

Unusual baby draws crowds, worshipped as divine

Hundreds are flocking to a house in Orissa's Balasore district to glimpse and even worship a baby born with both male and female genitalia, being described as an incarnation of Hindu gods Shiva and Parvati.

The baby, now five-and-a-half months old, was born to Baijayanti Singh in Ayodhya Nagar Patana village in Balasore district, around 200 km from state capital Bhubaneswar.

'When the child was born (Feb 11) we thought it is a boy. But two days later we found that it had both male and female sex organs,' she said.

'We feel the baby is part of both Shiva and Parvati as it was born just four days before Maha Shivratri,' added Guru Gobinda Singh, the child's father.

Baijayanti had a normal delivery and the baby is healthy.

Describing the phenomenon, senior gynaecologist S.N. Sahu told IANS: 'It is called an intersex (congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system) baby and such incidents may happen.'

Though such a condition does not lead to ill health or cause physical pain, it is a serious health issue that needs to be treated medically, he said.

'Surgically correcting the appearance of intersex genitals will not change the underlying medical needs,' Sahu said.

The couple has a son and was expecting a daughter this time.

After news of the newborn spread in the locality, hundreds started flocking to their house to see it and offer prayers to the baby.

'We have never seen such a baby before, not even heard of one,' said Bishnu Prasad Mohapatra, a resident of nearby Remuna village.

'We heard that Shiva-Parvati have arrived in this village, so we came here to offer prayers to the baby,' added Katimani Singh, a local resident.

Meanwhile, doctors in the district headquarter hospital say the baby needs proper medical examination.

'We have to verify whether the baby has testis or uterus and ovary and which organ is fully operational. It can be a normal baby after its inactive sex organ is removed,' Sahu said.

'I will discuss about the baby with the chief district medical officer. If possible we will carry out medical tests and keep the baby under observation,' he said.

Social activists working in the health sector say no one knows how many such babies are born because of the secrecy shrouding such cases.

'It is estimated that about one in 2,000 children, or five children per day, are born in the United States as visibly intersex. This figure is yet to be calculated in India,' according to Dilip Kumar Parida, secretary of a local non government organisation.

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