

Guruji speaks on Yoga Nidra

*By Swami Shantananda Puri Maharaj,
August, 2013*



Guruji on Guru Purnima in Ghazipur

Guruji speaks on Yoga Nidra

Yoga Nidra is a very good yogic exercise which can relax business people and actresses and those with packed schedules and especially when they are in great tension or absolutely tired due to long working hours. This gives you some immediate peace of mind and gradually it may lead to a state of relative happiness considered to be as a potential prelude to liberation [moksha]. This also leads to concentration essential for going into Samadhi state.

Mainly this Yoga Nidra consists of two parts:

Part 1: The person can lie down comfortably on a mat on the floor and chant Om with a deep breath from the naval and make it a long chanting of Om. The roar of a tiger emanates from the navel. As per the science of phonetics [siksha shastra] Om should be chanted from the navel and not superficially from the lungs as we are accustomed to do. This in itself [chanting once] will immediately give the person some peace of mind for a few minutes. This chanting of Om should be done three times with a small interval of 2 or 3 minutes between one Om and another. This interval will ensure that we revel in the peace of mind which comes during the interval. We cannot enjoy this peace for a longer time as thoughts will intrude by that time and the peace will disappear since the optimum time of interval between two Om's is considered about two minutes.

After lying down on the mat and chanting Om three times, we will start the process of relaxation part by part of the body starting from the toe to the head in the manner detailed below:

You can either keep a recorded cassette or some friend who will take you slowly part by part from the toe upwards to the head.

As and when you move your attention from one part to another your concentration also moves with it.

Relaxation is done by first tightening of the muscles and then relaxing them one by one.

Let somebody say or you can say 'toe' and completely tighten the muscles of the toe [initially if you are unable to]. If you are unable to tighten it, just imagine that the muscles in the toe are getting rigid and firm. Then, for some moments, all your attention will be on the toe. Then you say one after another second finger, third finger, etc. of the right foot and tighten them as you did for the toe but without relaxing the toe. Then you think of your ankle and tighten your muscles there without relaxing the earlier ones. Then you go to the heel, and on to the calf muscles below the knee [all to be done only for the right foot], then the knee joint, then the thigh, the waist, the hip, the stomach, the right forearm, the right upper arm, and the right shoulder by tightening their muscles in turn.

Now you go to the left foot and repeat the entire procedure starting from the toe upto the waist / hip as you did for the right foot. Now you tighten up the muscles of the stomach, then the chest area, the back, but continuing at the same time to keep tight all the earlier muscles of the right and left feet. Now, keep your neck muscles tight. Then come to the lips in the same way, the cheeks, both the eyes, the nose, the forehead, both the ears and the surrounding area, the forehead and the entire top of the head. Now you have to slowly begin to relax one by one, starting from the toe of the right foot. Imagine the right toe is relaxed and enjoy the relaxation. Similarly, the other toes, the sole and the heel, the ankle, the calf muscles below the knee, the knee joint, the waist and hip, etc. They have all got to be relaxed one after another. If you find it physically impossible, do it in imagination and in due course the physical contraction of muscles will follow. Do the same relaxation technique for the rest of the portion in the same order in which you tightened them upto the top of the head.

At every step, your mind should be either on the tightening or the relaxation of each muscle and you should enjoy the relaxation of the muscles. When the entire exercise is over, take deep breaths three times with your eyes shut.

Part 2: In the second part, we will be moving the various types of emotions from one extreme to another and experience the consequences in our mind. It will be as follows:

1. Think of the happiest day you ever had in your life. Replay the same scene and all the emotions of that day from minute by minute in your mind. Recall all the details and your mind should relive all those events while doing this recalling activity. While acting you should genuinely experience the emotion of an ecstatic joy. Say for instance, while travelling in a train, you meet your future wife or husband sitting next to you and by chance your hands touched each other. Feel as if some electric current has passed through your entire body and enact once again the unique thrilling happiness you got out of it. These exercises should be done for a length of time, say for 10-15 minutes, slowly and your entire mind and feelings should be concentrated there. This can be better demonstrated than written.
2. Now, you imagine a day which is the unhappiest so far. Say you imagine a very bad accident of an aircraft in which you were travelling. You were conscious and could see the mangled bodies crimsoned with flowing blood of old men, women, and children with many of them weeping. What a gory sight! You felt as if your entire heart was coming out and felt that you also should have died in the accident to avoid such an unhappy sight. You can expand further on these ideas so that for about 15 minutes you live in those unhappiest moments.
3. Now you imagine that you are travelling on a summer day in the Sahara desert all alone. All the air you breathe is terribly hot, the lips are absolutely dry and cracked, the water in the water bottle has long ago been exhausted and not a drop available anywhere. Your heart is weeping and begging silently, "Lord, why do you make me undergo all this heat?" The heat is percolating through my shoes to the inside of the body searing it all as if burnt in fire. I shout, "Lord, I cannot bear this heat anymore. Please grant me death now." Thus you can remain in those feelings of heat experiencing them for a few minutes.
4. Now you are travelling in the Antarctic. It is all freezing cold everywhere. The air that I breathe is terribly cold. My lips have swollen, the cold from the surroundings is all piercing the entire body and I am shivering involuntarily. You can expand this further with your imagination for a few more minutes. You should really feel that you are walking in the Antarctic and are undergoing all these tribulations.
5. Imagine that you are smelling the most excellent scent imported from Paris. Ah, what an extremely lovely perfume! I have never smelt the like of it any time before. Enjoy it and revel in it for sometime.
6. You think of the most horrid stench you have to bear, say while cleaning up the drainage in your house. O My Lord, I feel like vomiting. O, what hell it is. Imagine the worst smell that you have ever has to bear. You can extend it as you want for some 15 minutes or so.

Now, close your eyes, and take a deep breath. In case you feel like dozing, do so. After a few minutes, you will feel rejuvenated and get up with absolutely renewed energy.

This is an exercise which can be better understood when it is demonstrated practically than by reading it in a book or manuscript.

Various versions of this Yoga Nidra are taught by different masters but essence and purpose, they cannot differ. This is an exercise which can take you finally to the path towards the realisation of the Self.

* * HARI OM * *

Website: <http://www.swamishantanandapurimaharaj.org/>