

MY HOME BIRTH STORY (WATER BIRTH)

Posted on May 28, 2015 by



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Before I started writing this I gave a lot of thought to why I wanted to birth at home with my second baby. I don't think I gave any thought to why when I made up my mind or during my pregnancy or any time before the birth. Before the birth it just felt like the right thing to do. But once I started thinking about this post is when I felt the need to explain.

I conceived both my children at first try, I am healthy, I've never had any reason to visit doctors or hospitals and my first birth was pretty messed up thanks to unnecessary interventions in spite of having a dream pregnancy (except the vomiting eeew); though it was vaginal and all's well that ends well. **However I have a lot of confidence in my body and the way I am built, I see no reason why I can't birth like females of all mammal species have birthed since forever** and if anything had to go wrong it can go wrong anywhere anytime.

Having said this, I feel interventions, C-sections, hospitals, and doctors all have their place and it's great to have them when it's genuinely a high-risk pregnancy or when complications arise. **But the midwifery care model is evidence based and really supports and celebrates birth and women.** They monitor the pregnancy and the birth closely and I felt far safer and in better hands this time than when I was with a hot shot doctor in a hotshot hospital the first time around.

Hospital births have become unnecessarily medicated and the **worse part is that it is based on convenience of doctors, schedules, hospital protocols etc.** Births are not based on individual women and their bodies and they are **NOT evidence based** at all.

It makes sense right? Each pregnancy is so different, each birth so individual and the mass factory of big hospitals cannot afford to cater to each individual woman. Hence they have schedules and if labor has not 'progressed' in a certain amount of time, it's time for the cut. Women are forced to labor and birth on their backs in semi reclining positions for no evidence-based reasons what so ever in most hospitals in Mumbai. While giving birth the hormones at play are so delicately balanced and any interference with this has far reaching consequences. Women need to listen to their bodies instead of being told or forced to birth a certain way.

In my first son's birth my doctor actually pulled out a huge list of women who were due that month and ticked of my name on the list and induced me because she was travelling in a few days and felt I may deliver while she was away. Without even asking or telling me! My baby was born 18 days early to fit the doctor's schedule and my baby, my husband and I were nothing more than a statistic, mere tick marks in what was meant to be the most momentous occasion of our lives. While meeting my baby for the first time and having him latch on for the first time I will never forget, the birth and how we were treated is something I won't like to remember.

Again **synthetic oxytocin or Pitocin to speed up labor are regular hospital procedure here in Mumbai (as are routine episiotomies)** and can cause a cascade of interventions. Do have a look at [this video](#) which shows the work the hormone Oxytocin does if the circumstance is conducive.

I knew then that I would do it differently the next time and home birth was something I read about

and investigated way before I gave birth again. **I can say I was way more informed and well read the second time around than the first where I put myself in the hands of doctors and medical staff.** In retrospect I feel so silly because I was so well informed about everything under the sun when it came to my body and health and even had [a blog](#) to show for it, but when it came to something so huge as giving birth I was ready to put myself completely in the care of doctors, instead of being informed and doing due diligence the first time around.

During this pregnancy I met my awesome mid wives Lina and Nhing, from [Mumbai midwife](#) when I was in my first trimester and immediately got a sense that I was in great hands. Over the course of the pregnancy I met them every month along with my back up doctor Dr. Ameet Dhurandhar. I remember feeling so sick and low during my third trimester and chatting with Lina on whatsapp and she really being there to ensure that I was ok. This care was different, **this time I was with people who really loved being at births and bringing babies into this world, unhurried, at our pace, following no prescribed time line**

On 5th April – Easter Sunday – my cousin offered to help me set up our new kitchen as we were due to move into our new apartment the following day. I was in the living room of my mother in law's home chatting with my sister in law at 1 pm when I first felt the surges. They came and went every 2 minutes lasting for 45 seconds. My husband Sumit was in our new apartment trying to get things in order when I called him saying get the bedroom ready as the baby was coming. I texted my cousin to say the plans were off.

I then called Lina who told me they would be over to see me. I walked over to our new apartment and asked my midwives to meet us there. When Nhing got there by 4:30 I asked her to do an internal and she said I was already 7 cms dilated. After that Nhing and Sumit started rushing to get the water birth pool inflated and set up. I just concentrated on the contractions and lost all track of time.

Lina was there suddenly and Sumit discovered the geysers in our new apartment were not working. He rushed over to our neighbours to ask for hot water and they slowly filled up the pool. I got in and the water was welcoming and relaxing. I remember falling asleep between contractions. Labour really slowed down then. I remember fretting about getting our new wooden floors wet, and worrying about the move, about what my son was doing, pending jobs in the apartment etc., which according to Nhing was the reason labor slowed down.

What I didn't worry about however, not then, not at any point in the pregnancy, was having complications or needing interventions, or birthing at home. I had an exceptionally strong belief in my body and my ability to give birth like we are meant to.

Between 5 pm to 9 pm I was in and out of the pool; to walk around in order to get a change and let my body do the work. Every time I was out of water the contractions seemed strong and unbearable and I was dying to get back in again. Through out this time Lina was checking the baby's heartbeat and checking my blood pressure at regular intervals (10 or 15 minutes I think) while Nhing was taking

pictures and sitting in the corner knitting. Lina massaged my lower back during every contraction!

They were discussing things in hushed voices. It was surreal. I was about to give birth, I was in another world altogether, there was a point where I was weeping copiously when Sumit played Tum Ho Toh from Rock on. At 9 pm I asked my midwives to do an internal again and there I was 10 cms dilated and they told me I could push whenever i was ready. I requested Nhing to rupture the membranes as they were bulging and I knew that the baby would be out soon after.

At some point between 9 and 9:40 I pushed him out in a semi squatting position. The crowning was really pure pain where I felt my body was being torn apart, and then it was over and there he was. All 3.9 kgs (8.4 pounds) of him. I cuddled him in the water and kissed his vernix covered body. We stayed that way for about half an hour and he latched on within 5 minutes of being born. Half an hour later my placenta was born and I got on the bed cuddling my precious bundle. Sumit cut the cord after the placenta was detached. **Lina checked his heartbeat while he was on my body -where he belonged- and we didn't get separated till 1 am, which is when they wiped him down and weighed him and stitched my tear.** They showed me his placenta which was shaped like a perfect heart, which was quite uncanny as we had already decided on a name for him which means 'Love'.

I had a shower used the bathroom and got on the phone to call and text loved ones. The mid wives finally left by 2 :30 am after making sure we were all tucked into bed.

I remember that night. I couldn't believe he was there next to me whimpering, suckling, and smelling divine. The night passed in and out of sleep with him curled up into me.

The next morning my first son danced in (from our old apartment) excited to see his baby brother and I was up and about like nothing had happened. I must say the way I resumed life the very next day, able to take care of my toddler and my baby, able to get back into routine, hardly any recovery required, no pain from the minor tear as compared to the episiotomy, not feeling like a patient hooked up to a drip, made everything worth it.

This was not ideal. I would have preferred the new apartment to be in a much more habitable condition. But all in all, this was a dream birth and **I am glad I was educated enough to give my baby the safest and gentlest of births born into the comfort of home, feeling loved and supported.**

While I understand home birth is not for everyone, I would encourage every woman to research undisturbed birth and have a midwife assisting her. The masculinisation or medicalization of the birthing process has its place. It just doesn't have to be in every situation. My midwives Lina and Nhing are my friends for life and I am so happy they were my birth companions. Their quiet confidence and matter of fact attitude made it such an enriching experience! I was on a high for weeks after!

It was such an empowering birth because I the mother made all the decisions with regards to MY body and my baby, and they only intervened (internal checks and rupturing the membranes) on my request. Thanks Lina and Nhing!

Thanks for reading. I would love to hear thoughts and comments.





Update

The [Human Rights in Childbirth Conference, Mumbai 2017](#) is just around the corner. Registrations are open. Please come if you're interested in educating yourself on your rights as a birthing woman. It will be an eye opener of a conference!

