India’s lost female generation

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11 January, 2006
India’s lost female generation

A survey from the University of Toronto and India’s Institute of Medical Education suggests that at least ten million females have been aborted in India over the past twenty years. Researchers looked at statistics on more than one million families. The survey covered the period for which ultrasound technology has been available. This technique shows the sex of a baby in the early stages of its life, when it is a fetus. Researchers say middle class families abort female fetuses so that they have male heirs. Researcher Prabhat Jha says: "We...estimate that...selective abortion accounts for 500,000 missing girls yearly."

Selective abortion has been illegal in India since 1994. However, statistics reveal that couples continue to base abortion decisions after having the ultrasound. Figures show that educated mothers abort twice as many female fetuses as illiterate mothers. The number of girls in India has been falling for the past 20 years. For every 1,000 boys up to the age of six the number of girls dropped from 962 in 1981 to 927 in 2001. Many couples believe a family is unbalanced without a son. They think a male is important to continue the family name and take care of his parents in their old age.
India’s lost female generation – 11 January, 2006

WARM-UPS

1. BOYS & GIRLS: Which are better? Talk about this with your partner. Would your prefer to have all boys or all girls? Are brothers better than sisters? Are pink baby clothes cuter than blue? Are girls more expensive? Do parents have to worry more about boys?

2. GENERATIONS: In pairs / groups, talk about the following generations. Try to guess about the ones you are unsure of (look them up on the Web for homework).
   - India’s ultrasound generation
   - Generation X
   - The chemical generation
   - Generation Y
   - Baby boomers
   - The digital generation
   - The lost generation
   - The “everything now” generation

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

   Surveys / medical education / abortion / the past / ultrasound / male heirs / India educated mothers / illiteracy / pregnancy / boys / girls / couples / bloodline

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. OPINIONS: Do you agree with the following opinions on abortion?
   a. Abortion is murder.
   b. A mother has the right to choose whether or not to end her pregnancy.
   c. The father should be allowed to stop the mother from having an abortion.
   d. A fetus is a human being and has the right to life.
   e. Abortion is OK in very special cases.
   f. All abortions should only take place after court decisions.
   g. Abortion is for weak people who want an easy life.
   h. If a baby is unwanted, it’ll have a sad life and add to society’s problems.

5. ABORTION: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word “abortion”. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

6. QUICK DEBATE: Students A think abortion is the same as murder. Students B think abortion is not murder. Change partners often.

7. ~ICIDE: Talk with your partner(s) about the following words:
   - patricide / matricide
   - infanticide / parenticide
   - suicide / pseudocide
   - spermicide
   - pesticide / insecticide
   - homicide / genocide
   - linguicide / cybercide
   - verbicide

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BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article’s headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

a. Millions of Indian women have said they have no aim in life.  T / F
b. A survey looked at figures covering a million Indian families.  T / F
c. Ultrasound is a technology used in recording songs to put on the Web.  T / F
d. A researcher says there are 500,000 missing in India every year.  T / F
e. It is legal in India to have an abortion based on the sex of the baby.  T / F
f. Educated mothers abort more baby girls than illiterate mothers.  T / F
g. The number of girls born in India is going down year by year.  T / F
h. Indian couples prefer boys so that they continue the family bloodline.  T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

a. at least  timeframe
b. statistics  essential
c. period  against the law
d. sex  uneducated
e. estimate  figures
f. illegal  gender
g. reveal  dropping
h. illiterate  show
i. falling  a minimum of
j. important  guess

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

a. India’s Institute of  having the ultrasound
b. Researchers looked at statistics  so that they have male heirs
c. in the early stages of its life,  been falling for the past 20 years
d. families abort female fetuses  in India since 1994
e. selective abortion accounts for  Medical Education
f. Selective abortion has been illegal  when it is a fetus
g. base abortion decisions after  without a son
h. educated mothers abort twice  500,000 missing girls yearly
i. The number of girls in India has  on more than one million families
j. a family is unbalanced  as many female fetuses
India’s lost female generation

WHILE READING / LISTENING

WHICH WORD? Delete the incorrect or least likely word from the pairs in bold.

India’s lost female generation

A survey / surveyor from the University of Toronto and India’s Institute of Medical Education suggests that at / in least ten million females have been aborted in India over / under the past twenty years. Researchers looked at static / statistics on more than one million families. The survey covered the period for which ultrasound technology has been available. This technique shadows / shows the sex of a baby in the early stages of its life, when it is a fetus. Researchers say middle lesson / class families abort female fetuses so that they have male heirs / hairs. Researcher Prabhat Jha says: "We...estimate that...selective abortion accounts for 500,000 missing girls yearly."

Selective abortion has been legal / illegal in India since 1994. However, statistics reveal that couples / trios continue to base abortion decisions before / after having the ultrasound. Figures show that educated mothers abort twice as many female fetuses as illiterate fathers / mothers. The number of girls in India has been falling / rising for the past 20 years. For every 1,000 boys up to the age of six the number of girls dropped / drooped from 962 in 1981 to 927 in 2001. Many couples believe a family is balanced / unbalanced without a son. They think a male is important to continue the family name and give / take care of his parents in their old age.
India’s lost female generation

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

India’s lost female generation

A ________ from the University of Toronto and India’s Institute of Medical Education suggests that at least ten million females have been ________ in India over the past twenty years. Researchers looked at ________ on more than one million families. The survey covered the period for which ultrasound technology has been ________. This technique shows the sex of a baby in the early stages of its life, when it is a fetus. Researchers say ________ class families abort female fetuses so that they have male heirs. Researcher Prabhat Jha says: "We...estimate that...________ abortion accounts for 500,000 missing girls yearly."

Selective abortion has been ________ in India since 1994. However, statistics reveal that couples continue to base abortion ________ after having the ultrasound. Figures show that educated mothers abort twice as many female fetuses as ________ mothers. The number of girls in India has been falling for the past 20 years. For every 1,000 boys up to the age of six the number of girls ________ from 962 in 1981 to 927 in 2001. Many ________ believe a family is unbalanced without a son. They think a male is important to continue the family ________ and take care of his parents in their old age.
AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'boy' and 'girl'.
   - Share your findings with your partners.
   - Make questions using the words you found.
   - Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.
   - Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
   - Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. WHICH WORD? In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "ABORTION" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about abortion.
   - Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
   - Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
   - Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:
   - survey
   - twenty years
   - period
   - technique
   - heirs
   - yearly
   - illegal
   - base
   - twice
   - falling
   - dropped
   - unbalanced

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DISCUSSION

STUDENT A’s QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

a. What were your initial thoughts on this headline?
b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
c. Do you think there are any cases in which abortion is OK?
d. How is the law for abortion in your country?
e. How does your religion look at abortion?
f. Do you think the morning after pill is the same as abortion?
g. Some people think doctors who do abortions are murderers. What do you think?
h. Is it important to have a male in the family to continue the bloodline?
i. Do you think fewer females will cause social problems in India?
j. What would you want to tell the unborn child?

STUDENT B’s QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

a. Did you like reading this article?
b. What do you think about what you read?
c. Do you understand the pro-life argument?
d. Do you sympathize with the “right to choose” argument?
e. If a woman wants an abortion, what rights does the father have?
f. Is having an abortion a selfish choice?
g. Do you think abortions should be encouraged for girls of 12, 13 or 14 years old?
h. When is the fertilized egg a human being?
i. What do you think of back-street abortionists?
j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
b. Was there a question you didn’t like?
c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
d. What did you like talking about?
e. Which was the most difficult question?
SPEAKING

ROLE PLAY: Should all abortion be made illegal?
Team up with classmates who have the same role to develop your roles and discuss ideas and “strategies”. Introduce yourself to the other role players.

Role A – Pro-abortionist
You believe abortion is a necessary part of society. There are many situations in which abortion will result in a better situation for everyone. For example, in cases of rape, where a mother does not have the capacity to look after the baby or where the mother is a young girl.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY ABORTION IS ACCEPTABLE.

Role B – Anti-abortionist
You believe abortion is the same as murder. Human life starts at the moment of conception. You believe no one has the right to end that life. You think mothers should be more responsible and caring. You also think governments should do more to help mothers with problems.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY ABORTION IS UNACCEPTABLE.

Role C – Citizen
You are not sure what to think. You can see all sides of the argument and they all sound good. You want to know the answers to lots of questions.

THINK OF MANY QUESTIONS TO ASK THE “EXPERTS”.

Role D – An unborn child
You’re not really sure about the issues on the outside, in the real world. Listen to what is being said and agree or disagree. You can get angry.

THINK OF REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD SEE THE WORLD.

Change roles and repeat the role play. Comment in groups about the differences between the two role plays.
In pairs / groups, discuss whether you really believe in what you said while you were in your roles.

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HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google’s search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on this news. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. LETTER: You are an unborn child. Write a letter to the world. Tell your thoughts hopes and concerns regarding the world outside. Tell the world what you think of abortion. Read your letters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

4. BOYS ‘N’ GIRLS: Make a poster about the pros and cons of having a boy or a girl. Show your poster to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all think of similar ideas?
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ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F        b. T        c. F        d. T        e. F        f. T        g. T        h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. at least        a minimum of
b. statistics        figures
c. period        timeframe
d. sex        gender
e. estimate        guess
f. illegal        against the law
g. reveal        show
h. illiterate        uneducated
i. falling        dropping
j. important        essential

PHRASE MATCH:

a. India’s Institute of        Medical Education
b. Researchers looked at statistics        on more than one million families
c. in the early stages of its life,        when it is a fetus
d. families abort female fetuses        so that they have male heirs
e. selective abortion accounts for        500,000 missing girls yearly
f. Selective abortion has been illegal        in India since 1994
g. base abortion decisions after        having the ultrasound
h. educated mothers abort twice        as many female fetuses
i. The number of girls in India has        been falling for the past 20 years
j. a family is unbalanced        without a son

WHICH WORD?

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A survey / surveyor from the University of Toronto and India’s Institute of Medical Education suggests that at / in least ten million females have been aborted in India over / under the past twenty years. Researchers looked at static / statistics on more than one million families. The survey covered the period for which ultrasound technology has been available. This technique shadows / shows the sex of a baby in the early stages of its life, when it is a fetus. Researchers say middle lesson / class families abort female fetuses so that they have male heirs / hairs. Researcher Prabhat Jha says: “We...estimate that...selective abortion accounts for 500,000 missing girls yearly.”

Selective abortion has been legal / illegal in India since 1994. However, statistics reveal that couples / trios continue to base abortion decisions before / after having the ultrasound. Figures show that educated mothers abort twice as many female fetuses as illiterate fathers / mothers. The number of girls in India has been falling / rising for the past 20 years. For every 1,000 boys up to the age of six the number of girls dropped / dropped from 962 in 1981 to 927 in 2001. Many couples believe a family is balanced / unbalanced without a son. They think a male is important to continue the family name and give / take care of his parents in their old age.

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