

Does Surrogacy Lead to Identity Crisis ?

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Abstract— Surrogacy is a very important invention of medical science. It is responsible for bringing smiles to many childless people world wide. There are different kinds of surrogacy but their motto is same - to fulfill the desires of childless people to have a baby of their own. There are not only married couples who desire to have baby through surrogacy as they are facing infertility issue, but there are other conditions too like - single individuals who want to have babies or people from LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) community or women who are fertile but don't want to conceive the baby by themselves, still they want to be parents. In our multi layered society, we can witness many different situations where either women or men or sometimes the both of a couple are facing infertility issues or any other physiological barriers or women who don't want to take this responsibility. So it is not possible to generalize the reason of choosing surrogacy method to have own baby. But the most important part of this medical treatment is giving the emotional feeling of genetic connection with the baby to intended couples or individuals. But a baby, born in this process may suffer from identity crisis as there are multiple persons involved in a single surrogacy birth process. These many engagements may make this procedure emotionally volatile to the child sometimes. In commercial surrogacy, the opportunity of getting mentally attached to surrogate mother is less but in altruistic surrogacy process this opportunity is higher and even we can say that it may be inevitable in maximum cases as it happens within family members.

Keywords— Surrogate mother, Metamorphosis, Homosexuality, Single parents, Childlessness, Human reproduction, Womb rent, Altruistic surrogacy, Commercial Surrogacy, Intended parents, Crisis of Identity, Identity Complications.

I. INTRODUCTION

The word “surrogacy” was first used in the early 15th century. This word has been derived from the Latin word “surrogatus” that means “substitute”. As the root of this word suggests itself, surrogacy procedure is a substitute for something. But for what? It is substitute for parenthood. Parenthood of couples and as well as single individuals too and at the same time it is opportunity to homosexuals, bisexuals and transgenders. Surrogacy is an emotional healer as it eradicates emotional sufferings of childless people around the world.

Surrogacy is the most precious gift of the century from medical science to the childless couples and single individuals. By availing the option of surrogacy, a childless person or couple can have child with own genetic material. It is the most positive side of this treatment procedure that no other alternative option like adoption, can't offer. On the other hand, surrogacy is the only option to the people of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) community. It is such a blessing to those people who are deprived by nature but blessed by science truly.

But this blessing carries a crisis with itself too. It is not as smooth in reality as we imagine. In a surrogacy procedure, there

multiple persons are involved like - an egg donor, a sperm donor, intended couples or individuals and at the end, the most important person, the surrogate mother. The child comes under the shadow of identity crisis when he/ she grows up. The child faces questions like, who is the real mother? Or, who is the real father? These questions come into his/ her own mind and these are injected into his/ her mind by the society also. So, on the whole, it is an alarming situation to the child for the rest of his/ her life. He/ she will have to go through a mental trauma all life. Here the questions arise related to surrogacy process and crisis created by it.

II. WHAT IS SURROGACY?

Surrogacy is an effective alternative parenthood procedure. It enables childless couples and individuals to fulfill their unfulfilled desire to have child with own genetic connection. Multiple options are there in surrogacy which are executed as per the situations and requirements. If a husband's sperm quality is poor, a sperm donor comes into the process to bridge the gap and eggs are collected from intended wife. And the rest is done with the help of another advanced technology called IVF (In Vitro Fertilization). In this process the fertilized egg is implanted into the uterus of the surrogate mother. So, in this kind of scenario intended couple are providing own sperm and egg and surrogate mother is conceiving the baby on behalf of the intended wife as she is unable to hold a baby in her own womb.

In a different situation, the intended wife's egg quality might be poor. At that condition, the husband may donate the sperm and here another woman will come in as egg donor. Then the rest procedure will be same as earlier instance and a surrogate mother will play the vital role.

Apart from these two situations, there might be another situation where both the husband and wife can be incapable of donating own sperm and egg respectively, and donors will meet the purpose at this situation.

But for individuals and people from LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) community need either sperm or egg donor for sure and the rest part will be surrogate mother's responsibility.

Surrogacy has a good international market and domestic too. Many childless couples and individuals travel to another country, mainly poor countries to avail the cheapest service, that is one of the most money making medical tourism wing.

There are technically two variations of surrogacy - traditional and gestational. In traditional surrogacy the mother who carries the baby in her womb, she is genetically connected to the baby. In gestational surrogacy, the surrogate mother is not genetically related to the baby and this is done with the help

of IVF (In vitro fertilization) procedure. The surrogate mother and intended couples or individuals make an agreement before the surrogate conceives, and the surrogate mother hands over the baby to the intended couples or individuals after the birth.

There are two more variations in surrogacy in terms of monetary transaction between the surrogate mother and the couples or individuals. In the commercial surrogacy, surrogate mother gets a remuneration apart from medical expenses and insurance. But in altruistic surrogacy, the surrogate doesn't get extra money except medical expenses and insurance. In many situations in case of altruistic surrogacy, family members become surrogate mother to help the loved and close ones.

III. WHY SURROGACY IS REQUIRED?

Surrogacy, like any other alternatives for any thing, is required when the main stream option is not working. As surrogacy is alternative to parenthood, it is understandable that this option is used when someone or any couple is unable to have own baby naturally. But at which kinds of situations couples or individuals are unable to have own child naturally?

Answering to this question, we must focus on infertility issues among women who are looking for this option. Infertility is caused by several hormonal irregularities that prevent ovulation. Apart from it, infertility has connection with obesity, underweight, abnormal menstrual cycle. Few women have problems in their fallopian tube also.

There are many women who have issues related to uterus. There is a critical situation that is termed as absolute uterine factor infertility in which uterus doesn't work normally or the uterus is absent after removal by operating it.

Some other physiological complications include Gestational Diabetes Mellitus (GDM), sexually transmitted infections (STIs), Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), Primary Ovary Insufficiency (POI) etc.

Apart from physical issues, habits of human's every day life also complicate situations and those habits are responsible for infertility like - smoking, excessive alcohol drinking, unbalanced diet, bad food habits like junk foods etc.

Along with physiological parts, some psychological sides also affect fertility status like - depression, stress, anxiety etc.

Now let's focus on another situation where a woman looks for surrogacy as she is not interested in conceiving a baby by herself. Here infertility is not the issue. As women have professional lives in present time, every woman can't afford own pregnancy time, so they opt for surrogacy.

Lastly we will talk about LGBT community. Lesbians can opt for IVF (in Vitro Fertilization) directly by arranging a sperm donor, but gay couples or individual male have to go for surrogacy as there is no other alternative to have baby with own genetic material.

In these scenarios, surrogacy comes in as a savior and bring smile to countless childless faces all over the globe. It is an important, still controversial procedure of modern medical system.

IV. SURROGACY AND IDENTITY CRISIS

As we have already discussed that there are two kinds of surrogacy in terms of monetary transaction - commercial and

altruistic surrogacy, we will discuss about identity crisis related to both separately. In commercial surrogacy when the sperm or egg donors are different from intended couples, situation gets more complicated in future to the child as there are two fathers - one is the man who donates sperm and second one is the social father. But it is also true that in commercial surrogacy, it is difficult for that child in future to point out the sperm donor but the curiosity for own biological father may make him/ her depressed and may keep in continuous or we can say never ending stress. But this situation gets more complicated in altruistic surrogacy that we will discuss later.

In the same way when a woman is donating eggs and another woman is playing the role of surrogate mother, the new born may be in an uncertainty of identity in future as the child will have to face problem to relate self to three women as mother - the egg donor or Biological mother, the surrogate mother and the social mother.

But if in any situation the intended mother donates egg and another woman becomes surrogate mother, the crisis still persists but here the child may be in crisis between two mothers - surrogate mother and social mother.

The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2020 was enacted on 25th December 2020. This bill stopped commercial surrogacy completely in India and allowed altruistic surrogacy only. What is altruistic surrogacy? The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2020 says - "altruistic surrogacy" means the surrogacy in which no charges, expenses, fees, remuneration or monetary incentive of whatever nature, except the medical expenses and such other prescribed expenses incurred on surrogate mother and the insurance coverage for the surrogate mother, are given to the surrogate mother or her dependents or her representative."

Altruistic surrogacy is ethical surrogacy. Here humanitarian values and emotions take the centre stage instead of money. Only family members can become a surrogate to help own relative.

In altruistic surrogacy, the complications may become more critical as in this pattern emotions play an important role in deeper way as only family members surrogate mothers only, the probability of identity crisis increases.

A new born may get confused or can find himself/ herself in an awkward situation later in life with complexity of relationships within the family. After knowing biological reality behind own birth procedure, he/ she can be hurt from inside as it is very much sensitive issue and it becomes more critical and emotional issue when it comes to child.

Anastassia Ontou. An Italian woman aged 67 who has become the oldest surrogate mother in the world recently. Her daughter was unable to carry own baby in her womb. According to Anastassia, her daughter was heartbroken and at that moment she had decided to become a surrogate for her own daughter. The baby girl was born after 7.5 months of pregnancy through cesarian section as there were some complications during pregnancy. It is the best example of altruistic surrogacy procedure.

But there might be a identity crisis in near future when the child will grow up and it will be a confusing for the child as her grandmother is technically her own mother and the woman who is known to her as "real mother", she is just social mother. She

doesn't have any biological connections with the baby girl. There is strong chance of growing deep affection and love from grandmother's end towards her own baby and at the same time she may also feel uneasy to express this feeling openly because to the society her identity is established as baby's grandmother. There could be a continuous mental trauma in her life as she may have to suppress her feelings for the rest of her life. This kind of identity and emotional crisis are very certain in altruistic surrogacy because of the family members' involvement.

But at the same time, we should mention that altruistic or ethical surrogacy is needed and it shouldn't be stopped because of the probability of identity crisis as surrogacy is one of the most effective parenthood alternatives. The crisis of childlessness is far deeper than probability of identity crisis because the latter one can be handled if we take proper initiative to manage situations and take care of the child in his/ her future life but id surrogacy procedure is stopped because of this, the crisis and pain of childless people will remain forever.

V. CONCLUSION

Probability of identity crisis or emotional crisis in surrogacy is inevitable. It is natural to a child to get shocked and come under identity crisis after knowing all of a sudden that the man or the woman is not his/ her own parents whom he/ she trusted the most in the world and certainly the first two persons on this earth to be trusted.

The truth of identity will definitely come to light one day by any means that no one can stop but the way of presentation of the truth before the child can be well designed with the help or consultations of psychological counselors. Everything has a proper way to present. It is always a better option to know any secret, from own family members or close ones instead of outsiders. But there will surely be an uncertainty in parents as if they reveal the truth before the child later, how he/she will react! Parents try to keep the family bonding intact by hiding or suppressing the truth from the child but this may create further bigger complications later in the future when the child will come to know about his birth reality by any external source.

In commercial surrogacy, contacting to the surrogate mother or the sperm donor might be tougher and apart from that, the child will not have frequent connection with them but in altruistic surrogacy the scenario is just the opposite. At the beginning, at the initial days of the new born, attachment with the baby may grow faster and deeper from the surrogate mother's end and by time it may influence the baby too. The child may feel extra attraction towards the surrogate mother than expected normal situation as per social relationship with her. Gradually this affection can grow more and it may make the situation more complicated for the child and get into an identity crisis.

As part of this civilized society, each and every human being has a responsibility too along with parents. We should be aware of our behaviour also and stop bullying any surrogate child by raising questions about his/ her parental identity. This silly act may throw the child to depression. And parents should also handle this kind of situation with responsibility, love and care. Because ultimately love and care make everything better. And a child feels the language of love better than anyone else.

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