

**Lecture**  
**Bare branches and drifting kites:**  
**Tackling female infanticide and feticide in India**

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**Abstract**

A well-known feature of demographic trends in several East and South Asian countries is the continuing decline in the proportion of females to males. In contrast to the female-male population ratio in Europe and the United States which is about one, and the sex ratio at birth which typically lies between 944 and 962 females per 1000 males, unusually low female-male population and sex ratios at birth have been recorded in Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal, Pakistan and South Korea. In particular, over the previous century India has witnessed a steady decline in its population sex ratio, reaching its lowest ever recorded ratio of 927 females per 1000 males in 1991. In large part, this decline may be attributed to the elimination of daughters in the form of sex-selective abortion, female infanticide and neglect. Motivated by the continuing decline in the girl-boy sex ratio, the main aim of this paper is to highlight, and examine the effectiveness of interventions that have been used to tackle daughter elimination. While the paper focuses on interventions, it also provides an idea of the extent of the practice, touches upon the consequences and speculates on future patterns of daughter elimination in the context of rising demand for technologies that allow ever earlier sex detection.

**JEL Codes:** J12, J15, J16

**Keywords:** India, Asia, female infanticide, sex-selective abortion, interventions

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## Workshop Violence and Power: Women in India

The workshop begins by setting out the context of the discussion. It reviews various forms of violence against women in India, provides an idea of the extent of violence and male and female attitudes towards violence. These issues are considered alongside women's representation and participation in the labour market, in business and in government.

Based on the preceding discussion we will then examine the role that may be played by (i) economic measures, including women's dowry, employment and income (ii) behavioral change programs and (iii) legal and political measures, in terms of dealing with violence. In the case of political measures we will pay particular attention to the role of mandated institutional change, in this case, reservation of a certain percentage of seats in local government for women on outcomes such as government (expenditure) priorities and (perceptions of) women's performance in government.

### Reading list: (✓ - denotes readings you may want to look at before the workshop)

#### *Magnitude and attitude*

ICRW (1999) *Domestic violence in India. A summary report of three studies*. Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women.

ICRW (2002) *Men, masculinity and domestic violence in India. Summary report of four studies*. Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women.

Srinivasan, S. and Arjun S. Bedi (2009) Tamil Nadu and the diagonal divide in sex ratios. *Economic and Political Weekly* 44 no. 3 (2009): 56-63.

Srinivasan, S. and Arjun S. Bedi (2008) Daughter Elimination in Tamil Nadu, India: A Tale of Two Ratios (with Sharada Srinivasan). *Journal of Development Studies* 44 no. 7 (2008): 961-990

#### *Economic and legal measures*

✓Bhattacharya, M., Arjun S. Bedi, and Amrita Chhachhi (2009) Marital Violence and Women's Employment and Property Status: Evidence from North Indian Villages. *IZA Discussion Paper No.* 361 (2009) also available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1447382>.

Gibson-Davis, C, K. Magnuson, L.A. Gennetian, G.J. Duncan (2005) Employment and the Risk of Domestic Abuse Among Low-Income Women. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67(5):1149-1168

✓Panda, Pradeep and Bina Agarwal (2005) Marital violence, human development and women's property status in India. *World Development*, 33(5): 823-850.

Srinivasan, S. and Arjun S. Bedi (2007) Domestic violence and dowry: Evidence from a South Indian village. *World Development*, 35 (5): 857-880.

Vyas, S. and C. Watts (2008) How does Economic Empowerment Affect Women's Risk of Intimate Partner Violence in Low and Middle Income Countries? A Systematic Review of Published Evidence. *Journal of International Development*. DOI: 10.1002/jid.1500.

Zhang, Junsen and William Chan (1999) Dowry and Wife's Welfare: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis. *Journal of Political Economy* 107(4): 786-808

#### *Political measures*

✓Ban, Radu and V. Rao (2008) Tokenism or Agency? The Impact of Women's Reservations on Village Democracies in South India. *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 56 (3): 501-530

✓Chattopadhyay, R. and E. Duflo (2004) The Impact of Reservation in the Panchayati Raj: Evidence from a Nationwide Randomized Experiment. *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, no. 9:979-86.

Chattopadhyay, R. and E. Duflo (2004) Women as policymakers: evidence from a randomized policy experiment in India. *Econometrica* 72(5), pp. 1409-1443

Ramesh, Asha, and Bharti Ali. 2001. *33 1/3: Reservation towards Political Empowerment*. Bangalore: Books for Change.