



Reversing the Ischemic Heart Disease through Yoga Nidra

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Introduction

Ischemic Heart disease is not a single disease, but a syndrome with multiple causes. In most of the cases the causes remain silent. It is of course due to the excessive tension and less relaxation. It is to be understood that ordinary sleep is not relaxation, for tensions cannot always be resolved completely in ordinary sleep. Yoga Nidra is qualitatively different relaxation. It is a 'sleep' where all the burdens are thrown off to attain more blissful state of awareness, a relaxation much more intense than ordinary sleep. However Yoga nidra can be consider as a highly effective practice for reducing blood pressure, as well as the cardiac work load of heart disease patients.

Yoga Nidra is one such wonderful technique, not only for physical or mental relaxation but also for preparing the mind for yogic discipline. It concerns mainly with *Pratyahara* (the fifth state of Astanga Yoga) and *Dharana* (concentration). On the basis of the present study as Yoga nidra reduces the pulse rate respiration rate blood pressure and also releases the stress of the people, it can be concluded that Yoga nidra is an effective tool for reversing the Heart diseases.

The most interesting and challenging topics of research in the recent times have been focusing on the mysteries of human body. Apart from the scientists and researchers of the modern age, the ancient sages and seers had delved even deeper into the marvels and intricate workings of the inner realms of the living human organism. However, for a healthy functioning of all the tissues and organs as well as for a healthy mind Indian Yogis have given few wonderful techniques. Yoga Nidra is one of them.

Yoga nidra as a state of mind between wakefulness and dream. When someone practices yoga nidra he opens the deeper phases of the mind. During the practice of yoga nidra the consciousness is at different levels. Sometimes it is very close to the senses and at others, it is at a very remote distance. When the consciousness is at a remote distances, then 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.

Sw. Satyananda Saraswati (1975) explains Yoga nidra as a state of mind between wakefulness and dream. When someone practices Yoga nidra he opens the deeper phases of the mind. During the practice of Yoga nidra the consciousness is at different levels. Sometimes it is very close to the senses and at others, it is at a very remote distance.

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Erskine-Milliss, J. & Schonell, M., (1981) 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 recognized and accepted.

Review of Literature:

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.

In the other study conducted at the Stanford University school of Medicine (U.S.A.) W.S. Agras (Psychiat J.): 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 continues for 12 months after *Yoga nidra* training.

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.

Siddhartha Bhushan (2001) says on the basis of his study that the 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 our present modern lifestyle, where psychological and psychosomatic problems are on the rise, the technique of yoga nidra may serve as a real boon for mankind.

Kumar Kamakhya (2004), *Yoga nidra and its impact on Students wellbeing*; observed after a six months study a significant change on the stress, anxiety and general well being level of the college going students.

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

Kumar Kamakhya (2006), *A study of the improvement of Physical and Mental Health through Yoga nidra*; 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); *The Healing Sleep*; observed in another study that Yoga nidra affects positively on blood cells especially the Hemoglobin and Total Leucocytes Counts (TLC) and states: "We all know 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, Dr. Pranav and Kumar, Kamakhya (2007) states 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 states that Yoga nidra is able to improve the immunity of the practitioner.

Kumar, Kamakhya (2008) observed a significant change in the stress level in his study. Result shows that Yoga nidra positively decrease the stress level of the male and female subjects both. Several other studies prove that, Yoga nidra equally influences anxiety level significantly.

Discussion and 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 in the practitioner. 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.

Through the body mind relationship, relaxation of body relaxes the entire nervous system. Through the relaxation of central nervous system in Yoga Nidra relaxation in autonomic nervous system takes place, as it reduces the whole physical and mental activities. Reduction in the muscular and neural activities slows down the metabolic rate

of the body. During the practice of Yoga Nidra due to the relaxed body and mind muscles becomes relaxed, arteries of the body become dilated as vasodilation occurs. Hence the cardiac out put as well as cardiac work load reduces; the systolic and diastolic blood pressure with pulse rate becomes down which has been seen during the present study. Due to the practice of Yoga Nidra relaxed body requires less oxygen accordingly less metabolic activities. Need of the oxygen in the body becomes less; due to that reduction in the respiration rate has been observed.

As the previous studies also supports our study, the practice of *yoga nidra* can be considered as an effective practice to be introduced as a preventive measure of the silent killer Ischemic Heart disease.

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