**FILM REVIEW**

**Name of the Film: Kanika (2017)**

**Title of the Review: A Haunting Message to Unethical Doctors**

**Author: Dr. Harshal Tukaram Pandve**

**Language: Marathi with English Subtitles**

**Producers: Sandeep Manohar, Pushkar Manohar**

**Writer & Director: Pushkar Manohar**

**Cast: Sharad Ponkshe, Smita Shewale, Kritina Vartak, Ananda Karekar, Nilesh Behre, Falguni Rajani, Chaitrali Gupte**

**Runtime: 130 minutes**

For any healthy society the ratio of male to female sex must be balanced. But in India the alarming rate of female foeticide is a cause of grave concern, as the number of girls born is declining at drastic rate in many parts of in the country. As per Indian Census of 2011 only 914 girls were born for every 1,000 boys in the age group 0-6 years. This is the worst child sex ratio in the history of our country since independence. This steep decline can be linked to the ever growing preference for a male child. The second largest state of the country Maharashtra is having the one of the worst child sex ratio in Indian States where only 894 girls born for every 1,000 boys. Preference to male child due to bad customs like dowry which is one of most important reasons behinds ever declining number of girls in Indian society . Apart from this primary reason, increased availability of advanced technologies, which also has been one most important factor responsible for decrease in sex ratios and increase in female foeticides. It is really unfortunate that developments in medical science and technology are being misused to get rid of a girl child before birth. More shocking and heart breaking is that even on immoral, unethical as well as criminal ground, foetus of a girl child is aborted by qualified and unqualified doctors for the sake of money, rather it has become business for few unethical, criminal minded doctors due to which whole medical fraternity is criticized tremendously. In March 2017 the police retrieved as many as ninteen female foetuses from a sewer in a village in western Maharashtra’s Sangli district dumped there by doctor who did female foeticide. In infamous Beed female feticide case from Maharashtra again, it was revealed that some doctors in this case were disposing of female foetuses by feeding them to dogs in order to destroy evidence of female foeticide, which are some of the glaring examples of heinous crime.

Marathi film **Kanika** explores the social horrors of female foeticide. This film is an innovative as well as entertaining experiment to deal with socially relevant issues like female foeticide, male dominating mindsets as well as role of doctors in these social evils. Film’s story revolves around renowned and reputed Dr.Kaushik Pradhan (Sharad Ponkshe) who runs a hospital and who is involved in illegal prenatal sex determination and female foeticide, with the support of Dr.Sachin (Nilesh Behre) and Dr.Rashmi (Falguni Rajani). Dr. Pradhan and his colleagues in criminal and illegal activities start experiencing unusual paranormal activities which shatter there day to day activities. These paranormal activities go one becoming more and more horrifying. Situation becomes hypercritical when killings of crime partner’s start and Dr. Pradhna become helpless, miserable and even mental ill to the extent that he is admitted in mental hospital. The secret behind these horrifying paranormal activities gets revealed in the due course of the film. Paranormal activities is resulted due to past involvement of Dr. Pradhan and his colleague for misuse of their knowledge and positions in case of one patient Vidya (Smita Shewale) who was referred to Dr. Pradhan by his doctor friend from a village, for sex determination test during her pregnancy, as her in laws want Vidya to deliver only a male child. Sex determination test reveals that sex of the foetus is female and Vidya’s in laws pressurize her for abortion. But, brave Vidya refuses abortion and delivers baby girl “Kanika” (Kritina Vartak), who is later killed by her own father (Ananda Karekar). Revengeful Kanika’s ghost later punishes all those doctors and others behind this heinous crime. Dr. Pradhan realizes his crime and confesses it with his wife Dr. Vaishali (Chaitrali Gupte) and near ones but they refuse to help and he finds himself alone in a mental hospital repenting his crimes.

The Marathi film Kanika is written as well as directed by Pushkar Manohar who has taken very strange but effective approach to comment on social evils like prenatal sex selection, female infanticide without losing film’s entertaining values. The film Kanika also throws light on interesting facts as well as loopholes in medical practice. Performance wise, Sharad Ponkshe who played Dr. Pradhan in the film shows all sorts of emotions from anger to fear effortlessly. Child artist Kritina Vartak who played title role of Kanika is really commendable. Other actors in supporting roles did their parts convincingly. Technically film is good especially cinematography and back ground score is effective in creating atmosphere required for horror film. In some scenes you feel that director has taken inspiration taken from some Hollywood horror classics which you can make out from posters of the film as well. At some times film is beat slow. Overall it’s a good experience to watch Kanika if you focus on upsides of the film.

To conclude, the Marathi film Kanika is an excellent experiment where horror genre is used to comment on real social horrors of the society. At the end of the film one slide shown written as “ This is a work of fiction….the reality is more horrific…” which say everything related to this alarming issue of declining child sex ratio and female feoticide. Even our Honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi has shown concern about this burning issue and assertively given a slogan of “Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao”. This film is haunting message to all of us especially to doctors who are involved such heinous crimes.

**Author’s details:**

Dr. Harshal Tukaram Pandve, MBBS, MD (PSM)

Associate Professor,

Dept. of Community Medicine,

Smt. Kashibai Navale Medical College, Narhe, Pune- 411041

Email Idd : dr.harshalpandve@gmail.com