

## ANTENATAL CARE YOGA AND ITS ROLE IN PREGNANCY

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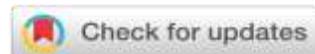
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### ABSTRACT

Pregnancy is a very important phase of every woman's life. In that there are so many changes in the body occurring physiology & psychology in this tricky situation to maintain, physical, spiritual, and emotional well benign is very important. *Yoga* is an ancient mind-body practice that originated in India It is becoming increasingly recognized and being used worldwide as a health practice for a variety of immunological, neuromuscular, psychological, and pain-related problems. It is most recognized for its potential to create balance in emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual dimensions. *Yoga* is a comprehensive system that commonly uses *asana*, *pranayama*, *dharana*, and *dhyana*. This article review about the awareness of *yoga* in the antenatal period and various types of *Asanas*. *Yoga* combines soul and mind with the body and *mudras* create mind peace.

**Keywords:** Pregnancy, A.N.C, *Yoga*, *Mudras*

### INTRODUCTION

The term "*Yoga*" is derived from the Sanskrit word "*Yuja*" which means "to combine". *Yoga* combines the Soul and minds with the body. The practice of *Yoga* began 5000 years ago in India as a practice for young men in training to be wise men. The postures strengthened their bodies so that they could sit for

hours at a time in meditation and become enlightened beings. The roots of *yoga* extend deep into the Hindu culture practised by saints, going back thousands of years. However, Indian sage *Patanjali* is credited for establishing the foundation and inspiration for the classic belief and form of *Yoga* as most

of us know it today. *Asanas are known as postures and Pranayama as breath control.* The postures helped to harmonize the energy in their bodies so that their mind could rest in the present moment with complete awareness, as spiritual attainment was one of the symbols of success in that era. Under Patanjali *Yoga Darshana Acharya Patanjali* has highly appreciated & directed the value of Asana as 1<sup>st</sup> requisite with *Pranayama* (TATRA STHIR SUKHAMASANAM). *Yoga* is the science of human life itself. The eight processes said as steps of Yoga are the evolutionary process for refining the person at all the levels of his consciousness. We can obtain physical energy through Asanas & Pranayama, Mental energy through *Yama* and *Niyama*, and Spiritual energy through *Pratyahara*, *dharma*, *dhyana*, and *Samadhi*. Thus, Yoga is the development of science and practice for the maximum enhancement of physical, mental, and spiritual capabilities to make it applicable for the care of the person and society. It is an approach by which human beings can achieve harmonious development and health of the body and mind complex.

#### **Antenatal Care (A.N.C.) Yoga**

Antenatal care *Yoga* means the *Yoga* advised to the expecting mother throughout the nine months. This *yoga* is not only for mothers but for the foetus too. Here *Yoga* does not mean only certain low-stress physical exercises, which is only the misconception of lay people, but it means implanting a completely new lifestyle, beneficial to the expecting mother and foetus. It is about preparing women physically and mentally through exercise and meditation to give birth to a healthy baby with no compromise to her health in particular. This is physiological and psychological management with non-medicinal ways to achieve a healthy mother and foetus, designated as antenatal care *yoga*. *Yoga* and *Ayurveda* being the ancient scientific medical systems of the world have a significant Contribution in the field of human reproduction, and after thousands of years, the principles are constant and still can be utilized to find solutions to the increasing problems connected with the future progeny. According to *Sushruta Samhita*

one can't completely cure a patient or treat a disease by using one system, on the contrary one must be well versed in different systems of medicine and use them prudently for the benefit of the patient. This is the very fundamental principle behind the integrated management of the pregnant woman and pregnancy. The practice of *yoga* can help you to prepare your mind and body for labour and birth, as this helps you to concentrate on the present and keep you healthy. The *Yoga* Postures are gentle ways of keeping your body active and supple. It can also help in ensuring easier labour and smooth delivery by relieving tension around the cervix and birth canal and by opening the pelvis. Poses that put pressure on the abdomen and other difficult poses should not be done during the advanced stages of Pregnancy. Women do not have to do all the *Asanas* advised in pregnancy it's important to listen to their bodies and just do as much as they easily can.

#### **IMPORTANCE OF A.N.C. YOGA AND THE WAY IT WORK'S**

The expecting mother needs proper care management of her body, mind, soul, her diet, habits, and exercise. *Ayurveda* advocates dietary regimens, exercises, psychological counselling, dos and don'ts in the behaviour.

In the ancient *Ayurvedic* treatises, the aims and objectives of antenatal care are explained as-

1. *Paripoornatva* (proper growth of the foetus and mother) is achieved by proper dietary and medicinal (iron, calcium, protein, and multivitamin) supplements and by A.N.C. *YOGA*.
2. *Anupaghata* (uncomplicated pregnancy) is achieved by proper antenatal care check-ups and antenatal care *yoga*.
3. *Sukhaprasava* (for normal healthy delivery of the foetus and wellbeing of both mother and foetus) is achieved by different *Ayurvedic* medications like *Yoni Pichu* of medicated oil or *Kwath* & A.N.C. *yoga*.

If we see the above clearly, in all three A.N.C. *Yoga* is common, and the reasons for how it works are described below.

*Yoga* postures commonly called *Asanas*, lead to strengthening of the muscles and ligaments and help to maintain their elasticity. In addition, they increase the calcium availability & absorption in the bone. This is very important for proper foetal blood circulation. Moreover, the strength of the pelvic floor is very important for the bearing down effort of the mother during delivery.

*Pranayama* is the breathing technique. It is helpful in making use of the total tidal volume of the lungs as it is reduced in pregnancy due to the pressure of the diaphragm from below. This increases the availability of oxygen to the mother and foetus and thus helps foetal growth. *Pranayama* techniques also lead to an increase in the breath-holding capacity by strengthening the respiratory muscles of the mother while bearing down during delivery.

Now looking at the incidence of congenital anomalies, teratogenic complications, unexplained foetal death, and rising rate of pregnancy-induced hypertension (PIH) & related complications, it can be said that proper support of holistic systems of medicine, i.e., A.N.C. *Yoga* will be a worth full natural alternative. It is now the need of time to encourage the application of ANC *Yoga* in the management of such complications particularly in PIH, as the reason behind PIH is stress and *yoga* works perfectly in decreasing stress levels. *Yoga* also benefits in normalising the homeostatic imbalances because of free radicals, it helps in eliminating these ROS, as the same is especially caused because of stress.

It has been suggested that A.N.C. *Yoga* works in:

- Improving the sleep of mothers.
  - Reducing mood swings as remain in high fluctuating conditions of mind through counselling and meditation done at A.N.C. *yoga*.
  - Reducing stress and anxiety.
  - Increasing the strength, flexibility, elasticity, and endurance of muscle, as strength of the pelvic floor needed for childbirth.
- Decreasing nausea, lower back pain, shortness of breath, headache, and joint pain.
  - Decreasing risk of pre-term delivery, PIH, IUGR
  - Increasing the positive energy in mothers through meditation, as they bond with other pregnant women during A.N.C. *yoga* sessions who are in the same phase of life. Social bonding and meditation increase the self-confidence of an expecting mother and ease fear, anxiety, stress, and depression.
  - Preparing psychologically for the expecting mother to take labour pains and deliver the baby.
  - Reducing the free radical stress in the mother and developing foetus.

### A.N.C. YOGA IN FIRST TRIMESTER <sup>2</sup>

This period is the most important phase of the whole pregnancy, especially in primigravida, as she has come to a completely new phase of life, where she has to deal with new responsibilities. From the phase of a girl, she is converting into a woman which involves a bit of psychological stress and changes in the body by adapting to newer physiological states concerning a lot of mental stress.

Hence, we concentrate only on counselling, *meditation*, and *Pranayam*. Right counselling help in making a woman mentally prepared to adapt to new changes in her body and help to cope with all psychological stress. Meditation helps her in coping with increased mood swings, and headaches and bringing positive energy into her life. *Pranayam* is a breathing exercise. This will encourage them to breathe in and out slowly and deeply which will increase the availability of oxygen in the mother. It improves the purification of the mother's blood. It also increases the availability of oxygen to the foetus and thus helps in the foetal growth.

1. *Utthitatrikonasan*: the pelvic muscles will be strengthening.



2. *Virbhadrāsana*: it stretches the groin area, boosts the body and back muscles, and relieves back-ache.
3. *Vrikshāsana*: stretches the legs, back, and arms which invigorate the body.
4. *Mantra* chanting

#### **A.N.C. YOGA IN SECOND TRIMESTER <sup>3</sup>**

This is the time when the mother gets more connected to the baby as she starts feeling the baby by now at this phase of pregnancy. This trimester is very important in baby growth. This is the safest trimester. As such, along with three measures i.e., counselling, meditation, and *Pranayam*, the mild type of *Yoga* where physical effort (stress) is involved, is included, particularly along with walking exercises.

Meditation plays the same role as it plays in the first trimester, in addition, it increases the bonding of mother and baby. An increase in positive energy, in general, enhances the mental growth of the foetus. According to *Sushruta*, in the fifth month of foetal development, *Manah* gets more attributed to the *Buddhi* factor (*PANCHAME MANAH PRATIBUDDHATARAM BHAVATI- su. Sh. 28/3*). The opinion of *Acharya Charaka* & *Acharya Vagabhatta* is also quotable here. Accordingly, they have directed that along with the development of *Manah* growth of *Mansa* and *Raktadhatu*s also seen in 5<sup>th</sup> month (*“PANCHAME MANAH PRATIBUDDHATARAM*

*BHAVATI “ MANSASHONITO PACHAYASHCHA: VAGABHATA – A. H.)* . Similarly in 6<sup>th</sup> sixth month of foetal development intelligence is gained substantially as is referred by *Sushruta* (*SHASHTHE BUDDHIH-Su. Sh. 29/3*). According to *Acharya Charaka*, 6<sup>th</sup> month is specially the time of gaining *Bala* & *Varna* by the foetus (*SHASHTHE MASI GARBHASYA BALAVARNOPACHAYO BHAVATYADHIKAMANYEBHYO MASEBHYAH-CHARAKA* ).

*Pranayam* helps similarly in the first trimester in addition it helps in improving the blood circulation in the foetus, helping in proper growth of the foetus and avoiding complications like IUGR. Meditation and *Pranayam* both help in avoiding PIH and IUGR complications. Gentle stretching and right posture *Yoga* are the regimens directed to be included more in this trimester. It keeps the mother active and decreases her lower back pains, and joint pains and increases the strength, flexibility, elasticity, and endurance of muscles. It helps her in keeping her body in the right posture during pregnancy time, reducing the harm caused to the bones of the mother due to wrong postures during this phase. *Asana* included in this trimester are-

1. *Vajrasana*: Improve digestion and strengthen the thigh muscle and pelvic muscles, this is only one *asana* that can be practiced after eating meals.

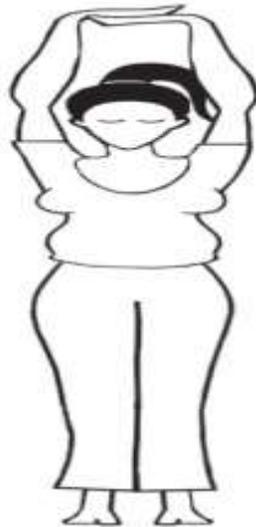


2. *Matsyakridasan*(Flapping fish pose): *Matsyasana* gives calmness to your mind, decreasing the level of

anxiety, stress, depression, and fatigue. Stimulates digestion and relieves constipation.



1. *Tada Asan* (standing erect and lifting body posture):



*Benefit:* This pose stretches and strengthens the torso

Stand upright, raise your arms overhead, and interlock your fingers. Breath in, hold the breath Now raise your body slowly upward from your toes hold the breath, and position for a few seconds now return back while slowly breathing out.

## 2. Trikonasana (Modified triangle posture)



*Benefit:* This pose regulates the digestive system and massages internal organs like the liver. Stand with your feet wide apart and arms extended at shoulder level parallel to the floor.

Stretch your left-hand overhead and bend down to the right side and touch your knee. Look up at your left hand. Return to starting position and switch sides.

## 3. Veerabhadrasana (warrior posture)



*Benefit:* This pose stretches the back and legs and strengthens the thigh and back muscles.

Stand erect with feet close to each other, and take both feet apart as far you can stretch both hands horizont.

Allyrotates your body left side with the same position while breathing in and bend your knees holding your breath for a few seconds now slowly breath out and return to starting position and switch sides.

#### 4. Vajrasan (Seated twist)



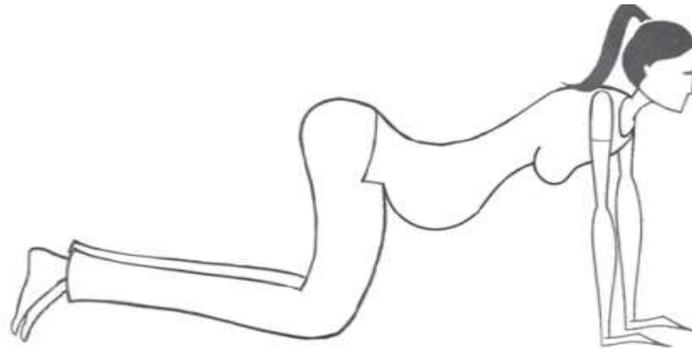
*Benefit:* This pose stretches the spine, improves digestion, and relieves constipation.

Sit with your legs stretched out in front of you. Bend your right knee and take your right foot over the left knee. Bring the left arm and elbow over the right knee. Keep your right hand behind you on the floor for support. Now twist your torso to the right and turn your head back. Return to starting position and switch sides.

This trimester is the risky one as complications occur more during this trimester like PIH, IUGR, and preterm delivery but as discussed above the woman who indulges in yoga activities will be at much lower risk of these complications. As discussed, all the activities above go the same in this trimester too, only *yoga* involving mild pelvic floor exercises is added more as they strengthen the pelvic floor muscles needed for childbirth. The added Yoga in this trimester is.

### A.N.C. YOGA IN THE THIRD TRIMESTER

#### 5. Marjari Asan (cat pose)



*Benefit:* releases spinal stress

Get down on all fours on your mat. Place your hands directly below your shoulders. Now lift your tailbone up towards the ceiling so that your lower back is concave. As you do this your head will lift up naturally towards the ceiling.

Now round your back like the hump of a camel and roll your head towards your chest. Make the movements as fluid as possible.

## 5. Bhadra Asana (Butterfly pose)



**Benefit:** Increases mobility of the hip joints and stretches the inner thigh.

Sit with your legs outstretched on the mat. Bend your knees and bring your feet in as close as possible, towards you. Bring the soles of your feet together.

Keep your spine straight and gently move your legs down and up, resembling the movement of a butterfly as it flaps its wings.

Counselling in this trimester is done to the mother regarding making her mentally prepared to take labour pains and deliver her baby normally, counselling to the mother is also done regarding how to deal with labour pains and how to apply pressure to deliver normally.

**Mudras** useful in Pregnancy <sup>4</sup>

1. *Apana Mudra*: Strengthened pelvic organs, during labour to help facilitate contractions.
2. *Gyan Mudra*: achieve better physical, mental, and spiritual status, it represents purification of the mind.
- 3 *Aakash Mudra*: It can be used when setting intentions for pregnancy to stay positive and healthy.
4. *Pushan Mudra*: Control nausea, flatulence, and feeling of fullness during pregnancy

*Malabandha* (The Root Lock) which is beneficial when practiced regularly before and after conceiving, helps to prepare the muscles for easy delivery.

**Pranayam** (Breathing exercise)

1. Doing *pranayama* on a regular basis provides oxygen to every cell.
2. In pregnancy there are hormonal changes and mood swings, and *pranayama* improves emotional stability.

3. Relives morning sickness and mood swings.

### ASANAS CONTRAINDICATED FOR PREGNANCY <sup>5</sup>

- *Dhanurasana* (Bow Pose)
- *Shavasana* (Corpse Pose)
- *Adho Mukha Shvanasana* (Downward-Facing Dog)
- *Paripurna Navasana* (Full Boat Pose)
- *Uddiyana Bandha* (Upward Abdominal Lock)
- *Bhujangasana* (Cobra Pose)
- *Bakasana* (Crane Pose)
- *Urdhva Mukha Shvanasana* (Upward-Facing Dog)
- *Chaturanga Dandasana* (Four-Limbed Staff Pose)

### DISCUSSION

Pregnancy is a period of enormous physiological and psychosocial adaptation in a woman's life. Although it is usually a time of joy and anticipation, many women experience some degree of anxiety, concern, and fear regarding their own health and that of their babies, as well as the approaching labour. Worrying about social, financial, occupational, and relationship issues can often add to their stress levels which increases the possibility of pregnancy complications. However, mild to moderate stress facilitates successful adjustment to these demands. A significant increase in the levels of stress hormones may compromise the health of both the mother and foetus. Complementary therapies, including A.N.C. Yoga, are increasingly popular with expectant mothers and are gradually being integrated into conventional maternity care. At present there is debate about whether these therapies simply provide a form of re-

laxation for pregnant women with psychological stress or whether they should be used more constructively to deal with Physic-pathological stress of expecting mothers. Mother's self-efficacy for labour is complex and multi-factorial. This paper has been worked out to charge insights into the factors which may be involved in the management of problems of expecting mothers. These include not only traditional elements of *Yoga* such as *Asanas*, *Pranayam* & *meditation* in particular but also the creation of secured motherhood and baby care in general.

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