

Impact of Reproductive Technologies on Women's Lives in New Delhi: A Study from Feminist Perspective

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Abstract : This paper is concerned with the ways in which Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) affect women's lives and perceptions regarding their infertility, contraception and reproductive health. Like other female animals, nature has ordained human female with the biological potential of procreation and becoming mother. However, during the last few decades, this phenomenal disposition of women has become a technological affair to achieve fertility and contraception. Medical practices in patriarchal societies are governed by male scientists, technical and medical professionals who try to control women as procreator instead of providing them choices. The use of ARTs presents innumerable waxed ethical questions and issues such as: the place and role of a child in a woman's life, freedom of women to make their choices related to use of ARTs, challenges and complexities women face at social and personal levels regarding use of ARTs, effect of ARTs on their life as mothers and other relationships. The paper is based on a survey study to explore and analyze the above ethical issues arising from the use of Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) by women in New Delhi, the capital of India. A rapid rate of increase in fertility clinics has been noticed recently. It is claimed that these clinics serve women by using ARTs procedures for infertile couples and individuals who want to have child or terminate a pregnancy. The study is an attempt to articulate a critique of ARTs from a feminist perspective. A qualitative feminist research methodology has been adopted for conducting the survey study. An attempt has been made to identify the ways in which a woman's life is affected in terms of her perceptions, apprehensions, choices and decisions regarding new reproductive technologies. A sample of 18 women of New Delhi was taken to conduct in-depth interviews to investigate their perception and response concerning the use of ARTs with a focus on (i) successful use of ARTs, (ii) unsuccessful use of ARTs, (iii) use of ARTs in progress with results yet to be known. The survey was done to investigate the impact of ARTs on women's physical, emotional, psychological conditions as well as on their social relations and choices. The complexities and challenges faced by women in the voluntary and involuntary (forced) use of ARTs in Delhi have been illustrated. A critical analysis of interviews revealed that these technologies are used and developed for making profits at the cost of women's lives through which economically privileged women and individuals are able to purchase services from lesser ones. In this way, the amalgamation of technology and cultural traditions are redefining and re-conceptualising the traditional patterns of motherhood, fatherhood, kinship and family relations within the realm of new ways of reproduction introduced through the use of ARTs.

Keywords : reproductive technologies, infertilities, voluntary, involuntary

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