

Motherhood Over Surrogacy: A Narrative Analysis of Kinship and Autonomy in the 2021 Hindi Film

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Abstract: This article delves into the multifaceted world of surrogacy, tracing its evolution from ancient practices to its portrayal in contemporary cinema, with a focus on the 2021 Bollywood film *Mimi*. Surrogacy, a beacon of hope for individuals facing infertility, is explored through various lenses, highlighting its complex interplay between altruism and commerce. The narrative of *Mimi*, where a young woman becomes a surrogate mother for a foreign couple, underscores surrogacy's emotional and ethical dimensions, challenging societal norms and legal frameworks. This piece examines surrogacy's representation in films, shedding light on ethical dilemmas, societal challenges, and the profound human desire for parenthood. Through an analysis of historical practices and cinematic portrayals, the article offers a comprehensive understanding of surrogacy's impact on individuals and society, emphasizing the need for empathy and ethical consideration in the evolving landscape of reproductive technologies.

Keywords: Women, Motherhood, Surrogacy, Cinema, Ethical Dilemmas

1. Introduction

In the ever-evolving landscape of modern existence, the concept of surrogacy emerges as a perfect reflection of our species' relentless pursuit of progress amidst the uncertainty of tomorrow. Surrogacy embodies both the promise of new beginnings and the shadow of unanswered questions. It strikes the delicate balance between the desire for advancement and scope to trade yet a profound wavelength of a powerful phenomenon "mother's love".

In today's urban jungle, where mutated and evolved minds reign supreme, the practice of surrogacy stands as a testament to our species' capacity for innovation and adaptation. In a world shaped by globalization and technological advancement, our lives are marked by an insatiable quest for improvement, mirrored by the advancements and innovations of reproductive medicine. As humans, we are the architects of our own destiny, constantly striving to redefine the boundaries of possibility and reshape the contours of our existence. Surrogacy forces us to confront the possibility of missed opportunities and unfulfilled dreams. For those grappling with infertility or reproductive challenges, surrogacy is hope in an otherwise uncertain landscape. It represents a chance to rewrite the narrative of parenthood, to bridge the gap between longing and fulfilment. Yet on the darker hues, surrogacy highlights itself as an essential option for business and commerce. And as a matter of fact, it's more famous that way.

To highlight the whole idea, we have chosen *Mimi* which emerges as a captivating portrayal of the complexities surrounding surrogacy and introspective musings on life, regret, and the pursuit of fulfilment. Directed by Laxman Utekar and produced by Dinesh Vijan, the film delves deep into the human experience, exploring the intersections of love, sacrifice, and the quest for identity. Set against the backdrop of modern-day India, the film follows the journey of its titular character, played with remarkable depth by Kriti Sanon. Through her action, we bear to witness the profound impact of surrogacy on the lives of those involved, from the intended parents desperate for a child to the surrogate mother torn between need, duty and desire to be a mother.

2. Literature Review

Surrogacy a product of modern medical science that involves a woman agreeing to carry a pregnancy for someone else with the intent of giving the custody of the child to the respective parents. Surrogate motherhood is a process in which a woman (the surrogate mother) births a child for a couple who are unable to have children traditionally, often because the wife is infertile or otherwise unable to endure pregnancy. In traditional surrogacy, the surrogate mother becomes fertilized through artificial insemination using the husband's sperm. In gestational surrogacy, the wife's ova and the husband's sperm are in vitro fertilized, and the embryo is put in the surrogate mother.

The issue of infertility has brought surrogacy in the picture which has been our society for quite a long time. The word 'Surrogate' comes from a Latin word *surrogare*, which means 'to put in another's place'. In the year 1978, the word surrogate has been used to describe a woman who carries and give delivery to a baby for another infertile couple.

Previously, surrogacy was frowned upon as physical transmission (intercourse) was the sole method of transferring sperm into a woman's body. New technologies that include in vitro fertilization (IVF) and test-tube babies make it feasible to create a kid without physical transmission, making the technique more advanced.

Surrogate parenting is not an entirely new option for childless couples. In ancient times, a lady with an impotent husband would engage in *Niyog Pratha*, which involved having liaisons with another man. The mother and her family owned the child, and the other person had no rights over it. *Niyog pratha*, commonly known as surrogate fatherhood, involves another individual donating seeds or sperm. It is also described widely in our mythology, and it was practiced, socially acceptable, and even honored. Kartikey, the god of war, also known as the deity of fertility, was conceived by surrogacy through Shiva rather than Parvati's womb, with Ganga serving as the surrogate mother. Balaram, Krishna's seventh child, was born after the embryo was moved to the womb of Rohini (Vasudev's first wife), preventing the infant from being slain by Devaki's brother, Kamsa. Surrogacy is also mentioned in the *Mahabharata* when Draupadi and her

twin brother were born in Yagna Kunda (a pit where the holy fire is lit to perform certain auspicious rituals as per ancient Indian belief).

Surrogacy was not only common in Hindu society but there were also few cases in the time of Jesus. Sarah, Abraham's wife, was unable to conceive children. Sarah gave her maid, Hagar, an Egyptian slave, to her husband Abraham so that they could have a child. According to Mesopotamian legal regulations, the woman could choose whether to have a child through surrogacy. Surrogacy originated 4000 years ago when Jacob, father of the 12 tribes of Israel, and his wife Rachel were unable to have children. Rachel decided to send her husband to her maid, Bilah. The infant belonged to Jacob and Rachel.

Cinema is considered as a powerful medium of mass communication. Various social issues have been brought to the forefront with the help of cinema to reach to the wide audience. The issue of surrogacy has also been attempted by filmmakers over the years and received wide engagement too.

James Bridge, an American director, made the first surrogacy film *The Baby Maker* in 1970. After giving up her kid for adoption, Tish Grey is approached by a childless couple who want her to adopt the husband's child due to the wife's inability to conceive. She accepts the offer, but discovers that getting to know the couple and forming a bond with them over the pregnancy complicated the straightforward arrangement.

Doosri Dulhan is a 1983 Bollywood film starring Sharmila Tagore and Shabana Azmi. The film's plot addressed the sensitive issue of surrogate pregnancy. Renu (Sharmila Tagore) and her husband, Anil (Victor Banerjee), mourn when she fails to have offspring following a miscarriage. But shortly, he goes to a brothel and asks young Chanda (Shabana Azmi) to bear and give birth to a child for his family.

The Surrogate (TV Movie 1995) revolves around the bright and talented student Amy (Alyssa Milano), who responds to an innocent advertisement for a rental property. Here she meets Stuart (David Dukes) and Joan Quinn (Connie Sellecca). After renting the property, she develops a positive relationship with the family. After much fear, the family asks her to be their child's surrogate mother because Joan is no longer able to have children. Amy thinks about it and agrees. When Amy realizes that the family is keeping a horrible secret regarding the death of an earlier baby, she departs, determined not to give up her child.

In 2001, Abbas - Mustan directed *Chori Chori Chupke Chupke*, an unofficial version of *Doosri Dulhan*. Abbas - Mustan effectively conveyed the same issue on screen. The film follows three key characters: Raj Malhotra (Salman Khan), his wife Priya Malhotra (Rani Mukherjee), and Madhubala (Preity Zinta). Madhubala, the prostitute, agrees to be impregnated and then give the kid to the couple (Raj and Priya) for one million rupees. Everything changes as she develops feelings for both the baby and Raj.

Baby Mama is a 2008 Hollywood comedy about a single businesswoman who finds she's infertile and employs a working - class lady as her surrogate. Tina Fey plays Kate

Holbrook, a 37 - year - old Vice President of a health food company who wants to have a baby. Amy Poehler plays Angie, the surrogate Kate hires to live with her after her meticulous arrangements fail. The two women disagree about who will be the surrogate mother and how to prepare for the birth. The film examines the importance of children, women's desire to have children, and the notion that prioritizing a profession over family is detrimental to women.

Good Newwz (2019) is a Bollywood comedy - drama film in which two couples with the same surnames undergo in - vitro fertilization and awaiting the birth of their children. However, problems arise when they discover that the sperm of each partner has been combined with the other.

Surrogacy is the central theme of the 2019 film *Badnaam Gali*. This is the narrative of a pregnant woman who lives alone, without her spouse or any other male. People in the society have questioned his life and character. This film follows the journey of a surrogate mother and her interactions with others around her. Patralekha Paul and Divyendu Sharma have worked in *Badnaam Gali*. Ashwin Shetty directed this picture.

In the film *Mimi*, it is evident that Mimi adopted the procedure of surrogacy initially for money as a medium to reach her dreams of entering into Bollywood. The whole procedure was going smoothly until a catastrophe occurred in the midway. The foreign couple after finding out that there were some abnormalities in the child, they thought of giving up the whole process. The concerned doctor suggests an abortion but Mimi refuses. After carrying the baby for five months in her womb, she has developed an emotional connection which she didn't want to give up. After struggling with all the odds, the baby was born, pure white and flawless who turns out to not have any down syndrome at all. The strong motherly feeling which Mimi had developed all these months made her give up her dreams and stay in a small town to raise the child.

Yashoda is a 2022 Indian Telugu - language action thriller film. In a highly structured hospital for surrogate mothers, a woman named Yashoda realizes that not everything is as it seems. Yashoda, an innocent woman, due to her circumstances volunteers to serve as a surrogate mother. She then finds herself caught in a world of uncertainty. Surrogacy is a new concept in Telugu cinema, and the narrative sets it up effectively. This provides Yashoda with an entirely new position.

Surrogacy, an emotive intersection of life, love, and commerce, walks the fine line between the essence of motherhood and the harsh realities of the modern market. Surrogacy, at its foundation, is the noble concept of one woman giving the gift of life to another, joining two souls in a shared journey of creation and nurture. However, as the wheels of capitalism revolve, surrogacy takes on a dual nature, evolving into a commercial operation in which the exchange of dollars for womb space undermines the sacredness of mother ties.

In this surreal context, the surrogate mother serves as both a vessel and a vendor, her body a vessel for another's desire, and her time and effort defined in monetary terms. Childbirth, which was once a deeply intimate experience, has become

commodified, raising ethical quandaries and societal concerns. Can the sacred act of creating life be reduced to a contractual agreement? Is the trade of money impairing the purity of motherhood's embrace?

As the voyage advances, the surrogate mother faces tricky emotional ground. Initially separated, she holds the seed of someone else's longing, her womb cradling a destiny different than her own. However, when life blooms within her, a delicate change occurs. The rhythmic beat of a little heart, the flutter of tiny limbs, reactivates a latent link that binds her to the life she carries. In the shadows of relaxing contracts and legal duties, an unspoken bond emerges, challenging the confines of trade.

Mimi (Movie)

Mimi is a 2021 Bollywood comedy drama film directed by Laxman Utekar and produced by Dinesh Vijan of Maddock Films. It is an adaptation of the 2011 Marathi film *Mala Aai Vhhaychy*, in which Kriti Sanon plays the lead role of a woman who chooses to take on the role of surrogate mother for a couple from abroad.

From the hectic streets of Rajasthan to the touching scenes in the film, *Mimi* invites you to join its cast of people on a unique journey filled with laughter, tears, and everything in between. *Mimi* seeks to catch your imagination and leave you speechless with its sad storytelling and compelling performances, led by the outstanding Kriti Sanon and supported by a stellar ensemble comprising Evelyn Edwards, Aidan Whytock, and Pankaj Tripathy. So, grab your seat, and prepare to be carried away on a cinematic thrill unlike any other, with each moment a monument to the eternal power of love and the beauty of the human experience. *Mimi* - a Bollywood masterpiece where hearts are touched, and lasting memories are formed.

The surrogacy dramedy follows with an American couple, Summer (Evelyn Edward's) & John (Aidan Whytock) looking for a healthy Indian woman to be their surrogate. Summer who lived in Delhi for a long time, understands the Indian culture well. They explained the situation and asked their driver Bhanu (Pankaj Tripathy) to help them find a woman who is healthy enough to carry a baby in exchange of Rs 20 lakh. Bhanu was sympathetic enough to help them as he and his wife were already struggling to have a baby. Bhanu finds about it and decides to help them meet a local dancer Mimi in the Mandwa village of Rajasthan. John and Summer were convinced by the choice as a dancer has the perfect body to carry a baby. Mimi is a small - town girl who aspires to be a Bollywood actress but was in need of money to give a kick start to her dreams. John and Summer want Bhanu to convince her to be a surrogate mother for them, but Mimi, who wants to be an actress, does not know about surrogacy. Bhanu describes it to her and takes her to see the couple, who offer her 20 lakhs, in exchange of carrying their baby. Mimi agrees, hoping this will support her dreams of being a Bollywood star.

Mimi is a passionate young woman whose dreams for success are overshadowed by the lure of a new beginning. As she faces the challenge of becoming a surrogate mother, her path shows the human spirit's tenacity and the power of altruism.

Her transition from a small - town girl with enormous hopes to a source of hope for Summer and John, whose lives hang in the balance as they wait for their long - awaited miracle is incredible.

John and Summer introduced Mimi to their doctor in Jaipur and started the surrogacy procedure. Mimi's IVF execution goes well and she becomes pregnant; yet, she has to hide the news from everyone. Mimi sneaks into hiding at her friend Shama's home, who lives in the Muslim neighbourhood of town pretending to be leaving for a nine - month outdoor film shoot to her family. Meanwhile, John and Summer have charged Bhanu for looking after Mimi during her pregnancy.

Everything was going as per the plan, with every second passing Mimi thought she's turning the stones of her Bollywood dream. Until a catastrophe comes, a few months later, after rounds of ultrasounds, Mimi's doctor informs John and Summer that the infant could be born with down syndrome. Summer laments and John is shattered seeing his wife down with tears; they suddenly change their minds about having a baby. They returned to America and abandoned Mimi. When Bhanu confronted Mimi about the situation, her whole dream seemed to be shattered, her world crumbles into a million pieces. Carrying the baby in her womb she was wandering in the roads to find John and Summer. The echoes of her Bollywood ambitions fade away as she faces the hard reality of betrayal. With each step she takes, the weight of her burden grows heavier, yet within her, a fiery determination emerges—a drive to overcome the odds and carve her path. The doctor suggests an abortion but Mimi refuses and decides to raise the baby all by herself.

Mimi's resolve hardens. She refuses to let fear guide her decisions, instead facing the frightening prospect of single parenthood with grit and fortitude. For Mimi, this child is more than a burden; he is a beacon of hope, a symbol of love and opportunity in a difficult world.

Mimi, alone and fragile, wanders down winding roads and random lanes in seek of relief in the middle of mayhem. Each passing moment demonstrates her undying strength and perseverance, as she holds onto the promise of a better life for herself and her unborn child.

Bhanu takes her home, in order to escape they tell her parents that he is her husband and the biological father of the child, with whom she has eloped and got married. After grappling with initial issues, Mimi's parents slowly accept the situation and grow happy about the baby's arrival. When the baby is finally born, its pristine white skin shocks everyone with its complexion, leaving them dumbfounded. Sensing Mimi's difficulty, her empathetic friend Shama offers to care for the baby while she seeks peace in Bombay.

Bhanu's wife unexpectedly enters the picture, shedding light on the facts and convincing Mimi's parents to rethink their minds. Even Bhanu's wife, despite early doubts, shows a willingness to accept responsibility for the child. However, as the days pass and the weeks become months, Mimi's love for her baby becomes stronger, erasing any doubts or anxieties that had previously plagued her thoughts. With unapologetic

adoration, she makes the life - changing decision to give up her dreams and raise her child in the little village.

Refusing to part ways with the child she has grown to love, Mimi sacrifices her ambitions and opts to remain in the quaint town to raise the child herself. As time passes, it becomes obvious that the baby does not have Down syndrome, as the test findings were within a margin of error, reaffirming Mimi's invincible commitment to her newfound duty as a parent. With tears streaming down her cheeks, she embraces her new role as a parent, her heart filled with awe for the priceless gift of motherhood. In that moment, Mimi realizes that love knows no bounds—that it is the greatest gift of all, capable of turning even the darkest nights into the brightest days.

Four years have passed and the once - infant, now known as Raj, had become an important part of both family and friends' lives. Amidst this familiar ambience, a sudden turn of events unfolded with the return of John and Summer, whose presence sparked tension across the household. Their goal was clear: recover Raj and, if necessary, file legal action.

John's sombre disclosure provided a picture of Summer's ongoing grief as a result of their decision to abandon Raj. Both of their hearts had been moved after seeing a video of Mimi and her white - haired son's joyful dance, which affirmed Raj's well - being and calmed any concerns about his health. Threats of legal action loomed ominously, flinging doubt on Mimi's will as she coped with the looming chaos. Despite her pain, Mimi eventually agreed to the demands, fearing the toll a protracted court struggle would take on Raj's well - being. The terrible moment drove by as they prepared to hand Raj over to John and Summer, surrendering themselves to a future of separation.

However, fate had different plans. In a startling twist, John revealed their newfound parenting to a young girl called Tara, whom they met at an Indian orphanage. This unexpected revelation shifted the odds once further, showing a deeper understanding of parenthood that went beyond biological bonds.

Mimi and her family prepared for Raj's painful departure. Seeing John with Tara, an appealing symbol of their growing family, gave life and wonder to the scene while casting light on everyone's deep journey toward love and self - discovery.

The heartfelt interaction between the two families served as an intense reminder of love's profound power and the human heart's limitless capacity to embrace and nurture. As John and Summer left for the United States with Tara by their side, Raj was brought up by Mimi and her family's love and support, ushering in a new chapter filled with love, resilience, and enduring ties to kin.

As we watch Mimi's journey, we are lured into a plot that touches our hearts and speaks to our own experiences with love and resilience. Mimi's constant drive and altruism remind us of the amazing strength that the human spirit possesses, urging us to face life's problems with courage and grace. *Mimi* not only entertains but also affects our souls, leaving a special imprint on our hearts as we ponder the

profound beauty of motherhood and the transformative power of love.

3. Conclusion

Surrogacy, an epic tale created from threads of love and hope, unfolds across the canvas of human history, casting shadows of both light and darkness.

The study of surrogacy in literature and film reveals an intricate web of human experiences, ethical quandaries, and societal difficulties. Surrogacy has evolved throughout countries and centuries, from ancient mythological rituals to modern - day storylines that explore the convergence of technology, commerce, and human emotion.

Surrogacy has historic roots, including Niyog Pratha and biblical legends of Sarah and Hagar, Rachel and Bilah, demonstrating a longstanding recognition of infertility and the desire for progeny. These narratives illustrate the profoundly established human desire for children and the lengths individuals have historically gone to accomplish it.

Cinema, as a powerful storytelling medium, has provided a platform for the examination of surrogacy's complex terrain. From James Bridge's *The Baby Maker* to Abbas - Mustan's *Chori Chori Chupke Chupke* to newer Bollywood offerings like *Good Newwz* and *Mimi*, filmmakers have struggled with the ethical, emotional, and legal aspects of surrogacy. These movie portrayals act as mirrors for society, forcing viewers to confront their own views, biases, and moral compass.

Mimi deals with the complexities of surrogacy, she faces various difficulties that question her determination and challenge her convictions. From the initial excitement of starting a new chapter in her life to the devastating heartbreak of disloyalty and desertion, Mimi's experience highlights the delicate nature of human connections and the strength of the human soul.

Through its evocative language and vivid imagery, the story *Mimi* encourages its audience to ponder the profound implications of surrogacy on the lives of those involved. Like pieces on a chessboard, Mimi and her companions navigate the twists and turns of fate, grappling with the moral ambiguities and ethical dilemmas that come along with their decisions.

In the face of societal norms and expectations, Mimi's story challenges us to question our own beliefs and values, urging us to confront the complexities of parenthood and the inherent sacrifices it entails. As Mimi's journey unfolds, we are forced to confront our own prejudices and biases, grappling with the uncomfortable truths that lie at the heart of the surrogacy debate.

Surrogacy is essentially about striking a careful balance between the altruistic act of giving life and the commercialization of reproductive services. The surrogate mother, torn between charity and commercialism, struggles with the complexity of her dual job as a nurturer and service provider. Her journey takes place against the backdrop of changing societal norms, legal frameworks, and moral

disputes, pushing us to confront the ethical difficulties inherent in the commercialization of human reproduction.

In conclusion, the study of surrogacy in literature and cinema provides a window into the human condition, illuminating the complexities of love, sacrifice, and the goal of motherhood. As we travel the ever - changing world of reproductive technologies and social norms, it is critical to approach surrogacy with empathy, compassion, and a deep understanding of the vast complexity that constitutes the human condition. Only through sophisticated awareness and ethical thought will we be able to negotiate the tricky terrain of surrogacy with integrity and respect for the natural worth of each person involved.

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