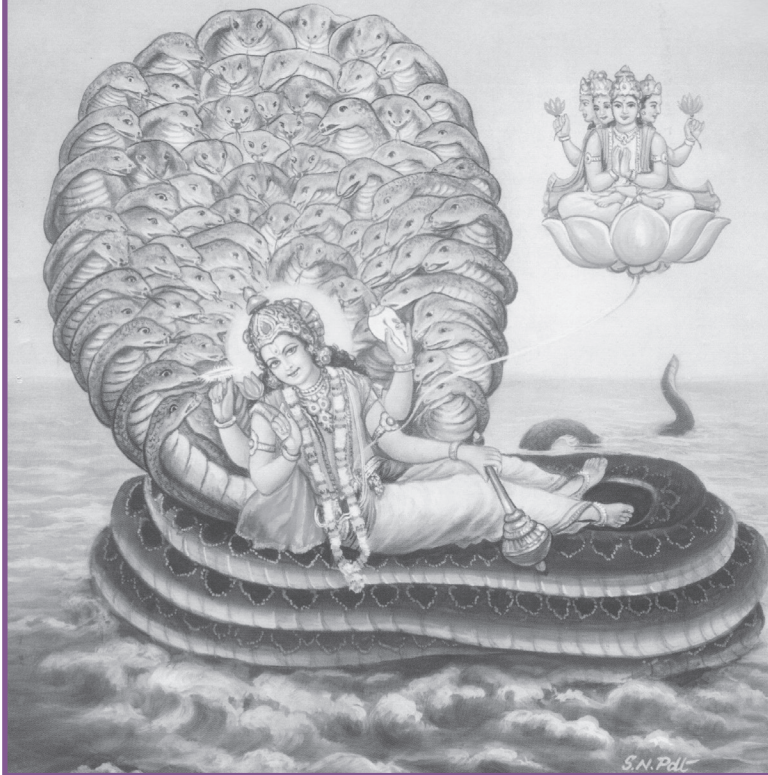


**Repetition of the mantra, *Om Namo Narayanaya*,
is a special yogic sleeping potion!
The greatest sleeper in the world is God in
the form of Lord Narayana.**



ENJOY THE GIFT OF SLEEP

By
Swami
Jyotirmayananda

Healthy sleep is a great attainment. It is a sign of physical as well as psychological health. If your personality is highly integrated, you can control sleep and sleep at will.

Sleep is necessary so that the physical body can rest and recharge itself at the end of each day. During sleep, special physiological and chemical changes occur in the body. Your blood becomes more alkaline and nature works to expel toxins or poisons. Your tired body heals itself faster during sleep because your mind and ego do not interfere at that time.

Sleep is a great aid in securing health, in promoting physical and mental balance, and in curing disease. In every way, it is a marvelous Divine medicine, given as a gift by nature.

PHYSICAL HINTS FOR HEALTHY SLEEP

- Do not depend on stimulants to keep awake or sleeping pills to go to sleep. Let sleep emerge

naturally from your heart and bathe your body in fresh energy. The sleep produced under the influence of drugs is not as healing as natural sleep. These drugs depress your nerves, and your mind becomes duller and duller as time passes by.

- Practice Hatha Yoga's powerful exercises to promote flexibility and strength of the body, deep and complete breathing, and profound relaxation. These exercises recharge your physical body with *prana* (vital energy). As you continue doing them with regularity and precision, you will enjoy healthier sleep.

- Follow a sensible diet and eat in moderation, allowing adequate time for good digestion. Diet plays a great part in soothing your nerves and promoting a restful sleep. As a rule, do not take heavy food before going to sleep. In the *ashrams* (centers of spiritual learning) in India, the evening meal is served at or before sunset so that there is

sufficient time for the food to be digested before the students go to sleep.

- Sleeping on your left side can also help promote better sleep. This encourages the breath to flow through the right nostril, which aids the assimilation and digestion of food, as well as provides other benefits to the body while it sleeps.

- If possible, do not sleep with your head towards the north. To do so allows the polar magnetic pull to interfere with the functioning of your brain.

- A good principle to follow is “Early to bed, early to rise.” Set a definite time for sleep that utilizes your best energies and try to maintain it.

- Practice moderation in sleeping, eating, playing, studying, meditating and in all aspects of your life. Too much or too little of anything can put stress on your nerves and disbalance your psychophysical personality.

ELEVATE YOUR MIND

Before going to sleep, try to elevate your mind. Read some elevating passages from an inspiring book, pray with a sincere heart or repeat mantra (a Divine name or mystic formula) with feeling and devotion. The suggestions that you give to your mind before sleeping are carried to your unconscious in a spontaneous manner, and they continue to operate during the night. Even if you read or pray for only five minutes, that effort educates your unconscious in a profound way.

If you know the art of repeating the Divine Name of Om, Ram, Krishna, Jesus and others with devotional feeling, you do not need any other form of lullaby. With each repetition, feel you are surrendering yourself to God, Who is the embodiment of love and sweetness. In this way, repetition of mantra gently rocks you to sleep, free of care and anxiety.

Repetition of the mantra, *Om Namō Narayana-ya*, is a special Yogic sleeping potion! The greatest sleeper in the world is God in the form of Lord Narayana, Who, according to Hindu mythology, constantly sleeps on the couch of the Shesha serpent. In the twinkling of an eye He creates the world and dissolves it, but, unconcerned by all this, He con-

tinues to enjoy infinite peace and bliss. If you were to realize that Lord Narayana, that Divine Self, as the Reality within you, you too could experience the sleep of supreme peace at every moment!

You sleep most profoundly when your mind is awake to the higher Reality within, when you realize that your personality is a wave in the cosmic ocean of life, sustained with infinite compassion by Divine Will. When you discover that you do not carry the strings of your personality in your own hands, but rather, that you are ever in Divine Hands, you can easily allow your nerves to relax and carry you into healthy sleep.

KEEP YOURSELF ACTIVE

During the day, keep yourself active. Do not allow yourself to be *tamasic*, or filled with inertia. If you are confused about something and do not know what course of action to take, do not simply close your door, lie down on your bed, and remain morose and melancholy. Make every effort to resolve the situation and keep yourself active by practicing Karma Yoga (selfless action). Use your talents and abilities for the good of others.

If you keep yourself active and useful to others, you will find that every obstruction in life will pass away. Fortified by the knowledge that the Self within you is bound to triumph, you will solve your problems effectively and be able to sleep profoundly and deeply.

FOLLOW A RIGHTEOUS PATH

Live righteously so that you are not pinched by a guilty conscience. If you have done things that you should not have done, if you have hurt others and degraded yourself in your own eyes, your guilty conscience will rob you of your sleep by sending dark creatures of the unconscious winging their way into your dreams like vampires.

If you promote fraud, treachery, violence, and hatred, you cannot relax at bedtime and enjoy real rest. But as you free yourself from grosser sentiments and integrate yourself in the light of Yoga, you become able to relax your mind the

moment you go to sleep and surrender serenely in Divine Hands.

BE THE SUPREME COMMANDER OF SLEEP

The Yogic art of mastering sleep involves control of sleep in all its aspects. It involves allowing yourself, by your will, to flow into a peaceful sleep and transcend the conscious problems of life. It involves waking up with brightness and alertness. It involves being in command when sleep is trying to overpower you and you need to stay awake. It involves learning to take a quick “cat-nap” for a few minutes when your mind is drowsy, but

needs to be back on its feet quickly to continue working. It involves taking control of the entire process of sleeping and waking by your healthy will so that the demands of your life are handled with success and skill.

Therefore, learn the art of promoting sound and healthy physical sleep and learn to curb the dullness of mind that Yogis refer to as psychological sleep. Most important of all, strive to attain God-realization, wherein you will discover what the Sages mean by the “sleepless sleep of the Self.” This is the sublime state of awareness enjoyed by the wise, the mystic sleep in which the world of day-to-day reality has faded from one’s view and only the nondual Self remains!



Relaxation Breathing for Enhanced Sleep

By Nick Nipank Shroff MD



Sleep is pivotal to cognitive function, metabolic regulation, and overall health. Embracing mindful breathing and relaxation techniques dramatically improves sleep quality.

Ancient Yogic traditions and contemporary scientific research underscore the effectiveness of nasal abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing, instead of shallow chest breathing. Proper breathing greatly enhances the physical, emotional, and mental well-being in healthy persons, as well as in people dealing with insomnia, anxiety, pain, arrhythmias and various chronic illnesses, such as migraines (one in 5 on earth), Type 2 diabetes, and COPD.

To induce profound relaxation, practice diaphragmatic breathing through the nose by focusing on the sensation of the breath during inhalation and prolonged exhalation. Become aware of the natural rhythm of the breath and gradually slow it down.

The benefits of slower, mindful breathing include:

- Enhanced resilience through body-mind awareness in the present.
- Improved sleep quality, increased Nitric Oxide, and reduced open-mouth snoring. It allows one to awaken refreshed in the morning with no dry mouth.
- Increased blood CO₂ levels, allowing for better oxygen absorption.

- Improved immunity and neuroplasticity.
- Toning of the Vagus Nerve, triggering a relaxation response with decreased heart rate, decreased arrhythmia, improved heart rate variability, reduced muscle tension, and better exercise tolerance.
- Activating the Hypothalamus, which reduces stress.
- Reducing anxiety and anger by influencing the autonomic nervous system

Restless to Restful relaxation breathing exercises are easy to incorporate into daily life. They are even more powerful when combined every day with *pranayama* techniques such as Alternate Nostril Breathing (*Sukha Purvaka Pranayama*), Humming Bee Breath (*Bhramari Pranayama*) and Victorious or Ocean Breath (*Ujjayi Pranayama*), as well as the practice of *Yoga Nidra*. These simple interventions result in greatly enhanced sleep and dramatic improvement in overall psycho-physical health.

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Related Pranayamas from *Yoga Exercises for Health and Happiness*

by Swami Jyotirmayananda

Sukha Purvak Pranayama

Sit comfortably, if possibly in a cross-legged position (in *Siddhasana* or *Padmasana*) and keep the spine erect.

Close your right nostril with your right thumb, and inhale slowly through your left nostril. Inhalation is called *purak*.

Then close your left nostril also with the ring and little fingers, keeping both nostrils closed. Hold your breath as long as you can comfortably do it. This is called retention or *kumbhak*.

Then, releasing the pressure of the right thumb over the right nostril, exhale very slowly through your right nostril. This is called *rechak* or exhalation.

Repeat this process, inhaling through the right nostril and exhaling through the left nostril, with a comfortable period of retention in between. This constitutes one *Sukha Purvak Pranayama*.

There should be a regular and steady rhythmic cadence for the time spent in inhalation, retention, and exhalation. Ideally, the period of retention should be four times longer than the inhalation, and exhalation should be half the time of retention. In other words, the ratio among inhalation, retention, and exhalation should be: 1 - 4 - 2.

Throughout your practice, maintain the mental attitude that you are drawing mercy, love, forgiveness, peace, joy and other Divine qualities into your personality, while expelling anger, greed, and other unwanted imperfections.

Ujjayi Pranayama

Sit in *Padmasana* or *Siddhasana* or in any other comfortable pose. Breathe in through both

nostrils while partially constricting the throat, producing a mild hissing sound of uniform pitch from the throat.

As you inhale, visualize the passage of air from the nostrils to the throat, from the throat to the heart. Then retain comfortably.

While exhaling as slowly as you can through the nose, visualize the movement of the *prana* from the heart to the throat, from the throat to the nostrils. No sound is made while exhaling. Continue for a few minutes, keeping your breath steady, rhythmic and deep.

Bhramari Pranayama

Breathe in slowly through the nose, while producing a high-pitched “mmm” sound in the throat like a buzzing black bee. Then, without retention, exhale as you produce a low-pitched “mmm” sound in the throat. Feel the vibration in your head. Practice five times and then breathe in deeply and retain as long as you can with comfort. Then exhale slowly and resume normal breathing.

Pranayama For Relaxation

Lie down on your back on the floor. Relax from the toes to the head. Or you may recline on your chair.

Breathe in deeply without making any sound. Feel that you are filling yourself with energy, life, joy, and peace.

Then exhale slowly and comfortably. Do not even think that you are exhaling. You may repeat “O...O...” while inhaling and repeat “M...M...” while exhaling. You may repeat any other mantra, half of it while inhaling and the other half while exhaling.