

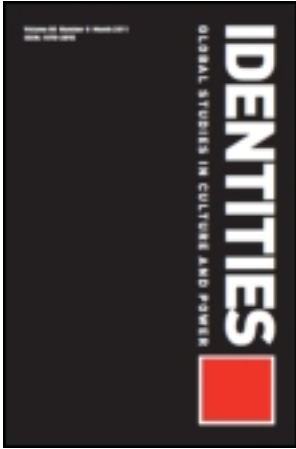
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Publisher: Routledge

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## Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/gide20>

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Published online: 27 Jan 2014.

To cite this article: Navtej Purewal (2014): Disciplining the sex ratio: exploring the governmentality of female foeticide in India, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, DOI: [10.1080/1070289X.2013.878248](https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2013.878248)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2013.878248>

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## Disciplining the sex ratio: exploring the governmentality of female foeticide in India

Navtej Purewal

(Received 19 January 2013)

The 'girl child' has attracted a considerable amount of attention in India as an object of policy addressing gender discrimination. This article examines the field of campaigns seeking to address female foeticide and positions the public discourse on the 'girl child' and sex selective abortion in India within a broad cultural backdrop of son preference. The article argues that anti-female foeticide campaigns exist within a disciplinary domain of female foeticide which both generates a discourse of saving the 'girl child' and also shows attempts to utilise both incentives and punitive measures in carving out a female foeticide carceral space.

**Keywords:** disciplinary power; female foeticide; Foucault; gender; India; sex ratio

### Introduction

The first episode of Bollywood actor Amir Khan's renowned television series *Satyamev Jayate* ('Truth Alone Prevails') entitled 'Daughters are Precious' aired in 2012 on the satellite channel Star Plus (<http://www.satyamevjayate.in/issue01/videos/DAX3NOFQtSI/>). The episode specifically explored the phenomenon of female foeticide<sup>1</sup> and generated a public dialogue with its consciousness-raising approach featuring live interviews, a studio audience and pre-recorded case studies from different parts of India. The programme highlighted the deep-rooted and widespread nature of female foeticide in contemporary India and showed the multifaceted outcomes of female foeticide *writ large*. Despite being a populist programme airing on prime-time television, this episode of *Satyamev Jayate* circulates within what will be argued here is a disciplinary domain of female foeticide. This is constituted not just by state power or legalistic frameworks but also includes public, private and popular discourses – multiple circuits of disciplinary power – which shape a broader domain of disciplinary power.

Female foeticide, or the termination of female-identified fetuses during pregnancy, is closely associated with a societal desire for male children and consequent unfavourable sex ratios towards females in contemporary India (Patel 2010). National census data over time identifies the increasing gender imbalance and bias against females through the functions of the state to track demographic change. In response to the statistical sex ratio, state and

non-governmental organisations in India have responded to the sex ratio as an indicator of social inequality in the symbol of the 'girl child' through a range of different discursive tools and methods, including awareness raising, financial incentives and punitive measures. This article will examine the contours of a governmentality of female foeticide in developing our understandings of anti-foeticide activity through the mantle of saving the 'girl child'.

The article begins by situating the symbol of the 'girl child' within international and national development discourse in India. I then highlight the ways in which Foucault's notion of the disciplinary domain can be used in understanding how the sex ratio and female foeticide have been addressed in policies and approaches. Finally, I explore specific campaigns and policies directed towards female foeticide and position them within a spectrum of disciplinary approaches towards female foeticide.

The discursive strategies of power directed towards the sex ratio in India can be identified within campaigns, schemes and policies of various state and non-state agencies who all contribute to the shaping of a public discourse on sex selection and the 'girl child'. This article builds upon previous research in which I focused on son preference and sex selection in India through an exploration of the cultural politics of female foeticide (Purewal 2010). While the previous research presented the gender backdrop to how son preference circulates, this study shifts the lens towards policies and the symbolism of the 'girl child' in the realm of anti-female foeticide activity. The disciplinary domain of female foeticide will thus be examined through examples of anti-female foeticide campaigns in India and an analysis of how they reflect upon a governmentality of female foeticide. The approaches of each of these campaigns will be explored through a discourse analysis of the policies, activities and strategies employed, which highlight a spectrum of governmentality – from discipline-blockade to discipline-mechanism – within what is referred to here as a disciplinary domain of female foeticide.

### **The 'girl child' within masculine sex ratios and international development discourse**

The identification of female children by the international community as a vulnerable group followed the UN decade for women 1976–1986. This subsequently led to UNICEF identifying the 'girl child' as a key target of its gender activity in 1990 (UNICEF 1993).<sup>2</sup> The South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) in response to this declared the 1990s as the Decade of the 'girl child' 1991–2001 in tandem with the release of the Census of India results, which offered an array of quantitative gender disaggregated data on literacy, sex ratios and health to exhibit the plight of the 'girl child' serving as an immediate means of launching the decade with high profile. As part of this national campaign, the Indian postal service issued a commemorative stamp in 1990 marking the beginning of the decade of the girl child (see [Figure 1](#)).



Figure 1. Indian postal stamp commemorating the decade of the 'girl child'.

The 1995 Women's conference at Beijing and the 1994 Population and Development conference contributed to setting the stage for India to adapt its growth-oriented, neo-liberal development discourse of that time to the emerging global consensus on gender inequality. The sex ratio became a strategic measure for identifying gender inequalities globally, as well as comparatively from different national data sets. As such, the sex ratio became a tool for agencies in shaping international discourses on gender inequalities through evidence-based demographic data highlighting gaps in the gender constitution of populations (Table 1).

The figure of the 'girl child' has since become a symbol for social development within a large welfare approach showing overtures to uplift girls through education and other policy interventions, but targeting rather than mainstreaming or empowering girls (Croll 2006). Despite the use of gender disaggregated data to highlight persistent gender discrimination, the implementation of policies has remained largely on a discursive level. Agarwal (1994) crucially identifies the fact that despite having legal rights to inherit parental property, women and girls are systematically excluded from gaining such entitlements. Indeed, formal rights to inherit have not translated into gender equality, and until a more probing approach towards the conditions generating masculine sex ratios is deployed, the cause of girls, as Croll (2006) argued, will be under-analysed and will remain a figment of international platforms and programmes.

The disciplinary power of anti-female foeticide came out of this era of recognition of international targets and of India's looming inequitable social

Table 1. Sex ratio in selected countries.

Country	2001	2011
World	986	944
China	944	926
India	933	940
USA	1029	1025
Indonesia	1004	988
Brazil	1025	1042
Pakistan	938	943
Russia	1140	1167
Bangladesh	958	978
Japan	1041	1055
Nigeria	1016	987

Sources:

2001: United Nations (1998).

2011: United Nations (2009).

indicators highlighting gender and other socio-economic disparities accompanying its growth-oriented post-1991 liberalisation economic strategy. The post-Washington consensus of the 1990s pinpointed a requirement for social indicators of inequality and disparity to act as checks of performance indicators of the social outcomes of economic development which would have implications for funding and aid within the omnipresent global neo-liberal economic agenda (Fine 2001).

The technocratic dimension of the gender mainstreaming approach showed less association with women's movements or feminism and more inclination towards efficiency, transparency and bureaucratic systems. As Baden and Goetz (1997: 7) comment: 'bureaucratic requirements for information tend to strip away the political content of information on women's interests and reduce it to a set of needs or gaps ...'

The international context of campaigns targeted at the 'girl child' highlights further tensions between the global 'girl child' agenda and localised perceptions of its meanings. In 1979, many national governments refused to sign the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) due to perceptions of it being a reflection of Western conceptions of gender (Baden and Goetz 1997). Such universalising attempts to establish principles and laws reflect the association of human rights with 'foundational claims about humanity... means they can appear to exist independent of social foundations, and indeed beyond the realm of social reality' (Hynes *et al.* 2010). India, who had initially not signed up to CEDAW, did so in 1993 and also signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Thereafter, the 'girl

child' remained a prominent figure not only in India but also in China after the 1995 Beijing conference as a symbol of the international community's attention to establishing a global discourse on women's rights across cultural and national contexts (Razavi and Miller 1995).

More recently, the symbol of the 'girl child' has been reinvigorated after the shooting of then 14-year-old Malala Yousafzai in the Swat Valley in Pakistan in October 2011 after her BBC blog 'Life Under the Taliban' raised the profile of hers and her classmates' defiance of extremist edicts against girls' education by attending school. Immediately after, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 66/170 declaring 11 October as International Day of the Girl Child to be marked every year (<http://www.un.org/en/events/girlchild/>). The symbol of the 'girl child', thus, is not merely a signifier of attempts to recover missing girls from the masculine sex ratios but also functions as an emblematic marker of national and international discursive strategies towards gender inequality.

### **The disciplinary domain of female foeticide**

In Foucault's (1977) outline of the spectrum of discipline, there are two extremes: on one end is the discipline-blockade which exists at the edges of society in 'arresting evil, breaking communication, suspending time,' and on the other end is the discipline-mechanism, 'a functional mechanism that must improve the exercise of power by making it lighter, more rapid, more effective, a design of subtle coercion for a society to come' (p. 71). The disciplinary domain of anti-female foeticide in India falls within the discipline-mechanism, with the other end of the spectrum, the discipline blockade, being reserved for extreme cases or in raising spectacles where, for instance, clinics or medical professionals have been found to be illegally practicing systematic foeticide.

While Foucault's thinking on power evolved throughout his writings (1994), he was consistent in his understanding of state power and policies beyond a conventional picture of hierarchical spectacles of power (i.e. sovereignty). This more extensive view of power includes other forms of social control and normalisation present in institutions such as hospitals, schools, etc. (i.e. governmentality) and at the collective and individual levels of population (i.e. bio-power) (Rose 1999). In order to avoid a reductive picture of governmentality, Foucault also included the spectrum of practices through which individuals' strategies to exercise their 'freedom' are shaped (Foucault 2009). Rose's (1999, p. 5) analysis of other 'incarnations' of state power in liberal societies at, what he calls, a more 'molecular level' further highlight a less centrally locatable disciplinary power which circulates through multiple circuits of power. It is this space of multiple circuits within disciplinary power which is useful here, as the individual, family, household and community levels of social reproduction which cut across private and public domains are significant spaces of power which, in the case of female foeticide, are often at odds with *normalising* techniques of penalties and incentives associated with

gender-bias in India. While the state in India is significant in directing anti-female foeticide discourse, the family, medical clinics and the media also act as purveyors of anti-foeticide discourse, exemplifying the multiple circuits of power and knowledge.

The forms of knowledge which bolster this disciplinary power are produced and sustained through discourses which are meant to result in self-checking, or auto-corrective, behaviours. These behaviours are meant to be internalised and thus encourage people to govern their own behaviour as part of a more efficient system of social control and regulation (Foucault 1977). This system of social control requires less direct means of governance and more utilisation of knowledge-laden tools of power which influence rather than command by force. Indeed, Britain's infamous 'indirect rule' which accompanied its civilising mission in colonial India falls within this form of disciplinary power (Cohn 1987, 1996, Arnold 1993, Sen 2002). However, disciplinary power on its own is not sufficient to understand the field of anti-female foeticide activity in India.

There is a distinct bio-politics around the sex ratio as a tool of demographic knowledge and classificatory function. While disciplinary power works at the level of the individual, or 'man-as-body', bio-politics operates at the level of 'man-as-species', focused on the broader population and only intervening at the level of generality in order to instil regularity, not discipline (Foucault 2009). It is at this juncture that these two technologies of power – disciplinary and bio-politics – each operate at their overlapping but distinctive levels. Anti-foeticide discourse and policy is simultaneously projected at the public level of spectacle and society while being subsumed, manoeuvred and manipulated within the private dimensions of the body, womb and kinship relations. The bio-politics of female foeticide, as will be argued in this article, is not only reflected by policy attempts to curb or discipline it but is perhaps more fundamentally shaped by son preference in the political economy of the family, positive perceptions of the birth of sons and negative perceptions of girls even before birth. It is no wonder, then, that the figure of the 'girl child' and the notion of 'missing women' have remained at the emblematic level where bio-power and disciplinary power meet. The notion of 'missing women' as highlighted by Amartya Sen (1990) came to be used as a discursive tool for the state to 'massify' (Foucault 2009), quantify, identify and then penalise states having noticeably unfavourable sex ratios. The distinction between the total sex ratio, which can also point to other causes of male majority ratios such as migration, and the child sex ratio, which points to patterns emerging from prenatal, postnatal and early childhood, provides a more focused picture of the gender dynamics being played out in pregnancy, childbirth, and early years of childhood (Table 2).

Thus, the collection of medical data and of collective populations through the compilation of district, state and national data is the most prevalent tool within the disciplinary power of anti-female foeticide for its functions within the technologies of power. Knowledge is implicitly embedded within disciplinary power and its structures, institutions and agencies. By identifying states with the lowest sex ratios as 'daughter-killing' (*kurimaru*), the Indian government presents



Table 2. Sex ratio in selected states in India.

States/territories	Child sex ratio* (age 0–6 yrs)			Total sex ratio*		
	1991	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011
India	945	927	914	927	933	940
Gujarat	928	883	886	934	920	918
Haryana	879	819	830	865	861	877
Punjab	875	798	899	882	876	893
Tamil Nadu	948	942	946	974	987	995
Kerala	958	960	959	1036	1058	1084
Chandigarh (UT)	899	845	867	790	777	818
Delhi (UT)	915	868	866	827	821	866

Source: Census of India 1991, 2001 and 2011

Note: \*Number of females to every 1000 males.

obstacle signs of sex selection on a national level. The census and other demographic data reflect state- and district-level social data, enabling a discourse of a disciplinary society through the identification of low sex ratios as non-normative patterns. However, with very few cases of legal enforcement of anti-foeticide laws in India to date, this disciplinary power is largely concentrated within the realm of spectacle through the deterrence of naming and shaming and financial incentives rather than punitive, carceral action (i.e. discipline blockade). Unlike the more totalising approach of China's compulsory (discipline-blockade) family-planning one-child policy, the Indian case shows a more mixed picture in its female foeticide discipline-mechanism. In India, hierarchies of governance and power push local and state bodies to act and make efforts through initiatives to raise awareness and show the existence at least in principle of legal enforcement against sex selection. The 1990s saw an expansion of policy initiatives led by the Government of India to address female foeticide as an issue of public concern in showing its commitment to the UNCRC. During and after this period, media attention and campaigns driven by medical, legal and feminist campaigners rose, culminating in a more legalistic approach resulting in the 1994 ban of sex-selective abortions through the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PNDT) Act and thereafter in the 2003 amendment which included pre-selective reproductive technologies such as the Selnas and Ericsson methods. While abortion had been legal in India since 1973, sex-selective abortion was not made illegal until 1994.

The disciplinary power of foeticide could be said to be a contributing factor to these pockets of improvement whereby local state information systems have generated a fear of the law and have attempted to curb easy access to sex-selective services. However, the variation across regions and states makes this correlation speculative and in need of further examination before ascertaining

any connections between state campaigns and changes to sex-selective practices and attitudes. Indeed, the impacts of campaigns and state enforcement of anti-female foeticide upon public perceptions of the 'girl child' draws attention to the role that the state plays in shaping public and private discourses. There exists a gulf between public and private discourses on sex selection. Alongside a hegemonic derision of female foeticide in the public realm, there are also continuing private tensions in terms of spoken and unspoken voices which render sex selection a continuing feature of personal dimensions of family decision-making and reproductive choice (Purewal 2010).

In effect, the dynamics between disciplinary power and bio-power lie at the crux of anti-female foeticide discourse in India, wherein continually declining sex ratios against females and the ineffectiveness of measures to discipline the practice of sex selective abortion lie at the limits of the generalisable. In a cultural and social milieu of son preference which is expressed in the sex ratio at the general level, combatting the endemic outcomes of son preference and gender-bias against female births is lost between disciplinary power aimed at individual practices and bio-power aimed at the demographic level. The individual dimensions of pregnancy and childbirth which is where the 'criminality' of female foeticide takes place is not only difficult to pinpoint but is fraught with its engagement with multiple circuits of power, including state agencies as well as patriarchal ideologies and practices of family-building often inclined towards gender-bias. Between the multiple circuits of power and the trends associated with emergent societal attitudes and population trends, anti-female foeticide activity in India has failed to incorporate the human rights agenda into campaigns and policies aimed at gender-bias and the 'girl child' by remaining at the discursive, spectacle level through the symbol of the 'girl child'.

### **Anti-female foeticide campaigns across the disciplinary domain**

Anti-foeticide campaigns operate within a spectrum of governmentality which shows a discursive tendency towards the no-tolerance discipline-blockade, but which shows policies and actions more fitting within the realm of discipline-mechanism. The elusiveness of female foeticide as a punishable act frame contemporary campaigns on female foeticide as a social and state policy quandary (Menon 1998). On the one hand, state agencies have attempted to show a 'no tolerance' approach towards sex selection while on the other hand there have been a range of methods employed to address social attitudes which discriminate against girls. The monitoring of sex ratio patterns, as discussed earlier, has become a routinised means of assessing India's track record in confronting the issue of female foeticide at the level of bio-politics. Particularly as funding for social welfare programmes was channelled through the central government, the sex ratio became foregrounded as an issue for donors, policymakers and bureaucrats to prioritise.

State and local governments have adopted a range of different methods to demonstrate their commitment to responding to the anti-female foeticide agenda. Allocation of government funds for development is tied to performance in improving sex ratio indicators through the creation of incentives to exhibit improvements. Croll (2008), in her Asia-wide focus upon the girl-child platform, argued that policies have not been effectively rendered into local and national level policies. The transformative potentials of activities directed at the cause of the 'girl child', she argued, would be better placed by targeting the embedded nature of girls' entitlements, socialisation and expectations in the household environment where they are lived and acted out. However, it is precisely at the private or individual level where our two technologies of power meet. On the one hand, the household is a unit logged into systems of information in terms of births, deaths, registries, etc. (man-as-species), while on the other hand, it is also the intimate space where pregnancies are conceived (man-as-body), which are either filtered to the level of the household as 'information' or not. The gap between these two spaces is where the sex ratio's continuing decline can be said to be taking place, highlighting both the limits and tensions of power.

### **Chandigarh and Delhi: deterring sex-selective abortion and incentivising the birth of the 'girl child'**

One of the *normalising* practices of female foeticide disciplinary power has been deterrence through conscious-raising. The two union territory administrations of Chandigarh and Delhi have each evolved their own campaigns towards sensitisation around the issue. The Chandigarh Union Territory Administration prepared an action plan in 2008, which attempted to track pregnancies and sex-selective medical interventions. One of the features of this approach has been to create a social databank in the city as a means of tracking the 'girl child's' survival and progress through records of health, school enrolment and educational milestones of young girls beginning with the issuing of a card at the time of birth. The enactment of this approach of surveillance has taken place through activities attempting to work in partnership with other agencies and sectors. Thus, educational institutions, religious leaders, government health agencies, the media, arts groups and non-governmental organisations were invited to take part. The approach of the Chandigarh Administration employs technologies of governance while trying to extend its influence in doing outreach work with NGOs, colleges and other agencies in passing on the message of anti-foeticide. The protection of the 'girl child' in the Chandigarh Administration's plan of action has contained a number of disciplinary tools, including tracking, targeting, and conscious-raising as a preventative strategy towards female foeticide. Over the years, participating colleges and schools, for instance, have held yearly events on their premises in showing their commitment to the cause. The 24th of January was announced in 2009 to be National 'Girl Child' Day each year by the government of India and since then has been instituted as a day of targeted activities. Government College

for Women in Chandigarh has held a day-long function, which, along with banners and speeches, has also included a pledge for each individual student to make a pledge that they would not commit female foeticide when pregnant in the future. A similar pledge was introduced at a men's college in the city subsequently. Thus, the life cycle is targeted, positing women not only as victims at birth and early childhood but also as active agents along with men within this disciplinary power.

The plan for action under the Chandigarh model also suggests certain empowerment strategies through financial incentives set at milestones in a girl's life: the time of birth, immunisation, enrolment into school and passing secondary school examinations. Reinforced by high-profile conscious-raising activities, such incentives are meant to exhibit in concrete terms the local government's commitment to tackling female foeticide. In 2008, the Delhi local government has also designed an incentive scheme called the 'Ladli Scheme'. The term *ladli*, which denotes a girl who is doted upon by parents and other loved ones, is used strategically and emotively to draw attention to the 'girl child' as one deserving attention, as much as the *ladla*, or more traditionally doted upon boy child (Purewal 2010). The financial burden associated with the 'girl child' in terms of marriage and dowries is directly addressed in the Ladli Scheme, in how it attempts to create a sense of daughters as economic assets rather than financial burdens, seen as one of the root causes of female foeticide. Set up as a savings scheme, a relatively high interest rate was offered for fixed deposits by a leading Indian bank for accounts set up in the name of the 'girl child'. To qualify for the scheme, girls had to be born in Delhi on or before 1 January 2008, and the parents of the child could not earn a yearly income of more than 100,000 rupees. The amount would be deposited in the name of the 'girl child' at different stages of her life as a means of accumulating the lump sum of Rs.100,000 that would become accessible on the girl's 18th birthday. The government would contribute Rs. 10,000 on the birth of the 'girl child', followed by Rs. 5000 deposits at each point on her admission to Class 1, 5, 9, 10 and 12.

### **The Nawanshahr Model: information technologies, surveillance and the creation of a carceral space of female foeticide**

Perhaps the most comprehensive approach towards disciplining female foeticide is the Nawanshahr Model in the northwest state of Punjab, which has historically been at or near the top of the list of states with low sex ratios (see Table 2). The district of Nawanshahr has been forthright in exhibiting a tough stance against female foeticide which has come to be coined as 'The Nawanshahr Model'. The Deputy Commissioner of Nawanshahr at the time received widespread acknowledgement as a crusader for the cause of anti-female foeticide when the programme was launched in 2005 and for showing his district's improved sex ratio during his first few years in office (Table 3).

Table 3. Sex ratio\* in India and selected union territories and districts.

	1991	2001	2011
India	927	933	940
Chandigarh	790	777	818
Delhi	827	821	866
Nawanshahr	905	918	954

Source: *Census of India* 1991, 2001, 2011.

Note: \*Number of females to every 1000 males.

An anti-foeticide cell was established within the local government office which built upon the inter-sectoral apparatus of information systems. The Nawanshahr Model embraces new information technologies as a method for storing and monitoring social data while enforcing a sense of disciplinary power (Foucault 1977) through the authority of a newly modernising bureaucracy. The Nawanshahr Model's apparatus consists of an extensive body of actors: the Suwidha<sup>3</sup> Centre where citizen services such as passport services and registration of births, marriages and deaths take place; a local government outreach programme comprised of approximately 35 non-governmental organisations and 4000 members and, of course, the local government and judicial system.

Within the Nawanshahr Model data is shared across different actors and offices. Social data for the district and village levels, such as the registration of births, medical records and registers of medical practitioners, is accessed by the anti-female foeticide cell and subsequently the outreach programme, in terms of making interventions in the community. Medical records, including the tracking of pregnancies from the first trimester to the birth, are available to the outreach workers who use the information to do awareness-raising within local communities while also scrutinising for 'missing' pregnancies and potential foeticide cases. The anti-foeticide cell within the Suvidha Centre uses information technologies in accessing and cross-referencing large-scale databases. Surveys are carried out and updated which then produce further data of medical records, patient files, registered doctors and scan clinics, nurses and reported pregnancies and recorded births, all of which can be scanned, analysed and followed up by intervention when deemed necessary.

These medical audit reports are subsequently generated and necessary disciplinary action is taken against scanning centres who indulge in malpractice or do not comply with the rules. Thus, the campaign from both sides, i.e. recording of data on pregnant mother(s) (social audit) from the society's side and medical audit of scanning centres can certainly help to bring down the cases of female foeticide. (Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Nawanshahr District 2005, p. 4)

The apparatus of the Nawanshahr Model has set out to address the sex ratio through an internalisation or socialisation against female foeticide discourse as a social 'evil'

or ‘menace’. However, socialisation and discursive pressure are also accompanied by more coercive and punitive measures, which seek to penalise the population when policy discourse is breached through suspected non-normative behaviour. When such breaches are identified, follow-up interventions are made by the Upkar Society with the support of the district government’s office. These are not merely health- or medical-related practical interventions but are also tied to penal codes and disciplinary measures. However, the fact that very few cases of female foeticide have been brought to court highlights the ways in which naming and shaming is the tool most strategically utilised in projecting the public and ceremonial punishment of female foeticide in India (Purewal 2010). Thus, while the discipline-blockade forms the structure of the system of disciplinary power, it is the discipline-mechanism which is more fully developed and drawn upon within actions and policies stemming from the carceral space. The media and police in this respect have also been positioned tactically to act as a conduit for this public punishment through spectacle. For instance, actors associated with the Nawanshahr Model have organised demonstrations outside of notorious clinics which have been suspected or exposed for continuing to provide illegal sex selection services, including simulated mournings of the deaths of unborn female babies. Revelations after a police raid in 2006 on a clinic operating in Patran in Patiala district in Punjab found approximately 50 female foetuses in a 10 m deep well behind the Sahib Singh Hospital, which had been operating illegally. Undercover anti-female foeticide workers have also visited doctors and clinics posing as patients and have identified those suspected of breaking the law against sex selection, which has also appeared in the media as part of anti-female foeticide enforcement.

While the Nawanshahr Model’s disciplinary power relies on an instilment of fear in being caught committing female foeticide, it also uses incentives to attract positive attention to the cause of the ‘girl child’. In January 2006, a function was organised to honour parents of newborn female babies. Numerous other meetings and gatherings have been held in villages in which social workers interact with village heads, health workers and villagers in order to raise awareness about the campaign against female foeticide.

As most of the social workers are women, the dynamics of the outreach activities show a concerted attempt to penetrate the domestic sphere in accessing women as active agents through pregnancy, women’s health and childbirth.

...a list is generated giving details of mothers having pregnancy from third to fifth month. A lady operator in (the) D.C. office thereafter give(s) a telephone ring to these pregnant mothers and finds out if there is any problem to her or the foetus. It leaves an invisible impact on the minds of the pregnant lady as well as on her in-laws that somebody is monitoring and watching them... It discourages them not to go for sex determination test and then abortion subsequently... (Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Nawanshahr 2005, p. 3)

While attempting to perfect its systems of knowledge and surveillance through technology and information gathering, the Nawanshahr Model shows little

attempt to consider Croll's (2008) suggestions to emphasise the gendered nature of entitlements and expectations, which lie at the core of the practice of female foeticide. Instead, the disciplinary power of the Nawanshahr Model operates at the discursive level, failing to display a more direct challenge to the politics of gender at the household or community levels within which female foeticide circulates. The material base of society is entwined with inheritance and social reproduction, in which daughters and sons hold distinctive gendered meanings (Purewal 2010). Indeed, the normative, *normalising* strategies to address female foeticide in the Nawanshahr Model, as has been highlighted here, positions women's bodies within Foucault's bio-politics as 'woman-as-body' and 'woman-as-species'. This shows how systems of power and knowledge operate on a collective 'massifying' level to exert state functions of power as well as at the less visible private level which is also imbued with gendered hierarchies of power, which women continue to negotiate and manoeuvre within the domain of child-bearing, family-planning and social relations. That boy children continue to be coveted within the cultural and political economy of the private and public bio-politics of female foeticide makes the sex ratio and attempts to save the 'girl child' as emblematic as the symbol of the 'girl child' itself.

### Conclusion

This article has outlined the broad disciplinary approach to save the 'girl child' within anti-female foeticide campaigns. Largely framed and driven by international and state-led initiatives, anti-female foeticide campaigns in India represent a disciplinary power informed by knowledge, data, information systems, incentives and surveillance. Despite the anti-female foeticide legislation of 1994 and 2003, which established an attempt to *normalise* the uses of reproductive technologies by making sex selective abortion illegal, the continually declining ratios and available underground services have shown the limits of the disciplinary domain. The bio-politics of female foeticide show its implicit location within the broader context of cultural attitudes, economic factors and social practices at the level of the family which lead to girls being viewed as less desirable. Thus, while the state has attempted to carve out a discipline-blockade on female foeticide by criminalising sex-selective abortion, this has remained largely on a spectacle level. As a result, anti-female foeticide campaigns continue to operate largely within the realm of consciousness-raising in order to deter and give incentives for the public to behave morally and normatively in not aborting female foetuses. These parameters of normativity and morality, while driven by global discourses on saving the 'girl child', have been executed in a manner which emphasises a disciplinary rather than transformative or empowering approach, a distinction which becomes significant when the practice of female foeticide is been found to be continuing.

The North Indian examples highlighted here in Delhi, Chandigarh and Nawanshahr point to the types of activities which exist within the

discipline-mechanism of anti-female foeticide and its systems of knowledge and power. Financial incentives in the form of savings bonds, deterring threats of surveillance of social and medical records and a broader fear of the law constitute a disciplinary power of anti-female foeticide in India. The bio-politics of female foeticide reflects both popularly practised 'traditions' in society around marriage and kinship which deem the 'girl child' less significant to sons to the imperatives of household survival strategies and state and policy activity which endeavour to discipline these practices. The space between these two levels reflects the gap between the *normalising* attempts of the state and its subjects. In this sense, the carceral space of female foeticide could be said to be in direct conflict with the culture, kinship and political economy of son preference which produces daughter discrimination. Without engagement with gender and the social and economic dimensions of son preference and culture, it could be said that such campaigns and policies have merely paid lip service to the save the 'girl child' agenda by utilising the 'massifying' tools of disciplinary state power while continuing to represent patriarchal state authority in their methods of disciplinary power.

### Notes

1. The term foeticide, while referring to the act of abortion, does not have connotations with anti-abortion or 'pro-life' discourses more generally. Instead, female foeticide refers specifically to the conscious termination of pregnancies when the gender of the foetus is identified prenatally as female and the implications this has on society.
2. See UNICEF's (1993) report on *Girls and Women: A UNICEF Development Priority*.
3. *Suwidha* in Hindi means 'the best way or path'.

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