

# DHYANA



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## DHYANA

### WHAT IS DHYANA?

The word Dhyana has been derived from the Sanskrit word 'Dhi', which means to contemplate, reflect, think or be occupied in thought. According to Maharishi Patanjali:

तत्र प्रत्यैकतानता ध्यानम् ।।3.2।।

*“An incessant flow of attention on the concentrated object is called Dhyana.”*

Dhyana has been defined by the Samkhya school of Philosophy as *“Dhyanam nirvishayam manah”* (ध्यानं निर्विशयं मनः) which is translated as “the liberation of mind from all disturbing and distracting emotions, thoughts and desires.” Dhyana always starts with Dharana, i.e. concentration; the mind becomes steady and one-pointed through concentration and when concentration leads to the uninterrupted flow of thought towards one object that becomes Dhyana.

The two Sanskrit words *“Dhyana”* and *“Nididhyasana”* both are sometimes used for Meditation, but there is a difference as *“Nidhidhyasana”* means “reflection or contemplation,” a method used by Monastic tradition of Vedanta Philosophy. Whereas, Dhyana is a conscious and voluntary attempt is made to still the activity of conscious mind. Through withdrawal of senses and concentration, one-pointedness of mind is achieved and then concentration is changed into meditation.

### SOME MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT DHYANA

Dhyana is not merely thinking about something or repeating sacred mantras or concentrating on a particular thought or object. It is not a ritualistic worship or prayer for material gains and boons. The word Dhyana has been lucidly used for Dharana and suggests concentration and musings of various kinds with closed eyes. In fact, ordinary students, researchers and thinkers use Dharana and Dhyana indiscriminately. Dhyana cannot be taught. It is not an expressive subject, but an experiencing art where the consciousness of the aspirant is diffused evenly within and without the body, without fading or showing signs of division.

### IMPORTANCE OF PLACE, SEASON, TIME, DIET, POSTURE AND NADISHUDDHI BEFORE PRACTISING DHYANA

**PLACE:** Ancient scriptures laid emphasis on various places like under peepal tree, temple, cowshed, holy places, river bank, cave, forest for good meditation. The most important factor for selecting the place for practice is environment. The surroundings of the place should be calm, peaceful and clean. A positive environment in itself charges one with energy, inspiration and the will to strive for the quest for spiritual enlightenment. It is advised that one should always practice in the same place every day to build up the spiritual vibrations.

**SEASON:** Vasanta and Sharad - these two seasons are proper for the practice because too much cold and heat is not in the air and the practitioner does not suffer from the problems generated by the season.

**TIME:** For Dhyan, there are four periods in the whole day of 45 minutes duration each during sandhis (Junctures) - These are before Sunrise (Brahma Muhurta); noon, Sun sets and mid-night. The best time is considered as Brahma Muhurta.

**DIET:** During the practice of Yoga stomach should not be over loaded; it should be half filled with food, one quarter with water and rest with air. The Ancient Scriptures describe three types of food - Satvik, Rajsik and Tamasik. The most important attribute of diet is that it should nourish basic body constituents (Dhatu i.e. skin, flesh, blood, bone, marrow, fat and semen) and should be pleasing to taste buds and agreeable to digestive system. Sattvik diet contains all above mentioned attributes. Rajasik and Tamasik diet are not suitable for the practitioners of Dhyan.

**POSTURE:** Asana is the 3<sup>rd</sup> limb of Ashtanga Yoga, which is the specific body position, which opens up the energy channels. When asanas are practiced, steadiness develops and Prana moves freely. Asana brings steadiness, health, lightness of limbs, mental equilibrium and prevents fickleness of mind, brings agility, balance, endurance and vitality.

The asanas suitable for meditation are: Siddhasana, Padmasana, Muktasana, Swastikasana, Sukhasana and few others. In all these meditation postures, the emphasis is on the erect posture.

**The postures used for practicing meditation are:**

**SIDDHASANA (The Accomplished Posture):** Siddhasana has been rated as the foremost among the 84 lakh asanas. All the other asanas are useful for achieving healthy body but the Siddhasana is useful for meditation, prayer and worship, Pranayama and Samadhi.

While sitting on the ground, the perineum should be pressed with the heel of one foot and should be placed on the other foot on the genitals. Remaining still and steady, with the senses controlled, gaze steadily into the eyebrow centre; it breaks open the door to liberation. This is called Siddhasana. It has been mentioned in scriptures that varying results are obtained by fixing the gaze in different ways.

1. **Bhru Madhya drishti:** Gazing at the centre of eyebrows
2. **Sama drishti:** Looking straight ahead
3. **Nasikagra drishti:** Gazing at the tip of the nose.
4. **Ardhonmesha drishti:** Half-open eyelids.
5. **Netrabandha drishti :** Closed eyes.



**PADMASANA (The Lotus Posture):** While sitting on the ground with the heel of the left foot resting on the right thigh so as to be as close as possible to navel. Then the right foot should be placed on the left thigh in such a way that the heels touch each other as near the navel as possible. The vertebral column and the body should be kept erect. Care should be taken that knees touch the ground. The hands should be placed in the lap, palms upward, or on the knees. The whole procedure is to be repeated by altering the sequence in which the feet are placed on the thighs.

This asana, like Siddhasana is used for meditation, prayer, worship and Pranayama, but it has the added distinction in that it is decidedly more effective and useful than Siddhasana for physical well-being.

**SUKHASANA (The easy posture):** While sitting on the ground with cross legs comfortably, the hands should be placed on the knees. Those who cannot perform Padmasana or Siddhasana for meditation, prayers or Pranayama may sit in this posture. This asana is named such that anybody can sit in the posture comfortably for a long period. It is advised for the aspirants who have stiff legs. Position of hands and eyes should be just like Siddhasana or Padmasana.

**NADI SHUDDHI:** It has been mentioned in scriptures that before proceeding with the practice of Yoga it very essential to cleanse the nadis. Shatkarma cleanse the internal system and organs of the body, the asanas makes the body strong, by pratyahara five senses are controlled and by practicing pranayama the body becomes light and radiant. Dhyan helps in self-realization and with Samadhi enlightenment is attained. Hence one should practice in this order; otherwise there is likelihood of getting harmed by the practice of Yoga.

Pranayama is practiced in order to understand and control the pranic process in the body. Breathing is a direct means of absolving prana and the manner in which we breathe sets off pranic Vibrations which influence our entire being. Prana and mind are intricately linked. Fluctuation of one means fluctuation of other. When either the mind or prana becomes balanced the other is steadied. Hatha Yoga says control the prana and the mind is automatically controlled. Hatha Yoga says let the mind be, concentrate on the body functions and vital energy, and the mind becomes quite in itself. When the nervous impulses are steady and rhythmic, the brain functions are regulated and the brain waves become rhythmic. The breathing process is directly connected to mind. While practicing meditation, the fluctuating mental waves create a barrier between the practitioners and the object of Dhyan. So in order to control mind one must have control on breathe. It has been found that through Pranayama, Mudra and Bandha and certain postures which regulate the prana, the mind can be brought under control.

In order to achieve the stage of Dhyan, few Pranayama are very essential to practice - they are Nadishodhana, Bhastrika and Bhramari Pranayama.

## TYPES OF DHYANA

Meditation is a very unique universal phenomenon integrating all religions, traditions, languages, cultures, irrespective of caste, creed, color and nation. Every aspect of day to day human living involves one or the other form of meditation. In all religions, namely Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Jewish meditation appears to be an integral part of prayer. Eminent sages and others have described meditation in different ways, depending evidently on their own experiences. This goes to confirm the Vedic saying - “एकं सत् विप्रः बहुधा वदन्ति।” (Truth is one, but the wise interpret it differently.)

**DHYANA IN BUDDHISM:** Buddhism offers two traditional meditation forms: the first is called Samatha Meditation, its purpose is to develop concentration; and the second is called Vipassana meditation, its purpose is to develop understanding. The purpose of Samatha meditation is to reach a state of connection, whereas the aim of Vipassana meditation is closely related to the process of enlightenment.

**DHYANA IN JAINISM: Preksha Dhyana:** Preksha literally means “to look”. It means to gather the attention of mind inward and constantly looking within which allows the practitioner to become free from the world of name and form, and abide in Absolute Truth Consciousness. Preksha Dhyana can be practiced anytime, anywhere but regular practice at fixed time daily brings speedier results. The steps that follow in this meditation are Shwasa Preksha (Breath awareness), Animesh Preksha (gazing at an object). Sharira - Preksha (Body-awareness), Vartmana Preksha (Awareness of present), Ekagrata. This can be practiced while sitting lying or standing. This Dhyana gradually releases tension and bring relaxation to body, develops a deep-silent and slow breathing pattern, sublimates the effort to speak undesirable things transforms the mind and brings quiet, calm and relaxation.

**TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION:** It means meditation on the Transcendent and not any extra ordinary transcendental type of meditation as made out by many, distinct from the traditional age old technique of AJAPA JAPA. Constant - continuous repetition or recitation of special Seed [Beeja] Mantras in a monotonous manner with concentration upon the incoming and outgoing Prana. The mind - thought travel with and is identified with breath, the Life Force.

**According to Gheranda Samhita - Dhyana is said to be of three kinds:**

1. **Sthula Dhyana:** Contemplating either on the Murthi (image) of one’s Guru or of God (Ishta Devata) is known as Sthula Dhyana. The object of Sthula Dhyana can be vividly visualized; this type of Dhyana is for beginners.
2. **Sukshma Dhyana:** The object at this Dhyana is Kundalini, the Serpent Power, after it has crossed the region of the eyes. Then it becomes imperceptible.



- Jyotirmaya Dhyan:** Tejodhyana is said to be 100 times superior to Sthula Dhyan. In this Dhyan while the yogi is meditating, he sees a light and fixes his mind on that. The light which the yogi sees is an inner light and not a light outside, which he can perceive. Strictly speaking, this light is neither an image nor a precept. A yogi who is successful in Bhramari Kumbhaka hears certain inner sounds which blend with the light that he sees and the yogi's mind is fixed on the blend. Thus, the sound, the light and the knowing mind becomes one.

Gorakshapaddhati describes two types of Dhyan: Sakala and Nishkala. These two are akin to the Sthula and Sukshma Dhyan of Gheranda Samhita.

### AUMKARA DHYANA

There is one type of Dhyan which is very popular among the yoga practitioner i.e. Aumkara Dhyan, which is performed as follows:

For practicing Dhyan one must move to an isolated place or in a room and sit in any meditative posture. By keeping the body erect, eyes closed and the hands in Jnana Mudra on the knees, one should start chanting "OM" loudly. The word OM has to be repeated again and again loudly. The vibrations of the sound should affect the body as well as the surroundings of the place, so that one feels that it is not only the mouth but the whole body from head to toe is repeating it; and not only gets that room the whole atmosphere filled with the Aumkar sound. These affect the body and mind equally. Body gets relaxed, peaceful, happy and healthy. This process influences both Annamaya and Pranamaya kosha equally. The practice involves lot of patience and energy. Initial practice should start with 10-15 minutes depending on the person's physical and mental capacity. This state is very important because this is the foundation of Aumkar Dhyan.

The second step consists of closing one's mouth and repeating and chanting the word mentally. The chanting should continue only in the mind. This will saturate the mind, like the oral chanting saturated the body. This process is slightly difficult than the first step, but the regular practice of the first step makes it easier to chant mentally. While chanting bodily, the room gets vibrated but while mental chanting the body becomes room for the person chanting and his whole body starts vibrating with AUM sound. This also can be practiced initially 10-15 minutes and increase the duration gradually. This practice can be continued for few months. With the practice the mind and body are soothed and becomes calm and peaceful. When the process of mental chanting becomes effortless the state of Dharana is achieved, i.e. concentration or Ekagrata, which will lead to Dhyan.

The third step of AUM Dhyan is simply listening to AUM. After saturating the mind with AUM chanting mentally one starts with the third step. In this step neither body nor mind is to be used, but simply listen. The chanting of OM physically and after mentally, it becomes very easy to hear a sound of "AUM" which comes from one's own heart.

It appears that the sound is emanating by itself and no effort is required to chant physically or mentally. This is called Ajapa Japa.

Whatever is mentioned above this state of Dhyan is not very easy to attain. It requires patience and practice to achieve the results. There is progressive evolution. Practice of various components of Yoga cannot make one adept in Yoga in a couple of months. The senses have to be thoroughly subjugated. Divine virtues have to be cultivated. The mind has to be controlled thoroughly. It is an uphill task.

## BENEFITS OF DHYANA

The relation between body and mind was widely accepted by the ancient scholars. It is a well accepted fact that the regular practice of certain asanas, mudras, pranayamas, dhyan etc. bestows remarkable changes in the physical and mental functions. The psychosomatic linkage is being increasingly recognized by the practitioners of modern medicine, in a sense that unless mind is involved the body cannot be treated and vice-versa.

Dhyan is an important Yogic technique. The regular practice of Dhyan bestows many benefits to the practitioner - some direct and some indirect. It not only helps the practitioner to control many mental problems but also help a person to rise to the highest level of spiritual experience. Negative emotions like fear, anger, depression, stress & tension, panic, anxiety, reactions, worry etc are reduced and a calm state of mind is developed. Total personality and outlook of the aspirant changes for the better, so that he manages to face adverse situations in life in a better manner and discharge his duties more efficiently. The practice of Dhyan makes the person a positive personality, having positive thoughts and doing positive acts. Dhyan also increases the concentration, memory, confidence, clarity of thoughts, and will-power receiving power of brain and decrease the level of fatigue.

A yogi who meditates regularly develops a magnetic and charming personality. Those who come in contact with him are much influenced by his sweet voice, powerful speech, lustrous eyes, brilliant complexion, strong healthy body, good behavior, virtuous qualities and divine nature. Just as a grain of salt dropped in water dissolves in the water, just as the sweet fragrance of Jasmine pervades the air, so also spiritual aura of a Yogi becomes infiltrated to the minds of others.

In his Yoga Sutras Maharishi Patanjali has mentioned certain powers a Yogi may acquire through concentration and Meditation. For example, through sustained and prolonged concentration on the hollow of the throat a Yogi can transcend hunger and thirst. Such a claim can be verified only by practicing the specified concentration method.

Many scientific studies have been conducted and are being conducted to prove the claims made by the ancient scholars. It has been revealed by the studies that application of Dhyan is highly effective tool not only for health rejuvenation, but also helps tremendously to cope up with stressful situations faced by present day society.





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