

## YOGA NIDRA – AN EFFICIENT ADJUVANT FOR GERIATRIC HEALTH CARE

Dr. Meenakshi Pathak S.N<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Awadhesh Pandey<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Vijay Kumar<sup>3</sup>, Dr. Neeraj Kumar Joshi<sup>4</sup>, Dr. Neeru Nathani<sup>5\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant professor, Department of Prasuti Tantra ,Patanjali Bharteeya Ayurvedigyan Avem Anusandhan Sansthan, Haridwar, Uttrakhand,

<sup>2</sup>PhD Scholar, Department of Shalya Tantra, Faculty of Ayurveda, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Swasthavritta, Patanjali Bharteeya Ayurvedigyan Avem Anusandhan Sansthan, Haridwar, Uttrakhand,

<sup>4</sup>Assistant Professor, Dept. of Swasthavritta, Ch. Brahm Prakash Ayurveda Charak Sansthan, New Delhi.

<sup>5</sup>Assistant Professor, Dept. of Swasthavritta and Yoga, Faculty of Ayurveda, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

Article Received on  
04 Dec 2014,

Revised on 24 Dec 2014,  
Accepted on 14 Jan 2015

### \*Correspondence for Author

**Dr. Neeru Nathani**

Assistant Professor, Dept.  
of Swasthavritta and  
Yoga, Faculty of  
Ayurveda, Institute of  
Medical Sciences,  
Banaras Hindu  
University, Varanasi.

### ABSTRACT

Old age is a stage of life where people may confront a variety of difficulties, including loss of confidence, lowered self-esteem, depression, unmet dependency needs, loneliness, boredom and fear of future. The elderly people habitually transfer their psychological difficulties into physical symptoms and complaints associated with their advancing age. This may lead to rapid physical and mental deterioration in them. These people could instantly quiet their mind, unleash a natural healing energy within, see beauty and grace in all life. This can be easily and effortlessly experienced through amazing energy of Yoga Nidra. Yoga Nidra is a state of mind between wakefulness and dream, in which person sleeps with a trace of awareness. The eight steps of Yoga Nidra (i.e preparation, relaxation, resolve, rotation of consciousness, breathing, image visualization,

resolve, finish) may be applied as an adjuvant to relieve accumulated tensions, stress resistance and psychosomatic diseases, and increases the overall efficiency of geriatric population.

**KEYWORDS:** Geriatric, Relaxation, Stress, Yoga Nidra.

## INTRODUCTION

The old age is an integral part of human life. It is the evening of life. It is ironical that however undesirable the old age, it is bound to come in life. A man is compelled to go through the pains and pleasures of this age like the other phases of life before making an exit from this mortal world. Thinking of old age, visions of loneliness and neglect emerge in mind. The picture becomes worse with the failing health and illness. A sense of despair glooms over all his pleasant feelings. Though it is true that no stage of life has its ever smooth sailing and every stage has its attendant problems, the difficulties of old age are insurmountable as the physical strength and mental capability required to cope up with the adverse situations of life are immensely reduced. The situation becomes more difficult when one finds him left alone without anyone to attend.

States of anxiety, depression, frustration and anger are accompanied with a variety of physical responses including palpitations, excessive sweating, diarrhoea, indigestion, headache and weakness. These responses are the outcome of a complex process by which the physiological systems of the body adapt to stress. This process has been termed 'the stress response' as per Dr. Hans Selye of Canada. It includes states of accelerated heart rate and increase in blood pressure, skeletal muscle tension and cortisone and noradrenalin levels in the blood.

The geriatric population could calm down their mind, unleash the natural healing energy within to see beauty and grace in all life. This can be easily and effortlessly experienced through amazing energy of Yoga Nidra. Yoga Nidra means sleep with a trace of awareness. It is a state of mind between wakefulness and dream. It cultivates strength, stability, flexibility, responsibility, trust and a sense of independence.<sup>[1]</sup> The eight steps of Yoga Nidra could be applied as preventive measure to relieve accumulated tensions, stress resistance and psychosomatic diseases, and to increase the overall efficiency of geriatric population. People should be trained initially under direct supervision of an expert. Yoga Nidra is now prescribed by doctors in many countries both as preventive and curative therapy in stress related diseases.

## STEPS OF YOGA NIDRA<sup>[2, 3]</sup>

- **Preparation**

Lie down your back on the floor and adopt the pose called Shavasana. In this position the body should be straight from head to toe, the legs slightly apart and the arms a little away

from the body, with the palms of the hands turned upwards. Adjust everything, your body position and clothes, until you are completely comfortable. During Yoga Nidra there should be no physical movements.

It is not necessary to make movements or deliberately relax your muscle, simply develop the feeling of relaxation. Make a resolution to yourself now that “I will not sleep, I will remain awake throughout the practice”.

- **Relaxation**

Now bring about a feeling of inner relaxation in the whole body. Concentrate on the body and become aware of the importance of complete stillness.

- **Resolve**

At this moment you should make your resolve. The resolve will have to be very simple, try to discover one naturally. You must develop a resolve to say at this time. (pause). It should be a short, positive statement in simple language. A resolve can be “I will remain healthy throughout my life”, stated 3 times with awareness, feeling and emphasis. The resolve you make during Yoga Nidra is bound to come true in your life.

- **Rotation of consciousness**

We now begin rotation of consciousness, rotation of awareness by taking a trip through the different parts of the body. As quickly as possible, the awareness is to go from one part to another. Keep yourself alert but do not concentrate too intensely.

- **Breathing**

Become aware of your breath. Feel the flow of your breath in and out of your lungs. Do not try to change the rhythm. Now concentrate your awareness on the movement of your navel area – your navel is rising and falling slightly with every breath. Go on practicing but be sure that you are aware. Now start counting your breaths backwards from 27 to 1. Firstly concentrate on navel region with counting, then on chest movements and then on throat movements.

- **Image visualization**

Stop your counting and leave your breathing... we now come to visualization. A number of different things will be named and you should try to develop a vision of them on all levels... feeling, awareness, emotion, imagination as best you can.

- **Resolve**

Now is the time to repeat your resolve. Repeat the same resolve that you made at the beginning of the practice, do not change. Repeat the resolve 3 times with full awareness and feeling.

- **Finish**

Relax all efforts, draw your mind outside and become aware of your breathing. Become aware of the natural breath. Become aware of the floor, and the position and your body lying on the floor. Visualize the room around you. Lie quietly for some time and keep your eyes closed. When you are sure that you are wide awake, sit up slowly and open your eyes.

### **STRESS AND YOGA NIDRA**

Dr. K. N. Udupa of Banaras Hindu University suggested that stress-related disorders evolve gradually through four recognizable stages. Initially, psychological changes such as anxiety, irritability and insomnia arise due to over stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system. In the second stage, distinct physical symptoms such as high blood pressure, elevated heart rate or increased intestinal motility appear. In the third stage, a more profound physical and/or biochemical imbalance sets in, and evidence of malfunctioning organs manifests clinically. Finally, detectable and often irreversible lesions appear, with severe symptoms requiring surgical or long term pharmacological management.<sup>[4]</sup>

Yoga Nidra can act both as preventive and curative therapy in the first three stages of stress-related disease. Yoga Nidra, which is subjectively oriented and internally directed, comes as a great boon to them, providing both a calming retreat and an effective coping device.<sup>[5]</sup>

### **PROBABLE MODE OF ACTION**

The Yoga Nidra state seems to reflect an integrated response by the hypothalamus, resulting in decreased sympathetic (excitatory) nervous activity and increased parasympathetic activity (relaxatory). This “Relaxation Response” can be thought of as the inverse counterpart of the so called “fight or flight” response. This well known State of sympathetic hyper-activation of the Hypothalamus and endocrine network prepares the body for immediate protective action in response to imminent danger. It is a revolutionary remnant of man’s early tribal life when his physical existence was under constant threat. The level of relaxation attained in Yoga Nidra serves to lessen the harmful effect of this “fight or flight” response.

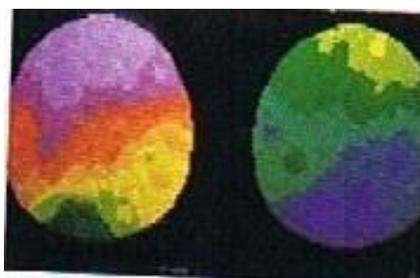
Yoga Nidra appears to work by changing the neuro-hormonal reactivity to stress, creating somatic conditions essentially opposite to those prompted by sympathetic over activity. During Yoga Nidra the organ and system of the body attains deep physiological rest and the body's powerful, inherent regenerative mechanism are set in motion. As a result, body tissues are physiologically braced against stress, becoming less susceptible to its harmful influence. The profound experience of muscular, mental, and emotional relaxation attainable in Yoga Nidra enables a balance of psychic and vital energies within psychic channels (nadis) of the energy frame work underlying the physical body. Free flow of these energies forms the basis of optimal physical and mental health.

### EFFECTS OF YOGA NIDRA

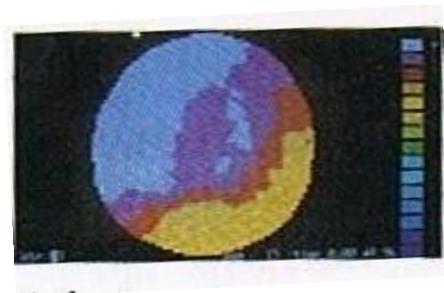
Studies have shown that regular practice of Yoga Nidra induces a significant decrease in both systolic and diastolic blood pressure in hypertensive patients, and also alters the circulating level of stress hormones, adrenaline and cortisol, secreted by adrenal gland.

Yoga Nidra means sleep after throwing off the burden. During the practice of Yoga nidra, some people may fall asleep. This is the beginning of sleep induction in brain so Yoga Nidra helps in achieving the deep relaxation phase. The effect of Yoga Nidra as assessed in EEG shows that in this, the subject goes in super-conscious state of mind having alpha brain waves prominence.

In a study carried out in Jan. 1988 at Charing Cross Medical School, London, UK, data was taken by means of Brain Electrical Activity Mapping (BEAM) instrument.<sup>[6]</sup>



The image on the left shows the map of a person at work and facing problems of management. Characteristically, all the hyperactive colours pink, red, green, yellow have appeared in the map. Here EEG shows dominance of beta waves. The image on the right side shows the averages of a person at home relaxing with his family. The map shows a relatively relaxed state with appearance of green and blue colours.<sup>[7]</sup>



This shows averages of an angry man. The map shows the optimum hyperactivity of brain cells (burst of beta waves).



This image shows initial phase of Yoga Nidra when relaxation begins. During Yoga Nidra the dual representation of both hemispheres was average during the first period, after the eyes closed. Activity of varying intensities was seen in the purple, red, yellow and green colours covering the frontal lobes. Beta activity was seen in the mid-portion of the brain with alpha restricted to darkish blue region in occipital areas.



This picture shows synchronization of brain waves representing progressive relaxation.



This shows the deep relaxation phase. During the practice of Yoga Nidra, some people may fall asleep. This is the beginning of sleep induction in brain. The EEG pattern and maps now clearly show the appearance of theta and delta waves dominance.

The integration of the basics of the Yogic lifestyle in our lives is perhaps more important now as the pace and complexity of life today leave us vulnerable to many stresses.<sup>[8]</sup> Yogic lifestyle is spreading rapidly and gaining popularity, with more and more people recognizing the need and importance of a healthier lifestyle.<sup>[9]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Yoga Nidra helps in achieving the deep relaxation. It can be utilized to deal with anticipated stress and stress related problems of geriatric population. During Yoga Nidra the organs and systems of the body attain deep physiological rest and the body's powerful, inherent regenerative mechanism sets in motion. As a result, body tissues are physiologically braced against stress, becoming less susceptible to its harmful influence. Yoga Nidra can play an effective adjuvant role in the field of geriatric health care, where intractable pain, loss of motivation and psychological depression pose major barriers in conventional treatment.

## REFERENCES

1. Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Yoga Nidra. Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India, Page 17.
2. Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Yoga Nidra. Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India, Page 81-85.
3. Pathak Meenakshi S N, Prof. Manjari Dwivedi, Dr. Neeru Nathani, Effect of Mahabala and Yogic Practices on Pregnancy and its outcome, MD research work, BHU, Dec. 2010.
4. K.N. Udupa, Stress and its management by Yoga. Motilal Banarasidas Publication Pvt. Ltd. Delhi, 1985.
5. Swami Shankardev Saraswati, Yoga Nidra as therapy.
6. Charing Cross Medical School, London, UK. Jan 1988.
7. Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Yoga Nidra. Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India, Page 272-275.
8. Krishna Raman, A matter of Health. East West Books (Madras) Pvt. Ltd., Chennai, 1998.
9. Dr. Chandra Patel, The complete guide to Stress Management. Mac Donald and Co. Ltd., London 1989.
10. Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha. Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India.
11. Dr. Bimal Chhajer, A Complete Guide to Managing Stress. New Age Books, Chapter 7, First Edition: New Delhi, 2004.