Son-struck: 7 abortions in 7 yrs of marriage, all for a boy

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Sumathi has been married for 10 years. However, this 31-year-old still has horrific dreams and wakes up traumatised in the middle of the night, fearing that she’s being taken for an abortion. This fear is a result of seven abortions that she was forced to undergo in the first seven years of her married life. The eight time she conceived, her in-laws took her for a pre-natal test. This time, a male foetus was detected and that ended the series of brutal forced abortions that she had to go through.

However, Sumathi never recovered from the mental trauma. When things became very difficult, Sumathi decided to visit a psychologist.

“Shes had a breakdown and there were a lot of things going on. The years of trauma had left her with severe depression, anxiety and frequent nightmares. She practically had an abortion each year, without giving her time to recover mentally or physically from the trauma,” said Vasuprada Karthik, psychologist, who works with government agencies such as Bharosa and She Teams.

Sumathi has now arrived at a conclusion that it was good that she never had a girl child.

“She says had she given birth to a girl, she would have gone through a similar fate. Probably, Sumathi would have had to leave the girl child to her fate just like her own parents did with her. After being forced to kill her interest in the girl child, she had zero interest in having a girl again,” added Karthik.

In yet another case at Petlaburj Hospital in the city, a pregnant woman with symptoms of clinical depression admitted to having undergone five forced abortions.

“She often forgot that she was pregnant and would start crying out aloud thinking that she had lost another baby,” said an insider.

Up to three abortions for getting rid of the girl child is very common.

“Many women admitted to having undergone three abortions and each was left with a psychological scar. Usually, they are not given enough time to heal from the mental and physical trauma after undergoing a forced abortion. The continued trauma often led to severe depression,” said Dr Lavanya Miriyala, clinical psychotherapist, who counselled pregnant women at the Government Maternity Hospital in Petlaburj previously.
FIGHT AGAINST FEMALE FOETICIDE

Under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994

- No person, organization or laboratory having ultrasound or any imaging machine shall determine or communicate the sex of a foetus.
- No person shall sell any ultrasound or imaging machine or scanner or any other equipment capable of detecting sex of foetus to any genetic counselling centre, genetic laboratory, clinic or any other person not registered under the Act.
- Registration of genetic counselling centre, genetic laboratory or clinic is a must under Section 18 of the Act.
- Creating awareness among people by displaying the board of prohibition on sex determination.
- Forced abortions have a direct impact on a woman's psychological well-being.

PSYCHOLOGICAL BATTLE

- The impacts can range from mild regret to a serious condition such as depression.
- Determining the sex of a foetus is illegal; so, all forced abortions of female foetus are illegal and are punishable.

IMPACT OF FORCED ABORTIONS

- Guilt
- Shame
- Sense of loneliness or isolation
- Loss of self-confidence
- Insomnia
- Relationship issues
- Suicidal thoughts and feelings
- Eating disorders
- Depression
- Anxiety