

# Yoga and Contraception

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In the last three issues, certain antenatal yogic exercises and pranayama have been described along with a few necessary restrictions (niyama). Yoga is universal, can be practised both by women and men. The desirability or eligibility of women doing yoga has been discussed by ancients.

Starting from the question

"Yoshitaam yoga Vidyaam  
Adhikaaro Asthi vaa na vaa."

and going through the various arguments, it is concluded that

"Poorvajva Adhikaarasyath,  
Yoshitaam yoga Karminaiha."

Thus women are fit for vaidic, yogic and other Karmas mentioned in the Sastraas.

## AFTER CHILD-BIRTH

The regular practice of yoga after childbirth may be started after 27 days. How-

ever the mother may start doing long, smooth rechaka and puraka (exhalation and inhalation) even after 10 days. This may be practised for about 10 to 15 minutes. The kumbhakas or holding may be kept very short to about 2 to 5 seconds. After 27 days, gradually the asanas may be practised. Upto about 40 days one may practise asanas for 15 minutes both in the morning and evening. It may be increased to about half an hour until after 3 months. Thereafter a  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour practice should be continued. This may be maintained upto weaning of the child, when normally the menstruation starts again. After the third month, some medication used to be given for what is termed "garbhasya suddhi" or purification and regeneration of the uterus. It may consist in performing Panchagavya Homa and partaking it. Among the asanas that normalize the uterus, specific mention should

be made about Utkataasana, Sankataasana and Karnapeedaasana. These asanas give a good massage to the pelvic organs and help improve vascularity and hence cleanse the garbhasaya.

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When should girls take to yoga, if they wish? One may start from the 5th year itself. However, they should practise yama and niyama along with asanas and usually they are not to be initiated into pranayama until the 14th year or about the onset of puberty. The asanas however could be done with the regulated breathing as mentioned by Patanjali, Kurantam and other Yogis. Since, in the olden days, girls were married before they became Rajasvalaas, they could practise Pranayama after marriage. From 18th year they could take up Pratyahara and Dharana on a Subhasraya or a pleasant Murti, and this

may be continued during the child bearing years, until the 45th year or about reaching the stage of menopause. Then those that are inclined to become Brahmavadins or those spiritually inclined may work on the other two angas of Dhyana and Samadhi, under a proper guru. Or else they may continue with their daily puja culminating in Dharana. All the other angas may be observed and practised regularly.

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In a seminar organized by a voluntary organization on family planning, someone remarked in jest that since yoga is mentioned these days as a cure all, why not yoga for family planning? It may be mentioned that yogis have studied this subject in some depth and have recommended yogaasanas that would act as contraceptive for women. However, these are very difficult postures which need to be practised from early age. Unless yoga is taught at a young age, its benefits including the one under consideration will have a limited application. The culture of yoga practice which is part of our heritage should be inculcated early in life to derive the wide range of physical, physiological, psychological, mental and spiritual benefits. Sage Nathamuni's prescription

tion for contraception is given in a capsule.

“Paasaasanam Yoganidra  
Garbhapindancha Bhadrakam.  
Matsyendra Aasanamityete  
Sarvagarbha Nirodhakaha.”  
“Bahihkumbhaka yukthirhi  
Praanayamaishcha Samyutha-  
yaaha.  
Dhridaihi Tribandanaircha  
Bhaveyuhu yadi Nithyasaha.”

Paasaasanam (Noose posture), Yoganidra (Yogic reclining posture), Garbhapinda (foetus posture), Bhadrasana, Matsyendra—when these are mastered and practised, conception will be prevented.

Further Praanaayama should be practised with emphasis on Bahyukumbhaka, along with the three Bandhas, namely Jalandara, Moola and Uddiyana regularly.

It could be seen that these powerful asanas which work on the pelvic organs, providing the right, controlled pressure and twisting or squeezing of the uterus, aided by the Bandhas in Bahyakumbhaka should prevent, if properly done, embedding of the fertilized ovum on the uterine walls.

**PAASAASANA**

Start from Samasthithi. Keep the chin locked. Inhaling raise both arms overhead, interlock fingers, turned outward. Then on the next

exhalation, pressing the feet, slowly twist to the right side. Stay for a few breaths. Then exhale again slowly, and deeply, lower the trunk, bending the knees, as in Utkataasana, except that the trunk is at right angles to the legs. In this position, exhale completely, draw rectum and lower abdomen and place the armpit on the outer side of the right thigh, just below the knee. Then on the next exhalation stretch the left arm and turn it around the right thigh. Then bend the elbow to take the forearm backward so that the left hand is near the left hip.

Take a breath and maintain balance. On the next exhalation turn the right arm from the shoulder in the opposite direction behind the back and meet the hand. And keep the fingers interlocked. Stay for a few breaths.

Then breathe in and exhale completely, drawing the low abdomen again and twisting a little more, holding the left wrist with the right hand. Turn and look over the right shoulder. Stay for a few breaths raising the pelvic diaphragm on each exhalation. The inhalation will be short but the exhalation will be long and smooth. On every exhalation tighten the grip feeling greater pressure on the pelvic region and a mild

twist in those organs. (Refer sketch 1). After a few breaths return to Samasthithi on inhalation.

Repeat on the other side as well.

Some of the asanas that prepare one to do Pasasana are utkatasana, Ardhamabyandrasana, Parsvathangi in Tadaasana Paarsvottasana Marichasana, etc. Long, smooth exhalation also would help in attaining the posture.

### YOGA NIDRA

This asana affords tremendous pressure being applied around the pelvis. It may be done lying down. Asanas that normally help in doing this are Paschimottanasana, Upavishtakonasana, Kurmasana, Karmapeedasana and long and smooth exhalation. Ekapada and Dwipadasirshhasana also will be helpful.

Start with Samasthithi, then Uttanasaana on exhalation. Then holding the breath jump back to Chaturangadandasana. Then exhale hold the breath, jump forward to Dandasana. Lie back on inhalation.

Then deeply exhaling, draw both legs overhead, bending the knees.

Exhaling draw the left leg behind the left shoulder.



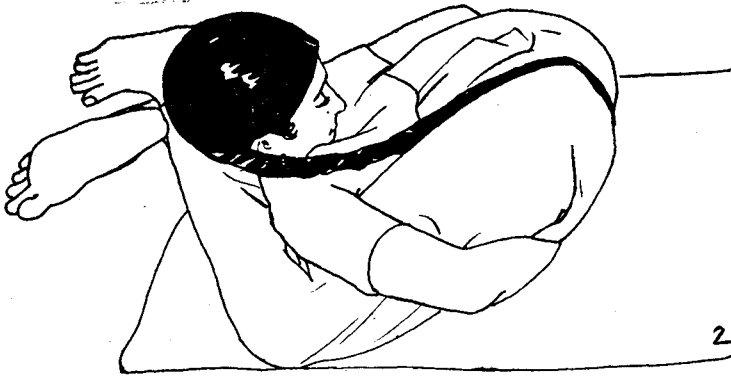
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Stay for a few breaths.

On the next exhalation, draw the right leg further up and slip it behind the right shoulder so that both the ankles are placed one on the other supporting the back. In this position the entire back will be supported by

the legs and ankles forming the base like a bed and the back on it.

Now slowly stretch the spine on exhalation, take the arms around the thighs and clasp the right wrist with the left hand behind the back. Stretch the neck and try to



straighten the spine. Refer to the sketch (2).

There is a peculiar, tremendous stretching of the pelvic musculo-fascial supports and also pressure. This, along with Dwipada Sirshasana may be practised for sometime by those who are habitual abortors and may be discontinued when it may help in pregnancy. So long as these asanas are continued to be practised regularly, they act as contraceptives.

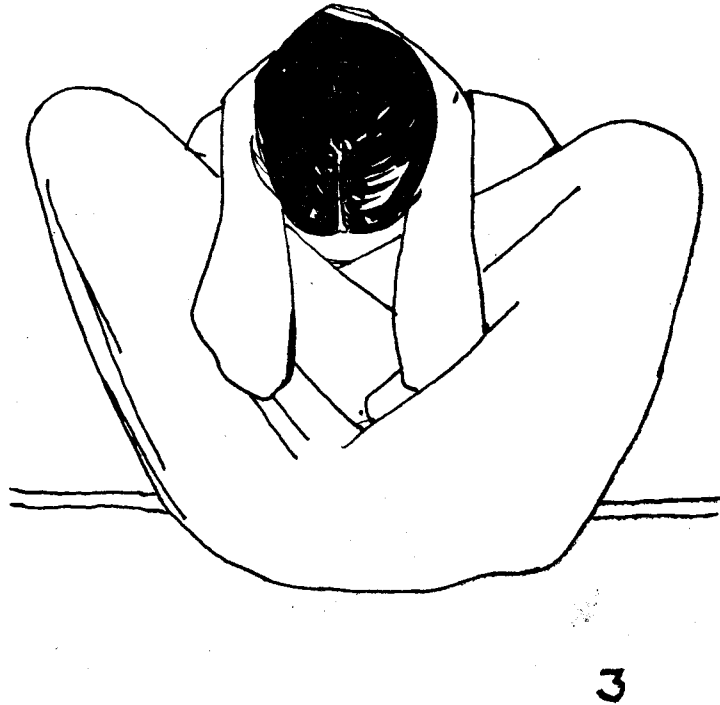
It is a great help, according to ancient wisdom, in preventing lung disease as consumption; flatulence, and other abdominal diseases of spleen, liver, stomach, etc. It helps to strengthen Swadhisthana, Brahmagraha Chakras for longevity. It controls apanavayu and hence the pelvic organs get strengthened.

### GARBHAPINDAASANA

This asana resembles a foetus. It is comparatively easy to follow.

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extremities, and lean forward and hold the back of the head with the palms, on deep exhalation. As you exhale again, tighten the grip, straighten the spine and draw the thighs close to the pelvis. Stay for a few breaths, made up of short inhalations and long deep exhalations. Refer to sketch (3). The upright side view is given in sketch (4).



The procedure is the same up to Padmaasana. Then slowly exhale, lean forward and insert the hands—relaxing the shoulders—between the thigh and calf muscles until the elbows are through. Press the buttocks and anchoring the coccyx raise the lower

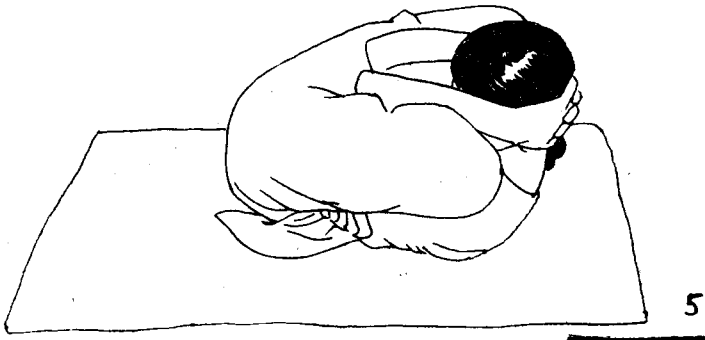


Stay in this posture for a few breaths. Loosen the lock. Repeat with legs crossed, but changing the order of bending the legs for Padmasana.

sana. Now exhale, place the right leg on top of the left thigh, the heel pressing the side of the navel. Stay for a breath. draw the left knee up towards the body so that it is

up to the chest, pressing the left knee up towards the body so that it is up to the chest, pressing the right heel against the abdomen in the process. On the next exhalation, slowly place the left foot outside the right knee. beside the right thigh, Stay for a few exhalations.

Then on the next deep exhalation, anchoring the coccyx, twist the spine and turn the trunk towards left side, so that the right armpit is outside the right knee



From Garbhapindaasana, one may lie back to do Uttanakumaarasana as shown in sketch (5). These asanas provide a great amount of pressure on the pelvic organs.

**MATSYENDRAASANA**

Among the foremost of Hathayogis of the Nathasampadaya, Matsyendranatha is considered the king among them as his name indicates. The asana named after him is a masterpiece of yogasana showing the grace, poise, and strength of yoga and it has great therapeutic values.

Asanas that help to prepare one for doing this asana are ardhmatsyendrasana, Parivri-  
tha Parsvakonasana, Pasasana, Marichaasana, and long Rechaka and Uddiyanabandha.

Start from Samasthithi and proceed to do Danda-



Pushing the chest forward, bring the right arm around and hold the left big toe, On the next exhalation, bring the left hand from behind and hold the right thigh near the groin. Stay for 6 breaths. On each exhalation, draw the rectum and the lower abdomen and twist a little more looking over the left shoulder. (Sketch 6).

Inhale return step by step to Dandasana. Repeat on the other side.

It could be observed that in Matsyendrasana, unlike the other two mentioned, there is also a twisting of the spine and pelvic organs. It is to a certain extent experienced in Paasana. In Matsyendrasana, the heel is placed between the pubic bone and the iliac and with the crossing of the leg it is anchored by the side of the uterus and in this posture the uterus is wrung as it were. However, it is a very difficult posture to achieve and master.

The other benefits of Matsyendrasana are mentioned in Hathayogapradeepika.

\*Matsyendrapheetam Jatarapradeepam  
Prachandarugmandala Khandanaastram.  
Abhyaasathaha Kundaliniprabhoddham  
Chandrasthirathivam cha Dadaathi Pumsaam

Matsyendrasana activates Jatarangni and thoroughly eradicates all chronic ailments. It activates kundalini and gives mental steadiness.

About Matsyendra, an anecdote is mentioned. Once Lord Siva, the Adinatha, secluding in an uninhabited island, and thinking it to be deserted, started tutoring His spouse Girija on the secrets of Hathayoga. However, remaining near the shore, a fish started intently listening to those instructions. Thus it attained high concentration (Ekagratha) and remained steady in the waters without absolutely any movement. Suddenly observing the fish, thus in Samadhi, the Lord realizing that Yoga has been learnt by the fish, out of great compassion (Kripalu), sprinkled (Prokshitavaan) water on the fish. With that the fish, known as Matsyendra, instantly attained celestial body and was transformed to a Siddha and he became a great teacher of yoga, thereafter. The asana named after him is Matsyendrasana and resembles a fish twisting and beautifully poised,

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#### OTHER ASANAS TOO

The asanas mentioned

above, it could be observed cannot have universal application as a pill would have. Thus unless one has been practising from a young age, these may not be of much practical value. But it could be observed that women could maintain not only good health, even as they take to the grihastha dharma, as propounded by Manu, but make use of yoga practice for Stri Dharma. According to my Acharya, apart from the above-mentioned asanas, women could practice Marichasana, Ardhamatsyendrasana, Baddhakonasana, Baddhapadma, Dhanurasana in exhalation, Sirshasana with Uddiyana Bandha, Aakunchanasana in Bahyakumbhaka which would help in limiting the family (Mitthasanthana) and would facilitate the mind to practice dhyana later on. Needless to say that these asanas are to be practised under a proper guru.

Further in all these asanas and also separately while practising pranayama, the emphasis will be on Bahyakumbhaka and the three Bandhas, especially Moolabandha and Uddiyana Bandhas. It could be observed that these are the very asanas and Bandhas that are required to be avoided during Pregnancy.

