

A vibrant pink watercolor wash covers the top half of the page, with various shades of magenta and fuchsia blending into each other. The bottom half of the page is a plain, light cream color.

A lay person's introduction to

# Yoga Nidra

As redesigned by Swami Satyananda Saraswati

**Krishna Prakash**  
Founder, Shrimath Yoga

Yoga is not a religion, but an aid to the practice of the basic spiritual truths in all religions.  
*Swami Sivananda*

श्रीः

आत्म - समर्पणम्

स्वरूपनिरूपणोद्देशे श्रीगुरवे नमः

प्रदीप - ज्वालाभि - दिवसकर - नीराजनविधिः  
सुधाप्लुते - शन्द्रोपल - जललवै - रघ्वरचरणा ।  
स्वकीयैरम्भोभिः सलिल निधि - सौहित्यकरणं  
त्वदीयाभि - वाग्भि - स्तव जननि वाचां स्तुतिरिच्छम् ॥

*from Soundarya Lahari of Adi Sankara, in Sri's handwriting*

*Due to Her infinite Grace, She, the Divine Mother, appears in the form of the one whom we can relate to, and ensures the knowledge of the Self is shared.*

*To that form which i relate to... Master Sri*

कृपासागरमज्ञानमूर्ति सदाऽनन्दमयंमातृस्वरूपं ।

सदगुरुश्रीसैलश्रीपूणानन्द प्रियनन्दनम् ॐ श्रीं प्रणमाम्यहम् ॥

Relaxation does not mean sleep. Relaxation means to be blissfully happy; it has no end. I call bliss absolute relaxation; sleep is a different matter. Sleep gives only mind and sense relaxation.

Bliss relaxes the ātma, the inner self;  
that is why, in tantra,  
Yoga Nidra is the doorway to Samādhi.  
*Swami Satyananda Saraswati,*

## INTRODUCTION

Namaste!

Dr Otto Stricker, the founder of yoga.in initiative, was on a tour of India to unearth and interact with Yoga Schools connected with the living spiritual traditions. During our interactions, the undersigned mentioned that not everyone who studies at the feet of the Masters / living traditions, become a teacher but only those who get a mandate to do so.

Thus, as per the living traditions, a certificate in Yoga is not an automatic passport to start teaching Yoga. It is just an acknowledgement that a course has been completed.

This booklet is originally a blog post that can be accessed at [An Introduction to the Roots of Yoga Nidra – Yoga in India](#) and it is part of a 3 post series based on the needs expressed by Dr Otto Stricker & Flavia Mameli as well as the scores of students from various countries who throng Shrimath to study Yoga as a system.

Thanks for your investing your precious time.

Jai ma!

Warm regards  
Krishna

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ROOTS OF YOGA NIDRA

### Understanding the terminology

Nidra means sleep and Yoga Nidra is its antonym!

Although appearing to be a practice of deep stillness, Yoga Nidra is a practice that allows one to rest, relax, rejuvenate, manage stress, understand oneself, realize desires consciously. With the word Yoga most of us predominantly associate postures, neglecting the true origin and complexity of the term. Especially in the context of Yoga Nidra, Yoga means awareness - a state that precedes concentration.



*Chin Mudra. Photo: Coni Hörler*

## **Traditions and reformation**

In India, the term Yoga Nidra is as old as the civilization itself. It is mentioned that the Lord of sustenance Bhagawan Sri Vishnu is in Yoga Nidra.

Yoga Nidra is derived from the tantric concept called Nyasa that means to withdraw. The nyasa (a set of energetic Yogic techniques for inner cultivation and purification) for the practice of Yoga Nidra is different from that of meditation. Thus, it is important to understand that there are umpteen numbers of practices that are rooted in the concept of nyasa other than Yoga Nidra and meditation. Each of these practices have their own prescribed ways to withdraw.

One of safest ways to understand the term Tantra is to see it as a set of process manuals available to experience the ultimate reality. There are a lot of terms and words in Tantra that are kept under lock, and the keys to these are not available in public. These process manuals are recordings of ancient teachers and are to be learnt only from authentic traditions.

Yoga Nidra as a practice was not known in public till Swami Satyananda Saraswati (Swamiji) of Bihar School of Yoga introduced it in 1964 primarily to train His four years old successor Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati.



*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati. Photo: Coni Hörler*

Swamiji was initiated into this practice by a practitioner of Tantra whom he met long time before meeting His eventual Guru Swami Sivananda Saraswati of Divine Life Society. He intuited that Yoga Nidra in its original form would not appeal to the current generation that is often tuned to look for ‘what is in it for me?’, be it spiritual or otherwise. Being an acclaimed Master, He was wise enough to understand



that the attention span of many practitioners was decreasing as well. Seeing all this, He restructured the ancient practice to suit the level and needs of our contemporary society.

Interestingly enough, a similar practice is still being carried out in many traditional Indian households in the context of motherhood: While the lady of the home is pregnant, during labour and, also in the upbringing of the child. The mother is the only source through which the child not only receives nutrition for its physical body but also the nourishment for its mind. Thus, what a mother eats, listens to, experiences, shares etc., impacts the child both while it stays in the womb and after it is delivered. Till the child develops a strong individuality of its own, which generally happens after the age of 7. Actually, it absorbs the external world like a sponge - without differentiating right or wrong - whatever happens around it during its sleep as well as waking state. It is only after this age, that judgement develops. Being practiced well, Yoga Nidra can help adolescent individuals to stay in touch with being open to new vistas of learning and becoming aware human beings.

Thus, Swamiji used His own learning from the Tantra practitioner and the traditional Indian way of bringing up a child, to restructure, finetune and release the version of Yoga Nidra that is being practiced today. In the following, He has shared the eight steps involved in the practice of Yoga Nidra. Fortunately today, there is a lot of information available for us to read, learn, practice and experience about Yoga Nidra.



*Chin Mudra. Photo: Coni Hörler*

### **How Yoga Nidra works**

In 1971, the US based Menninger Foundation offered scientific proof of the efficacy of Yoga Nidra. But, to limit this practice to a mere relaxation tool is a gross injustice

that one can commit to this nugget of ancient wisdom. So, how is Yoga Nidra actually practiced?

Sound is the subtlest of the sensory inputs among the other inputs such as touch, taste and smell. Thus, Yoga Nidra teachers use verbal instruction as the method to lead the students into the practice as well as the depths of experience that Yoga Nidra offers. From the instructions that help to relax the body, the practice then leads the students to the various energy centers of the body and by using breath as a tool these energy centers are worked upon to get deeper access into ourselves, more particularly the physiological aspects, our tendencies and more.

Finally, visually shown instructions invoke various emotions, thoughts etc. and help us to understand and sort out many issues that are hidden in the deeper recesses of our being.

The key to the success of Yoga Nidra practice is the timely introduction of a Sankalpa, meaning a resolve at two strategic places during the flow of the practice. A resolve is a desire that is your deeper need, something that you wish

to see coming true in this life. In tradition, thus, Yoga Nidra is not taught as a simple weekend module but as an elaborate life changing process. This is done by introducing various concepts from the Veda, Tantra and Yoga traditions that help practitioners to understand, refine, finetune and finalize the set of resolves which can be used in the practice of Yoga Nidra.



*Yoga Nidra & Meditation, Shrimath Yoga*

## **Benefits of Yoga Nidra**

Apart from the immediate benefits of relaxation, stress relief and desire manifestation through resolve(s), Yoga Nidra prepares us to enter the higher limbs of Yoga such as

Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (transcendence).

Yoga Nidra trains us to use judgement at appropriate times in life rather than everyday goggles, which might make us blind. It helps us to develop trust, confidence, clarity of mind, emotional stability, perseverance and above all: Yoga Nidra saves us from falling into the gallows of complexes, be it inferior or superior.

By consistent practice under a teacher, gradually one would learn to instruct oneself and get on to practice on their own. Also Yoga Nidra teachers highly benefit from sharing the practice. For them, Yoga Nidra is like an acid test. It is the practice that greatly transforms a mere Yoga instructor into a Yoga teacher. And this being said, it underlines the importance to learn Yoga Nidra from authentic (!) living traditions.

**But careful:** Teachers of Yoga Nidra should clearly educate themselves that they are just delivering the session! They are in no way the author or guarantor of results as the

results are an outcome of various factors including the Karma balance of each student.

Yoga Nidra one of the most well known practices to experience Pratyahara (withdrawal, the 5th limb of Yoga). It is not only a practice for students, but also a training ground for teachers to withdraw from the sense of ownership and develop the attitude of a witness, observing a seamless progress in and to the higher limbs of Yoga.

### **What Yoga Nidra is not**

Yoga Nidra is not hypnotism, mesmerism, counselling or psychological intervention as understood in a contemporary context.

In Yoga Nidra, the practitioner is the decision maker, not even the teacher, because the fulcrum of Yoga Nidra revolves around the resolve decided by each practitioner. The teacher provides only the knowledge and principles from the ancient traditions of Veda, Tantra and Yoga to help the student with framing a personal resolve.



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Jai Ma!

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## KINDLY NOTE

**In case if you felt the document helped you then PRAY for Shrimath Yoga and if it feels right then DONATE whatever you deem fit directly to Bihar School of Yoga through [State Bank Collect \(onlinesbi.sbi\)](https://onlinesbi.sbi)**

Krishna was fortunate to learn Yoga Nidra & Antar Mouna directly from the living traditions, transmitted through Swami Yogakanti, Swami Muktidharma, Swami Karma Karuna & Swami Satyasangananda who in turn are direct disciples of Paramahansa Satyananda Saraswati.

Namo Narayan.  
Jai Ma!



## **About the author**

[Krishna Prakash](#) is the founder of Shrimath Yoga, an ashram that is located in Bangalore. Since its inception in 2011, students from 40+ countries have studied Yoga as a system and given excellent [reviews](#) for Shrimath Yoga.

***Shrimath Yoga is the first Yoga School in India to be approved by Yoga Alliance International to provide teacher training in Yoga Nidra.***

*Retreats and Teacher Training Courses are available in very small groups with a strong focus on each participant.*

[Krishna](#) continues to learn from the living traditions of Bhagawan Nityananda of Ganeshpuri, Sri Ramakrishna Mutt, Bihar School of Yoga & other Siddha traditions.

Keen to experience ***Yoga Nidra?***

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