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Abortion occurs, when death of a human life is deliberately caused at any stage of its existence in the womb, viz. zygote, fetus and embryo. It is distinguishable from infanticide. Abortion is the deliberate destruction of human life, while it is in the womb.

TYPES OF ABORTION

There are many ways of aborting an unwanted foetus. The method chosen depends mainly on the duration of pregnancy to be interrupted as in the first or second trimester (3 months). **Recently, Lok Sabha passed a bill** which seeks to extend the upper limit for permitting abortions from the present 20 weeks to 24 weeks (6 months) for "special categories of women" which include rape survivors, victims of incest, differently-abled and minors. Aims to expand the access of women to safe and legal abortion services on therapeutic, eugenics, humanitarian or social grounds.

There are many types of abortion:

-Early Abortion: Early abortion is the one that occurs before the 12th week whereas late abortion is the category that occurs between the 12th and 20th week.

-Spontaneous abortion: Spontaneous abortion or miscarriage occurs without any intervention.

-Threatened abortion: Threatened abortion is the process of abortion which starts and can still be reversed to recovery and continuation of gestation.

-Inevitable abortion: Inevitable abortion is the one where the changes have progressed to such a state from where further continuation of pregnancy is not possible.

-Complete abortion: Complete abortion occurs when the entire products of conception are expelled from out of the uterus.

-Incomplete abortion: is where the evacuation of the uterine contents is only partial.

-Induced abortion: Induced abortion is the one, which is performed deliberately for elective reasons.

-Sex-selective abortion and female infanticide: Sonography and amniocentesis allow parents to determine sex before birth which has led to sex-selective abortion, and the targeted termination of female fetuses. Sex-selective abortion might be partially responsible for the noticeable disparities between the birth rates of male and female children in some states.

Reasons of Abortion

(A). Save the life of the woman carrying a pre-natal organism : There may be a threat to the life of the woman carrying a prenatal organism posed by the later. In certain extreme cases, if the pre-natal organism is allowed to develop normally and come to term, the woman carrying the pre-natal organism herself will die. This is sometimes treated as a legitimate reason to seek an abortion. But now-a-days the continuance of pregnancy involving risk to the life of the pregnant women is very rare, because advances in modern medicine has made it almost never necessary to perform an abortion to save the life of the woman carrying the pre-natal organism. Some women however may be seriously ill and incapacitated throughout their pregnancy.

(B). Avoid or alleviate economic hardship: Sometimes the birth of a child or another child brings an unbearable financial burden on the woman and her family. As for example, (i) some women cannot continue in their jobs and may face enormous difficulties in fulfilling their responsibilities at home, (ii) women of limited means are usually unable to take adequate care of the children in addition to the existing ones. This tragic condition according some moralists justifies their access to abortion as a means to escape the oppressive conditions of poverty they are in.

(C). Avoid social stigma of illegitimacy: When the woman carrying a pre-natal organism is unmarried there is a chance of a social stigma of illegitimacy. Usually an unwanted child suffers from physical or spiritual deprivation, and this may grow up to be a problem for him or for society. This is treated by some moralists as legitimate reason to seek an abortion.

(D). Preserve the happiness of the couple: Certainly common, and perhaps most common of all, are those instances in which having a child will interfere with the happiness of the women, the joint happiness of the parents, or even the joint happiness of a family unit that already includes children. A couple may be content and happy together and feel their relationship would be damaged by the intrusion

of a child. This is treated by some moralists as legitimate reason to seek an abortion.

(E). Avoid future attitude tinged with bitterness toward the child

taking birth as a result of rape or incest: A woman, who becomes pregnant as a result of rape or incest, may find the psychological pain of carrying a child to term unbearable. Because she may be convinced that her attitude to the child after birth will always be tinged with bitterness. Usually an unwanted child suffers from physical or spiritual deprivation, and this may grow up to be a problem for him or for society. This is treated by some moralists as legitimate reason to seek an abortion.

(F). Fear of transmitting fatal disease or deformity from the severely ill or deformed parents :

Parents having possible or actual deformity; suffering from chronic disease like AIDS may be unwilling to allow a child to enter the world under such circumstances. Again some women are incapacitated throughout pregnancy. This may thus be treated for some moralists as legitimate reason to seek an abortion.

(G). Sex selection for the parents :

Many people seek abortion applying the method of 'sex selection', that means they want to abort a pre-natal organism, if it is of the wrong sex or not of a preferred sex for them. In modern times it is not difficult at all to know the gender of the prenatal organism by ultrasonography or some other methods. Once the gender of the prenatal organism is known, the parent can decide whether the prenatal organism be allowed to born or it should be aborted depending on their choice of sex of the prenatal organism.

(H). At the fear of anticipated beatings or incestuous attacks of the

child from brutal and violent parent : When one of the parents knows that the other one is brutal and violent, either because of mental illness or for inborn ill nature, he/she will usually be unwilling to subject the child to the anticipated beatings or incestuous attacks, and having no other realistic way to remove the child from such a relationship he/she may seek abortion.

(I). To prevent future deformity of the child resulting from chromosomal anomalies : Women who learn that the child they are carrying has serious chromosomal anomalies will often consider it best to prevent it from being born with a condition that is bound to cause terrible suffering to it.

(J). To achieve control over population growth : Abortion is usually considered as a means to meet the social obligation to control population growth.

(K). Meet the need of the professional career of the woman carrying a pre-natal organism : Sometimes pregnancy interferes with the professional career of the woman carrying a pre-natal organism. Many employers and schools do not tolerate pregnancy in their employees or students, and many women cannot put their jobs, careers or studies on hold, for various reasons whatsoever. A woman may believe that bearing a child at this time is incompatible with her present life-plans, since continuing a pregnancy is likely to have profound repercussions throughout her entire life.

(L). Justification for abortion from right to body perspective : Besides, these reasons, women aligning themselves with feminist ideology, advance another reason as a justification for abortion. They claim that a woman has a right to do with her body whatever she wishes regardless of the reasons she chooses for an abortion. The supporters of the 'right to body argument' do not allow any space to the pre-natal organism beyond the body of the woman carrying that prenatal organism. Therefore, for them, the woman carrying a pre-natal organism enjoys natural right on the pre-natal organism as a part of her body and she can do any thing with that part of her body.

(M). Justification by reason is not necessary for abortion: As such, for some feminists, no reason at all is necessary for abortion, since it is a matter of the private conscience of the woman carrying a pre-natal organism—which implies that it is “not a moral question that requires being justified by reasons.

ISSUES OF ABORTION

-Legal Issue: India was one of the first countries which legalized induced abortion through the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1971. According to this act, a woman can legally have an abortion if its pregnancy carries the risk of grave physical injury or endangers her mental health, if it is a result of contraceptive failure in a married woman, if it is the consequence of rape, or if it is likely to result in the birth of a child with physical or mental abnormalities. In such circumstances, abortion is permitted up to 24 weeks (six months) of pregnancies without any need for spouse consent.

-Physical and Medical Issue: A woman is made physically and psychologically for motherhood. This is the basic fact of her life. If this process of becoming a mother is suddenly stopped, the shock will have its effect. This effect may be physical or mental, immediate or long term.

-Emotional Issue: There is emotional and physical unrest experienced during the first few weeks of pregnancy. It is at this time that the expectant mother may be subjected to maximum pressure to agree to an abortion. The common psychological problems associated with abortion are depression, neurosis, guilt etc.

Each individual is different. For some, abortion provides great relief with little or no disturbance. For the others, the experience can be upsetting. The key factor seems to be whether the woman wants an abortion or whether she is hesitant. Being refused an abortion and forced to bear an unwanted child can lead to psychiatric symptoms. But the woman who has health problems and has to have an abortion or who is persuaded to have an abortion against her better judgement is also more likely to show negative psychological reactions following an abortion.

-Social Issues: Legalised abortion, saves lives by reducing the number of illegal attempts. Antiabortionists emphasize their fears that without any restriction, except the individual women and her conscience, an 'Abortion Mentality' develops so that abortion becomes too common

and are performed too easily or for reasons that are not serious: For example teenage pregnancy tend to become a common occurrence among several college students in urban areas with free access to abortion facilities.

-Moral Issues: Much of the controversy about abortion has centered around the moral issues. In ordinary justice, the child has as much claim as the mother to life and should have even more claim to legal protection of its right, since it is incapable of defending itself.

-Rights of the Unborn Child: The UN declaration on the Rights of the child maintains that “The Child by reason of its physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care including appropriate legal protection before as well as after the birth.”

The Anti abortionists claim that science has proven beyond any reasonable doubt that human life begins at fertilization. The foetus from the beginning has its own life, is a totally new human being, a new person, with a genetic code quite distinct from the genetic code of its parents. That new life is completely there at fertilization, lacking only development and growth. Abortion always takes away the innocent’s already existing life.

CONCLUSION

Hence, Abortion is the process of willfully removing the foetus from the womb of the mother by one or another method. Although several countries including India have legalized abortion particularly during the first trimester, everyone knows that it is an act of willfully putting an end to the life of a helpless child in the womb of its mother. For the world community it is an ethical issue. Very often people agree to participate in abortion without knowing the what, why, and how of abortion and its life long impact on an individual, family and the society. Here we expected to provide the much needed information on abortion from ethical point of view.