



DOHADA (PREGNANCY CRAVINGS)*

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Dohada (Sanskrit), *dohala* (Pali), *dohala* (Prakrit, Hindi), *doladuk* (Sinhalese), "two-heartedness," is the pregnancy whim, when the will of the foetus influences the moods and desires of the mother. The word is probably derived from Sanskrit (*dvi + hrd*), literally "having two hearts"; from Sanskrit *daurhṛda*, "sickness of heart," "nausea," or "evil-hearted"; or perhaps from Sanskrit *doha + da*, "giving milk." Dohada is sometimes a euphemism for pregnancy.

The condition of having a second heart, causing vicarious cravings in the mother, is discussed in Sanskrit treatises on medicine and love, and in religious literature, where it is often interpreted as transfer of karmic substance (especially by Hindus) or as coordination of two people's karma (especially by Jains). In literature, the dohada motif is used as a stock embellishment. For example, many poetic descriptions of spring feature the pregnancy longings of blossoming trees. The *asoka* tree longs for the touch of a maiden's foot in order to blossom, and the *kadamba* tree for the first thunder of the monsoon. Stories of pregnant humans and animals in dohada also abound, especially in the religious literature of the Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains, where they often have a formulaic character, serving, like dreams, to augur the birth of a hero. Dohada incidents often serve as a start motif, or are used ornamentally,

having no obvious influence on the main events of a story.

Dohada stories usually involve some direct or indirect danger to the husband, who must perform heroic deeds to satisfy his wife's cravings, ensuring a safe and auspicious birth. Sometimes a dangerous dohada is satisfied by trickery, or dohada may be feigned to trick the husband. Dohada stories usually involve inauspicious, dangerous cravings, but, especially in a Jain context, may involve auspicious cravings for pious acts.

Examples of auspicious or good dohada are the craving of a Jain woman to hear continuously the Jain teachings, and to spend money for religious purposes, or the craving of a Buddhist woman to entertain the monks.

Cases of inauspicious or evil dohada are more numerous. For example, in the *Thusa Jataka*, Prince Ajatasatru's mother has a dohada to drink blood from her husband King Bimbisara's knee, which is satisfied; she gives birth, after an unsuccessful attempt at abortion, to a child who is destined to kill his father and seize his throne. The *Vipaka Sutra* (a Svetambara Jain canonical text) contains many especially sinister dohada stories.

Dohada is often satisfied by deceit. In the *Kathasaritsagara*, Queen Mrgavati has a dohada to bathe in a lake of blood, which is satisfied by her husband, who makes for her a lake of red colored lac. In the *Parisistaparvan*, the Machiavellian political theorist Canakya (Kautilya), plotting to destroy the Nanda dynasty, searches for a suitable proxy to rule for him. A village chief's daughter has a dohada to drink the moon, and Canakya promises

to fulfill it if the infant is given to him to raise. The dohada is fulfilled when the mother drinks a reflection of the moon, and her son, the future Mauryan emperor, is named Candragupta, "Moon Protected."

Many stories involve feigned dohada. In the *Vidhurapandita Jataka*, the queen, wishing to hear the sage Vidhura discourse on the *Dharma*, feigns dohada. In the *Nigrodha Jataka*, a woman feigns pregnancy and dohada in order to improve her status in the household.

Similar tales are found in the world's folk and popular literature. (See MotifT571, "unreasonable demands of pregnant women"; Thompson 1957: 402-403).

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