



# A Sociological Analysis of Technology and Call Centre with Special Reference to Gender-imbalance in India

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**Abstract:** Based on secondary literature, this paper focuses on the reasons for declining sex ratio, debate on the relationship between technology and society and insecurities and vulnerabilities of job at call centres. In this paper, the news of raid on call centre in New Delhi which used to send couples desiring for male child to foreign countries where sex predetermination is not illegal, has been used as an example to discuss on how increasing economic condition helps in reinforcing patriarchy by using technology and analyze the reasons that why specific technologies have the impacts they do in the area of human reproduction especially. This paper is an endeavor to do as such and distinguish manners by which the sex ratio irregularity influences significant social structures and practices in the society.

**Keywords:** Assisted reproductive technology (ART), gender imbalance, patriarchal social structure, insecurities, call centre

**Introduction:** It is the proven fact that the patriarchal nature of society accords the secondary status to women and they are considered subordinate as compared to men at every stage of their life for centuries. Sociological perspectives on gender therefore intend to explain the key social differences between men and women with reference to social in place of biological or psychological differences. Gender differences are grounded in relations of power and inequality which are evident all over the social world because in most societies men are accorded an uneven share of social, political, economic and cultural resources. Indian society is not an exception in this regard. Gender differences starts from the conception of child itself for which newly invented technology plays an important role in determining the sex of the fetus and later

about the unwanted girl child. And the gender biased behaviors remain intact throughout the life span of the person.

India is one of the few Asian nations whose rising sex ratio at birth (SRB) has gotten a lot of consideration in the last few decades. The patriarchal structure of society involved in various traditional activities of gender inequality in the world in general and in India in particular has been a vital point of discussion for decades and centuries. Deeply ingrained son preference mindset is responsible for the massive gender gap in India. It is commonly acknowledged today that a combination of three elements – continuous inclination towards male child, a decrease in fertility, and the quick spread of sex-assurance advanced technology – is accountable for the high SRB (John et al 2008). While these variables can be named as the "prompt" reasons for the rise of sex ratio, other long term, basic structural elements have also been noted. Vital among these are marriage, kinship and property frameworks that degrade women, young women, and little girls in correlation to men, young men, and children (John et al 2008).

**Materials and Methods:** This research paper is descriptive and analytical in nature. An attempt has been made to analyze the gender imbalance and the role of technology in this regard in Indian context. Secondary literature collected from books, journals, magazines, research articles as well as Govt. documents has been used for this purpose. The published and unpublished materials in the form of books, reports, journals, periodicals and newspaper clippings have been used.

### **Gender Imbalance in India**

According to Global Gender Gap Report 2021 published by World Economic Forum, India has slipped 28 places to rank 140<sup>th</sup> among 156 countries becoming third worst performer in South Asia. This report takes into consideration four dimensions, namely, economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment to examine the gap between men and women. Although, the census of India (2011) reported the rising sex ratio as 940 females per 1000 of males which shows an upward trend from the 2001 census data. But Economic Times (15 July 2019) reported that India, the world's second most populous nation, has enrolled a decrease in birth rate for one more year while death rate has gone down inferable from better medical facilities. India's sex proportion, or the number of females per 1,000 males, declined to 896 in 2015-17 from 898 2014-16, as per government survey. The information points to a stressing picture. The nation's sex proportion during childbirth, which is the number of females born per 1,000 males, is demonstrating a stressing decline, as indicated by a Sample Registration System (SRS) survey. The survey, the world's biggest statistical study, covering 7.9 million individuals, was directed by the office of the registrar general and census commissioner. The latest report is its fourth in the series. The figure remained at 896 in 2015-17, down from 898 in 2014-16 and 900 in 2013-15. Of the best 22 states for which information is accessible, Delhi recorded inferior number than

the national average. In spite of the fact that the sex proportion in rural India declined from 902 in 2014-16 to 898 in 2015-17, it is still higher to urban India's 890.

As we know that a huge part of Indian culture inclines towards a male child, the well-to-do all the more so. Individuals in urban zones are better situated to misuse the framework as they have approach to advanced medical facilities. In this way, they regularly resort to neonatal tests, in spite of the fact that these are restricted in India through Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PC&PNDT Act), 1994. This enables them to prematurely end a young girl child.

### **Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART) and Gendered Impacts of Infertility**

There is no doubt that technology has invaded every aspect of human lives and it has been invented with the purpose of making human lives easier. So the medical field has also got benefitted with the technological advancements. It has also succeeded in the field of reproductive process of human beings and multiplying the research interest manifold particularly in the field of Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART). ART was invented with the purpose to assist the infertile couples desirous for children in fulfilling their dreams of parenthood and to cure the problems of infertility but it has gender implications as well. There has been a significant increase in IVF clinics globally over the past decade, hence, the number of ART cycles performed. The globalization of ART has taken place considerably to fulfill the dream of parenthood. The proliferation of fertility clinics in the developing countries and the increasing demands for stepping in them, the desire for having child especially son of an upwardly and increasingly mobile middle class because of the submissive patriarchal society, provides the ground for this research.

Infertility is a global problem impacting more than 60-80 million people with an estimated 8-12 % of couples facing difficulty in conceiving a child at some point in their lives (FHI 2003). Among low-income countries (LICs), despite high fertility rates, infertility rates range from 22% in South Asia to 29% in some sub-Saharan countries (RHO 2004). The definition of infertility varies between cultures and the biomedical definition may not encompass variations in cultural assumptions of childlessness.

The idea of infertility revolves around socio-cultural assumptions; especially presumptions regarding the value of parenthood as a social role in a given society (Greil et al 2011). Gender is primary socio-cultural institution that influences the notions of infertility which is socially constructed. Women and men 'do' gender every day acting out the prescribed gender roles and norms which are set out by the given society (West & Zimmerman 1987). Socially constructed gender roles and norms shape the lives of men and women around the world. Gender ideologies commencing from the birth, deeply rooted in men's and women's consciousness during their lifetime crucially influence the sense of self and identity that cut across caste, class and all social divisions

in the society. In most part of the world, women's primary identity is associated with the idea of wifehood and motherhood and they are mainly considered responsible for the reproduction of the child whereas men's primary identity is regarded as the breadwinner and protector of the families.

On 02 October, 2019, India Times reported that an In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) firm that run a completely fledged call centre for couples, was caught in the national capital Delhi for purportedly offering sex choice, which is restricted in India. The clinic by its name 'Ela Woman', supposedly sent couples needing a male child to nations like Thailand, Singapore, and Dubai where sex determination isn't illegal. The call centre used to work through an undeniable call focus and had a site through which individuals could get in touch with them. The office in East Patel Nagar was attacked on Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2019 by the National Inspection and Monitoring Committee (NIMC), which has officials from the ministries of health, law and justice, Delhi government's PCNDT unit, district authorities and police. The authorities speculate that about six lakhs women succumbed to this racket over the span of two years. The women, as indicated by an India Times report, were sent to spots like Dubai, Singapore and Thailand to undergo IVF procedure to have male child. The report expresses that the centre was controlled by an engineer by profession and an IIT graduate. About 300 representatives worked in this call centre who used to call individuals across India and offer packages to the customers and try to convince them for IVF treatment. The blame might be charged under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994. They referenced that their facility has a wide system in the nation over with 100 such IVF centers and organizers in Dubai, Singapore and Bangkok. The firm purportedly charged Rs 10, 000 for the registration and Rs 8.5 lakhs for an IVF in Dubai for an 'ensured' male child.

## **Gender and Technology**

This news reminds us to redefine the impact of technology on women's lives and the relationships of science and technology to the society. While there has been a rising eagerness for the relationship of science to society in the course of the most recent decade, there has been a much more prominent distraction with the connection of technology and social change. A significant worry of feminists has been the effect of new technology on women's lives, especially on women's work and the suggestions for women's command over their body and fertility. The important issue here is whether the issue lies in male command over technology, or whether the technology in some sense intrinsically man-centric. On the off chance that women were in charge, would they apply technology to progressively considerate ends? Gender inequality within reproductive technologies can be analyzed through many ways. The biasness within the technology itself can be considered as one aspect. This research is an attempt to demonstrate that ART is very much prospective to be used to control reproductive autonomy of women both as technology in itself individually and as part of a larger pattern of control. When one considers ART as part of a system of gender control, it becomes easy to perceive the methodical domination of women by posing restrictions on all

reproductive autonomy of women whether it is in preventing or promoting their fertility. Women gain control over the technology only by recognizing the restrictions that reproductive technologies place on women and instigate the quest to identify their own reproductive autonomy.

During the eighties, women's activists have started to concentrate on the gendered character of technology itself. As opposed to asking how women could be treated more evenhandedly inside and by a neutral technology, numerous women's activists currently contend that Western technology itself encapsulates male-centric qualities. This parallels the manner by which the women's activists investigate of science developed from asking the 'woman question' in science to asking the more radical 'science question' in women's liberation (Wajcman 1991). Technology, similar to science, is viewed as profoundly embroiled in the manly venture of the superiority and control of women and nature. Technology incorporates practices, information and institutions that are patriarchal in nature.

The eco-feminists contended that women are nearer to nature than men and that the technology that men have invented also depend on the domination of nature similarly that they try to command women. They focused on military technology and the natural impacts of other present day innovations. As per their views, these advancements in technology are results of a male-centric culture that 'speaks violence at each level' (Rothschild 1983: 126). Human natural reproduction issue in connection with sexual preference and technology is the most challenged and debatable issue than any others.

Women are the bearers, in many social orders the essential nurturers, of children. This implies the reproductive technologies are of specific significance to them. Birth control, inclination towards son has been a major issue for all technological developments for women's movement. Key to this investigation and of expanding importance today is the discernment that the processes of pregnancy and childbirth are coordinated and constrained always by complex and inquisitive advancements in technology. Inherent in this view is the idea of reproduction as a natural process, intrinsic in women alone, and a theory of technology as male centric, empowering the male domination of women and nature.

Proponents of reproductive technology argue that changes in technology are the most significant reason for change in the society. Maybe here more than elsewhere, major technological advances are viewed as having straightforwardly changed women's lives to improve things. The technological advances of pregnancy and labor are said to have put an end to the risky and difficult parts of childbirth. Profoundly medicalized and technologized process proposes for sound and healthy pregnancies. The new advanced systems for observing fetal improvement in the beginning periods of pregnancy imply that some 'inadequate' embryos can be prematurely aborted. Barren women who recently had no alternatives would now be able to attend fertility programs that guarantee the opportunity of conceiving pregnancy 'naturally' and would be to undergo for IVF treatment to have children. Furthermore, most basic of all,

progresses in the technology of fertility control are viewed as the way in to the monstrous social change that has happened for women's equality. The boundless accessibility of trustworthy contraception and abortion (in case of inadequate or unhealthy fetus), a privilege frequently battled for by women, has implied that for the first time in mankind's history women enjoy control over their own bodies.

Most vocal in their restriction to the improvement and use of genetic and reproductive technology are a gathering of radical women's activists who in 1984 framed FINRRAGE (Feminist International Network of Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering). They consider the development of reproductive technology as a type of male-centric misuse of women's bodies. As opposed to considering reproductive technologies to be as a continued assault on women's bodies, another group of women's activist and observers highlight the indecisive impacts that reproductive technologies have on the lives of women.

Distinguishing the gendered character of technology need not prompt a dismissal of existing 'male-centric' technology. Now is the ideal opportunity for revising the connection between technology and gender. The old masculinist philosophy has been made progressively illogical by the remarkable changes in technology, by the confrontations of woman's rights activists and the new consciousness of the susceptibility of the natural world. The important point here is that advancements in technology uncover the social orders that devise and use them, their ideas of economic wellbeing. To the extent that technology at present mirrors a man's reality, the battle to change it needs a change in gender relations. These authors contend that women's development has to a great extent overlooked the issue of infertility and treated women who take an interest in these cutting edge research programs as 'blinded by science' and as inactive sufferers of prenatal molding. As indicated by them, the vast majority of the authors connected with the FINRRAGE disregard women as dynamic operators who have proposed requests for such technologies as a result of their real desire to have children. Reproductive technologies might be the main open door way, barren women need and can use to satisfy this need and what's more, along these lines we should encourage their 'right of reproductive choice'.

These scholars disagree with the extreme radical feminists' view that technologies in themselves have male-centric political properties. Rather they problematize the institutional settings wherein these reproductive/specialized technologies happen. As per Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, 'we have to isolate the power relations inside which reproductive technologies.... are applied from the technologies themselves' (Petchesky 1987: 71). The issue isn't technologies conversely the manner in which these advancements draw their importance from the social and political atmosphere wherein they are inserted.

The genuine threats for women that go with medical and technological advancements in the sphere of reproduction are straightforwardly identified with the various conditions of women's situation in the society. Access to the advantages of costly strategies, for example, in-vitro-treatment is vigorously

identified with the capability to pay. Women who are poor and helpless won't approach these strategies and moreover, they will be least ready to oppose maltreatment of medicinal power and procedures. For instance, moral issues over sex predetermination have an uncommon criticalness given proof that the IVF treatment is presently being utilized to have male child in India. Although, sex predetermination is not allowed in India, the affluent couples go to foreign countries. In this case, it can be said that the real problem is not with the technology itself but the social structure that give importance to the male child in this twenty-first century when everyone is talking about women empowerment. This remind us the very popular campaign initiated by the central government of India 'beti bachao beti padhao' which focus on to challenge the deep rooted patriarchal mindsets in the social system, strict enforcement of PC&PNDT Act and improvement in the education of girl child. There is no doubt that people are becoming aware of the importance of the girl child and they are giving equal status but gender biasness still persists vastly in Indian society. So this mindset needs to be questioned vividly and awareness regarding gender equality needs to be spread enthusiastically.

There is wide understanding among women's activists about these perils. For those women's activists who dispute the FINRRAGE examination, these threats are seen not as a component of the technologies themselves, but of their maltreatment. This position is summarized by Stanforth (1987: 15), when she says that these technologies have been 'a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they have offered women a greater technical possibility to decide if, when under what conditions to have children; on the other, the domination of so much reproductive technology by the medical profession and the state has enabled others to have an even greater capacity to exert control over women's lives'.

The motivation behind this area has been to recommend that sexual relations in combination with populace strategies and market powers have shaped reproductive technology. What's more here is the plan or type of the technology that has been critical to its utilization. While the general impact of this has been the masculinizaion of a region that was beforehand a women's circle, women who are as of now advantaged in the society have been in a situation to take profit by later regenerative procedures. Here as somewhere else technologies work inside and strengthen the established social gender imbalances.

## **Insecurities and Vulnerabilities of Call Centre Employees**

Work in call centres infers a large set of instabilities and vulnerabilities, which are somewhat reflected in the high attrition rates. Call centres offer higher salaries and high-tech facilities to a simple graduate in India, which they would never envision at some other workplace. In spite of having these facilities, the normal steady attrition rates in the call centres are very high and there are different appraisals that propose it. In the review, push attrition is found as a critical element. The causes for the separation from the organizations are for the most part expiry of contractual term, expanded pressure and absence of

career prospects inside the firm (Ramesh 2004). Rising push attrition rates unambiguously show the employment insecurities related with transient work contracts, demanding/unpleasant nature of the work and absence of radiant professional ways in the area. From one viewpoint, laborers are being tossed out routinely, because of the organizations' stand to hold just the most profitable hands and to dispose of long-term responsibilities towards employees. Beside this, the nature of work is so unpleasant and demanding that the call executives themselves choose to discontinue. Some call centre tasks request securing of even new persona. Work can get disappointing now and again, particularly when they have to manage irritative and cruel clients who use abusive language. Indeed, even the best and attentive operators report that there were times when they lost their temper and needed to cry or curse to relieve their disappointment. A considerable number of them agree that this dissatisfaction is one of the prime factors that compel the employees to consider discontinuing the firm. For instance, in above mentioned case, three hundred employees lost job at one stroke because of temporary nature of call centres and employers' faults. There are large numbers of fake call centres working in different arenas to dupe the foreigners as well as nationals. Police have raided many fake call centres all over the India. So it is the pressing need to have regulations for opening and running of call centres so that employees also don't get embroiled in these kinds of call centres. This also shows the insecurities of jobs of call centre employees. These employees would need to start their job again from the very beginning because their experience at this call centre would not be counted. The automated and continuous observing and nonstop work appraisal followed in BPOs likewise add to the disappointment and employees frequently realize it as genuinely undignified. In performance appraisal, the past reputation of performance of the executive isn't counted; it is frequently done dispassionately with the guide of PCs/programming projects.

## Conclusion

This paper has provided documentation of the settings wherein reproductive technologies impacted the lives of women. The researcher has contended that specific sorts of technologies are inseparably connected to specific institutionalized patterns of intensity and authority, and the instance of reproductive advancements is no more exception in this case. Further, ingrained practices that are basic reasons for the gender disparity – inflexible marriage standards, patrilineal legacy and patrilocal living arrangement, sons' support at old age of parents, and absence of self-sufficiency of women can be said as intact reasons which lead to the imbalanced sex proportion through the use of advanced technology. So, it can be said that increasing material condition lead to the reinforcement of patriarchy because those who are disadvantaged from economic point of view cannot even think for such expensive IVF treatment to have male child. Therefore, we have to investigate the particular social interests that structure the learning and practice with regards to specific sorts of technology. There is urgent need to tackle this issue by creating awareness among the public and by regulating the already existing legislations more stringently. And it is



the responsibility of government to regulate such kind of fake call centres which used to promote gender imbalance in India or for that matter any fake call centres which used to deceive customers in any ways.

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