

YOGA AS THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION IN SUTHIKA

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ABSTRACT

The moment a child is born, a mother is also born. Postpartum is transition period in which mother needs to adopt herself for a healthy motherhood. Modern life style with sedentary habits is one of the leading causes of lactation failure, postpartum blues, weight gain, postpartum depression, puerperal psychosis and urinary incontinence in post natal period. It is observed that most of the psychosomatic disorders can be managed without pharmacological therapy. Practice of *yoga* postures can provide women with both obvious and unexpected benefits for the body, mind and spirit. “*Bhramari Pranayama*” the part of *yoga* which has proven effects on trigeminal system and endocrine system which eventually has positive effect on female health and lactation. “*Shalabasana* and *Moolabandha*” has superior effects to Kegal exercises for perineal muscles. “*Uttanapadasana* and *Bhujangasana*” improves tone and power of abdomen and back muscles. It is also proved that *yoga* can treat sleep and stress related disorders. *Yoga* can be done anywhere without causing any untoward effects. *Yoga* in *Suthika* (postnatal) can prove to be a more effective and safe method to overcome the postpartum stress and in due course helps in increasing the physical strength and ability. By increasing maternal motivation and self-confidence, postpartum exercise enhances child rearing practices and helps mother to play their maternal roles more efficiently. *Yoga* can help women to find physical and emotional balance as well as self-acceptance. Further research for effective postpartum care is essential for better outcome.

Keywords: *Yoga*, Postpartum, *Suthika*.

INTRODUCTION

Yoga is a psychosomatic spiritual discipline for achieving union and harmony between our

mind and body. Being holistic in its approach, it is one of the best means for achieving physi-

cal, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing. *Yoga* helps to manage stress and lead a healthy and happy life. Stress is an outcome of the modern fast paced lifestyle. It is produced out of dissatisfaction, frustration. At present human existence is challenged by the stress disorders and psychosomatic diseases such as Hypertension, Hyperacidity, Insomnia, Heart diseases, Diabetes mellitus, Asthma¹.

Although the system of *yoga* has not been conceived for the therapeutic purposes, it has been observed through applied research that regular practice of *yoga* not only controls the disease but also promotes and maintains healthy condition of body and mind. It also prevents disease process. *Yoga* is not an alternative for conventional therapy, but it definitely supports the healing process. *Yoga* has potential to tranquilize and balance the mind², which is the key in the management of stress disorders.

Suthika is a woman who has recently brought forth a child. According to Ayurveda “A lady is said to be *suthika* after the expulsion of placenta till 45th day of post-partum period or till *rajodarshana*³”. This is one of the most sensitive and delicate period of every mothers’ life. Women in *suthika*(postnatal) period are more prone to various diseases and related complications. Hence the need of effective care and management is to be considered to be of utmost importance.

CONTENT:

In olden days postpartum women (*suthika*) were advised to follow complete rest for 45 days (*suthikakala*) and follow certain diet regimens and avoid various *manasikabhava* (mental factors) such as *krodha* (anger), *shoka*

(grief), *bhaya* (fear) and *sharirikashrama* (physical activity causing fatigue) such as *vyayama* (exercise), *maithuna* (sexual union) which can vitiate the *dosha* further in an already compromised body. *Suthika* (postpartum woman) was advised certain *vatahara* (vata pacifying) measures such as massage with *Balataila*, irrigation or *snana* (bath) with *Badhradarukashaya* and especially wrapping of abdomen with clean cloth⁴. But in today’s fast-paced life finding even few moments for her-self has become a challenge. Modern sedentary life style has brought drastic changes in *Dinacharya* (daily-routine/regimen) of every woman. It is a great transition from age old living style of Indian women. For those who experience a particularly difficult birth or postnatal health issues, this period of recovery can be even more challenging. There is a need of self-assessment, where our traditional customs are giving way to modern day living.

Previously *suthika*(postpartum woman) was advised to do activities such as drawing water from well, filling water to big vessel in bathroom, sweeping for the first time after labor, which was followed as customs especially on particular days like 28th or 45th day. Presently, we need to assess those customs and its relevance in health of women and scientific background of those activities. It is suggested that such movements tone up the abdomen (rectus abdominus muscle) and muscles of the back along with modulation of neuro-endocrine axis⁵.

In the current era, majority of the women are just following prescription by the doctor as oral medicines and advise of rest as complete bed rest without activity, just by watching

stressful serials. These are activities or *charyas* exactly our great *acharyas* (scholars/mentors) contraindicated. Hence the way out from these issues can be attained through *yoga*. Many of us will raise a doubt that great Sushrutha *acharya* and Bhavaprakasha mentioned *vyayama* (exercise) is contraindicated in *suthika* (postpartum woman) in *paricharya*⁶ (nursing/regimen). But we need to realize that *yoga* is not an exercise. Many of us misunderstood Gym as *yoga* and complaints reversal of changes achieved through heavy exercise (GYM). In postpartum women there is laxity of abdominal muscles and perineal muscles resulted due to normal pregnancy changes over nine months period, hence there is need of slow and gradual restoration of muscle strength without harming physiology and psychological profile of women.

Yoga is a psychosomatic spiritual discipline, which brings harmony between body and mind. *Asana* (postures) and *pranayama* (breathing exercise) are parts of the *Astanga yoga* mentioned by Sage Pathanjali, which has proven effect on psychosomatic health of human being. *Asanas* (postures) as explained in *Yogasuthra* “*Sthiram sukham asanam*” which is stable and gives pleasure. *Hatayogapradeepika* says “*Kuryat tadhasanam sthairyama arogyam cha anga laghavam*”⁷ *asana* (yogic postures) is that which brings lightness and stability of the body and which is beneficial to health. *Asana* (yogic postures) is helpful in re-establishing the proper functioning of musculoskeletal system and promoting the mental health. It is proved that “*Shalabasana* and *Moolabandha*” has superior effects to Kegal exercises for perineal muscles. “*Uttanapada-*

sana and *Bhujangasana*” improves tone and power of abdomen and back muscles⁸. It is also proved that *yoga* can treat sleep and stress related disorders.

Objective analysis of *yoga* ensures its emphasis on all the system of body. It has positive effects on respiratory system as breathing is of such a paramount importance in *yoga*. It has good effects on cardiovascular system as inverted postures cannot be fully comprehended without understanding the dynamics of circulation. It has good results in musculoskeletal system where all our actions are expressed. It has effect on nervous system due to residence of all managerial function of musculoskeletal system. Studies have shown that practice of *yoga* orchestrates fine tuning and modulate neuro-endocrine axis. *Pranayama* (breathing exercise) has proven effect on respiratory system along with management of stress induced disorders such as postpartum blues (Puerperal psychosis)⁹. Studies revealed *Bhramari pranayama* has significant effect on trigeminal system as well as in endocrine system¹⁰, which has major role in endocrinal problems of postpartum women such as lactation failure.

The set of *yoga* which has proven effect on management of post-partum disorders are *Bhramari pranayama*, *Nadishodana pranayama*, *Navasana*, *Bhujangasana*, *Urdhva-prasaritapadasana*, *Makarasana*, *Adhomukhasavasana*, *Ardamerudandasana*, *Tadasana*, *Ardakatichakrasana*, *Vrikshasana*, *Shalabasana*, *Gomukhasana*, *Vajrasana*, *Mulabandha/mahamudra*, *Savasana*, and *Ardapavanamukthasana*¹¹. These *Asana*'s (postures) are beneficial in achieving happy and healthy postpartum period, which has great role in

managing psychosomatic health of a mother without pharmacological therapy and also do not have any adverse effects. *Yoga* is helpful in effective lactation and child rearing practice. It promotes arterial circulation and venous return. *Yoga* is an effective tool in the management of postpartum urinary incontinence¹². It will lessen the risk of Deep Vein Thrombosis and embolism in postpartum women. *Yoga* is helpful in restoring the muscle tone of the abdominal wall and pelvic floor¹³. It tones up uterine muscles and strengthens the low back. It helps in reduction of urinary excretion of adrenaline, noradrenalin, dopamine and aldosterone. It is helpful in decreasing the serum testosterone, luteinizing hormone levels and increasing the cortisol excretion, indicating optimal changes in hormones¹⁴. *Yoga* maintains spinal integrity and boosts immunity. Regular 15-20 minutes of *yoga* provides improvement in psychological profile and reduces *suthikarogas*(postnatal diseases).

Yoga has physiological benefits such as, stable autonomic nervous system equilibrium, maintenance of optimum pulse rate, respiratory rate & blood pressure. Other than these *yoga* increases Galvanic Skin Response (GSR), increases EEG - alpha waves. Increase in theta, delta, and beta waves also seen during various stages of meditation¹⁵. Psychological benefits are seen such as increase in subjective well-being, self-acceptance, self-actualization, social adjustment and decrease in anxiety, and depression. There is improvement in hand grip strength, eye-hand coordination, choice reaction time, and steadiness. Many researches prove that there is improvement in integrated

functioning of body parts and better psychomotor functions¹⁶. There is definite improvement in Cognitive functions such as attention, concentration, memory and depth of perception¹⁷.

CONCLUSION

Yoga affects every cell of the body. It brings better inter-neuronal communication so that the systems associated with nervous system will show their optimal role on health. It also improves strength of the body and increases the resistance against stress and many diseases. It not only brings tranquility, harmony and spiritual peace but also balances *Tridoshas*. *Yoga* in *Suthika*(postnatal) will be a more effective and safe method to overcome the postpartum stress. And in due course it helps in increasing the physical strength and ability of the motherhood. By increasing the maternal motivation, self-confidence and by achieving healthy status of mother by *Yoga*, we can enhance child rearing practices, which help mothers to play their maternal role more efficiently and effectively. *Yoga* can help women to find physical and emotional balance as well as self-acceptance. Further research on *Yoga* for effective postpartum care is essential.

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