



## FEMALE FOETICIDE AND INDIA’S BRIDE BAZAAR: THE CASE OF HARYANA

### I. Executive summary

Female foeticide/infanticide has been one of the features of the India’s patrilineal society. Child Sex Ratio (CSR) i.e. the number of girls per 1,000 boys in the age group 0-6 years has reached alarming proportion in India. According to 2011 Census, Haryana recorded CSR of 834 girls per 1000 boys.<sup>1</sup>

The sex ratio in Haryana has fallen so low that men are unable to find brides. As a result of female foeticide, there are about 879 women for every 1,000 men in Haryana, according to 2011 census.<sup>2</sup> As per media reports, around 13.5% of Haryana’s young men between the age group of 25 and 29 were unmarried in 2010, primarily due to lack of brides.<sup>3</sup> Unmarried men in Jind district (which had 871 females per 1,000 males) had formed “Jind Kunwara Union” (Jind Bachelors Union) and demanded “brides” in lieu of their votes ahead of the Parliamentary elections of 2014.<sup>4</sup>

The scarcity of women has given risen to trafficking with Haryana becoming epicenter of India’s bride bazaar. Thousands of women/girls from poor families in states such as Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Tripura, Odisha, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, etc. have been either brought or bought for marriage purposes in Haryana.<sup>5</sup> The women/girls who are sold off as brides against their will are known in Haryana as ‘paros’ or ‘molki’ (molki literally means ‘one who has a price’),

the terms used for women who have been purchased in other states and brought to the region.<sup>6</sup>

There are no accurate figures on the number of women/girls brought to Haryana for forced marriage. A 2013 report by United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) revealed rampant trafficking of girls to Haryana from other parts of India for forced marriages. In 2010, a field study conducted by Drishti Stree Adhyayan Prabodhan Kendra which covered over 10,000 households revealed that over 9,000 married women in Haryana were brought from other states.<sup>7</sup> The study which covered 92 villages of Mahendragarh, Sirsa, Karnal, Sonapat, and Mewat districts stated that there were over 50 girls in every village that have been bought, some of them as young as 13 years.<sup>8</sup> However, according to one estimate, there were

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over 45,000 Paros in Haryana who were brought from Jharkhand alone.<sup>9</sup>

Majority of the 'purchased brides' are exploited, denied basic rights, duplicated as maids, and eventually abandoned. They end up being used as sex slaves and then resold to other men. The trafficked/ kidnapped/ lured women/girls are negotiated at prices depending on their age, beauty and virginity and are exploited. These women/girls are forced to get married or live in the family against their desire without performing marital ceremony.<sup>10</sup> Many a times, these women have to accept polyandry, i.e. sharing of one woman among brothers.<sup>11</sup>

The State Government of Haryana is aware of the same but has failed to take effective measures apart from providing lip service.

Unless a host of measures including compulsory registration of all marriages and marriage with the purchased/ trafficked woman/girls is criminalised, trafficking for the purposes of marriage as a direct consequence of female foeticide will continue unabated.

## II. The scale of female foeticide in Haryana

Haryana leads India in low CSR among all the States and Union Territories in India. According to 2011 Census, Haryana recorded CSR of 834 girls per 1000 boys in the age group of 0-6 years.<sup>12</sup> The previous Census data indicates that the CSR of Haryana remained dismal. During 1971 census, the period prior to use of ultrasound machines for sex selections, the CSR was 898, which increased to 902 in 1981 but decreased to 819 in 2001. The CSR increased to 834 in 2011. But the CSR of Haryana is still far below the national average CSR of 919, a difference of 85 points.<sup>13</sup>

There are 21 districts, of which only one district namely Mewat recorded CSR above 900 in 2011. The district which recorded lowest CSR was Mahendragarh (778) followed by Jhajjar (782), Rewari (787), Sonipat (798), Ambala (810),

Kurukshetra (818), Karnal (824), Yamunagar (826), Rohtak (828), Kaithal (828), Gurgaon (830), Bhiwani (832), Panipat (837), Jind (838), Faridabad (843), Fatehabad (854), Hisar (855), Sirsa (862), Panchkula (863), Palwal (866), and Mewat (906).<sup>14</sup>

**Table 1: CSR data for districts of Haryana (in ascending order), 2001-2011<sup>15</sup>**

Sl No.	District	Child Sex Ratio (0-6 years)	
		2001	2011
1	Mahendragarh	818	778
2	Jhajjar	801	782
3	Rewari	811	787
4	Sonipat	788	798
5	Ambala	782	810
6	Kurukshetra	771	818
7	Karnal	809	824
8	Yamunanagar	806	826
9	Rohtak	799	828
10	Kaithal	791	828
11	Gurgaon	807	830
12	Bhiwani	841	832
13	Panipat	809	837
14	Jind	818	838
15	Faridabad	847	843
16	Fatehabad	828	854
17	Hisar	832	855
18	Sirsa	817	862
19	Panchkula	829	863
20	Palwal	854	866
21	Mewat	893	906

The skewed CSR in Haryana is manifestation of the decade long sex determination leading to female foeticide.

Because of Haryana's infamy in female foeticide/

infanticide, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chose to launch his government's ambitious programme "*Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*" (Save girl child, Educate girl child) from Panipat on 22 January 2015, exhorting people to save the girl child and educate her.<sup>16</sup> Out of 100 districts selected to be targeted under the *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* programme, highest number of districts are from Haryana (12), followed by Punjab (11) and Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan & Maharashtra (10 each), among others.<sup>17</sup>

The situation is very grim in half of the villages in the state, where the sex ratio is below 500. According to the figures available with the State Health Department, sex ratio at birth in 3,974 villages (54%) out of 7,363 in the State was recorded below 500 in 2013. There were about 2,458 villages that failed to report the birth of even a single girl child in 2013.<sup>18</sup> Worst, in Gajarpur in Mewat district, Kharal in Jind, Bopur in Kaithal and Suri village in Panchkula the ratio stood abysmally low between 76 and 143 females per 1000 male births during 2013.<sup>19</sup>

No girl child has been born in some villages of Haryana for years. This was confirmed by none other than Ms. Maneka Gandhi, Union Minister in the Women and Child Development on 22 January 2015 who stated that not a single girl child had been born in 70 villages of Haryana during the past several years.<sup>20</sup>

However, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) in its annual reports states that during 2005 to 2015, a total of only 105 cases of foeticide were recorded in Haryana. These included 8 cases in 2005, 9 cases in 2006, 4 cases in 2007, 5 cases in 2008, 3 cases in 2009, 2 cases in 2010, 5 cases in 2011, 28 cases in 2012, 21 cases in 2013, 6 cases in 2014 and 14 cases in 2015.<sup>21</sup>

### III. Haryana: India's bride's bazaar

The sex ratio in Haryana has fallen so low that men are unable to find brides. As a result of female foeticide, there are about 879 women for every 1,000 men in Haryana, according to 2011 census.

The national average is 943 women to 1,000 men.<sup>22</sup>

According to a media report, around 13.5% of Haryana's young men between the age group of 25 and 29 were unmarried in 2010, primarily due to lack of brides.<sup>23</sup> Unmarried men in Jind district (which had 871 females per 1,000 males) have even formed "Jind Kunwara Union" (Jind Bachelors Union) and demanded "brides" in lieu of their votes ahead of the Parliamentary elections of 2014.<sup>24</sup>

Since there are not enough local women to marry, there is no option but to buy them from distant areas. As a result, thousands of women/girls from poor families in states such as Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Tripura, Odisha, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, etc. have been either brought or bought for marriage purposes in Haryana.<sup>25</sup> Trafficking of women/girls has also become a flourishing business in Haryana. These women/girls who are sold off as brides against their will are known in Haryana as 'paros' or 'molki' (molki literally means 'one who has a price'), the terms used for women who have been purchased in other states and brought to the region.<sup>26</sup>

There are no accurate figures on the number of women/girls brought to Haryana for forced marriage. A 2013 report by United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) revealed rampant trafficking of girls to Haryana from other parts of India for forced marriages. In 2010, a field study conducted by Drishti Stree Adhyayan Prabodhan Kendra which covered over 10,000 households revealed that over 9,000 married women in Haryana were brought from other states.<sup>27</sup> The study which covered 92 villages of Mahendragarh, Sirsa, Karnal, Sonapat, and Mewat districts stated that there were over 50 girls in every village that have been bought, some of them as young as 13 years.<sup>28</sup> However, according to one estimate, there were over 45,000 Paros in Haryana who were brought from Jharkhand alone.<sup>29</sup>

Majority of the 'purchased brides' are exploited, denied basic rights, duplicated as maids, and eventually abandoned. They end up being used as sex

slaves and then resold to other men. The trafficked/kidnapped/lured women/girls are negotiated at prices depending on their age, beauty and virginity and are exploited. These women/girls are forced to get married or live in the family against their desire without performing marital ceremony.<sup>30</sup> Many a times, these women have to accept polyandry, i.e., sharing of one woman among brothers.<sup>31</sup>

According to the latest report (2015) of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Government of India, a total of 84,483 persons were kidnapped & abducted during 2015. Of these, majority of victims were females (60,655 persons), accounting for 71.8% of total kidnapped/abducted persons. Marriage was the main cause of kidnapping & abduction of females accounting for 52.6% (31,884 out of 60,655) of the total female kidnapped/abducted. The number of victims was higher in the age group of 18 years & above – below 30 years (30,923 victims). In this age group, majority of kidnapping & abduction were reported for the purpose of marriage accounting for 52.9% (16,348 out of 30,923 victims) of total victims belonging to this age group during 2015.<sup>32</sup> The NCRB data shows that Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Assam accounted for almost 50% of all kidnappings for marriage. Assam, which clocked 4,141 such cases, had the highest rate of such offences at 26.4 per one lakh of population.<sup>33</sup>

In Assam, the police had registered 444 cases of trafficking of women/girls from 2005 to 2016 (up to September). These included 25 cases in 2005; 29 in 2006; 21 in 2007; 27 in 2008; 37 in 2009; 25 in 2010; 21 in 2011; 30 in 2012; 18 in 2013; 82 in 2014; 73 in 2015; and 56 in 2016 (up to September)<sup>34</sup>. Similarly, Assam Police had recorded 35,285 cases of kidnapping of women/girls from 2005 to 2016 (up to September). These included 1456 cases in 2005; 1544 in 2006; 1471 in 2007; 1789 in 2008; 2092 in 2009; 2767 in 2010; 3192 in 2011; 3360 in 2012; 4222 in 2013; 4499 in 2014; 5068 in 2015; and 3825 in 2016 (up to September).<sup>35</sup> It can be stated with certitude that majority of these women/girls have been trafficked/

kidnapped to northern states including Haryana for the purpose of forced marriage.

#### IV. Emblematic cases of trafficking for marriage

Over the years, several girls and women were rescued by police and NGOs from the various parts of Haryana who were brought from Assam, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and other parts of the country. The condition of these procured brides remains deplorable. Thousands of these women are raped, abused, used as domestic slaves and often eventually abandoned.<sup>36</sup>

Some of the cases documented by Asian Centre for Human Rights are highlighted below:

##### Case 1:

In September 2008, an 18-year-old girl from Dantewada in Chhattisgarh was rescued by police in Hisar district. The victim's lover identified as Sujan Kumar of Odisha had taken away the girl from her village on pretext of marriage and sold her to one Rampal Singh at Matrora village in Hisar district for Rs.63,000.<sup>37</sup>

##### Case 2:

In April 2010, two girls from poverty stricken families from Tripura were sold to a marriage bureau in Haryana. The girls were sold by traffickers identified as Prant Nath and his wife Bela Rani Nath assuring the victims' families that they would be given jobs in Haryana. In August 2010, the State Government of Tripura decided to send a police team to Haryana for investigation into the case.<sup>38</sup>

##### Case 3:

In October 2011, a 14-year-old girl from Assam was rescued by police and Shakti Vahini at Shahpur village in Jind district. The girl was lured by a trafficker from Assam who promised to marry her. He brought her to Delhi and sold her off to one Rakesh for Rs 25,000. Thereafter, she was taken to Shahpur village where Rakesh married her forcibly and subjected her to the worst form of slavery.

The girl was five months pregnant when she was rescued.<sup>39</sup>

#### **Case 4:**

In November 2011, a 16-year-old girl from Betul district of Madhya Pradesh was rescued by authorities from the Jind railway station in Jind district. She was found in a traumatised condition by the Government Railway Police. Her uncle, Ramesh, had sold her to Ved Prakash, a truck driver, against a payment of Rs 90,000. However, she fled from his house on 22 October 2011. The victim informed the police that she was forcefully married against her wishes.<sup>40</sup>

#### **Case 5:**

On 26 January 2013, 15-year-old Rina, studying in Class 9<sup>th</sup> in Assam was kidnapped and sold by middlemen in Haryana. The victim was sold to a man old enough to be her father for Rs 70,000. The victim managed to escape and was rescued by the police.<sup>41</sup>

#### **Case 6:**

On 25 December 2013, a 32 year woman, native of Morigaon district of Assam was rescued by a joint team of Assam Police and Haryana Police from the clutches of her exploiter in a village in Haryana. The woman was trafficked for the purpose of forced marriage and was sold for Rs.67000.<sup>42</sup>

#### **Case 7:**

On 26 January 2014, a 22-year-old girl from Udalguri district of Assam who was sold to a man in Haryana escaped from her captivity and rescued. The victim, who belongs to a poor family, was trafficked for the purpose of forced marriage by her aunt Meena Kumari, who sold her to one Suresh for Rs 80,000. She was also gang raped. The victim used to work as an assistant in a garments shop in Guwahati, Assam and was lured by Meena Kumari to visit Sirsa in Haryana on the pretext of visiting her daughter on 7 May 2013. On reaching Delhi, she was taken to Jind district and forced to stay in

a house for four days. Her aunt told her that she would come back after which they would go to her daughter's place together. But Meena did not return and she was sold to Suresh of Kaithal district. She was forced to do all kinds of household work like washing and cleaning during day time and sexually abused by Suresh and another person, Mahavir.<sup>43</sup>

#### **Case 8:**

In February 2014, a 30-year-old woman who was trafficked from Assam for forced marriage and sold to a mentally-challenged man was rescued in Jhajjar district. The man's family allegedly sold their cattle to buy the woman as they could not find a bride for him. The victim was allegedly offered tea and snacks laced with sedatives by her acquaintance Babai (50) and brought to Delhi. Babai came in contact with the victim while looking for employment as domestic help in her locality in Assam. The victim was taken to a village in Panipat from Delhi and allegedly sold to one Sombir in Jhajjar. The victim managed to contact her family over telephone on 24 February, following which the police were alerted.<sup>44</sup>

#### **Case 9:**

In June 2015, a teenage girl from Dhubri district of Assam was rescued by the police in Fatehabad district. The girl was sold to a man in Fatehabad five months ago after she left home for a job promised to her by the trafficker identified as Akram. Akram had sold the girl to 35-year-old Bhagwan Das, a resident of Jhandwala village, to be his wife for Rs 80, 000. When the police reached Das's residence, he claimed to have married the victim and addressed her as his wife. However, the girl denied the marriage. The police claimed that they were planning to sell off the girl again.<sup>45</sup>

#### **Case 10:**

On 2 August 2015, a teenage girl hailing from Guwahati, Assam was rescued by authorities in Rewari district, Haryana. The victim was rescued a house near Rewari railway station. The victim stated that in December 2014 she had met a girl named Sofia at the local market and became friends with

her. In January 2015, Sofia took her to Gurgaon and sold her for Rs 80,000. Subsequently, she was married forcefully to a person in Rewari.<sup>46</sup>

#### **Case 11:**

In August 2015, two women and two minor girls were rescued by the police from Rewari, Jhajjar, Mahendragarh and Rohtak districts of Haryana. According to the police, the victims were brought by traffickers to Delhi from West Bengal and sold men looking for brides in Haryana for Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 lakh. The victims were from extremely poor families and made to work as labourers on the farmlands of the persons where they were sold.<sup>47</sup>

#### **Case 12:**

In August 2015, a 17-year-old girl from Raniganj in West Bengal escaped from captivity in Gurgaon, Haryana. According to the victim, she was kidnapped along with another girl in June 2015 and brought to Delhi in a drugged state. In July 2015, the agents married her off to a man from Rewari district who work as a driver in Gurgaon for Rs. 80,000. However, marriage became hell for her as her husband abused her for her dark skin and kept her locked in the house. She also stated that she was sold off four times and subjected to forced marriage.<sup>48</sup>

#### **Case 13:**

In December 2015, a minor girl Anita Singha (name changed) from Naxalbari Block of Darjeeling district of West Bengal was rescued from being married to person of Gurgaon, Haryana by a joint team of police and NGO Shakti Vahini. The groom identified as Kamal Kumar (25) came from Gurgaon with two other men, namely Satpal Singh (48) and Satbir Singh (50). The girl belonged to a very poor family.<sup>49</sup>

#### **Case 14:**

In January 2016, a girl from Morigaon district of Assam identified as Junumoni Devi died under mysterious circumstances in Haryana. She was sold

to a groom in Haryana for Rs. one lakh a few years ago.<sup>50</sup>

#### **Case 15:**

In February 2016, a 15-year-old girl, Sunita (named changed) was rescued by authorities from a village in Haryana. The victim, a native of Jharkhand was sold by an agent for Rs. 1 lakh to a 30 year old man who forcefully married her. She was subjected to torture by her husband on her first day in the state. In her statement, the victim stated that "Every night for nine months, her husband and father-in-law returned home inebriated, beat her with belts and shoes and sexually abused her. I woke up each morning with bruises on my body. I begged them to let me go back to my mother, but they just enjoyed my misery". Sunita belong to a poor family and never went to school. She lost her father early and her mother worked as a domestic help in the Jharkhand city to eke out a living.<sup>51</sup>

#### **Case 16:**

On 9 July 2016, a 35-year-old woman from Assam, who was trafficked for a forced marriage, was rescued from a village in Bhiwani district. The victim, a native of South Salmara in lower Assam, was trafficked around one-and-a-half years ago by three persons on the pretext of giving her a job in Delhi and but later sold her as a bride to one Jaipal for Rs. 30,000. At the time of rescue, she was found to be six months pregnant.<sup>52</sup>

#### **Case 17:**

In August 2016, a 14-year-old girl trafficked from Assam was rescued by police an NGO Shakti Vahini from a village in Hisar district. The girl was sold for around Rs. 1 lakh to a 50-year-old man by traffickers. The girl was sexually exploited and tortured. She was kidnapped from her native place in June 2016 by one Safiqul and sold off to Dharmender in Hisar. She was kept like a sex slave and was forced to do all the household chores from mending buffaloes to cleaning and cooking during the day time and sexual exploitation at night.

The girl was also sexually abused by the trafficker Safiqul before she was sold.<sup>53</sup> According to the victim, Dharmendra used to beat her, scratch her hand with blade and pour hot water on her besides sexually exploiting her.<sup>54</sup>

### Case 18:

On 24 August 2016, three trafficked girls were rescued by police in Palwal. The girls were kidnapped by traffickers from West Bengal and brought to Haryana to be forcibly married off. One of the girls, aged 15 years, was sold in Palwal with the intention of making her a bride to 10 men.<sup>55</sup>

### Case 19:

On 25 September 2016, a teenaged girl from West Bengal escaped from her captivity in Bhiwani district. The victim stated that she accompanied a woman known to her from West Bengal to Bhiwani two days ago on the promise of a job. However, she overheard her talking of a deal with another woman after which she slipped out of her custody. On the way, she asked a motorcyclist for lift, but the biker too started misbehaving with her and she jumped off the running bike and suffered injuries. She finally reached a local police station. The accused was trying to sell her for Rs 20,000 to a man from a nearby village. She was also sold to a man in Hansi sometime back but she escaped.<sup>56</sup>

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