




Memoirs of denial

A journal on denial of safe abortion services in India

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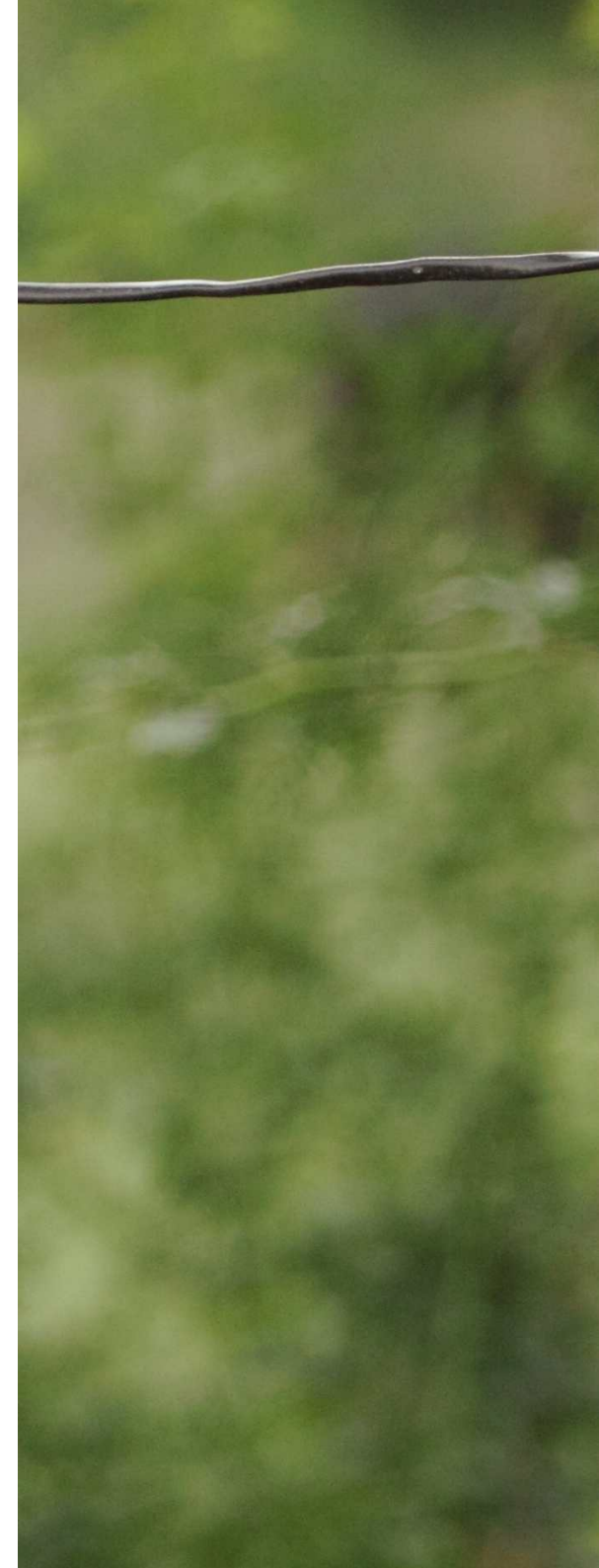




Savita, 29, struggles through life with many more just like her in other villages of Maharashtra, India. In spite of being a woman in Paradhi community (a nomadic tribe in Maharashtra), she had managed to complete her 3rd standard before being married off at age 16. Her first child, a girl, was born 2 years later and then followed 3 more daughters and 2 sons. The couple earn Rs. 6000 per month as construction workers. She manages her household with her meagre income while her husband squanders his share satisfying his addictions.

When we spoke to her, her youngest was just 1.5 years old. Till then, she had normal deliveries at rural hospital in public health system. To add to her woes, she discovered that she was pregnant again. The positive pregnancy test brought her more anguish than joy. How would she manage to feed another mouth with her limited income?

Stressed and anxious, Savita, met the gynaecologist in government health facility in her village and requested an abortion. Sadly, instead of understanding her situation, he was furious. He berated her for not using contraceptives and being irresponsible. Further, lecturing her on how such practices led to the current population crisis in the country, he sent her away threatening legal action if she persisted. He suggested that since she was already in her second trimester, it would be more practical to continue this unwanted pregnancy and get herself sterilized after that to avoid this in the future.



Dejected, she decided to try her luck at the private registered MTP (Medical Termination of Pregnancy) centre in town. However, this did not work either. The doctor demanded Rs. 7,000-Rs. 8,000 for the procedure and refused to discuss anything else with her till she agreed.

As she walked back home frustrated and angry, she reflected on how it would be much cheaper to have the baby (deliveries were free in government health facility in her village) as opposed to getting an abortion.

During our conversation, she lamented on the humiliating experiences she had faced in the clinics. Neither doctor had tried to understand her situation or help her. Money ruled everything and those who had it were ensured a safe abortion service. While the poor like her had to eke out an existence of pain and suffering.

Issues of concern:

- Health care provider misconveyed her that the second trimester abortions are illegal. In fact, Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act in India sanctions abortion till 20 weeks of pregnancy under certain conditions.
- Health care providers deny safe abortion services because of their anti-abortion sentiments, and women are not provided with counseling, objectively.
- Private health care sector offers unregulated higher cost, which makes difficult for poor women to access safe abortion services.



SAMYAK is registered as a Communication and Resource Centre on gender, masculinities, health and development. Its vision is the promotion of gender equitable, violence free society and safeguard human rights of all individuals to lead a fearless and meaningful life through collaborative partnerships and advocacy.

SAMYAK understands significance of the work of various women's organizations and also derives its inspiration from the work of individuals and activists from the women's movement and other social justice movements in India. SAMYAK works on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) issues with men and women and is engaged in advocacy work on access to safe abortion with public and private health care providers, policy makers, community, CSOs and media.





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