

REVIEW ARTICLE

The Holistic Approach of *Garbhsanskaar*: A Narrative Review of its Practices and Benefits

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: *Garbhsanskaar* is an ancient Indian tradition or prenatal practice that encompasses a range of prenatal practices aimed at enhancing the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of an unborn child. Rooted in Indian tradition, these practices include reading spiritual books, chanting *mantras*, meditation, yoga, dietary regulations, listening to music, and engaging in creative, positive, and spiritually enriching activities.

Methods: Literature from a range of sources including ancient texts, contemporary research articles, and clinical studies was conducted for this study. Furthermore, databases such as Google Scholar, PubMed, and traditional Ayurvedic manuscripts till December 2023 were utilized to gather relevant information on *Garbhsanskaar* practices and its effects.

Results: Numerous researches on *Garbhsanskaar* or prenatal care and its effects on expectant mothers and their unborn children revealed several kinds of advantages for their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. These exercises include yoga, meditation, pranayama, *yoga nidra*, diet, painting, and reading sacred texts.

Discussion: This study presents that all the practices which come under the *Garbhsanskaar* ritual actually improve the mother's and the baby's physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Conclusion: *Garbhsanskaar* offers a valuable perspective on prenatal care and should become essential in the life of pregnant women.

1. INTRODUCTION

Garbhsanskaar is an ancient Indian practice that involves a series of traditional rituals during pregnancy. This *Sanskar* aimed to uplift the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of an unborn child. The term "*Garbhsanskaar*" is derived from two Sanskrit words, where "*Garbha*," meaning womb of a mother, and "*Sanskaar*," meaning education/values.^[1,2] The *Vedas* and *Puranas* are ancient Indian books that have references about the *Garbhsanskaar* practice. It is widely believed that a baby's physical, mental, and spiritual development starts in the womb and the unborn child is greatly influenced by the mother's thoughts, feelings, and surroundings. Historical figures, such

as Abhimanyu, son of Arjun and Subhadra, from the *Mahabharata*, and Prahlad from the *Puranas* are often cited as examples of children who benefited from *Garbhsanskaar*.^[3]

These days, anxiety, stress, and hormonal imbalance are prevalent among 21st-century working women.^[4] As a result, during pregnancy, it may also have an impact on the physical and mental health of their unborn children. Thus, in the current context, the significance of *Garbhsanskaar* becomes much more pertinent. It is every parent's responsibility to work toward establishing upright values in their unborn child. *Garbhsanskaar* is very effective to improve the health outcomes of babies as well as mothers.^[5] The aim of this study is to present a narrative review over all of the practices that come under the *Garbhsanskaar* ritual and to find whether these practices improve the mother's and the baby's physical, mental, and spiritual well-being in the womb.

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2. METHODS

A comprehensive review of existing literature from a range of sources including ancient texts, contemporary research articles, and clinical studies was conducted for this study. Databases such as Google Scholar, PubMed, and traditional Ayurvedic manuscripts till December 2023 were utilized to gather relevant information on *Garbhsanskaar* practices and its effects. Keywords used in the search included “*Garbhsanskaar*,” “prenatal care,” “spiritual health during pregnancy,” “Prenatal yoga,” and “Ayurvedic prenatal practices.”

3. RESULTS OF REVIEW

3.1. *Garbhsanskaar* Practices/Prenatal Practices and their Effects on Mother and Her Baby in Womb

3.1.1. Practices to enhance physical health

To maintain the physical health of the mother and the child, emphasis is placed on eating a nutritious, well-balanced diet. It is advised to follow traditional diets high in proteins, vitamins, and minerals. Diet is crucial, especially at this time of year. Dietary interventions could be considered a promising therapeutic approach during pregnancy.^[6] Intrauterine growth retardation and preterm labor can result from nutritional deficiencies.^[7] Studies revealed that pregnant women who consume more fruits and vegetables have a lower risk of upper respiratory tract infections.^[7] The mental well-being of a mother is also associated with maternal nutrition.^[8] Studies suggest that a mother’s poor mental health and malnourishment can affect the physical and cognitive development of the fetus.^[8] Prenatal depression may affect as many as one in five women, according to research, and it is more common in high-income nations than in middle- and low-income ones.^[9] Since a child’s nutrition is their foundation for life, it should be rich. Herbal and natural therapies are also frequently recommended to help with minor health issues that may arise during pregnancy as well as to support pregnancy. All these are recommended by Ayurveda or home remedies in Indian tradition.

During pregnancy, physical activity is also important.^[10] Prenatal yoga practice has been shown to have benefits for women who suffer from anxiety, stress, depression, sleep disturbances, and low back pain.^[11] Along with asana, pranayama, and guided meditation, *yoga nidra* is also important to practice. Deep breathing techniques or pranayama are beneficial for relaxation and may even be helpful during childbirth. The practice of *Bhramari Pranayama* reduced the cardiovascular hyperreactivity among pregnant women.^[12] Guided meditation and *yoga nidra* are also helpful in pregnancy.

3.1.2. Practices to enhance mental health

Mental health is directly linked with physical health. Thus, a rich diet and prenatal yoga are also helpful to improve the mental health of the mother as well as the baby in the womb. Listening to soothing music, spiritual bhajans, mantras, and classical ragas is believed to stimulate the fetus’s brain and promote intellectual development. Music helps pregnant women to reduce anxiety^[13] and improve overall well-being.^[14] Family and community support also play a vital role in ensuring the emotional well-being of the pregnant woman.

Creating a positive home environment is believed to have a beneficial impact on the unborn child’s mental health. Maintaining a positive mindset for mothers is crucial in this period. Expectant mothers are encouraged to avoid anxiety, stress, and negative thoughts. It is advised to stay away from negative thoughts, and negative influences, including disturbing news, movies, or any form of stress-inducing

content. Pregnant women are advised to read “holy scriptures”, uplifting stories, and positive literature to instill good values and morals in the unborn child.

Painting or drawing, creating rangoli, and crafting home décor items are also beneficial for mental health and can help to calm the mind and establish a supportive environment for mothers’ mental health. Art therapy like making paintings can improve the sleep qualities of pregnant women.^[15] These activities are helpful for reducing the psychological stress of pregnant women^[16] and additionally developed the child’s creativity.

3.1.3. Practices to enhance spiritual health

It is recommended that expecting mothers engage in spiritual practices including meditation, chanting, and prayer to create a peaceful and optimistic atmosphere. It is said that reciting mantras, such as *Om*, the *Gayatri Mantra*, or other holy chants, can produce good vibrations and a calm environment, and is claimed to affect the developing mind and soul of the infant. Studies showed that pregnant women, who chant *mantras*, reduced systolic blood pressure by chanting mantras.^[17] Reading religious literature such as the *Ramayana*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, or other spiritual books can imbue an unborn baby with positive energy and spiritual principles. Books with the lessons of saints are suggested to read because of its content, which is both inspirational and uplifting. *Sundara-kanda* from *Ramayana* is suggested to read during pregnancy to develop good qualities in the baby. Engaging in meditation practice really aids the mother in preserving her composure and inner serenity, which benefits the spiritual well-being of the child. Mindfulness meditation is a strong controller of the sympathetic nervous system during pregnancy and enhances parasympathetic functions in pregnant women.^[18] Depression and stress are very common in modern scenarios; thus, meditation helps to reduce depression among pregnant women.^[19] A spiritually charged atmosphere can be produced by carrying out regular prayers and rituals, such as burning a lamp and making prayers.

Developing a close relationship with the child is recognized as well a crucial component of spiritual growth. It is attainable through *Garbh-samvad*. A strong bond between mother and unborn baby can be developed by *Garbha-samvad*. It is the practice to establish a connection with the baby. *Garbh-samvad* refers to “speaking with the unborn child.” With the aid of *Garbh-samvad*, a mother can instruct a child in several areas. Studies reveal that an unborn child can perceive his mother’s attachment even while they are still in the womb. Speaking with the unborn child is a crucial aspect of *Garbhasanskaar*. Specialized methods are utilized to develop this communication.

4. DISCUSSION

“*Garbhsanskaar*” represents a profound confluence of ancient wisdom and modern prenatal care, which is offering a holistic approach to nurture the unborn child. Rooted in the belief that a child’s physical, mental, and spiritual development begins in the womb, this practice underscores the importance of a positive, enriched environment for the unborn baby and the pregnant women.

Our Study reveals benefits of its multifaceted nature, encompassing positive thinking, nutritious diet, exposure to soothing sounds, engagement with spiritual and inspirational texts, and the practice of yoga and meditation. Each practice of *Garbhasanskaar* is designed to create a harmonious and nurturing environment, traditionally and scientifically. Recent research has shown that pregnant woman’s high levels of stress is directly associated with high risk to have the

preterm birth of the baby.^[20] Preterm delivery accounts for more than two thirds of all perinatal fatalities.^[21] Also Previous 'preterm delivery' is associated with a high risk of preterm birth in the next pregnancy.^[22] Mindfulness meditation and yoga exercise can prevent gestational diabetes mellitus.^[23,24] reduce hypertensive disorder in pregnancy and increase maternal comfort during labour.^[25,26] In this modern scenario, working women are in high risk of these complications thus *Garbhasanskaar* has become much relevant and important during pregnancy.

Garbhsanskaar is believed to benefit both the mother and the baby by promoting comprehensive physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. These benefits are rooted in traditional beliefs. By creating a calm and positive environment with these practices, the expecting mother can reduce stress and anxiety, leading to a more serene and healthy pregnancy which directly benefit the baby in the womb.

5. CONCLUSION

The goal of the *Garbhasanskar* is to produce future generations that are healthy, intelligent, cultured, peaceful, and free from inherited illnesses and to lessen stress and enhance the pregnant mother's ability to cope and her overall welfare. Hence, it can be concluded by these research findings that *Garbhsanskaar* is found to significantly influence the development of the fetus in all aspects of health (Physical/Mental/Spiritual). Furthermore, these practices have health benefits for pregnant women too. These health benefits of pregnant women are directly associated with the development of the fetus's health. In conclusion, *Garbhsanskaar* offers a valuable perspective on prenatal care and should become essential in the life of pregnant women.

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7. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

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8. FUNDING

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9. ETHICAL APPROVALS

This manuscript not require ethical approval as it is a review study.

10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

11. DATA AVAILABILITY

This is an original manuscript and all data are available for only review purposes from principal investigators.

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