“Pranayama and yoga” : A boon to motherhood Ekta Rajendra Lambole¹, Aayushma², Prakash R Kanade³

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Abstract

Yoga is multi dimensional practice that originated in India and is becoming increasingly recognized and used in developed nations as a health practice for a variety of immu nological, neuromuscular, psychological, and pain condi- tions. Pregnancy in a woman is a condition in which woman changes both from inside as well as outside. These changes create obstacles in the normal life of a pregnant woman and yoga in pregnancy can help the women to go through these changes and challenges. Practicing yoga during pregnancy provides a great range of activity and benefits to unborn child and mother by numerous ways. Yoga soothes the mind, refocus the energy and prepare the woman physiologically and psychologically for labour. Different breathing techniques impart invaluable neuro-muscular control and helps in coordinated relaxation and contraction of uterus. Different type of asanas (postures),are described in Ayurveda and Yoga darshan texts which can be performed by a pregnant woman as they consume low energy and provide greater benefits. Yoga practicing includes physical postures and breathing techniques which minimizes the complication of pregnancy, like pregnancy induced

hypertension, intrauterine growth retardation and pre-term delivery etc. Western exercises bring about what is known as phase contraction of muscles while yogic exercises create a static contraction which maintains a muscle under tension without causing repeated motions.

KEY WORDS – Pregnancy, Yoga, Asanas, Pranayama, Birth weight, stress.

INTRODUCTION–

Yoga is an ancient discipline designed to bring balance and health to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions of the individual ^[1]. The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit term “Yug” and directly translates as “to unite”; more broadly, it means to work towards a unified experience of the self and improved health ^[2]. Pregnancy is an integral part of life of a woman which changes her physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually for rest of her life. To balance all these dimensions yoga can be postulated as requisite for normal and complication free pregnancy. Pregnancy in a woman is a condition in which woman changes both from inside as well as outside. Fear and apprehension often cloud the mind, the moment pregnancy is confirmed. Child birth is surely the greatest act performed by the

woman. It can be great emotional experience. These changes create obstacles in the normal life of a pregnant woman and yoga in pregnancy can help the woman to cruise through these changes and challenges^[3].

Benefits of practicing yoga during pregnancy:

Yoga provides a great range of activity to unborn child and mother by numerous ways. Yoga soothes the mind, refocus the energy and prepare the woman psychologically for labour. Various asanas create more space in pelvis which eases the expulsion of fetus. Number of poses can assist or speed up the process of labour by reliving tension around cervix and birth canal^[4], and recovery after the delivery as well. Different breathing techniques impart invaluable coordinated relaxation and contraction of uterus. Proper antenatal preparation by yoga and dhyana (meditation) can help the majority of women to have a labour that is easy and safe so that she can enjoy the labour and experience a sense of fulfillment. As yoga

Table No. 1^[6]: First trimester asanas

Sr. No.	Asanas (Postures)	
1.	Utthitatrikasan (Extended triangle pose)	It strengthens the pelvic floor muscles, thighs and calf muscles. Increases the flexibility of spine and improves digestion
2.	Virbhadrasan (Warrior pose)	It stretches the groin area, strengthens the body and back muscles and tones up the lower body. Increases stamina and flexibility and relieves backache
3.	Vrikshasan (Tree pose)	It stretches the legs, back and arms which invigorates the body. It helps to improve concentration

Second trimester asanas - Avoid lying on back because it reduces blood circulation to uterus and poses that stretch the muscles too much. In second trimester the centre of gravity starts shifting to right, so all

is the cultural part of our life and it should be indulge in the pregnancy routine.

Effect of Asanas :

Yogasana is to assume a certain bodily position in order to encourage various vital organs and endocrine glands to function more efficiently leading in turn to overall development of body and mind and to maintain physical strength. It has capacity to produce higher quality of conception, healthy maternal environment for pregnancy and more harmonious birthing experience^[5]. Different type of asanas (postures), are described in Ayurveda and Yoga darshan text which can be performed by a pregnant woman as they consume low energy and provide greater benefits. Yogasanas are divided in three categories according to trimesters.

First trimester asanas:

All basic poses can be practice with a few modifications. Avoid inversions, closed twists and back bends that might compress the uterus or over stretch it which causes low blood circulation to uterus. Encourage a long relaxation phase after exercise^[6].

standing poses with your heel against the wall for support should be done. While twisting, move shoulders and back rather than waist, to avoid the unnecessary pressure on abdomen.

Table No. 2^[7]: Second trimester asanas:

Sr. No.	Asanas (Postures)	
1.	Vajrasan (Thunderbolt pose)	This asana enhances digestive system which increase the energy uptake. Alters blood flow and nervous system impulses in the pelvic region. Relieves stomach ailments like hyperacidity and it is the only asana that can be practiced after taking meals
2.	Matsyakridasan (Flapping fish pose)	Stimulates digestion and relieves constipation. It relaxes the nerves of legs and this is an ideal asana for relaxed sleep. It improves blood circulation
3.	Marjariasan (Cat stretch pose)	Is very helpful in toning the female reproductive system and muscles of pelvis. This asana increases the flexibility of neck, spine and shoulders muscles which are essential for bearing down efforts during labour
4.	Tadasan (Mountain pose)	Stretches the entire spine and helps to clear the congestion of spinal nerves. It also helps in developing physical and mental balance. It stretches and strengthens the rectus-abdominus muscle which an accessory muscle for bearing down
5.	Bhadrasan (Gracious pose)	This asana benefits the digestive system and helps in relieving various stomach ailments. It helps in toning the muscles of female pelvic region. Along with meditation, it relieves mental stress
6.	Kati chakrasan (waist rotating pose)	Tones up the muscles of waist, back and hips. It induces the feeling of lightness and relieves physical and mental stress .

Third trimester asanas -
Practice only those asanas which do not exert pressure on

abdomen wall. Supine poses should be avoided.

Table No. 3^[7]: Third trimester asanas

Sr. No.	Asanas (Postures)	
1.	Ardhatitaliasan (Half butterfly)	Is an excellent asana for loosening of hip joints, which enables fast and easy delivery
2.	Pornatitaliasan (Full butterfly)	Tones up pelvic girdle. It relieves the tension from inner thigh muscles and removes the tiredness of legs. This asana increases the stretching ability of perineum
3.	Chakkichalanasan (Churning mill pose)	Is an excellent asana for toning the nerves and muscles of pelvis and abdomen and prepare them for delivery.

4.	Utthanasan (Squat and Rise pose)	This asana strengthens the muscles of back, uterus, thighs and ankles. It tones up the pelvic girdle and this asana is equivalent to sweeping floor. Thus enables fast and easy delivery.
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Pranayam (Breathing Technique) –

Pranayam is not only helpful in pregnancy but is a gift given by Ayurveda to human race for long life. Pranayam is practice of complete, prolonged and slow breathing. It works on both mind and soul. Pranayam provides extra oxygen to every cell which

Table No. 4^[8]

energizes and rejuvenates them. It should be practiced every day. It tones up the nervous system, improves emotional stability and helps to eliminate anxiety, fears and phobia. It improves breathing capacity and also increases stamina and vitality

Sr. no.	Pranayam	Benefits
1.	Anulom Vilom Pranayam	It strengthens the body mentally as well as physically. During labour, holding of breath for maximum duration can provide great help for pushing during labour. It provides more oxygen to the body so more oxygen is transferred to the fetus.
2.	Bhramaripranayam	It is the effective breathing exercise to release agitation, anger and calms the mind. It is very useful for pregnant women because it eases the process of childbirth by controlling the breathing during the process of labour. It improves concentration and removes toxin from body

DISCUSSION –

Yoga practices includes physical postures breathing techniques which minimizes the complication of pregnancy, like pregnancy induced hypertension, intrauterine growth retardation and pre-term delivery. Practicing *yoga* is helpful in increasing the birth weight of babies. Pranayam (Breathing exercise) relaxes the mind, refocuses the energy and relieve stress from impatient and tensed pregnant woman. A study reveals that a single and multi sessions of antenatal yoga on measures of moods suggest that antenatal yoga lowered state of anxiety and cortisol levels after a single session and this effect

was consistent over time. Antenatal yoga was associated with significant reduction in fear of childbirth and is potentially preventive against increases in depression symptoms^[9]. Yoga is the practice which includes different asanas, pranayama (Breathing exercise) and their beneficial effects are mentioned here below.

Asanas (Postures)

1. It strengthens the pelvic floor muscles and reduces muscle cramps during third trimester.
2. Increases the flexibility of spine.
3. Tones up the lower body.
4. Increases stamina and relives backache.

5. Improves digestion and relieves constipation.
6. Improves blood circulation and induce relax sleep.
7. Strengthens the bearing down muscles and helps in the expulsion of fetus.
8. Relieves physical and mental stress.

Pranayam (Breathing exercise)

1. Provides extra oxygen to every cell and rejuvenates them.
2. Tones up nervous system and improves emotional stability.
3. Relieves morning sickness and mood swings.
4. Eliminates anxiety, fear and phobia.
5. Increases breathing capacity, stamina and vitality which help in bearing down during the process of labour.

Conclusion :

In today's stressful life the lifestyle, stress, anxiety etc. causes the adverse effects on pregnancy. Yoga is a multifactorial approach that encourages mental calm and sooth breathing. Practicing yoga reduces the mental stress; manage pain and symptoms of depression. So, Yoga must be included in the pregnancy regime to attain the higher level of fitness for both mother and child.

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