

Imagine you know a pregnant person who wants to get an abortion. They are looking for any doctor or quack to help them. They are convinced abortion is illegal in India and have come to you for help. Do you also feel abortion is illegal? What would you tell this person? Why do you think they have such an impression?

I definitely don't feel and for a matter of fact know that abortions are not illegal in India, even though the laws surrounding abortion have its own flaws. We live in a society where most of the conversations about abortion occur surreptitiously because of the various stigma attached to it given the existing patriarchal concept of "motherhood", "womanhood" etc. This hush-hush around abortion for what so ever reason, i.e. "one should seek abortion in ways that nobody should know", "abortion cannot be an open conversation like any other medical condition" etc., adds not only to the shame associated with it but also to the stigma that abortion cannot be accessed in any medical facility like any other medical checkup. This secrecy involved in having conversations about abortion is also emboldened by the lot of content we consume especially visual media like cinema, serials etc. Most of the media in which abortion is mentioned, either centres the panicky (not to discard the panicky in a patriarchal society where a people seeking abortion are subjected to "character assassination") or convincing the person seeking abortion to change their mind or the emotional trauma involved with abortion. Even the state funded public awareness campaigns about reproductive and sexual health (e.g. the campaign "Hai Goli Me Biswas" by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare) entirely focuses on contraceptive pills or sterilisation, leaving abortion out of the discourse. In this context, the covertness given to abortion is confused as its illegality by the population which is largely unaware about the nitty-gritties of legislatures (mainly MTP act) around abortion. Also the legal language is highly inaccessible to common public and the state's hesitation to fund public awareness campaign, owing the cultural morality it upholds directly or indirectly, about abortion putting women's agency and accessibility of information to safe abortion at the centre just adds to the public conscious that abortion is illegal.

I think one of these or combination of all of these reasons is why the person thinks that abortion is illegal. I will explain the person that seeking abortion is not illegal. I will suggest them to consult with a qualified and trained medical professional