

Surrogacy- Renting a Womb

The Science of Human Reproduction has progressed at a pace which is unimaginable! The Health Sector in India has kept abreast of all these advances and is able to offer the best health services which are available anywhere in the world!

Infertility is a social problem in our country. Women who are childless have to face many social taboos besides being the target of harassment by their families. This, of course, is seen mainly amongst the illiterate and economically downtrodden. But I have seen it even amongst the most affluent families. Why else would a woman subject herself to years and years of unending investigations and treatments just to bear a child? Why would she just not adopt a child to satisfy her maternal instinct? Inability to conceive makes a woman feel that she who is to be blamed, even though we know, that the husband is equally responsible in 50% of the cases! The desire to produce a child is so immense, that women subject themselves to every kind of therapy, draining them physically, emotionally and financially.

Surrogacy is the latest addition to the battery of treatments available to our infertile couples today. Whenever a woman has a problem of either a nonfunctional uterus or absent uterus (following hysterectomy or since birth) she can now opt for Surrogacy. So, even though a woman has reached a age of 40 years and is minus a uterus, she can still have her own biological baby made from her own egg and husband's sperm fertilized in the laboratory, and implanted in a surrogate. A surrogate is a young woman who carries another couple's baby, within her uterus, delivers the baby, and hands it over to them. Of course; it is not as simple as it sounds. It involves a highly skilled and technical process of aspirating the biological mother's eggs from her ovaries, fertilizing them with the biological father's sperm, creating an embryo within a very specialized lab, and transferring the embryo into the artificially prepared lining of the uterus of the surrogate which readily accepts the embryo.

The pregnant surrogate goes through the pregnancy with all the support, nutrition, vitamins, and her needs are well looked after the biological couple along with their gynecologist. The surrogate goes through the inconvenience of a nine months pregnancy and maybe its complications and also suffers the pangs of labour. Once the baby, is born the surrogates responsibility is over and the biological mother takes over. A lot of legal issues are involved; hence a contract is signed between the two sets of parents prior to the initiation of treatment.

Fortunately in India, surrogates are available easily. Within a family, a woman is always willing to oblige her sister, her sister-in-law and her near and dear ones. But outside of families too, surrogates are available for a price. Besides earning money, they have a feeling of satisfaction that they have been able to assist another of their fraternity, to

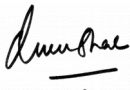
become a mother. This very combination of low socio economic status with a value added noble gesture” has made surrogacy very popular in India.

Medical tourism has taken advantage of this fact and many international couples, and gay couples have been utilizing this facility in our country. In our own Assisted Reproduction Center in Mumbai, we have been inundated with such enquires and couples are flying in from every where in the world in order to have a baby. In a way I feel happy for our women who opt to become surrogates—it gives them a sudden boost financially which they would not dream of, for years together! It gives them a certain status in their families, because now they are bringing in the money. It brings a smile on everyone’s faces, the biological parents, the surrogate and us the doctors!

Surrogacy: Couples who benefit maximum from it are:-

- i. Women who are born with an absent uterus.
- ii. Women who have lost their uterus due to surgery where the uterus could not be saved.
- iii. Women who have repeated miscarriages.
- iv. Women who are medically not allowed to get pregnant. eg. women who have a severe cardiac problem or severe kidney disease.
- v. Women with repeated IVF failures.

Assisted Reproduction Technology (A.R.T.) has truly revolutionized the concept of having a baby. The success of an Infertility clinic truly lies in the art of A.R.T.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anurag', with a horizontal line underneath it.