**Hinduism Point of View on Abortion**

Hindus sacred texts have a clear stand against abortion. The Vedas represent it as one of the most morally reprehensible action and lists it as the most heinous act. Kaushitaki Upanishad has included abortion in the list of crimes that involve murdering one’s own mother and father along with theft. The abortionist is listed by the Mahanarayana Upanishad with actions like breaking chastity vows.

Individual Hindus however hold different views/stances regarding abortion. The rate of abortion in India is high according to statistics and while this is the case, 80% of Indian women do not approve the act while 56% consider it the most heinous crime.

Hindus have actually gone an extra mile to state the distinctions in their sacred texts between miscarriages and abortions. It goes  further to state  killing of a male embryo is Brahmin which is the same as killing an adult Brahmin which is the worst possible  sins anyone can commit. Generally, Hinduism is opposed to abortion and classical texts are strongly opposed to it. In essence:

1. One text compares abortion to killing of a priest
2. Another considers it in the same light as that of killing one’s parents
3. Another says any woman that aborts her child loses her caste

Many modern Hindus and traditional Hinduism sees abortion as a breach of duty to sire/produce children that will continue the family lineage and produce new members of the society. This is because many Hindus regard offspring production as ‘public duty’ not an ‘individual expression of personal choice’.

In practice though, Hindu culture in India widely practices abortion. The religious stance on abortion is often overlooked by the cultural preference for sons rather than daughters. This leads to abortion that prevents birth of baby girls and is commonly known as ‘female foeticide’.

Unless the life and health of the mother is at risk, traditional texts and teachings condemn abortion. This is because it is contrary to the religious teachings of non-violence. The Hinduism system also teaches that the correct course of action is that one that causes the least harm to those who are involved.

As such, in cases where the life of the mother is at risk, abortion is deemed acceptable. In the Vedic texts, the spirit which is known as atman is born into the embryo when conception takes place. Fertilization is seen as sacramental action signifying the bond of matter and atman as such, abortion leads to death of an actual human person. Abortion also violates the ethical, cardinal principal of the Hindus which is non-injury and which they hold dear.