

## REVIEW ARTICLE: SPIRITUALITY AND PREGNANCY

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### ABSTRACT

The meaning of spirituality has developed and expanded over time, and various implications can be found alongside each other. Spirituality is a broad concept with space for many perspectives. In general, it includes a sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves, and involves a search for meaning in life. According to few, spirituality is also “a way of being in the world in which a person feels a sense of connectedness to self, others, and/or a higher power or nature; a sense of meaning in life; and transcendence beyond self, everyday living, and suffering”. A spiritual journey for a pregnant lady is essential as she undergoes physical, mental, and emotional changes throughout her pregnancy period. In this article an attempt is made to define role of spirituality on pregnancy and its outcome with the help of various books and research articles.

**Keywords:** *Spirituality, Pregnancy.*

### INTRODUCTION

World Health Organization defines health, as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. Although spirituality is recognised by several authors as an essential dimension in life and health, the WHO’s definition of health still lacks a full approach of spirituality. This gap seems to be related to the poor development and implementation of policies towards effective holistic care.

Ayurveda, the traditional system of healing has given utmost importance to the health of women in the society. Considering this, various *paricharyas* or do’s and dont’s are been mentioned to be followed by a women during her menstrual cycle, during pregnancy as well as after delivery. While explaining *Garbhini*

*paricharya*, Acharya Sushruta mentions that the women should remain happy since the very first day and should perform religious and auspicious rites<sup>1</sup>. This shows that the importance of spirituality and pregnancy was well understood thousands of decades before itself.

### SPIRITUALITY AND PREGNANCY

Ayurveda has recognized the need for the mental, spiritual and physical preparation of the mother-to-be for the momentous event of childbirth. This science explains definite practices for the mother and father in the form of “*Garbhadana purva samskara*” for the attainment of *Supraja janma* or “Physically, Mentally, Emotionally and Spiritually healthy child.”

The health of the parents is directly responsible for the health of a child. Not only their physical health, but also their psychological and spiritual health affects the child in the womb<sup>2</sup>. The surrounding environment, the food, the activities, in fact everything the mother is exposed to during pregnancy directly affects the child<sup>3</sup>.

### AYURVEDIC APPROACH

While explaining *Maithuna ayogya stree* (Contra indicated conditions of women for coitus), *Acharya Charaka* explains that the coitus should not be done with a woman having *shoka* (sorrow) or *krodha* (angry). Normalcy of psychological or happiness of couple is most important for conception.<sup>4</sup>

While explaining *Saatmya* as a factor in *Garbha utpatti*, *Acharya Charaka* mentions that congenial diet and regimen by the *stree* and *purusha* are not the only factor for the decent of *Garbha*. There is something called as *Jiva* (life/soul/spiritual power) which has equal and utmost importance for *Garbha utpatti*<sup>5</sup>. The *mana* of the foetus attains the characters of *Satwa*, *Raja* and *Tama*, depending upon the psychological status of the mother and father (*Satwa* of *maata* and *pita*), the topics being listened by the pregnant woman (*Antarvartnya shrutam*), the influence of deeds of the previous life (*karma*) and specific practice of *mana*<sup>6</sup>. In month wise development of foetus, it is explained that all *indriyas* (sensory organs) will be developed during 3<sup>rd</sup> month of pregnancy<sup>7</sup>. This statement further justifies the role of hearing good thoughts by the pregnant women will influence the mind of the baby. As well as we can note here various researches which are been conducted to note the practice of music therapy during pregnancy and its influence on pregnancy outcome. *Acharya Sushruta* opines that *mana* becomes more enlightened by 5<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy<sup>8</sup> and *buddhi* will be attained by 6<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy<sup>9</sup>. According to Ayurvedic philosophy the knowledge or perception is the result of interaction between *mana* and *indriyas*. Since by 5<sup>th</sup> month auditory reflexes and peripheral sensory reflexes develop to certain extent, hence the authors have mentioned the enlightenment of *mana*<sup>10</sup>.

### REFERENCES FROM PURANA

Story of Sage Ashtavakra: his mother had a habit of sitting near her father and husband while they were teaching their shishyas. Her unborn child attained mastery over the Vedas by listening to his grandfather. Unable to bear the mistakes done by his father, the child started correcting them from his mother's womb and was cursed by his father for insulting him and born with eight bends in his body<sup>11</sup>.

Story of Abhimanyu: while Abhimanyu was in his mother's womb., Arjuna would narrate tales of his great skills and valour to Subhadra. Abhimanyu even before he was born was a good student, learnt the art of war and entering Chakravyuha from his parents conversation<sup>12</sup>.

### SCIENTIFIC JUSTIFICATION

Modern medical evidence suggests human body functions are under the influence of "Neuro-Endocrine" system. Throughout the pregnancy period, various chemicals (Hormones, Neuropeptides) are being released in the would-be mother's body. All such Neuropeptides (biologically effective chemicals) are also flowing through the body of the growing baby (foetus) in her womb. If those chemicals are associated with positive thought/feeling (e.g. endorphins/Serotonin etc) they would arouse similar effect in the baby<sup>13</sup>.

Negative thoughts involving anger, lust, greed, fear, anxiety and other such negative thought have a long-lasting (probably lifelong) influence on the growing brain of the baby in womb<sup>14</sup>.

Human ear can hear sounds in a range of frequencies from 20Hz to 20000Hz. Few radiologists testify that babies in womb reacts and responds to the ultrasonographic observations which are performed during the ante-natal USG scan for the well-being of the foetus<sup>15</sup>.

### CONCLUSION

It is great wonder that our ancient Rishis were able to grasp and visualize such intense secrets about the body and soul in those ancient days itself when there were no tools available as are available with modern scientists now. It was well explained in those era in the form of *Rajaswala paricharya* and *Garbhini*

*paricharya*. Even the medical fraternity will realize this sooner or later that whatever is spoken to or heard by the foetus in womb will have a permanent impact over the brain, memory, intellect and emotion of the baby<sup>16</sup>. There is no doubt that one who understands the spiritual secretes of pregnancy, will be blessed with a *Shreyasi praja* or *Sanskaryukta garbha*.

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