

Baby Samourai made-in-India - 1. Choosing the right Gynec

And now, a little more about my own experience of having a baby in India...



Let's start when the pregnancy got confirmed. The Gynecologist I had for my Indian debut, who belonged to the Stone Age, told me my life as I knew it was over: no more eating outside, no more travelling and if possible no more sex (she couldn't really why, but in case eh...) until the end of the first trimester. So I did not cancel my coming business trip and... set to find a new doctor! If possible one that had some with the Western patients. I know very well that pregnancy is the same process for all the women in the world, but you know...

Fortunately with the all the social media 'groups', we quickly found the right doc: the kind of Gynec that let you ride on the bike until the very last day of pregnancy! Joke apart, the choice of the Gynec is not trivial because in India, there is a real tendency to promote (or 'force') C-sections (cf Babies made-in-India – 6).

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Baby Samourai made-in-India – 2. A dream pregnancy



Throughout my pregnancy, I almost managed to escape advice and tips and did only what I wanted to (with the support of the father obviously). That's how we ended up in Laos, the poorest country in Asia, during the monsoon season, kayaking on the furious Mekong, or pedaling in the mud, when I was five months pregnant! When holidays got over and I got back to work, one of my colleagues almost forbade me to take the stairs, 'given my condition', which obviously made me laugh.

So, I got a dream pregnancy. A part from a horrible first trimester. And a part a few severe cramps, a small sciatic nerve that got stuck for three weeks at the end of the fifth month, my asshole who tried to get away in the eighth month (hemorrhoids man I tell you...), and my sphincters which once failed me for 24 hours (it's scary)!

Here is what saved my life:

1. A magic potion against nausea,
2. A balanced diet (a juice or smoothie at 9 AM, a biscuit at 11, lunch at 1, protein-shake (my Gynec insisting heavily on it) at 4, a snack at 6, a soup and/or salad at 9),
3. Sport (yoga, exercise ball, walks, sex (when you are lucky enough to have trooper hormones and that your new whale-type figure doesn't repel your partner) - sex is even 'prescribed' to induce labour; as the doctor told my favorite Indian "you started it, now you finish it!"),
4. A good deal of luck!!

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Baby Samourai made-in-India - 3. Choosing the delivery method



Pregnancy is fine but well, the time of giving birth did come at some point. Not that I was in a hurry but, as I read somewhere, we never saw a 24-month pregnant woman!

Determined to follow Mother Nature's ways as much as possible (i.e. to avoid caesarean delivery), I let the British midwife to convince me to try to aquatic experience... She had nice arguments, like the relaxing effect of hot water which is a natural painkiller.

Then, to support her theory, she found nothing better than showing me, like that, completely out of the blue, a video of a water birth at home. It was very, very hard for me not to burst into tears. And not of emotion before this miracle of nature, no. Of terror. I am still traumatized by this video, and the image of the huge woman with huge boobs giving birth in her living room, with her eldest daughter, husband, mother, dog around.

Giving life to a child is supposedly the most beautiful thing in the world. But then why so much suffering huh?? The midwife, wanting to be reassuring, commented on the video: "you see, sometimes, she even

smiles between two contractions". Fantastic!

Well, anyway, this pain I couldn't start to imagine it, so I focused on a detail that may seem trivial: the heavy breasts of this mother. Already, being myself very reserved, I was really worried about having my parts exposed to the entire human race during childbirth. And I had started seriously considering delivering all alone in my bathroom when the midwife added, as if she had read my mind: 'don't worry, you can keep a spaghetti top or a sports bra. And to close the deal with this argument: "water birth is definitely the most intimate way to deliver a baby, because you are all alone in your pool, nobody to stare between your legs". Sold!

A few weeks before the D-day, I went to the pool of a hotel to test the waters... I was indeed curious to see if it would have the desired effect: everyone recommended me immersion to get relief, to feel lighter. I did not feel any lighter when entering the water... On the other hand I did feel heavier when getting out of it! But anyway, since I had no problems with gravity, I decided to not renew this experience...

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Baby Samourai made-in-India – 4. Final preparations



I haven't been able to touch my feet for three months

I started my maternity leave a couple of weeks before due date. I had an exhaustive to-do list before becoming a parent: buy a decent fridge and washing machine (we already had the crib!), make peanut butter, finish watching Orange Is the New Black and treat myself with a haircut / manicure-pedicure. Because I thought I wouldn't have too much time to do it with the newborn and (it is very trivial and unlike me (put it on the hormones) but) I wanted to look decent on the photo where they put the baby on your chest. With the arrival of my parents and my mother-in-law, it took me a good full week to complete these operations...

I surprised my Indian relatives by going out alone (i.e. to have breakfast with a girlfriend) at D+1, then running the stairs up and down like a maniac at D+2. And I myself got my share of surprises, for example when my mother-in-law predicted me the delivery date indicated by the stars. Or when she told me that in Kerala, the new mother must spend the first ten days bedridden, to recover (cf Babies made-in-India - 3). At the end, I delivered in a complete astral chaos (or at least in the greatest contempt for astral predictions), and two days after I got back home, I was perched on a stool to reorganize the kitchen cupboards... Lets not see here any

provocation ;)

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Baby Samourai made-in-India – 5. Landing at the hospital

Finally, one evening, five days after term, at midnight sharp, I shook my favorite Indian who was asleep: the contractions seemed to have started! Two hours later, he making our midwife taste his juices while I writhed in pain...

At 2:45 AM, while people were blasting disco music in the street (don't ask, it's Mumbai), we finally set for the hospital where we were received by a perspicacious nurse "you are pregnant? And what are you here for?"

At 3:00, an employee of the hospital tied me to a wheelchair – I did think of protesting, for the form, and the absurdity of the situation, and because I had the right (after all I was pregnant and about to give birth, they could have entertained a little whim), and go on foot, or at least not strapped. India, land of contrasts and contradictions, is a country where everything is true, and the opposite too... Thus, if most Indians live in the greatest contempt for the rules (driving, waiting in lines, etc.), some of them whose job boils down to a few simple and repetitive tasks would rather lose an arm than disobeying their instructions. I gave in and left the ground floor properly harnessed on my chair.

At 3:05, we were in the room.

At 3:07, I had removed the battery from the clock whose ticking irritated me.

At 3:10, I watched, utterly bemused, the intern measuring the duration of my contractions with eyes riveted to the clock. It took her a good minute to realize that the hands were not moving! I will give her the excuse of the undue hour...

At 3:18, my wheelchair friend started to remove my beautiful pink-orange nail polish. So much for the mani-pedi! There again I thought of protesting. But then I remembered the recent comment from my mother about her own surgery: nail polish is forbidden because the medical staff can 'see' the blood pressure from the nail color.

I spent the next two hours on the exercise ball that my midwife had managed to smuggle, writhing in pain at the whim of contractions. I was managing pretty well until my Gynec arrived. Still in a joyful mood, I wanted to tell her the joke the radiologist had told me the same morning: "If you manage to get this big baby (1) out naturally, I will come to shake hands with you at the hospital". Except that I completely missed my effect: a contraction shook me violently in the middle of my sentence and I had to finish it in tears. I understood that the Gynec believed I had taken the radiologist seriously when she told me when leaving "come on, let's prove this idiot wrong!" Incidentally I learned later that this little jokester of radiologist was a recidivist: he had shocked my friend with this same comment, and with her Yugoslav sense of humor, she refused to go back to his lab!

(1) The average birth weight of a French baby is estimated at 3.6 kilos – which I was unaware of – which is 900 grams above the average Indian (3.5 vs 2.7 kgs, source: http://www.doctissimo.fr/html/sante/bebe/sa_308_normal.htm; <http://www.BabyCenter.in/a1015212/your-low-birth-weight-baby#ixzz3PZguMc2A>)

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Baby Samourai made-in-India – 6. In the pool



At 6 o'clock we set foot (and wheelchair) for the delivery room to attend the filling of the pool – apparently the sound of running water itself encourages the cervix to open up. And all of a sudden I was very far from the idea I had of water birth. Yes, curiously, despite the awful video, I still had romantic images of the thing. First the image of a naiad frolicking in a hot water spring, her long hair covering her bare breast (reserved, the naiad), birds joyfully chirping in the surrounding trees. And splash, a small cry, and her baby is there, swimming around her. A natural childbirth, I thought, going back to the (hot) source. Looking back, I had overlooked that most births happen night – the outing in the jungle is immediately less romantic – and that I should probably go back to prehistory to find an ancestor who had tried this method, so maybe not so 'natural' after all.

Another image I had, more 'modern', was of a five star bathtub, with bubbles, bath salts, scented candles, music and a glass of white wine. This vision almost made me eager to give birth!

But there, as everyone was busy setting up the whole thing and the horror of the situation was striking me in the face – I was going to have to go into this inflatable pool and suffer – I didn't dare shout out to misunderstanding ("STOOOOP! Stop everything! I don't want this! I and to go and lay on the table, I want the epidural!"). No, instead, I took off the horrible hospital gown and stepped into the pool. This is when the midwife offered to go pick up my sport bra. I was already in so much pain that I didn't care being in the pool with only my bra, nevermind, it was too much effort to change. She also offered to plug my MP3 but suddenly the slightest sound was painful to hear (so much for all the relaxation tracks I had downloaded!).

Once in the water, the Gynec asked me if the pain had reduced. Apparently she was expecting a positive answer and eager to please her, I nodded. "Yes it's always the same!", she was happy. In fact I was in so much pain that I could only sit in a corner, immobile, hoping that it would go away if I didn't move a muscle. After an hour, to please the midwife, I tried another position. And spent the next hour immobile in another corner, but squatting.

I must have stayed 3 hours in the water. Small breaks I was taken out to pee in a portable toilet (despite the encouragement of the medical team, I could not bring myself to piss in the pool), and other fun stuff. Finally my Gynec surrendered: there was nothing to do, my cervix refused to go faster than the music and hot water was not accelerating its opening.

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Baby Samourai made-in-India – 7. After the pool

Eventually they took me out of the water for good. And then, I was swimming (note the water metaphor, it's beautiful isn't) in complete surrealism.

Imagine. I've always been the first one to say, as more than 80% of the French (2), that if I give ever birth, I will get the epidural. No question about it! With my argument: when you go to the dentist, you get an anesthesia. Well here it's the same.

And here I was, drowning in pain, and saying nothing. Nothing at all. Not a word. I suffered in SILENCE. Just a voice in my head screaming "but just give me a fucking epidural already!"). A Samourai in all its glory! And there, out of nowhere an anesthetist materialized, almost sorry to be there: everyone seemed to over-convicted that I wanted a natural birth (probably because I had opted for the water birth) and therefore was against painkillers. So I had to listen to the speech of my doctor who explained to me that I had no reason to be ashamed of reducing pain, that I had already gone through a lot, and that she herself had given birth to twins by caesarean. In total surrealism I was swimming, I tell you!

I refused to sniff gas and but accepted a spinal (no time for the epidural). Immediate relief!

In short, I ended up giving birth... Lying on a table, legs spread, with my favorite Indian, three gynecs, two pediatricians, an anesthetist, a midwife, and six nurses in the room. And I couldn't care less! It actually even made me laugh thinking back of the 'intimate' childbirth I had planned!

And Baby Samourai was there! On my chest! Peeing on me! That's how we realized it was a boy: doctors had forgotten to check...

In India, sex determination of the fetus is prohibited, since Indians took advantage of this technology to abort girls – which are expensive, with the dowry. India has a deficit of girls, and in some States it has started to cause serious problems, having to import brides and all (see these [posts](#) for more on the topic).

And the final word: baby Samourai hates baths, which should not surprise anyone... ;-)

(2) The French are apparently more sensitive than the British since only 30% of the latter opt for anesthesia (Sources: http://www.liberation.fr/vous/2011/10/18/70-d-accouchements-avec-peridurale_768628;) <http://www.babycentre.co.UK/a542571/epidural>)

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