

Efficacy of Yoga & Anupreksha in Natural Birthing and Reducing Labor Duration

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Abstract: Labor is an important and crucial phase of pregnancy and hence, needs to be addressed scientifically. Basic neurological principles can be applied to the childbirth. The present study has used the principle of positive visualization along with the physical activity in the form of yoga to see the labor outcome. Ninety prim parous were selected with the method of randomization. They were matched of socio-economic status and health. The high-risk pregnancies were not included in the study. Ninety subjects were divided into three groups of thirty each. The three groups were Yoga Group, Yoga & Anupreksha Group, and Control Group. Yoga & Anupreksha Group was given contemplation for a normal delivery with short and easy labor. Yoga Group practiced only yoga and the Control Group was assigned thirty to forty-five minutes' walk. The results were very encouraging. The labor duration range dropped from 24 – 8 hours to 6 – 0.5 hours. The ratio of normal delivery went up drastically from 11 to 28.

Key Words – Anupreksha, Pregnancy, Labor, Positive Visualization, Yoga

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I. INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy is a beautiful phase in a woman's life which transforms her completely. Though every moment of gestation is important in its own way, labor is of utmost importance. Unanimously, women fear labor and additionally various experiences pouring into their ears, worsen the problem. On the contrary, birthing is a very much normal process where the body of a woman unfolds naturally. When the baby is fully developed in the womb and ready to survive on its own, hormones are released and the process of labor begins. There are four stages of labor – Effacement, Dilatation, Transition, and Expulsion. During 'Effacement' the walls of the cervix are thinned out, then the opening of the cervix takes place and this stage is 'Dilatation.' Contractions during this stage widen the diameter of the cervix so that the baby's head may accommodate and pass through birth canal. The third stage, 'Transition', is marked by the baby's descent into the pelvic region and the pregnant woman starts feeling pressure in the pelvic floor region and contractions become longer and stronger. Once the cervix is dilated 10 centimeters, the expulsion of the baby takes place. If women are trained to become body-centered and taught to work along with the body mechanism, it would become easier for them to cope up with the contractions during labor. If a pregnant woman understands and tells herself that each contraction brings her baby closer to her lap, she will be relaxed and positive and this, in turn, will relax the muscles and ease the pain naturally. To achieve this, both body and mind need to be trained. The body can be trained through Yoga practices where *asanas* help to make the body flexible and strengthen the muscles simultaneously. Breathing helps to increase the awareness, conserve energy, create rhythm during labor, and get rid of tension as contractions come and go. Meditation releases the tensions by overcoming stress and fear, the mind calms down and becomes body centered. Visualization is the language of contraction of sub-conscious mind^{1,2}. When one practices positive visualization in a very relaxed state of mind, i.e. in the alpha state of mind, it creates a very strong impression on the subconscious mind³. The combination makes for a powerful mind programming strategy^{4,5}. So one can relax the mind through Yoga and then practice *Anupreksha* (contemplations or positive affirmations) for short and easy going labor^{6,7}. The researcher has worked on this and the present study shows the efficacy of practices of Yoga and *Anupreksha* in reducing the labor duration.

II. METHODOLOGY

Ninety primigravidae were selected from various hospitals of Jaipur. The subjects selected were matched for age and socio-economic status. Only primiparous were selected because researcher wanted the subjects with no previous experience. The other reason to select primiparous was that their bodies were not unfolded by the previous pregnancy. All the subjects selected were healthy and high-risk pregnancies were

avoided. The selection was done by the method of randomization. The study was conducted under the guidance a Senior Obstetrician Dr. Ritu Joshi at Studio Yogamrit, Jaipur, and Rajasthan.

Subjects were divided into three groups randomly. There were two experimental groups A & B, and one control group C, each group had 30 subjects.

Group A: Yoga Group

Group B: Yoga & Anupreksha group

Group C: Control group

- Subjects of experimental group A i.e. Yoga Group were given regular one hour of Yoga session five days a week. Sessions were conducted by the researcher herself as she is a trained Yoga teacher. *Asanas*, breathing practices, deep relaxation, chants of mantras, and meditation were part of every session. Subjects were deeply relaxed after every session.
- Subjects of experimental group B i.e. Yoga and Anupreksha were also given Yoga sessions same as the group A. There was no difference in their sessions in terms of *asanas*, breathing practices, deep relaxation, chants, and meditation, but in group B after the deep relaxation subjects were given *Anupreksha*. *Anupreksha* was designed for short, easy labor and normal delivery. *Anupreksha* had to be repeated at least nine times in the relaxed state of mind. Hence, subjects were also asked to repeat the *Anupreksha* nine times at the end of every session. They were advised to repeat the same at night just before going to bed. They were advised to do 10 minutes of breathing practices to relax the mind and then do *Anupreksha*. This continued from their 16th week of pregnancy up to labor.
- Subjects of control group C were advised by their obstetrician to take up 35-40 minutes of walk daily in their general guidelines. There was no intervention of Yoga and Anupreksha.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that the best result are of Yoga & Anupreksha Group where the range of labor duration is lowest. The maximum hour of labor is 6 and the minimum hour is just half an hour, which is miraculous. Yoga & Anupreksha Group is better than the Yoga Group because, in the Yoga Group, the body was trained for labor and mind was trained to remain relaxed during labor, whereas in Yoga & Anupreksha Group mind was trained a step ahead by contemplating for short labor. The contemplation works well in a relaxed state of mind so after Yoga practices the group B was given contemplation for normal delivery and easy and short labor, and results have endorsed the effect.

Yoga Group did not practice any contemplation or positive visualization for short labor and normal delivery. So body responded to the Yoga practices and mental relaxation only, hence, the labor duration was long compared to that for the Yoga & Anupreksha Group.

Control Group practiced neither Yoga nor Anupreksha so the subjects had the maximum range of labor duration.

Table 1 - Maximum & Minimum Duration of Labor Duration (in Hours) (Group Comparison)

S. No.	Group	Maximum Range	Minimum Range
1	Yoga	12	2
2	Yoga & Anupreksha	6	½
3	Control	24	9

Table 2 shows that the effect of contemplation or positive visualization on the normal birthing as well. Yoga & Anupreksha Group had 93.33% (maximum number) of normal deliveries whereas Yoga Group had 76.70% normal deliveries. In comparison to the above experimental group, the Control Group had just 36% normal deliveries.

Table 2 - Mode of Delivery (Group Comparison)

S. No.	Group	Normal (#)	C-Section (#)
1	Yoga	23	7
2	Yoga & Anupreksha	28	2
3	Control	11	19

IV. CONCLUSION

To summarize, the present study demonstrates that Anupreksha (positive affirmation or contemplation) and Yoga practices together result in normal deliveries with reduced labor duration.

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