

Happy Mothers

“Are you happy?”

“Happy? Is there any woman who doesn't feel happy to become a mother? Furthermore, I am the mother of triplets.”

This is part of the conversation between a Western journalist, who visited the Pyongyang Maternity Hospital in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and a DPRK woman who gave birth to triplets, the 455th triplets born in this hospital.

Her simple and frank answer surprised the journalist. It was natural that she was surprised as she was from the West, where most of the women would not bear a child and parents are shunned by their children.

In the Western world, the prevalent advice is “Be born not as a woman; if you are divinely punished to be born as a woman, don't make the mistake of becoming a mother as well.” It is a matter of daily occurrence that mothers maltreat and abandon their children, and even kill them. The US law allows abandoning of one's child, encouraging mothers to do so without hesitation. Worse still, a book on why women should not bear children has become a bestseller, an expression of women's view on mothers.

However, in the DPRK, there is no reason that women should be willing not to bear children and abandon them.

The Pyongyang Maternity Hospital and similar hospitals in various parts of the country deliver babies. The triplets as well as their parents respectively receive an ornamental silver dagger or gold ring, and they are provided with a posh house and enjoy various benefits and privileges. Social benefits like reduction of labour hour are bestowed on women with several children. There are no instances of firing women or reducing their salaries on the plea of having children.

Children learn to their heart's content and bring their talents into full bloom at the well-regulated educational system—ranging from nursery and kindergarten to primary, junior middle and senior middle schools and schoolchildren's

palace—receiving uniforms and other school supplies from the state, so what is surprising is that education and all social benefits for them are free.

Women in the DPRK could not but be happy to become mothers as they raise their children at state expenses and by social benefits.

The Western journalist, who had talked to the woman, wrote an article, titled, *Korean Shocks*: In the West when a woman is delivered of a baby, she first sighs out of fear and worry, but in north Korea, the parents of triplets receive the gifts of gold rings or ornamental silver daggers and enjoy all sorts of social benefits; it was silly of me to ask such a woman if she was happy.