



SURROGACY

Perhaps Parenthood requires love,
not DNA

A technique utilized by IVF experts to assist couples to

have their own biological children with the assistance of other women who have the capability to bear children, is the only way for women who are born without a uterus, or have untreatable uterine disease, or whose uteri has been removed for medical reasons or who have medical reasons for not carrying a pregnancy to enjoy motherhood. If science has the possibility to help these unfortunate women, it is only ethical to provide them such assistance.

Surrogacy is termed altruistic when a dear friend or relative is willing to carry the pregnancy on behalf of the concerned woman, without any commercial benefits.

Whilst commercial surrogacy is one where an unrelated woman is willing to carry the patient's baby and hand over the baby after the delivery for a fee.

Enhancing the medical tourism industry

In some countries surrogacy is legal, whilst in some it is banned, both for legal and ethical reasons. The recent success with uterine transplantation in carrying pregnancies to term may replace surrogacy in future, once transplantation is available to all, which may realistically take another 10 years. Till then, surrogacy will be the mainstay of helping such women to have their own biological children. In India, as IVF centers with excellent medical expertise matching international standards are available in India, with the entire treatment at a lower cost, surrogacy became popular with the international clientele. This is a similar situation with international patients coming to India for various medical treatments, through medical tourism.

The money game

Thus surrogacy, which is actually a medical treatment, became extremely popular in India and the business world looked at it as a huge industry because of the allied services which were required. Services obtained through the travel industry, hotel industry, hospitals, surrogacy homes, etc. got involved through agencies which promoted surrogacy abroad. Surrogates earned money for their childrens' education and bought better homes for themselves. Even though IVF experts collected their professional fees, it was the agencies who got the maximum financial gains. With the lure of money, many illegal and unethical practices came into play, mainly because this medical treatment with so many ramifications does not have any monitoring agency to overlook assisted reproduction, just as it occurs in other countries.

The dilemma

As and when some unfortunate events occurred, there was a regulation brought in. Those who adhered to legal and ethical practices, followed such notifications from the regulatory authorities, but some continued the illegal and unethical practices.

The ART Draft Bill which has been in existence since 2008 for assisted reproduction, has not yet been passed in the Parliament, and as the years have gone by, it has

been constantly updated till 2014. It has finally been put up on the website of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and was open for public debate till the 15th of November 2015 following which it was supposed to be finalized.

But before that deadline, all IVF Centers received a letter from the ICMR asking them to stop

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international surrogacy overnight! This has caused a lot of confusion for IVF experts who have been stopped from completing treatments halfway and have left hundreds of foreign couples in a lurch! Yes, it is agreeable that there should be a law in place and a proper monitoring agency appointed to make sure that legal and ethical practices are followed. But there should be a proper plan in place and not knee-jerk reactions to







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unfortunate incidents which may occur from time to time.

Whether Surrogacy is ethical or unethical is an issue which is debatable, depending on whom you speak to and whose viewpoints are stronger, the jury is still out there on this issue. But why this hurry to ban something without waiting for the deadline? Are surrogates really exploited by foreign clients? It is kind of disagreeable because most of the foreign clients have done something more for their surrogates who have assisted them in bringing so much joy to their lives. Our national and international patients respect surrogates, they love them for what they have done for them and besides paying their dues as per their contracts with

the surrogates, they have given them much more than they asked for, mainly towards the education of their children.

If one talks to surrogates who have been engaged at ethical centers, one would find that they all feel good about participating in the surrogacy program, because it gives them a better status at their homes, they are well cared for during their pregnancies like never before and deliver in hospitals which they could never have afforded before; and they envisage a better future for their children for the efforts they have put in.

Everyone has their viewpoint, and it is high time that authorities give an opportunity to all to voice their opinion before bringing on another ban!



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