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Q6(c)

Underline the socio-cultural factors) responsible for India's skewed sex-ratio

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Perspectives on the study of Indian society

Perspectives on the study of Indian society: Indology (G.S. Ghurye); Structural functionalism (M.N. Srinivas); Marxist sociology (A.R. Desai).

Core demand of the question

- Underline the socio-cultural factors responsible for India's skewed sex-ratio
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Patriline and patrilocal marriage make sons the continuing line.

Daughters are culturally other houses, which dowry prices.

Honour and ritual son-need reinforce elimination.

Better-off groups with clinics often show sharp skew.

Matriline and stronger land rights for women correlate with less bias.

Introduction

A skewed sex ratio is not a mysterious shortage of girls. It is the social preference for sons written into kinship, honour, and the labour of care. Technology made the preference countable; it did not invent it.

Body

Kinship and property

- Patriline and patrilocal marriage, as in Karve's northern zone, make the son the line and the daughter a guest.
- Dube's **Seed and Earth** idiom treats the girl as a field that will belong to another house, so her birth is a loss.
- **Dowry** inflates that loss as a future payment.

Honour and religion-as-practice

- Gotra and jati continuity, not only poverty, drive elimination where ultrasounds arrived first among the better-off.
- Some communities show less skew where women's land rights or different descent, including matriline pockets, weaken the seed line.

Other socio-cultural loads

- Ritual need for sons, widow stigma, and violence against women who bear daughters.

- The new middle class can combine consumption with sex selection, so skew is not only a village custom.

Note

- Law bans detection of sex. Culture still ranks the child.

Flow diagram

Patrilineal Seed and Earth -> Son preference

Dowry honour -> Son preference

Son preference -> Skewed sex ratio

Selection technology -> Skewed sex ratio

Conclusion

Socio-cultural factors behind India's skewed sex ratio are patrilineal, dowry, honour, and the devaluation of daughters as outsiders to the line. Prosperity and clinics have often sharpened, not erased, that culture.

Facts & figures

Seed and Earth

Dube's metaphor that naturalises son preference in much of Hindu North India.

Karve north

Village-exogamous patrilineal that structurally exports daughters.

Dowry

A cultural tax on the girl child that turns sex ratio into household arithmetic.

PNDT law

Legal ban on sex detection that culture still evades.

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