

A study on the impact on stress and anxiety through *Yoga nidra*

Kamakhya Kumar

Department of Human Consciousness & Yogic Science, Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya Shantikunj, Haridwar 249411, Uttarakhand

E-mail: kamakhya_kumar@rediffmail.com

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The study aims at finding out the effect of *Yoga nidra* on stress and anxiety on college going students. The study conducted at the *Yoga* clinic of Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya. Practice time was 30 min the duration was 6 months. 80 students were taken from PG *Yoga* classes for observing the effect as well as 30 was in control group. The result shows a significant change in the practice group as *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.

Keywords: *Yoga nidra*, Stress, Anxiety

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Stress (roughly the opposite of relaxation) is a medical term for a wide range of strong external stimuli, both physiological and psychological, which can cause a physiological response called the general adaptation syndrome¹. It can be understood as tension (psychology) a state of mental or emotional strain or suspense. Today, life style such as cigarette smoking, habitual hostility, and suspiciousness towards others, a diet high in fat and low in fiber, and a sedentary way of life leads to many psychological problems and psychosomatic problems. Stress and anxiety have become major killers in our developed world, particularly the youth, the college going students are loosing their confidence and getting the academic stress. A disturbing trend in college student health is reported the increase in student stress nationwide. Good mental health is one of the greatest resources for vitality, creativity and wealth, while poor health in contrast significantly drains. When stress is perceived negatively or becomes excessive, students experience physical and psychological impairment. Hence, it is necessary for the students of higher education to induce a complete relaxation technique, through which they can prevent themselves from a well known disorder.

Yoga nidra is probably best-known technique to induce complete physical mental and emotional relaxation. *Yoga nidra* is a state of consciousness, which is, neither sleep nor awaken, neither is it concentration nor hypnotism. It can be defined, as an altered state of consciousness. According to *Maharshi*

Markandey Yoga nidra is the *state* of deep relaxation as *Lord Vishnu* Himself uses this marvelous technique.

Utpanneti Tada Loke Sanityapybhidhiyate/

Yoganidram Yada Vishnurjagatyekarnavikrite//

Maharshi Markandey according to his visualizations states in his text, *Markandey Purana* that at the end of *Kalpa* when the entire universe was in a deep relaxation *Lord Vishnu* was lying on the bed of serpent in the state of *yoga nidra*.

Drastwa Tavsarau Chograu prasuptam Cha Janardanam/

Tustav Yoganidram Tamekagrahridyasthitih//

Meaning: When *Lord Brahma* observed him in the state of *yoga nidra* to make him awake He started praying the *lordess Yoga nidra* which lives in the eye of *Lord Vishnu*².

The author of *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, great yogi *Swatmarama*, classifies *Yoga nidra* as the state of *turiya*; means the all expansive and encompassing 'fourth dimension', in which *Shakti* neither contracts nor expands, but is in union with *Shiva* or supreme consciousness³.

Abhyaset Khecharim Tavadyavat Syadyoganidritah/ Sampraptyoganidrasya Kalo Nasti Kadachana//

Meaning: *Khechari* should be practiced until *yogic* sleep occurs. For one, who has attained *yogic* sleep, time become non-existent. Here, the term *yoga nidra* has used as the state of *Samadhi*. *Yogic* sleep or *yoga nidra* is the state in which conscious mind subsides but awareness remains⁴.

Yoga nidra is simplified version of *Tantric Kriyas*, designed by Swami Satyananda, Bihar School of *Yoga*, Munger in present form⁵. *Yoga nidra* is probably best known technique to induce complete physical, mental and emotional relaxation. This was proved through a series of study done at Cherring Cross Medical School London that it is a technique in which one can 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 meditation⁶. *Yoga nidra* also brings simultaneous relaxation by inducing alpha brainwave in both hemispheres of brain and alter the states of consciousness. It has been further proven that it is the safest, weakest and surest methods to bring about alter state of consciousness in human beings. Therefore, it is panacea or *Ram ban* for the management of psychosomatic illness. Recognizing the problem is half the battle. Without knowing what stress is, and how it may strain our health, we will not be able to recognise it. Awareness is of primary importance of we are to learn to manage stress effectively. Our body is often the first place to reveal signs of a problem. Unfortunately, our upbringing often trains us to be stoic and in our anxiety not to appear weak, we often deny signs of stress⁷. 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* as in an important study it has been observed that *Yoga nidra* significantly lowered levels of serum cholesterol in cardiac patients⁸. One of the study states that, the future role of *Yoga nidra* in coronary care and management regimes appears to be a major one. The value of the practice of yogic relaxation in prevention of cardiovascular disease has been fairly well recognised and accepted⁹. Another study 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 session¹⁰. Another study found that a reduction in blood pressure and anxiety levels in hypertensive patients continued for 12 months after *Yoga nidra* training¹¹.

Technique of *Yoga nidra* has preventive, promotive and curative value. It prevents stress and stress-related disorders by inducing deep physical, emotional and

mental relaxation, by training the mind to remain calm and quiet and by rooting out the repressed desires and thoughts from the deeper realms of the mind. As a promotive science, *Yoga nidra* awakens the inherent creativity and promotes the learning and memory abilities of the practitioner. Researches also indicate that *yoga nidra* can be used as a therapeutic technique to cure psychological disorders like anxiety, hostility, insomnia, etc. and psychosomatic diseases like asthma, coronary heart disease, cancer, hypertension, etc. In the present modern lifestyle, where psychological and psychosomatic problems are on the rise, the technique of *yoga nidra* may serve as a real boon for mankind¹². One of the studies, there was psi missing with the preliminary test session. At the time it was felt that this was due to the students doing too many preliminary tests, so that they were too rushed and confused by the time the experimental test occurred. Therefore, this year the students did less preliminary testing, so the class was less rushed and they were more at ease with the procedure. This resulted in improved overall scoring. The relaxation session gives a consistent score over both years. The meditation session compares favorably with the score from the previous year, which was in the psi-hitting range but not significantly so, as does the *Yoga nidra*, which compares very favorably with the psi-missing of the previous year. This suggests that the lessons learnt from the first year are resulting in an environment, which is more conducive for psi-testing¹³. In another study on 30 students, 15 days practice of *Yoga nidra* had a positive effect in enhancing the memory of children¹⁴. 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* to assess the effect of *Yoga nidra* on stress level of the subjects, and to assess the effect of *Yoga nidra* on anxiety level of the subjects.

Methodology

Eighty students (40 male and 40 female) of ranged 20-30 yrs from Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya of PG *Yoga* classes selected for the practice of *Yoga nidra* assigned to the experimental group. One of the groups of thirty students (15 male and 15 female) of same age group and same class also considered as control group. Both the groups, experimental and control groups were from PG *Yoga* classes, so all had been practicing the set of *Asanas*, *Pranayamas* and

Shatkarmas regularly. Additionally, the experimental group was practicing *Yoga nidra* for half an hour daily. Before starting the practice of *Yoga nidra*, both the groups went through few psychological tests. Practice of *Yoga nidra* 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 visualisation. To assess the impact of *Yoga nidra*, parameters were stress and anxiety. For the measurement of stress and anxiety level, Eight State Questionnaire had been applied. After six months, the same test was repeated and the data's at 0.01 significant levels are shown¹³.

Result and discussion

The practice of *Yoga nidra* decreased the anxiety and the stress levels of the subjects of practice group.

Mean and standard deviation of the experimental and control group for anxiety level in subjects are given (Table 1). There is a positive change in the level of anxiety between both the groups (Fig. 1). The significant level for observing the *t* value is 0.01 and shows the significant change in stress level as “*t*” value is 2.5.

Mean and standard deviation of the experimental and control group for stress level are given (Table 2). It is observed that there is a positive change in the level of stress in male subjects between both the groups (Fig. 2). The significant level for observing the *t* value is 0.01 and shows the significant change in stress level as “*t*” value is 2.48.

Conclusion

Stress is a cognitive or emotional response made by the individual towards any situation, which demands adjustment. When the demands of the situation exceed the ability of the individual distress results,

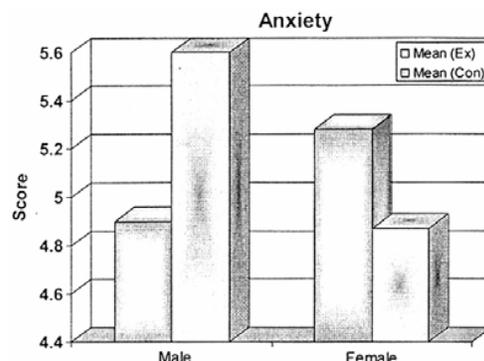


Fig. 1—Effect of *Yoga nidra* on anxiety level

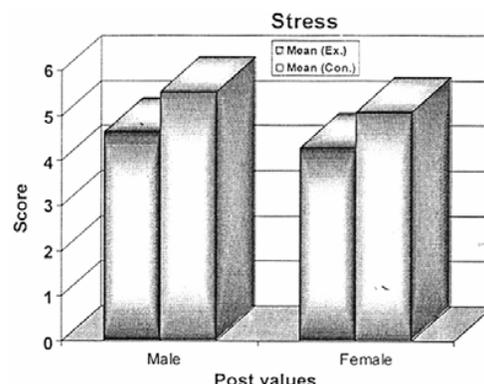


Fig. 2—Effect of *Yoga nidra* on stress level

which may manifest in mental and physical symptoms of abnormality. The practice of *Yoga nidra* helps in building up the coping ability. The practitioner of *Yoga nidra* slowly becomes aware of the inherent dormant potentialities and thus prevents himself from becoming a victim of distress. As *yoga nidra* relaxes the physical as well as mental stresses, it relaxes the whole nervous system. Stress-related disorders evolve gradually through four stages. In the first stage, psychological symptoms like anxiety and irritability arise due to over activation of the sympathetic nervous system^{14,15}. *Yoga nidra* can be considered as a highly effective practice for reducing stress on the basis of the study, as *yoga nidra* releases the stress of the students of higher classes. Practice of *yoga nidra* also reduces the anxiety of male and female subjects both. It may have positive results for the other age groups and occupations also.

References

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- 3 *Swatmarama; Hatha Yoga Pradipika*; Chapter 4 verses 49.

Table 1—Effect of *Yoga nidra* on anxiety level

	Mean	sd	“ <i>t</i> ” value	significant level
Experimental	4.90	1.22	2.5	at 0.01
Control	5.60	1.45		

Table 2—Effect of *Yoga nidra* on stress level

	Mean	sd	“ <i>t</i> ” value	significant level
Experimental	4.95	1.26	2.48	at 0.01
Control	5.67	1.23		

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