



***Yoga, Pregnancy & Mothering: Giving Birth to Conscious Beings
Serving Pregnant Students & New Mothers in Yoga
Part II: Using the Koshic Model - The Psycho-Emotional Body***

1. Using the Koshas to Explore Pregnancy Experience
 - a. The Koshas are the dimensions or levels of human being. They offer a map for the journey of self discovery. This map of being comes from an ancient spiritual science called Vedanta. These dimensions can be described as bodies: physical, energetic, psycho-emotional, wisdom and bliss.
2. Manomayakosha: The Psycho-Emotional Body
 - a. Relates to the basic drives and emotions including flight or fight response, survival, reproduction, social roles and personality. Blockage manifests initially as stress and eventually as physical and/or mental illness. Yoga postures, breathing and meditation techniques can help relieve stress and enhance self-awareness.
3. Manomayakosha
 - a. What is happening in a woman's mental/emotional body?
 - i. The experience of being pregnant and the prospect of giving birth trigger strong emotions and challenge a woman to examine her past experience and unconscious tendency to repeat patterns.
 - ii. Joy, anticipation and love can inspire a woman to open her heart and experience a stronger sense of connection with self, baby, family and friends
 - iii. Emotional pain and conflict manifest the beliefs and conditioning that create separation as a distorted view of life, separation from others including baby and from within the self
 - iv. Deep seated memories from the past surface more easily in pregnancy. A woman's experience of her own birth, infancy, childhood and adolescence, her relationship with her parents and partner can form a basis for her prospective parenting.
 - v. Sometimes repressed feelings arise in labor and/or the postpartum period.
 - b. Practices to support her through this period
 - i. Practices which can enhance her self awareness and her ability experience deep feeling, allowing it to arise and subside as naturally as the breath. Plant seeds of encouragement. Invite students to integrate the experience of what arises through reflection and sharing as appropriate. Invite them to contemplate the deeper meaning of feeling and sensory experience as it relates to her well being and prospect of birthing and parenting.

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(1) Relaxation techniques

- (a) Visualize a warm wave of water or current of light moving in slow motion with even rhythm from the soles of her feet to the crown of her head, hydrating, relaxing and calming the body as stress, tension and anxiety are released with each exhalation. Relaxation deepens with out breath as journey continues allow for special healing in the areas of pelvis, abdomen and low back.
- (b) Relax by using a healing color and moving the color with the breath throughout the body so that each body part is nourished and then relaxed. (Note that soft colors may induce sleep while bright vibrant colors bathing senses can help maintain calm attention.)

(2) Mantras

- (a) Mantras, affirmations and prayers can be combined with images & mudras to enhance effects & focus the mind. There are quite a few Sanskrit mantras. It may be most helpful to explore just a few to determine whether they truly meaningful to individual students.
 - (i) Om Ma Om (Salutations to the Divine Mother)
 - (ii) Om Mani Padme Hum . The Compassionate Buddha Mantra (Chanted to cultivate acceptance, compassion & loving kindness. Om is blessed to help you in the practice of generosity, Ma helps you to observe pure ethics, and Ni helps you in the practice of tolerance and patience. Pad, the fourth syllable, helps you to realize perseverance, Me helps you in the practice of concentration, and finally the sixth syllable Hum helps you in the cultivation of wisdom.)

(iii) Bija mantras

(3) Affirmations/Bhavanas/Sankalpas

- (a) Draw from sharing in class – sense recurring themes and build class around them
 - (i) Bhavanas of divine intention to move from disease through healing from separation to wholeness
 - (ii) Opening to give and receive support from the universe
- (b) Creating sankalpas or affirmations; (best to allow student to identify her own affirmation):
 - (i) Chakra issues
 1. Safe at the center of being
 2. Flowing with the rhythms of life
 3. Standing in power
 4. Opening heart to life
 5. Following & speaking truth

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6. Following path of truth
7. There is only God
- (ii) Calm & tranquility themes
- (iii) Healing themes
- (iv) Heart, love & compassion themes
- (4) Sounding: Intuitive sounding can release emotional blocks
- (5) Restorative Yoga
 - (a) Viparita karani against wall or chair with bolster
 - (b) Semi reclining supta baddha konasana
 - (c) Semi reclining virasana
- ii. Practices to avoid
 - (1) Long periods of resting in postures in which pelvis is rotated posteriorly (concern over baby's position – heaviest part of baby's head can shift to front of sacrum which could result in painful back labor)
 - (2) Excessive internal focus if woman is extremely agitated