

Pro Life-Pro Choice Debate: Looking through the Prism of Abortion Right in the Indian Context

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Abstract : Background: The abortion debate has polarized women, pitting them against each other in the binary of pro-choice and pro-life. While the followers of pro-choice views the right to an abortion as inherent to a women's right to sovereignty, the latter believes that it is unethical to kill a unborn baby as it is in a way denying the foetus' right to life. So there are innumerable arguments and counter arguments without hyphenation and the dilemma remains that which one is more significant - the mother's right to terminate pregnancy or the foetus' right to life. This pro-life and pro-choice debate has an western root which is more about reproductive freedom. But the Western standard of looking at abortion debate is not fully relevant in the Indian context. The situation is entirely different here. Sex selective foeticide is a social ill in India which cannot be explained through the prism of abortion debate only. It must take into account the problems of forced female foeticide. Objectives: Against this backdrop the study sheds light on the following issues: -How the Reproductive debate has been evolved? -How it is relevant in the Indian Context where female foeticide is a harsh reality? -How one should address the dilemma between life and death in the context of pro life-pro choice debate? Methodology: The study employs historical analytical and descriptive analytical methods and uses primary documents like governmental documents and secondary sources like analytical articles in books, journals, and relevant websites. Findings: -Fertility control is not a modern day phenomenon. It has its roots throughout ancient, medieval and present epochs. However, there existed debates over the rights of the foetus and the question of ethics pertaining to the act of abortion. -Pre-natal sex determination for sex selective abortion is a common phenomenon in India because of the wish for male heirs. The cultural preferences for male child over female ones have resulted in the disappearance of girl children. -When does the life begin has not been recognized by any law. Considering Indian case, it can be said that the Pro life/ pro choice is not that relevant as it is in the US. Here the women are often denied the basic human rights. They are murdered at the womb in many places. Their right to lives are jeopardised in that way. In the liberal abortion regime of India, women's choice to end a pregnancy is limited among very few enlightened families. In many cases, it is the decision of the family to end a pregnancy for boy preference. For that pre natal sex determination plays a crucial role. Conclusion: In India, we can be pro life only when the right to life of the unborn can be secured irrespective of its sex. Similarly we belong to pro-choice group only when the choice to terminate a baby is entirely decided by the mother for her own reasons.

Keywords : female foeticide, India, prolife/pro choice, right to abortion

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