

Editor's Message



UNWANTED: FROM WOMB TO TOMB

Tales of aborting female foetuses are nothing new. It has become so common that very few bat an eyelid on such news and most take it for granted as an acceptable way of life. The preference for baby boys and the unacceptability of girl child in the family have reached such stupendous level that young women are forced to undergo abortion at any stage of pregnancy once it is found that she is carrying a baby girl. Women become a cause of curse and butt of joke and derisive comments in many families, especially in the cow belt in north India, that many innocent lives are snuffed out at a young age. There are cases in which women have been forced to abort pregnancy many times consecutively as each time sonography test has shown the child in the womb as girl. There are also young mothers who have ended their lives unable to bear the torture from in-laws for bearing a girl child.

The reasons for this preference for boys and antagonism towards girls are ludicrous. The antipathy to a girl stems from the belief that she is a burden on the family in many ways. The dowry needed for a girl's marriage has become so prohibitive that parents from even well-to-do families dread to think of having daughters. Though giving and taking dowry are prohibited, no one gives a damn about the law. Many marriages have rocked hitting the dowry wall. Many innocent lives have ended for want of dowry. Thus parents look forward to the birth of boys to escape the burden of dowry and when the contrary happens they feel like the heavens have fallen on them. The preference for boys is also based on the belief that only male progeny can do the last rites of their parents. Though there is no religious ban on daughters doing the same ceremonies, many find it difficult to break out of the centuries-old practice of not permitting the daughters to do the same.

The overall impact of these preposterous beliefs and practices is appalling. According to reports, some 39 million women are missing and around 10 million girls were killed in the past 20 years. Female babies are thrown in gutters and forests and one in every 25 unborn girls is aborted. This has resulted in a very abnormal child sex ratio of 914 girls for 1000 boys. Selective abortion and discrimination have made the girl child an endangered species. By 2050, according to one study, there will be around two crores of men in India who will not have brides if the child sex ratio remained the same in the coming years. It is high time that we choose the slogan 'let the girl child live'.

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