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YOGA NIDRA IN PREGNANCY

MEENAKSHI PATHAK S.N*, MANJARI DWIVEDI**, AWADHESH PANDEY***, TUSHAR PATHAK**** AND
MUDITA PATHAK*****

Declaration

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Abstract

Imagine what it would be like if you could instantly quiet your mind, unleash a natural healing energy within, see beauty and grace in all of life and reach new heights of awareness. You can easily and effortlessly experience this amazing energy through yoga nidra. Resting the body-mind is the fundamental basis on which true and deep healing takes place which Yoga nidra does. It cultivates strength, stability, flexibility, responsibility, trust and a sense of independence. "THE STRESS OF BIRTH IS BRIEF AND INTENSE".

Pregnancy though a stressful condition, is the period which is just the beginning of a lifelong sentence. In this condition relaxation can be invaluable skill for coping with all kinds of stress encountered in pregnancy. Yoga nidra can be of great benefit to these women by developing intuitive awareness and providing an opportunity for deep relaxation. If you are able to relax and trust in your body's power of recovery, you improve your chances of a safe and positive experience of pregnancy.

This abstract highlights some of the facts regarding the topic.

Keywords: Pregnancy, stress, Yoga nidra, relaxation, flexibility

Introduction

Pregnancy is a period which is just the beginning of a lifelong sentence. Pregnancy is distinguished by a multitude of physiological and endocrine adjustments directed towards the creation of an optimal environment for the foetus. Every organ system in the expectant mother as well as her personality are intimately involved in this complex process.

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- There are many physiological changes in pregnancy which can be combat by Yoga nidra such as

Neurologic system :

- Insomnia
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Slightly impaired cognitive functions

Cardiovascular system :

- Throbbing, rapid pulse
- Tachycardia, fatigue
- Occasional orthopnoea

Respiratory system :

- Dyspnoea

History of Yoga Nidra³

The vedic literature and upnishadas are pregnant with yogic knowledge but we don't find the term Yoga Nidra. However, the puranas mention it several times, in different contexts. Markandeya Purana, Vishnu purana, Devi bhagvat and other common scriptures highlight the importance of it. Yoga Nidra is very well defined by Adya Sankaracharya in his text 'Yoga Tadavali'. Hatha Yoga Pradipika also used this term in different context.

Yoga Nidra was first experienced by Swami Satyananda Saraswati when he was living with his guru Swami Shivananda in Rishikesh. He explained Yoga Nidra as a state of mind between wakefulness and dream that opened deep phases of the mind, suggesting a connection with the ancient tantric practice called nyasa, whereby Sanskrit mantras are mentally placed within specific body parts, while meditating on each part of the body mind. The form of practice taught by Swami Satyananda includes eight stages (internalization, sankalpa, rotation of consciousness, breath awareness, manifestation of opposites, creative visualization, sankalpa and externalization).

Paramyogeshwar Sri Devpuriji was an early modern proponent who passed it on to Sri Deep Narayan Mahaprabhuji: it was taught to his disciples since 1880. On his journeys to the Himalayas, Sri Devpuriji met Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, who conveyed the technique to several yogis and swamis, such as Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Swami Rama as another proponent of the Sadhana.

Swami Satyananda's extensive worldwide tours with Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda teaching the Yoga Nidra practice of Satyananda Yoga gradually spread the idea throughout India, Europe, Australia and the United States.

Yoga nidra means sleep with a trace of awareness. It is a state of mind between wakefulness and dream. The subconscious mind is a very obedient disciple and immediately carries out the orders that you put to it. If you know how to practice yoga nidra , you can train your subconscious mind completely.

Two stages of yoga nidra

1. The first stage induces a relaxed state of body mind. This stage is common in all Yoga Nidra practice. The body has the potential to heal itself but requires the correct conditions for healing to take place. The primary condition required for healing is deep rest.

2. The second stage is the use of processes or strategies that are specific to the condition being treated. This stage may employ tactics and techniques such as specific forms of breathing and instructions to induce feeling – states that rebalance the basic elements of the body-mind.

Steps of Yoga Nidra

- **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 every 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. In pregnancy a resolve can be, “I will remain healthy throughout my pregnancy”. 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 relation 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 part to part. 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 sometime and keep your eyes closed. When you are sure that you are wide awake, sit up slowly and open your eyes.

States Of Consciousness

Stage	State of consciousness	Psychological dimension	Brain wave pattern	Realm of experience
1.	Awake	Conscious mind	Beta (13-20 c.p.s)	Sensory awareness, external knowledge
2	Yoga Nidra	Superconscious mind (borderline between	Alpha (8-12 c.p.s)	Deep relaxation,

		awake and sleep)		visionary states, conscious dreaming, archetypal imagery.
3	Dreaming sleep	Subconscious mind	Theta (4-7 c.p.s)	Release of emotions, suppressed fears and desires.
4	Deep sleep	Unconscious mind	Delta (0-4 c.p.s)	Awakening of instincts and primitive drives.

Important Actions of Yoga Nidra

CVS :

- Yoga Nidra is proved to be an effective preventive, alleviative & curative technique in management of cardiovascular disorders.
- It reduces the load of environmental & intrapsychic stress being relayed from the hypothalamus into the electrical conducting fibres of the heart via the sympathetic nervous system.
- In a study in at the University of Israel, yoga nidra significantly lowered levels of serum cholesterol in cardiac patients.
- It lowers the circulating levels of metabolic and endocrine 'stress hormones', including lipid, lactate, aldosterone, testosterone, adrenaline, dopamine-beta-hydroxylase.
- Reduction of blood pressure (systolic by 15-20mmHg diastolic by 10mmHg after 3 weeks of practice).
- Respiratory system :
- Yoga Nidra and other yogic kriyas have definite relaxation and dilatation of the bronchial tubes when retested on spirometer.
- Other Benefits of yoga nidra
 - Asthma
 - Peptic ulcer, colitis
 - Chronic degenerative diseases
 - Drug addiction & alcoholism
 - Hypertension
 - Psychological disorders

Summary

- Yoga Nidra cultivates strength, stability, flexibility, trust and a sense of independence
- Yoga Nidra creates the most favourable condition for intra-uterine growth and development of a healthy foetus.
- It relieves pain by stimulating the pituitary gland to release endorphins and encephalins.
- It provides relaxation to cope with all kinds of stress in pregnancy.
- It combats some of the minor ailments of pregnancy to major complications.

Conclusion

If a lady is able to relax by *Yoga Nidra* and trust in her body's power of recovery, she improve her chances of a safe and positive experience of pregnancy.”

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- ⁴*Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (2/71-74)
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- ⁷*Yoga and Pregnancy* – Sophy Hoare Ch. 3, pg 19
- ⁸*Tatvargayo sanishad Sutra* 6/1
- ⁹*Bhagwat Gita* 6/23, *Bhagwat Gita* 2/50
- ¹⁰*Obstetrics Normal and Problem Pregnancies*, Steven Gabbe, Fifth Edition

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