

Sex and gender

Literature



Caesarean Section versus Natural Birth The article in the New York Times Magazine puts natural births at center stage. Natural birth, is a term so rare in the 21st century that it is almost impossible to imagine its existence. This can be attributed directly to the industrialization of childbirths. The art of delivery has lost its beauty because a lot of women prefer to give birth to their babies in a hospital setting rather than a home setting. In hospitals, unlike at home, the delivery process is a medical event and the gravid woman has a very small role to play and instead of midwives, doctors are the key players.

The magazine highlights the story of a woman, now elderly, who has been relentless in her support for home births. As a midwife, Ina May Gaskin, has aided in the delivery of numerous breech babies via the vaginal route and of shocking concern is that all this was done at home. Delivery of breech babies is different from any other births, because the fetus comes with the ‘ behind’ first instead of the head. A great risk is posed here because the fetus may asphyxiate. Doctors advise strongly against a natural birth and instead opt for Caesarean section [C-Section]. Ina Gaskin has however proved that it is indeed possible to deliver naturally safely even for breech babies. Her philosophy is very simple, “ putting birth back in women’s hands and showing them their true power.” She also believes that the bringing forth life should be viewed as a blessing and not a curse.

Ina Gaskin has not had an easy journey while advocating for natural births. She has been a victim of great scrutiny especially by women. Nonetheless, she still keeps on, at least for the women who share in her views on natural birth.

The New Yorker shares a different view on childbirths. It shows its

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modernization. Here, doctors and hospitals take center stage. An ironic illustration is given of a doctor who even after delivery of many babies via caesarean section, did not wish to deliver her baby in this way. She was of the opinion that C-section should only be an option in emergency situations. The article paints a vivid picture on the physiology of giving birth. The process takes place in three phases. Namely, early labor followed by active labor and lastly transition phase. In early labor, the cervix dilates to 2 to 3 cm while in the transition phase it dilates further to 10cm. It is at this point that the baby's head comes into view. Naturally this is meant to be the case but as it is things go wrong. The cervix may fail to dilate to the required 10cm and this means the head cannot pass through (obstructed delivery). Another bigger complication could be a breech baby. Medical intervention is required at this point for without it fatalities of either the fetus and the mother or both may result. Obstetricians from ancient times dealt with obstructed deliveries using different maneuvers such as breaking the baby's clavicle or use of forceps to yank stuck babies out. Nowadays, C-section is used.

In “reproductive rights and sexual rights” by Sonia Correa and Rosalind Petchesky, the most intriguing issue is that of equality between men and women as far as reproduction is concerned. It is felt that women should have control over their fertility and that reproductive roles should be divided equally between genders. However, this is not practical because as it is women are at greater risk than men for they are the ones who get pregnant. Reproductive rights for women should be respected. Therefore, acts such as female genital mutilation should be eradicated and working conditions in which they are subjected to should not affect their reproductive health.

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In conclusion, the business of being born lies on both a man and a woman. The woman should not be treated as an object but rather a subject whose opinion is respected.

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