

The Controversy is- Should Sex Pre-selection be permitted?

Sex selection is not a new issue; in medieval Germany people used hammer and scissor for selection of sex. However, most of the times, it has been used against the girl child. There can not be an appropriate time than The World Women Day, 8th March, to discuss about the issue. There are some positive and some negative aspects of this methodology.

There is no problem till it is used for medical reasons or when it is used in developed countries for balancing sex ratio. But problem exist mostly in developing countries like India and China, here society start using technology for female foeticide, because of negative bias towards girl child (Bukatko & Daehler).

We live in a sexist world; still many (mostly female) embryos are being terminated without check in the name of “procreative liberty” (Sauer, 2001).

The couples who want to select the sex of child may use one of the three following options:

1. To terminate a pregnancy already established, once sex is determined and is not favorable (MTP)
2. To undergo pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD)
3. To alter the population of inseminated sperm so as to increase the likelihood of desired pregnancy.

The first method is sometimes dangerous to mother and her health. This is the most widely used method in developing countries and is uncivilized and leads to social imbalance due to prevailing practices. The second method involves embryonic biopsy and may be dangerous to child. The last method though expensive, is more scientific and

appealing. Normally this method is being used in the developed world and help the couples to choose a balance family.

Right to reproduce is fundamental right of the individual. However, Individuals and society raise objections on sex pre-selection and speak on behalf of the unborn, when such tests are performed without clear medical justification. Physicians and patients with genetic diseases normally have the opinion that gender selection is needed to avoid X-linked illness, whether through invasive or noninvasive means (Sauer, 2001).

The Ethics Committee at Columbia University has also suggested that gender selection should not be performed except in instances in which a clear medical indication exists (e.g. a known genetic X-linked carrier status).

The Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority (HFEA) has suggested that all non-medical sex selection in spite of safety or usefulness be prohibited. The suggestions are based primarily on public opposition to sex selection, and also on the possible risk to children who are chosen for their gender. The HFEA also draws attention on the lack of clear profits of such choices and the fear that couples will disallow children in cases of error or restrict a child's development (Robertson, 2004).

However, Ethics committee of American Society for reproductive medicine (ASRM) on sex selection offers an interesting and contrasting report. Contrasting the HFEA, the ASRM Committee concluded that non-medical sex selection for gender variety could be offered to couples that requested and counseled earlier, and if sperm sorting were established as safe and effective (Robertson, 2004).

The ill of female foeticide is known to be widely prevalent in countries like India and China; resulting sex ratio has sharply declined. This will have far reaching social

impacts. The governments in developing countries, where such practices are prevalent, have banned such tests for a long time. Now medical councils have also stepped in to take action against errant doctors providing illegal antenatal sex determination tests (Sharma, 1999).

There are negative impacts of Modern contraception, but society and peoples are largely embracing the practice because of the importance of controlling the number and timing of their children. Besides possibilities of abuse of child's genetic selection, it also offer good things too. Apart from reducing the more obvious misfortunes attending the genetic roulette of conception, such technology will strengthen our children's tendencies toward the character we value (Stock, 2001).

The arguments against Preconception sex selection are (Stock, 2001):

- Its capacity to reinforce sexism,
- To diminish the welfare of children so conceived,
- To upset sex-ratios,
- To mechanize the reproduction,
- The trend toward genetic control in unnatural.

The preferences of adoptive parents include gender, health, age, ethnicity, the presence or absence of disabilities and various other parents balance against the availability of children (Stock, 2001).

In America and other developed countries there seems very little chance of the sexes going far out of balance at all. According to Americans view a boy and a girl both makes a perfect family. So they used the technology to achieve perfection, resulting a perfect sex ratio (Silver, 1998).

Ultimately solution of this issue will depend only on social and psychological evidence about the advantages and thus importance to couples of having sibling of different sexes raised together in a family. If one accepts that people have a large degree of freedom over their personal and reproductive lives, they should have the freedom to take steps to have children of different genders in their family (Robertson, 2004).

Different societies are using sex pre-selection in different ways. The societies where sex pre-selection is being used for killing of a particular sex and is resulting in sex imbalance should not be allowed. However, societies which are using this method for a balanced family, is a healthy trend.

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