



# *Dhyanayoga*

## *In Yoga Upanishads and Samhitas*

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### INTRODUCTION

*Dhyana* (meditation) is one of the eight limbs of *yoga* as mentioned in Patanjali Yogasutra. The Yogachudamani Upanishad described *dhyana* as one component of *sadanga yoga* (six components of *yoga*). Dhyanabindu Upanishad says that *dhyana* is the fifth *anga* of the *sadanga yoga*. *Dhyana* is performed in *Padmasana* and with *kumbhaka*. The Yogaraja Upanishad says that *dhyana* is one of the four *angas* of *yoga* such as *asana*, *pranasamrodha*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. It comes under *antaranga yoga*. Swami Satyananda Saraswati says meditation is the vehicle which takes one on the inner trip.

### DEFINITION OF DHYANA

*“Tatra pratyaya ekatanata dhyanam.”*

(Patanjali Yogasutra III/2)

In *dharana* (concentration), the continuous flow of similar mental modifications is *dhyana*.

*“Soham chinmatrameveti chintanam  
dhyanam uchyate.”*

(Trisikhibrahmanopanishad - 30)

*Dhyana* is the perfect reflection of self as absolute consciousness and *Soham*.

The Gheranda Samhita says, one pointed awareness (*ekagrata*) of an object or thought process is *dhyana*.

*Samadhih samata prokta yavad dhyanam  
prthak-prthak.*

(Vashistha Samhita 1/37)

The Vashistha Samhita says, *dhyana* is the balanced state of distinct ideas, while *samadhi* is perfect equanimity.

*“Dhyanameva hi jantunam karanam  
bandhamokshayoh”*

(Vashistha Samhita 4/17)

Meditation, indeed is the cause of bondage and liberation of all the beings.

*“Dhyanam Atmasvarupasya vedanam  
manasa bhavet”*

(Vashistha Samhita 4/19)

Meditation is defined as the true understanding of one’s own Self by mind.

*“Soham chinmatrameveti chintanam  
dhyanamuchyate.”*

(Yoga Vashistha Sara – 10/24)

“I am that Supreme Self which is consciousness alone and Brahman”, this type of reflection is called as *dhyana* (contemplation).



## AIM OF *DHYANA*

Swami Satyananda Saraswati says that the aim of meditation is to still the ever restless mind and make it one pointed. This is in fact the aim of yoga to allow one to meditate while being involved in worldly activities. During meditation a link is made between the higher regions of mind.

## TYPES OF *DHYANA*

In Trisikhi-brahmanopanisad *Mantra – bhaga*, it is described that *dhyana* on Paramatma and Vasudeva is of two types - *Saguna dhyana* and *Nirguna dhyana*. Both the *dhyanas* lead to *mukti* (liberation). In Yogatatva Upanishad, two types of *dhyana* are described - *Saguna dhyana* and *Nirguna dhyana*. As per Brahmasutra three types of *dhyana* are there - *Nirguna dhyana* (Unconditional or attribute less meditation), *Saguna dhyana* (Conditional or qualified meditation) and *Pratika dhyana* (Symbolical or Idolatrous meditation). In Gheranda Samhita three types of *dhyana* are described - *Sthula dhyana* or *Murtimaya dhyana* (Gross or Physical meditation), *Yotir dhyana* or *Tejomaya dhyana* (Meditation full of light) and *Sukhsma dhyana* or *Bindumaya dhyana* (Subtle meditation). *Yotir dhyana* is 100 times superior to *Sthula dhyana*. *Sukhsma dhyana* is one lakh times superior to *Yotir dhyana*. *Sukhsma dhyana* is the real meditation. Another three types of *dhyana* are also described in Gheranda Samhita - *Bahiranga dhyana* (External meditation), *Antaranga dhyana* (Internal meditation) and *Ekachitta dhyana* (One pointed meditation). In Vashistha Samhita two types of *dhyana* are described - *Saguna dhyana* and *Nirguna dhyana*. *Saguna dhyana* is of 5 types such as to contemplate on Lord Narayana on eight petaled lotus of heart, to imagine Vaisvanara on middle of lotus of heart, concentrating on own Self on middle of eyebrows,

imagination of one's Self in the form of child within the lotus of heart and meditation on solar plexus and to contemplate upon the golden *Purusha* in its middle illuminating the whole world.

Swami Satyananda Saraswati says about two types of meditation – passive and active. Passive meditation is the aim of sitting in one pose and performing a meditational practice. Successive passive meditation will automatically lead to active meditation. Active meditation is that which occurs one's daily duties when one walks, talks, eats and so on. Active meditation can be developed by performing the passive meditational practices and by developing one's self identity, as well as performing the techniques of *karmayoga* and *bhaktiyoga*.

## OBJECTS OF *DHYANA* (*LAKSHYA*)

In *Sthula dhyana* the object of meditation is *Guru* or Deity. One meditates on the physical form of one's *Ishta deva* or deity. In *Yotir dhyana* it is *Brahman* or *Prakriti* as a mass of light. One meditates on or visualizes the brilliant flame form of *Brahman*. In *Sukhsma dhyana*, *Brahman* (Absolute) in the form of *Bindu* or *Kundalini Shakti* is the object of meditation.

The Svetasvatara Upanishad says that a spiritual seeker should seek the grace of *Savita*, the source of the whole world and concentrate on that eternal *Brahman*. The object of meditation should be the Cosmic Self (both *Saguna Brahman* and *Nirguna Brahman*). The Yogakundali Upanishad says that *Atma* should be visualized and meditate upon. It is merely the size of thumb and like the light of lamp placed inside a pot. It shines like a light of lamp placed in a pot. The objects of meditation as described in Trisikhi-brahmanopanisad are *Vasudeva*, *Paramakasa* (great ether, who shines for ever



with the light of crores of Suns, as sitting in the lotus of his own heart), *Viswa Roopi* (one who is of the form of universe, who has several forms, several faces, several planks with several armaments, several eyes which shine like crores of suns, several colors and who is peaceful and also very angry). The *Yogi* should meditate on that indestructible matter which shines like God's grace in the centre of the heart, on that ultimate truth which is beyond *Turiya*, on that Sun who is the form of wisdom which is immeasurable and unending, on that being who is like a shining lamp in a windless place and on that being who is like the shine of unprocessed gems. The *Yogi* should be able to see and experience the shine of that *deva* with the universal macro or micro form or at least a small portion of him in his lotus like heart. As per Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati, three places of meditation (*lakshya*) are identified with Moon (Head), Sun (Heart) and Fire (Genitals).

### **PRANAVA DHYANA**

As per DhyanaBindu Upanishad, the one *Akshara* (letter *OM*) should be contemplated upon as Brahman. One should contemplate on *Om* as *Isvara* resembling an unshaken light (*sthira dipa*), as of the size of a thumb (*Angustha matra*) and as motionless. It says during *puraka* (inhalation) one should meditate upon Mahavishnu at *Nabhi sthana* (navel). During *kumbhaka* (retention) one should meditate upon Brahma at *hrd sthana* (heart) and during *rechaka* (exhalation) one should meditate upon Shiva at *lalata sthana* (between the two eyebrows).

### **PLACE FOR DHYANA**

The stillness and calm of nature acts as a perfect setting for the practice of meditation. One should face north or east to take advantage of favorable magnetic vibrations. It is best to have a

special room for meditation which should be clean and tidy, free from distracting vibrations and associations.

### **ASANA FOR DHYANA**

The meditation *asanas* are *Sukhasana* (Easy pose), *Ardha Padmasana* (Half-lotus pose), *Padmasana* (Lotus pose), *Siddhasana* (Accomplished pose for men), *Siddha Yoni Asana* (Accomplished pose for women), *Swastikasana* (Auspicious pose) and *Dhyana Veerasana* (Hero's meditation pose).

### **PRANAYAMA FOR DHYANA**

*Pranayama* serves as a basis for many types of mediation. Those *pranayamas* are *Nadi sodhana pranayama* (psychic network purification), *Ujjayi pranayama* (The psychic breath), *Bhastrika pranayama* (Bellows breath), *Kapalabhati pranayama* (Frontal brain cleansing breath) and *Bhramari pranayama* (Humming bee breath).

### **MUDRA FOR DHYANA**

*Mudras* meant for meditation are *Jnana mudra* (Psychic gesture of knowledge), *Chin mudra* (Psychic gesture of consciousness), *Khechari mudra* (Tongue lock), *Shanmukhi mudra* (Closing the seven gates), *Akasi mudra* (Awareness of inner space), *Vajroli mudra* (Thunder bolt attitude), *Sahajoli mudra* (Spontaneous psychic attitude), *Shambhavi mudra* (Eye brow centre gazing) and *Agochari mudra* or *Nasikagra drishti* (Nose tip gazing).

### **BANDHA FOR DHYANA**

*Bandhas* meant for meditation are *Jalandhara bandha* (Throat lock), *Moola bandha* (Perineum contraction), *Uddiyana bandha* (Abdominal contraction) and *Maha bandha* (The great lock).



### **DHYANA AND RELATED CHAKRAS**

In *Sthula dhyana*, *Anahat* and *Sahasrara chakras* are activated. But the *Mooladhara* and *Ajna chakras* are activated in *Yotir dhyana*.

### **PRACTICES OF DHYANA**

There are different practices of *dhyana* such as *Japa yoga*, *Mantra Siddhi yoga*, *Ajapa japa*, *Yoganidra*, *Antarmouna*, Inner visualization, *Trataka* and *Antar trataka*, *Nada yoga*, *Prana vidya* and *Kundalini kriyas*.

### **BENEFITS OF DHYANA**

***Dharanabhirmanodhairya jati caitanyam  
adbhutam***

**(Yogachudamani Upanishad -110)**

The Yogachudamani Upanishad says that one enjoys *chaitanya* (lightened state of consciousness) during the practice of *dhyana*.

***“Sagunam dhyanam etat syat animadi  
gunapradam,***

***Nirgunadhyana yuktasya samadhischa  
tato bhavet.”***

**(Yogatattva Upanishad – 105)**

The Yogatattva Upanishad says that *dharana* on *Akasa tatva* for *six ghatikas* (two hours twenty four minutes) leads to *Saguna dhyana* which gives different *siddhis*. *Nirguna dhyana* leads to *Samadhi* within twelve *ghatikas*.

***“Jadi sailasama papam bistirnam  
bahuyojanam,***

***Vidyate dhanayogena nanyobhedah  
kadachana.”***

**(Dhyanaabindu Upanishad -1)**

As per Dhyanaabindu Upanishad, *dhyana yoga* is the destroyer of *papa* (sin). The one *Akshara* (letter *Om*) should be contemplated upon as *Brahman* which is called *Pranav* meditation. The Svetasvatara Upanishad says if one keeps on meditating on the cosmic Self after death, he attains the third state, the state of over lordship that is he becomes one with *Isvara*. It says that if one meditates on *Saguna Brahman*, he becomes one with *Isvara*. This is called *karma mukti* (gradual liberation). If one meditates on *Nirguna Brahman*, he gets immediate liberation. It says that concentration on the eternal Brahman will save him from being drawn into public welfare activities and being shackled by this world. In Trisikhi-Brahmanopanisad it is said that both *Saguna dhyana* and *Nirguna dhyana* lead to *mukti* (liberation). If a *Yogi* is able to meditate, his mental preoccupations will be completely calmed down. He would have salvation in his grip. All the occult powers like *Anima* would be very much within his reach.

***“Dhyanaena Atmani Pasyanti kechit  
Atmanam Atmana”***

**(Bhagavad Gita - 13/24)**

As per Bhagavad Gita, *dhyana* (meditation) is better than *jnana* (intellectual knowledge) and *jnana* is better than *abhyasa* (practice).

***“Dhyanat Pratyaksha Atmani”***

**(Gheranda Samhita 1/11)**

The Gheranda Samhita says, by *dhyana* one can get *Pratyaksha Atman* (self realization). It is becoming one with the soul or higher self.

***“Atma sakshat bhavet jasmat tasmad  
dhyanam visisyate”***

**(Gheranda Samhita 5/22)**



*Dhyanayoga* is a most precious knowledge by which, there is direct perception of the Self.

**“Dhyanameva hi mohshasya mahamargastapodhana”.**

**(Vashistha Samhita 4/54)**

Meditation alone is the highway to salvation.

### HEALTH BENEFITS OF DHYANA

*Swami Satyananda Saraswati says meditation implies relaxation, both physical and mental. It acts as a holistic treatment for disease. It is a most powerful way of controlling physiological processes and also of controlling physiological reactions to psychological events. During meditation there is a slowing down of the metabolism, for there is a sharp reduction in oxygen consumption and carbon dioxide output. The reduced metabolic rate is due to the control over the involuntary nervous system output which one develops through meditation. Meditation has a noticeable influence on blood pressure, which drops much lower than normal both during and after meditation. The heart rate also slows down. Blood flow increases during meditation. During meditation the activities of the sympathetic system are reduced and therefore constriction of the blood vessels is automatically decreased, resulting in a greater flow of blood. It is the sure way to counteract different states of mind such as pessimism, depression and tension. During meditation one experiences a feeling of no anxiety.*

### CONCLUSION

Swami Rama says those who practice meditation regularly and systematically as instructed by the teacher get into the mood of meditation easily. The more one meditates the

more one gets the power of penetration and one pointedness of mind and finally the power of introspection. Swami Shivananda Saraswati says that meditation allows us to see things as they are, without the masking veil of our likes and dislikes, without fear or hope'. Swami Satyananda Saraswati says that the culmination of meditation is self-realization. It makes us conscious of connection between the outer and inner life and leads to spiritual happiness and peace. Sustained meditation leads into *Samadhi* which is the highest state of meditation. The Trisikhi-Brahmanopanisad says that one has to understand that the realization of the universal truth of the unity of *Jeevatma* (Soul) and *Paramatma* (God) which is that “I am *Brahman* and *Brahman* is me” is the real state of *Samadhi* which is an enlightened state of meditation where all the thought process are unified with God. That man becomes *Brahman* and he does not take another birth.

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