

WELLBEING • SPIRITUALITY • NATURAL LIVING • ORGANIC BEAUTY

YOGA

MAGAZINE

June 2011 UK 3.20

Get the Perfect

*Yoga
Beach
Body*

PART I

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
Yogi Malik meets

*Bikram
Choudhury*

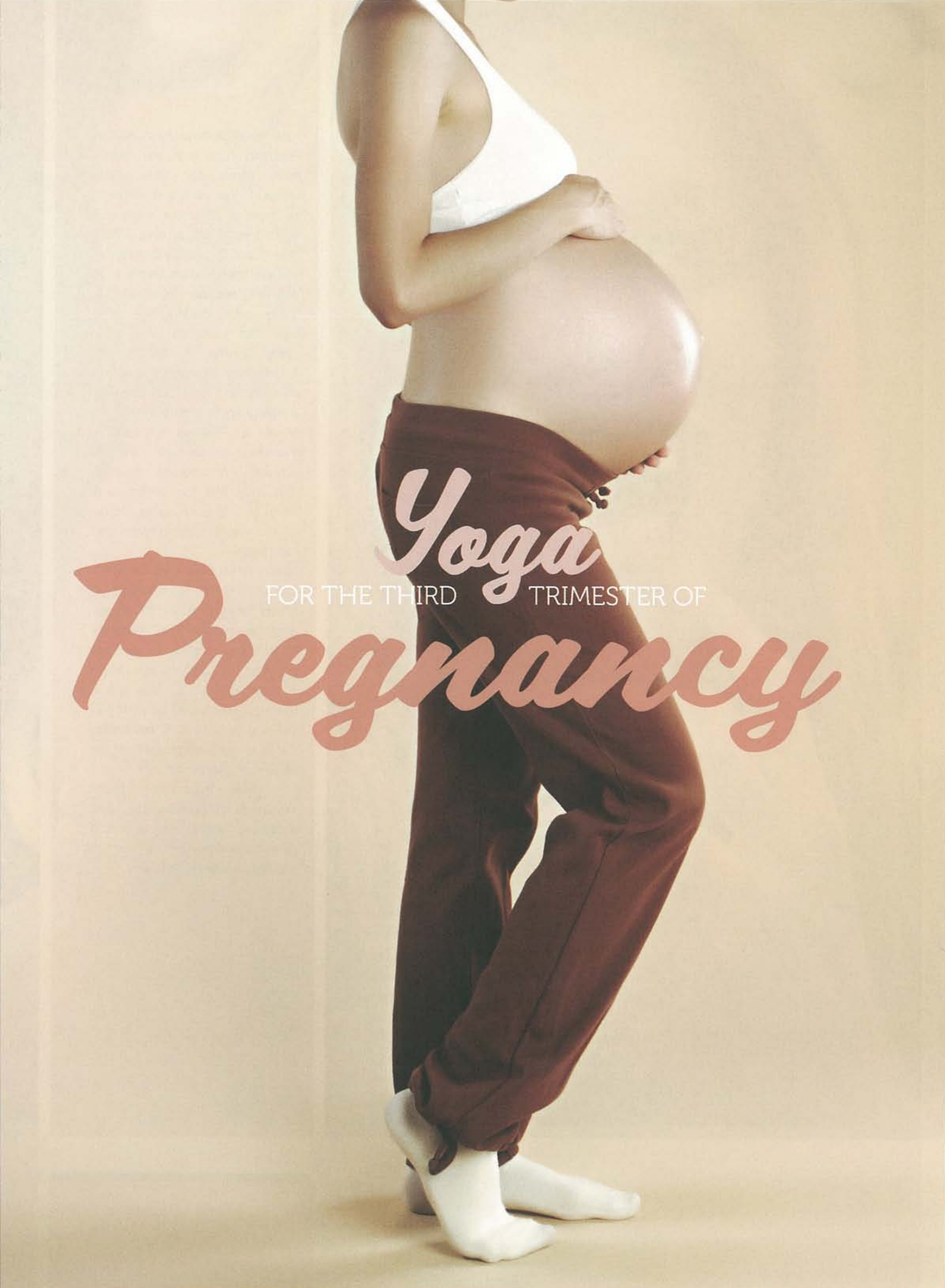
*The World's
Best Yoga
Retreats*

*Boost
Your
Confidence*

*Swani
Chandra*
A SPIRITUAL INSIGHT
TO TANTRA

ISSN 1478-9671 02
9 771478 967010

yogamagazine.org



Yoga
FOR THE THIRD TRIMESTER OF
Pregnancy



Emma Sharma, mother and qualified prenatal yoga teacher, who has recently released her own prenatal yoga DVD, informs women in their third trimester of the advantages of practicing yoga throughout pregnancy to help prevent and relieve common pregnancy ailments, open up the hips in preparation for birth and to increase stamina for optimal, gravity-assisting positions for birthing.

Welcome to your third trimester of pregnancy. You may find yourself starting to slow down a little now as you carry the extra weight of your growing baby. Yoga can help you with the aches, pains and discomfort often associated with the latter stages of pregnancy. Your body is getting ready to birth your baby, so try and stay positive and relaxed during these last few weeks. Listen to your body and rest when you need to, you will need the energy reserves for when your baby arrives and for your postpartum recovery.

Backache can become an issue for some women, especially during the latter stages of pregnancy. Your pelvis is starting to loosen up to allow easier delivery of your baby. In addition, your bump is growing by the day, which can throw your body off-balance and cause you to curve your spine and waddle your hips, causing undue strain on your spine and back muscles. Backache can be relieved through pelvic tilt exercises and by being conscious of keeping your weight evenly distributed. Be sure to use your thighs, not back muscles, when lifting items. A 'V' pillow offers excellent back support for pregnant women, whilst sleeping or sitting up.

Many women find they have fluid retention towards the end of their pregnancy. As you grow to make room for your baby, so does your tendency to retain fluid. Ankles, fingers and face may become slightly swollen. Yoga can help relieve fluid retention as it increases circulation.

Yoga can help with your emotional state during pregnancy. You may be experiencing some fear of the birthing process by this stage. It is important to stay calm and relaxed, so if you have not already done so, this is a good time to introduce some meditative practice and deep breathing into your daily routine. During your yoga practice you will have time to focus inward and connect with your baby who is probably making you very aware of his/her movements by now.



Yoga can help with your emotional state during pregnancy. You may be experiencing some fear of the birthing process by this stage. It is important to stay calm and relaxed, so if you have not already done so, this is a good time to introduce some meditative practice and deep breathing into your daily routine.

The Birthing Process

Moving around during the early part of labour helps your cervix to dilate and encourages your baby to move into the optimal position for travelling through your pelvis. Make sure you drink a lot of water and urinate often during labour to prevent dehydration. Many women find that dim lights, soothing music and privacy help during labour; like most female mammals, women share this need for privacy.

Doulas can make wonderful labour companions providing support throughout your birthing process. Their job is to ensure that you, and your partner, are happy and comfortable at all times. Your doula will be aware of how you would like your labour to progress and can help, as best she can, to fulfil your wishes and pass on your desires to any other members of staff, allowing you to focus entirely on birthing your baby. Research shows that hiring a doula reduces your likelihood of an unnecessary caesarean, and intervention by forceps or vacuum extractor, by as much as fifty percent. In addition a doula is shown to reduce the duration of labour and lessen your stress, pain and anxiety. A doula offers consistency throughout your labour, and is not affected by shift changes as midwives are.

During the majority of your labour breathe deeply, focusing primarily on your exhalations. As the contractions increase in intensity you may find it useful to make sounds, groaning, humming or even shouting. These sounds may provide you with a feeling of release, as you let go of any tension you are holding and distract yourself from the pain. Making sound actually encourages the production of endorphins, providing natural pain relief. The following positions, which are common to traditional women's cultures worldwide, are ideal for giving birth. They help to assist gravity and optimal opening of the pelvis in order to make the birthing process as smooth and relaxing as possible. There are particular yoga postures (explained in more detail in my previous articles) that will help with adopting these positions: garland pose, half squat and hip openers such as pigeon pose).

Supported squatting

This position encourages fast descent of your baby as it benefits from the use of gravity. During a contraction, stand with your legs apart, then bend your knees and hold on to your partner or a midwife. Your partner can stand behind you and hold you under your arms or you can face your partner and place your arms around his neck, as you hang off him and let go of your weight. Try and surrender with the contraction while your partner totally supports you. The contractions will be intensified as your baby's head puts increased pressure on your cervix. Your pelvis is wide open so this position

is particularly helpful if you have been experiencing a long labour, your baby is in breech, is a large baby, or your baby is in distress. Squatting can be tiring, so be sure to rest properly between contractions, and/or save squatting until the end.

Full squatting with two supporters

If you have practiced squatting throughout your pregnancy in prenatal yoga, or are particularly used to or capable at squatting, then this position could be ideal for you. During the contraction, squat on the floor, while your two supporters kneel on either side of you, with one knee each under your buttocks. Put one arm around each supporter, while they each put an arm behind your back. The pelvis is wide open, your pelvic floor is relaxed and gravity is on your side. The risk of tearing is vastly reduced. Between contractions, you can stand up or get on all fours. This posture allows the fluid to drain from the uterus more easily than a lying down position. You are also able to watch your baby being born in this position, if you so wish.

Supported squatting using a chair


You can also perform a full squat with the help of just one supporter. The supporter sits on a chair or on the edge of a bed, while you squat between their legs, using his or her thighs for support. The other version of this posture is to face your partner on the chair and hold each other by the wrists as you squat down with your heels on the floor. This is an effective posture at relaxing the perineum.

Kneeling or on all fours

For this position you just kneel on all fours with legs apart or kneel whilst leaning against a pile of cushions. This posture gives you more control and can slow your baby's descent a little if required. If your baby is in a posterior position, then being on all fours will relieve pressure on your back and permits you to sway your hips to enable your baby to rotate as he/she descends. Between contractions you can kneel upright if you wish. Sometimes when the mother kneels the baby can take a long time to descend from crowning to birth. If this happens then it is best to switch to a more vertical squatting posture so that the birth can advance.

Side Lying

This position leaves the sacrum free to move for delivery. Lie on your side with your torso propped up with pillows then hook one arm under your knee to support your leg as you birth your baby. Side lying does not use gravity to its full advantage though, so if things are moving slowly then this would not be the optimal position. But if your baby is progressing smoothly then this could be a comfortable posture for you to adopt.



During the majority of your labour breathe deeply, focusing primarily on your exhalations. As the contractions increase in intensity you may find it useful to make sounds, groaning, humming or even shouting.

To summarise, the advantages for adopting an upright position during labour are: using gravity to help you, increased circulation between you and your baby, better alignment of your baby to travel through your pelvis, more intense contractions and larger pelvic diameters when squatting or kneeling.

Practicing thigh strengtheners and hip openers regularly throughout your pregnancy will make it easier for you to adopt the aforementioned birthing postures and have the stamina to use them for extended periods at a time.

If you are interested to find out more about optimal birthing positions and breathing techniques then the following books could be useful to you: Active Birth by Janet Balaskas, Ina May's Guide To Childbirth and Juju Sundin's Birth Skills.

To find out more about Emma Sharma or to purchase her newly released prenatal yoga DVD recommended by Yoga Magazine which includes a beginners and advanced workout, visit emmasharma.com

emma sharma