



The Effects Of Yoga Nidra And Its Practices

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ABSTRACT:

Yoga Nidra is more than its popular conceptualization of “sleep and relaxation”, warranting the exploration of its many definitions in this research. The four states of consciousness, its connection to Yoga Nidra, its benefits and history are explained according to Mandukhya Upanishad. Yoga Nidra has been discussed and supported by several scientific journals, articles and literature thereby allowing this research to delve into some of its practices including those described as a guide for readers as well as a new proposed definition for the term “Yoga Nidra”. The practice of Yoga Nidra has shown its merit in empirical studies, therapy, relaxation, healing, meditation and creativity, to name a few. The science of Yoga Nidra and its finer effects, with the support of the new definitions of Yoga Nidra, can now be evaluated based on the physiological and neurological processes in the human brain with the use of EEG and PET scans.

Key Words: Yoga Nidra, States of Consciousness, relaxation

INTRODUCTION

The Sanskrit term and state of consciousness called “Yoga Nidra” means “Yogic Sleep” (N.C. Panda, 2011) it is expounded in Mandukhya Upanishad. It can be used to allow oneself to become attained or enlightened as well as assist in deep relaxation, meditation, healing, etc. According to Swami Rama (2007), Yoga Nidra or “psychic sleep” is also called “sleepless sleep” or “voluntary sleep”. During this practice, through guided mediation, the body becomes absolutely relaxed and one’s awareness turns inwards which allows for one to withdraw from the senses (Pratyahara). Seers, sages, and yogis practice this ancient technique to observe the vrittis in their mind-field leading to the purification of their minds and their samskaars to attain liberation. In this state of Yoga Nidra, alongside the practice of Dharna (concentration) on the center between the eyebrows, alpha brainwave frequencies are produced allowing for the stimulation of the pineal gland. This stimulation results in a release of the melatonin hormone which reduces stress, boosts the immune system and prevents illness. With regular practice one can harmonize and balance the energy in the left and right hemispheres of the brain, which develop better mental performance. Swami Veda Bharati (SVB) has proposed a new definition for Yoga Nidra, “Yoga Nidra is a state in which one shows all the symptoms of deep non- rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, including delta brainwave frequency”. This makes it easier to measure physiological, and neurological processes. Bharati Swami Veda (2013).

Kamakhya Kumar 2013 explained that Yoga Nidra is qualitatively a different kind of relaxation, that yoga nidra is a kind of sleep, where relaxation is deeper (very subtle), as one goes into deeper relaxation, a more

blissful state of awareness is experienced. According to Maharishi Markendaye and his visualisations, he believes that Yoga Nidra is a state of deep relaxation. The sustainer, Lord Vishnu is marveled by it. Maharishi Markendaye believes that at the end of kalpa, all the universes were in an absolute deep state of relaxation and the Magnificent Lord Vishnu, laying on Ananta (the serpent) in yoga nidra state. Whenever Lord Brahma observed the Lord Vishnu in yoga nidra, he wakes him up by praying to Lordess Yoga Nidra, who resides in the eyes of Lord Vishnu.

There are many perceptions in various commentaries on Yoga Nidra, that has profound insight into what is Yoga Nidra and how it is mastered. Yoga Nidra is becoming more popularised around the world today as Yoga has become a modern day trend. According to swami Rama in 1970 who says, that most of one's diseases are psychosomatic. Some common psychosomatic diseases are one's inability to sleep restfully, to control blood pressure, to control stress, asthma, peptic ulcer, minor and major heart attacks. Swami Satyananda Saraswati (2012). Believes that the practice of Yoga Nidra can help in overcoming psychosomatic diseases. Now the question is what is Yoga Nidra? Or should the question be who is Yoga Nidra? Yoga Nidra cannot be translated into any other language, for the modern society it is called "yogic sleep" or sleepless sleep. Yoga Nidra is a state of conscious sleep, for the one who is in deep sleep remains fully conscious, fully aware of his surroundings internally and externally. Yoga Nidra is one method of meditation used by highly evolved minds. Yogis apply this technique to sleep and meditate, they enjoy this voluntary sleep. This technique can help one in removing sloth and inertia which are obstacles in one's practice. "there are no drug and no scientific or physical technique so far discovered that give rest to the unconscious part of mind, except the technique of Yoga Nidra. It is difficult to be conscious of how one's mind withdraws itself and slides into the unconscious state. Only through the practice of Yoga nidra one can achieve this. Swami Rama (1982).

HISTORY OF YOGA NIDRA

Kamakhya Kumar (2013) expounded and expanded on the knowledge of Yoga Nidra according to the visualisation of Maharishi Markendaye. At the end of the (kalpa) time of the universe, the great Lord Vishnu who is laying on his serpent bed, merges in Yoga Nidra, who resides in his eyes and then goes into a state of deep relaxation. Lord Vishnu (he who sustains the universe) goes to Yoga Nidra. Kamakhya Kumar (2013), has described this profound ancient knowledge of yoga nidra in his Handbook of Yoga Nidra. It began with four questions put forward by Jaimini to Maharishi Markendaye. Yoga nidra is believed to have its origin in the Vedic era in the caves of Devalaya Himalayas. The Markendaye Purana is one of the eighteen major Puranas, which consists of 134 chapters. Yoga Nidra was discussed in the Durga saptashati first (700 verses dedicated to the divine mother of the universe) a section of the Markendaye Purana. In the chapters 50, 51, 52 to 97, the stages of the creation of the solar system, of the fourteen manvantaras (manu is the progenitor of mankind) is contained. Manvantara can be divided into two parts, manu the progenitor of mankind and antara means distance, manvantara literal meaning is the entire life span of mankind. These thirteen chapters 78, 79, 80 to 90 together are called "Devi Mahatmya" which is also known as Durga Saptashati, or chandipath. It is the primary text for Shakta ritual (devi worship) in the Navratri (nine nights) celebrations in India. Devi Mahatmya is looked at, as a move to merge the male principle of the universe with the female principle of the universe. Kamakhya Kumar (2013).

SVB holds a similar view on Yoga Nidra (yogic Sleep) by stating at the end of dissolution (pralaya) every element returns to its respective places (its origin). When all the separated sparks of consciousness (the earth, sun, moon, stars, galaxies, oceans, every material thing), all the diversities of the universe and the abundance of scattered minds come together and function as one and remains concentrated in Brahman that is Yoga Nidra. There is the creative consciousness who is resting dormant in Brahman and at the end of dissolution, after everything is absorbed, assimilated, and withdrawn into Brahman himself, at the end of pralaya. The Lord Brahman rest or goes to sleep. When the lord goes to sleep he merges himself with the creative consciousness of the universe, the feminine principle of the universe, Yoga Nidra who resides in his eyes. This is called the Lord's sleep. Yoga Nidra is referred to as the sleep of Brahman. He returns to the singularity of consciousness

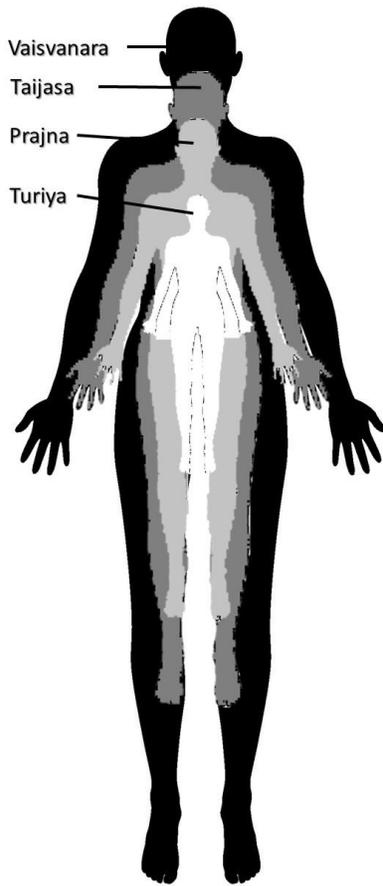
and not unconsciousness. Another word for maya (illusion) is Yoga nidra (the creative power of Brahman) that lies coiled up in the unmanifested mode in Brahman. Yoga Nidra is a feminine word, a feminine deity who resides in the eyes of Brahman. Shesha the serpent is the residue that remains after the universe is absorbed, assimilated and withdrawn coils itself and form a bed for the Lord for the Lord to rest. N.C.Panda (2011), also supports this perception on Yoga Nidra in his text Yoga-Nidra.

As time passes on every second, everything changes, for the evolving minds not everyone, even one's perception, of knowledge, of practical life, of definitions and everything being to look at from a different perspective. SVB has a modern definition for Yoga Nidra, he says that "Yoga Nidra Proper is state where one produce delta brainwave frequency and remains conscious". He says that in sleep, coma, and conscious dying that one produce delta brainwaves, and is still conscious. In 1970 Swami Rama demonstrated conscious control over various brainwave frequencies. When he generated theta brainwave frequency, he looked as though he was in a deep sleep and simultaneously he was aware of all the activities that were taking place around him at that time. This is the Yoga Nidra state, a state of conscious sleep. In conscious sleep one has the awareness and ability to record everything that is happening in one's internal and external environment." Yoga Nidra is a state beyond the waking, dreaming and sleep states but between prajna and Turiya". In this state of yoga nidra the capacity of one's mind is expanded and one's intuitive faculty is strengthened. Swami Rama said that the secret "lies in turning inward and exploring one's unconscious mind. The unconscious, controls both the conscious mind and the body. Swami Rama (1970). But, Panda (2011) and Swami Satyananda Saraswati (2012), have similar views of Yoga Nidra they said that in Yoga Nidra, one stays somewhere between the waking (Vaishvanara, jagrat) and the sleeping (taijasa, svapna) states.

Yoga Nidra is expounded in the Mandukhya Upanishad, which describes the four states of consciousness, the waking, the dreaming, the deep sleep and the Turiya states. According to the commentary of the Mandukhya Upanishad by Swami Rama (2007) which contains 12 verses. Verse 3 contains knowledge of the waking state (vaishvanara, jagrat), verse 4 contains knowledge of the dreaming state (taijasa, svapna), verse 5 contains knowledge of the deep sleep state (prajna, sushupti), verse 7 contains knowledge of the state of Turiya (turiya is turiya). The human being is comprised of 5 koshas of layers according to Taittiriya Upanishad. These five koshas are Anamaya kosha, pranomaya kosha, manomaya kosha, vigyanamaya kosha and anandamaya kosha in the very center of anandamaya kosha is the Atman (the self, pure consciousness). This pure consciousness in the very center has four (4) states of consciousness and the practice of yoga nidra begins with this layer that is called Atman (pure consciousness). Swami Rama (2007).

FOUR STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Swami Rama learnt this Vidya or knowledge from several sages many times and he is a master in this practice. It is advised not to teach this knowledge to anyone and everyone. But he has explained yoga nidra in our language so that it is easy for us to understand how the individual soul is related to the cosmic soul and liberation. We should to understand the integration of body, mind and heart. Mandukhya Upanishad teaches one how to know the four states of consciousness, the waking, dreaming, sleeping states and turiya. These are not states of mind, creations or projections of mind. They are called states of consciousness.



There are four primary states of consciousness, the waking state (vaishvanara), dreaming state (Taijasa), the deep sleep state (prajna) and Turiya (turiya). There are three transitional states and they are unmani, ahladini and the third one is Samadhi. Among these seven states of consciousness Yoga Nidra is very near, very close to Samadhi, that is between prajna and Samadhi. Another name for Yoga Nidra is voluntary sleep or sleepless sleep. In this state of consciousness, you are fully conscious, fully aware of everything that is happening inside and outside of you, Swami Rama (2007). However, N.C Panda (2011), says that the ancient seekers like the yogis and rishis used to imitate the Lord of the universe Ananta-Sayana. This process they called yoga nidra, in the process they were able to have communion with God and get direct knowledge from him. It is called Pramana (real knowledge), directly perceived from God or revealed authority. N.C Panda believes that yoga nidra is the state between the waking state and the dreaming states. So during yoga nidra the person is not in the sleep state. In yoga nidra the tendency to fall asleep is normal but one does not sleep because of one's mental resolution, because of one's intention done in the initial part of the practice. Mental resolve or intention is important before getting into Yoga Nidra.

1. THE WAKING OR VAISHVANARA STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Vaishvanara is the state of consciousness which is directed to the external world and interacts with its objects through 7 seven instruments (earth, water, fire, air, space, breath and ego) and 19 nineteen channels. The 19 nineteen channels are the 5 five cognitive senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste), 5 five active senses (speech, grasping, walking, reproduction and elimination), 5 five major pranas (prana, apana, samana, vyana and udana) and the 4 four faculties of the antah karana or inner instrument (manas-mind, ahamkara-ego, biddhi-intellect and chitta-storehouse of memories), giving a total of 19 channels (Swami Rama, 2007). To know how consciousness interacts with the external world and how limited human beings are, when only one aspect of consciousness is experienced, one must understand the functions of these 7 seven instruments and 19 channels. In the waking state all the objects that are seen in the external world are projections of Shakti (the power of consciousness). Only a small portion of the entire mind is used, called the conscious mind and identifies with the physical and pranic layers. In the waking state the mind is aware of all the activities that are taking place in external world. It is dualistic, it is a state of subjective and objective consciousness. Here the ego identifies itself as the conscious subject and the objects just remain around. The ego is important it makes one aware of oneself, but in a limited way. It makes separation from others or from one's surroundings. Information coming from the external environment is filtered by the ego. Due to its narrow focus a number of data may be ignored. Vaishnavanara is constricted because of time, space and causation, a small portion of the entire mind is available for use. And this state alone does not aid in enlightenment. According to Panda, N.C (2011) the soul is comprised of four quarters, the first quarter Vaishvanara lies in the domain of the active waking state (jagrat). In this state one communicates with the external physical objects and experiences the gross universe. It is impossible to understand the waking state of consciousness, without understanding the dreaming state of consciousness. Exploring the dreaming state using a conscious method of meditation, through direct experience, one would realise that the dreaming state is subtler than the waking state. One can expand one's field of knowledge if one knows the art of being a witness. Simultaneously one can witness all the ideas, fancies, impressions, repressions, suppressions arising from the unconscious mind called Chitta. Swami Rama (1982).

THE DREAMING STATE OR TAIJASA

Taijasa is the state consciousness that is turned inward and it is made up of 7 seven instruments and 19 nineteen channels and one experiences the subtle mental impressions (samskaras) arising from one's chitta. In the dreaming state the mind creates objects of the external world, that gives happiness and joy. It tries to satisfy suppressed and unfulfilled desires, because of avidya (ignorance) and desire the dreams fell as though it is real.

The senses are employed by the mind in the waking state to experience and interpret the objects of the external world. But in the dreaming state mind is turned inwards from the senses and the images, impressions and suppressions that one stores in the unconscious mind (the chitta). These arise automatically from the storehouse in dreaming. When one has unfulfilled desires, one dreams to satisfy that desire. The mind then creates an object that will satisfy the unfulfilled desires. This is how nature functions naturally. If a desire is not fulfilled in the waking state, then in the dreaming state it will be fulfilled. In the waking state one has the tendency to suppress one's desire and it keeps piling up then during the dream it arises, it comes forward. Sometimes when one comes out of the dream state one is still not satisfied because one forgets the reality of the dream state and now identifies with the information of the external world obtained via the senses. It is known that almost everyone dreams many times in the night still many of us are not aware of our dreams when awaken. It is as though everyone has 2 two separate personalities, one during the day and another during the night. Yet we have no coordination between them. Swami Rama (1982). Swami Rama says that there are many ways to connect waking and dreaming states directly, by using a conscious method like meditation. Some people can integrate both states by remembering and analyzing their dreams in the waking state and can regulate their self-awareness and regulate themselves accordingly. Dreaming can expand one's field of knowledge, if one knows how to witness the dream. Swami Rama (2007) says by witnessing one can see every thought, fancies, memories, ideas, everything that is arising from the storehouse of the unconscious mind, the Chitta. The center for mastering sleep is the throat center, the Vishuddha chakra (SVB). If one should lie down and focus on the throat center it will not happen because it is a part of Sri Vidya Tradition and one has to be initiated into Sri Vidya.

SVB continues to explain, those who support in Vedanta believe that the ordinary wakeful physical world is a cosmic dream and it is asleep and has forgotten itself. As one develops vairagya, dispassion towards the world, one's mind become stable (yoga sutra of Patanjali 3:15). SVB says all are accurate but incomplete because if one is not given special practices to the devotee or initiate, in an experiential way then it is incomplete. So the first thing one does is learn to observe the dreams, then learns to monitor the dreams, then learns to modulate the dreams, then direct the dreams. Then the unconscious mind is purified and understanding and mastery of sleep is established. And dreams will be eliminated. Hence the observation, awareness and knowledge of the dream state stabilised the mind. Some people believe that sleep is a part of the cosmic sleep of tamas that has befallen on consciousness, knowing that the pure self never sleeps that a small portion of the mind sleeps. The higher mind observes the lower mind sleeping, thus one learns to enter yoga nidra state, conscious sleep. When the mind becomes concentrated and absorbed in the experience of consciousness, the true knowledge of sleep becomes the object of meditation. (SVB). Then the mind becomes stable.

Nidra jnana "knowing the sleep or knowing during sleep" suggests that yoga nidra is the art of conscious rest, the art for the mastery of sleep and the art to develop creativity. Yoga nidra involves highly complex mental practices done in shavasana, it is taught in advanced schools of yoga. It begins with simple progressive relaxations followed by advanced relaxation practices. Swami Veda has given a yoga nidra practice in the cave of the heart. here one will reach delta brainwave state, which is associated with Non-REM sleep or in Coma state. In this state one is fully conscious of all the activities taking place in one's surrounding and can repeat words and sentences softly whispered by others.

2. DEEP SLEEP OR PRAJNA

Prajna or deep sleep is the third state of consciousness, in this state one has no desires and dreams and one experiences the void or deep sleep. In this state of deep sleep all of one's experiences integrate and become one unit. Only bliss is experienced and understanding of this state and those before becomes clearer. This state is a very subtle state subtler than the preceding states of waking and dreaming. In Prajna state one experiences deep sleep or void, it is not a superficial state. One can observe that there is a difference among the various states known. The knowledge of the preceding states is understood clearly. In the state of Prajna one's mind is aware of neither the physical nor the mental activities taking place. Here one's conscious mind is focused inward and away from the external world. Desires and dreams do not exist in this state as well as material objects. One moves progressively from waking to the dreaming state.

The void or deep sleep is described by the yogis as a purely subjective consciousness that is filled with bliss. Every night every one of us enters this state many times and re-vitalise ourselves but we are not able to be consciously aware of being in Prajna and experience its blissful quality. Yogis over time have practiced many methods for expanding their awareness of the Self (consciousness). The purpose of being a human being is to become aware of his being. To become consciously aware of prajna state. It is not as blissful as the Turiya state. Yogis experience this oneness by going into yoga nidra (yogic sleep), simultaneously remaining aware of his surroundings, gaining profound clarity of mind. With a clouded mind clarity and awareness are impossible but in yoga nidra mind is one-pointed, clear and alert. In yoga nidra one is aware of the absolute reality but in normal sleep one is close to the absolute reality but is unaware of it. Swami Rama (1982). Sleep according to the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, sutra 1:5 states that vrittis are five folds and of two kinds. In sutra 1:6 states, that these fivefold vrittis are pramana (valid proof), viparyaya (perverse cognition), vikalpa (imaginary cognition), nidra (sleep) and smritayah (memory). Each one of these vrittis are discussed in sutras 1:7, 1:8, 1:9, 1:10 and 1:11 respectively. In sutra 1:10, "Patanjali explains sleep as a vritti in the mind-field. "abhava-pratyayalambana vrittir nidra", meaning that "sleep is a modification or operation of the mind-field resorting to the cognition principle of absence or negation and to the cause thereof". Bharati Swami Veda (SVB). (2001). Swami Satyananda Saraswati (2012) gives his opinion on sutra 1:10, by discussing the characteristics of sleep. "Abhavapratyayaalambanaa vrtirnidraa", Sleep is a state of mind and its characteristics are, no awareness, conscious and unconsciousness. For if one can understand this vritti called sleep, one will be able to understand the Samadhi state easily. If one can understand sleep one can understand the external world, sleeping conceals (hides) the knowledge of the external world.

However, in sleeping one does not have any desires, there are no dreams or any other perception, all the vrittis in the mind-field become concentrated together and their energy process fuses as one, now one's perception is focused within, it is introverted. Awareness of the external world ceases, nature dominates with inertia, tamas so that the senses can rest. This is referred to as an unconscious state of mind. So when we are asleep there are objects in the mind, it cannot see, hear, feel or taste anything. Everything has become silent. But as we sleep the mind is awake, continues to spins and construct images without being, as an object. Therefore, sleep is not an unconscious state. Tigunait (1992) states that the whole of the mind does not sleep, that is why we have a memory of our sleep when awaken. Sometimes we say, I feel tired, I did not sleep well or I had a great sleep. So far all the commentators like Swami Veda Bharati (year), Swami Hariharananda Aranya (1977), Swami Satyananda Saraswati (2012), are supporting this view, that sleep is a particular type of perception, because one reflects on it. Now in sleep the mental activity that causes the absence of the other vrittis is the Guna of prakriti called Tamas. Here tamas dominates sattva (the essential nature of buddhi), the mind-field and rajasic qualities. When tamas is dominant it overpowers sattva and rajas of buddhi also overpowers chitta and all the senses, because there is no object to reflect on tamas. Tamas overwhelms the mind, it is obscured with darkness and consequently becomes impure. The mind then identifies with tamas and takes the form of tamas as its object. (SVB). Therefore, the experience and vrittis that would arise from it would be like those in the external world (waking state). The mind observes if I am sleeping and enjoys tamasic pleasure. The one who is sleeping is called antah-samjna (inwardly conscious) or the one whose awareness is within. Tigunait (1992). Continues

to expand on sleep by saying that our vitality (energy prana) is drained, when our sleep is disturbed with thought construct. “the quality of sleep depends on the quality of the sleeping mind”. Sleep is a modification in the mind because we reflect on it. When we go to sleep with a disturbed mind, we will wake up with a disturbed mind and this makes us tired, sluggish and drained, instead of being energized.

Swami Veda Bharati (2001) believes that sleep is not a state of unconsciousness because only the surface layer of the mind is over powered by tamas, only that part of the mind sleeps when undergoes alterations of waking, dream and sleep. The rest of the mind continues its normal operations (sutra 111:15). And in one’s lifetime the entire mind never sleeps. If the entire mind sleeps, who will continue to operate the brain, heart, lungs and the body’s systems while we sleep? When we are asleep and we roll to the edge of the bed, who tells us to move away from the edge of the bed because we can fall off? So you see if the entire mind sleeps then who will wake us up? Then we may never wake up.

That part of the mind that experiences the vrittis, experiences tamas which induces sleep and makes the senses inactive. Therefore, abhava-pratyaya-alambana means that the mind identifies with tamas, tamas replaces the objects of the other vrittis then the mind observes that “I am sleeping” and the mind experiences the absence, which is tamasic pleasure. This is why the author (SVB) says “resorting to or being dependent on the cognition of absence and to the cause there of”. The dominance of tamas dulls and stupefy, which cause the occlusion or subjugation of normal cognition that take place in the waking and dream states. Tamas becomes the common characteristic of the body, senses and the mind-field. One may not have the memory of a vague absence of the vritti but one reflects on the quality of one’s sleep. On awakening there three types of memories sattvic, rajasic and tamasic. Sattvic one says “I slept comfortably or my mind is clear”. Rajasic one may say “my mind is wandering, it is unsteady, I am unable to concentrate”. Tamasic one may say “my mind is tired, I feel lazy, I slept heavy”. This shows that sleep is a positive vritti. The quality of sleep is not stated but it is inferred from how we feel upon awaking. Based on this sleep is considered a particular type of cognition. (SVB). The center for the mastery of sleep is in the cave of the heart, the Anahat chakra. There are many caves in the cave of the heart, one has to know which cave to enter otherwise it can be a different cave, the light and sound at each level is different. Also the mind-field whose focus in meditation is witnessing, awareness and knowledge of the dream or sleep states of consciousness becomes established or balanced. (SVB). A yogi’s mind-field attains a state of stability when its focus is on the observation, awareness and knowledge of the dream state or the sleep state for it identifies with the same. Swami Muktibodhananda (2012). gives a practice called kechari mudra and advises that this should be practiced until yogic sleep happens. For the ones who have practiced kechari mudra until he has merge in yoga nidra, there is no such thing as time. Time does not exist (sutra 4:49).

3. TURIYA STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

Turiya is the fourth state of consciousness and it corresponds to Samadhi, absolute silence, no sense, desire, thoughts or feelings can explain Turiya. Here consciousness is undifferentiated. It is not focused inward, outward or both, it is beyond cognition, non-cognition. It cannot be experienced through the senses, by inference or by compassion it is unthinkable, undescribed and incomprehensible. It is Silence, pure consciousness. “the real self”. It can stop everything in a second, it is all blissful and tranquil and it is one without a second. In this state, one is aware and remains above the waking, dreaming and deep sleep states. It is a realization of a reintegration of all the levels of reality. It is unchanging, attribute less, eternal and beyond cause and effect. Understanding with the mind is useless, because mind is limited. Turiya is beyond void and consciousness is its nature. This is the purpose of life it has to be realized. Turiya is a state of equilibrium and can be compared with death. Sleep can be compared with death which is a deep sleep for thousands of hours, days or years, where one leaves the body, breath and conscious mind. After this long sleep, one wakes wearing a new body. It is said that he who is aware of this reality has no fear of dying. The highest joy is everlasting happiness, when we go beyond the Turiya state. Swami Rama (1982). In Turiya one is in deep sleep, Samadhi and experiences oneness with the supreme consciousness and witness all the states of the world differently from consciousness. He knows all the states of mind and consciousness. It is not outward or inward, it is purely

being. It is a perennial state of eternal bliss, here the knower knows and knows that he knows. One is a citizen of Turiya, one's true abode. A citizen of Turiya can travel freely throughout all the states of consciousness, whenever and wherever one wishes. One can travel to the waking state, dreaming state, deep sleep state and return to Turiya state for one's real state is Turiya, one's permanent abode, Swami Rama (2007).

3.1.THE SOUNDLESS SOUND OM

In Turiya consciousness one realises that one's individual atman and the universal Atman are one and the same thing. The yogis say that OM is the connection, the link, the bridge between the individual atman and the universal atman. According to the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali sutra 1:27 "Tasya vachaka Pranavah". Pranava OM is the name of God, Ishvara or Brahman. OM is spelt AUM in the Mandukhya Upanishad, Swami Rama (2007). "A" represents the waking state, "U" represents the dreaming state and "M" represents the deep sleep state.

Having mastered the waking, dreaming and deep sleep states one is ready for the Turiya state. The Benevolent Lord Krishna called Arjuna "Gudakesha" in the Mahabharata. The Lord Krishna says to Arjuna, now you have mastered sleep and understand all its secrets, you are ready for the "Virat Darshan". SVB (2018) continues to explain the meaning of this, having mastered sleep state of consciousness and understand all its secrets means that Arjuna entered conscious sleep, which is mastery of the sleeping state (Yoga Nidra State of Consciousness). One can say to having mastered the sleep state one is qualified to be initiated into Samadhi.

SOME PREPARATORY PRACTICE FOR YOGA NIDRA

Some preparatory exercises for yoga Nidra have been given in this study they are, centering, diaphragmatic breathing, 61 points relaxation, and shithilikarana and yoga Nidra heart center practice. Also given in this study is the Yoga Nidra practice in the heart center, by Swami Veda Bharati (2018).

1. CENTERING

The action of centering at the beginning of the session is to bring one's physical body and mind to an equipoise and balance of the physical body's alignment, position, weight evenly distributed, relaxing the whole body with every exhalation and balancing the energies. As one condition one's mind for the day's session, it is important to come to that centered point both physically and mentally, letting go all the tension, worries and fatigue. The action of centering at the end of the session is to keep one's physical body and mind balance, maintaining that equipoise as they leave and continue with their daily activities. So we begin the session with centering and end with centering. In centering one prepares oneself for the day's session by bringing balance mentally and physically. One's body and mind are harmonized and grounded, from this centered posture one can witness or observe the progression of the various things that occur within.

2. DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

The diaphragm is the primary muscle of breathing. It is a strong, horizontal, dome shape muscle, separating the thoracic cavity from the abdominal cavity. The heart and the lungs are located in the thoracic cavity and the stomach, intestines, reproductive organs, excretion organs are located in the abdominal cavity. Diaphragmatic breathing should again become our natural function. Diaphragmatic breathing uses a minimum amount of effort and gives maximum amount of benefits (Samskrti and Veda, 1985). The quality of the breath is important, it should be deep, according to your capacity, it should be gentle, slow, smooth, with no pauses, no jerks, no sound, the inhalation and exhalation should be the same length and there should not be any pauses between the inhalation and the exhalation and the exhalation and the inhalation. This type of breathing is good for the heart and circulation. It is good for the right vagus nerve and the digestive system as well as the liver. The pause in one's breathing indicates heart disease. The preliminary practice of diaphragmatic breathing precedes all the other pranayama practices and it is well established in makarasana. Keshaviah Prakash (2016).

Some benefits of diaphragmatic breathing are:

Physically, it decreases muscle tension, decreases heart rate, decreases respiration rate, and pulmonary stress. The body becomes calm. It reduces fatigue and the need for more sleep. It decreases cardio vascular risks. The lungs are filled completely with air, increasing the intake of oxygen from the air. It reduces the number of breath per minute. It forces waste product, carbon dioxide and residual air out of the lungs. Residual air may cause fatigue and laziness. The up and down movements of the diaphragm, gives a gentle massage to the organs that surrounds it, this gentle massage increases the circulation in these organs and help it to function more efficiently. Samskrti and Veda (1985). It increases the parasympathetic dominance and relaxation state. It reduces the sympathetic tone. It increases blood and oxygen to the brain and heart. It increases the transfer of oxygen from blood to tissues. It increases the lymphatic circulation and venous flow returning to the heart. It is associated with normal blood pressure and it is an indicator of good health. It lowers blood pressure. Psychologically, it increases the strength of the ego, emotional stability, confidence and self-esteem, physical and intellectual alertness, one's perception over the environment leading to the mind becoming calm. It decreases one's perception of pain and stressors thereby reducing anxiety, phobias, and psychosomatic problems. Therapeutically, diaphragmatic breathing aids in decreasing anxiety and restoring emotional balance, producing a relaxed body and a calm mind.

3. One can learn to breathe diaphragmatically through the following: -

In Makarasana or the crocodile pose, diaphragmatic breathing becomes well establish and it can be used for relaxation. This posture allows you to observe the effects of the movement of the diaphragm muscle as you inhale and exhale. The reverse of makarasana will be discussed here as well. Those subjects who are uncomfortable lying face-prone can practice diaphragmatic breathing, lying in shavasana (corpse pose). While lying in shavasana, gently place a sand bag (specially designed bag filled with sand that covers the area between the navel and the sternum to the sides of the rib cage), on the area between the navel and the sternum. It can weigh approximately 15 to 16 pounds. Ahymisin.org

PROCEDURE FOR 61 POINTS RELAXATION EXERCISE

Begin with some gentle stretching just enough to remove the stiffness in your body. Dim the lights, no sounds, no aromas then lie down on your back on shavasana. As you lie down align your head, neck and trunk, place your feet comfortably apart (10 to 15 inches apart) or shoulder width apart, with your scapular (shoulder blades) comfortably resting on the floor, this will take your arms a little away from the sides of your body. Now cover your body with a shawl or blanket because during the practice the body temperature will drop. (according to the weather). Palms facing upwards, with your fingers slightly curled and relaxed. Observe your whole body and make the posture comfortable. Support the contour of your neck and the back of your head with a small cotton pillow. Distribute the weight of the head and relax it. Now gently close your eyes. Allow the floor to support your body's weight, become conscious of the body's weight where it touches the floor. Totally and completely relax the whole body. Distribute the body's weight and body's energy equally, throughout the whole body. Mentally scan the whole body to ensure that the head, neck and trunk are aligned. Now relax the whole body and enjoy this steady and comfortable posture. Now, your mental awareness to the place between the navel and the sternum as it extends all the way to the spine. Allow the breath to flow slowly, gently, deeply, evenly, smoothly, silently and continuously without any jerks or pauses. Ensure that the length of both inhalations and exhalations are equal or even, it should be done according to your comfortable capacity. Observe the gentle rise and fall of the navel and stomach area with your gentle breathing. Let the breath flow freely in a continuous and rhythmic manner. Now mentally condition the mind to go through the journey of the corpse (shav yatra). Sixty-one points throughout the corpse. Keshaviah Prakash (2016) and Swami Rama (2007) support this type of systematic relaxation.

Method for 61 points relaxation.

You will be using your mental awareness to travel through the 61 different points throughout the body. At each point you will bring your mental awareness there. Use the inhalations to move from one point to the next and use the exhalation to spend time relaxing that point and the area that surrounds it. Now, bring your awareness to each parts of the body that is called and relax that part of the body.

1. relax the center of the forehead, 2. relax the pit of the throat (the vishuddha chakra), 3. relax the right shoulder joint, 4. relax the right elbow joint, 5. relax the right wrist joint, 6. the tip of right thumb, 7. relax the tip of the right index finger, 8. relax the tip of the right third finger, 9. relax the tip of right ring finger, 10. relax the tip of right little finger, 11. relax the right wrist joint, 12. relax the right elbow joint, 13. relax the right shoulder joint, 14. relax the pit of the throat center, 15. relax the left shoulder joint, 16. relax the left elbow joint, 17. relax the left wrist joint, 18. relax the tip of the left thumb, 19. relax the tip of the left index finger, 20. relax the tip of the left third finger, 21. relax the tip of the left ring finger, 22. relax tip of the left little finger, 23. relax the left wrist joint, 24. relax the left elbow joint, 25. relax the left shoulder joint, 26. relax the pit of the throat, 27. relax the heart center, 28. the right breast, 29. Relax the heart center once more, 30. relax the left breast, 31. relax the heart center of consciousness (the Anahata chakra), 31-point relaxation ends here and 61-point continues. 32. Now relax the navel center of consciousness (the Manipura chakra). 33. relax the center of the abdomen, 34. relax the right hip joint, 35. relax the right knee joint, 36. relax the right ankle joint, 37. relax the tip of the right big toe, 38. Relax the tip of the right second toe, 39. relax the tip of the right third toe, 40. relax the tip of the right fourth toe, 41. relax the tip of the right little toe, 42. relax the right ankle joint, 43. relax the right knee joint, 44. relax the right hip joint, 45. relax the center of abdomen, 46. relax the left hip joint, 47. relax the left knee joint, 48. relax the left ankle joint, 49. relax the tip of the left big toe, 50. relax the tip of the left second toe, 51. relax the tip of the left third toe, 52. relax the tip of the left fourth toe, 53. relax the tip of the left little toe, 54. relax the left ankle joint, 55. relax the left knee joint, 56. relax the left hip joint, 57. relax the center of the abdomen, 58. relax the navel center of consciousness (Manipura chakra) , 59. relax the heart center of consciousness (the Anahata chakra), 60. relax the throat center of consciousness (the Vishuddha chakra). 61. relax the center of the forehead.

Now bring your awareness to the area between the navel and the sternum as it extends to the spine. And observe the gentle rise and fall of the navel and stomach area, with your gentle breathing. Now very gently bring both feet together and your arms over your head and give the body a nice gentle stretch down to your toes and up to your fingers. Then release, arch the right knee and turn on your left side, turning on the left side will open the right nostril (the Pingala nadi) and it will induce some activity in your relaxed body. Now very gently bring the body in a comfortable posture. Take a few moments and observe the effects of the practice (reflection). This brings us to the end of the sixty – one Points relaxation exercise. Swami Rama (2004). Path of Fire and Light and Keshaviah Prakash (2016) and Swami Rama (2007) support this type of systematic relaxation.

4. SHITHILIKARANA DEEP RELAXATION

Relaxation is only the means for the preparatory of Yoga Nidra. If one is not relaxed one may not be able to increase one's awareness of the subtler layers of one's being. So the more relaxed one is it is better for increasing one's observation within. in order to let go physical, emotional, and mental tension. Practice the "wave" exercise, in order to intensify relaxation and sensitivity, I feel the breath's caress rising in front of my body from my heels to the top of my head when I inhale, and flow downward from the top of my head to my heels and behind the body as I exhale. I observe the rise and fall of my breathing and waves of sensations that purify me and wash away all my physical and mental tension. Breath after breath, I relish the envelope of sensations and I let go. I allow my body to go into the shava to rest and relax to the rhythm of my breathing, which comes and goes like waves on the tranquil ocean.

Shithilikarana

method: It is a relaxation (method) technique, it is good for insomnia, high blood sugar level, hypertension. The quality of sleep increases and the duration of sleep decreases. If you do this exercise you will not wake up with aches pains and inertia. It is very good for physically and mentally based depression. Should be practice between pranayama and meditation? Practice this exercise for a long time and master it. To begin, Room should be made dark; eyes should be closed. You may use something to cover your eyes. Put a pillow behind your head (not too big and not too small pillow), to prevent the finer gases from the digestive system from coming up and disturb your heart. (Heart patients) gastric problem can disturb the heart, disrupt the heart rhythm and disturb the brain. Lie on the floor in shavasana.

Feet comfortably apart. Scapula comfortably resting on the floor causing the arms to be a little away from the sides of the body. Align the head, neck, and trunk. Take five complete breath (diaphragmatically) 5 complete exhalation, 5 complete inhalations. Exhaling let the abdomen contract allowing the lungs to expel the carbon dioxide. Inhaling let the abdominal muscles gently relax. Now, Exhale from the crown of your head to the toes. Inhale from the toes to the crown of your head. Eliminate all the pauses, jerks, and sounds in the breath flow. Exhale as though you are breathing down to the toes relaxing. As you exhale you are emptying yourself and expelling all your toxins, fatigue, strain and stress. On inhaling, inhale the energy from the atmosphere. Inhale from the toes up through the ankles, knees, hip joints and the spinal column, coming back to the crown of the head. **DO NOT RETAIN THE BREATH**, Exhale back to the toes (10 times). The exhale and inhale from your ankles, energising your knees, hip joints, spinal column and the crown of your head. (10 times). Then exhale through the spinal column to your knees, exhale and inhale from your knees and inhale from your knees to the crown of your head, through your spinal column (10 times). Exhale to your perineum. At each center of concentration from the perineum upward, exhale and inhale five times (5). Reducing the long pause between the inhalation and exhalation. Let the breath flow smooth and serene. Inhale from the perineum to the crown of the head. (5 times). Exhale to your navel center of consciousness. Inhale from heart to the crown of your head.

Exhale to your throat center of consciousness. Inhale from the throat center to the crown of your head. Exhale to the bridge between the two nostril and inhale to the crown of your head. The breath should become very fine and short. At this point in the exercise, the motion of your lungs will have a shorter rhythm. Inhale from between the two nostril to the crown of your head (5 times). Then let your consciousness and mind attend to the inhalation and exhalation process between the nostril and the space between the two eyebrows. (do this at least 10 times). Resulting in low pulse rate and heart rate – heart muscle is also to rest. The involuntary system also rests. The pumping station that pumps blood to your brain shows down. Again, breathe five times as though you are breathing from the crown of your head to the center of the nostrils. Exhale to your throat, the inhale from your throat to the crown of your head. (5 times). Exhale to the space between the two breast (heart center). Inhale back to the crown. Exhale from your manipura chakra and inhale back to the crown. Exhale from your perineum, inhale back to the crown. In this practice the second chakra is bypassed. Exhale and inhale (5 times) to your perineum and back, through the spinal column. Exhale to the knee joints (10 times) and inhale to the crown of your head. Exhale to your ankles (10 times) and inhale from your ankles to the crown of your head. Exhale to your toes (10 times) and inhale from the toes to the crown of your head. Now, very gently get up (sit into a comfortable position).

5. YOGA NIDRA IN THE HEART CENTER, PRACTICE BY (SVB) 2018

Lie in shavasana, relax the whole body, from head to toes. As you relax, the breath relaxes. Bring your awareness to your breathing, after being completely relaxed. Let the breath flow slowly, gently, smoothly and silently. Observe the gentle rise of the navel and stomach area, how it relaxes gently as you inhale and shrinks on the exhalation. Practice without mantra and no thought, only feel the flow of the breath. Now inhale as though you are inhaling from the crown of the head, exhaling from the navel. Only feel the flow as you exhale from the navel center to the crown inhaling. Inhale from the crown, exhaling from the heart center. Inhale from the crown, exhale from the throat center. Inhale from the crown, exhale from the center between the eyebrows.

Inhaling from the crown, exhaling from the throat center. Inhale from the crown, exhale from the heart center. Now, feel though you are inhaling and exhaling from the heart center. Let the breath flow slowly, gently, smoothly and silently. When you inhale go into a dark cave, let the breath flow as though it is flowing from the heart center. Feel as though the cave is breathing, your main focus is in being in the cave. Consciousness is in the darkness of the cave. Total and absolute rest, no thoughts, no mantra, only a feeling of being in the cave. Pay obeisance to the consciousness in the cave and gently come out of the cave. Bring your awareness to your breathing. Gently open your eyes, SVB (2018).

SOME HEALTH BENEFITS OF YOGA NIDRA

According to World Health Organisation (WHO) 1946, “health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”, Constitution of the World Health Organisation. Yoga Nidra is one of the finest way to self-realisation, a state of Samadhi. It is an ancient technique of healing used by the masters and psychologists today. A few minutes of Yoga Nidra, can give one more than 6 hours of unconscious sleep, 45 minutes feel like 3 hours of regular sleep. It can help one to solve problems and where answers are not known it can give those answers. One inner recorder becomes operative and one can records everything that is happening around. One can learn many languages in Yoga Nidra. One can increase one’s memory and expand the mind consciousness and one can have conscious sleep. One can have control of the modifications of the mind. One can control both voluntary and involuntary nervous systems in the body. One obtains deep rest, physically, mentally and relaxation. Yoga Nidra leads to less stress, more rest and better health. It improves anxiety, depression, psychological problems, peptic ulcer, asthma, menstrual problems and overall well-being. It decreases blood pressure, cholesterol, improves blood glucose fluctuations and symptoms associated with diabetes. It is a form of meditation, it helps one to activate the relaxation response, improve the functioning of the endocrine system and the nervous system. It repairs damaged cells in the body. It develops power, helps to control anger, violence, greed, jealousy and more. Yoga Nidra is practiced to overcome sloth and inertia. It is a re-vitalising exercise, it gives total rest to the mind, brain, nervous system, senses, the entire body and more...

CONCLUSION

The quality of rest received through yoga nidra is different from ordinary sleep, ordinary sleep gives partial rest. The dimensions of life that are being explored during the waking, dreaming and sleeping can be explored through yoga nidra by attaining the fourth state of consciousness called Turiya. One learns to witness one’s body by voluntarily withdrawing one’s conscious mind. One learns how to train one’s will-power by strengthen his determination. Then one learns to voluntarily slide into the deep sleep state and come back according to his will. With the mastery of yoga nidra one can go beyond all the levels of the unconscious state. In yoga nidra tension, stress and anxiety are reduced. It releases hormones that relax and calm the body. It relieves the body from anxiety and slows the nervous system and restoring emotional balance. Yoga Nidra balances psychosomatic diseases, physiological problems and increase spiritual awareness. The yoga tradition origins are in India; it is one of the most ancient traditions of India. Yoga is revered and respected as a spiritual tradition, which offers a unique way of life, a holistic way of life, to develop the human species. Yoga also offers an array of practices that can increase and develop the human mind and awareness. It can bring one to the highest and most sacred level of one’s being (the self). Yoga Nidra can be used to attain the highest state of consciousness. Other animals existing on the earth does not have this profound ability, to consciously move from one state to another. One is fortunate to be born as human being. Swami Veda Bharati (2018). One can progress to the next elevation.

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