



THAT
COVID
EPISODE



TWISA DANDAPAT

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Chapter 1

I came out of the washroom with teary eyes. My husband was shocked.

- ◆ You went inside to check the result. I thought!
- ◆ Yes, I did.
- ◆ Then why are you crying?! Is everything alright?
- ◆ Yes, these are happy tears. It's positive!
- ◆ Omg! Congrats!

Before he could complete his sentence, a procession with drums beating like anything subdued his voice.

"Today is Ganesh Chaturthi. A very auspicious day to get such news!" I thought.

I was happy & sad at the same time. I felt happy because I was pregnant and sad because I was remembering my first pregnancy incident rather, my abortion episode.

That Covid Episode

Flashback...

After 1 year of our marriage...

I was dead tired that day. Continuous local train travel was hectic for me. But when in Mumbai you have to travel by train, there is no other alternative for office travel where reaching on time is the main priority.

For the past few days, I was feeling drained out, do not know exactly what the problem was – was it the travel or the household work or my pregnancy (I was 11 weeks pregnant). That evening I was having snacks at home after a busy day and was talking with my husband who was in the kitchen, cooking our dinner.

My husband is a great cook. I didn't know the ABCD of cooking, he taught me everything from the scratch within 3 months of our marriage. That day he was cooking because I had returned late from the office.

No, he is not a house husband neither he has a temporary job. Rather he is an engineer with so many patents under his name, and he works at an MNC.

And, I have done MBA post engineering – a very cliché form of education which has been popularized by Indian parents. I currently work at an Indian apparel company.

We live in Mumbai, while our parents are at Kolkata.

With both of us working and living without parents, there is no gender role in our house. We do whatever suits us, whoever is free, takes up the responsibility of the household task.

As I was having snacks I found blood draining out from my body, dripping from my leg. Shocked, scared – probably these 2 feelings together were the state of my mind. I immediately called up my Doctor who advised me to rush to the hospital.

Series of USGS followed that night. At 11 PM in the night I found myself sitting on the hospital bed sobbing. The doctor told me that the fetus had stopped growing inside me. I called up my mother-in-law and told her – “I couldn’t keep the baby. I am sorry.” And I broke down.

I exactly do not know why did I called her and not my mother. Maybe because somewhere deep down inside me the societal prejudice was there who says – “Whenever a girl is pregnant no matter how much pain she goes through while carrying and delivering the baby, the baby belongs to her husband’s family and not her family.”

The doctor suggested taking pills for abortion as it was a very early stage. So, we went back home. There were 2 pills that were to be taken after a 24 hours gap. As I took my second pill, within an hour labor pain started. I rushed to the washroom. I was sitting on the pan and thinking whether to call the ambulance. I was feeling that my entire body was trying to kick out a part of my lower abdomen. After 10 minutes, I found something coming out of my body but it got stuck in the midway. With my own fingers, I pulled that thing out of my body and screamed aloud calling my husband – I was holding the baby sac. It was a bloody muscular sac. Seeing that sac, my husband too screamed and told me to flush it off. I did.

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This entire thing happened within few seconds leaving a lasting impression on our minds. That day for the first time, and probably the only time in my life I saw my husband crying.

Before that, we were clueless, overjoyed, and a carefree married couple who didn't know how to deal with the pregnancy. That moment made us parents who just lost their first child. Maybe it was a fetus for the medical world but for us, yes, it was our child who could never see the daylight.

Since I had a miscarriage earlier, we kept this good news to ourselves, we didn't tell anybody except our respective parents about.

Being a party lover, at the top of my mind was the baby shower. Through social media, I started getting ideas about what people do when they are pregnant. I like to keep up with the latest trends. That's why when I came across baby moon pics I immediately decided that I must go for it.

My husband (a very practical person) after listening to my social media learning's told me, "I think it's time we insure our lives. I was looking out for options and shortlisted two banks. Both of them would call you tomorrow. Please understand what they are offering and finalize one!"

All my excitement just vanished. This is one of those moments when I hated him for his bossy tone yet loved him for his practical approach. Thus we bought life insurance.

Also, during this time I got to know about stem cell banking. Stem cell banking is done to store the stem cells of the baby

so that if in case any day in future any crucial disease occurs, these cells can be used to cure that disease. Stem cells are located inside the umbilical cord that connects the baby and the mother. Post-delivery within 15 minutes the stem cell has to be collected. We opted for stem cell banking.

After all the serious tasks were done – it was time for a babymoon.

Like most of the wives, I am the one in our marriage, who takes the pain of exploring travel options and chalking out itineraries each time we travel. Babymoon was not an exception. I started exploring options for one night stay as more than a night stay might be hectic for me. After much read, I finalized Matheran – which is unique in its way.

It was a beautiful experience with a comfortable stay. I was very happy with the good photos that we could click on. After all, my obsession with photos is never-ending. Being 90's kids we had TV as entertainment in our childhood days and landline as the medium of connection. Smartphones & social media culture came at the time when I had just finished my education and started working. With lots of free time, this photo posting culture along with hashtag was the obvious indulgence that I could soak myself into. Hence my obsession grew. (I am just trying to justify my photo clicking fever!)

Chapter 2

- ◆ This time we should keep cook.
- ◆ My husband suggested as he was going through my medical reports which confirmed that day's kit test. Yes, I was pregnant.
- ◆ Hmm. Yes. We shouldn't take the stress.
- ◆ And you start traveling by cab. No need to take the bus.

Thus we outsourced all the household work. Our daily routine looked something like as below:

Morning 7:10 – Alarm starts and it will ring exactly for 5 minutes at a stretch. In those 5 minutes, he will have the world's most peaceful sleep. Once his precious 5 minutes alarm goes off he will get up and get ready.

7:30 AM: He goes out to his office.

I get up with sleepy eyes and close the door. Immediately from inside a voice tells me to run as my day has begun. I literally rush to the washroom for the bath. As soon as I step outside the bathroom and get the slippers off my feet the doorbell rings.

Chapter 2

7:40 AM: The cook arrives. I got a south Indian cook and I am getting Bengali food from her. Ask me How?

This is probably the best part of my day, me being a foodie. I sit on what we call in Bengali - Mora (a stool made of the bamboo stick), in front of the kitchen and give the cook instruction.

Every day during bath I ask myself what is or could be my possible food craving of the day. And as I watch cooking videos while sitting on the Mora I give her instruction in detail. The dishes are exactly at par with authentic Bong taste buds, thanks to her great cooking skills.

8:30 AM: The maid arrives.

Once I close the door for her, I start packing my lunch and tiffin boxes. My Doctor has prescribed me to eat every two hours. Hence, I have to pack 3 to 4 tiffin boxes.

One is the heavy lunch box with rice and two types of curry. The second one is the fruit box. The third one is the sprouts box. The fourth one is the snacks.

The curry ranges from authentic bong dishes like Muri Ghonto to chili chicken from my favorite cuisine Chinese. And snacks will range from dosa, idli, poha, pancake, egg roll, paratha, momo - you name it and I have it in my snack box.

9:00 AM: My cook cuts the tender coconut water for me.

9:15 AM: Both maids leave for the day. It's time for me to book a cab.

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9:30 AM: The cab finally reaches after getting a confused route instruction from me over the phone. Yes, you are right! My morning passes by instructing people.

Then it's time for me to jump inside the cab.

The moment I get in I call my Maa and put the phone on speaker. In pregnancy, it is better not to speak on phone, you may use headphones as an alternative. I prefer to keep the phone on speaker as I like to listen to music (which is played on the tablet as part of additional service provided by the cab). Music calms me and gives a good head start to the day for me.

10:15 AM: I reach the office. The actual distance from my home to the office is 5 km which should not take more than 20 minutes to travel. But thanks to the Mumbai traffic for which my travel time is 45 minutes.

Anyways, my entire day in the office goes in front of the laptop with intermittent meetings (few official and few casual yet official catch-ups with work people). There are few days in the office where I have to deliver a presentation. Hence, I take utmost care to dress up in such a manner where my baby bump is not the first thing that people would notice.

Dressing up. . . .

The day I got to know about my pregnancy on that same evening I started planning my wardrobe. I like to plan well ahead of time, especially when it comes to shopping.

On the eve of my first day of pregnancy, I was browsing an online shopping portal. At the back of my mind, I was thinking

about what kind of dresses to wear with the upcoming ever-increasing belly. All maternity dresses were nothing but gown with the word maternity attached in the name. And yes the gowns are costlier than the same type of gown under the normal dress section. So, I thought of buying from the normal section of size larger than my usual one.

I had heard that in pregnancy hurting the body is a strict no as the pain might trickle down the baby. So, I decided to wear a long sleeve dress to hide my unwaxed savage arms. I went for an ankle-length full sleeve cotton gown (both western and eastern) for my pregnancy wardrobe. And yes, all my tight-fitting jeans went in the last row of the wardrobe, as I won't need them for the next 1 year at least.

Back to the routine topic. . .

At the office, we get a 1-hour lunch break. I take 30 minutes for lunch and for the rest of the time, I walk. There is a beautiful garden inside the office premises where I take a slow walk while talking over the phone (using earphones, of course). I call this my networking time. I talk in turns with my friends and cousins.

6:45 PM: I book a cab and since it's the peak office hour I have to hold my patience and cancel 3 to 4 times before I get my cab at a reasonable price. Else during the rush hour, the cab rates increase by 3 to 4 times sometimes.

7:10 PM: I finally manage to hop into the cab. This is the only time of the day when I relax and do not think about anything. I eat my evening titbits sometimes and sit silently and watch the traffic outside.

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8:00 PM: As soon as I reach home and my husband opens the door with a big smile on his face I feel at ease and I get that 'back to the den' feeling. And every day he would make surprise snacks for me. I get palak soup, biscuit pizza, egg pizza - unique healthy recipes from his kitchen. While changing dress I eagerly wait for the dish to arrive with a cute presentation.

Post that I read books and then do exercises as prescribed by my physiotherapist. I got myself a collection of the 20 best books (must-read ones) in the world. It is said not just the food even the thoughts trickle down the baby. Hence I thought of buying the books.

10:00 PM: Post dinner I vomit. Every day I vomited. Initially, I used to feel low, later on, this vomiting became part of my daily routine. Medicine couldn't curb it. Vomiting makes the body weaker. As it drains out the water, throughout the night I keep drinking water intermittently in my sleep and thus end my day somehow.

Day by day sleeping at night was becoming uneasy. With my ever-growing belly, turning to sides was difficult. Lying flat was a strict no, as this position might choke the baby.

But I was looking forward to my baby shower day. We decided to throw a baby shower party post anomaly scan. Hence, I was literally counting the number of days left for my anomaly scan to be done. An anomaly scan is done to detect any abnormalities in the fetus. This is done in the 5th month of pregnancy.

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