

Nishtha Saraswat
(Dietician & Yogacharya)

Pregnancy made comfortable

with
Yoga &
Dietetics

Simple
solutions to all
pregnancy
related
problems

Unique
combination
of yoga and
dietetics

Modified
yogic
exercises
and special
menu plans
for pregnant
women

A complete reference book covering all the stages from
Pre-pregnancy to Post-pregnancy



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PREGNANCY made comfortable with Yoga and Dietetics

*A complete reference book covering all stages
from pre-pregnancy to post-pregnancy*

Nishtha Saraswat



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DEDICATED TO

My mother Isht Sharma

&

My father, Guru and inspiration

'Padma Shri' Bharat Bhushan

who have dedicated their lives to the
benefit of mankind

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Preface

There are few happier moments in a woman's life than successfully giving birth to a kicking and healthy baby. Attaining motherhood transforms a woman forever and extracts out a persona lying dormant for years deep within her. Preparing for pregnancy and living through those fantastic nine months, moment by moment, is an experience that a woman can never forget in her lifetime.

Pregnancy, the stage of conceiving another life within, leading to the birth of the baby can be broadly classified into three periods — pre, during and post pregnancy. Each period has its own significance, characteristics and complications. Various phases during pregnancy bring about a lot of changes in a woman's life at all levels, physical, mental, emotional and social.

This book is an effort in the direction of understanding the process of pregnancy from all possible dimensions and providing an insight to the reader or should I say the user, which should help her in making the whole process of pregnancy more enjoyable and problem-free. The means to an easy, enjoyable and problem-free pregnancy has been provided through an amalgamation of the regular practice of the ancient Indian science of yoga and the modern yet relevant subject of 'Dietetics'. I can say this as I have been practising yoga since a tender age of three years under the guidance of my father, Yoga Guru '*Padma Shri*' Bharat Bhushan and have seen innumerable cases of pregnant women who have been benefited from the application of various modules of yoga and correct diet.

Readers can use this book as a reference during various stages of pregnancy and can find solutions to most of the problems that occur at all those stages. Amazingly, most of the problems associated with pregnancy can be cured with simple application of 'Yoga and Diet'. A proactive and regular application of the suggested yogic techniques and correct diet plan will help them enjoy their pregnancy in a wholesome manner. Pictures, illustrations and charts have been used in the book extensively to make it user-friendly, practical and easy to understand.

The contents of the book are an outcome of my personal experience in the field of yoga as a demonstrator in my earlier years with my father and as an exponent and consultant later. Being a student and then a professor of the extremely relevant subject of Health and Nutrition has given me direction and courage to combine the benefits of Yoga and dietetics and present them to the reader for best usage. The contents have been further substantiated and augmented with information from various textbooks, journals and articles published in India and abroad in various media.

The effort has been to keep the book as simple and usable as possible. The best way to use the book is to live with it during all phases of pregnancy, even though various sections of the book are complete unto themselves. Even those who are planning for their pregnancy can benefit as the book begins with pre-pregnancy stage.

— Nishtha Saraswat

Foreword

It is indeed a pleasant experience to write about this book by Nishtha Saraswat whom I witnessed from early childhood performing yoga on national and international platforms and growing into a well-shaped Yog-Sadhika. She earned depth of yoga in *sanskaras* inherited from her father, world renowned Yoga Guru Shri Bharat Bhushan, the founder of Mokshayatan International Yogashram at Saharanpur and first ever '*Padma Shri*' awardee by the President of India for his excellence and contribution to enrich the great Indian heritage of science of yoga. Nishtha succeeded in giving a scientific vision and reason to yoga during her studies of M.Sc. and she could see and suggest the practice of yoga suiting to particular requirements of the individuals.

Under modern lifestyle of comforts, maternity is growing tough and complicated day by day as women in modern society leave all exercises and even normal physical activities as soon as pregnancy is confirmed. Even newly wedded women are bound to face the consequences of such comforts in the form of frequent complications and caesarean deliveries. As a result, they lose right of healthy life just after one or two deliveries and pregnancy becomes a threat to their life instead of joy of motherhood. Scientific observations now claim that exercises even during pregnancy do not disturb the motherhood but on the contrary help enjoying joy of health, easy pregnancy and balanced growth of baby in the womb followed by comfortable delivery. Readers will learn from this book that yoga is not merely a set of physical exercises but a lifestyle to heal and highlight the spirits of women even under challenging circumstances and the best way to help the baby grow physically, mentally, emotionally and even spiritually. Pregnancy is the time when a baby taking shape in the womb is directly governed by the physical, mental and emotional state of the mother. Indian *rishis* noticed the significance of this special period and made it a part of *Sanskar Vidhi* to guide us for pre, during and post-pregnancy preparations to grow a holy being who is going to descend on this earth in the form of a baby.

I have gone through the book and I feel that this book will fulfil the requirement not only of a pregnant lady under special circumstances but of newly shaping baby and the society at large. The author seems to have observed the gradual changes in women and the baby during pregnancy and has suggested special yoga programme most favourable to enjoy pregnancy with dos and don'ts and the diet discipline to bring perfect results of yoga practice during this period. I feel that this book will prove to be the best friend to a woman to help her during pregnancy and will become the need of every family as motherhood is the foundation stone of the family. My best wishes to this noble effort of the author and the publisher.

Vasant Panchmi, Vikram Samvat 2063

Dated: January 23, 2007

Ishwar Bhardwaj
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Pregnancy, Yoga and Dietetics

The word 'Pregnancy' brings with itself a variety of emotions. On one hand, it means devoting the conjugal life towards divine process of 'Srijan' or creation, expectations of a new life descending on earth, unbridled joy, happiness, excitement and expansion. On the other hand, it also means the beginning of a long wait, anxiety, pain and labour. Whatever it may mean to different people, a common aspect of pregnancy is a couple's involvement in creation with a series of possible complications associated with it. Though being pregnant and ultimately being able to give birth to a life is a wonderful, enriching and fulfilling experience and a pride for a woman, but it can also be a difficult and even harrowing experience with lasting impact on both the mother and the child. This, therefore, becomes extremely important that pregnancy be handled in such a manner that not only the outcome but the process of pregnancy itself becomes easy, enjoyable and pleasant. What to say of mother, even the baby in the womb should not pass through any unpleasant experience of screaming with fear or blowing with rage as it will always result in an unbalanced development of the baby.

The question arises as to why should pregnancy be treated any differently from the normal period in one's life? The answer to this lies behind the simple fact that pregnancy is different from other phases in one's life as it involves carrying two lives in one body, which never happens during any other phase of life. And the new life which is carried totally depends on the carrier for everything it needs for its further existence till it comes out into the world to be identified as independent entity. Giving birth to a healthy baby is so important a task that Indian *rishis* prescribed special *Sanskars* as *Garbhadhan Sanskar*, *Punsavan Sanskar* and *Jaatkarm Sanskar* to give proper guidelines to the couple to perform their duty towards humanity in a perfect way and develop the child properly. In other words, all phases involved in pregnancy must be given due attention and care.

The various phases involved in pregnancy are:

1. Pre-pregnancy, where one gets physically, mentally and emotionally ready to sow the seed of life
2. Conception or beginning of pregnancy, wherein the fertilisation happens and the seed of life is sown
3. First trimester or the first three months of the pregnancy, during which the life inside the mother takes shape
4. Second trimester or the next three months of the development of life inside the mother's womb
5. Third trimester or the last three months of pregnancy, which culminate in the delivery and birth of the baby
6. The critical post-pregnancy period, which is as important as the pregnancy itself

Every phase during pregnancy has its own significance in terms of the impact that it has on the lives of the mother and the child. Any one phase not handled well can have long term repercussions and can be detrimental in various ways for the mother and the newly born. Each phase should thus be first understood thoroughly for its significance and should be treated accordingly in order to make pregnancy enjoyable and a truly memorable experience.

What we need to know first about pregnancy and its various stages is the type and nature of the complications involved. Then we should also know how we can overcome those complications and can even avoid them. The dos and don'ts to be observed must be clear in our minds and the solution to most common problems at hand.

So, what is it that one can actually do to look forward to making pregnancy an enjoyable, pleasant and a memorable experience? Where can one find the answers to the most common problems and complications that occur during pregnancy? Is there something that is easy to understand and apply during those crucial nine months to make pregnancy problem-free? Is there something that can be cent percent effective with no side-effects? What should an expectant and expecting mother look up to during that period?

The answer to these important and relevant questions lies within the realms of the two of the most relevant social subjects of modern times, the ancient Indian scientific art of 'Yoga' and the most significant arm of the subject of Health and Nutrition Sciences 'Dietetics'.

Yoga

Yoga has become one of the most spoken and commonly heard word in the recent times. The word 'yoga' is derived from the Sanskrit meaning of the word, which means 'to join' and can be understood as meaning 'Unity' or 'Oneness'. Yoga is not, as many would believe, an ancient art that has mythological heritage, nor is it, as the popular belief goes, only about '*Asanas*' and '*Pranayamas*'. Yoga, in its true essence, is the science of living in the right manner. It ensures 'the right living' during all stages of life viz. 'Infancy', 'Childhood', 'Adolescence', 'Adulthood', 'Middle Age' and even 'Ripe Old Age'. It encompasses all aspects of the personality — 'Physical', 'Mental', 'Vital', 'Emotional', 'Psychic' and 'Spiritual'. This is achieved through various forms of yoga.

Yoga creates an environment of dynamic peacefulness and harmony within. On a physical level, it strengthens and tones various parts of the body and improves flexibility, stamina and mobility. Biologically it does a balancing act on different systems of the body, helps increase vitality, strengthens immunity, detoxifies the body and improves all biological processes and brain functioning. Mentally, it increases sensory awareness, improves concentration levels, clears the thought process and relaxes the mind, focuses attention and frees the spirit. And most importantly, it keeps away negativity on all three levels.

The eight forms of a comprehensive yogic system (*Ashtanga Yoga*) according to Sage Patanjali include:

- *Yama* – moral duties such as *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Satya* (truth), *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), *Aparigraha* (self-restraint)
- *Niyama* – self-observances such as purification of inner self through discipline, *Shoucha* (inner cleansing), *Santosha* (contentment), *Swadhyay* (self-introspection), *Ishtar Pranidhan* (devotion to Almighty)
- *Asana* – physical yogic exercises
- *Pranayama* – breathing techniques
- *Pratyahara* – dissociation of self-consciousness from outer world
- *Dharana* – concentration on a particular subject
- *Dhyana* – meditation
- *Samadhi* – identification with pure consciousness, self-actualisation

Self-actualisation or identification with the pure consciousness is the pinnacle of achievement and ultimate aim of being a *yogi* (one who observes and practises all aspects of yoga in daily life).

What makes yoga so powerful a medium is the fact that it takes the holistic route of unification and harmony. Yoga provides individuals with their own way to connecting with their true selves. Such is the flexibility and adaptability of yoga that it transcends all barriers of place, religion, faith, caste, and creed and establishes connection with everyone who wants to embrace it for well-being.

The science of yoga can be safely and effectively applied during all stages of life for enlightened and problem-free living and pregnancy is no exception to this. Yoga, if practised regularly under restraint and guidance, is known to have an immensely positive impact during all phases of pregnancy. The process of pregnancy will never be the same again if yogic techniques are applied and practised correctly. The entire experience of pregnancy will then be as pleasant as the outcome itself.

The most significant advantage of making yoga a daily ingredient of one's life during pregnancy is that if followed correctly there are only positive effects that are seen. Unlike any other mode of modern treatment or medication, there are no harmful side-effects of practising yoga in the right manner.

Benefits of Yoga during Pregnancy

- Yoga minimises the discomforts and complications faced during different stages of pregnancy. Yoga improves the circulation of blood, which really helps in dealing with different functional changes occurring in the body.