

FICTION BOOK REVIEW

Origins of Love
(Simran Singh 2)

Kishwar Desai. London, UK: Simon and Schuster, 2013. ISBN-13: 978-1-471-11122-8. Price: £7.99. Pages: 496 (paperback)

This is Kishwar Desai's second book in a series of three [*Witness the Night* (Simran Singh 1) and *The Sea of Innocence* (Simran Singh 3)] about Simran Singh, a feisty social worker. The story revolves around three different situations that are connected through the needs of women who access assisted reproduction services and especially those of surrogacy in countries like India. By integrating the different themes it highlights the emotional and physical struggles of women who want children through surrogacy as well as the women who are exploited in developing countries by corrupt and greedy 'surrogacy clinics'.

Simran Singh is a social worker who discovers a child born through IVF and surrogacy who also has HIV. The child is rejected and no one is willing to take responsibility. In the process of attempting to find the sperm donor who fathered the child as well as the woman who undertook the surrogacy she comes across a web of corruption, deceit and violence within the surrogacy business. In attempting to find the child's father she also finds love and is able to lay bare the scheming cruelty of unregulated surrogacy work in countries where laws exist but are not implemented as strictly as they should be.

I enjoyed reading the book and I was surprised at my emotional response to the story as it unfolded. Surrogacy has always had the potential to help many women but its dark side was a distant text book list until I read this book. I have since been motivated to read a lot about surrogacy and how it is accessed in different countries. India is a land of mixed opportunities where

the very rich and very poor live side by side in seemingly neat boxes. Surrogacy has been a common theme in many Indian families for many years. However, getting paid for being a surrogate has opened up a Pandora's Box, just like the underground organ trafficking business did in the past two decades. I would recommend reading this book as an aid to understanding the network of people who are affected when a surrogacy is undertaken.

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