

Abortion: A Moral Issue

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Abstract

Nowadays different crimes are committed by people enticed away from the truth and deceived by devil, only to achieve their personal goals and maintain their individual liberty. One of the greatest sins committed in this world is abortion. The fetus is a human being from the very beginning and has the right to live. Although the mother has a right to decide what shall happen in and to her body, her rights cannot be privileged over those of the unborn child. Therefore, the life of every human being should be respected. The most common attempts were made to show that the unborn child does not have the right to burden the female reproductive rights and women's right to abortion. According to the universal declaration of human rights, every human being has the natural right over his own life and this rule encompasses all members of the human society including human embryo. All of them are supposed to have human personality and ethical rights. Thus, it is not permitted to deprive an embryo of his future life. The purpose in the current overview was to attempt an explanation of the questionable notion of the abortion. The paper puts forward a brief argument about abortion versus the right of fetus to live.

Keywords: Right to Life, Abortion, Human, Person

1. Introduction

Nowadays different crimes are committed by people enticed away from the truth and deceived by devil, only to achieve their personal goals and maintain their individual liberty. They merely think about their own transient interests, and disregard the rights of others. Everyone has the right to live and have personal liberty and security (1). Among all the rights it has, "the right to live" has overshadowed the others and no one shall be deprived of his life (2, 3).

One of the greatest sins committed in this world is abortion. The fetus is a human being from the very beginning and has the right to live. Although, the mother has a right to decide what shall happen in and to her body, her rights cannot be privileged over those of the unborn child.

Therefore, the life of every human being should be respected; whether it would be a normal fetus or an abnormal one, or a healthy person or someone with physical or mental impairments.

According to the universal declaration of human rights in 1948, all human beings regardless of their race, skin color, gender, language, religion, opinions, national or social origin, or other status are entitled to equal rights and dignity (2, 4). Article three of the declaration provides that every human being has the right over his own life, liberty and security (1, 2).

However, the right to live is respected in all nations, but too many crimes such as abortion, murder, suicide and dif-

ferent types of euthanasia are still committed violating it.

2. Arguments

2.1. Embryo and the Right to Life

The beginning of a human life as an individual living organism is the period when he or she is identified, or begins to be identified, as a person (3). From the biological standpoint; every genetically living human is referred to a member of human beings and consequently has the right to live. Therefore, from the moment of fertilization and formation of the egg cell, the embryo possesses the right to live. Accordingly, fertilization is the beginning of the life of a new actual human being with his own special genome and gender. The life formed in this way is human life, not plant or animal life. The human being created in this manner has a unique personal identity, as the human genome that makes distinction between the lines on each finger (3).

Given the basic facts about the inception of human life, many claims are advanced in the discussions about abortion.

A number of population control advocates contended that the large population of the earth is the main reason of poverty in many countries and abortion is a good way to control the human population (5).

This assertion could be answered as follows: it is proved that in populated countries with high birth rates

and low quality of life, the level of happiness and life satisfaction is higher than other societies (6).

Furthermore, born children are never killed because they are perceived to be too numerous for the planet.

From the Islamic perspective, killing infants for fear of poverty is regarded as a shameful deed. Since God has promised to provide sustenance for them as well as for their family (7).

Some people seem to think that embryo is an unwanted human being in the case that the mother's life is threatened. Therefore, in their opinion the embryo does not have the right to live like a whole human and the mother could decide about killing or keeping it (8).

Mary Anne Warren believes that a mother can do an abortion, because she has the right of autonomy to maintain and defend her own life and well-being. Therefore, from her viewpoint depriving a mother from the right of abortion is actually violation of the right of personal autonomy (9).

Mary Anne Warren mentions five basic characteristics of human which distinguish the embryo from the human society and divest him of his moral rights due to the lack of them. The five characteristics are: 1) Consciousness, 2) Reasoning ability, 3) Self-motivation, 4) Capacity to communicate with the outside world and 5) Self-awareness (10).

The current study claims that the aforementioned arguments are absolutely wrong. According to the western views and the human rights rules, a human being is entitled to have freedom provided that he does not violate the rights of others. Therefore, the mother is not allowed to kill an embryo because of having unconstrained degree of freedom.

The embryo is totally dependent on the mother's body. This attachment, however, does not deprive it of the right to be a human being, and he has a unique identity from the moment of the conception to the moment of death and has all the natural capacities to act as a person.

Due to the embryo's physical dependency on the mother, almost in all countries even in the religious ones such as Catholic communities, abortion would be permissible in a situation that a pregnancy threatens the mother's life.

Aside from that, in all societies the word mother represents a good example of a perfect human who lovingly tolerates the travails. A godly mother shows love and compassion for her children with care, protection and sacrifice which is continued throughout her children's lives.

Why should an innocent human being be called embryo for his parents' faults? Parents have a responsibility toward their offspring that they do not have to strangers (8). They should accept the responsibility of their own actions and are obligated to make an effort to maintain the

lives of their unborn and born children.

All the creatures in the world are physically related to each other. For instance, human body requires oxygen to breathe, water to drink, the vitamins which exist in plants and animal meat. The plants also need water, soil and sunlight to grow, human infants and children are dependent on their parents, disabled and ill persons all need somebody to take care of them. In all of these situations, it cannot be said that they do not have the right to live only because of their dependency on each other.

Contrary to the above prolife reasoning, from the pro-choice perspective, the mother's full autonomy over her body is another issue to justify abortion. In this view, the fetus is simply a part of the mother's body. The bodily autonomy justification is that the mother does have the right to deny whomever she wants, even the baby growing within her and even if the fetus has an inherent right to life, superseded by mother's right to autonomy. This argument could be properly responded as follows:

Although, it is true that the fetus is another body that grows in the mother's womb, it is not a part of her body. Even the physical appearance of a pregnant woman views the fetus as a foreigner the womb expresses hospitality to the fetal ensuing creature. Aside from that the fetus is actually a dependent human, he does not only belong to the mother, but half of the embryo's genotype belongs to the father and it has also proved that the genomes of the fetal cells completely differ from those of the mother. Therefore, the above-mentioned claim is absolutely rejected and as a conclusion, no mother is permitted to expel the baby from her body as an intruder via abortion.

2.2. Islam and the Human Creation

The Holy Quran quotes Pharaoh as asking Moses in surah Taha verses 49 and 50: "Who then is your Lord, Moses?" He said: "Our Lord is He Who gave unto everything its nature, and then guided it aright."

All the living and non-living things in the world are created in perfect balance and measurement. Then they are guided in the right path toward the desired target. Therefore, all creatures are connected to a larger spiritual and physical world. If the structure of something is harmed, it absolutely fails to achieve the main goal and also deprives others from its important role in the balance of the creation (11).

Therefore, destroying the world's creatures including the persons with physical or mental impairments for any reason would get them away from God's intended purpose of creation and disturb the balance which God has created.

According to the above discussion, all the creatures such as plants, animals, healthy people or the ones with

disabilities, even the living environment, etc., are worthwhile and should be cherished. Since all of these precious gifts are created for the mankind by the glorified God. Hence, it is man's duty to preserve and enjoy the God's blessings quite well (11).

As a result, the right to live for a patient in coma or a fetus with thalassemia is as equal as that of a healthy person.

From an Islamic perspective toward abortion, having a malformed fetus may be a divine trial for the parents making them live in torment. But perhaps it would bring out many blessings, whereas they are not aware of them.

It may also be a good example for others that remind them to express gratitude to God for their well-being. It may awaken the hearts of God's negligent servants and bring them to perfection.

Allah reminds us of the difficulties that mothers bear while giving birth and raising their children.

"And we have enjoined upon man concerning his parents. His mother beard him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years: Give thanks unto me and unto thy parents. Unto Me is the journeying" (Surah Luqman: 14) (12).

It is quoted in the book "the Treatise on Rights", Risalat Al-Hoquq, from Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him): "And the right of your child is that you should know that he is from you and he will be ascribed to you in this world through both his good deeds and his evil deeds. And you are responsible for what is entrusted to you in teaching him good conduct, and guiding him toward his Lord and helping him to obey him on your behalf and for himself" (13).

It is said in the "Sermon of Shabaniyah" by Mohammad, the prophet of Islam (peace be upon him): "Have sympathy for your youngsters" (13).

This study has been approved by the ethical committee of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences.

3. Conclusions

Unfortunately every year the world observes approximately 25 - 50 million abortions that cause the death of about 50 - 100 thousand mothers (14).

Studies show that despite the easy access to different methods of contraception, nearly 400 - 500 unintended pregnancies and 80 thousand abortions (daily 200 cases) occur each year in Iran (15, 16). These abortions are mostly performed illegally and under unsafe conditions; 10% - 50% of the unsafe abortions have some side effects which put the mothers' health at risk. Avoiding the contraception methods or the failure of them is recognized as the two main reasons of unwanted pregnancies in Iran (17). Thus, a remedy should be sought that would raise mother's awareness and furthermore, provide the conditions in which

the high-risk pregnancies that threaten the mothers' well-being can be performed legally and safely in hospitals.

Nowadays, unfortunately the fetal right to live is ignored and too many abortions are easily done by the people who want to escape liability by justifying themselves.

Their purpose is to obviate the emergency and hardship rule. Is this rule applicable in the case of causing the death of an innocent fetus? Is it a conscionable act to kill a human embryo for the reason that he puts his parents and the society in trouble? If yes, the people who are disabled in accidents should be killed to get rid of the problems they cause. Whereas, the reality is that in human society, disabled persons have equal rights and dignity to healthy people and are even supported by the international human rights.

Besides this, there are some certain responsibilities for each individual in the human society which he or she is obligated to fulfill. For example, taking the responsibility of having a child is regarded as one of these obligations.

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