'Humanitarian’ Thresholds of the Fundamental Feminist Ideologies: Evidence from Surrogacy Arrangements in India

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Recent developments in reproductive technologies and their use for practices such as surrogacy and sex determination have challenged the very ideologies that feminism fundamentally represents; equality, liberty and justice. The lecture aims to identify the ‘humanitarian’ thresholds of feminist ideologies with reference to surrogacy arrangements in India. Surrogacy practices in India reinforce inequality, cause exploitation, commodification of women and children and violation of basic human rights, allowing space for control and power of several intermediate institutional agencies. Surrogacy provides a wider reproductive choice for certain people at the cost of the health, well-being, freedom and life of some others and hence crosses the ‘humanitarian threshold’ of feminist ideologies. Although reduction in inequalities may reduce exploitation to some extent, this ‘motherhood market’ does not conform to the broader feminist or reproductive health-rights-justice perspective.

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