

Colossal Disparity in Population

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Part I

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The Census Bureau of India released the 2001 census data related to different religions on September 6, 2004. The alarming statistics expose the desire to have a male child at all costs that has tipped the balance of population, specifically in Punjab where 780 girls are there per 1,000 boys [gender ratio] in the age group of 0-6 years few Sikhs. This same ratio is 821 for Hindus, 879 for Muslims, and 870 for Christians, whereas this ratio for the whole of Punjab is 799, and for whole India is 927. This gender ratio is the lowest in Punjab as compared to all the 28 states and 6 union territories. The dangerous trend reveals that the Sikh community is number one in girl foeticide.

The 1.08 billion total population of India consists of 80% Hindus, 13.7% Muslims, 2.3% Christians, 1.84% Sikhs, 0.8% Buddhists, and 0.4% Jains, in 2001 census. The Sikhs used to be number three, with 2% of total population. However, they have been surpassed in numbers by Christians who don't follow foeticide and use various tactics for religious conversion.

Sluggish Sikhs: The Hindu population grew @ 20.3% in 1991-2001, slowing down from 25.1% in 1981-1991, the Muslim population grew 36% in 1991-2001, accelerating from 34.5% in 1981-1991, whereas the Sikh population grew @ 18.2%, slowing down from 24.3% growth in 1981-1991. Hence, the growth rate of 6.1% for Sikh population is the minimum. **The Sikhs also have the highest number of childless couples.** The Sikhs should worry more than Hindus about political ramification due to changing population landscape. Curbing of anti-girl-child syndrome is the only ways for survival of Sikh community.

The Sikh population of 19.2 million in India consists of 14.6 million in Punjab, 1.2 million in Haryana, 0.8 million in Rajasthan, 0.7 million in Uttar Pradesh, 0.6 million in Delhi, 0.2 million in Chandigarh, 0.2 million in Jammu and Kashmir, and 0.1 in Himachal Pradesh. Punjab did not get Chandigarh due to low Sikh population, according to Indian government. The Sikh population in Haryana is 35%, which means all Sikhs may not have been counted in this census. Punjab population consists of 59.9% Sikhs, 37.0% Hindus, 1.6% Muslims, and 1.2% Christians. However, the Indian government has used incorrect figures in the past. For example, 52% Sikh population and 48% Hindu population was used by Indian government for political purposes to justify falsely the Third Sikh Holocaust (1984-1994). The Indian Government created discrimination against its own citizens in the eyes of international community. The female foeticide will increase the numerical population gap, which will have serious political ramification for Sikhs at the state and at national level.

The census conducted in 2001 indicates that, according to religion in Punjab, there are 14,592,387 Sikhs, 8,997,942 Hindus, 382,045 Muslims and 292,800 Christians, out of total population of 24,265,174. The total female to male ratio in Punjab for Sikhs is 897, for Hindus 846, for Muslims 793, and for Christians 893. However, at the national level, Hindus and Muslims have better ratios than Sikhs, that is 931 for Hindus, 936 for Muslims and 893 for Sikhs.

Gender Disparity: All the districts in Punjab have surprising gender ratios. For example, only Hoshiarpur and Nawanshehar are the two districts having gender ratio above 900. All the other 15 districts have ratios lower than 900. Ludhiana is at the bottom, with only 824.

The reasons for the low gender ratio are female foeticide, 'earning son' syndrome, education and, recently state-facilitated poverty. The state-hastened poverty developed because of Third Sikh Holocaust, low land holdings, deprivation of Punjab waters and electricity, and total denial of federal revenues. State Chief Minister Arvinder Singh felt astonished at population variation and promised stern action against gender determination practice. However, his new wisdom still remains to be seen in action.

The parents having girls should be compensated for education, marriage and other related expenses for their daughters. The Punjab government should start paying bonus to ladies having girls as in Andhra Pradesh, where the government pays 100,000 Rupees for having a daughter to avert the present imbalance.

Nature-Driven: The gender ratio for 2001 is quite compatible and nature-driven in foreign countries. For example, the ratio is 1029 for US, 1040 for Russia, 1041 for Japan, 944 China, 938 for Pakistan, 953 for Bangladesh, and 933 for India. In 1991 census, the ratio was 945 for India, **thus India has the lowest gender ratio in the world, because the families see a boy as a bread winner and provider for old - aged parents whereas the daughter is a liability who is married and becomes a part of her husband's family.**

'Female foeticide' is the destruction of girl child foetus in the womb during the stages of development when different body parts can be seen by medical instruments or tested in medical laboratories. There are several methods to detect the sex of an unborn child.

These methods include ultra sound technique which can see organ of an unborn child; comparative genomic hybridization test requires only two days at a cost of about \$100; fluorescent *in-situ* hybridization takes two days at a cost of \$200; polymerase chain reaction takes one day at the cost of \$100; pre implantation genetic diagnosis takes one week at a cost of \$3000 and karyotyping takes ten days at a cost of \$100. These tests in the West are performed for the detection of genetic abnormalities of a child in families which already have genetic diseases. However, in India, these tests are being used to detect and abort female fetus within about a month. Some methods may prove dangerous for the mother, because abortion is conducted after about three months. It should also be ethically considered a murder of an individual.

The medical profession has been quick to make money from the use of ultra sound machines at the cost of female children affecting the national gender ratio as well as yielding to the demand of a family to have a male child. The physicians and technicians went to villages and towns with portable machines, thus undermining the root of a nation, disregarding respect for religious family values. The physicians are there to save lives. However, in this case of foeticide, they did not follow their oath. The poor Sikh families in villages were probably pushed around by government health officials or physicians to undergo forced sterilization. In such cases, **these officials took away the parents' souls. It is imperative that state or Sikh organizations should investigate cases of forced sterilization and start court cases against those officials.**

Government Failure: The Indian government has not acted upon its promises made in Preconception and Prenatal Diagnostic Technique Act of 1994. If a physician has only portable ultra sound machine and not other chemicals, that person is keeping machine only for the detection of female fetus. It is unsanitary to conduct medical examination in a home or laboratory. There are far too many unequipped abortion centers and ultra sound clinics which should be closed and services should be performed by trained professionals. No independent ultra-sound clinic without a physician exists as such in any part of the world except in India.

The government must license people who can conduct such tests under the guidance of a

physician in a hospital setting, according to the intention of the Act, allowing only prenatal diagnosis just for chromosomal abnormalities, genetic metabolic disorder, and congenital abnormalities. Before conducting ultra-sound test and abortion on a thirty-five-year old mother exposed to drugs, radiation or having mental illness should get a second opinion from another physician. Genetic abnormalities are found in less than 2% while infertility is found in about 10% of Indian population.

India's Supreme Court has approved PIL (Public Interest Litigation) introduced by CEHAT (Center for Inquiry into Health and Allied Themes) to ban the tests and practice of foeticide. The Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act for Prohibition of Sex Selection was passed in 1994 against unethical medical termination of healthy pregnancies. However, it has NOT prevented foeticide because it has NOT been enforced.

Imbalance: When it was determined that the Muslim population was increasing at a higher rate than Hindu population, a BJP leader, Venkaiah Naidu announced it as a danger for the unity of India. **The Sikh political leaders did not even know about their dangerous population trend.** Simranjeet Singh Mann, former member of parliament, declared the decrease in Sikh population is due to the killing of thousands of Sikh youth by Indian government in Third Sikh Holocaust, whose effect has been revealed in 2001 census. Other Sikh leaders should think about the ways to restore Sikh population. Otherwise, their children will lose their future status. The emigration of Sikh youth was accelerated by the attack on Darbar Sahib by Indian government forces, thus starting a mass exodus for almost ten years. To escape being killed by Indian government force, the Sikh youth had to run for their lives. The diaspora caused decrease in Sikh population in Punjab. The Hindus from U.P. and Bihar flooded Punjab, thus replacing working Sikhs.

Religion plays a large role in political life of Indians, mostly because of elections. Even when 4 out of 5 Indians are Hindus, a little increase in Christians (7.8%) and Muslims (13.7%) threatened Hindu dominance. As long as Hindus do not consider minorities as Indians, India cannot progress. The sooner they accept them as equals, the sooner all of them will progress fearlessly and dominate the world courageously and economically because of their collective intelligence.

Clash of Cultures: The Indians borrowed the words of "majority" and "minority" from the West recently. According to the Indian civilization, there is no majority or minority - otherwise Jews and Parsis may not have come to India. I find Indians adopt a fad from the West when it is at its last leg in the West. For example, the Americans used to wear jeans, now they don't wear jeans that much. Some Indians would however die to wear jeans to show off and some even wear them on the hottest summer days. In the past, the Americans killed American-Indians. Now the Americans are protecting them and giving grants to preserve their languages and cultures. Similarly, the Hindu majority is trying to kill minorities. Hindus must protect minorities, their culture, language, and civilization because *their* progress is the *progress* of India. Diversity in India has always proved to be the strength of the country. The women have been pushed to be a new minority in India because of foeticide. Without females, there would be no life at all. The prosperity of India only lies in respecting the right of minority communities, including women.

Women in India face discrimination - practically in all institutions of society, such as education, economy, legal system, dowry system, health industry and social system. Provision of larger role in business, government and education to woman will prove to be the strong pillars of a sustaining democracy. These are bold challenges to some of the men who hold political and economic power in India. The only way to remove these challenges is to provide freedom to women without oppression; provide human rights as in a real

democracy, vote and worship freely; provide equality similar to that of their brothers in family and right to have respect for their opinions.

All the communities should help one another to improve their growth, because it is a natural problem as the girl-child gender ratio for the whole country at 927 in 2001 is down from 945 in 1991. At national level, the Indian government should start helping senior citizens, so they don't have to look towards their sons to take care of them in their old age. The Parliament can approve a Senior Citizens Act as the American government has Senior Citizen Act. The government should provide for its elderly population without the attachment of male family member looking after them.

Occupational Hazard: Just after independence, the Indian army had about 35% Sikhs. Indira Gandhi implemented the policy that Sikhs could only occupy 2% of army jobs because they form 2% of total population. Such actions had negative effect on the state economy. However, it did not show up, because of the hard working nature of Sikh farmers who gave rise to green revolution. Since the prosperity of Green Revolution has vanished, and Third Sikh Holocaust after-effects are showing up in population and economy, the Sikh activists and leaders must develop a comprehensive plan to divert negative factors affecting Punjab economically, educationally, politically, and socially. Sikhs must not be left behind in the communication and computer technology revolution which is spreading through out the world. Again, the recent census as well as the future decline in population will prove disastrous to the Sikhs. It is a wake up call, and the Sikhs all over the world should be concerned.

The intellectuals, including teachers, professors and students, should go from village to village, and teach people what is right and what is wrong concerning population. Whether it is learned, inherited or unrealistic; positive thinking can help in any adventure. Sikhs together can increase and stabilize their population to keep Punjab as their homeland.

The stability of population in general is directly proportional to economic and social stability. The progress in Punjab is hampered because there is no major technical institute or industry. The excuse given by the Indian government was that it is a border state and Punjab suffers a lot during Indo-Pak wars. All small European countries are border countries. Then should they not have any industry in them? But they do. To compensate for their neglect, the Indian government should tax non-border states and pay the collected money to the border states. The compensation should be retroactive from August 15, 1947.

I traveled several times by train from Amritsar to Bangalore in 1970's. The family planning signs appeared only in Punjab. Other states did not have such signs. The Indian government concentrated on Sikh population to curb their growth. Then family planning workers went from house to house to convince poor Sikh families to follow family planning. They used to give a few rupees, or a sewing machine, to the family for going through gruesome non-sanitary birth control procedures. **The effects of such notorious acts are visible now and the Sikh population is dwindling day by day and will have disastrous political effects on the Sikhs in the future.**

Fractional Land: The poor Sikh families in the villages did not know that small families with two to three children do not always bring happiness and prosperity, because the holdings are already small in Punjab. If a farmer has a large family, at least one or two of the family members would have progressed and helped the whole family, whereas with a small family, there is less possibility of progress. The Sikh families should not worry about bringing up children. According to Guru Arjun, God has created living things in stones and has already provided food for them.

In Sikh religion, number 5 has special meaning. For example, there are 5 *Panj Piaras*, or Beloved ones, and 5 *Rahits*. In villages, people generally say *Panjan wich Parmesher*, means wherever there are five people, there is the presence of God. According to this saying, some Sikhs long to have 5 or more children. Some God - fearing parents don't follow abortion. Such parents have inherent respect for human life. However, some of them don't consider male and female children equal. The girls are not treated equal and they don't share the belongings of parents equally. Special favors are bestowed on boys right in front of their sisters. **The parents must know that equal treatment of all human beings is the essence of Sikh religion.**

Some villagers who have gone through birth control procedure had two or three children. They forget that there are several other aspects which are going to affect the survival of their children. Many causes, such as malnutrition; diseases such as cholera, malaria; accidents on the road, safety violations in electrical lines and machines; natural disasters, such as floods, fires, drugs, and alcohol, false police encounters, poverty, etc may cause the death of children. India has not progressed much, because of such calamities. The real medical help is almost non-existent in rural Punjab. The positive way to avoid such misfortunes at present time is to have large family according to local tradition. Having only two children is to neglect the centuries old tradition of having many children, which leads to *end* of some families in Punjab.

“Hamare Do”: Two children norm is the idea of Western governments because these governments are very stable. People are educated and respect one another, judiciary is independent and people follow the law. There is no gang rule to kill minority by majority. The majority doesn't clamp separate rules on the minorities and people love to follow the constitution. The majority does not have the power to affect the human rights of minority community including liberty, life and prosperity. In India, the majority of people don't know about democracy which is only in voting. There is no democracy in social economic, educational, media, and other spheres. The children in Western nations are protected by government if their parents can't take care of them. People in India have to take care of children by themselves. The Mormons in Western nations are growing day by day because they don't use birth control pills or abortion and they do not follow gender selection.

In one Punjab village, several families check the gender of their children before birth. In one of such families, the abortion was performed because of a girl. The mother could not have any more children afterwards due to defect caused by abortion which was negligently performed by a physician. In another case, the family had one son and then the mother underwent tube ligation. The son was killed in a scooter accident when he was 20 years old. Can you imagine the plight of these parents? They are going to spend their whole life thinking of ill - fated birth control operation. Don't they deserve more children?

Dowry Menace: The dowry system multiplies the sufferings of the parents of a daughter. Some people don't want to feel humiliation and dishonor upon giving a daughter in marriage. The in-laws of the daughter become dominant over her parents and demand material goods all the time. In addition, the son-in-law treats the daughter and her previous family sometimes very harshly. Such behavior is intolerable and such people should be taught the value of daughter-in-law similar to the value of their own daughter. The Indian culture intentionally imposes restrictions on the girl child, leading towards the ultimate premature and untimely death of older girl children. The birth of a girl child should be considered a blessing for future prosperity.

[To be continued]



