

Garbha Sanskar: An Overview

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Abstract

A child for a mother is her prince or princess, she wants to give best of everything to her baby. This feeling starts from the time of conception or even before. One of the most famous and well-known tales is that of Abhimanyu from the Mahabharata. When Arjuna's wife was pregnant with their son Abhimanyu, he told her about how to penetrate the Chakravyuh, a particular war formation. When Abhimanyu became a young man and a warrior in the Kurukshetra war, he remembered his father's story. He was able to employ the strategy that he had heard his father tell his mother while he was in her womb. Another story is of Prahlad from the Puranas. Prahlad was born into a family of demons who were wreaking havoc on the Gods in heaven. His mother listened to devotional prayers and stories about Lord Vishnu while he was in her womb. As a result, he became a devotee of Lord Vishnu. He stood by good and renounced all evil. This led to the downfall of his demon father's evil empire. These stories tell us that the concept of Garbha Sanskar is not new to people. But the question is does it really help? Does it help the mother and child? If yes how? Considering these questions some information is reviewed and presented further.

Introduction

Garbha Sanskar is an astonishing way of teaching good things to the unborn baby in womb during pregnancy. The literal meaning of word *garbh* is womb and *sanskar* is teaching good or right things. The aim of any parent is to bear and nurture a healthy, capable child who can face the pressures of our increasingly complex lifestyles. Garbha Sanskar is both a medical practice and a 'culture'. Just like a person brought up in a musician's house imbibes a musical culture, the child is conditioned within the womb. The practice has been developed over four

decades of research and medical practice. Tambe says, "If women are provided with expert guidance during pregnancy and the early years of their children, it will have an immense impact on society."

An Overview

We start our life out as a zygote, the fertilized egg in our mother's uterus, 46 chromosomes that will determine everything from eye color to height and that help to influence our intelligence and who we are individually. By the fourth week of pregnancy,

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the zygote has turned into an embryo and will begin developing what will become its brain.

The brain begins as the ectoderm, which is the top layer of the now three-layered embryo, and will develop into the neural tube which will close by week six. At ten weeks gestation, the new brain will begin forming neurons at the rate of 250,000 per minute, according to the article "Fetal Development: What Happens during the First Trimester?" At the 16th week, the fetus' eyes are becoming sensitive to light, and at week 18, the fetus can hear. By the 28th week, the fetus' eyes open.

According to the 2005 ABC News story "Parent-Child Connection Shapes Brain" by Amanda Onion, available on <http://abcnews.go.com>, "Allan Schore, a leading neuroscientist at the University of California-Los Angeles' Center for Culture, Brain, and Development, points out that the parent-child connection during a child's first year can not only affects a child's psychological state, it actually plays a role in physically shaping the brain. The benefits appear to be more internal: It's the child's ability to handle stress and feel emotionally secure that evolves during this early part of life."

At only week ten of gestation, a fetus's neurons are forming at the rate of 250,000 per minute. By birth, a baby comes into his parents' arms with about 100 billion neurons, each with about 10,000 branches!

This is according to David Allen Walsh, PhD, in his book, /A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen/.

These neurons have great significance in that they send and receive all of our body's messages. For example, as you read this article, your eyes see the words and transmit those images to your brain via neurons. Once that message reaches the brain, other neurons move the transmission along to the area of your brain that can translate the word images, so you can see and understand what you are reading.

A 2000 article, "Brain Development Research, What it Means for Young Children and Families," agrees: "The impact of environmental factors on the young child's brain development is dramatic and specific, not merely influencing the general direction of development but actually affecting how the intricate circuitry of the human brain is wired. Because the brain is organizing at such an explosive rate in the first years of life, experiences during this period have more potential to influence the brain – in positive and negative ways."

It has been nearly a century since pre and perinatal psychology was introduced by Otto Rank, a student and colleague of Sigmund Freud. His slim book, *The Trauma of Birth*, was a gift to his mentor and friend in 1924. This birthday surprise detailed how Rank

thought that difficulty during birth could affect the psyche of the person being born in such a way that it would affect them the rest of their lives. While first warmly received by Freud, it was rejected and the relationship between teacher and student was forever affected.

Since then, this pattern of considering that babies have experiences that have lifelong implications has taken similar course in the world. A small cohort of practitioners took on the belief that yes, these early experiences do influence behavior for a lifetime while the medical, scientific and popular communities ignored, disengaged or even repudiated this idea. Now, in 2015, a confluence of neuroscience, cellular biology, trauma resolution therapies, and human development are indeed supporting the fact that early experiences prenatally, during birth and in the first year of life do indeed have lifelong implications for health and happiness. These experiences can affect the child in both positive and difficult ways, depending on what happens. Healing is possible, no matter what difficulties may occur.

After Otto Rank, several influential practitioners took up the thread that these early life experiences were deeply meaningful, yet it was not until the 1960's after the publication of research articles on how caregivers and babies interact that the vital importance of this early bond received scientific support. This research detailed how the style of attachment between mother and baby could have lifelong and multi-generational implications. Then the 1990's were considered The Decade of the Brain, and many government dollars supported scientific research into embryology, neurology and related fields, especially the human genome project. It was thought that humans had over 100,000 genes that could be mapped and therefore disease and health could be easily tracked and hopefully manipulated for the greater good. However only 25,000 genes were discovered and research turned to looking at how the environment influenced gene expression. This field of study is called "epigenetics," or how the environment and genetics interact. The nature/nurture fight was forever settled and the era of the "epigenome" was born.

Conclusion

Considering all above information about the realities of life before birth, we must appropriately

reset the clock on parenthood. The womb is no longer a dark, secret place. We know it is not an isolation tank! What goes on in there for nine months is the ceaseless moulding and shaping of the whole baby – collaboration between baby and parents. All the new facts of life plead for parental involvement, participation, and cooperation in the powerful matrix of intimate interactions that take place in the womb. Pregnancy is parenting de facto. Parental influence on a child is at its peak during construction in utero

These studies even prove that : (1) babies in the womb are alert, aware, and attentive to activities involving voice, touch, and music; (2) that babies benefit from these activities by forming stronger relationships with their parents and their parents with them, resulting in better attachments and better birthing experiences, and (3) that these babies tend to show precocious development of speech, fine and gross motor performance, better emotional self-regulation, and better cognitive processing. These are the gifts and rewards of active parenting.

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