



Like a Virgin: How Science Is Redesigning The Rules Of Sex

Aarathi Prasad

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Most cultures tell the tale of a maiden who gives birth untouched by a man. Is this just a myth, or could virgin birth be the way we make babies in the future? In *Like a Virgin*, biologist Aarathi Prasad looks at inconceivable ideas about conception, from the 'Jesus Christ' lizard's ability to self-reproduce (it walks on water, too) to the tabloid hunt for a real life virgin mother by geneticists in the 1950s. Prasad then transports us to the maverick laboratories that today are inventing the equivalent of 'nonsexual selection', from other to daughter womb transplants to egg fertilizing computer chips, from sperm replacements for women to silicone wombs for men.

Like a Virgin: How Science Is Redesigning The Rules Of Sex Details

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copy of myself, either through cloning or a virgin birth - one of the joys of the sexual reproduction is the lottery of similar and new features of the child.

So if you are interested in a collection of amusing facts about reproductive biology, I recommend you to read the book, but if you interested in the state of art in the field of reproductive biology - try Nature reviews instead. And sorry but I can;' recommend anything comprehensible about the ethics of human reproduction.

Vineet says

Whatever was there to say was said in the first 100 pages. Author repeats herself thereafter. Unfinished...

Gerald Carey says

Aarathi manages to cover a range of areas associated with sex, sexual intercourse, fertilisation, implantation, genetics and artificial...you name it!

An eye-opening book which left me wondering...given how difficult it is to actually get pregnant, how is it that there are 7+ billion people in the world!

Paul says

I received a free copy of this book as a Goodreads Giveaway.

This book lay unread for several weeks as it seemed a bit daunting. I'm not sure that I want the rules of sex to be redesigned....everything has been fine the way it's been so far!

Anyway,although I found the book hard going in places, I was pleased that I persevered as I unexpectedly developed an interest in the subject. Despite my initial misgivings, I did take on board much of what was expounded and it certainly made me think about things in rather a different way. It seems pretty much anything is possible!

Overall a good read and recommended, but there seemed to be a fair bit of repetition and some strategic editing (correction) would have further improved the work.

Elizabeth Hauke says

This was an interesting book - approaching reproduction very much from a biological rather than human standpoint. However, I took issue with a number of things that were presented as 'fact' without any source references. Also, this is not a book to tackle when you're feeling tired as a lot of the sentences have a few too many clauses for comfort.

Flowers4Algernon says

You should possibly leave morals, scruples, ethics etc at the door before reading this otherwise you may (as I did) get incensed at some of the experiments that are undertaken in the name of science and without comment from the author. However, this is a really interesting and relevant book which is definitely worth reading although the science lost me on a few occasions. Good to know that sperm swim faster in space though!! I would love to know how they found that out.

Sehar Moughal says

"Male plus female equals baby will no longer be our only path forward. As we conceive the once inconceivable and take full control of how and when we bring the next generation into the world, we are sure to dislodge many notions of sex and gender along the way" - Aarathi Prasad.

The title is enticing and so are the first 150 pages. By that time, you are hooked on the book and regardless of how repetitive the author sounds, you finish the damn thing.

The best thing about this book? The simplicity of language used to explain VERY difficult biological processes specifically, sexual reproduction. Every chapter starts with a documented story, which makes it easier to relate the processes to an actual occurrence.

Very informative. The book is a birthing process. Starts off with speculations about natural virgin birth over the centuries, the discovery of sperms/eggs, ovaries/testes and then provides intricate biology of the egg, the womb, and the fertilization. The last few chapters change direction and look at artificial fertilization including egg/sperm donations, IVF, ART, AID & IUI. The book ends with discussing the ethics of being solo parents (via artificial means) and challenging the traditional ways of human sexual reproduction.

Moushumi Ghosh says

A very well-researched book that looks at the developments in human reproduction and the direction in which it is proceeding. That's mainly towards removing the role of men and women as we know at present. According to Prasad, this is not a bad thing.

There are fascinating historical accounts of medical intervention in human reproduction right from antiquity to the present. Prasad sees current developments as helping women and men (in all permutations and combinations of relationships and those not in one as well) have children at any time in their life during and after the fertile years. it redefines what 'fertility' will mean in the future.

The title is rather a provocative one. I guess the marketing department had a hand in it.

Despite being a scientist, Prasad's writing is quite accessible. I enjoying reading the book except the last

chapter or so where my attention flagged. That's probably more my fault than hers.

Read if you like to read about the future of reproductive science.

Kirsten Benites says

An incredibly fascinating look at how humans are created--either naturally or through science. Prasad has an engaging way of writing about scientific concepts which is readable by a layperson, but not so dumbed down that you feel pandered and condescended to.

My one quibble with this book is that I wish she had raised, even perhaps in a conclusion, whether in an over-populated world, where billions live in poverty, we should be devoting immense resources to creating more people.

Christie says

First sentence: "For most of human history, women have been given little credit when it comes to childbearing."

In this book, Aarathi Prasad chronicles reproductive technology from the fertility "treatments" of the middle ages and the Renaissance (eating powdered boar testicles, drinking sheep's urine and avoiding mules like the plague) to the first successful artificial insemination in 1776 to the first test tube baby in 1978 to surrogacy, egg donation, artificial wombs, ovary and uterus transplants, sperm and eggs made from stem cells, etc. The author looks toward a future in which conception, pregnancy, and birth happen in any and every way except the usual way.

This book made me think and feel lots of things. At first, I found it incredible that anyone even manages to reproduce with all of the things that can go wrong and everything against it. Secondly, it made me feel like I'm wasting all my good fertile years and should start having babies yesterday (thankfully no rash decisions were made :-P). Then the book made me squirm with its descriptions of ovarian teratomas and vesico-vaginal fistulas (believe me you do not want to know). The book was interesting to say the least. I felt the book was very approachable. The science is presented in a way that is easy to understand even if you've never taken a biology class in your life. I think the author does a good job presenting all sides of arguments regarding artificial reproductive technology and the things that could go wrong though she is ultimately hopeful that these technologies will do more good than harm. Much of the book sounds like science fiction, but it makes you think about science and childbirth in a whole new way.

I did feel that the book is somewhat biased against men. The author seems to be a bit of a radical feminist thinking that soon men won't be necessary to procreation at all. It seemed that she pushed this agenda more than necessary especially in early chapters, though she became more balanced in later chapters showing that these reproductive technologies can help men have children without women just as much as they will help women have children without men. The author also ended up repeating herself a lot throughout the book which became annoying at times.

I learned a lot of things from the book which is ultimately what I look for in books such as this; the gleaning of more useless knowledge. It was a quite interesting book and I recommend it to anyone interested in

reproductive science.

Evalangui says

I was gifted this book as part of the GoodReads giveaway.

"Like a Virgin" is, first, highly readable. As a happily childless woman I am not particularly interested in the ins and outs of the uterus (the reason I wanted to read this was the more science fictional aspects explored) but even the biology parts were made interesting by not overly complicated explanations that leave you with a good general idea of things going from DNA splitting to the consequences of assisted reproduction, both physical and cultural (eg. India is rife with young women becoming surrogate mothers for foreigners who can pay them a third of what they would pay a woman in their countries).

Since same sex couples were mentioned quite a bit (enough to be inclusive, let's say). Interestingly, there's a rat in Japan that has two mummies, one of which donated a younger egg that somehow was used to fertilize the mature egg of the first.

Y chromosomes are, many fear, on their way out, as they have only 80 genes to the 1000 or more of the X and since they have to partner with an X chromosome when an embryo is created, they cannot exchange genetic information to "update" themselves, being limited to reshuffling the genes internally. Of course, without Y chromosomes regular males cannot be produced (fertile XY males), making a possibility of the all female world like many proposed in sci-fi (are there any biologically all-male worlds? I know of some where women and men live separately but none where women have disappeared).

Very interesting, my only concern reading this in May 2014 is that the information might by now be slightly outdated or at least not fully updated. Such is the destiny of printed press, another disappearing model. Because of that and the fact that it's not very in-depth (It's not MEANT to be but I feel a little more would not have hurt the readability factor) I'm giving it 3.5 stars.

Nikki says

Very interesting. Talks about how a virgin birth could be possible. IE.: what if a fetus could be gestated entirely outside of a woman's body with the perfection of an artificial womb.

Megan RFA says

This was completely not what I was expecting. I was expecting an intimate glimpse into future science backed up by current research and lots of in-text citations.

Unfortunately, this book was mainly a recounting of the misconceptions of the past several centuries, peppered here and there with interesting tidbits about current research (with NO citations or footnotes), and tons of the author's own biased speculations about what the future holds.

