

Yoga Nidra in Hatha Pradipika

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Introduction

The term *yoga nidra* is derived from two Sanskrit words, ‘*yoga*’ means union or one pointed awareness, and ‘*nidra*’ which means sleep. During the practice of *yoga nidra*, one appears to be asleep, but the consciousness is functioning at a deeper level of awareness. It means even when you sleep, your self is awake and aware. For this reason *yoga nidra* is often referred to as deep relaxation/sleepless sleep/ *yogic* sleep/psychic- sleep/transcendental sleep/ dynamic sleep/conscious sleep/ a scientific sleep with inner awareness. *Yoga nidra* is a process by which one can travel from conscious to unconscious through sub-conscious. *Yoga nidra* is one of the *pratyahara* practice, where one withdraws the awareness from external sources and gradually enters into the *citta* and ultimately leads to *dhyana* and *samadhi* too.

Since *Yoga Nidra* is an old practice and it has been discussed in *Vedas* and *Puranas* such as *Devi Mahatmya*, *Bhagavata Purana*, *Vishnu* (the sleeping lord) reclines on the *naga shesha* in *yoga nidra*. It has been practiced by *sadhus* and *risis* from the millennia. Of the three states of consciousness of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, as expounded in the *Upanishads*, particularly the *Mandukya Upanishad*, *yoga*

nidra refers specifically to the conscious awareness of the deep sleep state, referred to as “*prajna*” in *Mandukya Upanishad*, *Bhagavata purana yoga nidra* refers to *yoga maya*. In *Brahma Samhita yoga nidra* refers to *cit* potency. Maharsi Patanjali and the authors of Hatha Yoga texts and other literatures might be influenced by *Vedas*, *Upanisadas* and *Puranas*. So it has been found that in some texts there are some indication and discussion of *yoga nidra* practice such as Patanjala Yoga Sutra and Hatha Pradipika etc. Let’s discuss how Swami Swatmarama’s discussed *yoga nidra* in his Hatha Pradipika.

Swami Swatmarama’s treatise on Hatha Yoga has been held in great esteem both by scholars and practicing Yogis. It is one of the outstanding Hatha text among other Hatha yoga texts. The date of Hatha Yoga text is between the middle of the 14th century and the middle of the 16th century (1350-1550) A.D.

In chapter four of **Hatha Pradipika** there is a discussion of *yoga nidra*. The author has mentioned the word *yoga nidra* only once in this chapter. While discussing the practice of various *mudras* Swami Swatmarama indicates that one should practice *Khechari Mudra* until *yoga nidra* is attained. Once *yoga nidra* is attained there remains no such thing as *kala* (H.P.CH.4.V.49).

In the preceding verses he explained briefly about *yoga nidra*.

1. Making the mind objectless and minimize the life activities

This is the state of preparation in which one should not try to not think of any thing and remain like an empty pot (H.P.CH.4, V.50), and when the worldly affairs (overt) and the inner activities such as: *kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada, matsyarya*, thinking, feeling etc (covert) life activities are reduced to minimum then surely the *prana (pavana)* and mind set concentrated in their space i.e. *brahmarandhra* (H.P.CH.4, V.51).

2. Treading the *susumnapath* or concentrating to *brahmarandhra*

By the practice of treading the *susumna* path incessantly in this manner life activities all the worldly behaviour or activities, as well as mental processes such as cognitive, conative and affective, are reduced to the minimum (H.P.CH.4,V.52).

3. Feel the body with nectar

Filling the whole body, from foot to head, with nectar; then (i.e. by doing this) will be attained excellence of body and great strength and valour (H.P.CH.4,V.53).

4. Merging the mind and *kundali*

Merging the mind in the *kundali* and the *kundali* in the mind and seeing (one's) mind with (one's own) mind, and one should meditate upon that supreme state (H.P.CH.4.V.54).

5. Merging with consciousness (one pointed awareness)

Merging the individual self in the cosmic self and vice versa, and seeing the self every where, one should not let anything enter one's consciousness and enjoy the blissful state (H.P.CH.4.V.55).

6. Awareness of the self

When the ordinary consciousness goes by the regular practice there is no consciousness either subjective or objective in Yogi's mind as there is nothing inside or outside an empty pot , but there is another consciousness with which the *yogi* is filled as well as surrounded like a pot in the ocean i.e. awareness of the inner self. (H.P.CH.4.V.56).

7. Thinklessness

After the awareness of the inner self the *yogi* should not worry about anything in the world, nor should he imagine or think. Abandoning all worries, he should imagine or think of nothing (H.P.CH.4.V.57).

8. Turning the mind from imagination

The entire universe is a mental construction; and the imaginary world too is a mental construction and it is also not real. Turning the mind away from all that which is mental construction, one can certainly attain peace by dwelling on *nirvikalpa (Brahman, who is not a mental construction)* (H.P.CH.4.V.58).

9. Feeling of non-dual/*Unmani Avasta*

When the mind turns from the imagination and directed towards *Brahman* disappears in it (*Brahman*) like camphor does in fire and salt in water (H.P.CH.4.V.59). Whatever is known is called object of knowledge and its knowledge is called mind. There is no other way of attaining peace than do abolish both knowledge and its objects (H.P. CH.4. V.60). When mind attains the state of *unmani* and no dualities is experienced (H.P.CH.4.V.61). When '*manas*' disappears in *Brahman* and when the *manas* loses itself the absolute (Alone) remains (H.P.CH.4.V.62). This is the state of *samadhi* or *unmani*.

Conclusion

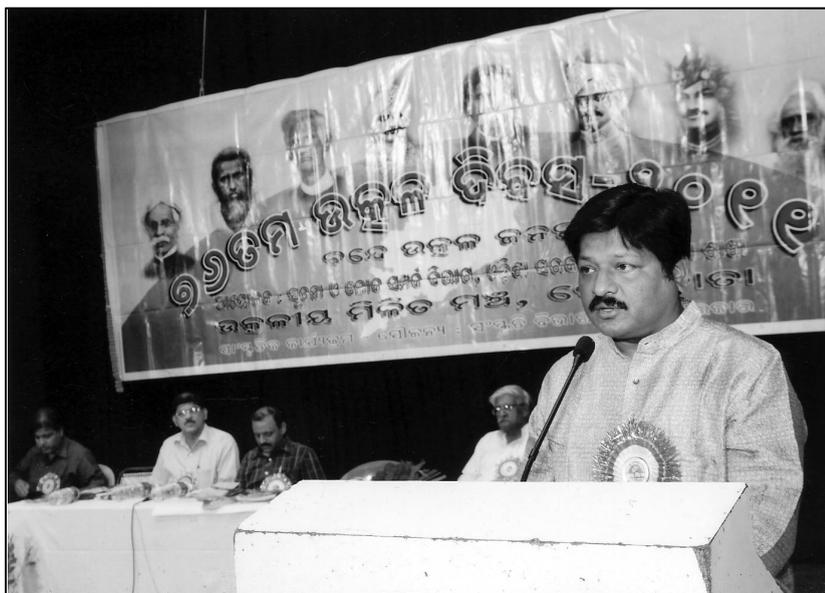
Swami Swatmarama mentioned in his Hatha Yoga during the practice of *Khechari mudra* a *sadhaka* can attain *yoga nidra*. And by attaining this there will be no such thing as (*kala*) means the *Sadhaka* will be free from all sorts of fear including the fear of death and also will go beyond the dualities, time and space. Ultimately will achieve the state of absoluteness and attain peace by dwelling on *nirvikalpa*. This is the state of *yoga nidra*. That's why in the very beginning of the *khechari mudra* practice the author mentioned that the *sadhaka* should practice *khechari mudra* until *yoga nidra* is attained. Swami Swatmarama has given the importance on *yoga nidra* on his Hatha Pradipika during the practice of *khechari mudra*. Although *yoga nidra* is a form of *raja yoga* practice. It seems that without *raja yoga* *hatha yoga* is fruitless and vice –versa. In Hatha Pradipika Chapter three and four importance has been given on both *raja yoga* and *hatha yoga* in numbers of Sutras. And it is advised that both *raja yoga* and *hatha yoga* should be practiced simultaneously because

without one other is useless. It means both *raja* and *hatha* are the both sides of the same coin. In order to attain success in yoga both must be practiced.

References :

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Shri Pratap Jena, Minister for School & Mass Education addressing on the occasion of Utkal Divas 2011 organised jointly by the Information Centre, Kolkata under Orissa Information & Public Relations Department and Utkaliya Milita Manch held at Mahajati Sadan, Kolkata.