

## THE CONCEPT OF MEDITATION IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

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### ABSTRACT

*This article is a about mediation. Meditation is also known as Dhyana. The word Dhyana has been taken from a Sanskrit word Dhi, which means to contemplate, reflect, think or be occupied in thought. Scientifically, mediation is the unification of conscious union (yoga) of an individual soul (jeevalme) with the universal soul (Paramatman). In mediation, we try to make our mind free from all disturbing, distressing and distracting emotions, thoughts and desires. Meditation is an uninterrupted flow of mind towards a particular object.*

**Key words:** *Dhyan, Hinduism, Bhagavad Gita, Upanishad, Vedant, Buddhism, Jainism, Yog Sutra Rupa Jahana, Arupa Jhana.*

### INTRODUCTION

Dhyana is the generic Sanskrit term for meditation. The Yoga Sutras refers to both the act of inward contemplation in the broadest sense and more technically to the intermediate state between mere attention to an object (dharana) and complete absorption in it (samadhi).<sup>1</sup> The earliest known reference to such practice on the Indian subcontinent occurs on one of the seals. A figure seated in the lotus posture was found in the ruins of the pre-Arya civilizations at Harapa and Mohenjodaro which existed prior to 1500 BCE. Most of the orthodox Hindu schools of philosophy derive their meditation technique from yoga, but superimpose their own theoretical understanding of consciousness onto the results of the practice.<sup>2</sup> The original meditative traditions in China and India should be considered as separate and indigenous. To further complicate the issue, analogies between meditative arts can be found in Shamanic cultures such as those in Siberia and Africa.<sup>3</sup>

Mediation is also referred as spiritualism that is practiced in China. Chinese forms of mediation have their origin in the early roots of popular. Taoism it existed long before the codification of Taoism as a formal philosophy during the seventh century B.C. However, there is no concrete available data to prove that meditation came first across in Hindu culture and then spread elsewhere. Thus, for the time being the original meditative traditions in China and India should be considered a separate and indigenous. To further complicate the issue, comparative studies between meditative states and trance consciousness have been made. It suggests that even earlier precursors to the Asian meditative arts can be found in Shamanic culture such as those in Siberia and Africa.<sup>4</sup>

Dhyana in Hindunism, Buddhism, Jainism mean contemplation and meditation, though their technical context is different.<sup>5</sup> Dhyana is taken up in yoga exercises<sup>6</sup> and leads to Samadhi and self knowledge. Various concepts of dhyana and its practice originated in the Vedic era developed further in the Buddhist, Hindu and Jain tradition, in partial form and partly influencing each other there have been influential within the divine traditions of Hinduism.<sup>7</sup> It is in Hinduism, a part of a self-directed awareness and unifying Yoga Process by which the Yogi realizes self (Atman, Soil), one's relationship with other living.

The term dhyanam appears in Vedic literature, such as hymn 4.36 of the Rigveda and verse 10, 11 of the Tanttiriya Aranyaka.<sup>8</sup> The term, in sense of meditation has occurred in the Upanishads. The Kauhitiki Upanishad uses it in the context of mind and meditation in vases 3.2 to 3.6<sup>9</sup> for example with mind, meditate on me as being prana.

The Brahmasutra, which distills the teachings of the Upanishads and is one of three foundation texts of the Vedanta school of Hinduism, states that Dhyana is not a pratedam (or one for each Veda). But meditation belongs to all Vedic schools. Adi Shankara further elaborates it in chapter on meditation. In his commentary on the Brahma-Sutras Sadhana is as essential to spiritual practice. His discussion on this is similar to his extensive commentary on Dhyana as we find in Bhagavad Gita and the early Upanishads.

Meditation in the Bhagavad Gita is a means to one's spiritual journey, requiring three moral values – Satya (truthfulness), Ahimsa (Non-violence) and Aparigaraha (Non-covetousness).

### **MEDITATION IN YOGA SUTRAS:**

In the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali is a key of the Yoga School of hider philosophy.<sup>10</sup> Dhyana is the seventh limb of this path following Dharana and preceding Samadhi. Dhyana is integrally related to Dharana because it

leads to other. Dharana is a state of mind and dhyana is the process of mind. Dhyana is distinct from Dharana because meditator is actively engaged with its focus on it.

Patanjali defines contemplation (Dhyana) as the mind forces, where the mind is fixed as something, and then there is “a course of uniform modification of knowledge”<sup>11</sup>. Adi Shankara, in his commentary on Yoga Sutra, distinguished Dhyana from Dharana, by explaining Dhyana is the yoga state when there is only the “stream of continuous thought about the object, uninterrupted by other thought of different kind for the same object.” Dharana is a state where the mind is focused on one object, but it is quite aware of many aspects and ideas about the same object. Shankara gives the example of a yogin in a state of dharana on morning sun may be aware of its brilliance, colour and orbit. On the other hand, the yogin in dhyana state contemplates a sun’s orbit alone for example without being interrupted by its colour brilliance or other related ideas.

In Patanjali’s Raja yoga is also called “meditation yoga” Dhyana is “a refined meditative practice”, a “deeper concentration of the mind”, which is taken up after preceding exercise. In Hinduism, dhyana is considered to be an instrument to gain self knowledge. It becomes a part of self directed awareness which unifies the yoga process by which a world that by default is experienced as disjointed. And this comes to one experience as self and an integrated oneness with Brahman. The Brahman has been variously defined in Hinduism, ranging from non-theistic to non dualistic God.

## **MEDITATION IN BUDDHISM**

In Buddhism, Dhyana (Sanskrit) or Jhana (Pali) is a series of cultivated states of mind, which lead to “state of perfect equanimity and awareness.”<sup>12</sup> It is commonly translated as meditation, and is also used in Hinduism and Jainism.

The Pali canon described eight progressive states of Jhana. Four are called meditation of form (rupa jhana) and four are formless meditation (Arupa jhana). There are four stages of deep collectiveness which is called Rupa jhana. For each jhana are given a set of qualities which are present in that jhana.

**First Jhana:** The five hindrances have completely disappeared and intense unified bliss remains. Only the subtlest of mental movements remain, perceivable in its absence by those who have entered the second jhana. The ability to form un-whole some intentions cease. The remaining qualities are “directed thought, evaluation, rapture, pleasure, unification of mind, curtail feeling, perception, intention, consciousness, desire, decision persistence, mindfulness, equanimity and attention”.

**Second Jhana:** All mental movements utterly cease. Wholesome intentions cease as well. The remaining qualities are “internal assurance, rapture, pleasure, unification of mind, contact, feeling, perception, desire, decision, persistence, mindfulness, equanimity & attention.

**Third Jhana:** One half of bliss (joy) disappear and the remaining qualities are “equanimity pleasure, unification of mind, contact, feeling, perception, intention, consciousness, desire, decision, persistence, mindfulness, equanimity & attention.

**Fourth Jhana:** The other half of bliss (happiness) disappears, leading to a state with neither pleasure nor pain, which the Buddha said is actually a subtle form of happiness (more sub-line than piti and Sukha). The remaining qualities are “feeling of equanimity neither pleasure nor pain, an unconcern due to serenity of awareness, unification of mind, contact, feeling, perception, intention, consciousness, desire, decision, persistence mindfulness, equanimity and attention.”

Beyond the four jhanas lie four attainments referred to in the early texts as druppas. The four formless jhanas are

1. Dimension of infinity space
2. Dimension of infinite consciousness.
3. Dimension of nothingness
4. Dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.

## **DHAYAN IN JAINISM**

Jain meditation has been the central practice of spirituality in Jainism along with the three Jewels.<sup>13</sup> Meditation in Jainism aims at realizing the self, attain salvation, take the soul of complete freedom.<sup>14</sup> Broadly speaking Jainism texts identify four types of meditation based on the nature of objects.<sup>15</sup> Ariha dhyana is state Jain meditation literature, occurs when one's focus is on agreeable and unpleasant things. Raudra dhayana focuses on religious idea or virtuous objects while Shukla – dhyana is the focus on pure ideas or bright objects. This classification of four Dhyana types may have roots, suggests Paul Dundas, in the earlier Hindu texts Kashmir Shaivism.

Scientifically, meditation is the unification of conscious union (yoga) of an individual soul (jeevalme) with the universal soul (Paramatman). In meditation, we try to make our mind free from all disturbing, distressing and distracting emotions, thoughts and desires. Meditation is an uninterrupted flow of mind towards a particular object.

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