

## PRICELESS DELIVERY

“Fi, fi, fo, fum” .... There comes my 3 year old son smearing mud all over the stair case. “That’s it! You come here now!”- I shouted. “I just cleaned your pancake mess from the kitchen and I have no energy left to clean all this mud. I have been looking for my mob. Tell me where did you hide it again”. My son looks at me with his sparkling black eyes and points on to his right and says “baby...water”. “Right, your one year old brother did it. You want me to believe that? This is my second phone in two months. Don’t lie and...” Even before I finished the sentence he ran in to the bedroom to smear the mud on to the quilt, may be. I closed my eyes and was about to scream “STOOOPPP”. I just could not. I took a deep breath and said, “I love you my son”.

I still remember the day my elder son was born, each and every minute and each and every second is still vivid in my mind because he was a little bundle of surprise, not just for me but for everyone. Three years ago I woke up early in the morning of 20<sup>th</sup> September 2012 to go to work. Had my big breakfast as usual. I am 35 weeks pregnant and I need my morning glucose. I was so proud of myself for making it to the 35th week of pregnancy while I was working, studying and coping with all the ailments of pregnancy right from the day that I conceived. “It’s ok, you have only four more days of work and then you start your maternity leave. Yeehaaa ...Well done. You are nearly there!” I said to myself and turned on the ignition in the car for the morning shift. It was a pleasant morning, clear blue sky and good weather. Very excited to be a part of the team in the new hospital where I work. I had just been there for less than a year. I have started to get to know the staff, routines and the hospital culture. I was working as a Registered Nurse then studying First Line Emergency Care to pursue emergency nursing after returning to work from maternity leave. My small 30 bedded rural hospital has got a good set of nurses and doctors who work there as a great team. Everything was looking good so far.

Half way down the road, I started to feel a bit uncomfortable in my stomach. "Did I have unusually large breakfast this time? May be I need to do a wee again. I thought I went to toilet four times by now. May be false contractions, the Braxton's Hicks that the midwives told me. I would be getting Braxton's Hicks contractions and that is normal" murmured to myself. I remember reading it somewhere. Phew!! Managed to reach work in time. Waddle, waddle, waddle... walked to the hand over room. "Hi everyone", I greeted the three night staff and four bright morning staff ready to start their shift. Nurse Unit Manger handed the diagnostic list to us and the night in -charge began the handover. No longer had she started the handover that I began to feel what I called during that time a 'heavy discomfort' in my stomach. "I cannot sit properly. I have stomach ache", I interrupted the handover. The night in charge who is also a midwife advised me to lie down and resume work only if I was feeling alright. I tried to lie down, but I could not. The pain in the stomach seemed to be worsening. "False contractions?" the midwife asked me. "You are 35 weeks right? You have 6 weeks to go, right? It should not be this bad. How about you get yourself checked at the maternity hospital. Its 30kms away from here. Call your husband and ask him to drive you there", the midwife suggested. I thought it was a good idea and called my hubby immediately. My hospital not only did not have maternity services but was having a huge controversy in the public for cutting down the maternity services at the hospital a few years ago in the hospital as a part cost saving initiative from the government.

"Look I cannot handle the pain at all. I cannot be labouring, can I? I cannot have the baby today. The book says 40 weeks and I have 6 weeks to go. So why is the pain?" I asked the midwife. "You need to go to emergency department. You look pale", said the midwife and handed me over to the ED doctor. In fact, I was pale and sweating. I was trembling and things suddenly changed. The doctor said he will have to examine me and get the ambulance booked if the pain worsens. In the meantime NUM had called me a sick day and replaced me. Gee she was quick, wasn't she? "8 cm dilated", doctor said after examining me. "8!!? So that means its happening!!? I am only having false

contractions for sure isn't it?" I tried to manage the say the full sentence biting on to the nitrous oxide tube.

The next words of the doctor actually took my heart beat away. "True contractions actually. She is in rapid labour. Do not give her any pain relief. The labour is way too advanced for that. Couple of contractions and the baby will be out! Get the suction ready! She cannot travel. Cancel the ambulance. Get the emergency maternity set ready and the neonatal trolley ready", the doctor commanded the nurses. They ran to get the equipment. Word quickly spread. Nurse unit manager and the Nurse Manger arrived on the scene in a second. ED In charge nurse made calls to get the Nurse Unit Manager from the maternity ward from the other hospital to arrive here. "Neonatal trolley? Why now when I would be delivering the baby tomorrow as the book says the pain would last for 8-16 hours. By the way, where is the neonatal trolley? I have not seen one here", I thought to myself. "Doctor, I have no cot ready and I have not packed the bags yet. I do not have any diaper or new born clothes. Still the baby comes today?" I panicked as I asked the doctor who was gowning and gloving. The doctor said, "You are not having a baby today. You are having the baby NOW! You can do whatever is comfortable for you but when I say PUSH, I mean it!!"

'Knock –knock' on the door. "Who can that be and why did they let them knock the door?" I wondered amidst my disbelief and confusion. I am feeling like the world is coming to an end with my pain and cannot digest that I am having a baby before my maternity leave even started. "Where is my wife? Is she ready for a check-up", enquired my hubby as he rushed in to the room. The doctor informed him that I was having a baby now and not travelling anywhere. My husband seemed to have understood everything in a second that I have been trying to understand for the past one hour. He held my hand and assured me, "you can do it and you have to. Trust the people around you and leave the rest to God". I still could not come into terms that I was having a baby right then d there but my hubby said the words and his face said even more.

In the next one hour the wonderful team around me was getting hot packs, towels, emergency equipment, suture kit and a tiny singlet and a beanie. A hospital where there is no maternity service, the staff looked fully confident and prepared to deliver my baby!! Wow. I cannot explain in any words the feeling of safety I had in the room. I trusted all the people in the room. I left it to them I did not know what was happening and what will happen in few minutes. However, I knew one thing for sure: they are all doing their best and truly no one could ever have done it better. I could see it in their eyes that they were all determined to get the baby out. "God does exist and He exists in the form of these good people who were around me to deliver my baby in the safest possible way where they did not have the maternity support", I realised.

Rapid labour which I had was truly rapid- two hours of pain and the baby came of me screaming and healthy. Everyone cried in joy! They all clapped and shook hands each other. One of the staff ran out to the ward." It's a boy, it's a boy, a boy!!" she shouted. Suddenly I heard cheers and applause at the distance. "Can I have a look" "I have a flower for the new baby from our hospital garden", "who wants coffee", "does the baby have black eyes like his mother", "When can we get in".... Questions went on and on from the staff working outside. "Put the uniform back on and I suppose you have your nurse's bag as your only luggage. Well pack it any way. Ambulance is here. You and the pre term baby will have to be under observation and you have go to the nearest big hospital", doctor told me as he was completing some forms for me. He held my hands and said, "All the best dear. You look after this precious little one for us, won't you?" His eyes told me everything. Me and my hubby were speechless. We both were searching for words to thank the team. The news did spread like a forest fire. The whole community knew that a hospital staff had a baby while at work. The news hit in the next day's newspaper headline with my son's picture in it. One more feather to the hospital staff's hat. Well done. I really mean it. I and my family owe you all a lot. The day that we would never ever forget in our lives. A day that taught us lot of lessons. The day my first baby was born. I closed my eyes and kissed my baby's forehead.

“Allo, allo”, mumbled my one year old next to me on a mobile phone. I opened my eyes. “Oh it’s you. Where is your big brother with mud all over him? By the way what do you have in your hands? My phone? It’s wet too. Ahhh, so is this what your brother told me, ‘baby... water’. Come give the phone to mama. Good boy”. The little one hands the wet phone to me. “Why is it wet dear and why does it sting? Errrrr did you ..... Is that why your brother told me ‘baby... water’.

Oh!!!! the joys of being a mother!.