

# Garbha Mata Sanskar

~ Education Starts In The Womb ~  
An Introduction

IN BRIEF

1. *Garbha Sanskar* is an age-old practice in Ayurveda which describes the care to be taken by expecting couples, especially the mother, before conception, during pregnancy and after delivery of the baby.
2. This practice can help impart seeds of emotional and mental wellness to the child as it is believed that every baby's mental and behavioral development starts in the womb.
3. Importance is given to the proper nutrition of the mind, body and soul through diet, exercise, meditation and emotional health management because the mother's thoughts, actions and behavior are deeply connected with the developing fetus.

*Have you ever wondered how some trees thrive and grow beautiful leaves and flowers but some don't? It all depends on the quality of the seed and soil. For humans, the seed is the egg or sperm while the soil is the uterus but there's more to it. Read on...*



## Seed & Soil

*Garbha* means fetus, *mata* means mother and *sanskar* means inculcating specific values and qualities. *Garbha mata sanskar* is a way through which a mother can stimulate in utero learning in her fetus. This process involves pre and post-natal care. It also involves responsible and mindful parenting which begins before childbirth and continues after the birth.

In the human body, the seed (*beeja*) is the egg or sperm and the soil (*kshetra*) is the uterus where the baby grows. The environment in which the seed or fetus grows is also very important because that is where an entire human would form.

Garbha sanskar is one of the most important *sanskaras* any human would need. Knowingly or unknowingly, we all practice garbha sanskar during pregnancy.

The word “sanskaras” literally means “putting together, making perfect, getting ready, to prepare” or “a sacred or sanctifying ceremony” in the ancient Sanskrit and Pali texts of India. Sanskaras are activities that help one achieve “purity” in which the excellent qualities of an individual’s personality are fully developed, from conception to the grave.

According to the theory of Karma, sanskaras are characteristics or behavioral traits which are a part of us since

birth and these attributes make and define us during our life time. If properly fed during conception they become a part of our subconscious mind, which regulate our lives. These attributes can be positive or negative depending upon whatever is fed to our subconscious.



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According to the Vedas, there are *Shodasha Sanskaras* or the 16 Sacraments of Life, which are practiced for a happy, healthy and fulfilling life.

## What Are The Benefits Of Sanskaras?

1

Sanskaras provide sound mental and physical health and the confidence to face life's challenges.

2

They are believed to purify blood and increase blood circulation, sending more oxygen to every organ.

3

Sanskaras can energize the body and revitalize it.

4

Sanskaras can increase physical strength and stamina to enable one to work for longer periods of time.

5

They rejuvenate the mind and enhance concentration and intellectual capacity.

6

Sanskaras give a sense of belonging, culture and refined sensibilities.

7

Sanskaras direct energy to humanitarian causes thereby building a strong character.



## Parental Responsibility

It's a well-known fact that healthy parents increase the chances of having a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby. A baby is a responsibility and not just an outcome of a physical relationship between a man and woman. Pregnancy should happen as a choice and not chance. Therefore, careful and mindful planning is required.

Bringing a baby to the world is a huge responsibility. On average, 4 children are born every second and 401,300 children are born a day. Imagine, if these children are not nurtured emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually, how would the world be like?

Have you ever thought about how our human civilization is contributing to the universe? We breathe, eat, sleep, drink and take everything from this Earth. We use and exploit Mother Earth with little to no contribution in any way except to create wealth and pleasure for ourselves. Consequently, we find ourselves on the path of destruction. With the increase in crimes, unrests and conflicts in the world, humans are losing the ability to heal, nourish and rejuvenate ourselves.

This is happening not only at the global level but also at the organizational and household levels. We are already seeing people going through a lot of physical, mental and emotional setbacks. The mind or the consciousness is not getting enough food or nourishment to bring out the best from human beings.



*Photo by Tsunami Green on Unsplash*



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### How Can Garbha Sanskar Help?

Garbha means fetus and sanskar means inculcating and stimulating special qualities in an individual. Our sanskars define the way we speak, behave, live and contribute to the Universe.

Garbha sanskar includes building the physical, mental and social character of the child during pregnancy. It also works on the spiritual level of an unborn child. The effect is long lasting.

This practice can help in imparting seeds of emotional and mental wellness in unborn babies as well as parents. The process involves the nutrition, lifestyle, physical movement, emotional health, sleep, rest, recovery as well as the spiritual growth of both parents.

A child is born with the help of both parents and not just the mother. Such is the concept introduced by the early sages in Ayurveda. Both parents are equal, hence gender equality is also not a recent concept.

The practice of garbha sanskar in Ayurveda dates back to ancient times but had not been given the importance it deserves due to the previous lack of scientific research on it. However, couples who practice it have seen fantastic outcomes. Activities in the practice include following an Ayurvedic diet regimen, chanting, talking to the baby, expressing one's feelings (touch), meditating, etc.

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According to the International Journal of Recent Scientific Research, garbha sanskar is a scientifically-proven fact to achieve the best outcome in a pregnancy. The practice encompasses pre-conception care, pregnancy care (*Garbhini Paricharya*), post-delivery care (*Sutika Paricharya*) and child care (*Bal Paricharya*).

In today's fast-paced world, it has become more important than ever for couples, especially, expectant mothers to prepare properly for a healthy progeny in order to build a better world for the future. It is a primary responsibility of all parents now and in the future.

Here's an important information from *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, an ancient text on yoga philosophy:

Our body is like a pot or a jar. An earthen pot is very weak and malleable, and if it's put under pressure or water, it will break or dissolve. However, when the pot is baked in fire, it becomes strong enough to contain the water and is useful.

Hatha yoga teaches us that as our body is weak to deal with the pressures of the world, we must bake it in the heat of discipline so that it's ready to face all the pressures of the world. Swami Svātmārāma wrote this in the 15th century. He knew mankind is going to be affected by the silly pressures of the world. What a genius he was!

## The First Step

Garbh sanskar starts with *garbh shuddhi* which means cleansing of uterus. Technically, it's not just the quality of the egg but also the quality of the sperm.

Hence, garbh shuddhi which means removal of toxins is not just on a physical level but also on a mental level. Removal of food that creates toxins and removal of thoughts that create emotional toxins are both addressed. It's like preparing a bed for planting seeds or cleaning a vessel for cooking food. In the same way, your health is of utmost importance not only to bring the baby but also to raise them.

Day in, day out we see people struggling with this basic need called nutrition. Each and every cell of our body contains DNA. Now, this DNA is responsible for each and every aspect of our growth and development. That's the most important component of our body which regulates everything, from the way you look to the way you think and act.

Our genes play a very, very important role in our physical, emotional, mental and social well-being. It's a clear connection between nature and nurture. Epigenetics talks about giving a fulfilling and nurturing environment so as to bring the best outcome in the pregnancy. It is the study of how our behavior and the environment can cause changes that affect the way our genes work. We can get the maximum potential out of our genetic system by giving ourselves a flourishing environment.

Now, our genes can be altered by nutrition, by the way we sleep, rest, act, by our emotional and social behavior, which are all part of our lifestyle.

The good news is we can protect our genes and keep them in the best possible form. The bad news is if the gene is altered, not only can it result in physical deformity but it can also have an impact on the mind.

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## How To Protect Our Genes Or DNA

The answer to this question is lifestyle. Your lifestyle is your key to holistic health.

Having been in the health and wellness industry for 14 years and having worked closely with the medical fraternity, what I understand and what we agree on is that lifestyle is the way to go. There is no alternative to a healthy lifestyle.

The fact is our lifestyle which comprises diet, exercise, stress, emotional health, etc., is not balanced. We are constantly chasing something.

There is a deep connection with the developing fetus from the way parents think, act and behave. After conception in garbh sanskar practice, lots of attention are given to the nutrition of the mind, body and soul through diet, music therapy, mantra chanting, based on the culture and beliefs of the parents. All these information and enrichment enter the *nadis* (tubes or the arteries in the umbilical cord that connect the fetus with the mother) into the developing fetus's body and mind.



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Garbha sanskar involves the following components:

### **Aahar (Food)**

A healthy, nutritious diet is to be followed at least 3 months before conception. It is recommended that the couple gets a complete body checkup to rule out any deficiencies. Special attention is given to the consumption of folic acid, vitamin B12, D3, calcium, magnesium and zinc to improve the quality of the egg in females. Even sperm quality matters, it has been seen that the supplementation of Coenzyme Q10 plays a very important role in improving egg quality and sperm motility. The couple is advised to refrain from substance abuse and alcohol.

### **Vihaar (Rest & Recreation)**

The couple is advised to follow the circadian rhythm which is the natural rhythm of the human body. Getting up at sunrise and practicing yoga *asanas* with light stretching exercises (for gross and subtle body) are recommended followed by *pranayama* (breathwork).

Some of the *asanas* that are helpful in conception are:

- *bhadrasana* (butterfly pose),
- *malasana* (low squat),
- *vipreet karni* (legs up the wall pose) with or without wall support,
- *virabhadrasana* (warrior pose),
- *matsyasana* (fish pose),
- *yoga mudra*, etc.

Basically, all *asanas* that help in improving circulation toward the abdominal area are suitable.

Post-asana practice and breathwork are highly recommended. *Kapalbhati kriya* (Skull Shining Breath) or *bhastrika pranayama* (Bellow Breathing) should be done on a regular basis. *Nadi shodhanam* (Channel Cleaning) or *anulom vilom* (Alternate Nostril Breathing) always help and are useful. The session should always end with *Shavasana* (Corpse Pose) — a relaxation technique done with positive affirmations. Relaxation should never be neglected because it helps lower stress hormones (cortisol) and increases mindfulness.

Post-conception, asana practice should be done strictly under supervision as each trimester needs to be treated with great care and attention.

### **Achaar (Do's & Don'ts)**

Achaar makes the foundation of lifestyle. It involves day-to-day activities related to physical and mental hygiene like cleaning the bowels regularly and treating constipation, practicing meditation, om chanting, staying mindful and positive, sitting less, moving more, health management techniques and others.

Meditation during pregnancy is of great importance as it reduces anxiety and stress, which enhances the emotional connection between mother and child, helps with better sleep, induces peace of mind,

facilitates the mother's connection with her changing body and the developing fetus, improves birth weight, reduces overall medical complications for the newborn, and it also reduces the risks of miscarriage, birth defects, premature delivery and postpartum depression.

### **Vichaar (Thoughts)**

Emotional health and healing should be taken care of. It has been seen that stress has a negative impact on conception as well as the developing fetus. Stress during pregnancy can affect the growth and development of the baby. Mantra chanting and meditation

are great stress management techniques and help balance the hormones. When the correct environment is given to the body, it starts resetting itself. This will also help prevent complications like diabetes, oedema, hypertension, etc., during pregnancy.

### **Birth The Virtuous Generation**

All in all, the journey of Garbha Mata Sanskar starts before conception and travels through *Garbhini* (pregnant lady), *Sutika* (lactating mother) and *Balyavastha* (infancy). The ancient wisdom if applied religiously will definitely help in building a virtuous, intelligent and healthy generation.

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