

Shattered Visage : The Real Face of IVF ,Surrogacy and Modified Babies in Pinki Virani's Book *Politics of the Womb*

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Abstract: Since procreation is the mainstay of humanity , it has been one of the most discussed themes across the world literature, myths and history. It was also treated by the male society as the only way to prove their manliness, propagating genealogy and prestige. Preserving the tradition and legacy through the so called 'heir' considered to be the greatest achievement from times immemorial. But, in the age of scientific advancement and information explosion, even in 21 century, the attempts of coercive or artificial birthing and fertility is still frantically rampant and becoming detrimental to the human race especially to the very women species. The paper focuses how Pinki Virani in her investigative and thought provoking book *Politics of the Womb: The Perils of Surrogacy, IVF, Surrogacy & Modified Babies(2017)* throws light upon the greedy and commercial reproduction industry and examines not only its rates of success and failure, but also the long-term effects of the procedures on mother and child. For her, it's a business of baby-making. She proves, through the artificial process, how the human element is sacrificed and uses and reuses women. Writing the first book of its kind anywhere in the world, the author gathers various proofs from global experts shows how the business mafia by business interest of a burgeoning repro tech industry causes fatal damages to humanity in general and women in specific. This paper meticulously explores the author's concern for women and provides urgent message to prospective parents, young women, and men to take a long, hard look at artificial reproduction so as to be seduced by its seemingly miraculous medico-technology.

Key words: *Surrogacy, IVF ,Surrogacy, Modified Babies, deadly diseases, medico technology, artificial reproduction.*

Pinki Virani (born January 30, 1959) a national award winning Indian writer, journalist, and human-rights activist, is renowned for her influential investigative books and novels namely *Once was Bombay*, *Aruna's Story*, *Bitter Chocolate: Child Sexual Abuse in India* and *Deaf Heaven*, continues her saga of exploring untold stories of women in her recent fifth book *Politics of the Womb -- The Perils of Ivf, Surrogacy & Modified Babies*.

Coherently drafted with twelve chapters, the book logically unravels the wrapped mystery of artificial reproduction that takes place around the world.

The *Foreword* records her opening remarks by quoting Carl Sagan, Virani establishes that a riot is organized on women in a slow motion engineered inside her body intended to take her part and part and profitable part. In the name of spirituality, science and genealogy how women are expected from the day one in her life. She states,

“The slow rampage in the name of God-for hers is the womb and she shall conceive.

In the name of the science- for hers is the hostile uterus and medical arbitration must arbitrate.

In the name of her child- for how can she desist, obliged as she is to not deny society defying solely in the name of motherhood.” [*Politics Of The Womb*,1]

She makes fun on how the sperm and egg are scientifically abracadabra-ed to make embryo-the beginning of what may, or may not, become conceptus to settle down in as a fetus in the women's uterus. She demands both men and women to question themselves whether it is only sham not to have children and not having maternal deaths due to IVF or during or after delivery. She says these news are not popular combatively as childlessness because they are not paid to carry their own babies. She also questions the every government mandatorily look into oocyte trafficking-where excess eggs are yanked out of women for commercial gains- and take stern steps to stop it. Perhaps for her stealing excess eggs is like human trafficking before birth. Collecting information from experts and world class journals like Lancet, Virani says the success rate of artificial

fertilization is very much low and people spend thousands of dollars for more than six or seven times failures. She quotes what experts like Dr. Geetha Nagrund says, “Women and their babies are being put at risk by aggressive IVF [TPOW,23].”

In the second chapter titled *Vagina versus Womb*, by phrasing ,’Men are from wombs, women are from vaginas,’[TPOW, 33], Virani points out how right from the beginning, the language around the women’s body has been framed by men. She says,

“ Sisters under the skin all women are not, no more than all men are brothers by their balls. But the womb, ah there it is , uniting women once they are condemned as infertile, though its completes medicalization. Break down their bodies into parts, isolate the womb, identify within its commercial components-ova, uterus, colonies each apart separately, then rule. Divide , Conquer [TPOW, 33].”

Woman for what she waits and wants is chemically pregnant, which is not known at all to her. Although, there is nothing like ‘biological destiny’ to both men and women [TPOW, 39], men play the word game. For men, its politely ‘womb’ but for women its ‘vagina.’ She also briefly discusses how various countries exploit artificial fertilization for regulatory legislation to be the best advantage. Many European countries, China and Australia regulate birth rate based on their requirement . Sex Selection is on the agenda in Australia. Chinese based on their population control they may increase the children rate or decrease. European counties need more young people to work in various industries, so they need some boys and some girls. They either stop or process or control the birth rate. Among all these issues , it’s true that finally women is the victim to sacrifice her body as a scapegoat.

The third chapter *Unpregnant* , Virani points out how childlessness is considered to be the greatest problem to couple across the world history and cultures. No favourite folk is complete without issue of childlessness. She questions the age old notion of not conceiving children by women is a curse and she has to bear the sole responsibility. History offers no redemption without reproduction. Women who are fertile can enjoy great social status . women who are infertile has been treated as a cursed one . According

to psychology people who cannot accept their childlessness are neurotic.’ [TPOW, 67]. Virani daringly questions the role and possibility of pregnancy by both men and women. She brings out all the origin and derivation of the word ‘hormone’ and ‘sperm’ and tries to validate the role of couple in child bearing. The author strongly feels the role of nature in conception and everybody has to accept the reality. Childlessness is not a crime. That’s why she says. “ the opposition to freedom is coercion , not determinism.” [TPOW, 33]. By quoting Dr. Robert Winston, “ failure to conceive is a female problem in just over a third of the cases,” [TPOW,82], the author discusses many practical questions related to medical issues that should be followed by both genders. Then only the issue of unpregnancy is resolved.

The fourth chapter *Buy, Bye Baby* begins with a sharp opening. She wonders that the natural baby is prayed for but the IVF baby is paid for. This is an almost a methodological chapter which discusses some of the major side effects of artificial babies evidences collected from the specialists in the area. She after explaining some major terms that are demystified, she categorically discusses nine problems that attached with the *IVF* and *ICSI* babies. She points out how the reports reveal some shocking issues. There are some birth defects to fertility techniques. The risk is two to four time more in babies born with help of assisted methods than on infants conceived naturally. The defects include heart problem, cleft lip, cleft palate abnormalities in the esophagus or rectum. There are growth and development related issues like adverse perinatal outcome, congenital mal formations and rare epigenetic defects. Lower performance of IQ levels may also a significant cognitive defect observed in the babies. The issues like autism and mental retardation among children born after IVF. Children born from assisted reproduction can have cerebral palsy. Finally , the author also discusses the possibility of getting cancer. Therefore she summarizes and asks the viability of being called ‘noble’ or ‘moral’ of buying children artificially. She states,

“Begetting children doesn’t make one noble or moral. It merely makes one a parent [tpow,117]”

In fifth chapter *Wee Bit Pregnant*, Virani provides many case studies of the parents across the world who tried for artificial children and questions the so called parenthood, especially the fatherhood. For instance, She states

“In June 2014 an American couple had a baby boy through a fertility clinic. Born healthy, his blood type didn’t match that of his parents. The paternity test which followed showed that the thirty four year old man was not this child’s father. The couple went to the fertility clinic but it was proved there was no sperm mix up. The clinic has records that the man was the only white one to supply sperm on the day this particular in vitro procedure was started. The child looked white [TPOW,143].”

Next chapter *Eggsploitaion* is an interesting one where , Virani explores the business takes place around the world in selling and buying women’s eggs for artificial conception. She explains various reasons for eggs selling among women and below poverty line. She reveal astonishing facts that even young girls sell their eggs for money due their poverty by force. Virani states the one girl was forced to sell her eggs eighteen times in India. She records numerable facts and figure around the world how medical mafia does business through brokers as well as medical staff. In India is ‘*andaa dandaa*’ means ‘egg’ and ‘business’. Bothe extracting and invasion are harmful to both women and have several side effects. Virani doubts even if fertility clinics stopped buy future law from harvesting eggs from women who are not directly parents for personal reproduction, and there are specific oocyte banks to do so, it its medical exploitation. [TPOW,82]. She records the plight of a woman,

“A twenty seven year old woman was forced, within one year of being married, to sell one kidney. Then her husband and mother –in –law got her to sell her eggs eighteen times.... She had been forced to be a surrogate once. She ran away from house and took refuge in women’s shelter taking her daughter with her. Her husband followed her and stabbed her. I requested the National Human Rights Commission to take *suo moto* notice and take action. They did nothing [TPOW,82].”

Professor Suneetha Reddy points out that human egg selling and commercial surrogacy provide the ‘perfect context’ for Indian women to be sucked under, ‘ the deep dark sea of medical markets’. [TPOW,82].”

In *Sins Of Our Fathers*, Pinki Virani records for kids in the through surrogacy, how the aged rich country people deplore the poor people from countries like third world countries and their medical consequences. The author narrates how an American couple in their mid fifties fly into India to buy their child through commercial surrogacy. The man had his pick from Indian women, young enough to be his daughters all lined up by the Ivf manufacturing workshop. His great facilitator who arranged everything said,

“Having a baby in international surrogacy is much like dealing in the stock market. If I know I have million dollars to invest I need to go to a good broker [TPOW,187].”

The author mainly finds out that the surrogacy that done through the aged parents through young women result a psychological disorder called schizophrenia among the adult offsprings. Advanced paternal age is associated with impaired neuro cognitive outcomes during infancy and childhood. Infertile man older than 40 years are at high risk of sperm damage. A child born to a 45 years old father is 3.5 times more likely to have autism, 13 times more likely to have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, two times more like to have a psychotic disorder, 25 times more likely to have bipolar disorder and 2.5 times more likely to have suicidal behavior or substance abuse. All these , she attributes the deliberate sins that transferred by surrogacy from the fathers to the children. That’s why she says ,” men are often bad, babies never are [TPOW,187].”

Under the title *Pregnant*, Virani brilliantly narrates how a pregnant woman undergoes various physical, physiological, psychosomatic, social and cultural experiences. Perhaps . this is one of the only and the best chapter that describes the nobleness of a mothers pain wonderfully described in Indian English writing. The author describes various organs

such as uterus, vagina, pelvis and cervix, the pregnant women undergo a radical change. During the nine plus months of carrying. The pregnant women also experience change in her breast, digestive system, varicose veins, hemorrhoids, respiratory system and musculoskeletal changes in post delivery situation. The author also narrates how she starts a foetus and mother bondage between mother and child during the nine plus months time. The news of pregnancy although is a good news to many the process is painful to her. The post delivery treatment in countries like India is not respectful as she need to undergo some religious observations . All these are unfortunately due to either artificial process or surrogacy is really a concern according to her which question the meaning of the motherhood. She questions the medical intelligentsia,

“The cardiologist who thinks the heart is a wonderful organ has never heard of the uterus [TPOW,217].”

The chapter named *Milk of human kindness* is dedicated to bring out the wonder works of mother milk. Virani shows the philanthropic work offered by parents, and family by donating mother's milk to premature babies at free of cost. She also provides information how various countries are supplying human milk through milk banks. According to Anne Groovslien there are 'about 500 milk banks across the world [TPOW,217].' The author is really successful in collecting and discussion the wonder works of mother's milk to both mother and child. Author reveals how while feeding, the mother feels the warmth and aroma bond in the skin to skin contact and resultant releasing hormones will repair her post delivery body. Breast feeding is useful to both the baby and mother by combating obesity and losing weight respectively. Most significantly breast feeding can reduce the risk of getting cancers in the mother, even if she has it in the family. Virani also discusses the medical advantages to baby in breast feeding. Mother's milk is the best for babies brain. Mother's milk protects against persistent stuttering. Mother's milk reduces the risk of attention deficient hyper activity disorder. Breastfed children are at lower risk of leukemia. Mother's milk is a gift which keeps on giving , benefits can be felt even decade later. Mother's milk can strengthen the gut by providing needed probacterial support. Finally, she expresses her worry and proves her concern for women

community on the decline of breast feeding rate worldwide. That's why she boldly praises the mother milk as, " Forever fresh, perfectly premixed, perfectly warm , from cute containers [TPOW,232]."

In the tenth chapter *In cold domain* is dedicated to discuss the perils of surrogacy. Pinki Virani says that women wants enjoy pregnancy but she can't due to surrogacy. There are pre, during and post delivery medical consequences involved in the process. Her body undergoes a kind of medicalized process. She is monitored like a machine always several injections need to be done for every cause. Finally mother can't enjoy the relationship with her baby. Mr. Cooks also speaks against surrogacy, " Personally ,I find it immoral. It commodifies the3 baby too[TPOW,273]." Author also provides the arguments of the homosexuals, lesbians, gays and single fathers for choosing surrogacy and exposes various threats involved in them to the babies. She quotes the 'gaybe revolution (gay baby) is leading to ' shameful neglect of abandons children [TPOW,274].'

Virani categorically points out what are the advantages of stopping commercial surrogacy. Stopping commercial surrogacy for countries like India will stop fresh baby flesh for international pedophiles. It will also stop breaking of the laws and stops creating stateless babies. Stopping commercial surrogacy also stops transporting babies to single man across the Nepal borders. Stopping commercial surrogacy also stops the cesarean deaths and their medical negative consequences like development of autism spectrum disorder, and attention deficient, hyperactivity disorder and a meta analysis. She also says that planned cesarean delivery through Stopping commercial surrogacy will have adverse affects on the childhood health.

In Hatch, match dispatch, Virani discusses the emergence of medical profession and various issues involved in it. She reveals how the medical practice has become money minting method where as a very few still hold the values of the nobleness. ' Greed ' is

said to be the main culprit and the doctors need to be treated like anyone else. She points out what Dr. Kapadia says,

“Some doctors have made sex determination their business, they have changed the demographic of this country. Despite the law, which makes so much paperwork and sets down rigid controls. They circumvent it [TPOW,294].”

The author gathers information from Dr. Kapadia, who hails from the doctors family from three generations, about the genuineness of IVF. There are many evidences that the ivf process has inherent malpractices done by greedy medical experts. She also points out the possibility of gene modification their results on the future generations. medical technology actually abstracts the original rectifying nature of human genes at mitochondria level. She expresses various possibilities of mutating the human gene through this kind of IVF and surrogacy will be a threat to humanity.

By saying , DO not wish women to have power over men, but over herself,’ Pinki Virani pens most remarkable comments on the whole issues of IVF and surrogacy in *Afterword*. She brings out how the post independence India is resurging through various forward ideological developments. While appreciating how even a teenage girl started asking intelligently questions, Virani encourages people start change first to question themselves “ why is it necessary for everyone to have children? which almost solves many problems linger around artificial reproduction. Lack of transparency among parental community , honesty among government officials, and medical mafia are some of the major issues at stake.

“The women’s womb is still the same, since time immemorial. It is that strong, it is that vulnerable. And, yet that all external factors are changed: society, career , workplace, toxic pollution, stress a depleting planet.....all these are now held upto her insides for being unable to be a

part of productivity. The woman who wants a child; there she stands, exactly at that intersection of morality and medicine [TPOW,341].”

Conclusion: By penning her concluding remarks as ‘This book is about choices, informed choices. And women right over her body; [TPOW,341],’ Pinki Virani once again proves her heartbeat that runs around the issues of gender and sexual aggression as also the political-socio violence being imposed on the vulnerable. Pinki Virani remains truly a remarkable activist who relentlessly campaigns for human dignity and individual rights in Indian writing and journalism.

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