

Abstract: Recently, there has been an upsurge on the number of yoga studios and meditation teachers offering training on a meditation technique called Yoga Nidra. According to some, the state reached during this meditation practice opens the doors to a higher state of consciousness; a state that goes above and beyond our normal wakeful consciousness. For some others, the state achieved during Yoga Nidra is more akin to that of a state of lucid dreaming: a state in which we're aware that we're dreaming while dreaming. Thus, Yoga Nidra is promoted as a practice aimed at facilitating and increasing the chances of lucidity during dreaming. Finally, some other practitioners attribute to Yoga Nidra healing properties ranging from 'stress reduction' to 'chronic pain benefits'. This disparity of descriptions about Yoga Nidra raises the question of what the state of yoga Nidra exactly is. Is yoga Nidra a type of dreaming state or a sui generis class of sleep experience? Furthermore, is the state reached via yoga Nidra a sleep experience at all? Is Yoga Nidra merely a state of relaxation? For my thesis, I argue that to answer these questions, we should start by getting clear what the phenomenology of the state of yoga Nidra is. In this presentation, I focus on a cluster of descriptions of yoga Nidra found in the literature and I argue that these aren't cases of yoga Nidra itself, as they claim to be, but cases of minimal dreaming or sleep-onset experiences.