

SON PREFERENCE IN HARYANA : STRUCTURES AND STRATEGIES

By

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CERTIFICATE

I am satisfied that the thesis presented by Jyoti Sapru (nee Dar), entitled '**Son Preference in Haryana: Structures and Strategies**' submitted to IIT-Delhi is worthy of consideration for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and is a record of the original bonafide research work carried out by her under my guidance and supervision and that the results contained in it have not been submitted in part or full to any other university or Institute for the award of any degree/diploma.

I certify that she has pursued the prescribed course of research.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ravinder Kaur", with a horizontal line underneath.

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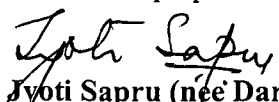
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Jyoti Sapru (née Dar)

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the phenomenon of son preference in Haryana and the structures and strategies that define its persistence in the face of burgeoning socioeconomic development. The phenomenon is studied through the impact it has on the lives and value of girls/women in the son preferring and daughter discriminating society of Haryana. The framework used in the thesis is of the prevailing socioeconomic conditions and cultural ideologies in Haryana, that push individual couples/families, at the household level, to strategize a 'value trade-off' between girls and boys in order to maximize the 'returns on their investments', in their children and their own future. The patriarchal structures of and material conditions surrounding marriage, work and reproduction, as the three pillars (re) constructing female agency, strategy and identity, substantiate the argument for and attempt to tackle the issue of son preferring practices and explore new linkages/realities in the lives of girls/women and their families.

This thesis addresses the questions: Why have sex ratios remained low over such a long period (a century, especially in Punjab and Haryana)? In other words, why do changing circumstances still support son preference and daughter discrimination in northern India and specifically in Haryana? Is culture only a broad 'convenient' ideological framework within which this phenomenon is explained, whereas the underlying determinants are to be found in the individual strategies of couples/families, which are a response to socio-economic and cultural factors? The thesis makes the argument that there are factors exacerbating investment in sons and foeticide of girls and the continuing low sex ratios do not point to a structural change at present, yet individual strategies, at the household level, attempt to chalk out the best scenario for existing girls, and may even contest existing structures. By exploring the individual strategies of couples/families, at the household level and within the nuclear family setting, the study finds new realities, strategies, power equations and links within the very culture and socioeconomic conditions that discriminate against girls.

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