A child is Born

The essay “A child is born” by Germaine Greer presents the comparison between the attitude towards pregnancy, childbirth, childbearing and childrearing in the technocratic West and traditional East society. The writer also compares the parent-child relationship and the role of children in traditional, agricultural societies with that of children in the western, industrialized countries.

She says that there are many ways of managing childbirth in traditional societies. In traditional societies, childbirth is a collective responsibility of the whole family and even the whole community. A pregnant woman is looked after and helped by the whole members of the family and societies. So, the pregnant woman feels safe and protected which greatly reduces her fear, anxiety and pain of childbirth. A mother gets a lot of love care and moral support from the family and relatives which is more important for the mother.

On the other hand Western societies have a different approach to pregnancy and childbirth. A pregnant woman does not get extra care and support from her family. She approaches her pregnancy mechanically like she approaches her examinations. The writer gives an example of her friend in college. She says that her friend was superstitious even though she was educated. So, she didn't buy clothes and toys before the birth of the child. But she used to note down every development, do exercise regularly and gave birth almost unattended.

In many traditional societies a woman goes to her husband's house after her marriage, but she is considered a part of the family only after she gives birth to a child. If she cannot bear children then her life is ruined and when she gives birth she loses her identity and is known as the mother of her first born child. In the same way child rearing is also a collective business of the whole family. In fact the biological parents do not have to look after their children. This weakens the parent-child relationship. And also is considered cruel in human and wrong by the western societies.

In Indian orthodox Rajput societies, by bearing a child the woman satisfies the desire of the family. Childbirth is an achievement celebrated with much feasting, singing and fun. The pregnant woman also gets a chance to go to her mother's home. So, we can say that in traditional societies, the birth of a child is more due to the pressure of the family than the mother's own desire.
The writer says that in Bangladesh all the children below five are looked after collectively by one of the family members. So a child spends the whole day in the company of other members and women to his/her mother only during bedtime whereas in the West the woman almost singly bears with the pains and problems related to pregnancy, child birth and child rearing.

But nowadays, even in traditional societies the use of western equipments and medicine is growing. The doctors, nurses and modern medicine is highly respected by the people. But due to lack of proper facilities and medicines the doctors are compelled to give strong dose even to weak patients. In some places where hospitals have been established with foreign help, they do not have sufficient and proper equipments and medicines and this leads to catastrophic consequences. The writer describes a scene of a delivery ward in a hospital in South Africa, a horrible combination of modern technology and traditional Africa. There were women growing in the pool of blood and the nurses simply ignored them and kept themselves busy with the equipments.

The writer seems to tell us that, keeping in mind the terrible experience that a woman undergoes before, during and after childbirth the birth of alive child becomes irrelevant. So the writer seems to suggest that traditional approach is better than the Western mechanical approach to childbirth. But the best way to manage pregnancy and childbirth would be a proper combination of the Eastern and the Western approaches.

1. What differences does the writer show between a traditional society and a modern society in manners of pregnancy, childbirth, and childbearing?

**Ans:** In traditional societies, the pregnancy, childbirth and childbearing are accepted collectively so that the mother does not feel the psychic burden. The whole matter of pregnancy is an occasion for the family. The children are cared and reared by whole members of the family. After the birth of the child, the mother is not called by her name but she is referred to as child’s mother. Different ritual practices are held after the birth of the child. The mother goes to her house for better rearing of the new born baby after the childbirth and she is provided with nutritious diet and energy giving foods.

But in modern societies, pregnancy, childbirth and childbearing are termed as personal matter which gives psychic burden to mother. The children are given birth at modern hospitals by using different modern method. Pregnancy is not taken as a matter of celebration. The child is reared and cared by her own
mother. The mortality rate of children is very less in compared to traditional societies.

2. **Why does the writer bring in the examples of the traditional societies to discuss the problems of a modern, especially a western society?**

**Ans:** The writer brings in the examples of the traditional societies to show that the problems of modern societies are greater and serious than that of traditional societies when compared. She portraits the picture of strong individual life in the west where the whole matter of pregnancy is personal and psychic burden for the mother but in traditional societies whole child bearing process are termed as collective responsibility of the whole family. According to the writer, the modern societies are selfish, boring, dry and cruel but the traditional societies are cooperative, generous, kind in terms of child bearing.