India has historically a deficit of women compared to most other countries, but we now live in a time when a systematic extermination of an entire gender is taking place right before our eyes. Until the 1980s, women and girls were dying either of neglect or were killed soon after they were born. Today, the horrifying reality is that, thanks to ‘advances’ in medical technology, they are now eliminated while still in the womb (Aravamudan, 2007). The girl child in the womb faces the peril of prebirth elimination i.e. female foeticide. The term “foeticide” is a combination of the Latin words ‘fetus’ and ‘caedo’ which means to kill an unborn child. The practice of female foeticide involves the detection of the sex of the unborn child in the womb of the mother and the decision to abort it, if the sex of the child is detected as a girl (Searia, 2006). Although the changing interrelationships between education, work, marriage and family status in some sense have brought a light of empowerment for women but the continuously declining sex ratio poses a big question towards the developments that have taken place till date. Keeping this in mind, the present study had been undertaken to know the intergenerational attitude of rural women towards the practice of female foeticide.

**ABSTRACT**: The present study was undertaken to assess the intergenerational continuity and discontinuity in attitude of rural women towards female foeticide in Ludhiana district. The study was based upon the sample of 200 respondents. The respondents were distributed equally over the two generations, the first comprising of mothers-in-law and the second comprising of daughters-in-law. The subjects for the sample were drawn randomly from six villages located on Block I of Ludhiana district. Data were collected through interview schedule. Results revealed that continuity was observed in attitude statement like exorbitant demand of dowry is coming in the way of the birth of a girl child. Highly significant differences in attitude were observed for attitudinal statement like sex selective abortions are a way to have a balanced family, only sons can provide age old security to the parents and only boys can perform the last rites of the parents.

**KEY WORDS**: Female foeticide, Intergenerational, Attitude

attitude of rural women towards female foeticide. The results implies that cent per cent respondents in the 1st and the 2nd generation believed that female foeticide is a social evil. No significant change (z = 0) could be observed for this attitude statement.

It is evident from the result Table 1 that no significant change was found as majority of the respondents (83.00%) from the 1st generation agreed that exorbitant demand of dowry is coming in the way of the birth of a girl child followed by 5.00 per cent who had doubts about it. The data for the 2nd generation depict that again majority of the respondents (81.00%) agreed with the statement and doubt was expressed by 10 per cent of the respondents. The results of the study are in agreement with the findings of Rustagi (2000) who observed that gender discriminatory practices prevalent in India stem from the influence of patriarchy and lower status of women which results in higher female mortality rate as compared to males, intrahousehold inequalities in consumption, heinous practice of demanding exorbitant dowries for marrying girls, abandonment of girls and so on.

Table 2 further throws light on the discontinuity in attitude which takes into consideration the person’s feelings about the attitude object. It includes items relating to mindset about female foeticide, reason for son preference over daughters.

It was quite evident from the data that significant differences (z = 2.78**) were observed in both the generation for the attitude statement that female foeticide is a crime against women. There were 81.00 per cent of the respondents in the 1st generation who agreed with the statement followed by 19.00 per cent of the respondents who had doubts about it. On probing the data for 2nd generation, it was observed that majority of the respondents (94.00 %) believed that female foeticide is a crime against women followed by 6.00 per cent of the respondents who had doubts about it. It is apparent from Table 2 that 12.00 per cent of the respondents from the 1st generation felt that sex selective abortions are a boon for not having daughters. Doubts were shown by 78.00 per cent of the respondents. However, on probing the data for the 2nd generation, it was observed that the trend had almost reversed as 65.00 per cent of the respondents disagreed with the statement and doubts were reported by 31.00 per cent of the respondents. The Z value came to be significant (z = 2.09**) hence, indicating a change in attitude. The statement is supported by Kumar (1983) who highlighted in his study that supporters of sex detection tests often argue that the growing

| Table 1 : Existing intergenerational continuity in attitude of rural women towards female foeticide |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Attitude Statements                              | 1st generation (n=100) | 2nd generation (n=100) | Z-value |
| Continuity                                        | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
| Mindset towards female foeticide                  |       |         |          |       |         |          |       |         |          |
| Female foeticide is a social evil                 | 100 (100.00) | 0 (0.00) | 0 (0.00) | 100 (100.00) | 0 (0.00) | 0 (0.00) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Reasons for son preference over daughters         |       |         |          |       |         |          |       |         |          |
| Exorbitant demand of dowry is coming in the way of the birth of a girl child | 83 (83.00) | 5 (0.00) | 12 (0.00) | 81 (81.00) | 10 (0.00) | 9 (0.00) | 0.36 | 1.34 | 0.69 |

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicates percentages

| Table 2 : Existing intergenerational discontinuity in attitude of rural women towards female foeticide |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Attitude statements                              | 1st generation (n=100) | 2nd generation (n=100) | Z-value |
| Discontinuity                                     | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
| Mindset about female foeticide                   |       |         |          |       |         |          |       |         |          |
| Female foeticide is a crime against women         | 81 (81.00) | 19 (19.00) | 0 (0.00) | 94 (94.00) | 6 (6.00) | 0 (0.00) | 2.78*** | 2.78*** | 0 |
| Sex selective abortions are a boon for not having unwanted daughters | 12 (12.00) | 78 (78.00) | 10 (10.00) | 4 (4.00) | 31 (31.00) | 65 (65.00) | 2.09** | 6.67*** | 8.03*** |
| Sex selective abortions are a way to have a balanced family | 61 (61.00) | 15 (15.00) | 24 (24.00) | 0 (0.00) | 55 (55.00) | 45 (45.00) | 9.37*** | 5.93*** | 3.12*** |
| Reasons for son preference over daughters         |       |         |          |       |         |          |       |         |          |
| Only boys can perform the last rites of the parents | 100 (100.00) | 0 (0.00) | 0 (0.00) | 71 (71.00) | 29 (29.00) | 0 (0.00) | 5.82*** | 5.82*** | 0 |
| Only sons can provide age old security to the parents | 100 (100.00) | 0 (0.00) | 0 (0.00) | 29 (29.00) | 4 (4.00) | 67 (67.00) | 10.49*** | 2.02** | 10.04*** |

*, ** and *** indicate significance of values at P=0.10, 0.05 and 0.01, respectively
popularity of amniocentesis is simply based on the theory of
demand and supply where an excess of males over females
are achieved by reduction of unwanted and hence neglected
women which would actually raise the status of women. Highly
significant differences (z = 9.37****) were observed in both
the generations for the attitude of considering sex selective
abortions as a way to have a balanced family.

Table 2 further reflects intergenerational changes in
attitude towards reasons for son-preference over daughters.
The results depict that all the respondents (100.00%) in the
first generation firmly believed that only boys can perform
the last rites of the parents. The trend of attitude towards
performing last rites of parents seem to be comparatively less
firm in the 2nd generation as 71.00 per cent of the respondents
agreed with this statement followed by 29.00 per cent of the
respondents who had doubts about it.

On further probing the data, it was apparent that cent
per cent respondents from the 1st generation believed that
only son can provide age old security to the parents. However,
observation for the 2nd generation depicts that the trend has
almost reversed as 67.00 per cent of the respondents disagreed
with the statement. There were 29.00 per cent of the
respondents who showed agreement. The Z value came to be
highly significant (z = 10.49****) which indicates a change in
attitude.

Conclusion:

Female foeticide is a clear indication of a whole society
being involved in a conspiracy against women which is causing
the destruction of half of the population of society, at the
hands of monstrous practices becoming more and more
rampant in a society fast losing its secular, social, and
humanistic fabric. The results of the study indicates a
difference in the attitude of women belonging to two different
generations. The first generation seems to be clutch at the
same age old mindset about the girl child and are having a
neutral attitude towards the practice of female foeticide in
contrast to the 2nd generation who are expressing a more
unfavourable attitude towards this heinous crime. However,
an evil like this can only be curbed if actions are taken both on
individual and collective level as every member of the society
belonging to any generation has his or her own piece of share
in building up norms for self, family and society as well.

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