

SEX-SELECTIVE ABORTION, FEMALE INFANTICIDE,  
AND THEIR LASTING EFFECTS IN CHINA AND INDIA

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Introduction

With a consistency comparable only to the world's ability to change daily, humanity undergoes evolution. Politically, economically, and particularly socially, changes throughout the contemporary world are unavoidable and, at best, only understood in part. Yet amidst many changes that threaten the global community's future, demographic changes have caused increasing concern of late. As author Thomas Homer-Dixon notes in his *The Upside of Down*: "to understand the destiny of our global society... it is good to start with global demographics."<sup>1</sup> Populations, most notably in impoverished areas of the world, are expected to grow astronomically in subsequent decades, resulting in an unprecedented youth bulge<sup>2</sup> in many developing countries. China and India—presently two of the world's most densely populated countries—are especially affected by this rapid population increase. Yet despite impending threats of mass starvation and economic

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downfall resulting from widespread poverty and overpopulation, sex-selective abortion and female infanticide are undoubtedly most threatening to populations in China and India.

Though relevant to each other, the practices of female infanticide and sex-selective abortion are not the same. Most principally, sex-selective abortion takes place during gestation, while female infanticide occurs within days or hours of a baby's life. Regardless of the differences, both female infanticide and sex-selective abortion are acts of gendercide, which is the deliberate and usually brutal killing of a person or persons based solely on their gender. In recent years female infanticide and sex-selective abortion have transitioned from a marginal to a critical factor in demographic trends. Presently, China and India face the threat of massively disproportioned male populations due to female infanticide and sex-selective abortion. While following these trends certainly endangers both countries' demographic futures, it is believed that, comparatively, China's population will be more notably affected by female infanticide and sex-selective abortion than India's. Regardless of their varying effects, female infanticide and sex-selective abortion are global issues that demand direct and immediate confrontation; ignored, they certainly have the potential to devastate the global community's demographic foundation.

### The Growth of Female Infanticide and Sex-Selective Abortion

Neither female infanticide nor sex-selective abortion is by any means novel; both are practices whose effects are only beginning to become evident. Nature, from even the earliest eras of human civilization, dictates that naturally more boys are born than girls to balance boy infants' susceptibility to disease and death.<sup>3</sup> Currently, in Northern India and the majority of China, 120 boys are born for each 100 girls in one year.<sup>4</sup> Yet recently, the population ratios of China and India have become increasingly distorted, and to understand this, one must understand the growth of 20th century female infanticide and sex-selective abortion.

Currently, female infanticide and sex-selective abortion can be attributed to the spread of new ideas and concepts, globalization in its most primitive form. As Western influence has increasingly pervaded India and other regions of South Asia, it has also brought a growing demand for the luxuries of a wealthier Western society. Television, introduced in India in 1959,<sup>5</sup> initially was supposed to uplift and unify what was viewed as a diverse nation.<sup>6</sup> As well as unifying, television has proven hugely influential in contemporary India. From shows depicting “Western style” family units, to advertisements showing teenagers adorned in the latest Western fashions, television encourages materialism. With the united presence of the Web, technology allows the impoverished to see what life is like in “rich countries.”<sup>7</sup> As Mira Kamdar notes in her book *Planet India*: “television has made the world outside India nearly visible...it parades the lifestyles of the rich before the eyes of the poor and [opens up] new worlds of possibility.”<sup>8</sup>

In China, innovations, such as the ultrasound machine, have also had a very detrimental effect on its population in this matter. Previously parents could not determine the gender of babies until birth, but now technology “[has] changed everything.”<sup>9</sup> While providing relatively accurate information on the health and status of fetuses during gestation, ultrasounds can also inform parents of the sex of their baby before birth. This access to gender information has caused a surplus of sex-selective abortions throughout China and, to a lesser extent, India.

As increasing Western influence, such as television, opens up possibility and opportunity for many in India, it also increases the practice of female infanticide and sex-selective abortion. Keeping up with modernity and ever-changing Western trends is expensive; as a result, the cost of dowries, for example, has increased astronomically. Large dowries have put families in debt, an occurrence that seems very unwelcome in many families. Traditionally, after marriage, the daughter moves into her new husband’s family, adding no further value or assistance to her maiden one. Expressions, such as “watering your neighbor’s lawn” and “raising flowers in someone else’s garden”<sup>10</sup> have become common among families

who do not want girls, and that viewpoint, though thoroughly reproachable, is unfortunately comprehensible. Sex-selective abortion has not been the most popular form of gendercide in India—female infanticide has, because it costs nothing. Female infanticide occurs in areas where families cannot afford to invest in daughters, and as poverty gets worse, the practice is only expected to increase in subsequent years.

## India

Female Infanticide [...**bold** emphasis applied by the editor]

With a population of more than 1 billion,<sup>11</sup> of which 20 percent have been deemed undernourished and impoverished,<sup>12</sup> it comes as no surprise that India is often referred to as the “heartland” of female infanticide.<sup>13</sup> Understandably, poverty is not only a leading dynamic in the practice of female infanticide, but also a factor that, with India’s current demography, promises to make its eradication difficult. Only an estimated 100 girls are born in some regions of India for every 124 boys,<sup>14</sup> and the number of female births continues to decrease annually. Additionally, the Azad India Foundation reports that in a 15-year period, over 5 million girls have “disappeared” from the population, **presumably killed**, with no signs of future replacement in coming years.<sup>15</sup> Globally, a reported 50 million to 60 million girls have also “disappeared,” presumably from female infanticide.<sup>16</sup> These figures have finally caught the attention of the Indian government. Yet despite attempts to remedy what is certainly recognized as a serious problem, India as a country faces an internal dynamic that makes change in the practices of female infanticide and sex-selective abortion there more difficult to eradicate than in China: Indian culture.

Though inconceivable to many Western societies, female infanticide in many developing countries is not reported or cited because it is viewed as a normal occurrence. Families, especially impoverished ones, **kill their baby girls** as a means not only to spare them a life of misery and starvation, but also to save their

families from further impoverishment with another mouth to feed. Boys are seen as better future laborers,<sup>17</sup> a quality desperately needed in much of lower-class India, and are placed at a higher value than girls despite the fact that educated women have proven twice as likely to receive jobs that better sustain a family.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, women are seen as little more than a monetary burden,<sup>19</sup> creating a desire to avoid giving birth to daughters at all costs. The accumulated costs of saris, ritualistic ear piercing, and, most crucially, a dowry, is an estimated US \$35,000 per girl; the average family in India only acquires about US \$3,500 in a single year's income.<sup>20</sup> These exorbitant costs make girls in India especially unwanted and have caused **millions of families to simply kill their daughters in infancy** rather than fall into bankruptcy in an attempt to support them. Though illegal, dowries are still largely a part of Indian tradition. Families unable to pay these costs often fall into servitude of the husband's family, and sometimes in a worst case scenario—if a debt cannot be paid or the woman is unable to produce a son—**brides are set on fire in an occurrence called a "bride burning."**<sup>21</sup> Currently in India, these horrendous events occur once every two hours.<sup>22</sup>

Hinduism in India, while not necessarily a direct cause, has certainly contributed in part to female infanticide and sex-selective abortion. Emphasis on male dominance and priority—established in eras as ancient as the Vedic and Epic ages—has placed women at a level markedly lower than their husbands.<sup>23</sup> One archaic code even suggests that wives should worship their husbands as gods.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, the caste system, an ageless and integral part of Indian culture, has increased the degradation of Indian women, especially those who are impoverished.

Families of lower class India are unwilling to fall into bankruptcy for their daughters, and so, in what is viewed as a means of survival, **they kill them at birth, often through smothering or poison.** Though the Indian government has already taken preliminary measures in preventing it—such as making dowries illegal—rates of infanticide still increase with little signs of impending change.

## Sex-Selective Abortion

Sex-selective abortion in India has slightly different dynamics than female infanticide: technology. Used mainly to determine the gender of a baby during gestation, ultrasounds—as well as sex-selective abortion—are notably innovations in comparison to archaic female infanticide. Developing mostly in the late 20th century, sex-selective abortions had also been a luxury limited to those who can afford both the ultrasound checkup and the actual abortion procedure.<sup>25</sup> This had caused rates of sex-selective abortion to be markedly lower than those of female infanticide.

Aided by globalization and the spread of technology, sex-selective abortion has now changed from a luxury to a rather accessible commodity for most of the Indian population; ultrasound checkups cost an estimated US \$12.<sup>26</sup> Gradually permeating rural areas, portable ultrasounds and doctors willing to practice abortions make ultrasound checkups and sex-selective abortion attainable to even the most impoverished of India. Reportedly 11.2 million illegal abortions occur in India yearly.<sup>27</sup> Though realistically they cannot afford it, the lower class of India are investing in these procedures for a reason no better stated than in an advertisement for abortion: “Pay five thousand rupees today (US \$110), and save fifty thousand rupees tomorrow.”<sup>28</sup>

With increased accessibility in more rural areas of India, sex-selective abortion, in coming years, could easily replace the practice of female infanticide. It is a disturbing notion; women could become pregnant with hundreds of girls and abort them before giving birth to the one desired boy. Already in one hospital in Punjab, India, it was discovered that the only girls born in one year had either been mistaken for boys or had a twin.<sup>29</sup> The growing use of ultrasounds and the practice of sex-selective abortions not only enables the **killing of millions of girls**, but they can also prevent even the “accidental” births that have been keeping sex ratios from becoming a complete disaster. Unquestionably, sex-selective abortion’s trends are looking no more promising in the future.

## The Future of India

Rates of female infanticide and sex-selective abortion in India have increased in recent years. They are only expected to continue in the next few years, and they are more influenced by globalization than by tradition in Indian culture. More than anything, female infanticide (**killing**) is a result of the low status, accorded by men and the culture, to women in many parts of the world, and in coming years soon will badly skew the demographic trends in India.<sup>30</sup> With a lack of females, brides will have to be imported from more impoverished areas of India, effectively breaking the stringent caste system upheld so vigorously by the predominantly Hindu country.<sup>31</sup> Birthrates, given the lack of marriageable women able to have children, are expected to decrease. In a matter of decades, even as few as 20 years, India's demography will be completely altered. A 49 percent population change is expected to occur between 2009 and 2050,<sup>32</sup> at which time the population of India is expected to be 1,747,969,000 people.<sup>33</sup>

## China

### Female Infanticide

Though similar in demographics, China is, historically, very different from much of India, especially now. Female infanticide, first and foremost, has been much more visibly evident in China than in India, as censuses recorded dangerously unbalanced gender ratios in both the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>34</sup> Additional hard times in the country, such as the era of the Qing Dynasty, **drove families to kill their girls** because sons were deemed a necessity for survival while girls were expendable.<sup>35</sup> In recent years, with a population of around 1,300,000,000 people,<sup>36</sup> 21 infants die for every thousand births in the country.<sup>37</sup> In some Chinese provinces, male to female ratios are 130 to 100.<sup>38</sup> These numbers are much more unstable than India's and, viewed comparatively, make China's

demographic trends look much more dangerous for its future. Despite these differences, China, like its counterpart, places a notably traditional preference for males that has been harnessed in modern times specifically through Confucianism.

An important influence throughout eras of China's history, Confucianism is, essentially, a system of ethics.<sup>39</sup> Developed by Confucius circa 500 B.C., respect for one's social superiors is heavily stressed; fathers and sons are recognized as the infallible heads of the basic family unit.<sup>40</sup> Obedience and respect were of the utmost importance, and "knowing one's place" was essential to the true embrace of Confucianism.<sup>41</sup> Women, especially, were expected to be passive towards the male figures in their family and there were in fact specific instructions from *The Analects*<sup>42</sup> dictating their role in the family called "The Three Submissions":

1. Submit to parents in girlhood
2. Submit to husband in marriage
3. Submit to son in widowhood

—*The Analects*, Confucius<sup>43</sup>

Similar to Indian culture, the responsibility of caretaking for the old falls on male children, especially in rural Chinese society.<sup>44</sup> Though the dowry "system" is not quite as commonly practiced in contemporary China, it does exist. Indeed, the factor most influential in female infanticide's steady increase in China is not cultural, but governmental, and a relatively new concept.

In 1979, as the country began its emergence from what would later be referred to as the Cultural Revolution,<sup>45</sup> the government implemented a policy that would devastate the lives of millions of Chinese girls: the infamous One-Child policy.<sup>46</sup> Appropriately named, China's One-Child policy encourages late marriage and child-bearing. Families in urban areas, which currently make up around 46 percent of the country's population<sup>47</sup>—as well as those who are government-employed—are specifically prohibited from having more than one child unless both the male and female parents are only children.<sup>48</sup> Infringement of the policy, though evident in census records, can result in denial of

some civil services.<sup>49</sup> Those who abide by the law gain access to better educational opportunities, and preferential homes.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, since most urban Chinese families are employed by the government, there is an understood obedience among many of the Chinese people. According to the Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS), there will be 30 million to 40 million more men aged 19 and younger than women by 2020. Some reports estimate that the One-Child policy has prevented the births of nearly 400 million babies throughout China.<sup>51</sup> The shocking truth of just **how cruel female infanticide is** in China can be no better embodied than in a narrative by Chinese writer Xinran Xue, in which she visits a home immediately following an infanticide:

We had scarcely sat down in the kitchen when we heard a moan of pain from the bedroom next door...there was a low sob, and then a man's gruff voice said accusingly 'Useless thing!'...I thought I heard a slight movement in the slops pail behind me...to my horror, I saw a tiny foot poking out of the pail...'Don't move,' [the midwife said] 'you can't save it, it's too late...it's not a child...it's a girl baby [and] around these parts...girl babies don't count.'<sup>52</sup>

Xinran Xue's accounts do not even begin to describe the real **atrocities of female infanticide** in provinces of China. Reports of female fetuses, "found in drains or dug from wells or floating in lakes, or eaten by dogs," have only increased in recent years.<sup>53</sup>

Undoubtedly, the Chinese implementation of the One-Child policy has affected the lives of **hundreds of millions of girls** throughout China. Though somewhat successful in curtailing populations, particularly in urban areas,<sup>54</sup> China's One-Child policy has created not one but two problems: fewer marriageable women and a surplus of the elderly population.<sup>55</sup> It was this generation, born after implementation of the One-Child policy, that has served as the working class of China. As they have aged, China finds itself within its targeted population goal but without the future population to sustain the country economically.

With a deeply-entrenched cultural stress on the importance of having sons over daughters fueled by Confucianism, families forced to have only one child increasingly desire to make that one child a boy. It is not only because there is a better chance of suc-

cess for him in society, but also because it is a return investment of sorts. While girls, as in India, will marry and earn income for her new husband's family, a son will be able to care for his parents in old age. In a society where "social security" is nonexistent, a son is seen as the support of the family. This belief is especially strong in rural China.<sup>56</sup>

### Sex-Selective Abortion

Yet China has more serious problems than social security for its senior citizens. Currently, the number of women born in China is 20 percent lower than needed to replace the current population.<sup>57</sup> As rates of female infanticide and sex-selective abortion rise, so do the rates of crime and suicide among young women. The earliest results of a disproportioned population are beginning to appear, and they are very bad for the society. Men, frustrated at being considered 'guangans'<sup>58</sup> as they grow older are resorting to rape, kidnapping, and blunt violence to attain a wife, start a family, and ultimately, advance in a society that requires it.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, guilt-ridden at the realization that they have **killed their children**, or simply disappointed that they have been unable to produce a son, more and more Chinese women of the reproductive age are committing suicide in distress,<sup>60</sup> a dynamic in itself that could hugely alter the country's future population.

### The Future of China

Organizations, petitions, even public protest of female infanticide and gender discrimination in China have been implemented, especially in recent years. The greatest efforts, however, have been in a global call for China's One-Child policy to be eradicated, or at least rectified to allow more than one child in both urban and rural areas of the country. Despite the global community's disapproval, however, China's government, as of

2002, has announced that it will be adamant about maintaining the policy,<sup>61</sup> at least for the next few decades.<sup>62</sup> According to Chinese Prime Minister Zhang Weiquing, suspending the One-Child policy, even temporarily, would cause “serious problems and add social and economic pressure [to the entire country],”<sup>63</sup> and the government has made it clear that the One-Child policy will not be terminated in the near future because it is doing exactly what it was designed to: limit the social and economic consequences of rapid growth in China. Until the government feels that the One-Child policy ceases to do that, it is unlikely that anything will be done to amend it. Unfortunately, by that time, it may be too late for China’s population. By 2050, China’s expected population, for both males and females, will be around 1.5 billion, with an expected increase of 8 percent from 2009.<sup>64</sup>

## Recommendations

As a prolonged and global epidemic, it is feared by many that female infanticide and sex-selective abortion will not be granted the appropriate attention until their effects become irreparable. In China and India, it is in both countries’ best interests not only to recognize and immediately confront each issue, but also to work within their own governments to formulate a plausible solution that tackles these issues directly. When they don’t do that, people “shrug” and do not take the problem seriously,<sup>65</sup> and public participation is vital to the eradication of both female infanticide and sex-selective abortion. Undoubtedly, there has to be official recognition, especially in China, that the desired small family sizes are increasingly **achieved by killing the girls.**<sup>66</sup>

## India

For India, a country more influenced by culture and tradition, the eradication of female infanticide and sex-selective abor-

tion will be difficult, but certainly not impossible. Poverty should, first and foremost, be recognized by the Indian government as the leading dynamic in the spread of sex-selective abortion and female infanticide; it has to “stop being regarded as a sad but inescapable aspect of the human condition.”<sup>67</sup> The fact is as author Shashi Tharoor aptly notes in *The Elephant, The Tiger and the Cell Phone*, that “poverty has a female face.”<sup>68</sup> With the prospect of a daughter as a monetary contributor instead of a burden, families will place more value on their girl children and, it may be hoped, **stop killing them**. India’s government needs to work to amend this so that, instead, girls become the face of the country’s progress. Micro-financing opportunities allowing women the chance to earn an income gives them the opportunity to sustain themselves and live independently, and should be implemented. It will take more than simply throwing money into the hands of poor women; it will take education.<sup>69</sup>

If India wishes to transition into a competitive, developed country, it must first drastically change its national attitude concerning women’s education. Currently, the female literary rate in comparison to males’ 76 percent is only 54 percent.<sup>70</sup> It has been proven that educated women are directly responsible for economic growth because they provide increases in countries’ working force. Education needs to become a priority throughout the country if eradication of female infanticide and sex-selective abortion is to occur. Micro financing, jobs, and independence are worthless without the education to make use of them. When girls are educated, however, it not only educates a family, but benefits a society.<sup>71</sup> As author Shashi Tharoor remarks: “India must educate itself—achieve one hundred percent literacy nationwide—if [it is] to fulfill the aspirations it has begun to dare to articulate, and rise to the development challenges of the twenty-first century.”<sup>72</sup> Already, proof of education’s success among women is becoming evident in various regions of India. An exemplary case has been found in Gudunvencheri, where a 20-year old woman Sushila reported that in her small village, all the girls had jobs. They could afford their own dowries, and they got respect.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, reinstatement of policies, especially those that provide financial incentives for

families with daughters, needs to be immediate; there are several, most created in 1990s that would prove especially beneficial. The “Jayalaitha Protection Scheme for the Girl Child,” created in 1992 by the Chief Minister of the Indian state Tamil Nadu, provided that poor families with one or two girls and no sons, would be eligible for money, if at least one parent was sterilized.<sup>74</sup> In addition, the government opened bank accounts for girls kept alive that varied from 15,000 to 22,000 rupees at childhood.<sup>75</sup> The “Cradle Babies Scheme,” created around the same time, asked families to, rather than kill their female infants, leave them in cradles set up in various areas by government healthcare centers.<sup>76</sup> The Sex-Selective Abortion Law and Maternal Healthcare Law of 1994 both tried to end sex-selective abortion by officially prohibiting use of medical technology to determine the sex of fetuses in India.<sup>77</sup> Most recently, in 2007, Joe Biden and Richard Lugar introduced the International Violence Against Women Act. It provides US \$175 million of foreign aid to try to prevent **“honor” killings, bride burnings, genital cutting [female genital mutilation], attacks with acid,<sup>78</sup> mass rapes, and domestic violence.**<sup>79</sup>

India’s government has, undoubtedly, made efforts to eradicate the practices of female infanticide and sex-selective abortion, but it needs more structure if it wants evident results. First, it needs to be held responsible for not only passing laws to outlaw the crimes, but also for enforcing them.<sup>80</sup> In addition, targeted dates by which time balanced sex ratios should be attained provides the government with long-term goals that keep it focused.<sup>81</sup>

The government is not the only force in India with the power to take a prominent stand against the practices of female infanticide and sex-selective abortion. Notably, an organization named the Democratic Women’s Association (DWA) campaigns in India’s states specifically against sex-selective abortion with the use of informative pamphlets, attention-drawing demonstrations, and public speeches about awareness.<sup>82</sup> Organizations like the DWA should be supported and encouraged with foreign aid.

Finally and most importantly, the government of India needs to develop an efficient social security system for its elderly.

Currently, caretaking of senior citizens is a responsibility allotted to the sons of Indian families. Much of the basis behind female infanticide and sex-selective abortion practice comes from Indian parents' innate fear of being abandoned and alone in old age. With a government option—not mandatory, but available to all—there is substantially less pressure on families to keep only their boys alive.

Female infanticide in India certainly has the power to cause irrevocable damage to the country as a whole, yet in contrast, its eradication can prove extremely beneficial. In addition to emphasizing the value of women, thereby reducing rates of infanticide, recommendations contributing to the eradication of female infanticide will help the country as well. While it does allow for the empowerment of women, literacy, for example, serves as a vital component in developing national identity and active citizenship.<sup>83</sup> Mass poverty, viewed as an immovable hindrance in India's economic progress, can be reduced with education: schooling translates directly to increased agricultural productivity,<sup>84</sup> which can in turn reduce malnutrition. It appears eradicating female infanticide not only eliminates national disadvantages and potential problems, but it also adds benefits and advantages that could propel India into a better future for all who live there.

## China

The issues of female infanticide and sex-selective abortion in China are more government-induced than in India, making it significantly more difficult to solve. Of the many contributing dynamics, principally it is the Chinese government's One-Child policy that holds the most responsibility for female infanticide and sex-selective abortion's growth. Pressured to make their one allowed child a boy, many urban families are **killing thousands** of girl babies, despite laws that prohibit abortions based solely on gender. One report noted that **400 million children** have been killed because of the One-Child policy.<sup>85</sup> Rectification, such as allowing two children per family unit as opposed to one in both

urban and rural families, would relieve some of the pressure families have to make their only child a boy.

Educational barriers in China are not as severe as India's; however, the benefits of education can never be overstated. Little more than a century ago, the government of China's Qing Dynasty had approved a national system of women's education;<sup>86</sup> today the literacy rate for both males and females between ages 15 and 24 is 99 percent.<sup>87</sup>

As women are further educated and gain access to careers, they become socially and economically valued and less susceptible to neglect and death, especially in rural China. As Chinese nationalist and political activist Qui Jin pertinently remarked: "women need to give up trying to please men" [and ultimately learn to make progress on their own].<sup>88</sup>

As in India, the Chinese government should either completely or partially reconstruct its social security policies to offset strains put on the boy child in families. Clearly, from the consistent stress and responsibility still placed on Chinese boys in their families, there is not a strong enough social security system to support China's growing elderly population. A policy reform, allotting senior citizens of China a fixed amount of money specifically for their healthcare, should alleviate the need to have only boys, and ultimately help to balance the increasingly disproportionate gender ratio of one of the potentially most influential countries in the world.

China has the potential to be a leading power globally in coming years, but only with gender balance. Undoubtedly, much of this will depend on its willingness to review the One-Child policy which, according to demographer Nicholas Eberstadt, has been "a disastrous mistake...[and whose] consequences are already being felt."<sup>89</sup> A strong rising generation of well-educated males and females is crucial to the country's success and progress and is impossible to attain without serious reform. Failure to recognize and attend to the massive gender-ratio distortion China faces in subsequent years promises only economic and social damage that could take decades to reverse.

## South Korea's Optimistic New Message for China and India

Both female infanticide and sex-selective abortion are deeply-entrenched problems, and it must be understood that positive results even after their eradication will not be instantaneous. The longer the global community prolongs action against female infanticide and sex-selective abortion, however, the more severe their effects become. Yet in spite of the seemingly dismal predictions for two of the most densely populated countries' futures, there is hope for change. Female infanticide and sex-selective abortion are epidemics that clearly have the potential to be eradicated; no country better exemplifies that fact than South Korea. A country once in the midst of many of the crises during the 1970s and 1980s that both China and India now face, South Korea's sex ratios went from "bad" to almost "normal" by 1990.<sup>90</sup>

South Korea's reform began initially in 1962, with an establishment of a national family planning campaign that sought to control unwanted births.<sup>91</sup> Contraceptives, made available to the entire population, curbed population sizes, but did not solve the gender ratio skewing problems. The country then began a widespread promotion of a "two-child" family plan, a strategy emphasizing the benefits of a family with more than one child. "Sons or daughters, let's have two and raise them well!" a 1974 promotional advertisement read.<sup>92</sup> Additionally, incentives made specifically for families with two children, encouraged many in both rural and urban parts of South Korea, to forsake the older trend of female infanticide for a newer and more practical family structure. Evidently, culture changed; female education, anti-discrimination, and equal rights made son preference seem old fashioned.<sup>93</sup>

Today, South Korea boasts an outstanding female to male ratio; its gendercide rate has been virtually reversed in only a decade. Literacy rates are high, there is economic strength, and it has become a much more unified country after reform. Undoubt-

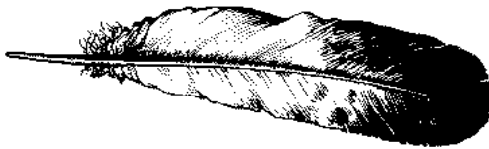
edly, much of this success can be credited to Korea's willingness to recognize the danger of its demographic trends. If China and India, even modestly, emulate South Korea in attempts to eradicate and prevent female infanticide and sex-selective abortion, results certainly have the potential to be equally beneficial.

## Conclusion

Infanticide and sex-selective abortion have pervaded far too many societies in the history of mankind and,<sup>94</sup> unfortunately, have now grown from simply a preference for sons to hatred of daughters.<sup>95</sup> The intentional **killings** of infant girls and fetuses,<sup>96</sup> sex-selective abortion and female infanticide are both epidemics that, whether or not fully recognized or understood, threaten the entire global community's future stability. The progress of China and India, both socially and economically, depends heavily on strong rising generations, which are impossible to attain with inequality in numbers between the genders. In allowing its continuity and spread to go unimpeded for so long, sex-selective abortion and female infanticide have caused the world to become dangerously susceptible to population changes that could take decades to reverse. Already violence and crime rates, especially in China, have risen with the decrease of the female population; men are clearly frustrated at the inability to find wives and start families. The countries bordering China and India—such as Nepal and Bangladesh—are especially susceptible to increased rates of kidnapping, sex-trafficking, and sexual violence, as male populations grow increasingly sexually frustrated.<sup>97</sup>

China and India face the same dilemma of massively disproportioned populations due to female infanticide, but it is expected to be China whose population will be more devastatingly skewed because of its infamous One-Child Policy. America and its allies—specifically, countries disproving of policies similar to China's One-Child policy—need to make a united stand not necessarily against China or India, but against female infanticide,

and in support of those countries' young girls and infants. Indeed, nothing better affirms our duty than a statement made by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn in their book *Half the Sky*: "If we believe firmly in certain values, such as the equality of all humans...then we should not be afraid to stand up for them...we need not accept that discrimination is an intractable element of any society."<sup>98</sup> A call for a global stand against female infanticide does not suggest that the United States, or any other country, should interfere with India, China, or any other country's affairs, but there should be representation for the millions of girls facing both ancient prejudices against them and the modern preferences for sons.<sup>99</sup> Throughout the developing world, they now lack such protection. It is the choice of the global community to decide whether female infanticide and the changes it will surely bring are of enough importance to receive international attention, but once such a decision is made, female infanticide may take years even to partially eradicate. But as an article in the *Economist* pointed out this year: "Mao Zedong said 'women hold up half the sky', [but if] the world [does not] **prevent gendercide**...the sky [will soon] come crashing down."<sup>100</sup>



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Thomas Homer Dixon, The Upside of Down (Washington: Island Press, 2005) p. 61
- <sup>2</sup> Youth Bulge: A concept defined by author Thomas Homer Dixon and demographer Eric Zuehike as the expectedly huge impending increase of youth in developing countries in subsequent decades.
- <sup>3</sup> “Gendercide,” The Economist Newspaper Ltd. (2010) p. 13
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13
- <sup>5</sup> Mira Kamdar, Planet India (New York: Scribner Press, 2007) p. 52
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52
- <sup>7</sup> Homer Dixon, p. 65
- <sup>8</sup> Kamdar, p. 53
- <sup>9</sup> “The Worldwide War on Baby Girls,” The Economist Newspaper Ltd. (2010) p. 77
- <sup>10</sup> Kamdar, p. 250
- <sup>11</sup> Population Reference Bureau, Date by Geography>India>Summary, [http://www.prb.org?Datafinder/Geography/Summary.aspx?region=140&region\\_type=2](http://www.prb.org?Datafinder/Geography/Summary.aspx?region=140&region_type=2)
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> Adam Jones, Case Study: Female Infanticide, [http://www.gendercide.org/case\\_infanticide.html](http://www.gendercide.org/case_infanticide.html)
- <sup>14</sup> “Gendercide,” p. 13
- <sup>15</sup> Azad India Foundation, Female Infanticide in India, <http://www.azadindia.org/social-issues/femaleinfanticideinindia.html>
- <sup>16</sup> Kamdar, p. 250
- <sup>17</sup> “Gendercide,” p. 13
- <sup>18</sup> Kata Fustos, Despite Wide-Ranging Benefits, Girls’ Education and Empowerment Overlooked in Developing Countries, <http://www.prb.org/Articles/2010/girlseducation.aspx>
- <sup>19</sup> Kamdar, p. 250
- <sup>20</sup> Jones
- <sup>21</sup> Bride Burning: A phenomenon that reportedly occurs once every two hours in areas of India, “bride burning” is the systematic murder of India brides unable to produce adequate dowries or produce sons. **Often, the burning is done by the male, and gasoline will be doused onto the woman and she is then set on fire by match or lighter.**

- <sup>22</sup> Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, Half the Sky (New York: Random House, 2009) Introduction, p. xiv
- <sup>23</sup> Peter Stearns and Michael Adas; Stuart B. Gilbert; Marc Jacob Schwartz, World Civilizations: The Global Experience 4th ed. (New York: Pearson Education, Inc., 2006) p. 61
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 61
- <sup>25</sup> O.P. Sharma and Carl Haub, Sex Ratio at Birth Begins to Improve in India, <http://www.prg.org/Articles/2008/indiasexratio.aspx>
- <sup>26</sup> "Gendercide," p. 13
- <sup>27</sup> Uma Girish, For India's Daughters, A Dark Birth Day: Infanticide and Sex-Selective Abortions Yield A More Skewed Gender Ratio, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0209/p11s01-wsoc.html>
- <sup>28</sup> "The Worldwide War on Baby Girls," p. 77
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 77
- <sup>30</sup> Jones
- <sup>31</sup> "The Worldwide War on Baby Girls," p. 80
- <sup>32</sup> Population Reference Bureau, India
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> Indian Journal of Medical Ethics, The Impact of China's One Child Policy, <http://www.issuesinmedicalethics.org/143ss106.html>
- <sup>35</sup> Patricia Buckley Ebrey, Cambridge Illustrated History: China (New York: Cambridge University Press, Reprinted, 1997)
- <sup>36</sup> Population Reference Bureau, Data by Geography>China>Summary [http://www.orb.org/Datafinder/Geography/Summary.aspx?region=164&region\\_type=2](http://www.orb.org/Datafinder/Geography/Summary.aspx?region=164&region_type=2)
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>38</sup> "Gendercide," p. 13
- <sup>39</sup> Peter Stearns, World Civilizations: The Global Experience, 4th ed. (New York: Pearson Education, Inc., 2006) p. 41
- <sup>40</sup> Eileen H. Tamura, Linda K. Menton, Noren W. Lush; Francis K.C. Tsui, China: Understanding its Past (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998)
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>42</sup> Viewed as the ultimate guide to Confucianism, The Analects are a collection of sayings and advices taught by Confucius as recopied by his students.
- <sup>43</sup> The Analects in Tamura, et al., p. 47
- <sup>44</sup> Daisy Sindelar, China: A Future With a Shortage of Brides, An Abundance of Elderly (Part 2) <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1056742.html>

<sup>45</sup> Cultural Revolution: led by Mao Zedong, the Cultural Revolution represented a time within China of drastic and terrible “reform” (and killing) of the country’s intellectual class.

<sup>46</sup> Indian Journal of Medical Ethics, The Impact of China’s One Child Policy July 2006, <http://www.issuesinmedicalethics.org/143ss106.html> (accessed May 17, 2010)

<sup>47</sup> Population Reference Bureau, India

<sup>48</sup> Indian Journal of Medical Ethics

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Penny Kane and Ching Y. Choi, China’s One-Child Policy, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov.pmc.articies/PMC1116910>

<sup>51</sup> CNN World Corporation, Study: China Faces 24m Bride Shortage by 2010, <http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/asiapcf/01/11/china.bride.shortage/index.html>

<sup>52</sup> “The Worldwide War on Baby Girls,” p. 77

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 77

<sup>54</sup> Kane and Choi

<sup>55</sup> Sindelar

<sup>56</sup> Jones

<sup>57</sup> “Gendercide,” p. 13

<sup>58</sup> Guangan: meaning “bare branch” in Chinese, the term ‘guangan’ is used to describe young Chinese men who have not married and begun families.

<sup>59</sup> “Gendercide,” p. 13

<sup>60</sup> “The Worldwide War on Baby Girls,” p. 80

<sup>61</sup> Indian Journal of Medical Ethics

<sup>62</sup> CNN World Corporation

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Population Reference Bureau, China

<sup>65</sup> Kristof, p. xiv

<sup>66</sup> Azad India Foundation

<sup>67</sup> Shashi Tharoor, The Elephant, The Tiger, and the Cell Phone (New York: Arcade Publishing, Inc., 1956) p. 417

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 418

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 418

<sup>70</sup> Kamdar, p. 250

<sup>71</sup> Tharoor, pp. 141-142

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 143

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 418

<sup>74</sup> Lisa M Woolf, Women and Human Rights: Female Infanticide, <http://www.webster.edu/~woolfm/femaleinfanticide.html>

<sup>75</sup> The Christian Science Monitor, Infanticide and Sex-Selective Abortion Yield A More Skewed Gender Ratio, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0529/p11s01-wosc.html>

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> **Acid attacks—refers to the practice—often coinciding with bride burning—in which husbands throw acid on to the faces of women to burn their skin and bones as a form of punishment for insubordination.**

<sup>79</sup> Kristof, p. 67

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 126

<sup>81</sup> Azad India Foundation

<sup>82</sup> Ranjit Devrak, A Murderous Arithmetic, <http://www.indiatogether.org/2003/jul/wom-girls.htm>

<sup>83</sup> Tharoor, p. 140

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 140

<sup>85</sup> CNN World Corporation, Study

<sup>86</sup> Ebrey, p. 279

<sup>87</sup> Population Reference Bureau

<sup>88</sup> Ebrey, p. 325

<sup>89</sup> Nicholas Eberstadt, China's Future and Its One-Child Policy September 19, 2007, <http://www.aei.org/issue26835>

<sup>90</sup> Sharma and Haub

<sup>91</sup> Carl Haub, Did South Korea's Population Policy Work Too Well?, <http://www.prb.org/Articles/2010/koreafertility.aspx>

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> "Gendercide," p. 13

<sup>94</sup> Larry S. Milner, A Brief History of Infanticide, <http://www.infanticide.org/history.htm>

<sup>95</sup> Azad India Foundation

<sup>96</sup> Woolf

<sup>97</sup> Kamdar, p. 252

<sup>98</sup> Kristof, p. 207

<sup>99</sup> "Gendercide," p. 13

<sup>100</sup> "The Worldwide War on Baby Girls," p. 77

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Editor's Addition:

*The New Criterion*  
May 2010, p. 3  
Notes & Comments

...For our second observation, let us turn to the manly, "judgmental" policy promulgated by Sir Charles Napier, the British Commander in India in the early nineteenth century. Told that immolating widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands was a cherished local custom (*suttee*), Napier said "Very well. We also have a custom: when men burn women alive, we tie a rope around their necks and we hang them. Build your funeral pyre. Beside it, my carpenters will build a gallows. You may follow your custom. And then we will follow ours."

[WF asks: Would it cut down on "bride burnings" if there were a few more "groom burnings" in retaliation?....]