

DHYANA: THE GATEWAY TO HEALTH, HAPPINESS AND MOKSA

AN OVERVIEW

Dhyana As Tapa

In both the Hindu and the Jaina traditions Dhyana (meditation) occupies the most important place. As a matter of fact its predominance in all religious traditions as an instrument for purifying the mind and realizing the self has made it almost synonymous with *tapa* (devout austerity) or penance. Our sacred lore is replete with the profiles of the numerous Dhyana Yogis (meditating yogis) of the ancient age who sat cross-legged and motionless in a state of deep meditation for days together to please any one of the three gods (Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh) of the Hindu Trinity and be blessed with a boon to either widen their spiritual influence or vanquish the demonic forces who wreaked havoc on the ashramites or on the people in the neighboring villages. Before defining Dhyana and expounding its beneficial effects it will be in fitness of things to give an overview of the tradition of Dhyana in the context of the present global scenario.

As The Penultimate Stage Of Yoga

Dhyana in the Jain, Hindu and Buddhist traditions is considered to be the penultimate stage of yoga. Both Lord Buddha and Mahavira who are known for having meditated for years before they became enlightened are pictorially presented to the people of the world in meditating postures only. In the Hindu mythology the story of Dhruva is an example of how profound Dhyana performed with the sincerest and most pious intention even by a small child can compel God to appear in person before him. It is said that the celebrated divine sage Narad himself came to the rescue of this little boy who after having been insulted by his king father left the palace and was wandering in the woods sobbing heavily. Narad taught him how to fasten his mind on God which he did perfectly. Days passed, he remained sitting cross-legged with his eyes closed and completely lost in the thought of God. The spiritual vibrations emitted by the equanimous state of Dhruva's mind attained by means of rigorous austerities moved Lord Vishnu's heart who raised him to the position of the Pole Star. In India every one is familiar with Lord Siva's meditative postures in all temples. Thus Dhyana is a household name in India. We have another story of the most resplendent Dhyana Yogi in the Jain mythology known as Bahubali who is said to have renounced the world in the wake of the peaceful end of a conflict with his elder brother Chakravarti Samrat Bharat. He embraced the twelve-month Pratima Yoga (assuming the form of a statue) and stood motionless like a rock for the whole year. He was immersed in his soul and became altogether oblivious of his body. His feet up to the waist were covered with creepers which entwined his thighs and arms but unaware of the outward development he enjoyed the blissful state of his mind. Dhyana made it possible for him to attain moksha - the avowed objective of a Jain. Dhyana has always been an integral part of the India religious system.

Dhyana in the West

The Western countries have come to know of the miraculous powers of Dhyana with the wholesale export of Yoga during the last three decades. It was in the sixties that the Beatles came into contact with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi of TM fame and were so enamored of the soothing effects of Dhyana on their minds that they came to India to rediscover it and stayed for many days in Maharishi's ashram at Rishikesh. The Beatles' visit to India brought the word Dhyana into

global focus. A new wave of Dhyana awakening is sweeping the world today. It is marked by the advent of numerous neo-meditation systems. Besides Mahesh Yogi, prominent among these who became instrumental in popularizing Dhyana in the west were Paramhans Yogananda, Osho Rajneesh, swami Shivanand Saraswati, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Brahma Kumaris, S.N. Goenka, Deepak Chopra and recently Acharya Mahapragya. The world today seems to be flooded with various brands of meditation developed by different spiritual leaders. They are being marketed as powerful weapons to combat diseases, achieve success in personal life and be prosperous. Thousands of meditation centres are mushrooming in all parts of the world. They are mostly motivated by commercial consideration.

It is heartening to note that a sizable number of health institutes, medical research centers and independent organizations across the world have begun to recognize the positive effect of meditation on human minds and the consequent changes that occur in the human body. Real life often presents us with stressful situations or quarrels in which we find that we lose the balance of mind. Strong feelings such as shame, jealousy or fear can affect our perceptions and often make us behave in a more controlled manner. Now the scientists agree that meditation or dhyana is the most effective way to beat stress and control our emotions. For centuries philosophers and scientists have been trying to locate the seat of human emotional development. In earlier times they probed various parts of the body in search of the centre of the emotions. Today the scientists believe that it lies in the brain's limbic system which regulates the blood pressure and heartbeat and controls the release of hormones via many neural paths. The centre of emotional self-control is situated in the temporal lobes of the cerebrum. Dhyana has been found to be the most effective way to activate the centre of self-control and bring peace to a strife torn person and for liberation (moksha).

I will confine my paper to just two meditation systems i.e. the Jain and the Hindu concepts of Dhyana as revealed in the Jain canonical literature and the Vedas. The main objective of Dhyana in the Jaina tradition has been to annihilate the karmic bondage, realize the self and ultimately attain moksha i.e. liberation from the transmigratory cycle of births and deaths. The Hindu tradition too lays a great emphasis on meditation as a means to invoke the divine powers or to conquer the throne of Lord Indra. It has also been used by the rishis and sages of the past for spiritual elevation.

Dhyana in the Jain Religious Tradition

The Jaina religious tradition is based on the belief that the unawakened state of the soul or mind is the main cause of all forms of worldly suffering. In Ayuro we come across this statement *iqfjlk vrk.keso] vfHkf.kfxTt ,oa nqD[kkieksD[kfl* 'oh! purusha, (man) exercise control over your Goui, it is the only way to free yourself from the pangs of sorrow.' The soul has an independent existence and is separate from the body. It is indestructible and is born and reborn depending on the thickness or thinness of the karmic layers in which the soul lies shrouded. In order to destroy these layers of karmas that cloud the soul is imperative that we concentrate on the true nature of the soul. The Jain ascetics have been practising dhyana from time immemorial to enable them to realize the soul and stop the inflow of the karmic matter and demolish the karmic layers that have already been accumulated and are now concealing the soul. The credit for reviving the Jain system of dhyana goes to His Holiness Acharya Mahapragya. He has named it as Preksha Dhyana in consonance with the spirit of various references he found in the Jain scriptures.

The definition of dhyana in a Jain and Hindu Perspectives

The celebrated Jain Acharya Ganadhipati Tulsi has defined Dhyana in

,dkxzs eu% lfUeos'kua] ;ksx fujks/kks ok /;kue~AA

Concentrating the mind on the pure and truthful objects or images or controlling the mind, speech and the body is dhyana. The above definition of dhyana is in keeping with the spirit of the Jain Philosophy. The mind has two states -fickleness and steadiness. The state of fickleness is called the mind (manah) whereas the steady state of the mind is called dhyana. In the Jain canon Dasavekalik we come across an aphorism lafiD[k, ÅiixeLi,ka which means perceiving the soul with the help of the soul itself, perceiving the subtle mind with the help of the mind itself, perceiving and realizing the most subtle aspects of consciousness by one's conscious mind only. The word 'Preksa' that figures in the Jain literature is central to the Jain meditation system. Thus in the Jain context the term Dhyana can be defined as the concentration of perception. Unlike the other systems of dhyana the emphasis here is on perceiving and knowing and not on thinking and contemplating. It is the perception of the present which is important. The following sloka in Sambodhi written by Acharya Mahapragya further elucidates the concept of meditation in the Jain tradition:

bfUnz;k.kh p la;E; d Rok fpYkL; fuxzgeA

laLi 'kUukReukRekua] ijekRek Hkfo ;flAA

You will become *paramatma* (supreme spirit) by controlling the sense-organs, stopping activating mind, speech and body and by realizing the soul by the soul. The soul can be realized only by concentrating on the perception of the soul.

Writing in his book Dhyana Knyon Acharya Mahapragya further defines dhyana as a way to exercise thorough and holistic control over one's sensual desires. Elaborating it he says," Dhyana means developing a sense of equanimity or opening the eye of equanimity. It is the state when a person will only perceive dispassionately - his perception will be free from the feelings of attachment or detachment. This is called the holistic control of our sensual feelings."

The types of Dhyana in Jainism

Dhyana in the Jain tradition has been classified into four categories: *arta* (mournful), *raudra* (cruel), *dharma* (moral) and *sukla* (pure). Of these four, the first two, since they are a cause of an evil rebirth, are evil concentrations and so worthy of rejection. On the other hand, the remaining two, since they are a cause of spiritual good and liberation, are noble concentrations and so worthy of acceptance; hence they find place among the forms of austerity. These concepts have been described at length in the Jain scriptures. The short description of the four concepts of Dhyana in Jainism will be useful. It will give the non-Jains an insightful understanding of the importance of Dhyana in the Jain tradition.

Arta-dhyana

Arta-dhyana is that concentration of mind, which is produced owing to some pain or misery either real or imaginary. It is, again, of four varieties. (1) When an undesirable thing comes in one's contract, distressed at the pain caused thereby constantly thinks of removing away this thing-of how to get rid of this thing; this constant thinking or concentration constitutes the first variety. (2) When one develops a bodily or mental pain or disease, one experiences worry caused by a pathetic eagerness to get rid of it; this constant sorrowful thinking constitutes the second

variety. (3) When a desirable thing goes out of one's possession, then one constantly thinks of getting it back; this constant thinking is the third variety. (4) The fourth variety is nothing but a concentration of mind on unsatisfied desires. On account of intense hankering after enjoyment of worldly pleasures, one develops a strong volition to get hold of things not yet in one's possession; this constant longing for worldly pleasures or a strong determination to acquire objects of worldly pleasures is the fourth variety. *Arti* means pain, and mental concentration on one's own pain is *arta-dhyana*. Arta dhyana is considered a stumbling block in the path of moksa.

Raudra-dhyana

Raudra means cruel or callous, and *dhyana* performed by such a mind or being is called *raudra-dhyana*. Cruelty or callousness of heart takes its rise from a tendency to commit violence, to speak untruth, to commit theft and to seek security for the things acquired, and the constant reflections that proceed in connection with them are respectively called *raudra-dhyana*. These are four types of *raudra-dhyana* that promote violence, untruthfulness, theft, protection of a thing acquired. Thus the four types of *raudra-dhyana* are: to contemplate to attack and kill others, to tell a lie to deceive others, to take undue possession of someone's property, and to protect one's own property with intense greed. *Raudra-dhyana* comprises the perverse pleasures of contemplating on evil acts and benefits derived from them. Thus its four varieties can be described as perverse pleasures of violence, untruthfulness, theft and possession. (Perverse pleasure of sexual enjoyment may be included in perverse pleasure of possession. Or like the fifth great vow of absolute continence, it may be taken as an independent perverse pleasure.) Those who resort to raudra dhyana only add to the miseries of the world.

Dharma-dhyana

This mental concentration leads to spiritual good. All wholesome and virtuous reflection is *dharma-dhyana*. It is also of four varieties: (1) What is the commandment of an attachment-free great man? What sort of commandment it ought to be? To apply one's mind to an investigation like this and thus to lay bare the commandment in question-that is called *dharma-dhyana* devoted to a consideration of Jina *ajna* or commandment. (2) To apply one's mind to the consideration of the nature of defilements and to the consideration of the question as to how to get rid of them-that is called *dharma-dhyana* devoted to a consideration of *apaya* or removal (of defilements). (3) To apply one's mind to a consideration of the question as to what consequences that are being experienced are due to what *karmas* as also of the question as to what *karmas* that are being accumulated are to yield what consequences-that is called *dharma-dhyana* devoted to a consideration of *vipaka* or the consequences of *karmas*. (4) To apply one's mind to a consideration of the nature of the universe that is called *dharma-dhyana* devoted to a consideration of *samsthana* or structure of the universe. Dharma Dhyana inspires a person to gradually attain a state of higher consciousness. A person inspired by Dharma Dhyana is inclined towards spiritualism.

Sukla-dhyana (Pure Concentration)

Sukla-dhyana is a very subtle auspicious mental concentration. It is attained at a very high spiritual stage, where the deluding *karmas* are completely subsided or are subjected to continuous process of destruction. It is so subtle that it is very difficult to understand it merely by reading books or hearing about it from the mouth of the preceptor.

Like the other types of *dhyana*, *sukla-dhyana* too is divided into four subtypes. The four are designated as follows:

(1) *Prthaktvavitarkasavicara* ¼i`FkDRo&fordZ&lfopkj½ (Constant conceptual thinking applied to various aspects of a substance).

The term '*Prthaktvavitarka*' means conceptual thinking dominated by difference. And as there is in it transition (*Vicara*) from one type of *yoga* to another, from the word to the meaning from the meaning to the word, or from one mode to another, it is called '*savicara*'. Though there is a movement of mind in this *dhyana*, yet it is of the nature of concentration, because the movement is confined to one substance only, that is, its object is one substance only.

(2) *Ekatvavitarkanirvucare* (,dRo&fordZ&lfopkj) (Constant conceptual thinking applied to one aspect only of a substance).

On the contrary, when a performer of *dhyana* takes up for concentration some mode or aspect only and undertakes in relation to it a reflection dominated by oneness or non-difference, again when sticking to some one of the three types of *yoga*, - viz. those pertaining to mind, speech and body-he introduces no change in the form of transition from word to meaning or *vice versa*, or from one type of *yoga* to another, then the *dhyana* concerned is called *ekavavitarkaircara*.

(3) *Suksmakriya pratipatin* (lw{efdZ;k&vizfrikrh) (Concentration accompanied with subtle physical (bodily) movement and (infallible).

When the omniscient Lord or Arhat at the time of death, during the course of the process called cessation of *yoga*, ultimately takes recourse to just a subtle bodily *yoga*, while putting an end to all the remaining *yogas*, then this act of his is called *suksmakriya pratipati dhyana*. This stage of *sukla-dhyana* is, in fact, not of the nature of mental concentration. So to call it *dhyana* is merely a convention.

(4) *Samucchinakriya nivrtili* (leqfPNUu&fdZ;k&vfuoFr) (Concentration accompanied with complete cessation of all activities and infallible).

When even the subtle bodily activities cease altogether and the constituent- units of the soul concerned become free of all wavering, then the state is called *samucchinakriya- anivrtidhyana*. For, in this state there takes place no activity whatsoever whether gross or subtle and whether pertaining to mind, speech or body; and there is no possibility of downfall from it.

Preksa Dhyana

What is Preksa Dhyana?

It is a simple system that propounds what the ancient philosophers said about the spiritual knowledge and the spiritual practice in a scientific way. It is a mode of inspiring the human mind so that one may be rid of the bestial tendencies and accomplish the goal of creating a peaceful world imbedded in nonviolence and peace. It is a way to awaken the discreet mind by which one can control one's impulsive moods and emotions. The word *preksa* has been derived from the root *iksa* which means 'to see'. When the prefix *pra* is added, it becomes *pra+iksa* *preksa* which means 'perceive carefully and profoundly'. Here seeing does not mean external vision but careful concentration on subtle consciousness by mental insight. *Preksa Dhyana* is a system of meditation engaging one's mind fully in the perception of subtle internal and innate phenomena of consciousness.

Sources of Preksa Dhyān

The word Preksa is at least as old as Lord Mahavira. It may even be traced back to the times of Lord Rishabh, the first Jaina Tirthankara. In Hath Yoga obeisance has been paid to Lord Rishabh in the following words.

****vkfnukFk ueksLrq rLeS] ;suksifn"Vk gB;ksx fo|k****

Adinath is none other than Rishabh. There is one incident which proves it beyond doubt that Preksa was in vogue in his age. Chakravarti Bharat had his bath and sat in his bed room. It was an ideal mansion made of glass. He sat on his throne and started seeing his image reflected in the mirror that was before him. He was observing his body. This process of seeing himself resulted in the destruction of all his karmic bonds. His concentration on his body put an end to the pall of ignorance that covered his soul and he became omniscient (kevali). This may be described as the earliest source of preksa.

Lord Parsva the twenty third Tirthankara promoted the highest form of dedicational practices. Both the Jain and Buddhist traditions have been influenced by his system of dhyāna.

Lord Mahavira's Dhyāna-Sadhana

After Lord Parsva it was Lord Mahavira who practised natural meditation for years. He remained standing motionless in Kayotsarg posture for sixteen days and nights. Sometimes he saw the lokas situated far in the universe, sometimes he saw the lokas below. When he wanted to know of the elements of the middle lokas, he perceived the middle lokas similarly when he wanted to know of the elements of the lokas below he perceived them. His process of perception continued incessantly. The tradition of meditation went on even after Mahavira's nirvana. With the passage of time the practice of meditation in the Jain tradition began to disappear. The form of meditation changed drastically 1500 years after Mahavira. Then came Acharya Haribhadra, Hemchandra, Shubhachandra and Pujyapad who promoted *dhyāna sadhana* again. It was Acharya Tulsi's edicated efforts in the later half of this century that the scientific research was undertaken under the supervision of Acharya Mahapragya. His difficulty was that there wasn't an independent *agama* exclusively dedicated to dhyāna system. There is a reference to an *agama* called *dhyān - vibhakti* in the list of agamas but it is not available today. In such situation the only course open to the researches was that a thorough study of the references to dhyāna in agam literature be done. The first book on the Jain Yoga was authored by Acharya Tulsi in 1961. It was entitled manonushashanam. Then came the books written by Acharya Mahapragya which made a serious attempt to collect various references of dhyāna that he came across in the agmic literature. He wrote **psruk dk Å/okZjksgj.k** and **egkohj dh lk/kuk dk jgL;** In 1975 Preksa Dhyān was formally launched. The word kayotsarg occurs frequently in various agamas. Acharya Mahapragya wove the scattered sources into a whole and the result is that we have the full fledged scientifically tested preksa meditation system today.

Salient features of Preksa Dhyān

The quintessence of Preksa Dhyān can be summed up in the following lines

- (i) see your self,
- (ii) Perceive your self,
- (iii) Realize the self.

Based on the above, preksa comprises the following components:

1. Kayotsarg : Relaxation with self-awareness

The age we live in is the age of tension. Kayotsarg is the best way to reduce stress and tension. Kayotsarg literally means abandonment of the body coupled with high degree of awareness. It is the conscious suspension of all gross movements of the body. It is the first stage of Preksa Dhyana. Lord Mahavira is said to have adopted this yogic posture whenever he was faced calamities. The practitioner achieves the state of a trance by concentrating on the perception of the various parts of the body. It results in the cessation of the chain of thoughts.

2. Antaryatra (Internal Trip)

The second step of Preksa Dhyana is antaryatra (the internal trip) After achieving the state of Kayotsarg the practitioner is asked to make his conscious mind travel from sakti-kendra (centre of energy) to gyan-kendra (centre of knowledge) which lies on the top of the head. He is asked to run his conscious mind via the spinal cord. The internal trip of the conscious mind is repeated several times. It results in an increased flow of the vital energy (prana-sakti) upwards.

3. Perception of Breathing

Breath control is central to any meditational system. Breath is considered the gateway to the realization of the soul. In Preksa Dhyana the practitioner is required to concentrate his mind on his breath as it goes in and comes out. This is the third step.

4. Dirgha svas-preksa (perception of long breath)

It is the process of inhaling and exhaling deeply and slowly. The practitioner regulates the rate of breathing by reducing the number of rates per minute.

5. Samavratti Svas-Preksa

Like Dirgh Svas Preksa it is an important step of Preksa Dhyana. Here breath is exhaled through one nostril and inhaled through the other. Through this practice one can attain the state of extra-sensory perception like clairvoyance.

6. Perception of the Body

It is the gradual perception of the entire body running one's conscious mind over different psychic centers of the body. One can experience the signals of pain without suffering.

There are the following chaitangya kendras:

Pineal Endocrine Jyoti-Kendra

Pituitary Endocrine darshan Kendra

Thyroids endocrine Vishudh Kendra

Throids Endocrine Anand Kendra

Adrenal Endocrine Taijas Kendra

Gonads Endocrine Svathya Kendra

Benefits of Preksa Dhyan

Preksa may appear to mean different things to different people because it contributes to increase physical, nervous as well as spiritual energies.

On the *physical level*, it helps each bodily cell to revitalize itself; it facilitates digestion; it makes respiration more efficient and improves circulation and quality of blood.

On the *mental level*, it proves to be an applied method to train the mind to concentrate; it cleans and relaxes the mind; it offers a way to treat serious psychosomatic illness without drugs; it is an efficient tool for ending addictions and other bad habits; it reveals to one the mysteries of his mind by the realization of the real subconscious and the unconscious.

On the *emotional level*, the strengthening of conscious reasoning controls reactions to environmental conditions, situation, and behavior of others; harmonization of the functioning of nervous and endocrine systems results in control and ultimate eradication of psychological distortions.

On the *spiritual level*, the firm control of the reasoning mind, regulation and transformation of blood-chemistry through proper synthesization of neuro-endocrinal secretions, and production of dispassionate internal vibrations lead one to attain freedom from anguish and infatuation, and to become free from the effects of mental afflictions and torments.