boys and girls born in the last five years. It was extremely difficult to get this sort of information, since no databases exist on a village level. Most of the information, if any, was not valid for scientific use, because it contained too many errors. The statistical data used in this thesis, comes from the Census of 2001, which could be obtained via the Internet at VHAP. The National Census held every 10 year in India is the most reliable source of statistic data that could be used for this thesis. From this source, comparisons between different regions can be made and the history and spreading of female feticide becomes visible. Most authors that have used statistics, which they did not obtain themselves, have made use of the Census data as well.

⁵ Colleagues from VHAP would translate the important issues that were discussed.



Figure 6: Meeting in a village in Patiala to address the adverse sex ratio, as part of the awareness campaign.

2.1.2 Independent research

Since it proved to be difficult to do independent research in India on the topic of daughter elimination and the declining sex ratio, most of the independent research done in India, consists of open and semi structured interviews⁶. Interviews were held with, for example, a mother who raised three daughters against the will of her family-in-law and an educated woman that was married to the sarpanch of one of the villages.

After leaving India, local AIESEC members were asked to fill in an online questionnaire about family composition and awareness of daughter elimination. Another Dutch student that was residing at Chandigarh at that time, was also requested to ask her colleagues to fill out a questionnaire. In total about 50 questionnaires were returned. Sampling methods will be discussed in paragraph 2.2.2 and information acquired through these questionnaires can be found in chapter 4.

A great deal of time in India was also spend reading local and national newspapers and articles on topics related to daughter elimination and the declining sex ratio in India. These provided a further insight into issues most people did not like to talk about. With great regularity, there were reports in the newspaper about doctors that were suspected of giving details about the sex of the fetus to parents, about places where people had found the bodies of aborted fetuses and about fathers who had murdered their daughters. In addition, articles that were not directly about the declining sex ratio or daughter elimination, but about

⁶ Since the topic of female feticide is an extremely delicate topic to talk about, guarantees had to be made to safeguard the privacy of the people who have participated in this research. Therefore, fictitious names have been made up for the respondents.

the general context of being a girl or a woman in India, came to the attention. Every so often, there were reports about young couples being murdered because they fell in love with each other, or about girls being set afire because her parents could not meet the dowry requests of the husband's kin. These articles may not have had a direct use for this thesis, but they have provided a better insight in the Indian society in which daughter elimination is taking place.

The data acquired during the research will be provided in chapter 4. In some cases the information is added to the main body of the text, in other cases the choice has been made to provide the data in the form of textboxes. When the acquired information is used to explain or clarify a certain topic, the information is put in the main text. The information provided in the text boxes, can be seen as examples or illustrations of how daughter elimination and the declining sex ratio play a part in the everyday life.

2.2 Research methods

In this part of the methodological chapter, the methods used during the research will be discussed. First, the literature research will be discussed, which forms the major part of the research done for this thesis. Secondly, the questionnaires that were developed for this research will be discussed. Finally, more information about the way personal conversations have played a part in the research is provided.

Before starting to discuss the different research methods used for this thesis, some general information about the type of research used for this thesis will be given. Methodologists Van Dijk et al created a model by which you can identify different sorts of research. According to their model, the research conducted for this thesis can be seen as 'practically-oriented scientific research'. This type of research is different from two other forms of research that are identified by Van Dijk; 'non-scientific research' and 'fundamental-scientific research'. Practically-oriented scientific research aims at acquiring knowledge to help decision-making, the research is guided by practical and scientific norms and it does not aim to generalize, but to find a solution for that specific practical situation ('t Hart et al, 2001). Therefore, this type of research links up with the aim of this thesis.

2.2.1 Literature research

At the moment there is still a lack of cooperation between different people that all have the same aim: trying to stop daughter elimination and regaining a healthy sex ratio in India. Fieldworkers are working directly on the challenges that they encounter in the field, and researchers are all focusing on their own different niche in the same field of research. If I say that more cooperation between all these different actors is necessary, than why not start myself, with combining different authors and their views on this issue. For this reason, literature research is the main method used in this thesis, in order to answer the questions that were posed in the first chapter of this thesis.

Literature research both facilitates building the conceptual framework of the thesis, and provides answers to the questions posed in chapter one. In order to be able to write about the declining sex ratio and all its related topics, knowledge about theories and results of earlier research is necessary. There are no grand umbrella theories that are concerned with

daughter elimination itself or with the declining sex ratio, so it is necessary to find out what is already known about it and put all those pieces of information together. This is necessary to be able to see in what context daughter elimination and the declining sex ratio are a part of the Indian social circumstances. On other topics, like migration, there are theories available, but they do not fit closely to the problems concerned with migration due to the adverse sex ratio in India. Therefore, in some instances it is necessary to make a comparison between the real life situation and the theoretical models posed by scientists.

Since this thesis is written to achieve the Masters-degree in human geography, the choice is made to focus on social scientists with a background in demography and population studies. The articles of Srinivasan and Kaur were of special interest to this thesis. Srinivasan has provided important insights in the concept of daughter elimination; her thesis was the only literature found in which daughter elimination was conceptualized and that provided important insights in the different perspectives on daughter elimination. The perspectives explained in her thesis all show that gender is an important concept when considering daughter elimination, as explained in paragraph 1.4.1. The articles of Kaur were chosen because she is the only author who explicitly focused on the concept of across-region marriages in India as a consequence of the declining sex ratio.

During the literature research it was found that most literature published before 2001 only mention daughter elimination or female feticide indirect. In 2001, the national census of India showed a radical decrease in the total population sex ratio and the child sex ratio. In literature published after the 2001 census, more attention is paid to different forms of daughter elimination as a cause of the declining sex ratio.

It was remarkable that when looking for gender issues in India in the literature, the gender relations in India were only explained by discussing the subordinate position of women. When it comes to gender, the authors did not look at the relations between men and women in general, but only focused on the subordinate position of women.

In most literature studies, it is common that there is a debate in the literature about a certain topic. In the literature on daughter elimination and the declining sex ratio, no such debate has been found. All of the authors used for this thesis agree that daughter elimination is the main cause of the declining sex ratio in India. The only disagreement found, was that in the literature used for this thesis, some authors, like Patel, have pointed to other, unidentified authors, stating that they wrongly apply the economical model of supply and demand to the social catastrophe of the female deficit in India. According to Patel (2007) and like-wise minded scientists, women are not commodities that can be put into economical models of expectations.

2.2.2 Questionnaires

Since getting people to cooperate with face-to-face interviews on a delicate topic like daughter elimination has proved to be difficult for an outsider in India, the choice has been made to use questionnaires. These questionnaires were used to get more insight into the family structure of the respondents and their awareness of different forms of daughter elimination and the declining sex ratio. The decision to use questionnaires was made for two reasons. First, as stated above, there seems to be a taboo on talking openly about female

feticide in India and many Indian people do not feel comfortable talking about their own feelings and opinions freely with an outsider. Therefore, it was better to use self-administrated questionnaires. The second reason was a more practical one, since there was a lack of both time and money; it was quicker and cheaper to use self-administrated questionnaires instead of using many face-to-face interviews and questionnaires by telephone. It would have been too time-consuming to interview all the people personally, since in most cases personal relations have to be set up first, before you can get people to talk freely about this subject.

Two different sets of questionnaires were made, one short handout version that was delivered to a group of people working at an international affairs office, and one, slightly longer, online version that was send to several young people from AIESEC Chandigarh. The first questionnaire was developed in India in cooperation with VHAP and aimed to find out the incidence of daughter elimination and marriage migration. After returning to the Netherlands, I felt that more information about the opinions and thoughts of people about daughter elimination and the declining sex ratio would be valuable for the research; therefore, an online version of the questionnaire was developed. Both of these questionnaires were self-administrated questionnaires, first the paper self-administrated questionnaire will be discussed, afterwards the online self-administrated questionnaires.

Paper self-administrated questionnaires

At the international affairs office 42 self-administrated questionnaires were handed out, of which 30 were returned. This means that there was a total non-response of 12. According to 't Hart et al. the response in self-administrated questionnaires tends to be lower than in most other sorts of questionnaires, therefore a response of 71% can be considered satisfying. The per-item response is also likely to be lower with self-administrated questionnaires; people tend to skip some questions by accident or on purpose ('t Hart et al, 2001). In the handout version of the questionnaire there was a low level of per-item non-response. Only in four of the questionnaires, one to three questions remained unanswered.

The answers in the questionnaires were not always consistent, some people answered that they were not married, and later wrote about their husband, others first stated not to have siblings and later on mentioned a brother. This type of inconsistency is typical of self-administrated questionnaires according to 't Hart (2001). In most cases, the questionnaire itself still contained enough information to be valuable for the research. If for example, someone answered not to have siblings in the first part of the questionnaire, and later on writes that it is difficult to find a suitable spouse since her sister needs to get married first, this final answer provides valuable insight for the research. In this case, a possible reason might have been that the respondent did not know what the word sibling means, or that he just made a mistake answering this question.

Respondents

All of the respondents that were allowed to answer the questionnaires had to be over 18, which is the legal marital age in India. This age limit was set so that all respondents were in their legal marital age and could therefore answer questions about whether or not they were married. The other requirement the respondents had to meet was being able to read and

write in English. This decision was made for the simple reason that they otherwise would not have been able to understand the questionnaire.

In total 30 people responded to the questionnaire, 26 (87%) of them were female, and the remaining four (13%) were male. In this group of respondents, the youngest was 20 years old, the oldest 31 years old, and the average age of the respondents was 25,6 year. Out of the 30 respondents, 13 (43%) were married, of which nine (69%) had one or two children. The other 17 respondents (57%) were not married at the time of filling out the questionnaire.

Online self-administrated questionnaires

The online questionnaire had been send to a small group of Indian students that are a member of AIESEC, with the request to forward the questionnaire to as many people as possible. According to 't Hart, the response on online questionnaires is even lower than for self-administrated questionnaires that are handed out personally, numbers about how much lower this response generally is, are not provided in their book ('t Hart et al, 2001). There were 13 questionnaires filled in and send back through e-mail. It is hard to tell how big the non-response is, since it is not known how many people received the request to fill in the online questionnaire. The per-item non-response was about the same as in the paper version of the questionnaire. It was not possible to send the online questionnaire back without answering all the questions, but giving a short yes-or-no answer on questions that ask about an opinion can be considered as non-response on these questions. The possibility that people did try to fill out the questionnaire and got disconnected from the internet halfway, or had difficulties sending the reply cannot be excluded either.

Respondents

Just as for the paper self-administrated questionnaires all the respondents had to be over 18 years old. The second requirement of being able to read and write in English also applied to the online version of the questionnaire. One incidental condition for the on-line questionnaire was that people without access to internet, either at home, work or at a cybercafé were excluded from the research.

The online questionnaires had a total response of 13. This group consisted of seven females (54%) and six males (46%). The youngest respondent in this group was 20 years old, and the oldest 37 years old, and the average age in this group of respondents was 23,6 year. In this group, only one person (8%), a male, was married. He has three children.

2.2.3 Interviews

Besides the questionnaires, information gathered through open and semi-structured interviews, was also used as a way of collecting field data. As discussed before the topic of daughter elimination is a delicate one, therefore it was not always possible to make an appointment for an interview with people beforehand. The most interesting conversations therefore took place spontaneously, like the afternoon that was spent talking to a mother of three daughters, or the day spent with the sarpanch's wife in one of the villages. These types of conversations held the middle between a normal face-to-face conversation in a field situation, and an open interview. A topic-list was kept in mind when talking to the

respondents, and during the conversation, as many questions as possible were asked, without interrupting the conversation too much.

Because of the sensitivity that had to be taken in mind when talking to people about daughter elimination, the decision was made not to take notes during the interviews. This might otherwise have caused people to be more reluctant in discussing sensitive information and it would have interrupted the conversation too much. After talking to somebody, it was tried to write down as much information as possible and to remember some important phrases used in the interview to quote them as accurate as humanly possible.

There were no interpreters used for doing the interviews, this choice was made because this way more questions could be asked, than would have been possible to ask when an Indian interpreter would have been present. My experience was that most people accept more from a foreigner than from a local researcher, since they will not blame you for asking culturally sensitive topics. There were times when people were talking to me while stating that they would never have told me this if I had been an Indian women, because some issues Indian people do not talk about amongst each other. So being a foreigner has been both a disadvantage sometimes, for not being able to understand people, but it has been an advantage at other times, because this way it was possible to talk with women about topics they would otherwise never have told me.

A negative side effect of not using an interpreter is that this way all people not being able to speak English were excluded from the research.

Respondents

For the conversations the same sampling requirements applied as for the questionnaires, the respondents had to be over 18 years old and because there was no interpreter used during the conversations, the respondents had to have some understanding of English.

Two open interviews were held with women, one in her thirties, and the other in her late forties. They both had children; the youngest had two sons, the eldest three daughters. One semi-structured interview was held with the young man who is called Shahid in this thesis. Informal conversations about daughter elimination and the declining sex ratio were held with colleagues; two females in their thirties, one married without children, and the other unmarried, and one male in his fifties who was married and had one son. During the seminars, several fieldworkers and researchers, like Vasudevan, Kaur, Sharma and Agnihotri were willing to answer some questions about the declining sex ratio and its consequences.

2.3 Limitations

There were quite some challenges during the research, people were not always as helpful as expected, there are different levels of doing research in India and in the Netherlands, and of course, the language and culture differences have played a part in the difficulties experienced during the research-period in India. In this final part of the methodological chapter, some important limitations will be outlined. The findings of this thesis cannot be used as a generalization for the situation in India in general, because of the small sample size used in the research and because of the limitations that will be mentioned below.

First, two limitations that played a part in the interviews with the sarpanches will be discussed. Those interviews were done in a formal setting with three to four employees of VHAP present. This setting may have prevented the sarpanch and the panches⁷ to talk freely. The panchayat may have feared that the information they provided would not be handled carefully. This way it cannot be sure if they were giving open and honest answers to the questions, and thus the validity of the information provided in these conversations is unclear. A second limitation here was that the meetings were held in Punjabi, and the director of VHAP would translate the conversations afterwards. According to me, this was not always done properly. Some translations were done incorrectly or were judgmental, like “What he said is not important, he is only a farmer” or, “the way I see it...”. Because of this the translated information has a lack of validity. It was not possible to convince the director of the importance of validity, therefore it was tried to get the office-members to talk about the details of the conversations afterwards. They could not do this in front of their boss, since this would be considered inappropriate according to the Indian manners.

Another limitation related to the research done in co-operation with VHAP, was that not everybody in the villages and meetings felt comfortable talking to me. This had nothing to do with me personally, but with the reputation VHAP has with some people in the villages. This combined with the other constraints mentioned before, made me realise that it might be better for my research to stop working for VHAP.

One final limitation that needs to be addressed is concerned with data gathering on daughter elimination in general. Daughter elimination cannot be measured directly, since, for understandable reasons, people do not report that they have aborted a female child, killed her after birth or let her suffer to die. Therefore, all numbers used in this thesis are estimates - or ‘guesstimates’, as Srinivasan (2006) calls them in her thesis - calculated from the number of expected births. The child (0-6 years) sex ratio derived from the census, is compared with the number of births that would have occurred in a natural context. The 0-6 sex ratio is hardly affected by factors like migration, as is the case with the total population sex ratio (Srinivasan, 2006, Retherford and Roy, 2003). Therefore, with this calculation an estimate of the occurrence of daughter elimination can be made.

⁷ Every village has its own *panchayat*, a village council, consisting of the *sarpanch*, the head of the village, and several *panches*, who are his advisers.

3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the general concepts of this thesis will be explained. In the first chapter three questions were asked regarding those concepts; 'How can the sex ratio in India be characterized?', 'What are the backgrounds of daughter elimination in India?' and 'How can gender relations in India be characterized?' In order to be able to understand the problems addressed in the thesis, it is necessary to gain more knowledge about these issues. It is further important to look at the consequences of the adverse sex ratio that have been found in other countries, therefore the fourth sub question 'What are the consequences of the adverse sex ratio in other countries?' will also be discussed in this chapter.

Therefore this chapter will first focus on the issue of sex ratio; what is sex ratio, and what does it imply that the sex ratio is declining? Sex ratio is a demographical phenomenon, first sex ratio in general will be explained, and then more attention will be paid to the declining sex ratio.

Secondly, the issue of daughter elimination will be discussed. Daughter elimination is seen as the main cause of the declining sex ratio in India, therefore attention will be paid to what daughter elimination is, what the different perspectives on daughter elimination are, and to what the causes of this phenomenon are. Attention will further be paid to the geographical and social spreading of the practice of daughter elimination.

As a third concept, gender will be discussed. As stated in the introduction, gender is an important factor in dealing with the phenomenon of daughter elimination and the declining sex ratio. Gender can be seen as something that gave rise to the conditions in which daughter elimination came to exist, as well as something that becomes influenced through the declining sex ratio. In this part of the chapter attention will first be paid to the concept of gender itself and how gender is related to daughter elimination and the declining sex ratio. Secondly, the gender relations in India will be discussed.

Since the aim of this thesis is to find out what the consequences of the declining sex ratio in India are, attention will be paid to two other countries that have an adverse sex ratio. A comparison between those two countries, China and South Korea, and India will be made, and attention will be paid to the consequences that were found in those countries.

3.2 Sex ratio

In this part of the thesis, information about the demographical concept of sex ratio will be provided. First, the concept of sex ratio itself will be discussed, after that, more information about the declining sex ratio will be given. Finally, in this part of the chapter attention will be paid to what kind of consequences adverse sex ratio has had on other countries. In this part of the chapter, statistical data will be provided to illustrate the situation as it is in India.

3.2.1 Defining 'sex ratio'

Sex ratio is a concept that is used in demography and population studies. In population studies, attention is paid to population composition and structure, age and sex structures are drawn from countries populations, and attention is paid to the implications these age and sex structures might have on demographic change. Gender issues also have become increasingly important in population studies in the last decades (Johnston et al, 2005). For this reason it is important that this thesis also pays attention to gender issues in relation to the declining sex ratio.

In demography and population studies, population pyramids were invented to give a clear view of the age and sex structure of a population. In these pyramids, the number of males and females per age group can be seen. Those pyramids also tell something about the past and the future of the demographic structure in a country. Figure 7 shows the population pyramid of India in 2005, this pyramid shows that there are many young people under 30, so the population is likely to be highly fertile and grow quickly. In addition, it can be seen that there are fewer females than males in especially the younger age groups. This shows that the sex ratio between females and males in those age groups is not equal. As a comparison, in Figure 8 the population pyramid of the Netherlands for the same year is shown. The pyramid of the Netherlands shows that in a developed country more people survive to a higher age and that the fertility rate is lower than is the case in developing countries.

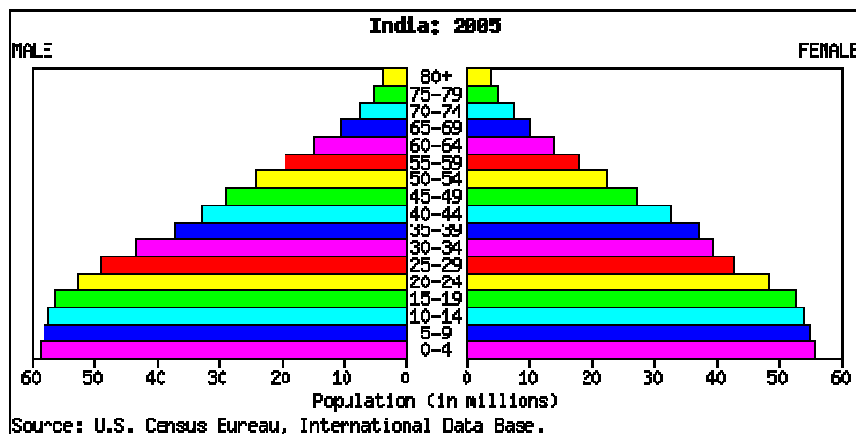


Figure 7: Age and sex distribution in India for the year 2005.

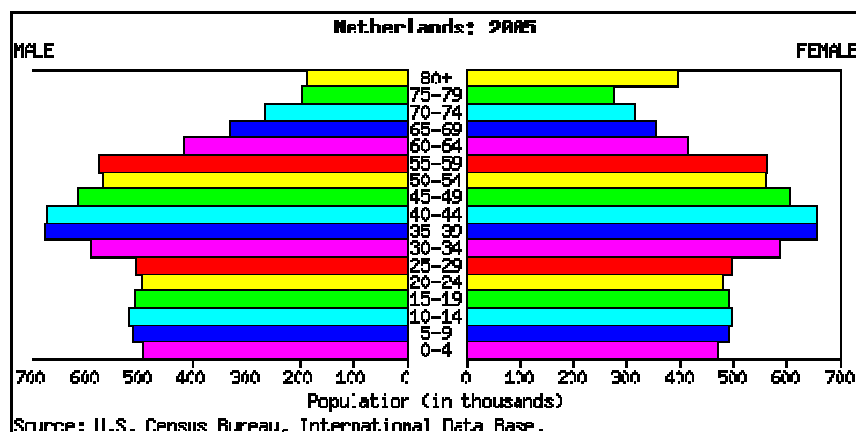


Figure 8: Age and sex distribution in the Netherlands for the year 2005.

According to the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI), a research institute engaged with the scientific study of populations, the sex ratio indicates the proportion of the numbers 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 per age, age group or for 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.

The sex ratio of the 0-6 age group is generally used to measure the occurrence of daughter elimination in the Indian society. Sex selection, infanticide and neglect distort the sex composition of this age group. The intensity of these three forms of daughter elimination combined can thus be measured by using the child (0-6) sex ratio. As stated before this sex ratio is not likely to be affected by factors like migration, as is the case with the population sex ratio (Srinivasan, 2006). Retherford and Roy (2003) developed a way to measure sex-selective abortion, through comparing the actual sex ratio at birth (SRB) with the number that could have been expected in a natural situation.

Figure 9 shows the death rate for children and infants between zero and four years old. The death rate of infants and young children can be used as an indication of the occurrence of female infanticide and neglect of female children⁸. The child death rate, in contrast to migration, does influence the child sex ratio. In a natural situation, more boys than girls would be born, but this would level out in the early childhood years as explained above. Males have a greater biological vulnerability during infancy and childhood, and females have a higher risk of dying during their reproductive period, so only in this age group, a higher female mortality may be expected. There should be a higher mortality of boys compared to girls in the 0-4 age group (Retherford and Roy, 2003), but when looking at this chart, a different picture can be seen. These higher death rates for female infants and children under four years old, point at social discrimination; not only do these numbers imply that female infanticide occurs, but also that the neglect of female children is causing higher death rates among young girls. The numbers in this chart therefore are an indication of a higher preference for sons over daughters. In paragraph 3.3.3 more attention will be paid to this phenomenon of son preference and daughter aversion.

Year	0-4 years death rate	
	Male	Female
1984	39.6	43.1
1993	22.7	24.8
1999	22.2	25.6

Figure 9: Per cent Infant and child death rates (0-4 years) by gender.

In Figure 10, the sex ratio for India for the total population and for the 0-6 age group is shown. This is done for India as a whole and for the states of Punjab and Haryana, the two states with the most adverse sex ratios, who were visited regularly during the internship at VHAP. The chart shows that the child sex ratio is declining rapidly. Figure 6 illustrates that the numbers for the all ages sex ratio show no dramatic decrease when comparing 2001 with 1981. However, when looking at the 0-6 sex ratio this picture suddenly changes. For the whole country, the average already dropped 44 points. For Haryana, the child sex ratio between 1981 and 2001 worsened with 82, and for Punjab even a tragic 115 points. In the next paragraph, more attention will be paid to the declining sex ratio.

state	All ages			Children 0-6 years of age		
	1981	1991	2001	1981	1991	2001
All India	935	927	933	971	945	927
Haryana	870	865	861	902	879	820
Punjab	879	882	874	908	875	793

Figure 10: Sex ratio (FMR), All ages and 0-6 years for select states, 1981-2001.

3.2.2 Declining sex ratio

It is widely agreed that sex ratio is a powerful indicator of the social health of any society. It conveys a great deal about the state of gender relations. Internationally speaking, socially as well as economically advanced societies have shown a sex ratio favorable to the female. Comparing the sex ratio in 1921, of 972 women in India for every 1000 men, and its decline to 933 in 2001, questions the relationship between social development and sex ratio (Census of India). In India, it seems not to be the case that development and sex ratio are linked in a positive way. The evolutionary perspective by Srinivasan, as will be explained in the next part of this chapter, therefore seems not to apply to India when looking at sex ratio. As Figure 11 shows, there are many districts, in different states spread throughout India, that have recorded a decline of at least 50 points in the child sex ratio over the last ten years. Those districts are colored red in this map. The orange and yellow districts show a decline of at least 40 and 30 points respectively.

⁸ It is hard to measure female infanticide and fatal neglect. Many babies who die shortly after birth are never registered, and for understandable reasons, people do not report the real cause of death in cases of fatal neglect (Srinivasan, 2006).

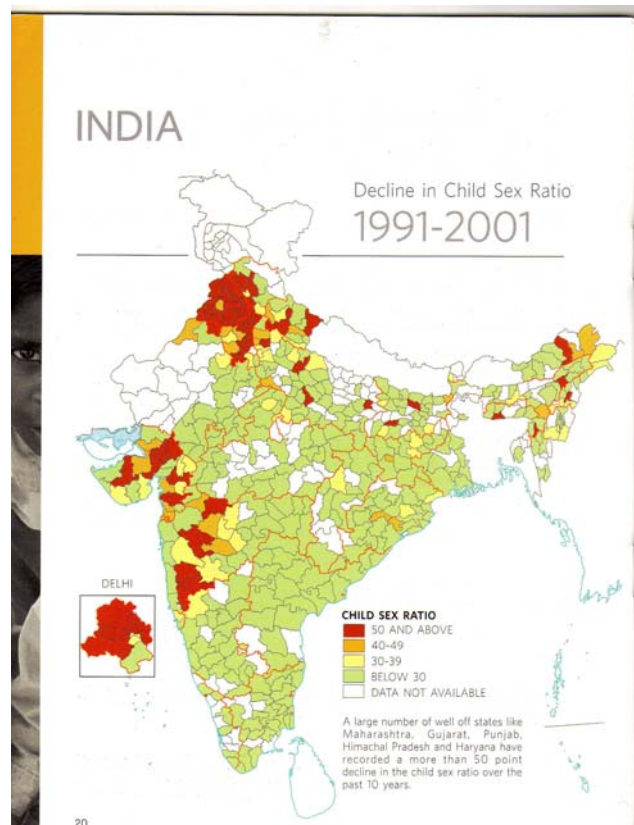


Figure 11: Decline in Child Sex Ratio 1991-2001.

This decline in sex ratio means that the number of women compared to the number of men is getting less. Several authors have discussed this deficit of women in the Indian society. Amartya Sen, Indian economist and winner of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences of 1988, is one of those authors, and the first to address this deficit of women. In 1992, Amartya Sen wrote an essay about 'missing women'. According to different calculations he used, there are around 25 to 40 million women missing in India alone. At that moment, he said that female feticide could only be a small contributor to this, and that the main cause for an overall higher mortality among women was the "*comparative neglect of female health and nutrition, especially – but not exclusively – during childhood*" (Sen, 1992, p. 587). When he made this statement about feticide not being able to explain the extra mortality of females in India it was only one year after the Census of 1991. At that time, there was no general concern about the adverse sex ratio at such a high level as after the 2001 Census.

In 2003, 11 years after his first article on 'missing women', Amartya Sen writes another article in the same journal, 'missing women – revisited'. The number of women missing in India, and in the world, has grown even bigger, reason enough for concern. But Sen is more concerned about a radical change that has occurred during that decade: "*There have been two opposite movements: female disadvantage in mortality has typically been reduced substantially, but this has been counterbalanced by a new female disadvantage – that in natality – through sex specific abortions aimed against the female fetus*" (Sen, 2003). He states his concern that the Indian sex ratio will continue to fall and the numbers of the 2001 Census only indicate 'the early days' of this phenomenon. Amartya Sen is only one example,

but this change in the way scientists have looked at the adverse sex ratio can be seen with more scientists.

In Figure 12, that shows the deficit of women in the total population and the deficit of girls in the 0-6 age group, two important facts can be seen. One, for India as a whole and especially for the two selected northern states there has been a high deficit of women in the population in the two decades preceding the 2001 census. Two, in the 20-year period between 1981 and 2001 the deficit of women in the total population did not increase a lot, but the deficit of the girls in the 0-6 population shows a dramatic increase. In Haryana and Punjab, there were 10 to 12 percent fewer girls than boys in 2001. Keeping in mind that these numbers are state averages, we can assume that these numbers are even more dramatic in some areas of these states. In absolute numbers, there were 23 million women less compared to men in 1981, but in 2001 this number increased to nearly 36 million. The absolute deficit of 0-6 year old girls increased from 2,4 million in 1981 to 5.9 million in 2001 (Visaria, L. in Patel, 2007).

state	Deficit of women in total population			Deficit of girls in 0-6 population		
	1981	1991	2001	1981	1991	2001
All India	3.4	3.8	3.5	1.9	2.8	3.8
Haryana	6.9	7.2	7.5	5.2	6.4	9.9
Punjab	6.5	6.3	6.7	4.8	6.7	11.6

Figure 12: Per cent deficit of women and girls (0-6 years) for selected states, 1981-2001.

This decline in sex ratio and the deficit of women that is connected to it, are likely to have consequences for the Indian society. In paragraph 3.5 attention will be paid to what the consequences of the declining sex ratio have been in other countries with a low sex ratio.

3.3 Daughter elimination

As stated in the introduction of this thesis daughter elimination on a massive scale, especially in the northwest of India, is causing the declining sex ratio. In the above part of this chapter, attention has been paid to the concept of sex ratio and what it means that the sex ratio in India is declining. To get a good picture of the declining sex ratio in the Indian society, it is important to look into what the cause is of this decline in the sex ratio. Therefore, this part of chapter three will focus on daughter elimination. First, attention will be paid to the concept of daughter elimination itself, and then the four perspectives on daughter elimination as noted by Srinivasan will be discussed, before going further into the different causes of daughter elimination. At the end of this paragraph on daughter elimination, attention will be paid to how this practice is spreading through the country.

3.3.1 Defining 'daughter elimination'

Daughter elimination consists of three ways of avoiding to get female children, female feticide is nowadays the most common form of daughter elimination, but female infanticide

and neglect of female children, causing a higher death rate are also ways in people are reported to eliminate their female offspring. Female feticide is the deliberate ending of a pregnancy, through abortion of the unwanted fetus. The reason for the fetus not being wanted is that she is not of the right sex. In female feticide, the female fetus is thus aborted because the prospective parents do not want to give birth to (another) daughter.

Before the widespread availability of facilities where people can go in order to get an abortion, most parents who did not want to give birth to a baby girl had to make do with killing the baby after she was born. This practice is called female infanticide. There are many different ways in which people have been reported to murder their baby daughters; some have fed them milk with juice from a poisonous plant. Other babies have been fed paddy husks, which slit the tiny throat, babies have been put in a clay pot that was later sealed and buried, and some people have stuffed the baby's mouth and nose with cow dung (Sen, 2001 & Srinivasan, 2006). Those methods of eliminating baby girls are not that prevalent nowadays, but occasionally there are still reports in newspapers about this kind of atrocities.

The third form of daughter elimination is fatal neglect of female children. In this form of daughter elimination the female child systematically receives less attention and care. She gets inferior food, since she is not considered to be worthy of eating the better food that male infants receive. When it comes to medical care of female children, parents decide to wait longer before seeking medical care for her when she is sick. The chances of female children to die of neglect are therefore higher than for male children.

In the 19th century and before, the practice of female infanticide was common in some parts of the Indian society, especially among the high caste groups in the northwest of India. The British colonist already made reports about baby girls being murdered and about the adverse sex-ratio in some areas (Dube Bhatnagar et al, 2005). When modern technology became more and more available throughout India the practice of female infanticide slowly changed into the practice of female feticide.

Since the '70s, female infanticide is slowly being replaced by female feticide. The difference being; girls are now not only denied the right to live, but not even allowed to be born. New reproductive technologies that were developed to find out genetic defects that only exist on the male Y-chromosome, became available in India. Those technologies became widely available throughout India when people came to know that this technique could also be used to find out the sex of the fetus. The resulting female specific abortion thus came on top of the already existing practices that discriminate against girls and women.

As a result of the practice of female infanticide and later on female feticide, there are fewer girls and women than naturally would have been the case, estimates are that around 40 million girls and women are missing from the Indian society (I. Grewal and J. Kishore, 2004). During the 20th century the practice of female infanticide and female feticide somewhat diminished, but a strong preference for boys remained to be present in large parts of Northern India. This was mainly visible in childcare patterns. Boys got better food, more attention and quicker treatments during illnesses (Patel, 2007 and Srinivasan, 2006). These patterns are still visible; especially in North-India, the death rates for young girls are remarkably higher than those for boys. As Srinivasan states in her thesis on daughter elimination in Tamil Nadu (2006): "*Daughter elimination in the form of female infanticide*

(killing of infants), feticide (sex-selective abortion) and neglect (withholding vital requirements for survival) is not an aberration or an idiosyncrasy but accounts for a large proportion of missing girls in India measured by the imbalance in the 0-6 sex ratio" (p. 1). In the paragraph 'son preference vs. daughter aversion' this will be explained further.

The Voluntary Health Association of India states that "*the immediate cause for the practice of female foeticide is that daughters are perceived as an economic and social burden to the family due to several factors such as dowry, the danger to her chastity and worry about getting her married*" (VHAI, 2003, in V. Patel, Patel 2007, p. 295). Before getting further into the causes of daughter elimination in India the perspectives on daughter elimination as noted by Srinivasan will be discussed.

3.3.2 Srinivasan's four perspectives

As stated before in the methodological chapter of the thesis, the perspectives on daughter elimination that were discussed by Srinivasan, provide an important inside on the different ways in which daughter elimination can be viewed.

The first perspective discussed by Srinivasan is the evolutionary perspective. Evidence of infanticide has been found in animals and early stages of development throughout the world. The prevalence of infanticide was high in early hunting-gathering and fishing communities and it moves in a continuum via traditional agricultural and pastoral societies towards modern society where there is a low prevalence of infanticide. Therefore, infanticide is explained as a sign of underdevelopment. The living conditions of early man were harsh and in order to get the highest survival rates of their children people choose to eliminate their daughters. They were perceived to be more vulnerable and to contribute less to the survival of the household. In pre-industrial societies, female infanticide was also common; here it was used to make the survival chances of the remaining children higher and to regulate the population. "*The costs of investing in another child have important (short and long term) consequences for production and reproduction activities for individuals and groups*" (Harris and Ross in Srinivasan, 2006). In all those cases of infanticide throughout the history of humanity, the female child has always been most vulnerable. As this continuum proceeds, we reach the stage of urbanization and industrialization, with more employment possibilities for women. Therefore, women's importance in the household increases and the risk of early mortality decreases.

In India, however the situation is slightly different. Instead of a decline of daughter elimination as (parts of) the country became more developed, statistics point out that female feticide became more common. The largest decline in 0-6 sex ratio in India is in the most developed parts of the nation (Census of India 2001). The states of Punjab and Haryana are the wealthiest states of India and have the most distorted sex ratios. The 2001 Census also shows that the decline in sex ratio is higher (32 points) in urban than in rural areas. The practice of female feticide is nowadays both in rural and urban areas more prevalent in groups that are more prosperous. According to Srinivasan, "*these trends are to a large extent explained by the prevalence of sex selection-technology aided sex selective abortion.*" Female infanticide did not vanish with the upcoming modernization, but modernization and development made it possible that this deep-rooted cultural practice turned into female feticide. As will be explained later on in the thesis modernization and development in India

facilitated pre-natal diagnostic techniques that show the sex of the fetus and made it possible to eliminate female offspring before birth.

The second perspective discussed by Srinivasan is the political economy perspective, in which the aversion for daughters is linked to the economic value of women. The general thought here is that the costs of raising a daughter do not meet the benefits. Daughters are looked after as an economic drain for their parents, the parents have to pay a huge dowry to marry her off and the wages for women are considerably lower. After her marriage the daughter's income goes to the family of the husband, nobody expects married women to economically support their parents. A debate is going on about the influence of agriculture on the status of women. According to Bardhan (1974, 1982 in Srinivasan, 2006) the status of women in South-India is better because there is a higher demand for her labor in the paddy fields. In the north the main crop is wheat, this is harder to cultivate and therefore women are less valuable to do this work. According to him, this explains the difference between the south, where there hardly is any dowry, and the north, where dowry is needed to compensate for the parents expenditure. Daughters are a liability in the agrarian society in the north and an asset in the agrarian society in the south. Others like Agarwal (1986) and Harris and Whatson (1987) (both in Srinivasan, 2006) point out that this proposition is not always tenable. The gender division of tasks in agricultural production varies regionally; there are also rice-cultivating areas in India where the dichotomy as stated above is not valid, with a higher demand for male labor. Das Gupta (1995) points out that women in wheat cultivating Punjab and Haryana just as often worked in agriculture as in other income-generating activities.

A third perspective that Srinivasan focuses on is the social-cultural perspective, here the practice of feticide and infanticide is looked upon as an outcome of patriarchal norms, son preference and the status of women. Female infanticide is explained in this perspective as the outcome of kinship arrangements and caste. In the upper caste families, female infanticide was a way to maintain the pride and honor of the family. It was unthinkable that a daughter remained unmarried, but marrying her off to a man of equal or lower status was even worse. This is the main reason why the high caste Rajputs of Rajasthan have been killing their female offspring for years (Kaur, 2007, Srinivasan, 2006). Superiority was of great importance for families of high status. Kinship arrangements also influence the way people deal with marriage. North-India has an exogamous marriage system, the bride moves far away to the groom's family. She is therefore isolated from her natal home and family. This results in lower autonomy and greater discrimination than women in the south experience, who marry close to their natal home, often to a blood relative. These consanguineous marriages, are characterized by a lower dowry, more female autonomy, the possibility of inheritance of property and an overall higher status of women. This kind of marriage does not mean that women do not experience gender discrimination; it is only less severe than is the case with exogamous marriages (Kaur, 2008).

The final perspective Srinivasan discusses is the demographic perspective. North India traditionally has a high fertility rate; one of its main causes is the high demand for sons in this area. Women continue to give birth until they have reached the desired number of sons. Northern India is in the middle of a demographic transition at this moment. The decrease in fertility rate is happening at the cost of the female progeny. Getting smaller families is seen as having fewer chances to get a son. So when the desired number of children in a family

has gone down, the desire for sons has equally gone up. Modern technology has made it a lot easier for parents to achieve the desired family size. By aborting the unwanted daughters, people can create their desired family. Sex-selective abortion is less common for first order births than for births of higher order, because the sex of the child becomes more important when people are planning to stop having children soon (Retherford and Roy, 2003). This means that when parents already have one daughter and ultrasounds point out that the second child will be a girl as well the chances are higher that they will go for an abortion.

3.3.3 The causes of daughter elimination

After outlining what daughter elimination is, and discussing the different perspectives on daughter elimination, attention will now be paid to the different underlying causes of daughter elimination. These causes are mentioned both by people working in the field, as well as in the literature. Srinivasan also discusses some of these causes in her thesis, but as will become visible in this paragraph, all of these causes of daughter elimination are linked to the perspectives of Srinivasan and the gender perspective I have added.

There are different underlying causes that create the circumstances at hand in which daughter elimination, and especially female feticide, is happening on a large scale in Northern India. According to Bose (2007), among others, there are three pre-conditions that have to be available for the spread of female feticide; first, there has to be easy access to medical facilities, in particular, ultrasound and abortion facilities. Second, people have to be able to pay the doctor and abortionist for the test and abortion. Third, a good network of roads to cut down the cost of travel and time taken to travel is necessary. In most parts of the northern states Punjab and Haryana all of these conditions are present. These states are among the most prosperous of India, the transportation network is good and there is easy access to medical facilities. Rainuka Dagar states that *“the higher income groups, urban populations and the educated have been found to practice a relatively higher extent of female feticide”* (Dagar in Patel, 2007, p. 95). This fits into the pre-conditions idea of Bose. The higher income groups, the educated and the urban population generally have more access in time and money, and more possibilities to go for an ultrasound and consequent abortion. Dagar quotes Bose on the higher level of access both in urban and rural areas in economically developed states: *“Those familiar with the field situation in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh and Delhi know that the ready availability of doctors during the ultrasound test and consequent female foeticide, the good transportation network and the ability to pay for the services of the mobile doctors are factors responsible for the widespread recourse to ultrasound in rural areas also”* (Bose in Dagar, in Patel 2007, p 95).

The factors that are important underlying contributors to the practice of daughter elimination will be outlined in the following paragraphs. First, dowry will be discussed, since this has been seen as the main cause of daughter elimination for a long time, after dowry two other cultural aspects that have a great influence on the Indian society; religion and the caste system, and their influence on daughter elimination, will be explained. Fourth, the family planning systems of the government that urged for smaller families will be discussed. The advanced reproductive technologies that facilitated the widespread use of ultrasonography will be discussed after that. Finally, more attention will be paid to the preference for sons and the aversion for daughters. The first five items discussed can be seen as causes of daughter

elimination, this sixth item is an overlapping cause that influences the decision to eliminate the female offspring. Son preference is thus linked to the five causes of daughter elimination.

Dowry

There are two different practices in which a payment in goods or money is made in order to tie the two families together at a marriage. There is bride price, in which the family of the husband pays a certain amount of goods or money to the family of the bride, and there is dowry, in which the family of the bride has to deliver goods or money to the husband's family. In the first case, the husband's family is compensating the wives relatives for the loss of the girl. In the second case, it is the girl's family who is paying the husband's relatives to compensate them for further expenses that come with the acceptance of the bride in their family. In both cases, the practice initially started out as a symbolic compensation, but lately the worth of especially the dowry is increasing. Another change has been that first dowry was given as a sort-of-optional gift, yet nowadays the receiving party often urgently demands it (Sen, 2001, Srinivas, 1984).

Female, 28: "I had heard that the purpose of dowry was to equally divide the inheritance between the son and the daughter. Because girls would marry and move away, in many cases to different villages, giving her a part of the land was not feasible. Instead, on the occasion of her marriage, parents would give their daughters an equal amount of gold (jewelry) or money. This way, the son would usually get the family house and land, while the daughter would get the dowry. Obviously, this is not the case anymore. Dowry has become a liability for the parents of a girl and it does not matter whether they have money or not. And it is strange to see that in well to do families, giving dowry is like a thing of pride. They boast of giving big dowry without realizing how they are increasing the social pressure on those who cannot afford it".

Questionnaire, 2008

Giving and receiving dowry are both considered honorable acts by the concerned families; it is widely used as a way to enhance the status in the family and in the community, even though the practice of dowry is illegal nowadays. Therefore a lot of marriages that are said to be dowry-less in reality still do have dowry, only the demand for dowry by the husband's relatives starts after the wedding, instead of in the negotiations preceding the wedding (Patel, 2007). It is not only the family of the husband demanding the dowry, it is also often the daughter herself expecting her parents to give a considerable dowry, so that her live in the conjugal home will be comfortable. Jewelry for example was often given to the bride to take to her marital home so that she had some wealth of her own. Although this is a gift for the wife, there are no rules that the husband and his kin cannot take this dowry and use it for whatever purpose they like.

Traditionally dowry was limited to certain upper castes only, but now it is spreading to lower classes of the society as well. Among many middle and lower castes in India there has been a spur in adoption of the practice of dowry that is replacing that of bride price (Patel, 2007). Dowry is seen as a way to make quick money by the receiving family, this fits into the cultural-economical shift of the Indian society, which brings consumerism and commercialization of human relations. Due to this shift, the female, especially a daughter, becomes increasingly considered as an economical liability. This matches the political

economy perspective as explained by Srinivasan in paragraph 3.3.2. Daughters are less wanted because they are perceived as an economical liability.

North-India in particular, has been infamous for dowry demands. Even after the wedding the demand for dowry continues, occasionally leading to bride burning and dowry deaths (Sen, 2001). The husband and his parents can ask the parents of the wife to give them money or goods, even after the initial dowry has been paid, or if both parties agreed on a dowry-less wedding. If the family of the bride is not willing or able to give more presents, it happens that the family-in-law threatens to burn or hurt the bride (Patel, 2007).

The height of the dowry is growing and the costs of marriages are rising, these increasing costs are caused by a rising greed in the society. Globalization brings western lifestyles into the living-room of Indian families, with the consequence that nowadays it is not uncommon to ask for a car, refrigerator or big screen television as dowry (ibid).

“A premature girl child needed to be kept in an incubator that would have cost Rs. 25,000. The family decided that this amount could be better utilized as a fixed deposit for her dowry, if she survived without medical care. The baby was not provided the needed medical attention and died”. (Dagar, in Patel, 2007, p. 110.)

The general perception has long been that dowry was the main cause of female infanticide and female feticide. The solution to stop female feticide was to get rid of the dowry system, so it was seen. Currently this attitude is changing. Dowry is still seen as an important cause of female feticide, but the thought now is that it is not the only cause (Srinivas, 1984, Sen 2001). Altering the dowry system on its own, will not solve the other underlying causes of female feticide.

Religion

Religion is a very important factor in every aspect of life in India. In different stages of life religious rituals are performed. There are several large religious groups in India, but for this thesis, only Hinduism and Sikhism will be outlined, since these are the main religions in Punjab and Haryana. The 0-6 sex ratio for the Hindu population lies at 925, for the Sikhs this sex ratio lies at 786⁹ (Census 2001). Both in Hinduism as well as in Sikhism male and female children are officially considered as equal and valued alike, but “*the community experiences the male to be God’s gift and the female to be a burden*” (Dagar in Patel, 2007, p. 117).

For Hindus the son is important in many rituals. The cremation ritual is one of the most important rites for Hindus. At the cremation ritual, the presence of a son ensures the deceased a direct passage to heaven. The son has to perform several rituals, which daughters are not allowed to do. If a father dies without having a son, the general believe is that he will go to *Poota*, or the hell. Therefore, a son is necessary to perform the last rites and to secure the fathers’ safe passage to heaven, if there is no son another male relative has to fill this spot (Patel, 2007).

⁹ These sex ratios are calculated over the total population in India. Since the vast majority of Sikhs lives in Punjab, and Hindus are living throughout the whole of India this number gives a slightly distorted view of the sex ratios divided per religious group. Sex ratios per religious group divided per state however cannot be found.

The role of the daughter in the Hindu religion is to assure the parents and the brother of earning *punya* (religious merit). Marrying of your daughter or your sister will give you symbolic capital and religious satisfaction because it is seen as a sacrifice of the family. For this reason, having one daughter is not only considered a burden, but also as a way of acquiring *punya*. The sacrifice of giving away more daughters does not give you more *punya*, therefore having more daughters is seen as a burden on the shoulders of the parents and the family. This burden is not only economical, but having more daughters is also seen as a burden in the ritual, religious and sexual sense (Patel, 2007).

In Sikhism, all people are considered equal; Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, rejected the caste system and the inferior position of women (sikhwomen.com). Although men and women are considered to be equal, the adverse sex ratio is the highest in Punjab, the homeland of Sikhism. In Sikhism, there are regular celebrations in the Gurudwaras¹⁰ in favor of the male child. Baby boys are being blessed in the Gurudwara and the first birthday of boys is a main event for the Sikh population. One Gurudwara (the Baba Buddaji Gurudwara) is especially known for people to go to if they want to conceive a son.

The Punjabi festival of Lohri, also celebrated by the Hindus, marks the beginning of a new year, at this festival traditionally all the newborn boys and the newlywed men in the family receive presents from friends and relatives. At this festival, women throw sesame seeds in large bonfires that are lit for the occasion, and ask for sons. There is a Punjabi saying that translates: 'As many as the elder brother's wife throws, so many sons the younger brother's wife will bear' (lohrifestival.org). In January 2008, in some villages in Punjab and Haryana, Lohri was celebrated especially in favor of the girl child, as a part of the 'Save the Girl Child' campaign (savegirlchild.com).



Figure 13: Celebration of Lohri in favor of the girl child, in a village in Kurukshetra, Haryana.

¹⁰ Gurudwara means the 'doorway to the Guru' and is the Sikh place of worship. The most important Gurudwara is the Harmandir Sahib, also known as the Golden Temple, in Amritsar, Punjab.

Caste system

The caste system is a hereditary system that determines the social class to which someone belongs. Castes are endogamous, this means that people tend to marry with someone from the same caste. Occupation is determined by caste, as well as power. Officially, the caste system does not exist anymore in the Indian society, but it can still be seen throughout the society. In the Hindu caste system, or Varna, there are four different categories, these people are all considered to be a part of the society. The highest category is called Brahmin, the people who belong to Brahmin castes mainly have jobs in high positions, as teachers, or as priests. There is also a group of people who are considered to stand outside of the society; they were called 'untouchables', recently the term 'Dalits' is preferred. There are several thousand different castes, who can all be categorized within the four categories of Varna (britannica.com).

Nowadays the Indian government uses a system in which different lower castes are categorized in order to be able to help the former 'untouchables' and low caste members to get education and to find a job. The categories of the government are scheduled castes (SC), to which around 50 groups of 'Dalits' belong, scheduled tribes (ST), to which tribal groups belong, and Other Backward Classes (OBC), to which around 3000 groups of the lower category of Varna belong (india.gov.in).

Female infanticide was especially common in the high castes like Rajputs. In those castes, it was unthinkable that a high caste girl would marry with a man of equal or lower caste. In other words, the man always had to be of a higher caste than his wife was. This practice resulted in a problem for girls born in the highest caste, since nobody would even consider marrying them. Having an unmarried daughter was also no possibility for high caste families, since this would injure their honor. The only solution for families to maintain their good reputation was to avoid getting daughters. Female infanticide thus became the solution to eliminate the female offspring and keep the families honor high. The caste system as a cause of daughter elimination matches the socio-cultural perspective discussed by Srinivasan in paragraph 3.3.2. Srinivasan explained that in the socio-cultural perspective, caste is seen as an cause of daughter elimination.

That female infanticide became the norm in those groups can be seen in the shocking fact that until a couple of years ago, some areas in Northern India with a high prevalence of high caste groups, have not had a *barat* for over 150 years. The *barat* is the celebrations that happen in the village of the girl, with a procession of the groom and his relatives to the house of the bride (Srinivas, 1984). There simply were no young girls living in those villages, the only females around were the wives that came from other districts to marry the village-boys.

Besides the traditionally higher prevalence of female feticide and infanticide in high caste groups, the pressure on women belonging to the higher caste is also different from women belonging to a lower or middle caste group. Traditionally women in India often have to obey to the husband and his family. Although on a lot of topics women have achieved more decision making power, it is still the custom that high caste women need to inform and consult the in-laws about their pregnancy and the possible abortion, and that low caste women only need to discuss these private matters with their husbands. The pressure from the extended joint-family is thus higher on high caste women than on women from lower caste groups.

Family planning programs

To deal with the enormous population growth in India, some 50 years ago the Indian government came up with family planning programs, aiming to reduce the family size to two children or less per couple. The 'reproductive health approach to population stabilization and sustainable development', adopted by the Department of Family Welfare and the UNFPA in India, wants to simultaneously increase the control of women over their own bodies and lives, as well as to keep the family sizes small. Small families became the norm, to reach this goal the state provided contraception and abortion, and made these socially acceptable to the majority of the population. The two-child norm is starting to become a reality now, but this happens at the cost of the girl child. The 'medical termination of pregnancy act' (MTP Act, 1971), which legalizes abortion under certain circumstances, was used as a family planning and population control measure by the state. The state derided people who believed this to be immoral, as being backward (Bahtia, in Patel, 2007).

Nowadays the government does not openly mention abortion as a way to reduce the family size, but this causes confusion for many people. They are confused about the government's desire for small families but yet opposing the tests and abortions. People do not mind having a small family, as long as they have at least one son. Pre-birth sex selection tests and abortions are for them just a way to achieve the desired -meaning, with at least one son-small family that the government promotes (Bose in Patel, 2007). According to Bhatia "*Family planning in the official formal jargon means controlling fertility. At the level of the people, it means controlling the number of daughters that the couple has*" (in Patel, 2007, p. 227/228). Family planning strategies thus can be seen as a cause of daughter elimination, this fits the demographic perspective as explained by Srinivasan in paragraph 3.3.2. While the family size is getting smaller, the preference for sons remains the same, therefore the decrease in fertility rate is happening at the cost of daughters.

Advanced reproductive technologies

A fifth cause of daughter elimination is the widespread availability of the means to undergo sex-selective abortions. Due to medical development and an increasing welfare in the worst affected regions, ultrasound machines became widely available and the costs of the tests and the subsequent abortion of the girl-child became affordable for more and more people. In opposite to the evolutionary perspective (paragraph 3.3.2) increasing development in India, thus also caused an increase in daughter elimination.

Ultrasonography was introduced in the 1960s to monitor high-risk pregnancies and gradually became a routine aspect in pre-natal care, first in most western countries and later in many others. Nowadays sonography has come to be synonymous with sex determination tests in India. It is less invasive than amniocentesis and when done at the right time (between 16 to 20 weeks) it gives a quite accurate picture of the sex of the fetus. Because of the advanced stage of the pregnancy, it can be painful and risky to abort when the ultrasound indicates that the fetus is female (Patel, 2007).

Amniocentesis and chorionic villus biopsy are tests that can be done earlier on in the pregnancy to determine the sex of the fetus, but these tests are more costly, therefore it is mainly the rich who can have these tests done. The sex ratios for the 0-6 year age group also point at the middle and higher income groups as the ones who have the most askew sex

ratios. From this, it can be seen that the reason for daughter elimination often does not lie in the fact of not being able to feed another mouth, but that it must be sought in the social and cultural norms (Sagar, in Patel, 2007). The use of these technologies that can tell the sex of the fetus in an early stage, are thus based on socio-cultural preferences and the values that go with them. The usage and spread of advanced reproductive technologies “*reflect a prior hierarchy of gender, social placement, religion and cultural specificities*” (Dagar, in Patel, 2007, p. 115).

From the start of the availability of amniocentesis in India, the demand for this has been high by people who want to get to know the sex of their baby, instead of finding out genetic abnormalities. It is for this reason that the Indian Council of Medical Research ordered that amniocentesis should be restricted to cases where genetic diseases could be suspected (Sagar, in Patel, 2007).

Besides the medical procedures that are available to find out the sex of the fetus, there are also methods existing that provide people with the possibility to conceive a child of the desired sex. After in vitro fertilization, only the fertilized eggs that will lead to a male child are inserted in the womb. This procedure generally requires around 3 to 4 insertions before it results into a pregnancy. Ninety-six percent of the clients want to have a son according to Dagar, and two-thirds of the clients are from the business community (Patel, 2007). This procedure to eliminate the possibilities of having a daughter even before conception is, due to the high costs, only accessible for the higher income groups.

Son preference vs. daughter aversion

One of the above-mentioned topics alone does not cause daughter elimination to happen, but all of them together have provided a society in which daughter elimination could develop. This can be compared to the perspectives of Srinivasan, all four of the perspectives had in common that gender relations played a part in them. This can also be seen in the different causes of daughter elimination that were mentioned above. Fieldworkers and theorists have all mentioned different issues that are a cause of daughter elimination, but in here also the gender aspect plays an important role in the different causes. The technologies that facilitate sonography on themselves do not cause people to abort their daughters. Religion in itself does not cause people to eliminate their female offspring. All the different aspects combined together have created an atmosphere in which daughter elimination could grow. Son preference vs. daughter aversion in the Indian society gives a perfect example of the gender relations in this society. Therefore as a final ‘cause’, more attention will now be paid to son preference in the Indian society. As will become visible in this paragraph son preference is probably the first thing that has to change in order to be able to stop daughter elimination and to curb the declining sex ratio in India. Son preference lies at the root of most of the above discussed causes of daughter elimination.

Many Indian women desire to have more sons than daughters. This desire becomes clearly visible in the sex ratio of live births. Most women whose first child is a daughter want to find out what the sex of the next child is. They are often pressurized by elders in the family to make sure that the next child is a boy. This idea is deeply internalized in the Indian mindset. They are part of the patriarchal values that provide people with a sense of security. “*Women derive value and status only as mothers of sons. Their happiness and social status in the*

conjugal homes is dependent on producing sons. Women have internalized these roles and values. Though they say that daughters take better care of parents or are more emotionally attached to the mothers, they desire to have more sons than daughters. In the pursuit of sons, they have become, with some pressure from the families, consumers of the new technology of ultrasound, which allows them to choose and bear sons” (Patel, 2007, p.43).

Son preference is highest for last order births, sometimes even more than twice as many boys compared to girls. In some Haryana villages, Visaria found that sex-selective abortion did not happen during the first pregnancy, but when it came to the second or third child almost 50 percent more boys than girls were born. This matches the demographic perspective of Srinivasan. The preference for sons might be related to education and status believes Visaria, as it is mostly the case in families with better-educated women, “*who belonged to higher castes and whose families were landed*” (Visaria, in Patel, 2007).

Bose found that son preference is so strong nowadays in Punjab that more and more couples are going for sex selective abortion even with the first pregnancy. According to her, the main reason for female feticide is the high status that families with several sons get, and the low status of couples with no sons (Bose, in Patel, 2007). Son preference is not something new that came up together with the small family norm. Son preference has been a fact in the Indian society for a long time. Women would mostly keep on giving birth until the desired number of sons was reached. According to Patel, fetal sonography has made it possible to modulate the composition of one’s children. “*Parents now do not consider it worthwhile to have daughters until a son happens to arrive*” (p. 143).

One of the reasons why people might prefer sons may lie in the prospects of migration that are different for men and women. The chances to go abroad in order to find work or to study are much higher for men than for women. Having children abroad will increase the status of the family in the community and will in most cases attribute to a higher family income. As Bose points out: “*Globalisation is thus adding to the miseries of the girl child*” (Bose, in Patel, 2007, p. 144). Status thus plays an important role in the preference for sons, giving birth to a son is perceived as a chance for upward mobility, whereas giving birth to a girl is believed to cause downward mobility of the household and the family (Patel, 2007).

Another reason that contributes to a preference for sons is the fear that comes with raising a daughter. Many women who have chosen to abort their female children have not done this because they were heartless, but because they were concerned about the future of their daughters. Only too often girls are being subjected to eve-teasing, molestation and sexual harassment (more about public insecurity of women will be discussed in paragraph 4.4.2). And the concern of mothers is also with the future of their daughters as brides and wives, the risk of bride burning and dowry death is still a real danger, especially if the parents of the girl do not live up to the unending demand for dowry of the daughter’s family in-law (Bose, in Patel, 2007). In order to ensure the girl’s safety and her sexual modesty the young girl always needs to be supervised and escorted by her elder family members or brothers. Girls are often given a mobile phone so that they can be traced wherever they go. This needs to be done by the girl’s family until she is married of. As the girl is seen as belonging to the family of her future husband, this can be seen as taking good care of someone else’s property. With the rising accounts of sexual assault on unescorted girls, the worries of parents get worse. Children cannot play on their own and young girls especially need to be

supervised at all times in fear of sexual assault (Patel, 2007). In paragraph 4.3.1 more attention will be paid to this rise in violence and sexual crimes. Patel further states that: “*For upper and middle class as well as for the poor, more monetary and human resources and caution are required in raising a female than a male child right from early on*” (Patel, 2007, p.159).

Prospective parents also prefer to give birth to a boy instead of a girl because of the above-discussed topic of the high costs that come with raising a daughter. This idea matches the political economy perspective discussed by Srinivasan. A daughter is considered as the property of her future in-laws, her identity and status are derived from the family she will marry into. In order to ensure a good marriage the daughter has to be raised as a good marriage partner. Her upbringing is focused on her future marriage. If she goes for higher education, it is mainly to increase her chances of a marriage with a highborn man. Besides the fact that education might increase her chances of marrying into a high status family, her appearance and the dowry she brings are also of great importance. When giving birth to a daughter, parents thus fear that she might not be a fair looking, smart girl, so that they have to give even more dowry to ensure her marriage. “*That is why often girls with serious illness are neglected with an unstated intention, i.e. let her die rather than be a problem later on, when a match for her in marriage is to be looked for*” (Patel, 2007, p.157). In fear of having to deal with finding a match for a physically or mentally challenged girl, parents do decide not to seek medical care for their seriously ill daughter.

Ladka marey kambakth ka, ladki marey bhaagwaan ki.

It is a fool who loses his male child and the fortunate who loses a girl.

Punjabi saying.

Since there is no social security program in India, the son is used as old age insurance for the parents. He is the one who is supposed to take care of his parents when they grow old. The oldest son often is the one who stays with his parents and takes care of them together with his wife. Daughters thus have to take care of the parents of her husband after she gets married. If there are more sons in one household it can both happen that only one son stays and the others start their own household somewhere, or that the other sons and their families stay and contribute to the extended household (Patel, 2007). Even though more women have started to work outside the house in recent years in India, the general perspective is still that the son has to take care of his parents, whereas the daughter takes care of her parents in law. In the textbox below the thoughts of one female respondent on this topic can be read.

Female, 28: "I read somewhere that it is believed that the sons will be in a position to take care of their parents, so therefore sons are preferred. That could not be farther away from truth [sic]. I personally know at least 34 families where the daughters are taking care of their parents (married daughters as well) while the sons have moved into new houses with their new families."

Questionnaire, 2008.

A final reason why the preference for sons is so much higher, is that the son is the only one who can carry on the family name and who can inherit the parents' property. As Das Gupta and Shuzhuo also showed, the patrilineal kinship system influences the preference for sons. This explains the higher prevalence of female feticide in higher income and higher states groups. Status is of great importance in the Indian society, to make sure that the status of your family stays high it is important to have a long lineage, which can only be achieved by having sons to carry on the name, the assets and the status of the family (Kaur, 2004). This cause of daughter elimination, matches the socio-cultural perspective of Srinivasan. As explained by Srinivasan kinship and honor are very important in the Indian society, therefore the socio-cultural perspective focuses on social attributes as kinship and caste, and how they contribute to daughter elimination. In a patriarchic society as is the case in Northern India, the name and status of the family is derived from the male lineage, seen from this perspective, this explains why people prefer to have sons over daughters.

There are reports that sex selection choices are made by Indians living abroad as well. In Canada, England and the US there have been reports of Indians going for sex selective insemination, sex-selective feticide and in some cases even female infanticide. From these instances, it can be seen that son preference remains to be strongly present in the mindset of some people, even when the cultural 'need' for a son is taken away. The benefits of development do not cause a decrease in daughter elimination, not even in a completely different environment.

3.3.4 The spreading of daughter elimination

Initially female feticide and female infanticide were only that common in some small pockets of land in the northern states that the outcomes of the practice could not be seen in a higher number of males in the total population. Even in 1991, none of the Indian states had a state average with less than 900 girls per 1000 boys. At the 2001 Census, four states were reported to have less than 800 girls per 1000 boys, and the number of districts with a child sex ratio of more than 950 girls per 1000 boys is getting smaller and smaller. As can be seen in Figure 2 on page 12, the geographical area with an adverse child sex ratio is getting bigger, and therefore it can be assumed that the practice of daughter elimination is spreading. Srinivasan speaks of a core with a widening periphery in Tamil Nadu, this core and periphery phenomenon can also be seen in the northern and western states of India. This spreading of the declining sex ratio, might be caused by migration of groups of people who practice female infanticide or feticide, but as Srinivasan says: "*While the notion of spread- from a core to a periphery- is a possible way of explaining the present trend, it is not immediately obvious why or how such a spread should occur*" (Srinivasan, 2006, p.15).

A possible way through which the practice of female feticide has spread from one state to another can be seen in the case of the Chaudhury caste. In Gujarat lives a group of people who belong to this caste, which has a high social status. This group of people are descendents from migrants from Haryana some 200 years ago. In Haryana, there are also still people who belong to this same Chaudhury caste. The migrants brought some of their social practices and customs with them to Gujarat and they have hold on to their caste-specific traditions. According to Visaria *“The similarity between the two groups, as far as treatment of women is concerned, is striking. The practice of female infanticide was known to exist in both the groups. With the advent of new technology, this inhuman practice has apparently been replaced by sex-selective abortion”* (Visaria, in Patel, 2007).

In paragraph 3.3.3 it was already mentioned that Indians living abroad, or as they are called, Non Resident Indians (NRI) were reported to seek sex determination or sex selective procedures. This happens both in their country of residence, as in India. There are cases known of NRIs coming back to India to get the procedure done. There is no statistical evidence that links Indian immigrants to female feticide in Western countries yet, but The Lancet is planning a study to see if the attitude towards female feticide by NRIs is changing.

Besides this form of geographical spreading of female feticide, within the state borders and within the Indian diaspora, this practise is also spreading on a social level. As discussed before, female infanticide started out as a cultural trait that was only practised by people belonging to the highest castes. At the moment, also people belonging to the upper middle class are practising female feticide. This indicates that female feticide is spreading downwards to groups of lower status, but with enough resources to be able to get an ultrasound done and to finance the abortion (Dagar, 2007, Kaur, 2004).

3.4 Gender

The third concept that needs to be addressed in this chapter is gender. In this part of the third chapter, therefore gender in general and gender relations in the Indian society in specific, will be discussed.

3.4.1 Defining ‘gender’

Before getting into the social position of women in India it is first important to get a closer look on gender. What is gender and what have other human geographers and social scientists written about it?

Awareness of gender has become inescapable in studies of demographic processes like fertility, mortality and migration, claims Patel (2007). Women are the ones who bear children; therefore, they have been the focus of attention for demographers in recent years. The declining sex ratio viewed as a demographic imbalance, leads for example to a lack of girls for boys to marry. With this kind of focus in the research, the message is conveyed that girls are necessary for reproduction and population stability. However, with this demographical approach the female identity is only seen as the role of being a mother or a wife. This will re-emphasize the existing gender norms that probably caused the imbalance in the first place.

According to Knox and Marston (2004), gender is something that has not come to the picture for cultural geographers until two to three decades ago. Their definition of gender is: *“Gender is a category reflecting the social differences between men and women. As with other forms of identity, it implies a socially created difference in power between groups. In the case of gender, the power difference gives an advantage to males over females and is not biologically determined, but socially and culturally created”* (Knox & Marston, 2004, p. 205).

Schech and Haggis (2003), argue that the role of women has been overlooked for a long time in social science. Only in the late 1960s some feminist social scientists noticed that women had been either ignored by the development process, or that they had roles that did not allow them to profit from the development in the same way as men did. They found that all over the world women had, to a greater or lesser degree, a lower status than men. At that time, the dominant explanation for this was biological determinism, the biological difference between men and women also explained the different status both have. The first scientist to see this was Ann Oakley, *“she states that “Sex” is a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female: the visible difference in the genitalia, the related difference in procreative function. “Gender” however is a matter of culture: it refers to the social classification into “masculine” and “feminine”* (Schech & Haggis, 2003, p. 85). According to Oakley, what it means to be masculine or feminine can vary across time, space and location. In the vision of Patel, amongst others, gender is also seen as a product that is *“socially and culturally constructed and politico-economically situated”* (Patel, 2007, p. 25). In this thesis the definition of gender as used by Knox and Marston applies, in which gender is seen as a social category that defines the social differences between men and women.

Pacione (2003) has focused on the role that women in developing countries have in changing their environment. Through collective action, which has been undertaken by women’s groups in different poor neighbourhoods in Third World cities, changes have been made. Pacione noticed a higher female participation in social movements, and according to him this is due to the sexual division of labour. Most women in developing countries have a traditional role as wife or mother, and often work (close) at home, either in paid or unpaid jobs. *“While few women among the Third World urban poor can afford to devote themselves exclusively to unpaid domestic work, the nature of their participation in the informal sector excludes them from formal political structures and restricts them to their homes and neighbourhoods for large amounts of their time. This socio-spatial confinement to poorly serviced communities heightens the women’s sensitivity to the problems of the local area and makes them more willing to participate in collective action to overcome disadvantage”* (Pacione, 2003, p. 569). Although most social movements are not created specifically by women for women, women *“have often formed the motive force in many movements established to press for a more equitable distribution of the benefits as well as the costs of urbanisation”* (ibid).

When looking at this statement by Pacione, this viewpoint can be taken into mind for trying to find a solution to stop the practice of daughter elimination in order to bring a halt to the declining sex ratio. If women themselves come into action against this practice, chances are that they will bring about a real change in the general attitude towards the girl child. On the other hand, Schech and Haggis speak about *“women as keepers of tradition”*. In the Indian context women are seen as the ones who need to stay the closest to the cultural traditions. *“While men have the task of adjusting to, and participating in the changes occurring in the*

external world of material activity which produce a modern society, women are responsible for protecting and nurturing the spiritual quality of the national culture” (Schech & Haggis, 2003, p. 127). For this reason it might also be difficult for women to stand up for themselves and try to acquire a change in the general mindset of the society, which still remains to be highly dominated by men.

The definition as provided by Knox and Marston fits the best to my own opinions about gender. Gender in my view, stands for the social and cultural relations between men and women. The society decides how men and women are related to each other, these differences in power are not fixed, but can change together with changing mindsets in the culture. Personally, I believe that Indian women can change the mindset of the population, by establishing social movements that protect women’s rights in India. Women have proved to be both adaptive and powerful in so many different occasions, therefore I believe that if a change in the Indian mindset will occur, that this will be initiated by women, from a grassroots level.

3.4.2 Gender relations in India

In many areas of northern India, the modern practice of sex-specific abortion has deep historical roots. There have been discriminatory practices against women for a long time. Reports from the British colonists already talk about practices as dowry, sati¹¹ and female infanticide (Dube Bhatnagar et al). Dagar also states that *“Masculine sex ratios, female foeticide, dowry, sati and wife beating are all forms of gender violence emanating from the practice of gendered differentiation”* (Dagar, in Patel, 2007, p. 116). Men and women have not been considered equal in the Indian society for a long time, and often, this still is the case. A strong division between male and female domains further characterizes gender relations in India.

“ ‘Everyone knows that it is better to spend a hefty amount now [on an abortion] than to raise another daughter, who is in any case going to be someone else’s property and drain the family resources all her life’, said Kamni, a young mother...” (Patel, 2007, p. 142).

¹¹ Sati is the traditionally Hindu practice in which the still living widow is being cremated together with the deceased husband on his funeral pyre.



Figure 14: Men watch the Lohri celebration in Kurukshetra from a distance.

Most women in India realize that they have been given a subordinate status that can be seen in all aspects of life. They have been told all their lives, over and over again, that the aim in their life is to be a good daughter, and later to be a good wife, mother and housewife. This norm became stuck in their minds, and therefore they will feel useless or even worthless if they cannot fulfill this aim. They seem not to have an identity of their own, but only an identity that is fixed to that of the male relatives in their lives. According to Sagar “*women grow up with the knowledge that their function in life is to selflessly serve their families, to be passive, humble and obedient, and to carry on the family name by bearing strong and healthy sons; by being a ‘mother machine’*” (Sagar, in Patel, 2007, p.187). Patel also says the same, and she adds that a woman earns more respect if she produces a son for the family. “*It is not only that motherhood brings status to a woman but also it is an attribute without which she is useless. A woman in a patrilineal society gains status and position through motherhood, especially through producing sons for the family and the lineage. She justifies her existence and is privileged only as a mother of son/s*” (Patel, 2007, p. 142).

Former Finance minister of West Bengal, Ashok Mitra, suggested that ‘*understanding the position of women in society was probably the single most important element in order to comprehend India’s population*’. He made this statement already some thirty years ago, but according to Tim Dyson (Patel, 2007) this ‘*observation surely retains its force*’. There is even an old Sanskrit saying about Indian women that still suits the reality of today: “*No woman has an independent existence, when unmarried she is protected by her father, husband in youth, son in her old age*” (Fruzzetti, 1993).

Mala Sen, an Indian writer, has done journalistic research on violence against women in India. In her book ‘Death by fire’ (2001), she writes about the circle of violence and

oppression in which many Indian women are caught, a small fragment of her book can be found below.

“Tens of thousands of women in India die each year, mostly soaked in kerosene by their husbands or in-laws and then set alight. Those who survive live with hideous scars. Commonly referred to as ‘victims of dowry deaths’, they have become statistics. So have the tens of thousands of girl babies killed each year, often by their own mothers, simply because they were not boys. Considered a lifelong burden, their lives are easily snuffed at birth or soon afterwards, and the authorities rarely intervene. Among the middle classes, female infanticide has also become increasingly common in the form of abortions, following scans that detect the sex of the unborn child. That too has become big business in towns and cities, with unscrupulous doctors making vast fortunes. It is a complete cycle of violence and oppression – from birth to death – and women themselves seem to have helped perpetuate this practice in the name of religion and tradition. Many have seen their own lives as not worth living, and have tried to spare their daughters from a similar fate” (Sen, 2001, p.51).

3.5 Consequences of an adverse sex ratio in other countries

As stated in the introduction of this thesis it is likely that the adverse sex ratio in India will have its consequences for the social demography of the country. India is not the only country in the world with an adverse sex ratio. The CIA factbook has published a list with sex ratios of almost all the countries in the world. From this list India shows an at birth sex ratio of 1.12 male(s) per female, China has an at birth sex ratio of 1.11 male(s) per female and South Korea 1.08¹². These countries have in common with India that the adverse sex ratio is a result from a preference for sons, but both China and South Korea already had an adverse sex ratio before the sex ratio in India began to decline. Therefore, when looking for the possible consequences of the declining sex ratio in India, a prediction can be made from looking at the consequences that the adverse sex ratio has brought for China and South Korea.

According to Das Gupta and Shuzhuo (1999), China, South Korea and North West India have the same sort of kinship system. In Southern India, the kinship patterns are different, so it is only possible to compare North West India to China and South Korea. In China, South Korea and North West India, the dominant kinship system is patrilineal and patrilocal. This means that kinship is based on the father’s/husband’s family line, and that were the family lives is based on the father’s/husband’s place of residence. In these three areas, a preference for sons can also be found. Another similarity between China, South Korea and North West India is that they all have experienced considerable socio-economic growth in the last decades, causing development and globalization, however social and cultural values have not changed in the same speed.

¹² As explained before in chapter one, there are different ways in which the sex ratio is measured. In the CIA factbook, the number of males per female is indicated this way. Since the sex ratios here are only used to compare the different countries with each other, it is not necessary to convert these sex ratios in the total number of females per 1000 males.

The kinship system in these areas is organized in such a way that men are far more important than women. Lineages are exogamous; this means that brides are imported to raise a new lineage, only the males are important for the lineage to continue. Identity and social position is thus derived from the father, the mother is almost irrelevant to this. In this kinship system, women are only valued as biological reproducers, while the men are the social reproducers, they confer the identity to the newborn child. When a woman gets married her rights are transferred to her husband's family, her future productivity and services belong to the marital family from now on, whatever the needs of her natal family may be. Therefore, the birth of a daughter is less welcome than the birth of a son. According to Das Gupta and Shuzhuo "*the kinship system in these settings leads to strong son preference and accompanying discrimination against daughters*" (p.622).

A difference between China and South Korea on one side, and India on the other, is that in India the marriage of a son costs much less than the marriage of a daughter, whereas in China and South Korea the marriage of a son is several times more expensive than that of a daughter. Although the costs of the marriage of a daughter are less, they still are considered as a financial loss for the family. The expenses for the marriage of a son are less resented, since the money stays in the family. Although there is a difference between these countries in who pays for the wedding, in all three countries the thought that making expenses for a son is less of a financial loss than expenses made on behalf of a daughter, is shared.

In China, there has been a shortage of brides for several decades, but especially for the men born after 1970 the 'marriage squeeze', adverse sex ratio causing difficulties to find a spouse, is getting worse. The men born after 1985 have reached, or will soon reach, the marriageable age. Das Gupta and Shuzhuo (1999) expect that 12 per cent of those young men will not be able to find a wife. "*Given the continued rise in levels of discrimination against girls between 1990 and 1995, the shortage of available wives will continue to rise in the foreseeable future, and higher proportions of men will not be able to find wives*" (p. 633). This prediction by Das Gupta and Shuzhuo was made in 1999, unfortunately I could not find any articles from a later date which provide evidence of the current situation and whether their prediction came true.

In South Korea, spousal shortage became a problem after the 1960's. For men born between 1980 and 1984 the marriage squeeze is the tightest, 25% of the men born in this cohort will not be able to find wives. For South Korea, the authors also predict that there will be a continuing shortage of women in the near future. "*There are already signs of the pressure of spousal availability, and some of this is resolved by importing women from elsewhere...*" (ibid, p. 634).

Ravinder Kaur also talks about the consequences of the adverse sex ratio in China and South Korea: "*While the Chinese are resorting to abduction, kidnapping and even a return to the old practice of rearing a young girl child for subsequent marriage into the family, Koreans are importing ethnic Koreans from northern China and reaching out to the Philippines for wives*" (Kaur, 2004).

3.5.1 Migration

As can be seen in the cases of China and South Korea, one of the consequences of the declining sex ratio is a shortage of wives. In South Korea, this shortage of marriageable women was resolved by finding brides elsewhere. The assumption is that this is also the case in India; marriage migration is taking place from areas with a normal sex ratio to areas with an adverse sex ratio, and a shortage of women. In order to find out more about this marriage migration, it is first important to look into the concept of migration itself. In a deductive way there will first be looked to migration in general, than migration will be seen as a coping strategy before finally looking into the concept of marriage migration. In paragraph 4.2, there will be more information about marriage migration as a consequence of the declining sex ratio and the ramifications of marriage migration. In this part of chapter three, the focus is thus to explain the basics about the concept of marriage migration.

Migration is one of many forms of geographical mobility, concerned with a change of residence (Willekens and Nair, 1982). Geographers have paid more attention to migration than to any other branch of population studies; the focus has changed from statistical evidence and models, to paying more attention to the effects migration has on places of origin and destination and on the migrating people (Johnston et al, 2005). Since there are so many different aspects and variations in migration, there is no 'Grand Theory of Migration', but E.G. Ravenstein made a formulation of 'laws of migration' in the late nineteenth century, which still remains to be valid:

- (a) *The majority of migrants go only a short distance;*
 - (b) *Migration proceeds step by step;*
 - (c) *Migrants going long distances generally go by preference to one of the great centres of commerce or industry;*
 - (d) *Each migration current produces a compensating counter-current;*
 - (e) *The natives of towns are less migratory than those of rural areas;*
 - (f) *Females are more migratory than males within their country of birth, but males more frequently venture beyond;*
 - (g) *Most migrants are adults – families rarely migrate out of their country of birth;*
 - (h) *Large towns grow more by migration than by natural increase;*
 - (i) *Migration increases in volume as industries and commerce develop and transport improves;*
 - (j) *The major direction of migration is from the agricultural areas to the centres of industry and commerce;*
 - (k) *The major causes of migration are economic.*
- (Johnston et al, 2005, p. 505)

In 1966, another geographer, Lee, came up with the idea of "*migration between two places as a response of various 'pushes' at origin and 'pulls' at destination*". While his idea of push and pull factors was aimed at the economical reasons for migration, nowadays there is an increasing tendency to view migration also as a social process, in which changing family and gender relations play a part. An underlying symptom of migration can also be found in relations of dependence between different regions and at different times (ibid).

These two ideas of Lee and Ravenstein that can be used to look at migration in general, can also be used to look at marriage migration in India. Therefore, the choice was made to use these two theories in looking at the concept of migration in India. India knows two different systems of data gathering on different demographical issues, including migration. These

systems are the National Census and the National Sample Survey (NSS). The National Census started in 1869 with exploratory surveys until 1872. After 1872 it became a decennial census, which has been undertaken without interruption ever since. According to Willekens and Nair census taking in India *'is one of the greatest administrative operations in the world.'* An enumerator personally visits every household. The NSS was initiated in 1950 as a *'comprehensive fact-finding governmental agency for collection of data on various demographic, social and economical characteristics of the households'*. Data collecting in the NSS is done on a sample base (Willekens and Nair, 1982).

The NSS paid attention to the reasons for migration from the end of the 1950s, special attention was also paid to marriage migration of women. The National Census only started paying attention to the reasons for migration at the 1981 Census. The reason for migration that could be given were (1) education, (2) family moved, (3) marriage, or (4) others (ibid.)

Migration as a coping strategy

There has been a focus on 'development-induced' economic migration in most literature on migration, in which people migrate from poorer areas to areas that are more prosperous. This leads to a one-way movement of the population, let by the 'push' factors of poverty and un(der)employment and the 'pull' factors of the higher wages at the area of destination (Deshingkar & Start, 2003). According to them: *"The dominant perception of migration among policy-makers, academics and officials in India continues to be that migration is only for survival and that migrants remain poor. The image of the migrant continues to be that of a powerless, impoverished and emaciated person who is trapped in poverty"* (ibid, p. 3).

Although the general focus is on migration for economic purposes, migration does also occur for non-economical reasons. There is a new trend of looking at livelihoods and adopting the social exclusion perspective. The livelihoods approach looks at both the importance of access to resources as to the *"institutional and policy context within which migrants must function"* (Deshingkar & Start, 2003). The economical perspective thus only looks at the 'push' and 'pull' factors, where the livelihoods approach pays attention to more aspects that influence migration. According to the economical perspective, everybody can and is likely to migrate to more prosperous areas; since they have more to offer, but the livelihoods approach takes into account that you need to be able to migrate. Therefore, the poorest people are not the ones who migrate. Elderly people, sick people, and children for example do not have the resources to migrate; they often do not have the money necessary for migration, and have not much to offer in the labor market at the destination. *"The poorest of the poor cannot afford either risk or movement and the majority starves in situ"* (Skeldon, 2002, in Deshingkar & Start, 2003). According to Skeldon, migrants, and especially the initial migrants, are *"among the most innovative and dynamic members of that community"* (Skeldon, 2000, in Deshingkar & Start, 2003).

Migration as a coping strategy is migration *'that is integral to people's coping, survival and livelihood strategies, and not just a response to emergencies'* (ibid). In most cases, migration as a coping strategy looks at men or women migrating to a different area to find work, and possibly sending remittances to the ones who stayed behind. In this thesis, marriage migration is also seen as coping strategy. For the bride's kin marrying the daughter off to a man from a different area means a way to cope with the circumstances at hand. Across-

region marriages are often dowry-less, which is important for poor families with one or more daughters. For the groom, who is not migrating, marrying to a woman from a different state is also a coping strategy. Remaining a bachelor in India also means that the young man cannot have land of his own, and will stay dependent of his parents. The shortage of marriageable females in some areas thus leads to a unidirectional flow of females from poorer areas to the more prosperous states. (Kaur 2004, Willekens and Nair, 1982).

3.5.2 Social consequences

As can be read in the statements of Kaur and Das Gupta & Shuzhuo marriage migration is not the only consequence of the adverse sex ratio in China and South Korea. According to Kaur in China abduction and violence against women is rising because of the adverse sex ratio. Das Gupta and Shuzhuo have discussed the different social consequences that are likely to occur in India due to the adverse sex ratio.

In China lately there has been a rise in abductions and kidnappings of women. Women are reported to be lured by job offers or brutally kidnapped and sold into marriage in provinces far away. Kidnapped women are often victims of violence and powerless to change their situation. Because women become to belong to the husband's lineage, her family-in-law can decide about her fate. For this reason, widows are often remarried to a male relative of the deceased husband. Other ways in which families try to assure a wife for their son is to adopt and raise a young girl into the family as a future bride for the son, or different families engage their children to each other to ensure a marriage (Das Gupta and Shuzhuo, 1999).

The cases of China and South Korea have shown that an adverse sex ratio can cause a change in the marriage systems; marriage migration is likely to occur in a country or area with an adverse sex ratio as discussed above. This consequence of the adverse sex ratio influences both men and women in the society. However, the cases from China and South Korea have shown that an adverse sex ratio also has social consequences that apply to males or females specifically. According to Das Gupta and Shuzhuo (1999), the social consequences for males that were found in the cases of China and South Korea were difficulties in finding a bride and social stratification between men. Consequences for women that were found in China and South Korea, were a possible increase in violence against women, subordination of women to men, both on the level of the household, as well as in the society in general. In chapter four, which goes deeper into the consequences of the declining sex ratio in India, attention will thus be paid to those three topics, to see if they also apply to India.

4 CONSEQUENCES OF THE DECLINING SEX RATIO

4.1 Introduction

Thus far, the concepts of sex ratio, daughter elimination and gender relations in India have been explained. Attention has also been paid to the consequences of the adverse sex ratio that were found in China and South Korea.

When looking at the adverse sex ratio in China and South Korea, different consequences were found. The adverse sex ratio in China and South Korea has caused marriage migration, difficulties for men in finding a wife and social stratification between men, and an increase in violence against women and a higher level of female subordination.

In this chapter will be looked at the case of India, do the consequences that were found in China and South Korea also apply for India? Therefore in this chapter answers will be provided to the sub questions as posed in chapter one: “How does the declining sex ratio influence marriage arrangement in India?”, “How does the declining sex ratio influence the life of men in India?”, and “How does the declining sex ratio influence the life of women in India?”.

Female, 24 [when asked about the consequences of the declining sex ratio]: “Serious, berserk consequences! More men and lesser women will obviously result in a chaos. With lesser women, there will be lesser [sic] birth rate, and if the same ‘tradition’ continues, all the girls will be killed out of those few babies too! It will seriously lead to an unbalanced society and increase in crime.”

Questionnaire, 2008

4.2 Marriage arrangements in India

As was seen in the case of China and South Korea one of the implications of the adverse sex ratio in those countries was a change in marriage arrangements. Women are imported from other countries or areas within the country with a healthier sex ratio for the purpose of marriage. In this part of the fourth chapter, will be looked into whether the declining sex ratio in India is also causing marriage migration to occur and if the decline in sex ratio is also causing other shifts in Indian marriage arrangements.

There has not been done a lot of research on the impact of the adverse sex ratio on marriage practices in India; Kaur is one of the few scientists doing extensive research in this field. Some other researchers have indirectly mentioned that the declining sex ratio is causing a shift in marital practices. Like Visaria, who remarks that some women have told her that “*a few men are forced to remain bachelors and for some, brides are being brought or bought by paying bride price from scheduled tribes and other groups from faraway places including other states*” (Patel, 2007).

4.2.1 Marriage migration

Kaur found in her research that because of the low sex ratio in India an increase in 'across-region' marriages has occurred. She found that migration studies have shown that a part of migration in India, especially in rural areas, exists of women migrating for the purpose of marriage (Kaur, 2004). During her research in the field, she found that men from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan (relatively wealthy states, with a low sex ratio) are marrying women from the poorer states of West Bengal, Assam and Andhra Pradesh; these states have a healthier sex ratio. This migration is unidirectional, women from the northern states as Punjab and Haryana do not have to go the West Bengal or Assam, since they are in short supply, they are able to find a husband closer at home.

Girls from the more prosperous states most often marry 'up', because for successful young men in Haryana and Punjab, it is not difficult to find a local woman for marriage. It is the 'second rate grooms', men who get married for a second or third time, handicapped or poor men, who will bring lower ranked women from eastern and southern states. This already points at the social stratification that is happening between men; more about this social stratification between men will be discussed in paragraph 4.3.2. In Punjab and Haryana, parents of girls often seek to marry their daughter in the outlying areas of Delhi, since the property rates in this area are on the rise. Although this points at an increase of the material value of the local girls, this does not mean that son-preference is getting less profound, or that lesser people go for sex selective abortions. "*The fact that women can be 'imported' from 'elsewhere' prevents society from focusing on the consequences of the shortage*" (Kaur, 2004).

Traditionally marriages in India occurred between people that lived in a conventional social and geographical distance of each other. Through social networks, marriages were organized. Nowadays newspaper advertisements and internet sites play a great role in finding a suitable match for marriage. This has increased the range of distance over which people can find a spouse that meets the caste, class and community criteria. These types of marriage arrangements not only occur within the boundaries of India, but also on an international level. There are even websites and agencies that focus on finding brides for Indians living in Canada and the US. It is also interesting to see what competences are looked for in a bride by her future parents-in-law.

Canadian well settled Jat Sikh Deol family from Ludhiana seeks compatible match from extremely beautiful, attractive, tall, convent educated brides for their two sons (1) 5'-10"/30, B.Sc., B.Ed. professional educator (2) 5'-9"/37, Accounting Diploma, CGA and professional accountant in government. Both boys are handsome, cleanshaven, never married, non-drinker, non-smokers.

American Punjabi, born in USA, Jat Sikh clean shaved, 33 years of age, 6 feet tall, 200 lbs weight, belongs to a respectable family in Bathinda, Punjab and Stockton, California, permanent civil service job, lives with family and have family values with simple life style, looking for life partner.

(The Tribune, 2008)

Across-region marriages are mostly dowry-less. For parents with more daughters and not enough money to pay for all their dowries, across region marriages are therefore a good way to avoid the humiliation of having an unmarried daughter, or to have to make do with a status-lowering match in their own region. The husband has to pay for the journey to her village and for the feast given at the bride's natal village, the wedding itself is often a small ceremony at the bride's village. Since being a married man will give the groom the right to have property of his own, across-region marriages are often a good solution for men who have trouble finding a bride locally. The status of both men and women married in these kinds of arrangements is not challenged. Because of the unidirectional aspect of taking the brides, the bride-takers remain to be superior. Both the bride's and the groom's kin are spared humiliation of either having an single adult living in the house, or the shame of giving your daughter away in a dowry less wedding, to a low caste/class family (R. Kaur, interview, January 21, 2008). As stated by Kaur: "*Marriage enables social adulthood for the women while allowing the parents to discharge what is still considered to be one of their most important duties. Non-marriage would mean social failure and dishonor within the community.... With an across-region marriage, the family escape both dowry and marriage expenditure*" (Kaur, 2004).

When the initial across-region marriage is established in a village, more marriages might follow. The married woman can bring more girls and young women to the village, and create a network of marriage migration. She will act as a go-between for the new bride and groom and can even accompany the groom to her natal village to help him finding a suitable bride. The go-between does not always get a financial benefit for her help, but she will often benefit socially, since her social network is increasing (R. Kaur, interview, January 21, 2008).

4.2.2 Changing marriage norms

Besides the marriage migration as described above that is taking place, a shift in marriage norms can also be seen. Since India is a diverse country with many different religions, which all have their own perception about marriage, there are also many different norms that apply to Indian marriages. For example, in the Hindu religion, remarriage of widows is considered to be inappropriate. And polygamy for instance, is only allowed for Muslim men, they can get married to a maximum of four wives, as long as he treats all of them equally.

According to Kaur, who has done extensive research on the topic of changing marriage norms in India, fraternal polyandry, bride swapping and widow remarriage are used as a way to cope with the shortage of marriageable women in North India.

Fraternal polyandry is a form of marriage in which two, three or even more brothers jointly marry the same woman, who leaves her natal home and comes and lives with the brothers. In some cases, all the brothers sit together as grooms during the wedding ceremony, but often only the eldest brother legally does so. The age of the brothers during the wedding influences this: "*... very young brothers almost never participate in actual wedding ceremonies, although they typically join the marriage when they reach their mid-teens. The eldest brother is normally dominant in terms of authority, that is, in managing the household, but all the brothers share the work and participate as sexual partners*" (Goldstein, 1987, p. 39). This form of polygamy can be found in Himalayan countries as Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan, but also in some Indian states in the Himalayas. Whereas polyandry is a legal form of

marriage in Tibet, this practice is illegal in India. Therefore the woman legally marries to one of the brothers, most likely to the eldest brother, and moves in the household to be the wife of all the brothers (Mr. Grewal¹³, interview, January 17, 2008).

Since fraternal polyandry officially does not happen in India, statistics about the number of families that live in these arrangements do not exist. Several participants at the 'regional seminar on female foeticide and infanticide' nevertheless mentioned that they were aware about some polyandrous families in the rural areas of Punjab and Haryana. In the literature on the declining sex ratio in India, reports about this practice were also found.

"According to one middle-aged rural, landed woman, 'If girls keep disappearing at this rate then boys will be in difficulty. Whom will they marry? Three-four brothers will have to make do with one woman - like the Pandavs.'" (Dagar, in Patel 2007, p. 116).

This type of marriage arrangements ensures that the property of the family is not divided into small pieces, but remains the same size. If for example, a woman would give birth to three sons, and all of them marry to wives who also give birth to several sons; the initial piece of land would quickly be fragmented into little pieces. There are also inheritance systems in which only the eldest son inherits the family property, but this leaves the other brothers landless. Therefore, fraternal polyandry is used as a way to keep the family property together without creating landless male offspring. When asked about the possibility of the brothers all living together with their individual families on the family land, Mr. Grewal answered, that this was not always desirable. If for example, one marriage was left without children, or with only daughters, and another marriage resulted in four children, the mother of those four would try to get a bigger part of the family income to ensure the best for her children.

Female, 22: "The decreasing sex ratio will have a dire effect on the wife-husband ration, i.e. few women for so many men to be married. This will obviously result in polyandry, which is not at all amiable for the woman. Frustration will rise up in males and this can also bolster the sexual crimes committed against women. Lack of women in a society will also result in shifting of roles, lack of maternal instincts in society and other womanly ideals in society."

Questionnaire, 2008

Another way in which marriages are arranged is by bride swapping, this type of marriage arrangement was mentioned during some of the visits to the villages and Anu,¹⁴ one of the colleagues at VHAP, who is doing research on female foeticide in the rural areas of Punjab and Haryana, confirmed that bride swapping is used as a way to ensure a marriage for the young boys and girls in the family. This is happening in two forms. The most common form often happens in marriages between people from relatively close areas. Arrangements are

¹³ The name Grewal is fictitious. This man was a journalist participating to the 'regional seminar on female foeticide and infanticide' held in Chandigarh. In my fieldnotes he was referred to as 'journalist'.

¹⁴ The name Anu is fictitious.

made between two families who both have a son and a daughter. Both families offer their daughter to the other family, in return for a bride for their son. In this way, two marriages are contracted, without either one of the families having to deal with intensive dowry negotiations. Another way in which bride swapping is happening is in across region marriages; instead of the marriage of just one woman from a certain area to another country or state, two or more girls, often sisters, are married at the same time to two or more men, also often relatives of each other. Especially in the first form of bride swapping a change can be seen in the norms that apply to Indian marriages. Traditionally in India, the custom is that women 'marry up', the bride-takers have to be superior to the bride-givers. In this situation, concessions thus have to be made in order to deal with the imbalance in the sex ratio.

The final way in which a change in marriage norms has occurred due to the declining sex ratio and the resulting marriage squeeze is widow remarriage. Traditionally the custom amongst Hindus was that widows were not allowed to remarry. Among Hindus in India, it has long been the practice that the widow 'became sati'; she was burned together with her deceased husband on his funeral pyre. Later, it became custom that widows moved into ashrams, to spend the rest of their life in mourning. Due to the imbalance in the sex ratio, nowadays widow remarriage is happening. According to Kaur (2008), this is mainly done in landowning communities. The widow marries either to a single younger brother, or in some cases even to an already married elder brother. This practice is called surreptitious fraternal polyandry. This is not considered the most preferred situation, but due to the shortage of women, families are now often allowing these marriages. These widows are often women who have migrated from a different region for the marriage.

In the next paragraph, more information about subordination of the migrated bride in the marital household will be provided. Anticipating on this paragraph, this type of marriage in which several young women from one village migrate to another faraway place seems to be preferable for the women. Since they do not stand alone in their newly acquired position of a foreign bride in the village, they are more likely to be able to support each other in times of need. This would be an interesting point of further research to see if this assumption is indeed the case.

4.2.3 Violence and subordination in the household

Conversations with fieldworkers and scientists about the consequences of marriage migration, have pointed out that this often involves a greater subordination of women than is the case in 'normal' weddings. Across-region marriages '*represent a pattern in which rural, often illiterate people from different geographical and cultural regions are getting linked*' (Kaur, 2004). In paragraph 4.4.1, more attention will be paid to female subordination.

The distance from the bride's natal home to the conjugal home can be hundreds of kilometers, and will take the woman to a completely different area. She is away from her family, the language may be different (in most of the receiving states the main language is Hindi, whereas in Tamil Nadu people speak Tamil, and woman coming from eastern states as Assam and West Bengal often speak Bengali) and the culture may differ completely. In most southern and eastern states, rice is the main part of the meal; in the northern states, people eat wheat products. Most people in the north are also (strict) vegetarians, whereas most people from the south and the east are not. Even the way women ought to dress can

differ completely (Kaur, 2008). All these differences cause greater insecurity for the bride; she does not know how to behave, cannot understand what her in-laws are saying and thus she becomes an easier victim of domestic violence and subordination (R. Kaur, interview, January 21, 2008).

Female, 22: "A society with more bachelors will have an increase in crime caused by sexual frustration, lack of companionship and above all a disarrayed family. A man might also have to share his wife, which is objectionable to anyone with sensibilities."

Questionnaire, 2008

4.3 Consequences for men

As could be seen in the case of China and South Korea, the adverse sex ratio in those countries caused different implications for men. The main consequences for men that were found in the literature on China and South Korea were involuntary bachelorhood and social stratification. In this part of the fourth chapter will be looked into whether these consequences also apply to India. This will help answering the fifth sub-question of this thesis; "How does the declining sex ratio influence the life of men in India?"

4.3.1 Involuntary bachelorhood

In Punjab and Haryana, the child sex ratio of the 2001 census pointed out that there are around 800 girls for every 1000 boys. This means that when these children reach the marriageable age (above 18 years) in the next 10 to 20 years there will be a 'marriage squeeze' just as in China and South Korea. The first signs of this marriage squeeze already have become visible in the society, but the census data point out that this is not likely to better in the first decades. One out of every five men in the northern states of India will remain to be a bachelor, unless he can find a bride from a different region or joins into a polyandrous marriage. For many young men, it is not their choice to remain a bachelor, but a simple outcome of the demographic shortage of women in those states.

Male, 25: "If the practice of female feticide and infanticide is not stopped, the percentage of females on this earth will decrease to an extent that we will not be able to find a wife."

Questionnaire, 2008

Kaur (2008) states that many men who remain bachelors live as adjuncts to their brother's family. Often the single brother has to live in the *haveli*, the dwelling for the cattle, instead of living in the same dwelling as the brother's household. In polyandrous families, all the brothers often share the main dwelling.

The literature about the demographic consequences of the declining sex ratio in India shows that it is not only the young, never married before men that suffer from the sex imbalance, widowers and divorced men, also have trouble finding a second wife. Since there are less young women, they and their parents often prefer to marry to wealthy, high standard, never

married before men (Patel, 2007). In paragraph 4.3.2 more information about social stratification between men will be provided.

During the meetings with the *panchayat* (the local council), the members of the panchayat explained that in their view, the lack of women in the marriageable age group is causing difficulties for men to find suitable brides. The panchayat expects that these difficulties will aggravate in the coming years, because in their village there are less young girls than boys. According to the panchayat, the solution for those men would be either to marry a girl with a low status or to find a bride elsewhere (panchayat, interview, February, 2008).

Conversations in the field and the answers from the questionnaires showed that many people expect that involuntary bachelorhood will cause frustration for the men who cannot find a wife. The main manifestations of frustration that were mentioned were different sorts of violence and drug and alcohol abuse. In the next two paragraphs more attention will thus be paid to those two consequences of involuntary bachelorhood.

Violence

Dr. Vasudevan, of the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD), was one of the guest speakers at the regional seminar in Chandigarh. According to Dr. Vasudevan, there appears to be a correlation between crimes against women and the declining sex ratio. Districts with a high sex ratio are less prone to crimes against women, than districts with an adverse sex ratio are. According to him, in northern states as Punjab and Haryana there is more violence against women than is the case in other states (Dr. Vasudevan, conversation, January 17th, 2008).

Male, 26: "Frustrations will happen caused by natural sexual and emotional needs that are not fulfilled, this will result in an increase in crime."

Questionnaire, 2008

Although Dr. Vasudevan is sure that there is a link between the declining sex ratio and the rise in crimes, there is no research on this correlation. There is no data available that shows a rise in violence, or that proves that violence and a low sex ratio are linked to each other. Vasudevan was not the only one though to suggest that young single men get emotionally and sexually frustrated and will therefore cause trouble in the society. According to different people I have spoken to, there has been an increase lately in different sorts of crimes. Mrs. Singh, mother of three daughters and living in Chandigarh, spoke about rising levels of vandalism and an increasing level of crimes against women. According to her the situation is changing rapidly. When she was young, it was just considered inappropriate for a young woman to walk unaccompanied, but now, she says that she cannot let her daughters go unaccompanied because it is too dangerous for them to be out on the streets, especially in the evening (Mrs. Singh, interview, January 9, 2008).

According to the sarpanch of a village in Kurukshetra, there is not only an increase in crimes against women, the young men now are just more violent in general, they also tend to fight more amongst each other. According to him, this happens because the young men get

frustrated and insecure about themselves because they feel they have failed themselves and their families. By fighting with their peers they want to show that they are 'strong and real men' (sarpanch, interview, march, 2008).

So although conversations in the field indicate that there is an increasing incidence of crime and violence amongst young bachelors, there is a need for further research to find out whether this is indeed caused by the frustration arising from the marriage squeeze, or if there are other factors that influence this violence.

Drug and alcohol abuse

Another problem that seems to be related to the high number of involuntary bachelors in the Indian society is a rise in drug and alcohol abuse by those young men. Although there is no scientific proof of drug and alcohol abuse increasing due to the rising number of bachelors in the Indian society, the sarpanches in the selected villages in Fatehgarh Sahib, Ambala and Kurukshetra all mentioned that they feel that these days more young men in the village are engaging in drug and alcohol abuse. This causes problems for the boys themselves as well as inconvenience for the other people in the villages.

Male, 37: "A lack of sexual satisfaction, the frustration of not having a normal family and becoming the object of ridicule will cause an increase in all sorts of crimes like drug and alcohol abuse, vandalism, public nuisance and assault of women."

Questionnaire, 2008

According to the sarpanches, the boys with drug and alcohol problems are mainly young men who have little land and a low status, and therefore have problems in finding a wife. By drinking and using drugs their status is falling even lower, and they risk losing their jobs if they have one. Kaur and Sharma confirmed that drug and alcohol abuse is increasingly becoming a problem in the rural areas. In urban areas, drugs and alcohol already caused problems with young men for a longer period. The young men who use drugs and alcohol often end up in a vicious circle. The sarpanch of a village in Fatehgarh Sahib said that it works both ways, the young men indulge in alcohol and drugs because of their uncertain future, but this is making their chances of finding a local bride even slimmer.

The inconvenience caused by young men drinking and using drugs according to the panchayat differed from noisy young men roaming the streets at night, to people being harassed by them. According to the sarpanch of the Kurukshetra village, drug and alcohol abuse is also causing more violence to occur in the village, because the boys 'tend to misbehave when they are drunk' (sarpanch, interview, March 2008).

Another side effect in which drug and alcohol abuse also causes problems for others is that in the Indian society, in which status is important, having a son with alcohol or drugs problems is causing a loss in status. Not only the young man who is engaging in drugs, or is drinking too much, is seen as derailed, but his family is also blamed for his problems. The wife of the sarpanch in Kurukshetra stated that most people think that if something goes wrong, like having a son with a drinking problem, that it is the fate of the family, they have

probably done something to deserve it. According to her, this can even lead to suicide amongst the family members of the young man. She said that suicide is for some people still seen as a way to restore the family honor (sarpanches wife, interview, March 2008).

Just as is the case with the relation between the declining sex ratio and violence, there is no data or evidence yet that can prove the correlation between subsistence abuse and a low sex ratio. Therefore, further research on both of these topics would be valuable to gain a better insight into the consequences that involuntary bachelorhood brings for young men.

4.3.2 Social stratification

When looking at the consequences of the declining sex ratio for men, the literature on the adverse sex ratio in China and South Korea showed that a shortage of women causes social stratification between men. In this chapter, it was already mentioned before, that there is social stratification between men in North India. In this part of the chapter, more attention will be paid to this social stratification between men caused by the declining sex ratio.

Just as in China and South Korea, the marriage squeeze in India is getting tighter. In North India, men largely outnumber women. According to Kaur (Interview, January 2008), most women in North India are married, and a substantial proportion of men are not. Because of the surplus of men, women can choose the most eligible partner for marriage. This means that the chances of getting married are the highest for men of high caste, high social standard, and for those who have never been married before. The chances to find a local bride are lowest for men from a low caste, low social standing, with little or no land, who have been married before or who are over 35 years old. In her 2008 article, Kaur writes: "*Thus men who are lower down in the social hierarchy in some way or the other suffer*" (p.11).

When comparing the matrimonial advertisements for divorcees, with the matrimonial ads on page 55, a huge difference can be seen in the competencies that are looked for in a woman.

Match for cleanshaven Saini Sikh boy, 32/5'-8"/27000/-, BHM, MBA, M.Phil.,
Officer national company. Mohali Settled Officer's family. Divorcee. Unmarried,
adjustable, clean hearted girl preferred. Caste no bar.

Slim, beautiful match for Sikh Khatri, 38/ 5'-9", Govt. employed, issueless
divorcee. No bar/ demand. Poor/ needy girl preferred.

(The Tribune, 2008)

That the low sex ratio is causing social stratification can also be seen in the situation of a 26-year-old female, let us call her Pooja, who wrote about her family in the questionnaire. They live in a part of Chandigarh that consists of houses build by the Chandigarh Housing Board. In general, it can be said that the people who live in this part of the city belong to the upper-lower class. It is a lot better from living in the slum-areas of Chandigarh, but the houses are dilapidated and often occupied by more people than what they are made for. In Pooja's family, there is no father present; he died a couple of years ago. She lives together with her mother, elder brother and younger sister. Since the status of the family is derived from the patrilineage, the status of the family dropped when the father died. Pooja's brother wants to

get married, but he cannot find a bride, since he is not considered an eligible match. Although he is still young and never married before, he does not have enough money, or a high status, therefore he is not the first one families will think of when they are looking for a husband for their daughter (questionnaire, 2008).

While Pooja's brother is having difficulties finding a wife, another young man in Chandigarh is experiencing the direct opposite. Shahid¹⁵ is 26 years old, Brahmin and owner of a company. He and his family receive several marriage proposals per month. Fathers even come up to his company and ask him how much dowry he wants; 'Just name it. We will give it to you'. He is in all ways considered as 'the perfect match'; he is young, never married before, comes from a high caste and a good family, he is smart, rich and on top of that, he is even good looking. Although there are enough families willing to marry their daughter to Shahid, he does not want to get married yet. He prefers to have a love marriage instead of an arranged marriage, and the thought of accepting dowry makes him sick. According to him it just does not feel right, it would feel like he was bought; "take my daughter, I even offer you money, marry her and have lots of sons" (Shahid, interview, summer 2008). I hope that other young educated men share this opinion of Shahid, and then this may bring about a change in the Indian mindset on the topic of dowry. If young men do not want to take dowry any longer, then maybe this practice and the problems related to it will fade away.

4.4 Consequences for women

As could be seen in the cases of China and South Korea the adverse sex ratio influences marriage systems and the lives of both men and women. In the above-described part about the consequences of the declining sex ratio in India for men, involuntary bachelorhood and social stratification have been explained. In this part, just as in the part about marriage migration already some issues concerning women have been mentioned. In this part of the chapter, more information about the influence of the declining sex ratio on Indian women will be provided. This is necessary in order to answer the final sub-question of the thesis; "How does the declining sex ratio influence the life of women in India?"

In China and South Korea, the main consequences of the adverse sex ratio that concern women, were subordination and public insecurity (Kaur, 2008, Das Gupta and Shuzhuo (1999). Therefore, first subordination of women will be discussed, this will be divided into subordination on the household level, and subordination on a national level. Afterwards more information about public insecurity because of the low sex ratio in India will be given.

4.4.1 Subordination of women

Throughout this thesis, attention has been paid to the gender aspect of the declining sex ratio. The relation between men and women has been discussed and the picture of the women being of lower social status has come visible for example when discussing the position of women in across-region marriages. In this thesis, subordination of women is seen in a way that women are valued less and often also treated this way. In a society with female subordination, or male domination, men have more power than women do, in different domains of life (Das Gupta and Mari Bhat, 1999).

¹⁵ The name Shahid is fictitious.

Das Gupta and Shuzhuo (1999) write about social subordination of women, and how the position of women in India is likely to change in the coming years. Since the population sex ratio is better than the child sex ratio, the shortage of women in their marriageable age will increase in the coming years. North India has the highest imbalance in sex ratio, but in other regions there are still many women available who are in their marriageable age. According to Das Gupta and Shuzhuo, this will have its consequences for the women in the north. They are likely to be valued less, and treated worse because they can be replaced. Dowry related violence is on the rise and it is likely that this will cause a worsening of the imbalance between men and women. Das Gupta and Shuzhuo hypothesize that “*the marriage squeeze has led to a rise in dowry-related violence during this century*” (1999, p. 647).

Subordination on household level

As stated above women have a subordinate position to men in different domains of everyday life. In this thesis, where the focus is on the declining sex ratio, many topics discussed involved the lives of men and women at the household level. Family planning and marriage are decisions that are influenced by, as well as have influence on the Indian sex ratio. In this part of the thesis, the position of women in the household as a consequence of the declining sex ratio in India will be discussed.

According to Dr. Agnihotri, one of the participants of the workshop in Mumbai, women in India are discriminated all their lives, this starts from the point of conception and will continue until the day they die. Women have a lower status throughout their lives; girl fetuses have a higher chance of being aborted, girl babies are less welcomed than boy babies and during childhood, girls suffer more often from malnutrition or lack of medical attention than boys. When she grows older, parents have to take care of her because she soon will belong to someone else's household and when she joins into the household of her husband, she is still considered to be of lesser value than her husband is. According to Agnihotri, the only way a woman can gain some respect in the household is by giving birth to sons (S. Agnihotri, interview, January 20, 2008).

Kaur explained that, although it sounds logical that when there is a shortage of women, they will be valued more, the Indian situation does not meet this 'supply and demand' model. If for example, there would be a shortage of wheat in a society, the prices of wheat products will rise. However, women are not a purchasable commodity that has economic value. Instead of an increased value of women, women become even more vulnerable. Especially in the situations in which the groom has paid for the wedding, the husband often sees his wife as his property, a purchasable commodity, he has bought her, and therefore he can use her in any way that pleases him (R. Kaur, interview, January 21, 2008). In her article on the social consequences of the low sex ratio, she writes: “*Girls and women may be forced back into exclusively domestic roles and there might be greater sexual demands on them. Shortage of girls, instead of making them more valued can intensify violence against them as they become a 'scarce' commodity*” (Kaur, 2008, p. 6).

Das Gupta and Shuzhuo note that dowry has first started to rise in India, but they expect that this will gradually disappear when the shortage of women becomes worse. “*The social arrangements surrounding marriage payments acquire some normative content, so marriage payments may not respond very quickly to this demographic shift. Another factor which may*

slow down this response is the consistent pattern of trying to marry girls into families of higher socio-economic status, since these transactions are smoothed by financial incentives” (Das Gupta and Shuzhuo, 1999, p. 636). On the other hand, they also state that: “..a scarcity of women will raise their value but not their status in societies characterized by strong gender inequality in power” (p. 641). So maybe dowry will disappear, but this does not necessarily mean that the situation for women will improve. To better the situation of women, their autonomy has to increase; this can only be achieved through a fundamental change in their position, both within the family as well as in the society.

During the regional seminar in Chandigarh Mrs. Mishra of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) told about the tragic case of a family she met in the field. The family had three children; two daughters in their twenties and a son who was ten years old. Before delivering her son, the husband had forced his wife into undergoing nine sex determination tests and had her undergo eight abortions. Even though the doctor warned the family that undergoing this many abortions was dangerous, her husband insisted on trying for a son. Just two days after his precious son was born, his wife died of exhaustion

(Regional seminar on female foeticide and infanticide, Chandigarh, January 17, 2008).

As stated in the third chapter of this thesis not all women are quiet victims of the male dominated society, many women have developed strategies to cope with their position in the household. Mrs. Singh told me that she has to obey her husband and her mother-in-law when decisions about the household are made. She lives in a joint family and has three daughters. Her mother-in-law did not mind the first daughter, was sad about the second one, and pressed her into undergoing an ultrasound for the third pregnancy. She insisted on an abortion, but Mrs. Singh was able to convince her husband not to abort the pregnancy. Now that the elder brother's wife has given birth to a baby boy, her mother-in-law is making her aware of her 'failure' whenever she can. Mrs. Singh's daughters are all in their twenties and she wants to make sure that they grow into fine, independent, young women. When the eldest daughter fell in love and wanted to have a love-marriage, Mrs. Singh managed to manipulate several family-members in such a subtle way, that only she and her daughter knew that this marriage was not just an arranged one (Mrs. Singh, interview, January 9, 2008).

Subordination on national level

When the ratio of women in a society is declining, especially in a country that was already patriarchal and male dominated, chances are high that the social position of women is getting even lower. Many participants of the seminars and workshops on female feticide and the declining sex ratio; like Agnihotri, Bedi, Kaur, Srinivasan and Vasudevan, expressed their fear that the situation of Indian women is likely to deteriorate.

In a patriarchal society men have more decision making power than women have, this does not only count for the household, but also on a larger scale. If the ratio of men over women is continuing to grow, than who is going to stand up for the rights of women? Dagar (2007) expressed her fear that with a smaller proportion of women in the society their vote will not be enough to stand up for women rights. Who will listen to the women who have become the

victim of domestic violence? Indian women have never learned to stand up for themselves, they have traditionally always obeyed their husbands, Dagar fears that this situation is not likely to change. Her ideas match the description of 'women as keepers of tradition' of Schech and Haggis (2003) that was explained in paragraph 3.4.1.

Some economists and doctors have argued that the adverse sex ratio is not that bad when looking at the law of supply and demand. If the supply of women gets reduced, than the demand for women will increase and therefore her status will increase as well. The problem will, so to speak, solve itself. According to those people, the scarcity of women will make them more valuable. Vibhuti Patel says on this topic: *"According to this logic, women will cease to be an easily replaceable commodity. But here the economists forget the socio-cultural milieu in which women have to live. The society that treats women as mere sex and reproduction objects will not treat women in a more humane way if they are merely scarce in supply. On the contrary, there will be increased incidences of rapes, abduction and forced polyandry"* (V. Patel, in Patel, 2007, p.301).

Since the sex ratio in India is still declining, it will take another ten to twenty years before a good estimate can be made about the consequences of the adverse sex ratio on the social position of women. Only then will it become really visible if the ongoing trend at the moment in which women are treated and valued less has continued, or if the economic model of supply and demand turned out to be a valuable model in predicting the consequences of this demographic and social problem.

Hopefully the idea of Pacione (paragraph 3.4.1); that women will form social movements and pressure groups through collective action to fight for their rights, instead of solemnly waiting for the future, will also be the case for the situation of the Indian women. Just as a 24 year old female wrote in the questionnaire: *"We should all try, on our part, to do something about the problem, no matter how small. Every little thing contributes to make a really big change!"* (Questionnaire, 2008).

4.4.2 Public insecurity

A final consequence of the declining sex ratio in India is an increase of public insecurity for women. This could also be seen in the case studies of China and South Korea, where women had a higher chance of being abducted or kidnapped when the sex ratio declined. Throughout the thesis, some notes about violence against women, domestic as well as public have been made. In this part of the thesis, more information will be provided on the issue of public insecurity caused by the Indian adverse sex ratio.

Parts of North India have been notorious for violence against women for a long time (Patel, 2007). As explained in the third chapter of the thesis, parents fear for the safety of their daughters. Girls are often not allowed to go outside unaccompanied, in fear of her being harassed, or worse. Among the middle and upwardly mobile lower castes in urban and metropolitan areas, the insecurity and sexual violence on girls and women has been progressively rising (Patel, 2007). The sarpanch of one of the villages in Ambala reported that many girls in their early teens are being withdrawn from schools in Haryana, because parents fear for their safety (sarpanch, interview, February 7, 2008).

Violence can thus be seen as aggravated due to the declining sex ratio, but it is also a cause of the declining sex ratio itself. According to Patel (2007) and others, female feticide and infanticide are just two manifestations of the many different ways in which Indian women become the victim of violence.

Deepika¹⁶, 18 years old, explained that she was not allowed to go outside without the company of her relatives. She said that it was not only that her father was afraid that something might happen to her, but that she herself also felt that she might provoke men when she is on her own. She said that men may think that it is 'okay to feel me up' when I am in some parts of the bazaar on my own. She also explained that taking public transport is 'always asking for trouble'. "If you cannot sit on the reserved seats in the front [in all public busses the first two rows are reserved for women only] then you better get out." Harassment in public transport happens all the time, "if you see a woman hitting a man in the face, than you know what happened" (Deepika, interview, March 22, 2008).

Due to the declining sex ratio, there has been an increase in prostitution in India. Mrs. Mishra of WCD told about a rise in women and child trafficking for the purpose of prostitution, young women and girls from Bengal and Bangladesh, even as young as eight or nine years old, are kidnapped or sold to human traffickers to work in the sex industry in Indian cities.

Butterfly, as she called herself, was a young orphan girl. When Mrs. Mishra first met her, she was seven years old and playing in the yards of an orphanage in Hyderabad. The girl was a vibrant young thing, who loved to dance and to play with the other children in the orphanage. When Mrs. Mishra came back to the orphanage two years later and asked about Butterfly the caretakers of the orphanage told her Butterfly was gone. After some time, Mrs. Mishra found out that Butterfly's uncles had picked her up from the orphanage and sold her as a child prostitute; she had to work the streets, was affected with HIV/Aids and Butterfly died at only nine years old.

(Mrs. Mishra, regional seminar, January 17, 2008)

The case of Butterfly shows another danger of the declining sex ratio in India, due to the shortage of women in the society, there is an increasing number of men who seek prostitutes to fulfil their sexual desires. Commercial sex workers have a higher chance of getting affected with HIV/Aids, and since there is a lack of safe transactions in this kind of business, the HIV/Aids virus is spreading quickly in areas with a high incidence of prostitution (unaids.org).

Both men and women can become infected with the HIV/Aids virus, but women have a higher chance of being infected (unaids.org). Not only the female commercial sex workers are subjected to this risk of HIV/Aids, women who become the victim of rape and women whose husbands have visited prostitutes also have an increased chance of being infected with the virus. Until now there has not been done any research to the connection between the declining sex ratio and HIV/Aids, but during both the Mumbai workshop and the regional seminar in Chandigarh, the assumption was posed that these two are interlinked. Further research on this issue would therefore be valuable.

¹⁶ The name Deepika is fictitious.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summaries and conclusions to the sub-questions

In the first chapter the aim of this thesis was explained. This thesis aims to look into the consequences of the declining sex ratio on the social demography of India. It is necessary to have knowledge about the consequences that the declining sex ratio has on the society, in order to be able to solve the problems that stem from this phenomenon.

The research question that was posed in the first chapter is: *To what extent does the declining sex ratio in India have consequences for the country's social demography?* In order to answer this question, it was important to look into the backgrounds of the declining sex ratio in India, therefore the first three sub questions looked into this.

5.1.1 'How can the sex ratio in India be characterized?'

This sub-question looked into the demographic concept of the sex ratio. Sex ratio indicates the proportion of the numbers of men and women in a certain society. In India, the sex ratio is calculated as the number of females per 1000 males. The child or 0-6 sex ratio can be used as an indication of the occurrence of feticide, infanticide or fatal neglect of children in the society, since the sex ratio of this age group is not likely to be affected by migration. In a natural situation, slightly more boys than girls would be born, but this would level out quickly, since males have a greater biological vulnerability during infancy and childhood. In a healthy society therefore, the number of males and females should be around equal.

In India however, the sex ratio calculated in 2001 for the total population was 933 and for the 0-6 age group 927. For the states of Haryana and Punjab, the sex ratio is among the lowest of the country, with total population sex ratios of 861 and 874 and 0-6 sex ratios as low as 820 and 793. Sex ratio can be used as an indicator of the social health of any country. The sex ratio in India decreased from 972 in 1921 to 933 in 2001; this decline therefore questions the social development of India in the last decades. The sex ratio in India indicates a high deficit of women in the population; estimates are that around 36 million women are missing, and since the sex ratio is still declining, this number is likely to increase even further.

Conclusion

The Indian sex ratio can thus be characterized as an adverse and declining one, that is favorable to males when looking at the whole country, and highly favorable to males when looking at the North West of India. When comparing age groups, the sex ratio is lowest for the 0-6 age group, this indicates the occurrence of daughter elimination.

5.1.2 'What are the backgrounds of daughter elimination in India?'

The second sub-question of the thesis, provided insight into the phenomenon of daughter elimination, which is causing the adverse sex ratio in India. Daughter elimination consists of female feticide, female infanticide and fatal neglect of girl children and can be seen as the main cause of the declining sex ratio in India. Female infanticide already happened in the

19th century in India, and together with the upcoming development in India, it has gradually changed into female feticide. The practice of daughter elimination is spreading, geographical as well as social. Daughter elimination started out in North-West India, now it is geographically spreading within India and even outside the country's borders in the Indian diaspora. The practice was first seen among the highest castes, nowadays daughter elimination is spreading downwards on the social ladder in India.

According to Srinivasan (paragraph 3.3.2), there are four different perspectives on daughter elimination. The evolutionary perspective sees infanticide is a sign of underdevelopment, which will disappear as the country develops. In the political economy perspective, women are seen as having less economic value compared to men. In the social-cultural perspective, daughter elimination is seen as an outcome of caste and kinship arrangements. In the demographic perspective, the smaller family norm is seen as the main cause for daughter elimination. According to Bose (paragraph 3.3.3), there are three preconditions in order for daughter elimination to happen: easy access to medical facilities, enough financial resources to pay medical practitioners and a there has to be a good network of roads. This matches the findings in the literature that mainly the upper-middle class, the educated and the urban population is practicing daughter elimination.

These perspectives of Srinivasan can also be applied to the five important underlying causes, which contribute to daughter elimination that can be identified in the literature. (1) The practice of dowry implies that parents of daughters have to pay an increasing amount of dowry. Therefore, girls are seen as an economical liability, just as in the political economy perspective. (2) In the Hindu and Sikh religion, a son is valued more, because he is needed to perform important religious rituals. (3) In the caste system females born in the highest caste groups were eliminated, because the practice was that the groom had to be of a higher caste than his bride. This cause matches the social-cultural perspective. (4) Family planning programs in India aimed at reducing the family size to one or two children per family. Because families wanted to have at least one son, this meant that fewer girls were born. This cause can be matched to the demographic perspective. (5) Advanced reproductive technologies became widespread in India, this facilitated ultrasounds that could indicate the sex of the fetus. For many people who do not want a daughter it is easier to abort the pregnancy, than to kill the baby-girl after she is born. This is contradictive to the evolutionary perspective.

Gender issues are at the base of the relations between men and women in India, this matches the idea that son preference is at the base of daughter elimination in India. In India, sons are highly preferred over daughters. Son preference and daughter aversion play an important role in the causes of daughter elimination. Daughters cost a lot of money on dowry, whereas the income of a son contributes to the family income and a chance of upwards mobility. In India violence against women is happening in the public domain as well as in the household, therefore raising a daughter comes with fear of her safety. Sons are seen as an old age insurance for the family, whereas the daughter has to take care of her parents-in-law. Finally, since India has a patrilineal kinship system, the son is the only one who can carry on the family name and its status. All of these factors together, contribute to the social context in India in which daughter elimination is happening.

Conclusion

The backgrounds of daughter elimination can be found in the high caste groups of North-West India, but the practice has spread throughout the society and to other regions of the country. Daughter elimination can only happen when the preconditions of access in time as well as money are met. Daughter elimination is caused by; the practice of dowry, religion, the caste system, family planning programs and advanced reproductive technologies. Son preference is at the root of these causes.

5.1.3 'How can gender relations in the Indian society be characterized?'

The third sub-question looked into the concept of gender, by asking: The concept of gender as used in this thesis, matches the definition of Knox and Marston (paragraph 3.4.1). Gender is seen as a social category that defines the social differences between men and women, and has become increasingly important in demography in the last decade. All over the world women have a lower status than men. Although women are subordinated to men, they are more likely to cooperate in social movements in order to change their situation. On the other hand, women are also seen as keepers of tradition. In order to successfully change the mindset of the population, women should thus initiate this.

Literature on gender in India only focuses on the low position of women, this already is a sign of the marginal position they occupy, both in the household as well as in the society. Traditional roles between men and women in India have always been characterized by social subordination of women. Women grow up knowing that their role in life is to serve their families and to bear sons. Women in patrilineal societies do not have status of their own, but only acquire status by giving birth to sons for the family and the lineage. Many women in the Indian society have become victim of a cycle of violence and oppression, and according to Sen (paragraph 3.4.2), women themselves can be held partially responsible for this, since they maintained this practice because of tradition and religion.

Conclusion

Gender relations in the Indian society are characterized by inequality and subordination of women. Women are not sole victims of male dominance; they also help maintaining this subordination in the name of tradition.

A fourth sub-question was posed in order to find out what the consequences of an adverse sex ratio have been in other countries. Looking at the situation in comparable countries, can be a good indicator of what might happen in India as a consequence of the declining sex ratio.

5.1.4 'What are the consequences of the adverse sex ratio in other countries?'

India is not the only country with an adverse sex ratio, in order to be able to look into the consequences that this decline in sex ratio might bring for India, a comparison has been made with China and South Korea. Those two countries can be compared to North West India, since they have the same patrilineal and patrilocal kinship patterns, experiences considerable socio-economic growth in the last decades and they all have a declining sex ratio due to son preference. China and South Korea experienced a marriage squeeze due to

a shortage of women in their marriageable age. One of the consequences is migration for the purpose of marriage. Migration is concerned with a change of residence; this often takes place from poorer, often rural, areas towards richer, often urban, areas. There are different (economic) push and pull factors that play a part in the decision to migrate. Social reasons have long been overlooked in discussing migration. The livelihood approach considers these social reasons, and adds that people have to be able to migrate; therefore, the poorest of the poor are not the ones who migrate.

Migration often takes place because of the prospect of a better life at the destination; therefore, it can be seen as a coping strategy for the household. Marriage migration is also seen as a coping strategy. Young women from poor states with a normal sex ratio, marry to young men in the richer states, which have an adverse sex ratio. This resulted in a unidirectional flow of women migrating for the purpose of marriage. Bachelors do not have right to land and do not have status on their own, therefore getting a bride from a different region, means he can contribute as an adult male in the society. Since across-region marriages are often dowry-less, marriage migration for the parents of the bride means that they are able to marry their daughter off without having to pay huge amounts of dowry.

Other consequences of the adverse sex ratio found in China and South Korea were a rise in abductions and kidnappings of women, changing marriage arrangements, subordination of women and a general increase in violence against women. For men, the adverse sex ratio means that it becomes harder for them to find a bride, there are more bachelors in the society and social stratification between men is happening.

Conclusion

The consequences of the adverse sex ratio that were found in two other countries, China and South Korea, were: marriage migration to states with a surplus of males, changing marriage arrangements, an increase in violence against women, increasing female subordination, involuntary bachelorhood and social stratification between men in the society.

The final three sub-questions of the thesis were based on the consequences of the adverse sex ratio that were found in China and South Korea. Three additional sub questions were posed in order to find out whether these consequences also applied to India.

5.1.5 'How does the declining sex ratio influence marriage arrangements in India?'

Whereas marriages in India were first contracted between partners who lived within a conventional distance from each other, nowadays a shift can be seen to across-region marriages. Men from the richer states in North-West India are getting married to women from the poorer states in East India. Since there is a surplus of men, in states like Punjab and Haryana, parents of local girls seek to marry their daughter to wealthy, educated, high-class men. This means that mostly second-rate grooms engage in these across-region marriages, since they cannot find a bride locally. Whereas marriage arrangements were first organized through social networks, nowadays the internet and national newspapers play an important role in finding a suitable match.

Giving and receiving dowry plays an important role in Indian marriages, but most across-region marriages are dowry-less. Because of this, marriage migration becomes interesting for poor parents with more than one daughter. Because of the unidirectional aspect of marriage migration, the bride-takers remain to be superior and the social position of both the groom's family, as well as the bride's family remains intact. Networks of marriage migration often occur after the initial across-region marriage, in which the married woman will often act as a go-between. Women in across-region marriages are subordinate to their husbands and have a higher chance of becoming a victim of domestic violence, since they have nobody to go to in times of need.

Marriage norms in the Indian society are also changing because of the declining sex ratio. Since there are many different religions in India, there are also many different norms and values concerned with marriage. Because of the adverse sex ratio, fraternal polyandry has been reported to take place in the northern part of India. None of the different laws on marriage in India allows this type of marriage, in which several brothers jointly share the same wife. Fraternal polyandry ensures that the property of the family remains together without creating landless male offspring.

Another way in which marriage norms are changing is that initially it was the tradition that the girls had to marry to someone of a higher social class. With the shortage of marriageable women in some regions, families have resorted into bride swapping, in which the son and the daughter of one family are married to the daughter and the son of another family. In this way, spouses are ensured for the children, without having to deal with dowry. The practice of upwards mobility of women through marriage cannot be met in these arrangements.

A final way in which marriage norms in India have changed can be seen within Hindu marriages. Hindu practice did not allow widows to remarry. In the old days, sati -the burning of the widow on her deceased husband's funeral pyre- was practiced. Later on, widows were expected to live in an ashram, to mourn her late husband and to abstain from any sexual relationships. Nowadays, due to the marriage squeeze, widow remarriage is happening. The widow is allowed to remarry to a brother of her deceased husband, leading to surreptitious fraternal polyandry.

Conclusion

Marriage arrangements in India are influenced by the declining sex ratio. Marriages are contracted over greater distances in order for people to find a spouse. These across-region marriages often are even dowry-less. Traditional norms about marriage in India are changing; fraternal polyandry is happening, families engage in bride swapping and widows are being remarried. All of these changes are occurring as a solution to the shortage of women available for marriage. The declining sex ratio has not changed the position of the bride-takers; they remain to be superior.

5.1.6 'How does the declining sex ratio influence the life of men in India?'

The sixth sub-question of the thesis looked into the consequences of the declining sex ratio that specifically apply to men, by asking: Due to the adverse sex ratio in India, there are more men than women in the society. In the near future, 20% of the men in Punjab and

Haryana will not be able to find a local woman to marry. Therefore, some of them have to look into marriage migration as a solution to find a bride.

There are indications that the involuntary bachelors become frustrated by their situation and will cause problems in the society. Violence was mentioned as one of the ramifications of involuntary bachelorhood. The incidence of crime is higher in states with a low sex ratio. Especially violence against women is rising, this might be related to sexual frustration of the bachelors. Drug and alcohol abuse is also suspected to be related to the declining sex ratio and involuntary bachelorhood. Because of their uncertain future, young men with a low status are reported to indulge in drugs and alcohol, causing nuisance on the streets. This works as a vicious circle, with this reputation, his chances of finding a bride become even smaller.

It is not only the men who are looking for a first marriage who experience difficulties in finding a partner, especially for those who have been married before it is extremely hard to find a local wife. The shortage of women, thus leads to social stratification between men. Because of the surplus of men, women can choose the most eligible partner for marriage. High caste men, with high social standard, who have land and money and who have never been married before have the highest chances of getting married to a suitable woman.

Conclusion

The lives of Indian men are influenced by the declining sex ratio. Due to the shortage of women, social stratification between men will happen. Men of lower social standing will have to look into across-region marriages or will remain to be bachelors. Involuntary bachelorhood might cause a higher incidence of violence and an increase in drug and alcohol abuse among young men.

5.1.7 'How does the declining sex ratio influence the life of women in India?'

The Indian society has a long tradition of male dominance and female subordination. Although the supply and demand model indicates that the marriage squeeze would lead to an increase in the value of women, this is not the case. Not all states in India deal with a shortage of women, as long as women can be brought from different states, women will be valued less, and treated worse, because they can be easily replaced. In across-region marriages, where the groom has paid for the wedding, he often sees his wife as his property, since he has paid money for her. This will not benefit her position in the household and within the marriage. Although many women are being subordinated in the household, they often find ways to deal with this subordination.

The adverse sex ratio is not only putting pressure on the social position of women in the household, but also on the position of women in the public domain. With a decreasing number of women in the society, chances are high that their public voices will not be heard, since it is mainly women themselves who fight for women's rights.

Some authors have argued that when the number of females is getting even lower, the value of women in the society will increase. They overlook the fact that women are not commodities that have economical value, they are human beings who have social value.

However, the future will tell if they were right or wrong to apply an economical model to this social problem.

The lives of Indian women are also influenced by the declining sex ratio because of a higher level of public insecurity. Women stand a higher chance of being abducted, kidnapped or to become the victim of violence.

The decline in sex ratio also caused a rise in prostitution, in order to fulfill the sexual needs of men. Prostitution enables the HIV/Aids virus to spread; therefore, it is likely that there is a link between the declining sex ratio and HIV/Aids. Although HIV/Aids tackles both males and females, women are more vulnerable to the virus.

Conclusion

The lives of Indian women are influenced by the declining sex ratio. In a male dominated society, women are subjected to subordination, both in the household as well as in the public domain. Women have a higher chance of becoming victims of violence and women rights will become pressurized. It is not sure whether the value of women will rise when they become scarcer. There might be a link between HIV/Aids and the declining sex ratio.

5.2 Summary and conclusion to the research-question

With all of the sub-questions answered, it is now possible to provide an answer to the research question that formed the starting point of this thesis: *'To what extent does the declining sex ratio in India have consequences for the country's social demography?'* When answering this question, it needs to be taken in mind that since India is such a big country with an enormous diversity of people, it is hard to generalize. The answers provided to the sub-questions and the answer to the research question, thus mainly apply to those states or districts which experience a declining sex ratio and who have patriarchic and patrilineal kinship patterns.

The social demography of India is characterized by a declining sex ratio. On a national level there are about 40 million women missing. In the northwestern states of Punjab and Haryana, the sex ratio is the lowest, whereas the sex ratios in the east and southeast of India are relatively healthy. The adverse sex ratio is caused by the practice of daughter elimination. Due to unequal gender relations, parents prefer to have sons instead of daughters; therefore, female fetuses are being aborted on a massive scale in northwest India. Unequal gender relations between men and women characterize patriarchic and patrilineal societies. These societies are male dominated and experience a high son preference. In order to find out what consequences the declining sex ratio can have for India, the cases of China and South Korea, who have the same kinship system as Northwest India, were examined. In those two countries, the adverse sex ratio had caused marriage migration, involuntary bachelorhood, social stratification between men, an increase in female subordination and violence against women.

The consequences that were found in China and South Korea were used as presumptions for the consequences of the declining sex ratio in India. All of the consequences that

occurred in China and South Korea could also be found in India. The declining sex ratio in India also causes marriage migration to occur. There is a unidirectional flow of women from the eastern and southeastern states to the northwestern states for the purpose of marriage. A change can also be seen in the existing norms around marriage in India, as a solution to the marriage squeeze. Due to the surplus of men, social stratification between men is also happening in India. Women can choose the most eligible men for marriage, leaving a group of involuntary bachelors. In addition to the consequences that were found in China and South Korea, in India it is suspected that this group of young men is causing violence and alcohol and drugs related problems. Just as found in the cases of China and South Korea, the subordinate position of women in India is increasing as a result of their reduced number in the society, which causes an increase in crimes and violence against women. In addition, a general decrease of public safety can also be noticed in the Indian society, as a result of the declining sex ratio.

There are suspicions that the declining sex ratio is the direct cause of the increase in crimes and violence amongst young men and of subsistence abuse in this group. It is also suspected that the declining sex ratio is linked to the spreading of the HIV/Aids virus in India. Therefore, in order to find out the full extent of the ramifications of the declining sex ratio, more research is necessary.

Conclusion

As has become visible in this thesis, the declining sex ratio has consequences for the social demography of India. The adverse sex ratio is influencing the lives of both men and women in the Indian society, and these influences can be found on both the household level, as well as on a state level. Just as was the case in China and South Korea, the declining sex ratio in India has several implications for both men and women. Marriage patterns are changing, men have trouble in finding a bride and the position of women is deteriorating. It may also be the case that the declining sex ratio is influencing Indian crime rates and the prevalence of HIV/Aids, but whether the consequences of the declining sex ratio indeed reach that far, needs to be further investigated. It is however certain, that the adverse sex ratio already is causing severe social consequences for many young people in the states of Punjab and Haryana. Due to the declining sex ratio, an increasing number of males will not be able to marry a local girl, with all the consequences stemming from this. It is thus necessary that the decline in the sex ratio comes to a halt to prevent these consequences from aggravating. A first step in this will be to change the Indian mindset in which women are considered subordinate to men.

5.3 Recommendations

At the end of this thesis, a few recommendations will be provided. First some recommendations for further research, and finally some recommendations that might help in bringing a stop to the declining sex ratio in India. On the following topics, further research may be valuable:

- In paragraph 4.2 of the thesis the topic of changing marriage arrangements was discussed. In here, it became visible that women in across-region marriages are more

vulnerable to domestic violence and subordination within the household. With the reported increase in marriage migration, social networks of across-region marriages are established, in which the female migrant often acts as a go between. Since her social network is thus increasing, she now has other people to turn to in times of need. I suspect that this will have a positive influence on her position in the household, but this needs to be proved. Further research on this topic would therefore be valuable in finding out whether this assumption is valid. If this assumption is right, then this can help change the lives of female marriage migrants.

- In paragraph 4.3.1, it became visible that conversations in the field have indicated a suspected increase in crime, violence and drug and alcohol abuse caused by involuntary bachelorhood. Further research on this issue, would be valuable to find out whether the declining sex ratio and the resulting involuntary bachelorhood are indeed causing this increase.
- In paragraph 4.4.2, it was briefly mentioned that discussions during the regional seminar in Chandigarh and the workshop in Mumbai, showed that it is also suspected that the declining sex ratio is influencing the spreading of HIV/Aids in India, due to an increase in prostitution. Further research on this topic would be highly relevant, since everything needs to be done in order to prevent this virus from spreading any further.

On all of these topics, there is still a lack of scientific proof. Especially on the last two items are strong suspicions that these are related to the declining sex ratio. Research has to point out whether these issues are indeed caused by the adverse sex ratio, or if there are other influences that cause these issues to happen.

In my view, it is important that there is collaboration between all the different actors who are working on the field of the declining sex ratio and daughter elimination in the Indian society. Both researchers and fieldworkers can benefit from extensive cooperation, and ultimately this will be of great benefit to the population of India.

In order to bring a halt to the declining sex ratio in India and to get a healthier sex ratio in the northwestern states of this country, daughter elimination has to stop. As long as the gender relations between men and women are still highly divided it is hard to root out this practice. A change has to come in the Indian mindset in which sons are preferred over daughters. I do not know how this change in mindset has to happen, but in my opinion, there is a need for both men and women to stand up for the human rights of everybody in the country. Dowry should not be demanded or given in a wedding, both men and women should be valued alike on all levels of society and daughters should be given the right to live.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books and articles

Address to the nation by the President of India. Shri K.R. Narayanan on the eve of the Republic Day-2002. (2002, January 25). Retrieved on December 6, 2007, from <http://mea.gov.in/event/2002/01/25event01.htm>

Bahtia, R. (2007). Health policy, plan and implementation: the role of health workers in altering the sex ratio. In T. Patel (ed.), *Sex-selective abortion in India, gender, society and new reproductive technologies*. (pp. 203-231). Delhi, India: SAGE publications.

Bedi, A. S. & Srinivasan, S. (2008, July). Tackling daughter deficits in Tamil Nadu, India. Retrieved September 16, 2008, via e-mail from A. Bedi.

Bose, A. (2001, may 19). Census of India 2001 and after. *Economic and Political Weekly*.

Bose, A. (2007). Female foeticide, a civilisational collapse. In T. Patel (ed.), *Sex-selective abortion in India, gender, society and new reproductive technologies*. (pp. 80-90). Delhi, India: SAGE publications.

Bronsema, H. (1990). *Over bevolking, een praktische handleiding in de demografie*. Groningen, the Netherlands: Wolters-Noordhoff.

Census of India, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare & United Nations Population Fund. (2003). *Missing... Mapping the Adverse Child Sex Ratio in India*. New Delhi, India: Roots Advertising Services Pvt Ltd.

Central Intelligence Agency, the World Factbook; India. (n.d.). Retrieved June 3, 2008, from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html>

Dagar, R. (2007). Rethinking female foeticide; perspective and issues. In T. Patel (ed.), *Sex-selective abortion in India, gender, society and new reproductive technologies*. (pp. 91-134). New Delhi, India: SAGE publications.

Das Gupta, M., Chen, L.C., & Krishnan, T.N. (Eds.). (1995). *Women's health in India. risk and vulnerability*. Bombay, India: Oxford University Press.

Das Gupta, M. & Shuzhuo, L. (1999). Gender bias in China, South Korea and India (1920-1990): effects of war, famine and fertility decline. *Development and Change*, 30, 619-652.

Das Gupta, M & Mari Bhat, P.N. (1999). Fertility decline and increased manifestation of sex bias in India. *Population studies*, 51:3, 307-315.

Deshingkar, P. & Start, D. (2003). *Seasonal migration for livelihoods in India: coping, accumulation and exclusion*. London, United Kingdom: Overseas Development Institute.

Dube Bhatnagar, R., Dube, R., & Dube, R. (2005). *Female infanticide in India, A feminist cultural history*. New York, USA: State of New York Press.

- Fruzzetti, L.M. (1993). *The gift of a virgin; women, marriage and ritual in a Bengali society. Second Indian impression with a new introduction on 'some contemporary issues in context'*. Delhi, India: Oxford University Press.
- Goldstein, M.C. (1987). When brothers share a wife. *Natural History*, 96:3, 39-46.
- Grewal, I. & Kishore, J. (2004). *Female foeticide in India*, Retrieved January 10, 2008, from <http://www.iheu.org/node/1049>
- 't Hart, H., van Dijk, J., de Goede, M., Jansen, W. & Teunissen, J. (2001). *Onderzoeksmethoden* (5th ed.). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Boom.
- Johnston, R.J., Gregory, D., Pratt, G. & Watts, M. (Eds.). (2005). *The dictionary of human geography* (4th ed.). Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Kaur, R. (2004, June 19). Across-region marriages; poverty, female migration and the sex ratio. *Economic and Political Weekly*.
- Kaur, R. (2007). Declining juvenile sex ratios: economy, society and technology. Explanations from field evidence. *Margin- the Journal of Applied Economic Research*, 1:2, 231-245.
- Kaur, R. (2008). Missing women and brides from faraway: social consequences of the skewed sex ratio in India. *Working papers der Forschungsstelle für Sozialanthropologie*, band 1. Retrieved November 11, 2008, from <http://epub.oeaw.ac.at/?arp=0x0019d906>.
- Knox, P. L. & Marston, S. A. (2004). *Human geography, places and regions in global context* (3rd ed.). Upper saddle river, NJ, USA: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Pacione, M. (2003). *Urban geography, a global perspective* (2nd ed.). London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Page, J. (2007, February 19). Hospital mass grave found as India cracks down on female infanticide. *Timesonline*. Retrieved on June 8, 2008, from <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article1403517.ece>
- Page, J. (2007, July 23). Babies' bodies found in abandoned well. *Timesonline*. Retrieved on June 8, 2008, from <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article2125010.ece>
- Patel, T. (Ed.). (2007). *Sex-selective abortion in India, gender, society and new reproductive technologies*. Delhi, India: SAGE publications.
- Patel, T. (2007). Introduction: Gender relations, NRTs and female foeticide in India. In T. Patel (ed.), *Sex-selective abortion in India, gender, society and new reproductive technologies*. (pp. 27-60). Delhi, India: SAGE publications.
- Patel, T. (2007). The mindset behind eliminating the female foetus. In T. Patel (ed.), *Sex-selective abortion in India, gender, society and new reproductive technologies*. (pp. 135-174). Delhi, India: SAGE publications.

- Patel, T. (2007). Female foeticide, family planning and state society intersection in India. In T. Patel (ed.), *Sex-selective abortion in India, gender, society and new reproductive technologies*. (pp. 316-356). Delhi, India: SAGE publications.
- Patel, V. (2007). The political economy of missing girls in India. In T. Patel (ed.), *Sex-selective abortion in India, gender, society and new reproductive technologies*. (pp. 286-315). Delhi, India: SAGE publications.
- Potter, R.B., Binns, T., Elliot, J.A. & Smith, D. (2004). *Geographies of development* (2nd ed). Essex, United Kingdom: Pearson Education Limited.
- Retherford, R.D., & Roy, T.K. (2003). *Factors affecting sex-selective abortion in India and 17 major states*. Mumbai, India: International Institute for Population Sciences.
- Sagar, A.D. (2007). Between a rock and a hard place: the social context of the missing girl child. In T. Patel (ed.), *Sex-selective abortion in India, gender, society and new reproductive technologies*. (pp. 175-202). Delhi, India: SAGE publications.
- Schech, S. & Haggis, J. (2003). *Culture and development, a critical introduction* (5th ed.). Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Sen, A.K. (1992). Missing women, social inequality outweighs women's survival advantage in Asia and north Africa. *British Medical Journal*, 304, 587-588.
- Sen, A.K. (2003). Missing women – revisited. *British Medical Journal*, 327, 1297-1298.
- Sen, M. (2001). *Death by fire; sati, dowry deaths and female infanticide in modern India*. London, United Kingdom: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Srinivas, M.N. (1984). *Some reflections on dowry*. Delhi, India: Oxford University Press.
- Srinivasan, S. (2006). *Daughter elimination in Tamil Nadu, India. Development, discrimination and survival*. Maastricht, the Netherlands: Shaker publishing.
- Ultee, W.C., Arts, W.A. & Flap, H.D. (2003). *Sociologie, vragen, uitspraken en bevindingen*. Groningen, the Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff.
- United Nations Population Fund – India (n.d.). *The missing daughters of India, sex selection and female foeticide. The issue; and what you can do*. New Delhi, India: UNFPA.
- Visaria, L. (2007). Deficit of girls in India: can it be attributed to female selective abortion? In T. Patel (ed.), *Sex-selective abortion in India, gender, society and new reproductive technologies*. (pp. 61-79). Delhi, India: SAGE publications.
- Willekens, F. & Nair, P.S. (1982). *The data base for migration analyses in developing countries: with an emphasis on India*. Voorburg, the Netherlands: Netherlands Interuniversity Demographic Institute.

Seminars

Regional seminar on female foeticide and infanticide, Chandigarh, January 17, 2008.

Workshop on Preventing Daughter Elimination in India, Mumbai, January 20th-22nd 2008.

Internet

CIA, The World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html>, retrieved on June 3, 2008.

www.tribuneindia.com, box on p. 55 retrieved on September 13, 2008, box on p.63 retrieved on November 24, 2008.

www.unaids.org, retrieved at November 26, 2008

www.sikhwomen.com/equality, retrieved at November 26, 2008

www.lohrifestival.org, retrieved on October 29, 2008

www.savegirlchild.org, retrieved on October 29, 2008

www.brittanica.com, retrieved on November 7, 2008

<http://india.gov.in>, retrieved on November 7, 2008

Figures

Figure on front page: posters used for the 'campaign against female feticide'. Photograph from private collection of author, January 8, 2008

Figure 1: www.mapsofindia.com, retrieved on June 3, 2008.

Figure 2: Missing... the adverse child sex ratio in India, Census of India, 2003.

Figure 3: www.mapsofindia.com, retrieved and edited on December 3, 2008.

Figure 4: www.mapsofindia.com, retrieved on December 3, 2008.

Figure 5: www.mapsofindia.com, retrieved on December 3, 2008.

Figure 6: Photograph from private collection of author, February 7, 2008.

Figure 7: www.nationmasters.com, retrieved on November 6, 2008.

Figure 8: www.nationmasters.com, retrieved on December 3, 2008.

Figure 9: Data derived from Sagar, in Patel, 2007.

Figure 10: Data derived from Visaria, in Patel, 2007.

Figure 11: Missing... the adverse child sex ratio in India, Census of India, 2003.

Figure 12: Data derived from Visaria, in Patel, 2007.

Figure 13: photograph from private collection of author, January 13, 2008.

Figure 14: photograph from private collection of author, January 13, 2008

SAMENVATTING

In deze scriptie, wordt aandacht besteed aan een demografisch probleem, dat op dit moment plaats vindt in verschillende staten in India. Vooral in de rijkere, noordwestelijke staten als Punjab en Haryana is een ernstige oververtegenwoordiging van mannen ten opzichte van vrouwen. Door deze scheve verdeling zijn er ongeveer 20% meer mannen dan vrouwen. De reden waarom er zoveel meer mannen dan vrouwen zijn is 'daughter elimination'. Ouders hebben liever een zoon dan een dochter en daarom worden meisjes achtergesteld in medische zorg, worden meisjes na de geboorte vermoord, en worden vrouwelijk foetussen geaborteerd.

De verschillende perspectieven waarin deze 'daughter elimination' beschouwd kan worden, worden in deze scriptie uitgelegd, en gelinkt aan de oorzaken die in de literatuur en in het veld genoemd worden voor dit fenomeen. Sociaal-culturele aspecten als genderongelijkheid, het kastensysteem, verwantschap, religie en het betalen van bruidsschat spelen allemaal mee in waarom ouders het krijgen van een zoon verkiezen boven het krijgen van een dochter.

Deze scriptie heeft een vooronderstelling dat een scheve verhouding in het aantal mannen en vrouwen in een samenleving gevolgen zal hebben voor de sociale demografie van dit land. De hoofdvraag van deze scriptie richt zich dan ook op het onderzoeken van de vraag in hoeverre de verslechterende verhouding tussen het aantal mannen en vrouwen in India gevolgen heeft voor de sociale demografie. Om een beeld te kunnen vormen van de mogelijke gevolgen van deze scheve verhouding wordt er gekeken naar China en Zuid Korea, twee andere landen die ook een ongelijke verhouding tussen het aantal mannen en vrouwen hebben. Deze twee landen hebben het zelfde patrilineaire verwantschapstelsel als het noordwesten van India heeft, en deze gebieden worden ook alle drie gekenmerkt door een voorkeur voor zoons en genderongelijkheid. De gevolgen die de scheve verhouding heeft veroorzaakt in China en Zuid Korea worden in deze thesis gezien als mogelijke gevolgen die ook in India plaats kunnen vinden. Daarom worden deze gevolgen uitgelicht en bekeken of deze inderdaad van toepassing zijn op de situatie in India.

In het eerste hoofdstuk van de scriptie wordt een situatieschets van India gegeven, zodat een goed beeld ontstaat van de Indiase context. Verder wordt in dit hoofdstuk de relevantie van het onderzoek aangegeven en worden de onderzoeksvragen van de scriptie geformuleerd.

Het tweede hoofdstuk van de scriptie is het methodologische hoofdstuk. Hier wordt aandacht besteed aan de stage die ik gedaan heb in Punjab en Haryana en aan het onderzoek dat gedaan is voor de scriptie. Verder worden in dit hoofdstuk de onderzoeksmethoden; literatuuronderzoek, vragenlijsten en interviews, besproken. Het hoofdstuk sluit af met een reflectie op de beperkingen van het onderzoek.

Hoofdstuk drie gaat in op de belangrijke theorieën en concepten die gebruikt worden in de scriptie. Allereerst wordt het concept sekse ratio uitgelegd en wat het betekent dat deze sekse ratio aan het afnemen is. Ten tweede wordt het concept 'daughter elimination' uitgelegd. De verschillende perspectieven hoe dit probleem beschouwd kan worden komen onder de aandacht en deze worden vergeleken met de verschillende oorzaken voor

'daughter elimination' die genoemd worden in de literatuur en in het veld. Als derde concept wordt gender uitgelegd en wordt er aandacht besteed aan de genderverhoudingen in India. Als laatste onderdeel in dit hoofdstuk, wordt er gekeken naar de demografische en sociale gevolgen die de scheve verhouding tussen het aantal mannen en vrouwen heeft in China en Zuid Korea.

In hoofdstuk vier worden de gevolgen die gevonden zijn in China en Zuid Korea onderverdeeld in drie groepen; veranderingen rondom het huwelijk, gevolgen die specifiek van toepassing zijn op mannen en gevolgen die specifiek van toepassing zijn op vrouwen. Vervolgens wordt er gekeken of deze gevolgen ook van toepassing zijn op India. In het gedeelte over het huwelijk wordt aandacht besteed aan huwelijksmigratie, veranderingen in de normen en waarden rondom het huwelijk en aan geweld en onderdrukking in het huishouden. Het gedeelte over de gevolgen voor mannen gaat in op mannen die ongewenst vrijgezel moeten blijven en sociale stratificatie tussen mannen. In het gedeelte over de gevolgen voor vrouwen wordt vervolgens aandacht besteed aan onderdrukking van vrouwen en onveiligheid in het publieke domein. In dit hoofdstuk wordt duidelijk dat de gevolgen die gevonden waren in China en Zuid Korea, ook van toepassing zijn op de situatie in het noordwesten van India.

Hoofdstuk vijf sluit uiteindelijk af met de conclusie dat de steeds schever wordende verhouding tussen het aantal mannen en vrouwen in India gevolgen heeft voor de Indiase samenleving, zowel op het niveau van het huishouden, als op nationaal niveau. Huwelijkspatronen zijn aan het veranderen, mannen hebben moeite om een vrouw te vinden en de sociale positie van vrouwen is aan het verslechteren. Verder is er het idee dat de gevolgen van de verslechterende sekse verhouding nog verder gaan. Wellicht veroorzaakt het zelfs een toename in misdaad en geweld en draagt het bij aan de verdere verspreiding van het HIV/Aids virus in India. Dit moet echter eerst verder onderzocht worden. Maar of deze twee laatst genoemde aspecten nu wel of niet het gevolg zijn van de verslechterende verhouding tussen het aantal mannen en vrouwen, het is duidelijk dat er iets gedaan moet worden om deze achteruitgang te stoppen zodat de problemen niet nog groter worden. Verder moet er een verandering plaatsvinden in de Indiase mentaliteit op het gebied van genderongelijkheid en de voorkeur voor zoons, om zo de levens van veel ongebooren meisjes te kunnen redden.