

The Love of Her Labor

Category: Birth

written by Neeta Nayak | December 4, 2024

An arranged marriage followed by childbirth within the next year was the lot of many Indian women for centuries.

Moving to the USA provided some reproductive freedom. With little support from extended family in a foreign land, I wanted to complete fellowship before having children, but the dreaded biological clock was ticking louder. I remember feeling conflicted: wanting to wait, but acutely aware of aging eggs. We decided there would never be a perfect time.

My husband and I were both students in Chicago. He was pursuing a finance MBA and working full-time. I was a full-time fellow and part-time pregnant person through cold wintry months. I always wanted a daughter and was thrilled when the sonographer confirmed "HER."

In the seventh grade I remembered wanting two daughters. Reports of female infanticides in India made me protective of my own gender.

We were told by our OB that most primagravidas (women in their first pregnancy) go past the due date. My husband worked in Indianapolis and planned to return home around the EDD (Expected Due Date).

Imagine my horror when I was awakened at 3:05 AM, fourteen days before EDD in a puddle of warmth. My sleepy brain thought that my bladder was creating the swimming pool. Alone at home, I frantically called my dear friend, who lived close, and then my husband. Both asked me not to panic because many hours lay ahead.

My next surprise was being told at arrival that I was ten centimeters dilated, and the baby was ready to pop out!

The contractions that followed were horrendous. What was expected to happen in the next 12-24 hours was compressed into an hour of horrible agony.

It felt like the uterus being ripped out of the rest of my body. I remember begging for a drop of morphine. It was too late for an epidural.

Even after years, the chant *push! push!* like a mantra is unforgettable.

What a relief when the baby announced herself with a strong cry. Pain miraculously dissipated. I barely felt the episiotomy being sutured, as my baby lay with quivering lips on my chest, our hearts beating in unison!

I now tell primagravidas to be skeptical of expecting to go past EDD or the labor lasting hours. My husband missed our firstborn's birth.

Mother Nature is amazing though! The agony of physical pain is forgotten by the mother's body as she holds the "love of her labor."

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