

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGES AS RELATED TO YOGA NIDRA

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Abstract. The present study *aims* at finding out the effect of *Yoga nidra* on regression and guilt on college going students. The study conducted at the Yoga Arogya Polyclinic of Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya. Practice time was 30 minutes the duration was 6 months. 80 students were taken from P.G. yoga classes for observing the effect as well as 30 was in control group. The *result* shows a significant change as practice of *Yoga nidra* positively decreases the regression and guilt levels of both the male and female subjects.

Keywords: *Yoga nidra*, regression, guilt.

Mental faculties are most precious bequests of the Almighty bestowed upon us. However, the belief that we can't expand or elevate the God-gifted mental potentials we are born with – is not correct. The difference in people's intellectual and other mental abilities is only that of the degree of arousal and activation of the grand powers indwelling in the human self. This difference is not due to the structure of the brain, inheritance or destiny, etc. Rather, it is a reflection of the extent of dormancy or activation of its unlimited potentials.

From early childhood, we tend to repress many wishes, desires and conflicts. Whenever a situation threatens the ego, the defense mechanisms are called upon and the conflicting situation is repressed or suppressed to the unconscious. All the traumatic experiences, unfulfilled desires and threatening situations are suppressed by the ego to the subconscious and unconscious realms of the mind. In the deeper realms of

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the mind this conflicting and frustrating matter does not die but remains alive and later manifests in the form of various pathological symptoms. The repressed desires, wishes and situations remain in the form of symbols in the unconscious mind.

During the practice of *Yoga nidra*, the instructor asks the practitioner to visualize certain symbols and images with a witnessing attitude. If the symbols and images are selected properly, then they are in accordance with the symbols of the unconscious. An abstract association is created between the guided imagery and the associated repressed experiences of the unconscious. For example, if the teacher instructs the practitioner to visualize a dog, this may bring out a past traumatic childhood experience in which the practitioner was bitten by a dog. The practitioner observes this associated painful experience with a witnessing attitude, which helps in cutting off the personal identification with the experience. When the personal identification ceases to be cut off, the painful experience associated with the dog is repressed again. In this way, the practice of visualization brings the unconscious repressed desires, experiences, conflicts and frustrations to the conscious level and then cuts off the personal identification with those experiences. As a result, the unconscious is cleared up.

Due to excessive activity on the mental plane, the mind always remains in a state of arousal, which results in mental tension. Throughout life the mind is fed with negative data. In the practice of *Yoga nidra*, especially in rotation of consciousness and breath awareness, the mind is relaxed, thereby releasing the mental tension. In this way, through the regular and sincere practice of *Yoga nidra*, tension at the physical, emotional and mental levels can be minimized.

Regression is a term coined by Galton for the tendency of the quantitative traits of offspring to be closer to the population mean than are their parents' traits. It arises from a combination of factors - dominance, gene interactions, and environmental influences on traits. It is the return to earlier or younger behavior and thinking.

Guilt is that quality which renders criminal and liable to punishment; or it is that disposition to violate the law, which has manifested itself by some act already done. The opposite of innocence. It is remorse caused by feeling responsible for some offence.

The point at which muscle cells are no longer working efficiently; it can be due to depletion of the body's glucose stores, reversible with oral glucose supplements, but also glucose independent, related to changes in the muscle cell itself.

During the practice of *Yoga nidra* the consciousness is at different levels. Sometimes it is very close to the senses and in others, it is at a very remote distance. When the consciousness is at a remote distance, it is only possible to understand through the auditory channels. During *Yoga nidra* the consciousness is suspended for a few moments periodically, which means that it alternates between the subconscious and unconscious states.

For the practice of *Yoga nidra* one should lie flat on his back and follow the spoken instruction of *yoga* instructor. It is convenient to use *Yoga nidra* tape. During the practice there should be no movement by the practitioner, as well as he should try to remain awake and aware of every given instruction.

In *Yoga nidra*, it is not necessary to concentrate. One should just keep the mind moving from point to point and be aware of every experience. *Yoga nidra* means sleep with a trace of awareness.

Various studies have been done in different part of world for observing the effect of *Yoga nidra*. M. J. Cooper, (1979): in an important study at the University of Tel Aviv (Israel) says that *Yoga nidra* significantly lowered levels of serum cholesterol in cardiac patients.

Erskine-Milliss, J. & Schonell, M., (1981) states that the future role of *Yoga nidra* in coronary care and management regimes appears to be the major one. The value of the practice of yogic relaxation in prevention of cardiovascular disease has been fairly well recognized and accepted.

In the other study conducted at the Stanford University school of Medicine (U.S.A.) W. S. Agras demonstrates that the drop in blood pressure induced by daily *Yoga nidra* practice has a far reaching effect, extending throughout the day, and is not merely a transient effect coincident with the practice session.

Another controlled study, which was conducted at the Langley Porter Neuropsychiatry Institute in California, Lekh Raj Bali (1979) found that a reduction in blood pressure and anxiety levels in hypertensive patients continued for 12 months after *Yoga nidra* training.

Sw. Mangalteertham (1998) proved through a series of studies done at Cherring Cross Medical School in London that it was a technique in which one could alter the states of consciousness from beta to alpha and then to delta. Therefore, subject enjoys the different state of consciousness, knowingly. It is a *pratyahara* but also opens the door for meditation.

Kumar Kamakhya (2004) finds after a six months study on the higher class students that practice of *Yoga nidra* reduces stress and anxiety as well as improves the General Well Being.

Kumar Kamakhya (2005) observed in another study that *Yoga nidra* affects positively on blood pressure and other psychological co-relates in hypertensive patients.

Kumar Kamakhya (2006) states after a six months study that there is a significant change on the Alpha E.E.G. and G.S.R. level of the subjects. This indicates the improvement of physical and mental health as a result of practicing *Yoga nidra*.

Kumar Kamakhya (2007) find that *Yoga nidra* can be considered as a highly effective practice for the practitioner as *Yoga nidra* significantly increases the level of hemoglobin of the students at higher classes and there is also an increase in TLC level. Thus *Yoga nidra* is a complete relaxation process of the body and mind, it increases the immunity of a person, and hence the change in the Hemoglobin and TLC are positive. It can be stated that sleep is good for us but present research shows that practicing *Yoga nidra* can not only help us fight off infection but lower stress level as well.

Pandya Pranav and Kumar Kamakhya (2007) state that practice of *Yoga nidra* is a tool of total relaxation. They observed a significant change in pulse rate, respiration rate, blood pressure and G S R to the subjects, after a six months study. They further state that *Yoga nidra* is capable of improving the immunity of the practitioner.

Kumar Kamakhya (2008) observed a significant change in his study in the practice group; result showed that *Yoga nidra* positively decreased the stress level of the male and female subjects. Several other studies prove *Yoga nidra* equally influences anxiety level significantly in both male and female subjects.

The above studies show that researchers are keen to know the effect of *Yoga nidra* in various directions; thus it is the right time to go deep into the search of the impact of *Yoga nidra* having the following aims and objectives.

Objective:

1. To assess the effect of *Yoga nidra* on regression level of the subjects.
2. To assess the effect of *Yoga nidra* on guilt level of the subjects.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

80 students (40 males, 40 females) of 20-30 years from Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya of P.G. yoga classes selected for the practice of *Yoga nidra* were assigned to the experimental group. A group of 30 students (15 males, 15 females) of same age group and same class was also considered as a control group.

Both the experimental and control groups were from P.G. Yoga classes; so all had been practicing the set of *Asanas*, *Pranayamas* and *Shatkarmas* regularly (except Sunday and holidays). For the experimental group it was the only difference that they were practicing *Yoga nidra* for half an hour daily (except Sunday and holidays) additionally. Before starting the practice of *Yoga nidra* both the groups took a few psychological tests.

Practice of *Yoga nidra* in this study is the simplest method of relaxation which is being practiced in the flat lying position of *shavasana* and follows the spoken instruction of Yoga-instructor. The practice includes the resolve, body part awareness, breath awareness and visualization.

TOOLS

For the measurement of regression and guilt levels Eight State Questionnaire, developed by Barton, Cattell and Curran in 1973 and adopted by S. D. Kapoor; published and reprinted in India by the Psycho Centre New Delhi, had been applied.

RESULTS

After six months the same test again was applied and the data obtained were as shown below.

Table 1. *The Effect of Yoga nidra on Regression Level of the Male Participants*

	Mean	SD	T value	Significance level
Experimental Group	4.95	1.26	2.48	0.01
Control Group	5.67	1.23		

Table 1 shows that there is a significant change at 0.01 significant level in the regression of the male subjects of experimental and control group.

Table 2. *The Effect of Yoga nidra on Regression Level of the Female Participants*

	Mean	SD	T value	Significance level
Experimental Group	4.62	1.04	2.74	0.01
Control Group	5.80	1.86		

Table 2 shows that there is a significant change at 0.01 significant level in the regression of the female subjects of experimental and control group.

Table 3 shows that there is a significant change at 0.01 significant level in the guilt of the male subjects of experimental and control group.

Table 3. *The Effect of Yoga nidra on Guilt Level of the Male Participants*

	Mean	SD	T value	Significance level
Experimental Group	4.56	1.12	3.75	0.01
Control Group	5.33	2.13		

Table 4. *The Effect of Yoga nidra on Guilt Level of the Female Participants*

	Mean	SD	T value	Significance level
Experimental Group	4.49	1.50	4.62	0.01
Control Group	5.60	1.35		

Table 4 shows that there is a significant change at 0.01 significant level in the guilt of the female subject of experimental and control group.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The brain is the linking mediator between the mind, body and emotions. In *Yoga nidra* intensifying the awareness of the body stimulates the brain. When the awareness is rotated on the different body parts, it not only induces physical relaxation but also clears the nerve pathways to the brain. Each of the body parts has an existing centre in the cerebral white matter, named by researchers as ‘motor homunculus’ or ‘little man’. The sequence of rotation of awareness in *Yoga nidra* is in accordance with the map in the cerebral white matter of the brain. When the awareness is rotated in the same sequence again and again, it induces a flow of pranic energy within the neuronal circuit of the motor homunculus of the brain. This pranic flow brings in a subjective experience of relaxation in the brain.

In one of the stages of *Yoga nidra* a pair of opposite feelings or sensations is intensified again and again. This continuous invocation of

opposite feelings or sensations is in accordance with the electrophysiological operating principles of the brain. When a neuron fires, it produces a nerve impulse which is relayed and registered in the brain. But if the same neuron keeps on firing again and again, then its relayed impulse is no longer registered by the brain. Researchers have called this 'phenomenon habituation'. When the brain becomes accustomed to the stimulus, then gradually it becomes relaxed. The state where the brain is completely relaxed results in mental relaxation. Sannyasi Mangalteertham (1998) concluded on the basis of his study that the practice of *Yoga nidra* brings alpha dominance in the brain, which is characterized by mental relaxation.

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PSICHOLOGINIAI POKYČIAI, SUSIJĘ SU YOGA NIDRA UŽSIĖMIMAIS

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Santrauka. Tyrimo tikslas. Tyrimu siekiama įvertinti *Yoga nidra* užsiėmimų poveikį studentų patiriamoms regresijos ir kaltės jausmams. **Metodika.** Tyrimas atliktas *Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya Yoga Arogya* poliklinikoje. Eksperimentinę tiriamųjų grupę sudarė 80 studentų, kurie 6 mėnesius lankė reguliarius klasikinės jogos užsiėmimus ir papildomai atlikdavo 30 min. *Yoga nidra* praktikas. Kontrolinę grupę sudarė 30 studentų, kurie tyrimo laikotarpiu lankė tik klasikinius jogos užsiėmimus. **Rezultatai ir išvados.** Tyrimo rezultatai atkleidė reikšmingą teigiamą *Yoga nidra* poveikį psichologiniam studentų funkcionavimui. Tiek vyrų, tiek moterų, papildomai praktikavusių *Yoga nidra* grupėse, regresijos ir patiriamos kaltės jausmų vertinimai reikšmingai sumažėjo.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: *Yoga nidra*, regresija, kaltė.

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