

## **SURROGACY: CHANGING PATTERNS OF LIFE FORMS IN KISHWAR DESAI'S ORIGINS OF LOVE (2012)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The research paper aims to analyze the situation, where the old order of any of the ways of living paves the way for some new and awe-inspiring modes of living, and throws open a plethora of opportunities for the weaker sections of society, to mull over some new terrains of revenue. We are living in an ever changing and evolving world. However, the change has never been as speedy as it has been for the last two decades. New strides in technology and science have transformed the world where some new possibilities have emerged and seem to have empowered the subjects, with little skill. The paper shows that, the women from weaker sections of society who opt for surrogacy, a new way of earning and also a new form of exploitation.

**KEYWORDS:** Surrogate-Mother, Denaturalized Identities, Hetero-Normative Circles, Embryo

### **INTRODUCTION**

Kishwar Desai's novel *Origins of Love* (2012), takes Indian fiction to the realms of that social reality, where writerly imagination breeds that imaginative paraphernalia, where science and technology open up the new thematic concerns that have never been dealt with, earlier. The concept of motherhood has been so much revolutionize that, a whole new social reality becomes the buzz word for traditional motherhood. This text under analysis brings the concept of commercialized motherhood, where the womb is hired for the span of nine months and the hired mother in return gets economic dividends. However, the process does not bring easy money, as the surrogate mother has to pass through physical and psychological traumas. In this age of globalization, the equations of geopolitics, trade and commerce and motherhood and even family, are constantly changing. Subhash., who runs a surrogacy clinic in Gurgaon, ponders over the ever changing dynamics of motherhood. "Subhash reflected that, globalization had made motherhood complex, almost beyond belief-and its boundaries were constantly shifting, as everyone searched for the immaculate conception and birth" (74). The practice of surrogacy may also disrupt the idea of family, where a mother ends up giving birth to her own daughter's child, since the daughter is not in a position to carry an infant to full term ". IVF had not only transformed the destiny of women, it had also completely disrupted the idea of a family" (75).

As time rolls by, the concepts, theories and ways of doing things have undergone tremendous changes. As gender has come out of the heteronormative circles and has legitimized other forms of gender in the recent times, same is the case of motherhood that can even nurture itself out of the conjugal bond. So, 'gender' and 'surrogacy' is meant to establish that, "reality" is not as fixed as we generally assume it to be. The concept of 'surrogacy' has been quite a buzz word for the last one and a half decades. It has drawn the flak, as well as attraction of common populace, respective Govts., and legal

paraphernalia. Kishwar Desai, in *Origins of Love* comes out with the dismal picture of Indian women, who opt for surrogacy as the multiple glitches involved in surrogacy add to their woes, as the commodification of the womb only promotes the culture of 'use and throw'. They are subjected to that kind of pre-natal and post-natal oppressive apparatus, that, only makes the second binary less powerful. The emotional and psychological trauma that the surrogate mother must be undergoing in a form of legitimized violence brings to mind what Derrida has written in his famous book of *Grammatology*

...But, it also denudes that, that which since then functioned as the proper, the so-called proper, substitute of the deferred proper, perceived by the social and moral consciousness as the proper, the reassuring seal of self-identity, the secret" (Derrida: 112).

As gender is not confined to only male and female, similarly, Surrogacy has also cemented the bond between gay and lesbian couples as they see the ray of hope in a surrogate mother who may provide them with a child, that otherwise would not have been possible. The textual analysis presents the case, where gay and lesbian couples seek to circumnavigate the non-normative circle, where 'parenthood' comes out of the strictly defined 'heteronormative' approach and perches itself on the ever changing dynamics of life forms in which the areas of utter impossibilities create the new pathways of post-structural and post-modern thinking where the watertight compartments of the earlier fixed realities throw open some equations that may take some time for their existence. The ontological structures do not obey the laws of fixed identities. As Judith Butler has rightly asserted

This issue has become more acute as we consider various new forms of tendering that have emerged in light of transgenderism and transsexuality, lesbian and gay parenting, new butch and femme identities. When and why, for instance, do some butch lesbians who become parents become "dads" and others become "moms"? (Butler: XII).

Lydia and Nicolas, the gay French couple, provide much banter as they are debunked by various organizations for using Indian women as surrogates since this practice only promotes immorality. Radhika had been used by this couple and she has been shown as one of the most exploited surrogates as merely a sixteen year old girl undergoes surrogacy twice with only a gap of six months.

One thing that comes out vividly while analyzing the text is that poor women undergo the kind of medical procedure that only promises more wealth to the doctors concerned "The profit was over 1000 percent because the main cost remained organizing the surrogate and monitoring her for nine months" (110). This kind of development adds more intrigue to the drama. Most of the surrogates produce children in the western world and money is no constraint for them. Sometimes the amount doubles when the gay and lesbian couples demand the services of a surrogate mother. However, the major chunk of money goes to the doctors and commission agents. The poor ladies like Reena and Preeti go in for surrogacy whose own children die of malnutrition. Reena's child dies unwept before her fifth birthday and "No one in the family had been perturbed since the deaths of baby girls were a routine occurrence" (283). It is tragic to see what happens with these surrogates. Most of the surrogates in India become surrogates not for themselves, but for their families. Here giving birth is tantamount to giving economic security to others. The easy availability of surrogates and their readiness to plunge themselves into the morass without knowing much about the procedural violence and hiccups speaks volumes of their suppressed identity and knowledge. One more lucrative option for women is to donate their eggs.

The young girls like Radhika start donating their eggs from the age of adolescence, as the scrupulous doctors like Dr. Ganguly (as shown in the text) harvests the eggs to produce multiple embryos to churn out dollars and pounds, from commissioning parents.

Motherhood, (surrogate mothers) which is a signed contract disassociates itself from the crude emotions and the sense of attachment, with the newborn baby is severed by the dictates of the signed contract. Reena in this text is shown to be the victim of emotional violence that generally comes with the birth of a child. However, Preeti another surrogate mother makes her understand the reality; "In the lessons they had been given in the hospital, they had been clearly told that, they had to divide their heads from their hearts, and realize from day one that they should have no emotional attachment to the child, in their womb" (288).

In this scheme of technological bonanza, 'zygotes' and 'embryos' become the centre of attraction, as it goes through a very different kind of gestation period, where the natural selection and the act becomes so much denaturalized that, human existence is also possible in a laboratory where the embryo becomes a fetus and ultimately assumes the full form, and goes to the brave new world, where the de-naturalized identities undertake the whole new journey. The textual analysis shows India to be the hub of surrogate industry, where the clinics like Madonna and Child in Gurgaon create the new pathways for assisted reproduction; "Who would have imagined a few years ago that sperm and eggs flown in from all over the world would be turned into babies in India?" (248). The text throws the hint, where surprising developments create whole new possibilities, where embryonic stem cell surgeries are the new weapons in the armory of the doctors, to fight and cure deadly diseases. Embryonic cells are the miracle cure and the healing of any part of the body is no less than a miracle; "They had the power to take the shape of whatever damaged part of the body they had been injected into and provide a replacement" (426).

Different metropolitan locations shown in this text like Mumbai, Gurgaon, Delhi and London internationalize the act of surrogacy, where different hues of womanhood and exploitation associated with it, come to the fore. The position and occupation of the Sub Inspector Diwan Nath Mehta and his boss Nazir Ali in Mumbai, as a customs official prepares them to deal with all types of legal and illegal consignments. Their derogatory and instigating remarks about the suspected material (embryos in containers), show their indignation towards this development. Mehta comes out with one more possibility, where the fair-skinned children of surrogate mother would be inducted in the sex trade. He opines, "These embryos could be implanted into women to produce fair-skinned children, who would then be inducted into the sex trade" (420). In other metropolitan area (Delhi), surrogacy assumes the bigger pedestal, that gives birth to political intrigues, where the crisis in political affairs may be brought back to normalcy by resorting to surrogacy. Sonia's choice to become the surrogate for the British couple, is thwarted by Rohit as he wants her to act as a surrogate for Renu madam and Vineet Bhai, the political leaders of the country. The dire need for a political heir, throws open the chapter of intrigues in political circles. Sonia finds herself flanked by the politics of caste, where her being a Dalit woman brings her less honor and grace in spite of the fact that, she was going to the political heir. And, the next place (London) becomes the place of the busiest activities, for the mouthpiece of the writer, Simran Singh, who embarks on a journey to England, to find the actual causes of baby Amelia's medical condition. The scientific and technological wonder, whose name is surrogacy is rampantly practiced in Gurgaon, where the fertility clinics, raise motherhood to that level, where it finds its reincarnation. It is in Gurgaon that, the writer describes her point of view through the process of surrogacy that comes with its own pros and cons. The air in London is such that, it provides the much needed oxygen for couples, when they look at the calendar

and devise the ways to look for Indian surrogates. The story of Ben and Kate located in London is the predicament of filial love, whose ripples only spread acute depressive syndrome for the couple. Their search for a child ends in India when, they adopt the abandoned child baby Amelia and take her back to London, and tread the path of parenthood.

The practice of surrogacy is intrinsically linked with women and their tendency to fit in with the miraculous reproductive drama, in which the 'zygote' turns into an 'embryo' and then takes the form of a fetus. This twenty first century condition, invites the feminists to ponder over and explore the new terrains of feminist activity, where the concept of victim and victimizer has become wider and needs to be scrutinized, from a different perspective and in a way interrupts the feminist discourse and ideology. Jaspal Singh, Parveen Kaur Khanna and Arvind Khanna opine in this regards; "So, apart from the traditional form of violence of patriarchy and its other allied forces, the violence generated through the help of technology on the womb of the mother, is the cult of violence by practicing non-violent ideology" (13)

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