

A Reflection on Personal Identity Crisis Through Ivf Technique in the Context of Medical Ethics

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ABSTRACT: Personal identity deal with the question of Who am i? The issues of personal identity concern a number closely related issues particularly persistence, change, time, sameness. In western philosophy since Plato’ s days, all are tried to solve the problem of personal identity. The concept of person is central and important in both theoretical and practical philosophy. In theoretical philosophy it is above all different theories on personal identity was formulated, But when we discuss in practical way we somehow discuss only the properties and capacity which became them as person. There are various aspect of the concept of person within the biomedical ethics. There are several way in which personal identity is taken to be relevant to the debate over the topic of biomedical ethics. So this paper will bring how the issues related with identity crisis in real life in the context of biomedical ethics. Today’ s world is the world of technology. But the technology use in bio medical how go beyond ethics and how its create identity issues will be discuss here. The different conception of person by overtime will be readdressed in the light of biomedical ethics like beginning of life, the question of human dignity, fetus identity, also establish the identity of embryo which denied by many people, how IVF method creating complexity toward identity how its related with biomedical ethics. This paper also explore through IVF technology how both surrogate mother and child having identity crisis in biomedical ethics.

Keywords- Identity, Fetus, Embryos, IVF, Surrogacy, Narrative identity, Immoral

INTRODUCTION: Personal identity deals with questions that arise about ourselves by virtue of being people. Many of there questions are familiar ones that occur nearly all of us now and then: What am I? When did I begin? What will happen to me when I die? What does being the person you are, from one day to the next, necessarily consist in? This is the question of personal identity, and it is literally a question of life and death, as the correct answer to it determines which types of changes a person can undergo without ceasing to exist. Personal identity theory is most philosophical confrontation with the most ultimate questions of our own existence. These are the some question that have deal by the philosopher since plato’ s day, and different theories made for the solving the problem such philosopher are mainly Plato, Descartes, John locke, Hume, Kant, Ricoeur, Parfit etc.

“The precondition to analyze persistence via empirically observable relations of causal space-time continuity on which causal laws are based, leads as regards the human individual to the theory that here the concept of the human being – understood purely biologically – rather than

the concept of person must be taken up. (Dennett 1981, Chap.14).”¹ The question of persistence only can be explain in accordance with the basic conviction of the biological approach. Whenever we talk about personal identity we read first beginning of life. The question of when a human life begins is usually posed in ethical dilemma and also in identity crisis.

In biomedical ethics there are various issues. But the question of the beginning of life, egg to embryos, embryos to fetus then actual being. In whole process suffer from a genuine ethical and identical dilemmas. The issues about fetus which is potential human being then how we destroy such potentiality. The fetus identity creates by her mother when he/she grow in her mother’ s womb how can we denied. The psychologist said that the emotion built by mother in pregnancy is giving him/his an identity. And ethically it’ s wrong to kill the fetus. The same issue in biomedical ethics applies to the disputes concerning the admissibility or inadmissibility of research on human embryos and pre-implantation diagnostics, alternative pregnancy and the crisis of identity.

Objective of the study: The study of the paper proceed through certain objectives. The study will precede keep in the view the following objective:

- To find out personal identity crisis in biomedical ethics.
- To bring out how medical technology like IVF practice occur identity crisis.
- To find out the conception of personal identity crisis in the very beginning of life.
- To examine how surrogate mother suffer from identity complexity.
- To bring out how it ethically wrong.

Research Methodology: The methodology adopted in the preparation of this paper is analytical. In this present work primary and secondary sources are used. The primary sources are books and e-book secondary sources are the creative writings and relevant materials are collected from various articles, journal, newspaper and book pertinent to the study area.

EXPLANATION: Perhaps the most exciting and variegated explorations of the relation between identity and ethics are taking place in the area of applied ethics, specifically in medical ethics and bioethics. Practically people are suffering from identity crisis in today’ s world. In biomedical science certain issues dealing by people are related to identity crisis. Disturbing picture of identity crisis for medical technology tried to be answer with the light of medical ethics.

Identity crisis of fetus: The key question ‘ when does human life begin?’ because all issue related with personal identity come for the question of when does human life begin. The fetus identity recognition is big issue in biomedical ethics debate on this topic is never ending. What is fetus? Is fetus living human being or potential being? Is kill fetus ethically justifiable? This

¹Dennett, D.C. (1981). *Brainstorms*, 267-285: Harvester Press.

entire question be answered when we know the actual character of fetus. “ We need both scientific knowledge of development of the brain and nervous system of fetus and- because scientist can not directly observe pain but only what we believe to be its physiological correlates- a view about what level of development is required for the existence of consciousness and a capacity to experience pain. As we have seen in considering pain in animals very different from ourselves, like invertebrates, it is difficult to know if there can be pain, or consciousness of any kind, without a functioning cerebral cortex. In humans, prior to about eighteen weeks of gestation, the cerebral cortex is not sufficiently developed for synaptic connection to take place within it- in other words, the signals that give rise to pain in an adult are not being received. Between eighteen and twenty-five weeks, the brain of the fetus reaches a stages at which there is some nerve transmission in those parts associated with consciousness” .²

If fetus have consciousness then killing fetus is unethical. Because consciousness give intrinsic value on it. Still a question in our mind that how fetus have an identity. Paul Ricoeur’ s contribution to hermeneutics philosophy, is one of the most significant. He focuses on personal identity, for him idem identity is the identity of something that is always the same which never change and ipse identity is sameness across and through change.³ From embryos to fetus and fetus to human being its also not change their identity as potential human being. A human fetus not changing into animal fetus so the sameness across and through change its same. Also Psychologically a person emotionally attached with her pregnancy in very beginning. The mother gives him/his an identity by doing activity. In social believe during pregnancy we are permitted to watching good thing only, reading holy books because people believe fetus can feel and learn with mother activity. So by social believe we give an identity to the fetus. If we kill the fetus its not ethically it’ s also socially not justifiable. If we doing such activity to kill fetus, through abortion, through embryos research, then it create an identity crisis.

Embryonic identity crisis: Another issues in biomedical ethics is IVF procedure, which is a from of Assisted reproductive technology(ART). In vitro fertilization(IVF) is a complex series of procedures used to help with fertility or prevent genetic problem and assist with the concept of a child. During IVF, mature eggs are collected from ovaries and fertilized by sperm in lab. Then the fertilizes egg(embryo) or eggs(embryos) are transferred to a uterus.

After discussing on fetus, the newer debate about the moral status on embryo outside the human body and embryo have an identity or not. Because in the procedure of IVF, the eggs are fertilized in lab, the very beginning of this procedure is happened in lab outside the human body. So the identity of fetus and embryo is very different, but still embryo have a potentiality to become a human being. Potentialist claim that the human embryos have potential for moray agent. Embryos have potentiality to become actual personhood. The embryos possesses property, an actual capacity to continue development. Embryos have intrinsic value as well.

² Siger, Peter. (2011). Practical Ethics, 136: Cambridge university press.

³ Narrative identity, <https://plato.stanford.edu>, retrieved on 28th Dec,2021.

Even existentialist say that something exist first then have essence. Egg are fertilized then it must exist first. So which is having potentiality, existence then how it not having identity. Ricoeur' s idea on narrative identity applied here, for Ricoeur “ time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence”⁴ Ricour said that after temporal existence we built our identity. Earlier we discuss embryo are exist if it exist in Ricoeur word it must have identity. So using multiple eggs and fertilize in lab after fertilized embryos, using multiple embryos transferred to uterus and sometime fertilize embryos are not giving successfully result and all multiple embryos are selectively deduced through abortion or other way, many time all embryos are totally destroy..it may be called kill the multiple potentiality or actual human being. It become an crisis of identity which maximum people are denied. Embryos identities which destroy by lab researches is not ethically right.

Identity crisis after fertilized embryos through IVF: In IVF, after fertilized embryos are transferred to uterus. The procedure can be done using a couple' s own eggs and sperm or sometime may involve eggs, sperm or embryos from known or anonymous donor. Sometime multiple embryos are transferred to the uterus, it may result multiple pregnancy with more then one fetus. Then other extra fetus are abort or we say kill them. Another process in IVF, when couples are not ready to carried the embryos in her womb then they go for third party which is another alternative gives by IVF.

Assisted Reproductive technology(ART) give many alternative to achieve pregnancy and surrogacy is one of them. Surrogacy is a form of third party reproductive in which a women agrees to carried a pregnancy of another couple or person who is not capable due to certain complexities or some other problem. The pregnancy is obtained by the IVF and implantation of fertilized embryos is done in the third party' s uterus. There are various type of surrogacy but mainly two type- a) Traditional/Natural/partial Surrogacy , b)Gestational Surrogacy. In traditional/natural/partial surrogacy is that type of surrogacy where surrogate acts as a carried of embryo which genetically related to her. In ‘ Traditional surrogacy’ is a form of surrogacy in where a women provides her own egg or surrogated mother is the genetic mother or biological mother of the child. Here a question arise that Is father genetic link with the child is most important? Where the identity of the surrogate mother has and also the intending mother identity is totally ignored here. Both intending mother and surrogate mother are identity denied by this process because the genetically the father only the genetic father of the child and intending mother identity is not genetically related with child. In India, there is no law govern for register surrogate mother name with the child as genetic mother. So surrogate mother go through an identity issues.

During prepare my research paper I read a book by Sheela Saravanan on ‘ A Transnational Feminist view of Surrogacy Biomarkets in India’ where I found some case study or interview of surrogate mother who share their experience about their journey as surrogate mother. In the very beginning, there are multiple embryos implanted. “ Although legally only three embryos

⁴ Narrative identity, <https://plato.stanford.edu>, retrieved on 28th Dec,2021.

are allowed to be implanted contact mother' s womb in India, up to five embryos are known to be implanted with a high likelihood of multiple pregnancies ..then doctor suggest ' selective reduction' ..sometime this process result miscarriage of remaining fetus”⁵. Miscarriage itself is painful physically and mentally. So surrogate mother feel the pain how they destroy a human being. Earlier we discuss on it how fetus killing is wrong.

Surrogate mother built an emotional connection with the child but suddenly after birth of the child, surrogate mother detached with the child. But she can feel an identity crisis with his body. Nine month of attachment, the heavy womb, the activity inside her womb, after delivery the physical changes, extra milk, here I mention a line from Sheela' s book during interact with surrogate mother “ You know Sheela ben, my hair has started falling in the last few week...i think the children have started teething, we believe that when our babies start teething, the mother loses her hair”⁶ so the identity crisis after birth of the child we can' t denied. Even hiding her pregnancy from outsider world, acting like which couple may want, not register her name with child if fetus genetically related with surrogate mother, all are giving her complexity toward her identity.

Through Traditional method of surrogacy child also suffer from the identity issue who is her genetic mother. Child not expresses their feeling in word but I' m sure child also feel the absence ness of the womb, suddenly change the interaction during pregnancy the tone of surrogate mother would be missed. Although in Japan law surrogate that is genetically related must be registered under the name of the women who gave birth. The parent may then adopt the child. India also governs such law which may solved partially the problem of identity.

Logic behind How it Ethically Wrong: Any creature of world not might be harm because it' s ethically immoral. Here might be question arise that Are embryos human being or have they identity? Yes embryos are human being and they have identity like human being have. “ Human embryos are not mere biological tissues or cluster of cell; they are the tiniest of human being. Thus we have a moral responsibility not to deliberately harm them...”⁷ So if kill human being is immoral then in the same way we killing them use them in research or in IVF also wrong. And identity of the embryos are built from the very first day. “ The fruit of human generation, from the first moment of its existence, that is to say from the moment the zygote has formed, demands the conditional respect that is morally due to the human being in his bodily and spiritual totality. The human being is to be respected and treated as a person from

⁵ Saravanan, Sheela. (2018). A Transnational Feminist View of Surrogacy Biomarkets in India, 113: Published bySpringer Nature.

⁶ Saravanan, Sheela. (2018). A Transnational Feminist View of Surrogacy Biomarkets in India, 110: Published bySpringer Nature.

⁷Quoted in Ted Peters, “ Embryonic Stem Cell and the Theology of Dignity” , in Suzanne Holland, Karen Lebacqz, and Laurie Zoloth, eds., The Human Embryonic Stem Cell Debate: Science, Ethics, and Public Policy.Cambridge, M.A: The MIT Press, p-129

the moment of conception; and therefore from that same moment his rights as a person must be recognized, among which in the first place is the inviolable right of every innocent human being to life.”⁸ If embryos to fetus is human being recognized in very first of conception then there identity also built from that way. If killing human being is morally wrong then past human being as fetus also wrong. Even also religiously accept that embryos are human being. Catholic Church statement on it is “ From the moment of conception, the life of every human being is to be respected in an absolute way because man is the only creature on earth that God has wish ‘ wished for himself’ and the spiritual soul of each man is ‘ immediately created’ by God; his whole being bears the image of the creator”⁹ Religiously killing the fetus is morally wrong. So the question of is embryos human being are answered. When we find embryos or fetus are human being then their killings are also ethically wrong.

Now we tried to find out how they have identity and how it is morally wrong to cease their identity. Human identity recognized through various way but the continuity of the same person or preserves my identity across time is just the continuity of this organism. This means that what we are today and the same thing as fetus from we grow. So if it would be wrong to kill us now because we have an identity and someone identity rejecting is morally wrong. Then also it would have wrong to kill the fetus that was one and the same as we to some day or years ago. Accordingly Paul Ricoeur our identity recognized through narratively. For him ‘ In telling our own stories that give ourselves an identity’¹⁰ Telling our identity not only mean by talking but also through our activity. At the same way embryos to fetus and fetus to proper human being is a process where we tell our stories with the help of our activity which give us an identity. So cease the identity is ethically wrong, someone right when we denied or stopping their growth is always ethically and morally wrong.

CONCLUSION: Medical science provides lots of alternative to achieve pregnancy by artificial methods. But sometime this method violates the identity of human being. Although Technology gives us all types of comfort ness, tried to solve all problem in our daily life. But it’ s in our hand to how we deal with them. We are rational being so we think rationally, act rationally. Identity issues nearly related with ethics. In today’ s world, an issue toward identity is very much relevant with ethics. Because whenever we denied someone identity or right to live then it will be ethically wrong Even also religiously it’ s wrong to cease the identity of

⁸ From Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation: Replies to Certain Question of the Day, Introduction, section 5, on the web at <http://www.Vatican.va/romancurial/congregation/cfaiths/documents/rc-co-cfaith-doc-19870222-respect-for-human-lifeen.html>.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Kemp P, History as Narrative and Practice, (1985). An Interview with Paul Ricoeur, Philosophy Today; 69-83.

human being. There is no right to denied someone identity. Every human being existence, identity and their right are cease by anyone is ethically wrong. This paper tried to answer the question of how embryos or fetus are human being and how they have identity. New technology in medical ethics is good but when its go beyond ethics work like irrationally then it' s not good for society and also ethically immoral. Identity crisis in medical ethics is a debatable topic but this paper tried to answer the question related to the identity crisis of beginning of life and IVF Technique used for pregnancy and ethical imbalance in here.

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