

# CHILDBIRTH ~ A WOMAN'S PLACE?

In the past, and in some parts of the world today, women supported each other during childbirth with their own experiences and the knowledge they received from their mothers. Midwives knew about natural medicines and massage, and childbirth was seen as a natural process. Often prayers were sent up to Mother Goddesses and women felt protected by other women during this painful and often frightening experience.

## ● How This Changed

Men took control of medicine and made it illegal for women to practise natural healing. They called medicine-women witches and often put them to death. Women thus lost power and their control of childbirth.

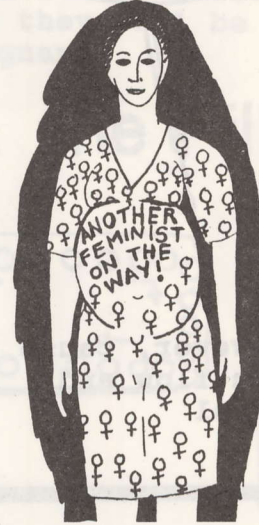
Modern medicine has reduced deaths in childbirth and made it safer for women to give birth. However, doctors often misuse this new knowledge of medicine and technology to gain control over women. This prevents women from being able to make their own choices concerning their bodies.

### ● The relationship between doctors and mothers

Most doctors are men and they sometimes regard women as inferior to themselves. They often treat women as if they have no right to argue. Doctors are professionals and earn high salaries and so are separated from most mothers by social class too.

Doctors also occupy positions of power in hospitals. These factors added to the fact that doctors have more knowledge, make it almost impossible for an equal relationship to develop between

them and mothers. An equal relationship is essential in a situation as childbirth.



### ● Why women need to change this

In all areas of life women need to break the traditions which keep them in a lower position. In childbirth it is easy for a woman to lose her identity and become just a patient. Women experience childbirth in different ways. Therefore it is important for them to be able to speak to their doctors, asking questions and demanding answers.

These days it should be possible for childbirth to be a happy occasion where women can feel the power and strength of their bodies which enables them to give birth.

### ● How to Regain Power

There are two paths to the equalisation of a doctor/mother relationship. One is the gaining of knowledge by women. This can be done by reading books, asking questions, going for regular check-ups and taking note of the changes in their bodies.

The second is the gaining of women's abilities to assert themselves, to remember that they own their bodies and that doctors are there to help and not to take control.