



**VOLUME 6, December 2008**

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## Yoga Nidra

Yoga *Nidra* is the Sanskrit name for sleep yoga. Yes, that is correct; there is a form of yoga that involves sleeping, but with self-awareness. For those of you who have read my book, *Essential Healing: Therapy and Consciousness*, know that I introduced to the reader the four levels of consciousness recognized for centuries by all Yogis'. In our every day language, we can be said to have waking consciousness, dreaming consciousness, dreamless sleep consciousness, and absolute trance like unconsciousness.

Waking	Consciousness	<b>A</b>
Dreaming	Sub-Conscious	<b>U</b>
Dreamless Sleep	Unconsciousness	<b>M</b>
Trance Like	Absolute Consciousness	<b>Silence</b>

*Chart of Consciousness*

We usually associate the term consciousness with self-awareness or sentience. This is not the case in the science of India or the science of psychology in the West. Our unconscious brain and mind process billions of bits of information per second completely unconscious to us or of itself.

The goal of Yoga Nidra is to help the practitioner become self aware and conscious at the dreamless sleep level, which is just beyond dreaming. Yoga Nidra is not a dreaming yoga or a how to cure insomnia yoga. Once the practitioner reaches the dreamless sleep level, she must have patience, courage, and love. At this level of consciousness, we encounter deep karmic impressions known as *samskaras* (joined-action) in Sanskrit. These *samskaras* are deep impressions that can drive our

actions or karma. They are the effects of our actions from past lives. In our current life, they are now the causes behind many of our actions.

The more we repeat these emotional mental patterns, the deeper the habit they form in our nature. Sometimes they are positive and can give one a giving nature. Many times, they are negative and destroy our self-esteem. We usually do not recognize them because they seem so automatic to us. *Samskaras* can even be defined by the underlying patterns in our natal astrology chart.

Ever meet someone you could not resist? How about someone you found it hard to like, even though they never did anything wrong to you? Perhaps you were driven to become a musician, a doctor, or a parent. These drives are our *samskaras* and they follow us from lifetime to lifetime. However, we need not be determined by these *samskaras*. We can affect them and even eliminate them. If this were not so, we would be doomed to endless suffering similar to only paying the minimum payment on an overcharged credit card. The debt would never be paid.

The level just above Dreamless Sleep is the level of Samadhi or Absolute Consciousness. This is the final goal of all true yoga. However, our *samskaras* stand between our goal and us. This is similar to the Cherub guarding the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, as told in the biblical book of Genesis. You could say that our *samskaras* work like a guardian of the threshold, with the sword of fire pointed at you. Ironically, we have actually created this guardian through our past actions. In this fact lies the key to our final liberation.

## Liberation How?

Most of us are able to meditate to the dreaming level but only Masters can be conscious on the Deep Sleep level. The Masters teach that even if we were able to reach the Deep Sleep level of Nidra Yoga, most of us could not deal successfully with the samskaras we would meet there. This is because they are already deeply ingrained in our physical, etheric, astral, and mental bodies. What we must do is purify the engrams in each of our bodies.

When we are suffering from over eating, it is an engram or a samskara in one of our bodies. An engram in the physical body may manifest as laziness when it comes to physical exercise. An engram in our etheric body may manifest as the desire to always be thinking about the future. A samskara in the astral or emotional body can manifest as pain and guilt from the past.

The best way to deal with samskaras is to face them, to feel them, to relive them. Re-living is equal to relieving.

### **The Simplest Answer**

So how do we remove these samskaras and reach final absorption into the Godhead? If we search all the Hindu *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Yoga Sutras*, we find many ceremonies and types of yoga designed to release us from the wheel of death and rebirth. However, what is the simplest answer?



**Krishna and Arjuna**

The *Bhagavad-Gita* contains the essence of all yoga. The Gita was written down sometime after the death of Krishna (February 18, 3,102 BC). Krishna, like Christ, was a divine incarnation or

avatar of the supreme personality of the Godhead itself. In the discourse between Krishna and Arjuna, are found the keys to the fast lane of liberation. The God Krishna represents our Higher Self while Arjuna is the struggling lower human spirit seeking liberation.

Krishna teaches Arjuna the correct way to practice three types of yoga. The three types of yoga discussed are *Bhakti Yoga*, *Karma Yoga*, and *Jnana Yoga*. Jnana yoga is right knowledge yoga. By knowing that Krishna (consciousness), or the true Self, is the force behind all forms of existence is the foundation of correct knowledge.

Next, we must understand Karma yoga or action yoga. We must practice doing the right actions in life, without any self-interest in regards to their results. This is how we begin to end our connection to the samskaras. While we do these practices, we dedicate them to the highest truth. That truth is that our Higher Self is the One Self or Krishna. In this regard, we are practicing Bhakti yoga by dedicating all of our detached actions, by right knowledge, to the One Self. Krishna teaches that this practice breaks all relationships to the samskaras, which are the results and triggers of karma.

In the Western scriptures, we see Jesus talking to the elders of the Jewish religion at a certain time in history. Jesus tells them that, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of *Me*. But you are not willing to come to *Me* that you may have *eternal* life (John 5:39-40).”

This is a great example of how the wrong knowledge about the scriptures can work against you. By not realizing that the scriptures point to the One Self, the Christ in us, causes the Sadducees and the Pharisees to remain on the wheel of death and rebirth.

Had the Sadducees and the Pharisees understood correctly, they would not have mistaken the prescribed letter of the law (action) with attached results (salvation). Concerning this Jesus again states, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have

neglected the more important matters of the law—*justice, mercy and faithfulness*. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.”

Here Jesus shows us that you must have the right motivation in your actions, and at the same time be detached from any self-interest in their results. Interestingly, Krishna shows in the Gita, that He is the force behind all actions, and yet He remains detached from them and their results.

### Closing Thoughts

In summary, by doing the right action for the right reasons (Karma Yoga), we must remain detached from the results. In this way, we honor through right knowledge (Jnana Yoga), that the Self is behind all reality, whether we understand it or not. We do not judge the Self as good or evil. As Job says in the Old Testament, “Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. (Job 1:21).”

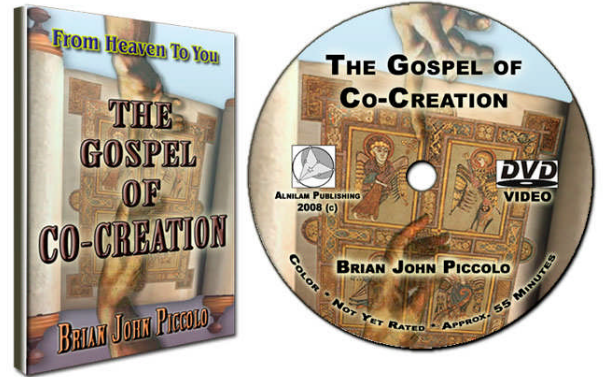
Nidra Yoga coupled with daily mediation can help us reach the state of deep sleep consciously. However, unless we can function on that level, we accomplish very little. Only Masters are adept at this skill. Thus, Krishna shows us a more practical and easier way to obtain liberation in the Bhagavad-Gita.

Finally, out of right action (Karma Yoga) and right knowledge (Jnana Yoga), dedicated to the One Self, the Christ/Krishna Consciousness, we perform perfect devotional (Bhakti) yoga. Taken all together, we break all karmic bonds and destroy all the samskaras. We receive total re-absorption into the Godhead or eternal life. I hope that every truth seeker on the path will read the Bhagavad-Gita at least once in their lifetime for their own edification and salvation.

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