

Raksha Prathamam Chak-
shushrotram
Naasaam Jihvaam Tadanut-
wancha.
Hridayam Tundam Naabhim
yonim
Tatastu Rakshath Sakalam
Gaathram.

—Yoganjali of my Guru
Sri T. Krishnamacharya.

Ante-Natal Yoga - III

By S. Ramaswami

Carefully protect the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, the heart, stomach, naval and the genitals. From out of such care (by yogabhyaasa), the entire body becomes well protected.

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The first of this series of articles dealt with the yoga practice for proper foetal development. The second was on yoga and natural childbirth, indicating specific exercises that are helpful. Mainly the two topsy turvy postures, upto the sixth month were recommended and the konasanas along with their variations were mentioned as they are specifically useful for good pelvic stretch. The konasanas are said to be very helpful generally for strengthening sex organs and could be employed as corrective and for proper development.

Jananendriya dhairyaaya
Konabhedaan Samabhya-
seth.

Hence these may be practised from childhood through puberty, to adulthood.

VAJRAASANA

Apart from the asanas mentioned earlier, Vajraasana and Veeraasana are also helpful, as has been indicated.

Of the many sitting postures, Vajraasana is comparatively easy to do and combines grace and poise. It is a good posture for pregnant women to sit comfortably, especially for doing pranayama. It helps to keep the back straight and derives its name as it strengthens the spine. It, along with its variations helps make the spine strong and supple. It helps to reduce the pressure on the abdomen for pregnant women unlike other sitting postures, which put considerable strain on the low

back. This and Viraasana help relieve low back strain. Some of the variations like lifting the trunk on inhalation and back bending help respectively stretch the pelvis and also make the spine supple.

PROCEDURE

Kneel, bending the legs, with knees, shins and the ankles together and stretched, toes pointing outward, so that you sit on the heels with the shins on the carpet. Keep the palms on the knees. Stretch the back of the neck and place the chin a couple of inches below the neck for Jaalandharabandha. Throw the shoulders a little back so that the shoulder blades tend to approximate each other, forming a canal along with spinal column and the chest is opened up. In this position, due to Jalan.

dharabandha, a good stretch is obtained way down the spine and is said to activate Apaana force which has to be quite strong for natural childbirth.

This Vajraasana or spine posture is believed to be perfected by sage Dadichi, whose spine became the deadly weapon in the hands of the Devas.

A few movements or vinyasas as back bending and raising the trunk (the kneeling position) will also be helpful. However, forward bending will have to be avoided. Viraasana is a bit more complicated and has been explained in an earlier issue. These asanas also help improve vascularity of the lower extremities, lumbo sacral region and the pelvic organs.

Apart from these Nathamuni also suggests Bharadwajasana. It has also been explained in an earlier issue. This gives a spinal twist, without pressure on the abdomen. Bharadwajasana also is helpful in expanding the chest and with that the spine gets a complete exercise. Nathamuni suggests doing these asanas regularly during pregnancy to facilitate natural childbirth.

Danda Padma Bharadwaja
Vira Vajra Samanithu.

Aasanaani Sadaa Kuryuhu
Sudhirga Rechapurakaihi.

It could be observed that these asanas are to be performed with long and smooth inhalation and exhalation. As per the system of my Acharya, asanas are to be done with vinyasas and coordinated long, smooth inhalations and exhalations. This tradition is handed down from Patanjali.

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SOME DONT'S

Generally women who have been doing asanas may continue to practice yoga during pregnancy, except forward bending exercises and certain kriyas like Kapalbhati. They should also refrain from doing Sirsa, Sarvanga and other more complicated topsy turvey postures after the sixth month. The food should be nourishing and they must create peaceful conditions at home. Moderate, carefully selected exercises as given above may be done for about half an hour per day to keep the body and mind fit to facilitate natural childbirth.

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A few precautions are however necessary.

Vegena Dhaavanam, Naatyam
Uchchaihi Goshanam Parithyajeth.

Garbhpatho Vikarascha
Sisooya Anthaiva Samsa-
yaha.

Running fast, dancing, shouting in a high pitch are to be avoided by the pregnant. Especially these precautions are necessary for young primies, as these violent movements may lead to abortion, or otherwise harm the foetus such as cord around the neck, placental separation etc., and even stillbirth. It is also necessary to take particular care to maintain harmony with the husband. (Patipriya).

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In case of disturbance in sleep during pregnancy, which condition is quite common, it is suggested that the expectant mother should regularly practice Ujjayi Praanaayama, sitting in Padmaasana.

Yadi Nidraa Vibhangavyaath,
Ujjayi Abhyaseth Sadaa.

There are many variations in the practice of Ujjayi and here the simplest, viz., Anuloma Ujjayi is explained for practice by Garbhini.

Sit in any asana, preferably Padmaasana. There should be chinlock—Jalandharabandha—stretching in the process

the spine. Both the arms should be stretched with the palms kept on the knees. The palms should be open and the fingers kept together. The elbows should not be bent.

Breathe in slowly and evenly—the breath being drawn in through both the nostrils, but with a rubbing sensation in the throat and making a hissing noise, due to partial closing of the glottis. The breathing sensation (the vibration) however, if done properly will be felt as down below as the diaphragm.

EXALE SLOWLY

The breath may be held for a few seconds (Mitha kumbhaka) or may be dispensed with, if difficult. The breath holding is done by constricting the throat, and not by closing the nostrils as is done in other Pranayama like Naadi Sodhana. The arms should continue to remain outstretched.

Right hand is now brought to the nose with the fingers in Mrigi Mudra (thumb and little fingers bent, and the other two fingers stretched) and the exhalation is regulated, in the first round through the right nostril and in the second through the left nostril and so on alterna-

tively. The exhalation should be done as slowly and evenly as possible. After the exhalation is completed the right arm is brought back to its original position of being stretched with the palm on the kneecap.

BANDHAS & KRIYAS

Now what about the Bandhas and Kriyas so closely associated with Pranayama? Among all the kriyas, the Satwic Kapalabhati Kriya is almost invariably done prior to any Pranayama to clear up the respiratory system. Further in all Pranayamas they are usually done with the Mula and Uddiyana Bandhas during Bahya Kumbhaka and Jaladhara Bandha is maintained through wherever applicable. However as could be inferred Kapaalabhati and the two Bandhas, Uddiyana and Moola Bandha **should not** be practised by Garbhini.

Kapaala Bhaati Bhastraa-
bhyaam
Vinaa Praanaayama Matha-
ha
Noddiyaanaka Moolaakyan
Bandhan Taasaamhi Sam-
mathan.

Praanaayama should be practised without kapaala-bhaati or Bhastrika. It should also not be interspersed

with Moola bandha and Uddiyana bandha.

However as has been mentioned Jaalantarabandha should be maintained as is helpful in Apana vaayu's control.

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After the fifth month garbhini should practice Praana-yama very regularly. Two Praanaayamas that are recommended are; Sitali and Naadi Sodhana Sitali is said to have a cooling effect on the system and Naadi sodhana removes toxins from the various Naadis. This is very important Praanaayama as according to my Acharya, as found in his Yoganjali, Nadis are the breeding ground for all disease and Naadi sodhana pranayama purifies the various Naadis. These Praanaayamas have been described in earlier issue of Indian Review.

AVOID GOSSIP

Avoid all gossip and purposeless small talk (vyartha samvaada), delusion and be careful not to let the mind go tickle (chanchala) by letting too many external influences. Daily Puja or prayer (Paraabhakthi) according to tradition and respect to the Acharya would help a long way in maintaining mental equipoise for an expectant mother.

