

Surrogacy- A view –by All India Women’s Conference (AIWC), presented at a Seminar on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2015 at a meeting of International Alliance of Women (IAW) at Paris.

No doubt surrogacy is a technical marvel, but All India Women’s Conference (AIWC) strongly feels that this is exploitation of a women’s body and must be stopped immediately. Allowing Surrogacy is to make use of women’s bodies and reproductive organs for the enjoyment of someone else to the detriment of the woman herself.

Women must have the right to their bodily integrity and have fundamental human rights over a supposed right for parents to have children. Children always have the right to have parents but there is no human right for parents to have children.

In the Indian context, I would like to give you the picture of “ Anand” clinic in Gujarat, India, Dr. Patel is having roaring business and she says the business has taken off beyond anything she imagined. She admits there are dangers if the surrogacy business continues to grow in India because there are little regulations by Indian medical council therefore strict rules are required to avoid exploitation of women. The world’s first baby factory is being built in India to house hundreds of poor women to be used as surrogate mothers to have children for western couples.

In “Anand” clinic , Dr. Patel has 45 mothers for surrogacy and 27 are already pregnant. Nearly 50 babies have been born during the last one year. Another 150 couples are still waiting. In the West, a surrogate mother charges US\$5000 to 7000, where as in India it can be done at half the price. It is sheer exploitation of a poor woman who earns \$2 a day in her regular job.

Published on 1-10-2013 by Daily Mail report, “ the multi million pound clinic which is being built by Dr. Patel at Anand will have self catering department for western couples, a floor for surrogate mothers, delivery room, I.V.F. department, restaurant and gift shop. This is going to become booming trade in India, which is sheer exploitation of women bodies.

**Economic Impact** – it is true that the surrogate mother is given a good amount of money which she can never dream of earning by any other means. The amount she gets is equal to ten years salary of her husband in rural India. In one case while talking to the surrogate mother she informed that she has 5 children of her own and she is carrying a surrogate child because she was going to use that money for her daughter’s wedding and for building a house, She is forced by her husband to carry the surrogate child without bothering about her health. This is exploitation by husband who will think that his wife is a machine for earning money. Therefore, it can make him lazy and alcoholic and the brunt will be borne by the women. Therefore, she is physically explicated, emotionally exploited and further suffers the economic impact also.

**Social Impact** - In India there is a social stigma for the surrogate mothers as she is renting her womb for money. This is not looked up as a healthy occupation and decent way of earning money. This attitude is especially in the rural areas where it is considered an immoral act.

**Emotional Trauma** – no emotional feeling of the mother for the child. As per the contract the surrogate mother has to sign an agreement she will relinquish all parental right over the child and

it is accepted that the surrogate mother will have no emotional attachment with the child. Which seems to be very un-natural because the child in the womb imbibes the emotions and thoughts of love & care of the mother? What kind of a child will she give birth to.

Real life case as recorded by one of our members Kuljit Kaur when she interviewed a lady who was surrogate mother for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time. She was asked what she felt while giving away her first child who was a daughter. There were tears in her eyes and she said I have carried her for nine months & how is it possible that I do not miss her. It causes emotional imbalance and leads to the emotional cruelty to the mother.

Children are not a commodity on a market and women's rights cannot be negotiable by privileged buyers who want to rent her womb. Childless parents may benefit by having a baby but the human rights issue is the only way to deal with this issue. The rights of women and children and not the buyer must be the focus of this issue.

In India there is no law to govern surrogacy. The Assisted Reproductive Technologies (Regulation) Bill has been pending for five years and the clinics have become an industry working with loosely governed guidelines by the Indian Council of Medical Research.

All India Women's Conference strongly feels that in the orphanages all over the world there are abandoned and orphan children who can be adopted by the couples who cannot produce babies. It will give a safe healthy and secure home to the child and the satisfaction to have a baby in the house to the couple. We suggest that work on less cumbersome laws for adoption of babies should be done immediately. We cannot have a society where another can be exploited for the desire of the other.

I appeal to the President of IAW to issue a statement to the world forum to abolish surrogacy all over the world- whether it is free or not.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to express my view.

Veena Kohli  
President, All India Womens Conference  
6, Bhagwandas Road  
New Delhi 11001, India  
T: +9111-23389680, 23389314, M :9810469223.