



# Wombs in Labor: Transnational Commercial Surrogacy in India (South Asia Across the Disciplines)

*Amrita Pande*

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Surrogacy is India's new form of outsourcing, as couples from all over the world hire Indian women to bear their children for a fraction of the cost of surrogacy elsewhere with little to no government oversight or regulation. In the first detailed ethnography of India's surrogacy industry, Amrita Pande visits clinics and hostels and speaks with surrogates and their families, clients, doctors, brokers, and hostel matrons in order to shed light on this burgeoning business and the experiences of the laborers within it. From recruitment to training to delivery, Pande's research focuses on how reproduction meets production in surrogacy and how this reflects characteristics of India's larger labor system.

Pande's interviews prove surrogates are more than victims of disciplinary power, and she examines the strategies they deploy to retain control over their bodies and reproductive futures. While some women are coerced into the business by their families, others negotiate with clients and their clinics to gain access to technologies and networks otherwise closed to them. As surrogates, the women Pande meets get to know and make the most of advanced medical discoveries. They traverse borders and straddle relationships that test the boundaries of race, class, religion, and nationality. Those who focus on the inherent inequalities of India's surrogacy industry believe the practice should be either banned or strictly regulated. Pande instead advocates for a better understanding of this complex labor market, envisioning an international model of fair-trade surrogacy founded on openness and transparency in all business, medical, and emotional exchanges.

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