

International Journal of Research in Indian Medicine**Role of *Yoganidra* on mental health w. s. r. to *Mansik-Swasthya*
-a critical review.****Rohini Prakash Dukare*¹, Archana Raman Belge²**¹ PG Scholar,² Professor, H.O.D. & P.G. Guide,

Department of Swasthavritta, Shri Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur, India.

Corresponding author: dukarerohini75@gmail.com*ABSTRACT:**

INTRODUCTION: In last few decades, there has been significant growth among prevalence of mental disorders in the adult world population. The incidence of anxiety & mood disorders is estimated to be over 25% around the world. *YogaNidra* may be one such technique at the same path & also an altered state of consciousness that is neither sleep nor awake, concentration nor hypnosis.

AIM & OBJECTIVES: 1. To assess the impact of *YogaNidra* on Mental health. 2. To encourage the practice of *YogaNidra* to reduce risk factors, prevent diseases of mental disorders & promote healthy lifestyle. **MATERIAL & METHODS:** Good mental health can improve life quality whereas poor mental health can worsen it. *Manas* is called '*Ubhayatmaka*' (sensory & motor functions) & hence considered as superior faculty because it controls & coordinates all other faculties connecting them with the soul. It includes Origin, Definitions, Stages, Procedure, Mechanism & impact of *YogaNidra* on mental health. **DISCUSSION:** *YogaNidra*'s ultimate goal is to fight stressful influences while also addressing imbalances associated with poor stress management. It's not just a method of dealing with stress; it's

also a way to transform & positively manage stress as stepping stone to better awareness, efficiency & success in life. **CONCLUSION:** *YogaNidra* is powerful technique to induce complete physical, mental & emotional relaxations. *Yoga Nidra* is more efficient and effective kind of rest & rejuvenation for mind & body than conventional sleep.

KEYWORDS: Conventional sleep, Drug abuse, *Manas*, Stress, *Ubhayatmaka*, *Yoga Nidra*

INTRODUCTION:

Mental health, defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), is "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community".

According to WHO, mental health includes "subjective well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, intergenerational dependence, and self-actualization of one's intellectual and emotional potential, among others".^[1]

Mental health is a dynamic state of internal equilibrium which enables individuals to use their abilities in

harmony with universal values of society. Basic cognitive and social skills; ability to recognize, express and modulate one's own emotions as well as empathize with others; flexibility and ability to cope with adverse life events and function in social roles; and harmonious relationship between body and mind represent important components of mental health which contribute, to varying degrees, to the state of internal equilibrium.^[2]

A mental disorder is one aspect of mental health.^[3] Mental disorders are defined as the health conditions that affect and alter cognitive functioning, emotional responses, and behaviour associated with distress and/or impaired functioning.^[1]

A Mental disorder, also called a mental illness^[4] or psychiatric disorder, is a behavioural or mental pattern that causes significant distress or impairment of personal functioning.^[5] The predominant view as of 2018 is that genetic, psychological, and environmental factors all contribute to the development or progression of mental disorders. Different risk factors may be present at different ages, with risk occurring as early as during prenatal period.^[6]

There are many different mental disorders, with different presentations. They are generally characterized by a combination of abnormal thoughts, perceptions, emotions, behaviour and relationships with others. Mental disorders include Depression, Bipolar disorder, Schizophrenia and other Psychoses, Dementia, and Developmental disorders including Autism.^[7]

Evidence from the WHO suggests that nearly half of the world's population is affected by mental illness with an impact on their self-esteem, relationships and ability to function in everyday life. Mental illnesses are more common than cancer, diabetes, or heart disease.

Evidence suggests that 450 million people worldwide have some mental illness. By 2029, mental illness is predicted to become the leading cause of disease worldwide. Women are more likely to have a mental illness than men.

In 2019, common mental disorders around the globe include depression, which affects about 264 million, bipolar disorder, which affects about 45 million, dementia, which affects about 50 million, and schizophrenia and other psychoses, which affects about 20 million people. Neuro developmental disorders include intellectual disability and autism spectrum disorders which usually arise in infancy or childhood. Stigma and discrimination can add to the suffering and disability associated with mental disorders, leading to various social movements attempting to increase understanding and challenge social exclusion.^[6]

According to a study published in Lancet in 2019, "1 in 7 Indians were affected by mental disorders of varying severity in 2017. Mental health conditions are 16% of the global burden of disease and injury in people aged 10–19 years. Half of all mental health conditions start by 14 years of age but most cases go undetected and untreated. Major depression ranks fourth among the top 10 leading causes of disease worldwide. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death in 15-19-year-olds. Exposure to childhood trauma can cause mental health disorders and poor academic achievement. ignoring mental health conditions in adolescents can impact adulthood."^[8]

Good mental health can improve life quality whereas poor mental health can worsen it. An individual's emotional health can impact their physical health. Poor mental health can lead to problems such as the inability to make adequate decisions and substance use disorders.

The present treatment for anxiety (and mental disorders in general) is a

combined drug–psychotherapy method, which has a lot of disadvantages, including drug side effects, lack of response to treatment, expensive psychotherapy costs, and/or pharmaceutical treatments. Therefore, the need for effective low-cost strategies has become increasingly urgent and necessary because they might provide the individuals with the right tools to cope with mental illness while modifying lifestyle and reducing the economic cost.

Aim of Ayurveda is preserving the health of healthy people and curing the diseases of the ill. It is also indicated that a person with *Swastha Mana* (healthy mental state), *Prasanna Aatmendriya* (delighted soul with proper functioning of sense organs) along with *Sama Dosha* (wellbalanced state of *dosha*), *Sama Agni* (proper metabolism), *Sama Dhātu* (proportionate body organs and tissues) and *Sama Kriya* (proper physiology) is perfectly healthy.^[9]

To promote mental health and prevent illness, there is a need to create such living conditions and environments that support mental health and allow people to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles.

Ayurveda and *Yoga* give holistic approaches for living life at its fullest. The two sciences have a common understanding of the health and balance of the mind.^[10] The literal meaning of *Yoga* is ‘to join’, that is joining of Mind and Body.^[11] One of the best methods for self-realization is *Yoga Nidra*. It is now used as a psycho-spiritual healing approach by both *yoga* masters and psychologists. The wisdom of self-realization is profuse in ancient Indian scriptures.

YogaNidra may be one such technique at the same path. It is a comprehensive collection of *Yoga Sadhana*. It can lead the aspirant to the stage of *Samadhi*. *Yoga Nidra* is an altered state of consciousness that is neither sleep nor awake, concentration nor hypnotism. *Yoga Nidra* is now a well-known technique for

achieving complete physical, mental, and emotional relaxation.^[12]

AIM AND OBJECTIVES:

1. To assess the impact of *Yoga Nidra* on Mental health.
2. To encourage the practice of *Yoga Nidra* to reduce risk factors, prevent diseases of mental disorders and promote a healthy lifestyle.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

Approach of Ayurveda towards Mental health:

Mana is the entity that provides knowledge and is intimately connected to *Atma*, the entity that permits one to perceive, and *Hridaya* is the seat of *Mana*.^[13]

The proof of existence of mind is given by Ayurveda is the existence of knowledge (*LakshanamManaso Jnana*). According to *Vedanta Darshana*, *Manas*, *Buddhi*, *Chitta* and *Ahankara* combine are called four *Antahkarana* (Internal instruments/Mechanism).

Manas is called ‘*Ubhayatmaka*’ i.e., it is a dual faculty which has both sensory and motor functions and hence considered as a superior faculty because it controls and coordinates all other faculties connecting them with the soul.^[14]

Manas functions introspectively without the relation to the sense organs. Any knowledge gained through *Chintya* (Object of thinking about do’s and don’ts), *Vicharya* (Object of Reasoning, logic and discrimination), *Uhya* (Object of Judgment or guessing), *Dheyaya* (Object of continuous thinking about desired things), *Sankalpa* (Object of imagination and evaluation as to merit and demerit) methods or emotions perceived by the mind also become the subject of thought. *Sukha* (happiness), *Dukha* (unhappiness), *Kama* (lust), *Krodha* (anger), *Bhaya* (fear), etc., belong to this kind of knowledge.^[15]

Satva, *Rajas* and *Tamas* are the three essential constituents of mind, of which last two are noted *Manas dosha*, which can potentially cause *Mano vyadhi* (mental disorders). All the positive attributes of the mind are due to the *Satva* constituent, and unwholesome activities are results of *Rajas* and *Tamas* constituents. These factors are responsible for the various behavioural patterns of human beings. According to the predominance of *gunas* the phenomenon of interaction between *Purusha* (microcosm) and *Loka* (Macrocosm) can be of 3 types

1. **Samyakyoga** (normative interaction)- wholesome interaction with *Satva* predominance, which maintains the mind in a well-balanced and harmonious state.
2. **Atiyoga** of mental activity is owing to *Rajoguna* predominance and will be characterized by excessive emotional outbursts, excessive excitement, anger, preponderance to violence etc.
3. **Heena yoga** of mental activity represents *Tamoguna* predominance and is characterized by *Avasada* (depression), ignorance, lack of interest in day-to-day activities etc.
4. **Mithya yoga** occurs due to erroneous interaction of three *Gunas* and is unwholesome to mental health.

Heen-aati- mitya yoga of mind with its *Artha*, in the level of psyche is the first step in the pathogenesis of psychiatric conditions as per Ayurveda. ^[16]

Origin & Definition Yoga Nidra:

The term *YogaNidra* is derived from two Sanskrit words, '*Yoga*' meaning union or one pointed awareness, '*Nidra*' which means 'sleep'.

The word *Yoga Nidra* firstly mentioned in *Devi Mhatmya* one of the great parts of *Markandeya Purana*. According to the visualizations of *Maharshi Markandeya* "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 total awareness".

He further states in his *Purana* that, *LordessYogaNidra* lives in the eyes of *Lord Vishnu*. When Lord Brahma observed *Lord Vishnu* in the grip of *YogaNidra*, to make him awake, *Lord Brahma* started praying to the *LordessYogaNidra*. This was the first time in this Universe when *YogaNidra* came into the form and due to her effect *Lord Vishnu* became able to get the victory over two evils named *Madhu* and *Kaitabh*.

Secondly, this word *YogaNidra* was again mentioned in a very small *Yogic* text *Yoga Taravali* authored by *AdyaSankaracharya*. "When mind has transcended *maya* (delusion), when ego has become static, when senses are no more functioning, and when all communication between the mind and the senses has been cut, when I and you no longer exist for a period of time, *Yoga Nidra* starts. ^[17]

In this era the formulation, development and propagating the technique of *Yoga Nidra* credit goes to *SwamiSatyanandaSaraswati*. *YogaNidra* is a meditation as well as relaxation practice, first discovered by Sw. *Satyananda Saraswati*. From an experience an idea came to his mind that sleep is not a state of total unconsciousness. He began studying the Tantric scriptures and after practicing them he constructed a new system of relaxation that was *YogaNidra*.

In the *Ashtanga Yoga* of *Maharshi Patanjali*, there is a state called *Pratyahara*, where the mind and mental awareness are dissociated from the sensory channels. *YogaNidra* is one aspect of *Pratyahara*. ^[18]

The characteristic feature of *YogaNidra* was the systematic rotation of consciousness in the body, which originated from the tantric practice of *nyasa* (meaning 'to place' or 'to take the mind to that point'). *Nyasa* was practiced in a sitting posture and involved the use of specific mantras which were placed,

felt or experienced at different parts of the body.^[19]

Stages of *YogaNidra*^[20]

The practice of *YogaNidra* is divided into the following stages:

Table No. 1 Stages of *YogaNidra*:

Stages	
1. Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performed in the posture of <i>Shavasana</i> Initial relaxation of the body and mind, induced by awareness of stillness, Comfort, Posture, Position, breath, and listening to the external sounds.
2. Resolve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take <i>Sankalpa</i> according to his or her wish. The <i>Sankalpa</i> should be short, clear, and positive. Repeats the selected <i>Sankalpa</i> three times in mind, with full determination, conviction and confidence.
3. Rotation of consciousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The awareness is rotated around the different body parts in a systematic and organized manner.
4. Breath awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aware of the natural breath without a change of flow of breath

	by watching it in the nostrils, chest, abdomen, in the passage between the navel and the throat.
5. Opposite feelings and sensations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical & emotional sensations are recalled, intensified, and experienced fully. This is practiced with pairs of opposite feelings or sensations like heat & cold, heaviness and lightness, pain & pleasure, love & hate etc.
6. Visualization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness is taken to the dark space in front of closed eyes. The practitioner is then instructed to visualize some objects, stories or situations.
7. Sankalpa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Sankalpa</i> which was taken in the second stage, is repeated in mind by three times with full dedication, faith & optimism.
8. Ending the practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aware of the external sound, objects & persons. Slowly move the body parts and stretch the body.

Procedure^[21]

- *Yoga Nidra* is a kind of meditation and relaxation technique practiced in a semi-darkened room.
- *Yoga Nidra* is done by first starting with yoga posture '*Vajrasana*' (sitting in kneeling pose), followed by *pranayama* (alternate nostril breathing) for five minutes.
- Later, the subjects are seated in '*Sukhasana*' (normal sitting posture) and asked to chant mantra for three times with deep concentration.
- Then, the subject lies in the supine position and practices '*Shavasana*' (corpse pose) with lower limbs 30 degrees apart and the upper limbs making an angle of 15 degrees with the trunk, with the forearms in the mid-prone position and fingers semi-flexed. The eyes are closed with eyelids drooping.
- The subject is teaching slow, rhythmic diaphragmatic breathing with a short pause after each inspiration and a longer one at the end of each expiration.
- After establishing this rhythm, he is asked to pay attention to the sensation at the nostrils, the coolness of the inspired air and the warmth of the expired air. This procedure helps to keep the subject inwardly alert and to forget his usual thoughts, thus becoming less conscious of the external environment, thereby attaining relaxation.
- The subject is asked to relax all muscles so that he is able to feel the heaviness of different parts of the body. This is achieved automatically once the subject learns the exercise. An experienced master checks that there is no movement of any part

of the body, except rhythmic abdominal movements.

- *YogaNidra* is done by asking the subject to concentrate on the different parts of the body in a prescribed sequence. This way, they try to arouse different parts of the brain by concentrating on the matching parts of the body.
- Initially, the subject has to shift his concentration quickly from one part to the next corresponding to the instructions given by the instructor in the following sequence. First, on the right side, thumb, fingers, palm of hand, wrist, forearm, elbow, arm, shoulder, right back, hip, thigh, knee, leg, ankle, foot, great toe, other toes of right foot. The same sequence is repeated for the left side. Then, the concentration is focussed on the proximity of the body with ground and next on the front of the body surface.
- Then the subject is asked to shift his consciousness again on breathing at the nostrils completing physical relaxation.
- Then the subject is asked to visualize the objects of universal significance as described by the instructor.
- The practice usually takes 45min to 50 min to complete.

Mechanism of *Yoga Nidra*-

The *YogaNidra* state appears to reflect an integrated response by the hypothalamus, resulting in decreased sympathetic (excitatory) nervous activity and increased parasympathetic (relaxatory) function. This 'relaxation response' can be thought of as the inverse counterpart of the so-called 'fight or flight' response. This well-known state of sympathetic hyperactivation of the hypothalamus and endocrine network prepares the body for immediate

protective action in response to imminent danger.^[22]

According to him *Yoga Nidra* is probably good technique for inducing complete physical, mental and emotional relaxation. *Yoga Nidra* is a magnetising state. In the state of *Yoga Nidra* the entire body is magnetized and it becomes full of electromagnetic pulsation, vibration and concentration. By these phenomena, the body becomes painless, respiration becomes occasional, and the heart rate slows down, according to the stimulation or depression of the cardiac centre in the medulla oblongata.

Yogic philosophy as well as modern psychology, enumerates three basic types of tension which are responsible for all the agonies of modern life.

- These three types of tension are classified as Physical, Mental and Emotional. Through the consistent practice of *Yoga Nidra*, these threefold tensions can be progressively released.
- Physical Tension- This is termed as muscular tensions related to the body itself, the nervous system and endocrine imbalance. These are easily released by the deep physical relaxation attained in the state of *Yoga Nidra*.
- Emotional Tension- It controls the emotional state of the mind, tranquilizes the entire emotional structure of the mind.
- Mental Tension- Everyone involved in some kind of mental activity in day-to-day life. The mind is a whirlpool of fantasies, confusions and oscillations. The tensions related to family, workplace, and interpersonal relationships are accumulated in the consciousness state of the mental body. This may bring psychological and behavioural changes in the body responsible for abnormal behaviour of an individual.

- *Yoga Nidra* is the science of relaxation which enables to enter into the realms of the subconscious mind, thereby releasing and relaxing mental tensions and establishing harmony in all facts of life.^[23]

Impact of *Yoga Nidra* on Mental Health:

Mental health is defined as the ability to work and study to one's full potential, deal with day-to-day challenges, contribute to one's community, and live a free and fulfilling life. A person with good mental health is emotionally and socially balanced, as well as capable of dealing with change and challenges.

Mental health issues can have an impact on one's feelings, emotions, and actions, as well as make regular tasks like school, work, and social interactions more difficult.

Feeling depressed, tense, frustrated, or nervous are all typical feelings, but when they persist for an extended period of time or begin to interfere with daily life, they can lead to mental health issues. There are several benefits to practising *Yoga Nidra*. It is helpful not only to physical but also to mental health.

- ***Yoga Nidra* relieves tension:** A high percentage of people remain in a state of tension and frustration as we are living in the age of tension. Sometimes it is muscular tension and sometimes it is emotional or mental tension. With the help of *Yoga Nidra* one can remove all types of tensions. It is said "a single hour of *Yoga Nidra* is as restful as four hours of conventional sleep". (Swami Satyananda, 1998)
- **Reconditions the mind:** The *sankalpa* taken in each session of *yoga nidra* is perhaps the most effective technique for reconditioning and training the mind. "Anything in life can fail you, but not the *sankalpa*

made during *Yoganidra*". (Swami Satyananda, 1998) The *sankalpa* is taken and sowed in the subconscious mind when it is relaxed and receptive. Swami Satyananda (1998) says, "the *sankalpa* taken at the beginning of *YogaNidra* is like sowing a seed, and the *sankalpa* at the end is like irrigating it. So, the resolve taken in *YogaNidra* always brings results, if it is taken sincerely".

- **Calms down the mind:** 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. It is concluded on the basis of a study that the practice of *YogaNidra* brings alpha dominance in the brain, which is characterized by mental relaxation. (Sannyasi Mangalteertham, 1998)
- **Awakes creativity:** Several examples from the past indicate that creativity is a characteristic of a relaxed and calm mind. When the mind is totally relaxed, the awareness slowly enters the deeper realms (subconscious and unconscious) of the mind and the person becomes aware of the creative and intuitive faculties.
- **Improves memory and learning:** The technique of *Yoga Nidra* is helpful in increasing learning and memory capacity. When *Yoga Nidra* is used in education, both hemispheres of the student's brain are involved in learning the subject, whereas in classroom teaching the left hemisphere functions more. In this way, the practice of *YogaNidra* involves the total mind in learning.

In a study it is said that, "using the technique of *Yoga Nidra* it was possible to teach a foreign language in 1/5th of the time required by conventional methods". (Ostrander 1973)

- **Makes a person able to face stress:** Stress is a cognitive or emotional response made by the individual towards any situation, which demands adjustment. The practice of *YogaNidra* helps in building up the coping ability.
- **Provides a remedy for psychological disorders:** In the practice of *YogaNidra*, the inherent tendency to become tense is rooted out and the individual starts viewing the situation as less demanding. It is also said that the practitioner of *YogaNidra* becomes his own psychotherapist, recognizing and systematically alleviating his own personal problems and interpersonal difficulties. (Gersten, 1978)
- **Manages psychosomatic diseases:** The practice of various stages of *Yoga Nidra*, have been found to be a significant and effective mode of therapy for asthmatics (Erskine & Schonell, 1981).

In a study it was reported that after three weeks of relaxation training the symptoms of colonic irritability significantly reduced. (Jansson 1979) In the case of cardiac patients, it is reported that *YogaNidra* significantly lowered levels of serum cholesterol in cardiac patients. (Cooper, 1979) Researches also show that the practice of *Yoga Nidra* lowers the elevated blood pressure levels of hypertensive patients. (Datey et al, 1977; Bali, 1979).

- **Promotes willpower:** *Sankalpa* improves will power. It helps in building up willpower and optimism because it is sowed in

the subconscious and unconscious mind again and again. In this way, by developing confidence, willpower and optimism, by clearing up the unconscious repression, one can fight any disorder, even cancer. This fact has been supported by a study in which it was found in controlled trials that a specific form of *Yoga Nidra* significantly increased the life span of cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy. (Simonton, 1972).^[24]

DISCUSSION:

People are under a lot of stress which impacts their mental health directly in their daily lives, yet the majority of them are unconscious of it. Thoughts and worries stream in the mind while sleeping, and the person awakens with an exhausted mind. However, in order to completely relax the mind, mental stress in the body must be relieved.

Inherently, maintaining mental health is emotionally challenging. In the workplace, self-care and stress management are required. *Yoga Nidra* and other self-practices have the ability to dramatically alter the field of mental health. Regular *Yoga Nidra* education may have a major impact on the stress and emotional exhaustion. Therefore, stress reduction techniques for mental health have the potential to improve mental ability.

An integrated response is seen in *Yoga Nidra* state such as the hypothalamus resulting in decreased sympathetic nervous activity (excitatory) and increased parasympathetic (relaxatory) function. This relaxation response is the inverse of the 'fight or flight' response.

Yoga Nidra's ultimate goal is to fight stressful influences while also addressing imbalances associated with poor stress management. It's not just a method of dealing with stress; it's also a way to transform and positively manage stress as

a stepping stone to better awareness, efficiency and success in life.

In the field of rehabilitation and geriatrics, where intractable pain, lack of motivation, and psychological depression are major barriers to conventional treatment, *Yoga Nidra* performs a vital palliative function. Furthermore, *Yoga Nidra* is most commonly used as a preventive technique, with healthy, active people using it to relieve acquired stress, increase stress resistance and overall efficiency, and avoid the development of psychosomatic disorders. *Yoga Nidra* can be used only or in conjunction with other forms of medical therapy. It has been reported to be beneficial in both acute and chronic illnesses, particularly degenerative and stress-related conditions like hypertension, coronary artery disease, and arthritis. Asthma, peptic ulcers, and migraine headaches are examples of diseases with a significant psychosomatic component that responded well to *Yoga Nidra* therapy.

Yoga Nidra is also being utilised in psychiatric admitting units to help patients to minimize their dependency on tranquillizer and sedative medicines while simultaneously increasing their self-reliance and shortening their hospital stay.

CONCLUSION:

Yoga Nidra is a powerful technique for achieving total relaxation of the body, mind, and emotions. *Yoga Nidra* is a basic stress-reduction technique that could have far-reaching consequences.

Its efficacy as a cure and a palliative, has been found in many research centres across the world in recent years, with extremely positive results.

Yoga Nidra is a more efficient and effective kind of rest and rejuvenation for the mind and body than conventional sleep. A *Yoga Nidra* session's thorough systematic relaxation is equal to hours of sleep without awareness.

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Rohini Prakash Dukare, Archana Raman Belge

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