
TOTAL HEALTH BY MEDITATION

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INTRODUCTION

Meditation is a state of absolute peace and bliss. It is a state of being in the pure, divine existence of ultimate reality (cosmic consciousness / God / truth). To attain this state various techniques are developed which are also termed as meditation. The word meditation comes from the Latin word '*meditatio*', which originally indicated every type of physical or intellectual exercise, then later evolved into the more specific meaning 'contemplation'.

The word meditation has two meanings. The first is continued, intent, focused thought. The second is a state of calm, unconditional countless awareness. According to the Eastern spiritual traditions like Yoga, Tantra, Zen, etc. the second meaning is equivalent to meditation.

Meditation is a way which gives the practitioner a real experience and taste of full being which is beyond all habitual patterns. In the stillness and silence of meditation, the practitioner gets the glimpse of his deep inner nature which was lost due to mental distractions. The concise Oxford English dictionary defines the word meditation as "1 the action or practice of meditating. 2 a discourse expressing considered thoughts on a subject."

Meditation is to live here and now. Meditation is a state which goes beyond the thoughts of past and imaginations of future. Meditation is beyond time, space and matter. It is the connectivity with the eternal source of every existence. Meditation is the highest state of human consciousness. According to Swami Vivekananda, "The greatest thing is meditation. It is the nearest approach to spiritual life – the mind meditating. It is the one moment in our daily life that we are not material – the soul thinking of itself, free from all matter – this marvellous touch of the soul." Soul is the existence of divine consciousness. It is eternal. To be in this eternal, infinite truth is meditation.

Meditation is a method to focus and ultimately quiet the mind. The practice is said to produce a higher state of consciousness. Meditation is recognized as a component of almost all religions, and has been practiced for over 5,000 years. Meditative disciplines cover a wide range of spiritual

and/or psychophysical practices which can emphasize development of either a high degree of mental concentration and stillness. Meditation is self regulation of attention, in the service of self-inquiry. This leads to self-realization.

Evidence of the origins of meditation extends back to a time before recorded history. According to archaeological excavation meditation practices may have existed among the first Indian civilizations.

“5,000 year old carvings from the Indus valley civilization depict a figure that some archeologists believe represents a yogi sitting in meditation posture.” Following is the photograph of this carving.



“Shiva-Pashupati”

The origin of meditative practices is very obscure. But it can be stated that the meditative practices will be still ancient than this carving. This is the historical reference of meditative practice. However the exact history of meditation cannot be dated on these sources. Meditation is the state to realize the ultimate nature of life and living. Its history will depend on the ancient evolution of human beings. It will depend

on the evolution of human consciousness.



Buddha Ajanta Caves

Since immemorial time the human beings would had been practicing the techniques to realize the state of meditation. From ancient times till date, meditation in some or the other form is being practiced around the world. There are several other sculptures which gives light on the practice of meditation in that era. The following sculpture of Lord Buddha is from Ajanta caves. The work on the Ajanta caves was started during the 4th century AD.

There are many techniques of meditation which can be classified

according to their focus. Some focus on the field or background perception and experience, also called 'mindfulness' whereas others focus on a preselected specific object, and are called 'concentrative' meditation. There are also techniques that shift between the field and the object. In mindfulness meditation, the meditator sits comfortably and silently, centering attention by focusing awareness on an object or process (a breath, or a sound, or a mantra, or koan or riddle evoking questions, or visualization, or an exercise).

Concentration meditation is used in most religions and spiritual practices. Whereas in mindfulness meditation there is an open focus, in concentration meditation the meditator holds attention on a particular object (e.g., a repetitive prayer) while minimizing distractions; bringing the mind back to concentrate on the chosen object. In some traditions, such as Vipassana, mindfulness and concentration are combined.

Meditation may be objective, or on qualities or purely subjective. In objective meditation the *Sadhaka* meditates upon an idol or picture of his deity (may be Lord Shiva, Rama, Krishna, Christ, Buddha, Mahavira or any other god or goddess). For him, the idol is something alive, vibrating with supreme energy. He may meditate upon the beauty, the qualities, and the activities of his deity. In subjective meditation, he may meditate upon the all-pervading pulsating supreme energy which is within him and without, permeating everywhere. He may also meditate on his breath while inhaling and exhaling. All these techniques lead to the state of meditation. But to attain this state continuous focus is essential. To attain the flow of continuous focus, concentration is required. Fixing the mind on an external object or an internal point continuously without interruption for twelve seconds is concentration. Concentration transforms into meditation. When the mind is fixed on any object or subject for 144 seconds continuously without break is meditation.

Meditation can be practiced while walking, talking, singing, dancing or doing simple repetitive tasks. Walking meditation helps to break down habitual automatic mental categories and regain the primary nature of perceptions and events, focusing attention on the process while disregarding its purpose or final outcome. In a form of meditation using

visualization, such as Chinese Qi Gong, the practitioner concentrates on flows of energy (Qi) in the body, starting in the abdomen and then circulating through the body, until dispersed. In Tantra there are various dancing meditations which purify all the meridians of the body, bring robust health and leads to samadhi.

Meditation is a state of absolute peacefulness and blissfulness. It brings divine felicity. "Meditation is the gate that opens that infinite joy to us. Prayers, ceremonials and all the other forms of worship are simply kindergartens of meditation. You pray, you offer something. A certain theory existed that everything raised one's spiritual power. The use of certain words, flowers, images, temples, ceremonials like the waving of lights brings the mind to that attitude, but that attitude is always in the human soul, nowhere else. People are all doing it, but what they do without knowing it, do knowingly. That is the power of meditation."

Meditation is not for some ascetics but is essential for all human beings. The individual self of a person unites with the higher self (source of existence) during deep sleep daily. This unknown union recharges the cells of a human being. Hence, when he gets up from his sleep in the morning there is a feeling of freshness, relaxation and full strength. This is a natural process for every human being. But if an individual could not sleep properly, he feels uneasy and is in a kind of fatigue.

It is the experience of every human being despite of his race, religion, sex, caste, country, profession, etc. Every human being needs relaxation, strength, ability to accomplish his duties and for peace of mind. Meditation is a great invention of a human being to keep his inner self in union with the higher self in a wakeful state for longer periods continuously.

In the schools of human insights like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Taoism, etc. the spiritual purpose and meaning is to merge the individual consciousness with the universal consciousness / ultimate reality / Source / truth. Meditation is the flow of continuous focus on one object (external or internal) / god /atman / supreme spirit / infinity. A sincere spiritual seeker meditates to realize the ultimate reality to understand the mystery of life and

death, to what is truth. Once he knows truth, he knows the ultimate reality, he becomes that, and there is nothing more to know. A person who has realized the truth, becomes truth, and lives in truth. Knowing is being. That is the highest state.

Therefore meditation is not meant just for the ascetic. It is the highest state of a human being and it is extremely important in the day-to-day life of every human being. A man who can meditate will become a better designer, a better manager, a better executive, a better actor, and above all, a better man. Meditation will be efficacious in every aspect of a human life. On the other hand, if a person cannot meditate, he/she will lack courage, poise and confidence to achieve his purpose.

Meditation is beyond all processes and techniques. It is beyond all limitations. "There is no tomorrow in meditation, no argument with death. The death of yesterday and of tomorrow does not leave the petty present of time, and time is always petty, but a destruction that is the new. Meditation is this, not the silly calculations of the brain in search of security. Meditation is destruction to security and there is great beauty in meditation, not the beauty of the things that have been put together by man or by nature but of silence. This silence is emptiness in which and from which all things flow and have their being."

Meditation is the ultimate state of a human being. It is the true nature of life. When a human being ceaselessly lives in meditative state, his individual consciousness (ego consciousness) melts into the cosmic consciousness (universal consciousness). This is also termed as superconsciousness (samadhi).

1.1 Meditation in Modern Relevance

Meditation concepts and practices have attracted the attention of the modern world for decades; however, only in recent years has it become evident that meditation practices might have a role in enhancing health and the quality of everyday life. A number of clinical research studies indicate a potential wide array of physiological benefits of contemplative practices. Part of the reason for these new discoveries is that many more young generation is now being trained in the meditative techniques. A more powerful driving forces are the

technological advancements that enable scientists to measure the changes taking place in our bodies, including the brain, during the various meditation practices.

The Western world, through its scientific technology, has made astonishing advances in understanding the physical world and utilizing its resources for improving human life through such scientific fields as medicine, agriculture, and engineering. Despite the improvement in our physical living conditions, however, humanity is still confronted with great suffering.

In fact, many of the complications and problems challenging the modern world are paradoxically, products of its rapid advances, such as the social upheaval that accompanied industrialization, and the labor market shifts that occur in conjunction with globalization. The most ubiquitous by-product of these problems of the modern era is simply called “stress,” and it has been implicated in the epidemics typical of our times, such as depression, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and substance abuse and other forms of addiction. Although the symptoms of these modern maladies can be treated by traditional medicine, we now recognize them to be as much a product of the mind as the body.

How can mental stress cause physical illness? Evolutionary science teaches us that our brain isn’t one undifferentiated mass. There are many distinct parts of it, linked in a complex network. The older parts of the brain, known as the limbic system, are the emotional, reactive parts that evolved long ago. The parts of our brain that evolved more recently, such as the frontal cortex, are the seat of rational, conscious thought. The various parts of the brain communicate not only with each other, but also with the body.

This two-way communication takes place through various hormones and neurotransmitters. Because of this two-way communication, mental stress can have physical consequences, and physical illness can have mental effects. Historically, much suffering resulted from un-met physical needs. And even today, in more than half of the world, much of the suffering that people experience is due to physical stresses such as insufficient food, inadequate housing, and infectious

diseases such as malaria, cholera, polio, or diseases caused by parasites or contaminated water.

In the more-developed countries, for example the United States, hunger and infection are not as common as chronic illnesses such as depression and heart disease – conditions that are linked to stress. Although wealthier countries have been able to eradicate problems such as polio and malnutrition, these problems have been replaced by others, such as high blood pressure, depression and stroke.

To function effectively in the world, some level of stress is necessary; to give us the energy and focus we need to react appropriately to dangerous situations. When the stress is prolonged, with or without a genuine danger, it has a negative impact on our health and results in destructive consequences such as high blood pressure and increased heart rate – and eventually leads to the breakdown of crucial systems and organs in our body.

What has become increasingly clear is that not all illness has purely physical causes, and not all illnesses can be resolved through physical interventions. Our mental and emotional states and attitudes play an important role in causing illness and therefore play an equally important role in alleviating illness. Western science is beginning to explore and understand the connection between body and mind; because of this understanding, interest in and appreciation for meditative practices has increased.

In the modern world, science holds the prominence and authority accorded to religion in the past. Anything that is validated through rigorous scientific investigation gains instant respect and acceptance; conversely, that which is not proven valid by science is considered questionable. Although spiritual pursuits may be noble endeavors, they are not necessarily considered relevant; the modern world is concerned not with the quality of our future lives, but with what is happening now: the quality of life right here.

Therefore, as science has begun to investigate the efficacy of contemplative practices, this same yardstick has been applied; can these practices contribute immediately to our day-to-day quality of life? If meditation is to attract the attention of the modern world, particularly the medical and

scientific communities, it will need to demonstrate its efficacy in a tangible way.

1.1.1 Stress, transcendental meditation and the relaxation response

The first scientist whose work on the health benefits of meditation which gained widespread attention was Herbert Benson, MD, of Harvard Medical school, who investigated transcendental meditation (TM). Although this technique is drawn from the Hindu tradition, it is basically a *shamata* practice in which the object of meditation is a repeated mantra. The reason his work gained such instant reknown was that he demonstrated, through a valid scientific study, that mental states arising from meditation have direct impact on our physical health.

Dr. Benson demonstrated that 20 minutes of a simple meditation practiced every day could reduce heart rate and metabolism and slow respiration, some of the crucial physiological responses related to reduced stress response. He argued that, as modern society is chronically afflicted by over-stress, which in turn contributes to many fatal conditions such as heart attacks and stroke, reducing the stress response was crucial for alleviating these ailments. He called these physical changes – and the accompanying feeling of calm – resulting from his meditation technique the “relaxation response.” Benson’s research was turned into a book that made a case for eliciting the relaxation response for better health; the book became an instant best-seller in the US in the 1970s.

Benson’s work kicked off a steady flow of investigation into meditative practices. Now, hundreds of clinical programs in North America incorporate basic meditation, under the rubric “mind-body medicine.”

1.1.2 Mindfulness meditation, stress reduction, and pain management

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., at the University of Massachusetts Medical center, is another leading researcher into meditation and its potential health benefits. The technique he developed, known as Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), is drawn from a Buddhist meditation known as *satipatthana* (Tibetan: dranpa nyer bzhag), or placement of mindfulness. Dr. Kabat-Zinn has convincingly demonstrated

the efficacy of his eight-week program; it is now being used in hospitals throughout the US for pain management and relief from chronic, stress-related illness. In addition, a recent study combining MBSR with cognitive and behavioral therapy, a Western psychotherapeutic technique, showed that when depressed patients are treated with the combination, it is 50% more effective in preventing relapse of depression, compared to cognitive therapy alone. Depression is a major problem in modern society; the rate of relapse is high, and recurrent episodes of depression have serious negative effects on physical health. This finding shows great promise for helping those who have suffered an incident of depression.

In another study, MBSR was combined with a traditional light therapy to treat patients suffering from psoriasis. Two separate studies found that when MBSR is combined with light treatment, the psoriasis cleared up four times faster than when it was treated only with light treatment. Psoriasis is a disease with an auto-immune component and outbreaks are often made worse by stress. There are various other studies that seem to indicate that meditation can enhance one's immune response; taken together, these findings suggest that perhaps meditation can intervene in a very positive way in the body's immune regulation.

1.1.3 Neuroplasticity, compassion and happiness

Perhaps the most sophisticated and impressive research into the impact of meditation is emerging from the laboratory of Richard Davidson, Ph.D., a neuroscientist at the University of Wisconsin. His ground-breaking studies argue that meditative states such as compassion and love are skills that can be enhanced through regular training and practice, and that these enhanced meditative states contribute to happiness and health.

Modern science recognizes that the human brain is "plastic," that is to say, it changes through experience. This means that joy, happiness, and other positive qualities can be enhanced by strengthening the corollary neural pathways and areas of the brain. Dr. Davidson's research on advanced Tibetan Buddhist meditators demonstrates that these individuals display enhanced neural activity on the left pre-

frontal cortex, a region of the brain associated with joy, happiness, confidence, and other positive mental states.

Another finding emerging from Davidson's research is that in meditation, the correspondence between the limbic brain (the older brain) and the rational brain (the newer brain), is more harmonious. This increased harmony is associated with enhanced mental function. This work is impressive in that it shows how meditation, a mental technique, can actually modify the neural structures in our brain, with a resultant impact on our emotional and physical functioning. Qualities such as compassion and love, therefore, are not set, but rather are skills that anyone can develop and enhance. This is something that the Buddhist contemplative tradition has long understood, but it is revolutionary in the scientific community, and gaining greater recognition, mainly because technologies such as MRI and PET scans enable us to observe and measure changes in brain structure and function associated with various meditation practices.

1.2 Research Methodology

The researcher used the following methods for the thesis:

- 1 – Original Scripts - Authentic scripts / texts written by ancient masters meditation.
- 2 – Photographs of primary sources - Authentic sculptures and seals representing meditation.
- 3 – Case Studies - Studies on the effects of meditation.
- 4 – Direct Books from Masters of Meditation - Books written by the master / experts of meditation on their personal experiences and on their discoveries in the field of spiritual science.

1.3 Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the research is as follows:

1. Meditation leads to enlightenment.
2. Meditation is very beneficial in attaining and maintaining perfect health.
3. Meditation is a state of cosmic consciousness.
4. Meditation reduces the level of stress and tension.
5. Meditation transcends the limits of time, space and matter.
6. Meditation is a way to realize the ultimate reality.

1.4 Limits

While doing this research project various limitations have been encountered. These limitations are been outlined to give a clear understanding towards the whole research project. The limits of this research project are as follows:

1. Geographical Area - We have conducted our research work at Pragyana Foundation, Kolkata.
2. Limited original scripts - Original scripts in the field of Yoga are rare. And some of the manu-scripts are in traditional languages which are not been translated. So it is difficult to understand those manuscripts as it is.
4. Sanskrit Shlokas - Several Sanskrit shlokas when translated in English, the meaning of the feelings of these shlokas gets changed.
5. Technology and experiments - Experiential terms cannot be experimented in the laboratories with test-tubes and other instruments.

Chapter-2

SCHOOLS OF MEDITATION & THEIR PHILOSOPHIES

2.1 Yoga

The word yoga originates from the Sanskrit word 'yuj' (literally, to yoke) and is generally translated as 'union' or 'integration'. Yoga is therefore the union and integration of every aspect of a human being, from the innermost to the external. According to yoga experts, the union referred to by the name is that of the individual consciousness with the cosmic consciousness.

Yoga is one of the six schools of Hindu philosophy focusing on meditation. Yoga has both a philosophical and a practical dimension. The philosophy of yoga deals with the nature of the individual soul and the supreme soul, and how the two are related. The practice of yoga is the activity that leads or brings the practitioner closer to this union of individual soul with the supreme soul - a state called realization of true self. These yoga techniques cover a broad range, encompassing physical, mental, and spiritual activities.

In Bhagwad Gita four paths of yoga are described namely - the path of meditation (Raja yoga), the path of devotion (Bhakti yoga), the path of selfless service to the divine (Karma yoga), and the path of intellectual analysis or the discrimination of truth and reality (Jnana yoga). Lord Krishna in *shloka* from Bhagvad Gita has described the way to attain the state of yoga. [Translation- When your intellect, confused by hearing conflicting statements, will rest steady and undistracted in meditation on God, you will then attain yoga (everlasting union with God)].

Yoga described in the *Patanjali yoga sutras* is also known as Raja yoga. Maharishi Patanjali defines yoga in his *shloka* :

[Translation- Yoga means to complete cessation of the functional modifications of citta]. The process to achieve the state of cessation of functional modifications of citta is yoga. The next sutra, explains the meaning of yoga as the ultimate state or end. [Translation- Then the seer will be re-established in its own form].

The re-establishment in the own form is the ultimate true state of a human being. This state is also termed as yoga. So yoga is referred as the state of self-realization as well as the process to attain this state. Patanjali's writing also became the basis for a system referred to as Ashtanga yoga (Eight-limbed yoga). These eight limbs are as follows: Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. Yama consists of ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truthfulness), asteya (non-stealing), brahmacharya (non-sensuality / living in brahma consciousness), and aparigraha (non-possessiveness). Niyama consists of saucha (purity), santosha (contentment), tapa (austerity), swadhyaya (self-study) and ishwara pranidhana (surrender to god). Asana means perfect posture which gives comfort and bliss. Pranayama is control of prana (life force). Pratyahara means withdrawal of senses. Dharana means fixing the mind on a single object which refers to concentration. Dhyana means intense contemplation of the nature of the object of meditation. And samadhi is the state of liberation from the bondage of the cycle of birth and death. Samadhi is merging of consciousness with the object of meditation.

Maharishi Patanjali, in his Yoga sutras, described five different states of mind namely - kshipta, mudha, vikshipta, ekagra and nirodha. Kshipta defines a very agitated mind, unable to think, listen or remain quiet. It is jumping from one thought to another. In mudha no information seems to reach the brain; the person is absentminded. Vikshipta is a higher state where the mind receives information but is not able to process it. It moves from one thought to another, in a confused inner speech. Ekagra is the state of a calm mind but not asleep. The person is focused and can pay attention. Lastly nirodha, when the mind is not disturbed by erratic thoughts, it is completely focused. This is the state of meditation. The ultimate end of meditation according to Maharishi Patanjali is the destruction of primal ignorance (avidya) and the realization of and establishment in the essential nature of the self. The main objective of meditation is to reach a peaceful state of mind.

Hatha yoga is a particular system of yoga described by yogi Swatmarama, compiler of the Hatha yoga pradiipika in 15th century. Hatha Yoga differs substantially from the Raja yoga of Patanjali in that it focuses on *shatkarma*, the

purification of the physical body as leading to the purification of the mind (*ha*), and *prana*, or vital energy (*tha*).

Yoga is a form of mysticism that developed on the Indian subcontinent in the Hindu cultural context. Its origin is impossible to trace, because it dates back to before recorded history. Yoga comes in many forms specifically designed to suit different types of people. The philosophy of yoga (union) deals with the nature of the individual soul and the cosmos, and the way of unifying them. The practice of yoga, on the other hand, can be any activity that leads or bring the practitioner closer to this mystical union - a state called self-realization. Over thousands of years, special practical yoga techniques have been developed by experts in yoga, who are referred to as yogis (male) and yoginis (female).

These yoga techniques cover a wide range covering physical, mental, and spiritual activities. Yoga improves every aspect of physical fitness; the mind/body energy exchange supports a mental clarity and concentration. The strength improves posture/alignment to support daily activities. The flexibility helps to prevent injuries and keeps the body supple and youthful. The breathing practices are the basis and the link between the mind and the body, providing a precious tool for releasing tension and reducing stress. The practice of yoga gives the way to quiet the mind by placing attention on the breath, and also on the movement (stillness) of the body.

Yoga is a healing system of theory and practice; it's a combination of breathing exercises, physical postures, and the nervous system and balance the body, mind, and spirit. It is thought by its practitioners to prevent specific diseases and maladies by keeping the energy meridians (*nadis*) open and life energy (*prana*) flowing. Yoga is a way to attain the state of union of individual self with the divine spirit. According to yogic science, this state of union is the highest state in the life of every living being. This state is defined as *Moksha* (liberation / salvation).

In the *shloka* of *yoga bija* by siddha guru Gorakhnath, Lord Shiva describes the greatness of yoga. (Translation- O Parvati! nothing is so fruitful, pleasing, subtle, mysterious, enlightening and lovely as yoga).

2.2 Tantra

Tantra consists of practices and ideas which has among its characteristics the use of ritual, energy work, for the identification of the microcosm (human being) with the macrocosm (universe). The Tantric practitioner seeks to use the divine power that flows through the universe to attain Nirvana. Tantra is not a single logical system. It is multidimensional.

Tantra is always regarded as an esoteric spiritual science. According to Tantra, the sorrow of life is caused by a bi-polar existence, a split of the one into two, because the reality of things is oneness and not the dual existence in any of its forms. The dual form of life being, in a sense, an unnatural way of life, there is always an uncertain attitude of like and dislike at the same time between one pole and another, love getting suppressed when hate supervenes, and hate being suppressed when love gains the upper hand, while the fact is that both these attitudes are present in an individual concealed and only one of the aspects comes to the surface as and when the occasion demands. To get back from duality to unity is the process of Tantra sadhana.

The process of working with the energy includes yogic practices, chanting of mantras, visualizations, etc. Visualization and mantras are used for the identification of the practitioner with the qualities and powers of the deity. This leads to oneness of the practitioner (sadhaka) and the deity (Ishta-devata). Yoga is used to unite the individual consciousness with the cosmic consciousness.

Tantra exists in various forms of namely - Shaiva, Vaisnava, Ganapatya, and Shakta. The texts of Tantra are classified as Shaiva Agamas, Shakta Tantras and Vaishnava Pancatantra samhitas.

According to Tantra, satchidananda (being-consciousness-bliss) has the power of both self-evolution and self-involution. Reality (prakriti) evolves into a multiplicity of creatures and things still it always remains pure consciousness, being and bliss. In the process of evolution, Maya (illusion) conceals reality and separates it into opposites, such as conscious and unconscious, pleasant and unpleasant, positive and negative, etc. If not realized as illusion, these determining conditions attach, limit and restrain the individual soul.

From the point of view of Tantra, even in the state of evolution reality remains satchidananda (being-consciousness-bliss). Tantra states that world process (evolution) and individual soul are real. So Shiva (purusha) and shakti (prakriti) are not separate they are always integrated.

Evolution is the outgoing current which is only half of the functioning of Maya. Involution is the ingoing or return current which takes the individual soul back toward the source i.e. infinite reality. Tantra transforms the outgoing current into ingoing current, thus dissolving the binding produced by Maya. This leads to Moksha (liberation). Tantra sadhana sublimate rather than negate relative reality. Sublimation consists of three phases namely - purification, elevation and the reaffirmation of identity on the plane of pure consciousness.

Tantra sadhana includes yantra, mandala and mantra practices to invoke deities like Shiva and Kali. The deities (Shiva and Shakti) are worshipped with flowers, incense, and other offerings and are engaged as attributes of Ishta devata meditations. In this meditation the practitioners either visualize themselves as the deity or experience the darshan (vision) of the deity. There are various secret rituals included in Tantra. They may include any or all of the elements of ordinary ritual either directly or substituted along with other rites and themes such as feast (food), sexuality or procreation, etc.

The divine sexual practice of tantra is a way to experience the infinite awareness. According to tantra, sex (maithuna) has three outcomes namely – reproduction (prajanana), pleasure (sukha) and liberation (moksha). Sexual rituals of tantra involve high structured and thorough preparation and purification rites. Maithuna balances the pranic energy channels namely - positive (ida nadi) and negative (pingala nadi) in the subtle bodies of both participants.

The sushumna nadi gets awakened and the kundalini shakti rises upwards within it. This leads to samadhi wherein the respective individualities of each of the participants are completely dissolved in the unity of cosmic consciousness. The male and female practitioners are conjoined physically and represent Shiva (male principle) and Shakti (female principle). Beyond the physical level, a subtle fusion of Shiva (positive

energy) and Shakti (negative energy) takes place which results in a united energy field.

2.3 Vedanta

Vedanta is a spiritual tradition explained in the Upanishads that is concerned with the self-realization by which one understands the ultimate nature of reality (Brahman). Vedanta which implies 'the end of all knowledge' - by definition is not restricted or confined to one book and there is no sole source for the philosophy of Vedanta. Vedanta is based on immutable spiritual laws that are common to religions and spiritual traditions worldwide. Vedanta as the end of knowledge refers to a state of self-realization, attainment, or cosmic consciousness. Historically and currently Vedanta is understood as a state of transcendence and not as a concept that can be grasped by the intellect alone.

Etymologically the word 'Veda' means 'knowledge' and anta means 'end'. So the literal meaning of the term 'Vedanta' is 'the end of knowledge' or 'the ultimate knowledge'. In earlier writings, Sanskrit 'Vedanta' simply referred to the Upanishads, the most speculative and philosophical of the vedic texts. However, in the medieval period of Hinduism, the word Vedanta came to mean the school of philosophy that interpreted the Upanishads. Traditional Vedanta considers scriptural evidence (shabda pramana) as the most authentic means of knowledge, while perception (pratyakssa) and logical inference (anumana) are considered to be subordinate but suitable.

Vedanta is also called *uttara mimamsa*, or the 'latter' or 'higher enquiry', and is often paired with *purva mimamsa*, the 'former enquiry'. *Pūrva mimamsa* which is usually called *mimamsa* deals with explanations of the fire-sacrifices of the vedic mantras (in the *samhita* portion of the Vedas) and *Brahmanas*, while Vedanta explicates the esoteric teachings of the *Aranyakas* and the Upanishads, composed from ca. the 9th century BC until modern times.

While the traditional vedic *Karma kānda*, or ritualistic components of religion, continued to be practiced through the Brahmins as meditative and propitiatory rites to guide society to self-knowledge, more *jnana* (gnosis)- or knowledge-centered understandings began to emerge. These are mystical streams of

vedic religion that focused on meditation, self-discipline and spiritual connectivity rather than on rituals.

The systematization of vedantic ideas into one coherent treatise was undertaken by Badarayana in the Vedanta sutra (200 B.C.). Scholars know the vedanta-sutra by a variety of names, including (1) Brahma-sutra, (2) Sariraka, (3) Vyasa-sutra, (4) Badarayan-sutra, (5) Uttara-mimasa and (6) Vedanta-darsana. The cryptic aphorisms of the Vedanta sutras are open to a variety of interpretations, resulting in the formation of numerous Vedanta schools, each interpreting the texts in its own way and producing its own sub-commentaries claiming to be faithful to the original.

Consistent throughout Vedanta, however, is the exhortation that ritual be eschewed in favor of the individual's quest for truth through meditation governed by a loving morality, secure in the knowledge that infinite bliss awaits the seeker. Nearly all existing sects of Hinduism are directly or indirectly influenced by the thought systems developed by Vedantic thinkers. Hinduism to a great extent owes its survival to the formation of the coherent and logically advanced systems of Vedanta.

All forms of Vedanta are drawn primarily from the Upanishads, a set of philosophical and instructive Vedic scriptures, which deal mainly with forms of meditation. The Upanishads are commentaries on the Vedas, their essence and end. Thus they are known as Vedanta (end of the Veda). They are considered the fundamental essence of all the Vedas and although they form the backbone of Vedanta, portions of Vedantic thought are also derived from some of the earlier Aranyakas.

The primary philosophy in the Upanishads which is of one absolute reality (Brahman) is the main principle of Vedanta. Maharishi Vyasa was one of the major proponents of this philosophy and author of the Brahma sutras based on the Upanishads. The concept of Brahman is the supreme spirit or the eternal, self-existent, immanent and transcendent supreme and ultimate reality which is the divine ground of all Being. This is central to most schools of Vedanta. The concept of God (Ishvara) is also there, and the sub-schools of Vedanta differ mainly in their way to identify God with Brahman. The shloka

from Kathopanishad describes about the realization of the eternal self- Brahman. (Translation- The self cannot be reached by speech, by mind, or by the eye. How can it be realized otherwise than from those who say, “He is”).

(Translation- When all the desires that dwell in the heart are destroyed, then the mortal becomes immortal, and he attains Brahman even here).

The contents of the Upanishads are often termed in enigmatic language, which has left them open to various interpretations. Over a period of time, several scholars have interpreted the writings in Upanishads and other scriptures like Brahma sutras according to their own understanding and the need of their time. There are a total of six important interpretations of these source texts, out of which, three are considered prominent.

These three are namely - Advaita Vedanta, Vishishtadvaita and Dvaita. These vedantic schools of thought were founded by Shri Adi Shankara, Shri Ramanuja and Shri Madhvacharya, respectively. It should be noted, however, that the Indian pre-Shankara Buddhist writer Bhavya in the Madhyamakahrdaya Karika describes the Vedanta philosophy as ‘Bhedabheda’. Proponents of other Vedantic schools continue to write and develop their ideas as well, although their works are not widely known outside of smaller circles of followers in India.

While it is not typically thought of as a purely vedantic text, the Bhagavad Gita has played a strong role in vedantic thought, what with its representative syncretism of Samkhya, Yoga, and Upanishadic thought. Indeed, it is itself called an ‘upanishad’ and thus, all major vedantic teachers (like Shankara, Ramanuja, and Madhvacharya) have taken it upon themselves to compose often extensive commentaries not only on the Upanishads and Brahma sutras, but also on the Bhagavad Gita. In such a manner, vedantists both old and new have implicitly attested to the Bhagavad Gita's importance to the development of thought and practice of Vedanta.

There are various sub-schools of Vedanta namely – Advaita Vedanta, Vishishtadvaita, Dvaita, Dvaitadvaita, Shuddhadvaita, and Achintya Bhedabheda. Advaita Vedānta was propounded by Adi Sankara and his grand-guru

Gaudapada, who described Ajativada. According to this school of Vedanta, Brahman is the only reality, and the world, as it appears, is illusory. As Brahman is the sole reality, it cannot be said to possess any attributes whatsoever.

An illusionary power of Brahman called Maya causes the world to arise. Ignorance of this reality is the cause of all suffering in the world and only upon true knowledge of Brahman can liberation be attained. When a person tries to know Brahman through his mind, due to the influence of Maya, Brahman appears as God (Ishvara), separate from the world and from the individual. In reality, there is no difference between the individual soul (jivatman) and Brahman. Liberation lies in realizing the reality of this non-difference or non-duality (advaita). Thus, the path to liberation is ultimately only through knowledge (Jnana).

According to Vishishtadvaita, which was propounded by Ramanuja, the Jivatman is a part of Brahman, and hence is similar, but not identical. The main difference from Advaita is that in Visishtadvaita, the Brahman is asserted to have attributes, including the individual conscious souls and matter. Brahman, matter and the individual souls are distinct but mutually inseparable entities. This school propounds devotion to God (Bhakti) visualized as Vishnu to be the path to liberation. Maya is seen as the creative power of God.

Dvaita was propounded by Madhva. It is also referred to as Tatvavada (The philosophy of reality). It identifies God with Brahman completely and in turn with Vishnu or his various incarnations like Krishna, Narasimha, Srinivasa etc. In that sense it is also known as sat-vaish nava philosophy to differentiate from the Vishishtadvaita school known by sri-vaishnavism.

It regards Brahman, all individual souls (jivatmans) and matter as eternal and mutually separate entities. This school also advocates Bhakti as the route to sattvic liberation whereas hatred (dvesha) and indifference towards the lord will lead to eternal hell and eternal bondage respectively. Liberation according to Dvaita, is the state of attaining maximum joy (or sorrow) which is awarded to individual souls at the end of their sadhana based on the souls' inherent and natural disposition towards good (or evil).

In that way, this is the only mainstream Vedantic philosophy that provides a realist solution to the so called problem of evil. The achintya-adbhuta shakti (the immeasurable power) of Lord Vishnu is seen as the efficient cause of the universe and the primordial matter or prakrti is the material cause. Dvaita also propounds that all action is performed by the lord energizing every soul from within, awarding the results to the soul but himself not affected in the least by the results.

Dvaitadvaita was propounded by Nimbarka, based upon an earlier school called Bhedabheda, which was taught by Bhaskara. According to this school, the jivatman is at once the same as yet different from Brahman. Jiva relation may be regarded as dvaita from one point of view and advaita from another. In this school, God is visualized as Krishna.

Shuddhadvaita which was propounded by Vallabha also encouraged Bhakti as the only means of liberation to go to Goloka (Sanskrit word 'go' means 'cow', also 'star' and the word 'loka' means world). The world is said to be the sport (leela) of Krishna, who is *Sat-chit-ananda*.

Achintya Bhedabheda was propounded by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (Bengal, 1486-1534). This doctrine of inconceivable and simultaneous oneness and difference is actually an ancient system of knowledge and devotion to supreme personality of godhead (Sri Krishna). However he has indicated that this sublime gift has been brought to mankind through the kind effort and dedication of an unbroken chain of teachers beginning with the supreme lord himself. In the modern age of science and technology, the pure teachings were broadcast all over the world in the 19th century. Some institutions follow the path of Mahaprabhu, such as Iscon, Gaudiya math, Sri radharaman acharyas, Srila Atul krishna goswamiji maharaj, Sri Sribhuti krishna goswamiji maharaj, Sri Pundrik goswamiji maharaj etc.

In Hinduism, dhyana (meditation) is considered to be an instrument to gain self knowledge, separating Maya from reality to help to attain the ultimate goal of moksha (liberation / salvation). Depictions of Hindu ascetics performing meditation are found in ancient texts and in statues and frescoes of ancient Indian temples.

2.4 Jainism

Samayika is the practice of meditation in Jainism. Its aim is to transcend daily experiences as 'constantly changing' human beings (jiva), and allow identification with the 'changeless' reality (the atman), considered common to all living beings. It is also a method by which one can develop an attitude of harmony and respect towards other humans and mother nature. *Samayika* is a Sanskrit word meaning equanimity and derived from *samaya* (the soul).

The goal of *samayika* is to attain equanimity. *Samayika* is begun by achieving a balance in time. If this current moment is defined as a moving line between the past and the future, *samayika* happens by being fully aware, alert and conscious in that moving time line when one experiences *atma* (one's true nature) which is common to all life forms. *Samayika* is especially significant during *paryushana*, a special period during the monsoon, and is practiced during the *Samvatsari pratikramana* ritual.

The *sadhaka* begins by achieving a balance in time. The act of being conscious of the continual renewal of the universe in general and one's own renewal of the individual jiva is the critical first step towards identifying with the atman. By being fully aware, alert and conscious of the constantly moving present, one will experience his true nature (atman). Practitioners generally sit in the Shiva, Buddha or Parshvanath posture. While others have been used by yogis and others, the 24 Jain Tirthankaras are always seen in this position.

Meditation techniques were available in ancient Jain scriptures that have been forgotten with time. A practice called *preksha* meditation is said to have been rediscovered by the 10th head of Jain swetamber Terapanth sect Acharya Mahaprajna, and consists of the perception of the body, the psychic centers, breath and of contemplation processes which will initiate the process of personal transformation. It aims at reaching and purifies the deeper levels of existence. Regular practice strengthens the immune system, builds up stamina to resist against aging process, pollution, chemical toxins, viruses, food adulteration, diseases, etc. Jain meditation is important to the daily lives of the religion's monks.

Jains sustain the ancient *Shraman* or ascetic religion and have significantly influenced other religious, ethical, political and economic spheres in India. Jains believe that all living beings possess a soul, and therefore great care and awareness is required in going about one's business in the world. Jainism is a religion in which all life is considered worthy of respect and it emphasizes this equality of all life, advocating the protection of even the smallest creatures. This goes as far as the life of microscopic organisms. A major characteristic of Jain belief is the emphasis on the consequences of not only physical but also mental behaviors.

A *Jain* is a follower of *Jinas* (conquerors), specially gifted human beings who have rediscovered the *dharma*, became fully liberated and taught the spiritual path for the benefit of all living beings. Jains follow the teachings of 24 special *Jinas* who are known as *Tirthankaras* ('ford-makers', those who have discovered and shown the way to salvation). The 24th and most recent *Tirthankar* is Shri Mahavir, who lived from 599 to 527 BCE according to traditional history. The 23rd *Tirthankar*, Shri Parsvanatha, is now recognized as a historical person, who lived during 872 to 772 BC.

Jainism encourages spiritual development through reliance on and cultivating one's own personal wisdom and self-control (*vrata*). The goal is realization of the soul's true nature. Jaina tradition is unanimous in naming Rishabha (also known as Adhinath) as the first *Tirthankar* of this descending (*avasarpini*) *kalachakra* (time cycle). The first *Tirthankar*, Rishabhdev/ Adhinath appeared prior to the Indus valley civilization. The Jain swastika symbol and naked statues resembling the Jain monks amongst the remains of the Indus valley civilization, do substantiate claims.

According to Jainism, the universe and *dharma* have no beginning and no ending. However it goes through a process of cyclical change. Jains believe it is approx. 8.4 million years old in its current cyclic period. Therefore there is no concept of a creator of the universe within Jainism. Jainism differs from other religions in its concept of God.

According to its belief, there is no overarching supreme divine creator, owner, preserver or destroyer. Every living soul is potentially divine and the *Siddhas* who have completely

eliminated their karmic bonding, thereby ending their cycle of birth and death, have attained God-consciousness. The main Jain prayer (Namokar mantra) therefore salutes the five special categories of souls that have attained God-consciousness or are on their way to achieving it, so as to emulate and follow their path to salvation.

According to Jainism every living being has a soul. Every soul is potentially divine with innate infinite knowledge, infinite perception, infinite power, and infinite bliss. Hence have benevolence for all living beings. Every soul is born as a celestial, human, sub-human or hellish being according to its own karmas. Every soul is the architect of its own life, here or hereafter. When a soul is freed from karmas, it becomes god-consciousness (infinite knowledge, infinite perception, infinite power, and infinite bliss) and liberated. Right view, Right knowledge and Right conduct (triple jewels of Jainism) provide the way to this realization.

Non-violence (Ahimsa) is the basis of right view, the condition of right knowledge and the kernel of right conduct. Senses should be controlled. A man / woman should limit his / her possessions and lead a pure life, useful to him / her and others. Owning an object by itself is not possessiveness, however attachment to it is possessiveness. Enjoy the company of the holy and better qualified, be merciful to those afflicted and tolerate the perversely inclined. Four things are difficult to attain by a soul namely- human birth, knowledge of the law of karma, faith in it and the pursuit of the right path. It is important not to waste human life in evil ways. Instead, strive to rise on the ladder of spiritual evolution.

It is usually believed that the Jain *sangha* divided into two major sects- Digambar and Svetambar, about 200 years after Mahāvīra's nirvana. The best available information indicates that the chief Jain monk, Acharya Bhadrabahu, foresaw famine and led about 12,000 Digambar followers to southern India. Twelve years later they returned to find the Svetambar sect, and in 453 the Valabhi council edited and compiled the traditional Svetambar scriptures.

The differences between the two sects are minor and relatively obscure. Digambar Jain monks do not wear clothes because they believe clothes, like other possessions, increase

dependency and desire for material things, and desire for anything ultimately leads to sorrow. Svetambar Jain monks, on the other hand, wear white clothes. seamless clothes for practical reasons, and believe there is nothing in Jain scripture that condemns wearing clothes. Sadhvis (nuns) of both sects wear white. In Sanskrit, *ambar* refers to a covering generally, or a garment in particular. *Dig*, an older form of *disha*, refers to the cardinal directions. *Digambar* therefore means 'covered by the four directions', or 'sky-clad'. *Svet* means white and Svetambars wear white garments.

Digambars believe that women cannot attain moksha in the same birth, while Svetambars believe that women may attain liberation and that Mallinath, a Tirthankar, was a woman. The difference is because Digambar asceticism requires nudity. As nudity is impractical for women, it follows that without it they cannot attain moksha. The earliest record of this belief is contained in the Prakrit suttapahuda of the Digambara mendicant Kundakunda (c. second century A.D.).

Digambars believe that Mahavir was not married, whereas Svetambars believe Mahavir was married and had a daughter. The two sects also differ on the origin of Mata Trishala, Mahavira's mother. Sthanakavasis and Digambars believe that only the first five lines are formally part of the Namokara mantra (the main Jain prayer), whereas Svetambaras believe all nine form the mantra. Other differences are minor and not based on major points of doctrine.

Svetambaras are further divided into sub-sects, such as Sthanakavasi, Terapanthi and Deravasi. Some are *murtipujak* (revering statues) while non-Murtipujak Jains refuse statues or images. Svetambar follow the 12 *agam* literature (voice of omniscient). Most simply call them Jains and follow general traditions rather than specific sectarian practices.

Like other Indian religions, knowledge of the truth (*dharma*) is considered to have declined and then revived cyclically over the course of history. Those who rediscover dharma are called *Tirthankara*. The literal meaning of *Tirthankar* is 'ford-builder'. Jains, like Buddhists, compare the process of becoming a pure human being to crossing a swift river - an endeavour requiring patience and care.

A ford-builder is someone who has themselves already crossed the river and can therefore guide others. S/he is called a 'victor' (Skt: *Jina*) because she or he has achieved liberation by their own efforts. Like Buddhism, the purpose of Jain dharma is mental and physical purification to undo the negative effects of karma. The goal of this process is liberation accompanied by a great natural inner peace.

Having purified their souls of karmic impurities, a *tirthankar* is considered omniscient, a role model. They are referred to as god, such as through the use of the word *bhagavan*, lord (e.g., Bhagavan Rishabha, Bhagavan Parshva, etc.). They are not regarded as gods in the pantheistic or polytheistic sense, but rather as examples of the spiritual qualities to which Jains are to strive. There have been 24 Tirthankaras in what the Jains call the 'present age'. History records the last two Tirthankaras: Parshvanath and Mahavira (the 23rd and 24th). Mahavira established the four-fold community (*chaturvidh sangha*) of monks, nuns, male and female laypersons.

The 24 tirthankaras, in chronological order, are Adinath (or Rishabhath), Ajitanath, Sambhavanath, Abhinandanath, Sumatinath, Padmaprabh, Suparshvanath, Chandraprabhu, Pushpadantanath (or Suvidhinath), Sheetalanath, Shreyansanath, Vasupujya, Vimalanath, Anantanath, Dharmanath, Shantinath, Kunthunath, Aranath, Mallinath, Munisuvratanath, Naminath, Neminath, Parshvanath and Mahavir (or Vardhamana, vir, ativeer, sanmati).

Jains believe that every human is responsible for his/her actions and all living beings have an eternal soul, *jīva*. Jains believe all souls are equal because they all possess the potential of being liberated and attaining moksha. Tirthankaras are role models only because they have attained moksha. Jains insist that we live, think and act respectfully and honor the spiritual nature of all life.

Jains view God as the unchanging traits of the pure soul of each living being, described as infinite knowledge, perception, consciousness, and happiness (*ananta jñāna*, *ananta darshana*, *ananta cāritra* and *ananta sukha*). Jains do not believe in an omnipotent supreme being, creator or manager

(*kartā*), but rather in an eternal universe governed by natural laws.

Jains hold that this temporal world holds much misery and sorrow and hence to attain lasting bliss one must transcend the cycle of transmigration. Otherwise, one will remain eternally caught up in the never-ending cycle of transmigration. The only way to break out of this cycle is to practice detachment through rational perception, rational knowledge and rational conduct.

Jain scriptures were written over a long period of time, but the most cited is the *Tattvartha sutra*, or book of reality written by the monk-scholar, Umasvati (Umāsvāmi) almost 1800 years ago. The primary figures are Tirthankaras. The two main sects called Digambar and Svetambar, both believe in ahimsa (or *ahinsā*), asceticism, karma, sanskāra, and jīva. Differences between the two main sects are mainly conduct related. Doctrinally, Jainism is uniform with great emphasis placed on rational perception, rational knowledge and rational conduct.

Compassion for all life, human and non-human, is central in Jainism. Human life is valued as a unique, rare opportunity to reach enlightenment. To kill any person, no matter their crime, is considered unimaginably abhorrent. It is the only religion that requires monks and laity, from all its sects and traditions, to be vegetarian. Some Indian regions have been strongly influenced by Jains and the majority of the local non-Jain population is vegetarian.

Jainism's stand on nonviolence goes far beyond vegetarianism. Jains refuse food obtained with unnecessary cruelty. Many practice a lifestyle similar to veganism, due to the violence of modern dairy farms, and others exclude root vegetables from their diets to preserve the lives of these plants. Potatoes, garlic and onions in particular are avoided by Jains. Devout Jains do not eat, drink, or travel after sunset, and prefer to drink water that is boiled and then cooled to room temperature.

Many Jains abstain from eating green vegetables and root vegetables one day each week. The particular day, determined by the lunar calendar is *Ashtami* (eighth day of the lunar month), new moon, the second *Ashtami* and the full moon

night. Anekantavada, a foundation of Jain philosophy, literally means ‘the multiplicity of reality’, or equivalently, ‘non-one-endedness’. *Anekantavada* has tools for overcoming inherent biases in any one perspective on any topic or in reality in general. Another tool is the doctrine of postulation, *Syādvāda*. *Anekantavada* is defined as a multiplicity of viewpoints, for it stresses looking at things from others' perspectives.

According to Jain beliefs, the universe was never created, nor will it ever cease to exist. Therefore, it is *shaswat* (infinite). It has no beginning or end, but time is cyclical with progressive and regressive spirituality phases. Jains divide time into *Utsarpinis* (progressive time cycle) and *Avsarpinis* (regressive time cycle). An *Utsarpini* and an *Avsarpini* constitute one time cycle (*kalchakra*). Every *Utsarpini* and *Avsarpini* is divided into six unequal periods known as *Aras*. During the *Utsarpini* half cycle, humanity develops from its worst to its best: ethics, progress, happiness, strength, health, and religion each start the cycle at their worst, before eventually completing the cycle at their best and starting the process again.

During the *Avsarpini* half-cycle, these notions deteriorate from the best to the worst. Jains believe we are currently in the fifth *Ara* of the *Avsarpini* phase, with approximately 18,500 years until the next *Ara*. After this *Avsarpini* phase, the *Utsarpini* phase will begin, continuing the infinite repetition of the *kalchakra*.

Jains believe that at the upswing of each time cycle, people will lose religion again. All wishes will be granted by wish-granting trees (*Kalpavrksa*), and people will be born in sets of twins (*Yugalika*) with one boy and one girl who stay together all their lives; a symbol of an integrated human with male and female characteristics balanced.

Jain philosophy is based upon eternal, universal truths. During the first and last two *Aras*, these truths lapse among humanity and then reappear through the teachings of enlightened humans, those who have reached moksa or total knowledge (*Kevala Jnana*), during the third and fourth *Aras*. Traditionally, in our universe and in our time, Lord Rishabha is regarded as the first to realize the truth. Lord Vardhamana

(Mahavira) was the last Tirthankara to attain enlightenment (599-527 BCE).

He was preceded by twenty-three others, making a total of twenty-four Tirthankaras. It is important to note that the above description stands true "in our universe and in our time" for Jains believe there have been infinite sets of 24 Tirthankaras, one for each half of the time cycle, and this will continue in the future. Hence, Jainism does not trace its origins to Rishabh deva, the first, or finish with Mahavira, the twenty-fourth, Tirthankara.

According to Jainism, the universe consists of infinite amount of *Jiva* (life force or souls), and the design resembles a man standing with his arms bent while resting his hands on his waist. The narrow waist part comprises various *Kshetras*, for *vicharan* (roaming) for humans, animals and plants. Currently we are in the *Bharat kshetra* of *Jambu dweep* (*dweep* means island).

The *deva loka* (heavens) are at the symbolic 'chest' of creation, where all *devas* (demi gods) reside. Similarly beneath the 'waist' are the *narka loka* (hell). There are seven *narka lokas*, each for a varying degree suffering a *jiva* has to go through to face the consequences of its *paap karma* (sins). From the first to the seventh *narka*, the degree of suffering increases and light reaching it decreases (with no light in the seventh *narka*). The *sidhha kshetra* or *moksha* is situated at the symbolic forehead of the creation, where all the *jivas* having attained nirvana reside in a state of complete peace and eternal happiness. Outside the symbolic figure of this creation nothing but *aloka* or *akaasha* (sky) exists.

Jain philosophy deals extensively with the problems of metaphysics, reality, cosmology, ontology, epistemology and divinity. Jainism is essentially a transtheistic religion of ancient India. It is a continuation of the ancient Sramana tradition which co-existed with the Vedic tradition since ancient times. The distinguishing features of Jain philosophy are its belief in independent existence of soul and matter, neither denial nor acceptance of a creative and omnipotent God, an eternal (and hence uncreated) universe, a strong emphasis on non-violence, on relativity and multiple facets of truth, and morality and ethics based on liberation of souls.

Jain philosophy explains the rationale of being and existence, the nature of the universe and its constituents, the nature of bondage and the means to achieve liberation. It is described as ascetic because of its strong emphasis on self-control, austerities and renunciation and called a model of philosophical liberalism for its insistence that truth is relative and multifaceted and for its willingness to accommodate all possible view-points of rival philosophies.

It has been compared to Western concepts of subjectivism and moral relativism. Jainism strongly upholds the individual nature of soul and personal responsibility for one's decisions; and that self-reliance and individual efforts alone are responsible for one's liberation. In this matter, it is similar to individualism and objectivism.

In Jainism, truth or reality is perceived differently depending on different points of view, and that no single point of view is the complete truth. Jain doctrine states that an object has infinite modes of existence and qualities and, as such, cannot be completely perceived in all its aspects and manifestations, due to inherent human limitations. Only Kevalis - the omniscient beings - can totally comprehend objects and that others can know only a part. Consequently, no one view can represent the absolute truth.

The hand with a wheel on the palm symbolizes the Jain vow of Ahimsa, meaning non-violence. The word in the middle is "Ahimsa." The wheel represents the dharmacakra, to halt the cycle of reincarnation through relentless pursuit of truth. Jain monks and nuns practice strict asceticism and strive to make their current birth their last, thus ending their cycle of transmigration. The laity, who pursues less rigorous practices, strives to attain rational perception and to do as much good as possible and get closer to the goal of attaining freedom from the cycle of transmigration. Following strict ethics, the laity usually chooses professions that revere and protect life and totally avoid violent livelihoods.

Jains believe that *devas* (demi-gods or celestial beings) cannot help *jiva* to obtain liberation, which must be achieved by individuals through their own efforts. In fact, *devas* themselves cannot achieve liberation until they reincarnate as humans and undertake the difficult act of removing karma.

Their efforts to attain the exalted state of *Siddha*, the permanent liberation of *jiva* from all involvement in worldly existence, must be their own.

The strict Jain ethical code for both laity and monks/nuns is *Ahimsa* (Non-violence), *Satya* (truth), *Acharya* or *Asteya* (non-stealing), *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), *Aparigraha* (non-attachment to temporal possessions). Jains are expected to be non-violent in thought, word, and deed, both toward humans and toward all other living beings, including their own selves.

Jain monks and nuns walk barefoot and sweep the ground in front of them to avoid killing insects or other tiny beings. Even though all life is considered sacred by the Jains, human life is deemed the highest form of life. For this reason, it is considered vital never to harm or upset any person. For laypersons, *brahmacharya* means either confining sex to marriage or complete celibacy. For monks and nuns, it means complete celibacy.

True spirituality, according to enlightened Jains, starts when one attains *Samyak darshana*, or true perception. Such souls are on the path to moksha, striving to remain in the nature of the soul. This is characterized by knowing and observing only all worldly affairs, without *raag* (attachment) and *dwesh* (repulsion), a state of pure knowledge and bliss. Attachment to worldly life collects new karmas, and traps one in birth, death, and suffering. Worldly life has a dual nature (for example, love and hate, suffering and pleasure, etc.), for the perception of one state cannot exist without the contrasting perception of the other.

Along with the Five vows, Jains avoid harboring ill will and practice forgiveness. They believe that *atma* (soul) can lead one to becoming *paramatma* (liberated soul) and this must come from one's inner self. Fasting is a tool for doing Tapa and to attach to your inner-being. It is a part of Jain festivals. It is of three types based on the level of austerity namely- *uttam*, *madhyam* and *jaghanya*.

During fasting a person imbibe himself in religious activities (worshiping, serving the saints and be in their proximity, reading scriptures, *tapa*, and donate to the right candidates - *supatra*). Most Jains fast at special times, during festivals (known as *parva*. *Paryushana* and *Ashthanhika* are the

main *parvas* which occurs 3 times in a year), and on holy days (eighth and fourteen days of the moon cycle).

Paryushana is the most prominent festival, lasting eight days for Svetambara Jains and ten days for Digambara, during the monsoon. The monsoon is considered the best time of fasting due to lenient weather. However, a Jain may fast at any time, especially if he / she feel some error has been committed. Variations in fasts encourage Jains to do whatever they can to maintain self control. Some Jains revere a special practice. When a person is aware of approaching death, and feels that s/he has completed all duties, he / she willingly ceases to eat or drink gradually. This form of dying is called *Santhara* / *Samaadhi*.

2.5 Buddhism

Meditation is the central part of Buddhism. Gautama Buddha himself was said to have achieved enlightenment while meditating under a bodhi tree. Most forms of Buddhism distinguish between two classes of meditation practices, shamatha and vipassana. Shamatha consists of practices which develop the ability to focus the attention single-pointedly whereas Vipassana includes practices which develop insight and wisdom through seeing the true nature of reality. Both of them are necessary for attaining enlightenment.

*“n’atthi jhanam apannassa panna n’atthi ajjhayato Yamhi jhanam ca panna ca sa ve nibbanasantike”*⁷ (Pali language)

(Translation- There is no meditation for one who is without wisdom, no wisdom for one without meditation; he in whom there are meditation and wisdom, he indeed is close to *nirvana*).

In the Pali canon the Buddha describes four progressive states of absorption meditation or jhana. The jhanas are said by the Buddha to be conducive to a pleasant abiding and freedom from suffering. The jhanas are states of meditation where the mind is free from the five hindrances (craving, aversion, sloth, agitation, doubt) and from the second jhana onwards incapable of discursive thinking. The deeper jhanas can last for many hours. When a meditator emerges from jhana, his/her mind is empowered and able to penetrate into the deepest truths of existence.

There are four deeper states of meditative absorption called the immaterial attainments. Sometimes these are also referred to as the 'formless' jhanas, or arupajhana (distinguished from the first four jhanas, rupajhana). In the Buddhist canonical texts, the word jhana is never explicitly used to denote them, but they are always mentioned in sequence after the first four jhanas.

Jhanas are normally described according to the nature of the mental factors which are present in these states namely- Vitakka (movement of the mind onto the object), Vicara (retention of the mind on the object), Piti (joy), Sukha (happiness), Upekkha (equanimity) and Ekagata (one-pointedness). The four progressive states of Jhana are as follows. In the first Jhana (vitakka, vicara, piti, sukha, ekaggata) the five hindrances are completely disappeared and intense unified bliss remains.

Only the subtlest of mental movement remains - perceivable in its absence by those who have entered the second jhana. The ability to form unwholesome intentions ceases. In the second Jhana (piti, sukha, ekaggata) all mental movement utterly ceases. There is only bliss. The ability to form wholesome intentions cease as well. In the third jhana (sukha, ekaggata) one half of bliss disappears (joy). In the fourth Jhana (upekkha, ekaggata) 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 sublime than piti and sukha). The Buddha described the jhanas as 'the footsteps of the tathagata'. The breath is said to cease temporarily in this state. Traditionally, this fourth jhana is seen as the beginning of attaining psychic powers (*abhigna*).

In Buddhism, rupajhanas (meditations of form) are successive levels of meditation in which the mind is focused on a material or mental object. It is a word frequently used in Pali scriptures and to a lesser extent in the Mahayana scriptures. Each higher level is harder to reach than the previous one as it relinquishes an attachment to one of the positive experiences of the previous state. The meditations of form are distinguished from arupajhana (formless meditations) which are meditations focused without material or mental objects (i.e., meditations on

infinite space, on infinite consciousness, on nothingness, and beyond perception and non-perception).

To reach each successive stage of meditation, a factor of attachment in the previous stage is renounced. The first meditation of form includes the three primary factors of the one-pointed noticing and experiencing of the object, rapture in the experience, and joy in the rapture. In the second meditation of form, the meditator lets go of the noticing and experiencing of the object and perceives the rapture and joy of the one-pointedness. In the third meditation of form the person detaches from the sense of rapture and perceives the one-pointed joy. In the fourth meditation of form the meditator relinquishes joy and perceives only one-pointed equanimity not disturbed even by joy.

The three realms (of desire, form, and formlessness and the meditations of form within the realm of form are related to the Buddhist view of the three poisons of the mind, i.e., greed (lust, desire, etc.), aversion (hatred, anger, etc.) and ignorance (delusion, illusion, etc.) . In the six worlds of desire, the three poisons are present and equally strong. When the meditator renounces the poison of greed they are able to enter the realm of form. When the meditator renounces the poison of aversion they enter the formless realm. And when the meditator renounces the last poison of ignorance they leave the three realms altogether and enter the Buddha realms.

After renouncing the poison of greed and entering the realm of form, in order to renounce the poison of aversion, the meditator engages in the four meditations of form. By renouncing one's attachments to objects, the rapture in objects, and joy in the rapture, one is renouncing one's aversion to the absence of objects, absence of rapture, and absence of joy. When one is able to renounce even the equanimity achieved in the fourth meditation of form, one renounces the last attachment to the realm of form and is able to enter the formless realm without being overcome by either desire or aversion, and one becomes able to engage in the four formless meditations.

The scriptures state that one should not seek to attain ever higher jhanas but master one first, then move on to the next. 'Mastery of jhana' involves being able to enter a jhana at

will, stay as long as one likes, leave at will and experience each of the jhana factors as required. They also seem to suggest that lower jhana factors may manifest themselves in higher jhanas, if the jhanas have not been properly developed. The Buddha is seen to advise his disciples to concentrate and steady the jhana further.

Theravada Buddhism focuses on the meditative development of mindfulness and concentration as part of the noble eightfold path which leads to *Nibbana* (nirvana/salvation). In Japanese Mahayana schools, concentration (Tendai) is cultivated through highly structured ritual. In Chán Buddhism (Chinese school), ts'o ch'an meditation and koan meditation practices allow a practitioner to directly experience the true nature of reality. The names of the schools namely Chinese 'Chan', Japanese 'Zen', and Korean 'Seon' are derived from the Sanskrit 'dhyana' which means 'meditation' when translated into their respective languages.

In Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayana) which emphasizes on Tantra, the purpose of meditation is to awaken the sky-like nature of mind and to introduce the practitioners to the reality of their existence which is the unchanging pure awareness underling the whole of life and death.

Most of the Buddhist traditions recognize that the path to enlightenment consists of three types of training namely virtue (sila); meditation (citta); and, wisdom (panna).

Buddhism as a philosophy and religion came into being during the 5th Century BCE with the enlightenment of Gautama Buddha. He is the founder of Buddhism. He was born in 563 BC in Lumbini, in the foothills of Nepal. It was prophesized that Gautama (who was named Siddharth) would become a saint and renounce the world. Therefore, his father took all possible care to keep Gautama in a palace full of luxuries and comfort.

However, Gautama was not satisfied with his majestic materialistic surroundings. One day, the young prince sneaked out of the palace in his chariot to see the outside world that was still unknown to him. He and his charioteer first came upon an old man; when Gautama asked about it to the charioteer; he replied that he is simply old and we all become old. They next came upon a very sick man. The charioteer said he is ill and we

can all become sick. Lastly they came upon a corpse, lying on the side of the road. Gautama asked about this new sight and the charioteer replied that he is dead and we will all die someday.

Gautama was shocked and they continued along. He then saw a Shramana (an ascetic who was peaceful and clear eyed) and was perplexed but amazed by the calmness on his face. The charioteer told him that the saint had renounced all materialistic things and therefore he was satisfied and blissful. This incident left an ineradicable mark on the mind of the young prince. He realized his life of luxury and pampering had hidden worldly truth from him, and one night he left his beautiful wife and infant son and began his journey to attain the truth of life.

At the age of twenty-nine Gautama wandered from place to place and studied under various shramana teachers of differing philosophies. He studied deep concentration and even put his body through harsh and rigorous penance, eating one grain of rice per day, pushing the body to utmost punishment possible to liberate the mind. But nothing could bring to him the peace and understanding he desired.

After six years of studying he decided that it was insanity. He was no closer to attaining his goal, and if the body died, how could one attain truth? He regained his strength and took a new path. Beginning with a dispassionate, happy mind he meditated anew. At the age of thirty-five, Gautama attained Enlightenment while meditating under a Bodhi tree in a place called Bodhgaya (in the state of Bihar). After attaining Enlightenment, he came to be known as the Buddha (the enlightened one).

According to the Pali Tipitaka, the four noble truths were the first teaching of Gautama Buddha after attaining Nirvana. The four noble truths are as follows. The first noble truth is that life ultimately is or leads to 'suffering' in one way or the other. The second is that the cause of this 'suffering' is attachment to, or craving for worldly pleasures of all kinds and clinging to this very existence, our 'self' and the things or people we - due to our delusions - deem the cause of our respective happiness or unhappiness. The third is that the 'suffering' ends when the craving ends, one is freed from all

desires by eliminating the delusions, reaches 'Enlightenment'. The fourth is that the way to reach that liberated state is by following the path the Buddha has laid out. Following verse from Dhammapada illustrates the position of meditation in the lives of the disciple of Gautama Buddha.

*“suppabuddham pabujjhanto sada gotamasavaka
Yesam diva ca ratto ca bhavanaya rato mano”*⁸ (Pali language)
(Translation- The disciples of Gautama are always well awake; their mind, day and night, delights in meditation).

In Buddhism, the term Karma is used specifically for those actions which spring from mental intent (cetana), which brings about fruit (phala) or maturation / result (vipaka). Karma can be either negative or positive; with its respective negative or positive vipaka. Karma is the energy which drives the cycle of suffering and rebirth (samsara) for each being. The skillful (kusala) and unskillful (akusala) actions produce 'seeds' in the mind which come to fruition either in this life or in a subsequent rebirth. The content of unwholesome actions and the lower types of wholesome actions belongs to the subject of ethical conduct (Sila). The suffering caused by the karmic effects of previous thoughts, words and deeds can be alleviated by following the noble eightfold path.

Human beings crave pleasure and satisfaction of the six senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking) from birth to death. After another rebirth they do the same, and continue repeating this cycle. Humans always expect pleasure and do not like to feel pain. This cycle of suffering is explained in twelve links of dependent origination, each conditioning the next. They are as follows.

Avidya (ignorance, specifically spiritual), Samskaras (literally formations, explained as referring to karma), Vijnana (consciousness, specifically discriminative), Namarupa (literally name and form, referring to mind and body), Sadayatana (the six sense bases: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind-organ), Sparsa (variously translated contact, impression, stimulation), Vedana (usually translated feeling: this is the 'hedonic tone', i.e. whether something is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral), Trsna (literally thirst, but nearly always in Buddhism used to mean craving), Upadana (clinging or grasping; the word also means fuel, which feeds the continuing

cycle of rebirth), Bhava (literally being existence or becoming), Jati (literally birth, but life is understood as starting at conception), Jaramarana (old age and death) and also sokaparidevadukhadaurmanasyopayasa (sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness and misery).

The eight-fold path is as follows :

(1) Right view - It is the beginning and the end of the path. It merely means to see and to understand things as they really are and to realize the four noble truths. Right view is the cognitive aspect of wisdom. It means to see things through, to grasp the impermanent and imperfect nature of worldly objects and ideas, and to understand the law of karma and karmic conditioning. The view of a person about the world forms his thoughts and actions. Hence right view yields right thoughts and right actions.

(2) Right intention - It refers to the volitional aspect. Volitional aspect is the kind of mental energy that controls our actions. Right intention can be described best as commitment to ethical and mental self-improvement. Buddha distinguishes three types of right intentions. The first is the intention of renunciation, which means resistance to the pull of desire. The second is the intention of good will, which means resistance to feelings of anger and aversion. The third is the intention of harmlessness which means not to think or act cruelly, violently, or aggressively, and to develop compassion.

(3) Right speech - It is the first principle of ethical conduct in the eightfold path. Ethical conduct is viewed as a guideline to moral discipline, which supports the other principles of the path. The importance of speech in the context of Buddhist ethics are namely- words can break or save lives, make enemies or friends, start war or create peace. Buddha explained right speech as follows: 1. to abstain from false speech, especially not to tell deliberate lies and not to speak deceitfully, 2. to abstain from slanderous speech and not to use words maliciously against others, 3. to abstain from harsh words that offend or hurt others, and 4. to abstain from idle chatter that lacks purpose or depth. Positively phrased, this means to tell the truth, to speak friendly, warm, and gently and to talk only when necessary.

(4) Right action - This involves the body as natural means of expression, as it refers to deeds that involve bodily actions. Unwholesome actions lead to unsound states of mind, while wholesome actions lead to sound states of mind. Again, the principle is explained in terms of abstinence: right action means 1. to abstain from harming sentient beings, especially to abstain from taking life (including suicide) and doing harm intentionally or delinquently, 2. to abstain from taking what is not given, which includes stealing, robbery, fraud, deceitfulness, and dishonesty, and 3. to abstain from sexual misconduct. Positively formulated, right action means to act kindly and compassionately, to be honest, to respect the belongings of others, and to keep sexual relationships harmless to others.

(5) Right livelihood - Right livelihood means that one should earn one's living in a righteous way and that wealth should be gained legally and peacefully. The Buddha mentions four specific activities that harm other beings and that one should avoid for this reason. First is dealing in weapons, second is dealing in living beings (including raising animals for slaughter as well as slave trade and prostitution), third is working in meat production and butchery, and fourth is selling intoxicants and poisons, such as alcohol and drugs. Moreover any other occupation that would violate the principles of right speech and right action should be avoided.

(6) Right effort - Right effort can be seen as a prerequisite for the other principles of the path. Without effort, which is in itself an act of will, nothing can be achieved, whereas misguided effort distracts the mind from its task, and confusion will be the consequence. Mental energy is the force behind right effort; it can occur in either wholesome or unwholesome states. The same type of energy that fuels desire, envy, aggression, and violence can on the other side fuel self-discipline, honesty, benevolence, and kindness. Right effort is detailed in four types of endeavors that rank in ascending order of perfection: 1. to prevent the arising of un-arisen unwholesome states, 2. to abandon unwholesome states that have already arisen, 3. to arouse wholesome states that have not yet arisen, and 4. to maintain and perfect wholesome states already arisen.

(7) Right mindfulness - Right mindfulness is the controlled and perfected faculty of cognition. It is the mental ability to see things as they are, with clear consciousness. Usually, the cognitive process begins with an impression induced by perception, or by a thought, but then it does not stay with the mere impression. Instead, we almost always conceptualize sense impressions and thoughts immediately. We interpret them and set them in relation to other thoughts and experiences, which naturally go beyond the faculty of the original impression.

The mind then posits concepts, joins concepts into constructs, and weaves those constructs into complex interpretative schemes. All this happens only half consciously, and as a result we often see things obscured. Right mindfulness is anchored in clear perception and it penetrates impressions without getting carried away.

Right mindfulness enables us to be aware of the process of conceptualization in a way that we actively observe and control the way our thoughts go. Buddha accounted for this as the four foundations of mindfulness. First is contemplation of the body, second is contemplation of feeling (repulsive, attractive, or neutral), third is contemplation of the state of mind, and fourth is contemplation of the phenomena.

(8) Right concentration - The eighth principle of the path, right concentration, refers to the development of a mental force that occurs in natural consciousness, although at a relatively low level of intensity, namely concentration. Concentration in this context is described as one-pointedness of mind, meaning a state where all mental faculties are unified and directed onto one particular object. Right concentration for the purpose of the eightfold path means wholesome concentration, i.e. concentration on wholesome thoughts and actions.

The Buddhist method of choice to develop right concentration is through the practice of meditation. The meditating mind focuses on a selected object. It first directs itself onto it, then sustains concentration, and finally intensifies concentration step by step. Through this practice it becomes natural to apply elevated levels of concentration also in everyday situations.

An important guiding principle of Buddhist practice is the middle way which was said to have been discovered by the Buddha prior to his enlightenment (bodhi). According to the scriptures, in his lifetime, the Buddha refused to answer several metaphysical questions. On issues such as whether the world is eternal or non-eternal, finite or infinite, unity or separation of the body and the self, complete inexistence of a person after nirvana and then death etc, the Buddha had remained silent.

Mahayana Buddhism received significant theoretical grounding from Nagarjuna (perhaps c.150–250 CE), one of the most influential scholar within the Mahayana tradition. Some of the writings attributed to him made explicit references to Mahayana texts, but his philosophy was argued within the parameters set out by the agamas. Nagarjuna asserted that the nature of the dharmas (hence the enlightenment) to be sunya (void or empty), bringing together other key Buddhist doctrines, particularly anatman (no-self) and pratityasamutpada (dependent origination). His school of thought is known as the Madhyamaka. According to Nagarjuna, the Buddha was not merely a forerunner but the very founder of the Madhyamaka system.

Though thoroughly based upon Mahayana, Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhism is also one of the schools that practice Vajrayana or 'diamond vehicle' (also referred to as Mantrayana, Tantrayana, Tantric Buddhism, or esoteric Buddhism). It therefore accepts all the basic concepts of Mahayana, but also includes a vast array of spiritual and physical techniques designed to enhance Buddhist practice.

Tantric Buddhism is largely concerned with ritual and meditative practices. One component of the Vajrayana is harnessing psycho-physical energy as a means of developing profoundly powerful states of concentration and awareness. These profound states are in turn to be used as an efficient path to Buddhahood. Using these techniques, it is claimed that a practitioner can achieve Buddhahood in one lifetime, or even as little as three years.

According to Mahayana, celestial Buddhas are individuals who no longer exist on the material plane of existence, but who still aid in the enlightenment of all beings. Nirvana came to refer only to the extinction of greed and hate,

implying that delusion was still present in one who attained Nirvana. Bodhi became a higher attainment that eradicates delusion entirely. Thus, the Arahant attains nirvana but not bodhi, thus still being subject to delusion, while the Buddha attains bodhi.

According to Theravada, a person may awaken from the 'sleep of ignorance' by directly realizing the true nature of reality. Such people are called *arahants*. After numerous lifetimes of spiritual striving they have also reached the end of the compulsive cycle of rebirths, no longer reincarnating as human, animal, ghost, or other being.

Theravāda is the oldest surviving Buddhist school. It is relatively conservative, and generally closest to early Buddhism. This school is derived from the Vibhajjavāda grouping which emerged amongst the older sthavira group at the time of the third Buddhist council (c. 250 BCE). This school gradually declined on the Indian subcontinent, but its branch in Sri Lanka and south east Asia continues to survive.

The Theravada school bases its practice and doctrine exclusively on the Pāli canon and its commentaries. After being orally transmitted for a few centuries, its scriptures, the Pali canon, were finally committed to writing in the last century BCE, in Sri Lanka, at what the Theravada usually reckon as the fourth council. It is also one of the first Buddhist schools to commit the complete set of its canon into writing. The sutta collections and vinaya texts of the Pāli canon (and the corresponding texts in other versions of the Tripitaka), are generally considered by modern scholars to be the earliest Buddhist literature, and they are accepted as authentic in every branch of Buddhism.

Buddhist scriptures and other texts exist in great variety. Different schools of Buddhism place varying levels of value on learning the various texts. Some schools venerate certain texts as religious objects in themselves, while others take a more scholarly approach. The Buddhist canons of scripture are known in Sanskrit as the Tripitaka and in Pāli as the Tipitaka.

These terms literally mean "three baskets" and refer to the three main divisions of the canon. They are as follows. The Vinaya Pitaka, containing disciplinary rules for the sanghas of Buddhist monks and nuns, as well as a range of other texts

including explanations of why and how rules were instituted, supporting material, and doctrinal clarification. The Sūtra Pitaka (Pāli: sutta pitaka), contains discourses ascribed to the Buddha. The Abhidharma Pitaka (Pāli: Abhidhamma pitaka) contains material often described as systematic expositions of the Buddha's teachings.

According to the scriptures, soon after the death of the Buddha, the first Buddhist council was held; a monk named Mahakasyapa (Pali: Mahakassapa) presided. The goal of the council was to record the Buddha's sayings - sutras (Sanskrit) or suttas (Pali)—and codify monastic rules (Vinaya). Ānanda, the Buddha's personal attendant, was called upon to recite the discourses of the Buddha, and according to some sources the abhidhamma, and Upāli, another disciple, recited the rules of the Vinaya. These became the basis of the Tripitaka. However, this record was initially transmitted orally in form of chanting, and was committed to text in a much later period. Both the sutras and the Vinaya of every Buddhist school contain a wide variety of elements including discourses on the dharma, commentaries on other teachings, cosmological texts, stories of the Buddha's previous lives, and lists relating to various subjects.

The Theravada and other early Buddhist schools traditionally believe that the texts of their canon contain the actual words of the Buddha. The Theravada canon, also known as the Pali canon after the language it was written in, contains some four million words. Other texts, such as the Mahayana sutras, are also considered by some to be the word of the Buddha, but supposedly were transmitted in secret, or via lineages of mythical beings (such as the nagas), or came directly from other Buddhas or bodhisattvas. Approximately six hundred Mahayana sutras have survived in Sanskrit or in Chinese or Tibetan translations. In addition, East Asian Buddhism recognizes some sutras regarded by scholars as of Chinese origin.

The followers of Theravada Buddhism take the scriptures known as the Pali Canon as definitive and authoritative, while the followers of Mahayana Buddhism base their faith and philosophy primarily on the Mahayana sutras and their own versions of the Vinaya. The Pali sutras, along

with other, closely-related scriptures, are known to the other schools as the agamas. Whereas the Theravadins adhere solely to the Pali canon and its commentaries, the adherents of Mahayana accept both the agamas and the Mahayana sutras as authentic, valid teachings of the Buddha, designed for different types of persons and different levels of spiritual penetration.

For the Theravadins, however, the Mahayana sutras are works of poetic fiction, not the words of the Buddha himself. The Theravadins are confident that the Pali canon represents the full and final statement by the Buddha of his dhamma—and nothing more is truly needed beyond that. Anything added which claims to be the word of the Buddha and yet is not found in the canon or its commentaries are treated with extreme caution if not outright rejection by Theravada.

For the Mahayanists, in contrast, the agamas do indeed contain basic, foundational, and, therefore, relatively weighty pronouncements of the Buddha. From the Mahayana standpoint the Mahayana sutras articulate the Buddha's higher, more advanced and deeper doctrines, reserved for those who follow the bodhisattva path. That path is explained as being built upon the motivation to liberate all living beings from unhappiness.

Hence the name Mahayana, which expresses availability both to the general masses of sentient beings and those who are more developed. The theme of greatness can be seen in many elements of Mahayana Buddhism, from the length of some of the Mahayana sutras and the vastness of the Bodhisattva vow, which strives for *all* future time to help free *all* other persons and creatures from pain), to the (in some sutras and tantras) final attainment of the Buddha's "Great self" (*mahatman*) in the sphere of "Great nirvana" (*mahanirvana*). For Theravadins and many scholars, including A.K. Warder, however, the self-proclaimed 'greatness' of the Mahayana sutras does not make them a true account of the life and teachings of Gautama Buddha.

Unlike many religions, Buddhism has no single central text that is universally referred to by all traditions. However, some scholars have referred to the Vinaya Pitaka and the first four Nikayas of the Sutta Pitaka as the common core of all Buddhist traditions. However, this could be considered misleading, as Mahayana considers these merely a preliminary,

and not a core, teaching, the Tibetan Buddhists have not even translated most of the agamas, though theoretically they recognize them, and they play no part in the religious life of either clergy or laity in China and Japan.

The size and complexity of the Buddhist canons have been seen by some (including Buddhist social reformer Babasaheb Ambedkar) as presenting barriers to the wider understanding of Buddhist philosophy.

Over the years, various attempts have been made to synthesize a single Buddhist text that can encompass all of the major principles of Buddhism. In the Theravada tradition, condensed 'study texts' were created that combined popular or influential scriptures into single volumes that could be studied by novice monks. Later in Sri Lanka, the Dhammapada was championed as a unifying scripture.

Nirvana means 'cessation, "extinction" (of suffering) or desires are 'extinguished', 'quited', 'calmed'. It is also known as "Awakening" or "Enlightenment" in the West. Also, Buddhists believe that anybody who has achieved nirvana (also known as bodhi) is in fact a Buddha. Buddhism is a way to attain nirvana.

Traditionally, the first step in most Buddhist schools requires taking refuge in the Three Jewels (Pali: Tiratana), as the foundation of one's religious practice. The Three Jewels are as follows. The first is the Buddha (*awakened one*). This is a title for those who attained nirvana. The Buddha could also be represented as a concept instead of a specific person: the perfect wisdom that understands dharma and sees reality in its true form. The second is the dharma: the teachings or law as expounded by the Buddha. Dharma also means the law of nature based on behavior of a person and its consequences to be experienced (action and reaction).

It can also (especially in Mahayana Buddhism) connote the ultimate and sustaining reality which is in-severable from the Buddha. The third is the Sangha. This term literally means 'group of Buddhists' or 'congregation of monks', but when it is used in Buddhist teaching the word refers to one of two very specific kinds of groups: either the community of Buddhist monastics (bhikkhus and bhikkhunis), or the community of

people who have attained at least the first noble stage (sotapanna - one who has entered the stream to enlightenment).

According to the scriptures, Gautama Buddha presented himself as a model, however, he did not ask his followers simply to have faith in his example of a human who attained Nirvana. In addition, he encouraged them to put his teachings to the test and accept what they could verify on their own, provided that this was also "praised by the wise". The dharma offers a refuge by providing guidelines for the alleviation of suffering and the attainment of nirvana. The sangha (Buddhist order of monks) is considered to provide a refuge by preserving the authentic teachings of the Buddha and providing further examples that the truth of the Buddha's teachings is attainable.

The general principles of Buddhism are evident in Chan Buddhism. According to Chan Buddhism the world is an illusion invented by each individual's mind and every thought has the power to produce a retributive future result (known as karma). This decides what form he/she will appear in during the next life. Enlightenment occurs when there is understanding of this, and nirvana is attained when the human being is emancipated from the endless cycle of life and death to join the universal mind. The word Ch'an was a Chinese pronunciation of the Sanskrit word "dhyana", which referred to the Buddha's teaching of meditative concentration. But the Chinese chose to interpret the word to mean 'awareness'. Thus the Ch'an school was centered on utilizing meditative concentration, rather than relying on sacred texts, in order to attain a direct awareness of one's true nature.

The key variations in Chan Buddhism are as follows. The first is the theory of the double truth defines two different kinds of truth a common one and a higher one, on three different levels. At the heart of this complex theory is an examination of the inter-relationship between existence and non-existence. Truth is complicated by the fact that on the one hand there is physical form or existence and, on the other, everything is said to be illusory or non-existent. In which case, what and where is truth - within existence or non-existence?

After considering this, the theory then considers the same question for enlightenment. The second is the idea that a good deed entails no retribution. This idea stems from the

Taoist belief in non-action, i.e. that action without effort, which is natural and spontaneous to the essence of the individual, does not entail any future retribution or "karma".

The third is regarding enlightenment. The method of attaining enlightenment is to do things without deliberate effort and purpose and live naturally. This prepares the mind for enlightenment. Fourth is sudden occurrence of enlightenment. Although non-action or living the life of non-cultivation diminishes distracting elements and facilitates contemplation. Enlightenment itself is not a gradual process but a sudden revelation. Fifth is the description of enlightenment which is indescribable. Although words can be a useful tool to explain a thought, they can only ever be an approximation to the idea.

Thus, the state of enlightenment can never be described. Sixth is reality of the world. There is no other reality than this phenomenal world. Whereas the unenlightened only see the physical objects around them, the enlightened in addition to this see the Buddha nature within the phenomenal world. Thus, Ch'an adopted doctrines of "absence of thought" and "seeing one's original nature" and also used illogical question and answer methods - all aimed at developing intuition, intuition itself seen as the true source of wisdom (prajna), not rational thought.

Meditation is the heart of Ch'an practice. All there is to be done in order to fulfill the quest is to simply stop the workings of one's mind and look no further outside oneself. The entirety of becoming (or rather recognizing the state of being) enlightened is placed on the individual, not on texts and ancient traditions.

Buddhist meditation is fundamentally concerned with two themes: transforming the mind and using it to explore itself and other phenomena. In Theravada there are two basic types of meditation, combined in various ways: samatha and vipassana, developing samadhi and panna (prajna) respectively. Similar practices exist in Mahayana alongside others that those traditions do not generally classify that way.

According to the noble eightfold path, samyaksamadhi is 'right concentration'. The primary means of cultivating samadhi is meditation. According to Theravada Buddhism the Buddha taught two types of meditation namely - samatha

meditation and vipassana meditation. In throughout most of Buddhist history before modern times, serious meditation by lay people has been unusual.

Upon development of samādhi, one's mind becomes purified of defilement, calm, tranquil, and luminous. Once the meditator achieves a strong and powerful concentration, his mind is ready to penetrate and gain insight (vipassanā) into the ultimate nature of reality, eventually obtaining release from all suffering. The cultivation of mindfulness is essential to mental concentration, which is needed to achieve insight.

Samatha Meditation starts from being mindful of an object or idea, which is expanded to one's body, mind and entire surroundings, leading to a state of total concentration and tranquility. There are many variations in the style of meditation, from sitting cross-legged or kneeling to chanting or walking. The most common method of meditation is to concentrate on one's breath, because this practice can lead to both samatha and vipassana.

In Buddhist practice, it is said that while samatha meditation can calm the mind, only vipassanā meditation can reveal how the mind was disturbed to start with, which is what leads to jhana (knowledge), prajna (Pali panna pure understanding) and thus can lead to nirvana (Pali nibbana). When one is in jhana, all defilements are suppressed temporarily. Only prajna or vipassana eradicates the defilements completely. Jhanas are also resting states which arahants abide in order to rest.

Buddhist meditation encompasses a variety of meditation techniques that develop mindfulness, concentration, tranquility and insight. Core meditation techniques are preserved in ancient Buddhist texts and have proliferated and diversified through the millennia of teacher-student transmissions. Buddhist meditation bestow physical and mental health and leads towards Nirvana which is the ultimate & the highest state of human existence.

2.6 Zen

Zen is a school of Mahayana Buddhism. It gives emphasis on practice and experiential wisdom particularly as realized in the form of meditation known as zazen which lead to the attainment of awakening. It de-emphasizes both

theoretical knowledge and the study of religious texts. It gives great importance to the direct individual experience of one's own true nature. Zen training emphasizes daily life practice, along with intensive periods of meditation. Practicing with others is an integral part of Zen practice. According to the Japanese Zen masters, Zen is a way of life.

Zen Buddhism is divided into two main schools namely - Rinzai and Soto, the former greatly favouring the use in meditation of the koan (meditative riddle or puzzle) as a device for spiritual break-through, and the latter (while certainly employing koans) focussing more on *shikantaza* or 'just sitting'. Zen Buddhist teaching is often full of paradox, in order to loosen the grip of the ego and to facilitate the penetration into the realm of the true self or formless self, which is equated with the Buddha himself.

The appearance of Zen as a distinct school of Buddhism was first documented in China in the 7th century CE. It is thought to have developed as an blend of various currents in Mahayana Buddhist thought—among them the yogacara and madhyamaka philosophies and the *Prajnaparamita* literature—and of local traditions in China, particularly Daoism and Huayan Buddhism. From China, Zen subsequently spread southwards to Vietnam and eastwards to Korea and Japan. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Zen also began to establish a notable presence in North America and Europe. In Zen, philosophical teachings and textual study are given less emphasis than in other forms of Buddhism. But Zen is deeply rooted in both the teachings of the Buddha Siddhartha Gautama and Mahayana Buddhist thought.

Zazen, or seated meditation is the fundamental Zen practice which recalls both the posture in which the Buddha is said to have achieved enlightenment under the Bodhi tree (at Bodh Gaya, Bihar) and the elements of mindfulness and concentration which are part of the eightfold path as taught by the Buddha. All of the Buddha's fundamental teachings namely the eightfold path, the four noble truths, the idea of dependent origination, the five precepts, the five aggregates, and the three marks of existence are the important elements of Zen.

Zen draws many of its basic driving concepts, particularly the bodhisattva ideal, from that branch. Uniquely

Mahayana figures such as Guanyin, Manjusri, Samantabhadra, and Amitabha are venerated alongside the historical Buddha. Despite Zen's lack of emphasis on textual study, it has drawn heavily on the Mahayana sūtras, particularly the *Lankavatara sutra*, the *Heart of perfect wisdom sūtra*, the *Sūtra of the Perfection of wisdom of the diamond that cuts through illusion* and the 'Samantamukha parivarta' section of the *Lotus sutra*.

Zen has also itself produced a rich corpus of written literature which has become a part of its practice and teaching. Among the earliest and most widely studied of the specifically Zen texts, dating back to at least the 9th century CE, is the Platform sutra of the sixth patriarch, sometimes attributed to Huìnéng. Others include the various collections of *koans* and the *shobogenzo* of Dogen Zenji.

The core of Zen practice is called *zazen*. *Zazen* is sitting meditation. During *zazen*, practitioners usually assume a sitting position such as the lotus, half-lotus, Burmese, or seiza postures. Awareness is directed towards one's posture and breathing. Often, a square or round cushion placed on a padded mat is used to sit on; in some cases, a chair may be used. In Rinzai Zen practitioners typically sit facing the center of the room; while Soto practitioners traditionally sit facing a wall.

In Soto Zen, *shikantaza* meditation which is a meditation with no objects, or content is the primary form of practice. The meditator observes the thoughts, allowing them to arise and pass away without interference.

Meditation as a practice can be applied to any posture. Walking meditation is called *kinhin*. Successive periods of *zazen* are usually interwoven with brief periods of walking meditation to relieve the legs.

Zen Buddhists of the Rinzai school practice meditation on *koans* during *zazen*. A *koan* (public case) is a story or dialogue, usually related to Zen or other Buddhist history; the most typical form is an anecdote involving early Chinese Zen masters. *Koan* practice is particularly emphasized by the Japanese Rinzai school, but it also occurs in other forms of Zen. These tales involving famous Zen teachers are a practical demonstration of their wisdom, and can be used to test a student's progress in Zen practice. *Koans* often appear paradoxical or linguistically meaningless dialogues or

questions. Answering a koan requires a student to let go of conceptual thinking and of the logical way we order the world.

Chanting meditation usually centers on major Bodhisattvas like Avalokiteshvara and Manjusri (Japanese: Monju). Since the Zen practitioner's aim is to walk the Bodhisattva path, chanting can be used as a means to connect with these beings and realize this ideal within oneself. For example, by repeatedly chanting the Avalokiteshvara sutra, one instills the Bodhisattva's ideals into one's mind. Through the realization of the emptiness of oneself, and the Mahayanist ideal of Buddha-nature in all things, one understands that there is no difference between the cosmic bodhisattva and oneself.

The wisdom and compassion of the Bodhisattva one is chanting to be seen to equal the inner wisdom and compassion of the practitioner. This leads to the end of the duality between subject and object, practitioner and Bodhisattva, chanter and sutra. Thus chanting allows one to experience a non-dual reality.

There are some other techniques general in the Zen tradition which seem unconventional and whose purpose is said to be to shock a student in order to help him / her let go of habitual activities of the mind. Some of these are common today, while others are found mostly in the form of stories. These include the loud belly shout known as *katsu*. It is common in many Zen traditions today for Zen teachers to have a stick with them during formal ceremonies which is a symbol of authority and which can be also used to strike on the table during a talk.

2.7 Taoism

The character *Tao* (or *Dao*) means 'path' or 'way', but in Chinese religion and philosophy it has taken on more abstract meanings. Tao is rarely an object of worship, being treated more like the central Asian concepts of atman and dharma. The word "Taoism" is used to translate different Chinese terms. Daojiao / Taochiao (teachings/religion of the Dao) refers to Daoism as a religion. Daojia / Taochia (school of the Dao) refers to the studies of scholars, or 'philosophical' Daoism. However, most scholars have abandoned the dichotomy of 'religious' and 'philosophical' Daoism. "The Tao symbolizes the totality of all things. It is a cosmic thought.

Everything is connected as you expand your awareness to understand and wonder at the enormity of the way. The way is awareness. The way encompasses good and evil and is bigger than both of them.”⁹

Taoism includes a number of meditative and contemplative traditions. Formerly said to have their principles described in the *I Ching*, *Tao Te Ching*, *Chuang Tzu* and *Tao Tsang* among other texts; the multitude of schools relating to Qigong, Neigong, Daoyin and Zhan zhuang are a large, diverse collection of breath training practices in aid of meditation with much influence from later Chinese Buddhism and with much influence on traditional Chinese medicine and the Chinese as well as some Japanese martial arts. The Chinese martial art Tai Chi Chuan is named after the well-known focus for Taoist and neo-confucian meditation, the T'ai Chi T'u, and is often referred to as ‘meditation in motion’.

Often Taoist internal martial arts, especially Tai Chi Chuan are thought of as moving meditation. A common phrase is, "movement in stillness" referring to energetic movement in passive Qigong and seated Taoist meditation; with the converse being ‘stillness in movement’, a state of mental calm and meditation in the tai chi form.

Taoism (Daoism) is the English name referring to a variety of related Chinese philosophical and religious traditions and concepts. These traditions influenced East Asia for over two thousand years and some have spread internationally. Tao (pronounced "Dow") is usually translated into English as ‘path’, ‘The flow of things’ or ‘the way’. However, its true nature is basically indefinable; it cannot be described, it must be experienced. Tao refers to a energy which envelops, and flows through all things, living and non-living, regulating natural processes and nourishing balance in the Universe. It also embodies the harmony of opposites (positive - negative), as there would be no love without hate, no light without dark, or no male without female.

The philosophical school of Taoism has its roots in the fifth century B.C.E. The founder is believed by many to be Lao-Tzu (604-531 BCE). Alternate spellings to Lao-Tzu are namely- Lao Tze, Lao Tse, Lao Tzu, Laozi, Laotze, etc. Lao Tzu was a beaurocrat, who spurred the world to constant feudal

warfare and other conflicts that disrupted society, and instead to find bliss. According to mythology, he was recognized as he left the kingdom, where the border guard requested Lao Tzu write down the essence of his wisdom. The resulting book is known as the Tao Te Ching, or book of the way.

Tao is the underlying pattern of the universe, which can neither be described in words nor conceived in thought. The aspiration of Taoism is to bring all elements of existence - heaven, earth, and man - into harmony. To be in accordance with the Tao, the individual must empty himself of dogma and knowledge, act with simplicity and humility, and above all seek nature. In essence, the knowable universe is composed of opposite components, whether physical (hard/soft; dark/light), moral (good/bad), or biological (male/female), which may be classed as either Yang or Yin. Yin (dark side) is the breath that formed the earth. Yang (light side) is the breath that formed the heavens.

When combined, existence is produced and is manifest as Tao, it is very important to note that neither yin nor yang can exist independently, thus giving rise to the famous 'fish symbol' of Taoism, symbolizing dynamic interaction.

The Tao surrounds everyone and therefore everyone must listen to find enlightenment. Taoists usually have significance in promoting health and vitality, especially through the nurturing of Chi (air, energy). To a devout Taoist, development of virtue is one's chief task. The three jewels to be sought are compassion, moderation and humility. Taoists follow the art of wu wei, which is to let nature take its course; a translation could be "without effort" or perhaps better stated as 'without forcing.' For example, one should let a river flow towards the sea unimpeded; do not erect a dam which would interfere with its natural flow. One should also plan in advance and consider carefully each action before making it.

Taoists believe that people are compassionate by nature and if left to their own devices they will show this compassion without expecting a reward. During its entire history, Taoism has coexisted alongside the Confucian tradition, which has served as the ethical and religious basis for many of the institutions and arrangements of the Chinese empire.

Taoism, while not radically subversive, offered a range of alternatives to the Confucian way of life and point of view. These alternatives, however, were not mutually exclusive. For the vast majority of Chinese, there was no question of choosing between Confucianism and Taoism. Except for a few straight-laced Confucians and a few pious Taoists, the Chinese man or woman practiced both either at different phases of life or as different sides of personality and taste.

The Taoists had their own temples and had their own system of martial arts. Emphasis was on internal styles, styles that sought to link and unify the external movements of the body with the internal energies and connection of the practitioner. Tai Chi Chuan mostly has its roots attributed to Taoism.

Most traditional Chinese Taoists are polytheistic. Nature and ancestor spirits are also common in popular Taoism. Organized Taoism distinguishes its ritual activity from that of the folk religion, which some professional Taoists (*Daoshi*) view as debased. This sort of shamanism is eschewed for an emphasis on internal alchemy among the "elite" Taoists. Chinese alchemy, astrology, cuisine, several Chinese martial arts, Chinese traditional medicine, fengshui, and many styles of qigong breath training disciplines are intertwined with Taoism throughout history.

Taoist theology focuses on doctrines of wu wei (non-action), spontaneity, humanism, relativism and emptiness. This philosophical aspect of Taoism emphasizes various themes found in the *Tao Te Ching* such as naturalness, vitality, peace, 'non-action' (*wu wei*), emptiness (refinement), detachment, the strength of softness (or flexibility), and in the Zhuangzi such as receptiveness, spontaneity, the relativism of human ways of life, ways of speaking and guiding behavior.

Tao can be roughly stated to be the flow of the universe, or the force behind the natural order. Tao is believed to be the influence that keeps the universe balanced and ordered. Tao is associated with nature, due to a belief that nature demonstrates the Tao. The flow of qi, as the essential energy of action and existence, is compared to the universal order of Tao. Tao is compared to what it is not, like the negative theology of

Western scholars. It is often considered to be the source of both existence and non-existence.

Tao is also associated with a 'proper' attitude, morality and lifestyle. This is intimately tied to the complex concept of *Te* (virtue). *Te* is the active expression of Tao. Taoism generally expresses this as 'integrity' or 'wholeness'. Tao is considered a 'way', while *Te* is the active living, or cultivation, of that 'way'.

Wu wei is a central concept in Taoism. The literal meaning of *wu wei* is "without action". It is often expressed by the paradox *wei wu wei*, meaning "action without action" or "effortless doing". The practice and efficacy of wu wei are fundamental in Chinese thought, most prominently emphasized in Taoism. The goal of wu wei is alignment with Tao, revealing the soft and invisible power within all things. It is believed by Taoists that masters of wu wei can control this invisible potential, the innate yin-action of the Way.

In ancient Taoist texts, wu wei is associated with water through its yielding nature. Water is soft and weak, it is noted, but it can move earth and carve stone. Taoist philosophy proposes that the universe works harmoniously according to its own ways. When someone exerts his will against the world, he disrupts that harmony. Taoism does not identify man's will as the root problem. Rather, it asserts that man must place his will in harmony with the natural universe.

Pu is translated as 'uncarved block' or 'simplicity'. It is a metaphor for the state of *wu wei* and the principle of *jian*. It represents a passive state of receptiveness. *Pu* is a symbol for a state of pure potential and perception without prejudice. In this state, Taoists believe everything is seen as it is, without preconceptions or illusion. *Pu* is seen as keeping oneself in the primordial state of *tao*. It is believed to be the true nature of the mind, unburdened by knowledge or experiences. In the state of *pu*, there is no right or wrong, beautiful or ugly. There is only pure experience, or awareness, free from learned labels and definitions. It is this state of being that is the goal of following wu wei.

Taoists believe that man is a microcosm for the universe. The body ties directly into the Chinese five elements. The five organs correlate with the five elements, the five

directions and the seasons. Akin to the "neoplatonic maxim" of "as above, so below", Taoism posits that by understanding himself, man may gain knowledge of the universe.

In Taoism, even beyond Chinese folk religion, various rituals, exercises, and substances are said to positively affect one's physical health. They are also intended to align an individual spiritually with cosmic forces, or enable ecstatic spiritual journeys. These concepts seem basic to Taoism in its elite forms. Internal alchemy and various spiritual practices are used by some Taoists to extend life, even to the point of immortality. Immortals, their actions and their relationships with the gods and natural forces form a significant portion of Taoist mythology.

The three jewels or three treasures are basic virtues in Taoism. The three jewels are compassion, moderation and humility. They are also translated as kindness, simplicity and modesty. The first of the three treasures is *ci* (literally 'compassion, love, kindness'), which the *Tao Te Ching* parallels with familial and brotherly love. It is compared to loving others and the world as a person loves their own existence. The second is *jian* (literally 'moderation, economy, restraint'), which the *Tao Te Ching* praises. *Jian* is connected with the Taoist metaphor *pu*. (uncarved wood; simplicity).

It represents perfect efficiency and simplicity of desire. The third treasure is the phrase *budan wei tianxia xian*, meaning "not dare to be first in the world". It is connected to a fear of death, out of a love for life. Taoism posits that to be first is to expose oneself to the world's destructive forces. Remaining behind and embracing humility allows time for one to bear fruit.

Taoism's origins may be traced to prehistoric Chinese religions in China. They are found in the composition of the *Tao Te Ching* (3rd or 4th century BCE), or amidst the activity of Zhang Daoling (2nd century AD). Laozi received imperial recognition as a divinity in the mid second century CE. Taoism gained official status in China during the Tang Dynasty, whose emperors claimed Laozi as their relative. Several Song emperors, most notably Huizong, were active in promoting Taoism, collecting Taoist texts and publishing editions of the *Daozang*. Aspects of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism

were consciously synthesized in the Neo-Confucian school, which eventually became imperial orthodoxy for state bureaucratic purposes.

The Qing Dynasty, however, much favored Confucian classics and rejected Taoist works. During the eighteenth century, the imperial library was constituted, but excluded virtually all Taoist books. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Taoism had fallen so much from favor, which only one complete copy of the *Daozang* still remained, at the white cloud monastery in Beijing. Taoism is one of five religions recognized by the PRC, which insists on controlling its activities through a state bureaucracy (the China Taoist Association).

2.8 Judaism

There is evidence that Judaism has had meditative practices that go back thousands of years. For instance, in the Torah, the patriarch Isaac is described as going (*lasuach*) in the field—a term understood by all commentators as some type of meditative practice (Genesis 24:63).

Similarly, there are indications throughout the Tanach (the Hebrew Bible) that meditation was central to the prophets. In the old testament, there are two Hebrew words for meditation: *haga*, which means *to sigh* or *murmur*, but also *to meditate*, and *sia*, which means *to muse*, or *rehearse in one's mind*.

In modern Jewish practice, one of the best known meditative practices is called *hitbodedut* or *hisbodedus* is explained in Kabbalah and Hassidic philosophy. The word *hisbodedut*, which derives from the Hebrew word "boded", and said to be related to the *sfirah* of Binah (lit. book of understanding), means the process of making oneself understand a concept well through analytical study.

Kabbalah is inherently a meditative field of study. Kabbalistic meditative practices construct a supernal realm which the soul navigates through in order to achieve certain ends. One of the most well known types of meditation is *Merkabah*, from the root /R-K-B/ meaning 'chariot' (of God).

Judaism is the religion of the Jews. It is a monotheistic religion based on principles and ethics embodied in the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh), as further explored and explained in the

Talmud and other texts. Judaism is among the oldest religious traditions still being practiced today. Jewish history and the principles and ethics of Judaism have influenced other religions, such as Christianity, Islam and the Baha'í faith.

At its core, the Bible is an account of the Israelites' relationship with God from their earliest history until the building of the second temple (c. 350 BCE). This relationship is often a contentious one, as the Israelites struggle with their faith in God and attraction to other gods. Among the larger-than-life figures we meet in the Bible are the Patriarchs - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who wrestled with their beliefs - and Moses, who led the Israelites out of Egypt.

Abraham, hailed as the first Hebrew and the father of the Jewish people, rejected the idolatry that he saw around him and embraced monotheism. As a reward for this act of faith in one God, he was promised many offspring. Abraham's first child was Ishmael and his second son was Isaac, whom God said would continue Abraham's work and inherit the land of Israel (then called Canaan), after having been exiled and redeemed. God sent the patriarch Jacob and his children to Egypt, where after many generations they became enslaved. God later commanded Moses to redeem the Israelites from slavery, leading to the Exodus from Egypt. The Israelites gathered at Mount Sinai in 1313 BCE (Jewish year 2448) and received the Torah - the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These books, together with Nevi'im and Ketuvim are known as *Torah Shebikhtav* (written Torah), as opposed to the oral Torah, which refers to the Mishna and the Talmud. Eventually, God led them to the land of Israel.

God designated the descendants of Aaron, Moses' brother, to be a priestly class within the Israelite community. They first officiated in the tabernacle (a portable house of worship), and later their descendants were in charge of worship in the temple in Jerusalem. Once the Israelites had settled in the land of Israel, the tabernacle was planted in the city of Shiloh for over 300 years during which time God provided great men, and occasionally women, to rally the nation against attacking enemies, some of which were sent by God as a punishment for the sins of the people. This is described in the book of Joshua

and the book of Judges. As time went on, the spiritual level of the nation declined to the point that God allowed the Philistines to capture the tabernacle in Shiloh.

The people of Israel then told Samuel the prophet that they had reached the point where they needed to be governed by a permanent king, as were other nations, as described in the books of Samuel. Samuel grudgingly acceded to this request and appointed Saul, a great but very humble man, to be their King. When the people pressured Saul into going against a command conveyed to him by Samuel, God told Samuel to appoint David in his stead.

Once King David was established, he told the prophet Nathan that he would like to build a permanent temple, and as a reward for his actions, God promised David that he would allow his son to build the temple and the throne would never depart from his children (David himself was not allowed to build the temple because he had been involved in many wars, making it inappropriate for him to build a temple representing peace). As a result, it was David's son Solomon who built the first permanent temple according to God's will, in Jerusalem, as described in the books of kings.

Rabbinic tradition holds that the details and interpretation of the law, which are called the *Oral Torah* or *oral law*, were originally an unwritten tradition based upon what God told Moses on Mount Sinai. However, as the persecutions of the Jews increased and the details were in danger of being forgotten, these oral laws were recorded by Rabbi Judah hanasi (Judah the Prince) in the Mishnah, redacted *circa* 200 CE.

The Talmud was a compilation of both the Mishnah and the Gemara, rabbinic commentaries redacted over the next three centuries. The Gemara originated in two major centers of Jewish scholarship, Palestine and Babylonia. Correspondingly, two bodies of analysis developed, and two works of Talmud were created. The older compilation is called the Jerusalem Talmud. It was compiled sometime during the fourth century in Israel. The Babylonian Talmud was compiled from discussions in the houses of study by the scholars Ravina I, Ravina II, and Rav Ashi by 500 C.E., although it continued to be edited later.

In modern Judaism, central authority is not vested in any single person or body, but in sacred texts, traditions, and learned Rabbis who interpret those texts and laws. According to Jewish tradition, Judaism begins with the covenant between God and Abraham (ca. 2000 BCE), the patriarch and progenitor of the Jewish people.

Throughout the ages, Judaism has adhered to a number of religious principles, the most important of which is the belief in a single, omniscient, omnipotent, benevolent, transcendent God, who created the universe and continues to govern it. According to Jewish tradition, the God who created the world established a covenant with the Israelites and their descendants, and revealed his laws and commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai in the form of both the written and oral Torah. Judaism has traditionally valued Torah study and the observance of the commandments recorded in the Torah and as expounded in the Talmud.

Judaism is a monotheistic religion based upon principles and ethics embodied in the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh), as further explored and explained in the Talmud and other texts. According to Jewish tradition, Judaism begins with the covenant between God and Abraham.

While Judaism has seldom, if ever, been monolithic in practice, it has always been fiercely monotheistic in theology - although the Tanakh records significant periods of apostasy among many Israelites from Judaism's beliefs.

Historically, Judaism has considered belief in the divine revelation and acceptance of the written and oral Torah as its fundamental core belief, but Judaism does not have a centralized authority dictating religious dogma. This gave rise to many different formulations as to the specific theological beliefs inherent in the Torah and Talmud. While some rabbis have at times agreed upon a firm formulation, others have disagreed, many criticizing any such attempt as minimizing acceptance of the entire Torah. Notably, in the Talmud some principles of faith (e.g., the Divine origin of the Torah) are considered important enough that rejection of them can put one in the category of '*apikoros*' (heretic).

Over the centuries, a number of formulations of Jewish principles of faith have appeared, and though they differ with

respect to certain details, they demonstrate a commonality of core ideology. Of these formulations, the one most widely considered authoritative is Maimonides' thirteen principles of faith, formulated in the XII century. These principles were controversial when first proposed, evoking criticism by Hasdai Crescas and Joseph Albo. Maimonides thirteen principles were ignored by much of the Jewish community for the next few centuries. Over time two poetic restatements of these principles ("*Ani Ma'amin*" and "*Yigdal*") became canonized in the Jewish prayer book, and eventually became widely held.

Joseph Albo and the raavad have criticized Maimonides' list as containing too many items that, while true, were not fundamentals of the faith, and thus placed too many Jews in the category of "heretic", rather than those who were simply in error. Many others criticized any such formulation as minimizing acceptance of the entire Torah.

As noted however, neither Maimonides nor his contemporaries viewed these principles as encompassing all of Jewish belief, but rather as the core theological underpinnings of the acceptance of Judaism. Along these lines, the ancient historian Josephus emphasized practices and observances rather than religious beliefs, associating apostasy with a failure to observe Jewish law and maintaining that the requirements for conversion to Judaism included circumcision and adherence to traditional customs.

Judaism has at all times valued Torah study, as well as other religious texts. The basis of Jewish law and tradition (halakha) is the Torah (also known as the Pentateuch or the five books of Moses). According to rabbinic tradition there are 613 commandments in the Torah. Some of these laws are directed only to men or to women, some only to the ancient priestly groups, the Kohanim and Leviyim (members of the tribe of Levi), and some only to farmers within the land of Israel. Many laws were only applicable when the temple in Jerusalem existed, and fewer than 300 of these commandments are still applicable today.

While there have been Jewish groups whose beliefs were claimed to be based on the written text of the Torah alone (e.g., the Sadducees, and the Karaites), most Jews believed in what they call the oral law. These oral traditions were

transmitted by the Pharisee sect of ancient Judaism, and were later recorded in written form and expanded upon by the rabbis.

Rabbinic Judaism has always held that the books of the Torah (called the written law) have always been transmitted in parallel with an oral tradition. To justify this viewpoint, Jews point to the text of the Torah, where many words are left undefined, and many procedures mentioned without explanation or instructions; this, they argue, means that the reader is assumed to be familiar with the details from other, i.e., oral, sources.

This parallel set of material was originally transmitted orally, and came to be known as 'the oral law'. By the time of Rabbi Judah hanasi (200 CE), after the destruction of Jerusalem, much of this material was edited together into the Mishnah. Over the next four centuries this law underwent discussion and debate in both of the world's major Jewish communities (in Israel and Babylonia), and the commentaries on the Mishnah from each of these communities eventually came to be edited together into compilations known as the two Talmuds. These have been expounded by commentaries of various Torah scholars during the ages.

Halakha, the rabbinic Jewish way of life, then, is based on a combined reading of the Torah, and the oral tradition - the Mishnah, the halakhic Midrash, the Talmud and its commentaries. The Halakha has developed slowly, through a precedent-based system. The literature of questions to rabbis, and their considered answers, is referred to as responsa (in Hebrew, *Sheelot U-Teshuvot*.) Over time, as practices develop, codes of Jewish law are written that are based on the responsa; the most important code, the Shulchan Aruch, largely determines orthodox religious practice today.

Jewish philosophy refers to the conjunction between serious study of philosophy and Jewish theology. Major Jewish philosophers include Solomon ibn Gabirol, Saadia Gaon, Maimonides, and Gersonides. Major changes occurred in response to the enlightenment (late 1700s to early 1800s) leading to the post-enlightenment Jewish philosophers. Modern Jewish philosophy consists of both orthodox and non-orthodox oriented philosophy. Notable among orthodox Jewish philosophers are Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, Joseph B.

Soloveitchik, and Yitzchok Hutner. Well-known non-orthodox Jewish philosophers include Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Mordecai Kaplan, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Emmanuel Levinas.

Traditionally, Jews recite prayers three times daily, with a fourth prayer added on Shabbat and holidays. At the heart of each service is the *Amidah* or *Shemoneh Esrei*. Another key prayer in many services is the declaration of faith, the *Shema Yisrael* (or *Shema*). Most of the prayers in a traditional Jewish service can be recited in solitary prayer, although communal prayer is preferred. Communal prayer requires a quorum of ten adult Jews, called a *minyan*. In nearly all orthodox and a few conservative circles, only male Jews are counted toward a *minyan*; most conservative Jews and members of other Jewish denominations count female Jews as well.

In addition to prayer services, observant traditional Jews recite prayers and benedictions throughout the day when performing various acts. Prayers are recited upon waking up in the morning, before eating or drinking different foods, after eating a meal, and so on.

The approach to prayer varies among the Jewish denominations. Differences can include the texts of prayers, the frequency of prayer, the number of prayers recited at various religious events, the use of musical instruments and choral music, and whether prayers are recited in the traditional liturgical languages or the vernacular. In general, orthodox and conservative congregations adhere most closely to tradition, and reform and reconstructionist synagogues are more likely to incorporate translations and contemporary writings in their services.

Also, in most conservative synagogues, and all reform and reconstructionist congregations, women participate in prayer services on an equal basis with men, including roles traditionally filled only by men, such as reading from the Torah. In addition, many reform temples use musical accompaniment such as organs and mixed choirs.

The core of festival and Shabbat prayer services is the public reading of the Torah, along with connected readings from the other books of the Tanakh, called *Haftarah*. Over the

course of a year, the whole Torah is read, with the cycle starting over in the autumn, on simchat Torah.

The laws of kashrut (keeping kosher) are the Jewish dietary laws. Food in accord with Jewish law is termed kosher, and food not in accord with Jewish law is termed *treifah* or *treif*. The Torah cites no reason for the laws of kashrut, but the rabbis have offered various explanations, including ritual purity, teaching people to control their urges, and health benefits. Kashrut involves the abstention from consuming birds and beasts that prey on other animals, and creatures that roam the sea floor eating the excretions of other animals.

Major prohibitions exist on eating pork, which is considered an unclean animal, and seafood. Meat is ritually slaughtered, and meat and milk are not eaten together, based on the biblical injunction against cooking a kid in its mother's milk. Although hygiene may have been a factor, the deeper purpose of kashrut is to lend a spiritual dimension to the physical act of eating. The idea is that Jews should not put anything into their mouths that involves spiritual negatives such as pain, sickness, uncleanliness, or cruelty to animals. Jewish holidays celebrate central themes in the relationship between God and the world, such as creation, revelation, and redemption.

2.9 Christianity

There are various practices in Christian traditions which can be identified as forms of meditation. The basis of many of these practices is Monastic traditions. In Catholicism, practices such as rosary can be compared to some forms of eastern meditation which focus on a particular object. In Philokalia, prayer as a form of meditation of the heart is described that leads to Theosis which ignores the senses and results in inner stillness.

Christian meditation is associated with prayer or scripture study. It is rooted in the Bible, which directs its readers to meditate. In Joshua 1:8, God commands his people to meditate on his word day and night to instill obedience. The Bible mentions *meditate* or *meditation* twenty times.

The book of Psalms says “his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night.”¹⁰

In the old Testament, there are two Hebrew words for meditation namely- *haga* which means to sigh or murmur, but also to meditate and *sia* which means to muse, or rehearse in one's mind. Prescribed Christian meditation began with the early Christian monastic practice of reading the Bible slowly. This spiritual practice is called "divine reading" or "sacred reading", or *lectio divina*. In this spiritual practice, monks carefully consider the deeper meaning of each verse as they read it. This slow and thoughtful reading of scripture, and the resulting pondering of its meaning, was their meditation. Sometimes the monks found themselves spontaneously praying as a result of their meditation on Scripture. This way their prayer in turn led on to a simple, loving focus on God. This wordless love for God is called as contemplation.

Guigo II, a Carthusian monk and prior of Grande Chartreuse in the 12th century was the first who formally described the development from Bible reading, to meditation, to prayer and to loving regard for God. Guigo named the four steps of this 'ladder' of prayer with the Latin terms *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*. The spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola include various meditative exercises. One of the practices is as follows.

The practitioner is encouraged to visualize and meditate upon scenes from the life of Christ. His Contemplation to Attain Love of God is a method that unites intellectual meditation and touching contemplation. There are several other examples of the practice of meditation in Christianity. According to Christians, meditation can be considered as a form of worship centered in love for God.

Christianity is a monotheistic religion centered on the life, teachings, and actions of Jesus as recounted in the new Testament. Christianity began within Judaism centered on the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. Under the leadership of the Apostles Peter and Paul it opened up early to Gentiles, gradually distinguishing itself from Judaism. Some Jewish Christians rejected this approach and developed into various sects of their own. Later a church hierarchy seems to have developed at least by the time of the writing of the Pastoral Epistles and was certainly formalized by the 3rd century.

Christianity spread across the mediterranean basin while enduring frequent persecution by Roman Emperors. Some early Christian theologians such as Origen and later Church fathers such as Augustine of Hippo and the Cappadocian Fathers helped to create a synthesis between Greek philosophy, especially Platonism, and Christianity, developing a distinctly Christian theology.

Christianity also had to deal with internal heresies, especially the Gnostics (who believed that salvation came through secret knowledge), various mystery cults and possibly Mithraism. It is commonly accepted in some academic circles that Christianity was influenced in form, language or even doctrine by these mystery cults, but theories about the exact nature of that influence remain disputed and minority views among mainstream scholarship.

Early in the 4th century, the emperor Constantine the great legalized Christianity, and Theodosius I established it as the official religion of the Roman empire near the end of that century. From that time onwards, the history of Christianity is difficult to extricate from that of Europe (and several other culture-regions). After the religion's legalization, doctrinal disputes, especially regarding christology, intensified, leading to internal strife and clearer dogmatic definitions through ecumenical councils. The Roman empire, having become Christian, now suppressed the old pagan cults and also Christian heresies. Other peoples adopted Christianity, such as Armenia or Ethiopia, while among other peoples ancient Christian minority communities developed, e.g. in Persia, India. Various forms of monasticism also developed.

After the western Roman empire had been shattered during the migration period, the Germanic peoples and Ireland converted to Roman Christianity, while the slavic peoples of eastern Europe adopted the Byzantine form of Christianity, (e.g. Russia in 988). This was a gradual process, taking a long time in some parts, as visible in pagan remnants in some medieval literary works, such as Beowulf or Nibelungenlied.

Cultural differences and disciplinary disputes divided East and West and resulted in the great schism (conventionally dated in 1054). This formally divided Christendom into two main groups namely- Roman Catholicism in the west and

eastern orthodoxy in the east. From the 7th century, Christianity was challenged by the religion of Islam, which quickly conquered the middle east and northern Africa. Numerous military struggles followed, including the Crusades, the Spanish Reconquista and the eventual conquest of the Byzantine empire and south-eastern Europe by the Turks.

Western Christianity in the middle ages was characterized by cooperation and conflict between the secular rulers and the church under the Pope and the development of scholastic theology and philosophy. Later, increasing discontent with corruption and immorality among the clergy resulted in attempts to reform Church and society, but only after Martin Luther had published his 95 theses in 1517 and started the protestant reformation, did the Roman catholic church manage to renew itself at the Council of Trent.

During the following centuries, Catholicism and Protestantism — the latter increasingly divided into denominations — competed with each other, while Christianity also spread to the Americas, Oceania, East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Christianity was also confronted with the discoveries of science (notably heliocentrism, evolution), enlightenment thinking, biblical criticism, social issues, and modern ideologies. Important developments in the 20th century were ecumenism and the charismatic movement.

The belief that God is a single eternal being who exists as three distinct, eternal, and indivisible persons: Father, Son (divine logos, incarnated as Jesus Christ), and Holy spirit (or *Holy ghost*). It is believed that Jesus Christ is both fully God (divine) and fully human (two natures in one person). Christians believe that salvation from 'sin and death' is available through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Protestants, Catholics, and orthodox Christians have arrived at several explanations as to exactly how this salvation occurs.

Most Christians interpret salvation to mean being able to enter heaven (and escape hell) after death, though some theologians have lamented this tendency. The question of "who is saved" has long been considered a dark mystery by many theologians, though most Protestants consider it a relatively simple issue of whether one has accepted Jesus as lord and savior.

Virtually all Christian churches accept the authority of the Bible, including the old testament and the new testament. Differences exist in the canons of the orthodox, catholic, and protestant churches — primarily their treatment of the deuterocanonical books used by catholic and Orthodox Churches, but rejected by Protestants as Apocrypha. This issue affects doctrines only indirectly. More theologically significant is the Swedenborgian churches' rejection of the new testament epistles, a stance which has not won acceptance from any other denomination.

Whereas Jews see the Torah as the most important part of the Bible, most Christians regard the Gospels, which tell of the life and teachings of Jesus, as central. Ornamental books of the four gospels are sometimes used in church liturgies. These may be carried into the church in procession, and laid upon the altar during the first part of the service. The 'gospel' means the 'good news' of the Christian message, which Christians regularly disseminate to others. This may include missionary work as well as the translation and distribution of Bibles, as practiced by Gideons International.

Orthodox and Catholic believers describe Christian worship in terms of the seven sacraments or "mysteries." These include baptism, the Eucharist (communion), matrimony, holy orders, confirmation or Chrismation, penance and reconciliation, and the anointing of the sick.

Many Protestant groups, following Martin Luther, recognize the sacramental nature of baptism and communion, but not usually the other five in the same way.

Anabaptist and Brethren groups would add feet washing. Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Holiness Churches emphasize 'gifts of the spirit' such as spiritual healing, prophecy, exorcism, and speaking in tongues. These emphases are used not as 'sacraments' but as means of worship and ministry. The Quakers deny the entire concept of sacraments. But their 'testimonies' affirming peace, integrity, equality, and simplicity are affirmed as integral parts of the quaker belief structure.

In general, Protestants tend to view Christian rituals in terms of commemoration apart from mystery. orthodox, Roman catholic, old-catholic and many Anglican and Lutheran

Christians hold the commemoration and mystery of rituals together, seeing no contradiction between them.

Virtually all Christians traditions affirm that Christian practice should include acts of personal piety such as prayer, Bible reading, and attempting to live a moral lifestyle, to include not only obedience to the ten commandments, as interpreted by Christ (as in the sermon on the Mount), but also love for one's neighbor, whether friend or enemy, Christian or non-Christian, in both attitude and action. This love is commanded by Christ and, according to him, is next only in importance to love of God and includes obedience to such injunctions as 'feed the hungry' and 'shelter the homeless,' both informally and formally.

Christianity teaches that it is impossible for people to completely reform themselves, but that moral and spiritual progress can only occur with God's help through the gift of the holy spirit, who dwells within all faithful believers. Christians believe that by sharing in Christ's life, death, and resurrection they die with him to sin and can be resurrected with him to new life.

2.10 Islam

In Islam the foundation of its creed and way of life is Meditation. A Muslim is obligated to pray, focus and meditate on Allah through reciting Quran. *Dhikr* is the core of this practice which is aimed at establishing the connection between the Creator and Creation which guides the soul to truth. A Muslim is obligated to pray, focus and meditate five times a day namely- before dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset and night. Through this practice a Muslim is expected to maintain the spiritual peace which is experienced through work, social and family life. Thus the whole day of the practitioner transforms into meditation and when he or she goes to sleep its nothing but another phase of meditation.

Prophet Muhammad spent long periods in meditation and contemplation. It was during one such period of meditation that Muhammad began to receive revelations of the Quran. Pious Muslims follow the deeds of Prophet Mohammad. There are two more schools of meditation in Islam. The first is *Tafakkur* and *Tadabbur* which literally means reflection upon the universe. Muslims feel this is a form of intellectual

development which derives from a higher level [God]. This intellectual progression through the receiving of divine inspiration awakens and liberates the human mind. This permits man's inner personality to develop and grow so that he may lead his life on a spiritual plane far above the ordinary level. This is consistent with the global teachings of Islam, which views life as a test of our practice of submission to Allah (God / eternal supreme power). The second is the Sufi meditation. Sufi meditation is mostly based on mystical exercises however this method is controversial among muslim scholars. Tamarkoz is a Persian term that means 'concentration' which is taught in the Oveyssi-shahmaghsoudi sufi order. It refers to the 'concentration of abilities'.

Islam is a monotheistic abrahamic religion originating with the teachings of the Islamic prophet Muhammad, a 7th century Arab religious and political figure. The word Islam means 'submission', or the total surrender of oneself to the Islamic conception of God (Allah). An adherent of Islam is known as a *m*, meaning 'one who submits (to God)'.

Muslims believe that God revealed the Quran to Muhammad, God's final prophet, through angel Gabriel, and regard the Quran and the Sunnah (words and deeds of Muhammad) as the fundamental sources of Islam. They do not regard Muhammad as the founder of a new religion, but as the restorer of the original monotheistic faith of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and other prophets. Islamic tradition holds that Jews and Christians distorted the revelations God gave to these prophets by either altering the text, introducing a false interpretation, or both.

Islam includes many religious practices. Adherents are generally required to observe the five pillars of Islam, which are five duties that unite Muslims into a community. In addition to the five pillars, Islamic law (*sharia*) has developed a tradition of rulings that touch on virtually all aspects of life and society. This tradition encompasses everything from practical matters like dietary laws and banking to warfare and welfare.

The word *Islam* is a verbal noun originating from the triliteral root *s-l-m*, and is derived from the Arabic verb *Aslama*, which means 'to accept, surrender or submit.' Thus, Islam means acceptance of and submission to God, and

believers must demonstrate this by worshipping him, following his commands, and avoiding polytheism. The word is given a number of meanings in the Quran.

The Quran states that all Muslims must believe in God, his revelations, his angels, his messengers, and in the ‘day of judgment’. Also, there are other beliefs that differ between particular sects. The Sunni concept of predestination is called divine decree, while the Shia version is called divine justice. Unique to the Shia is the doctrine of *Imamah*, or the political and spiritual leadership of the Imams.

Muslims believe that God revealed his final message to humanity through the Islamic prophet Muhammad via the archangel Gabriel (*Jibril*). For them, Muhammad was God's final prophet and the Qur'an is the revelations he received over more than two decades.

In Islam, prophets are men selected by God to be his messengers. Muslims believe that prophets are human and not divine, though some are able to perform miracles to prove their claim. Islamic prophets are considered to be the closest to perfection of all humans, and are uniquely the recipients of divine revelation—either directly from God or through angels.

The Quran mentions the names of numerous figures considered prophets in Islam, including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, among others. Islamic theology says that all of God's messengers since Adam preached the message of Islam—submission to the will of God. Islam is described in the Quran as ‘the primordial nature upon which God created mankind’, and the Qur'an states that the proper name *Muslim* was given by Abraham.

As a historical phenomenon, Islam originated in Arabia in the early 7th century. Islamic texts depict Judaism and Christianity as prophetic successor traditions to the teachings of Abraham. The Qur'an calls Jews and Christians ‘People of the Book’ (*ahl al-kitāb*), and distinguishes them from polytheists. Muslims believe that parts of the previously revealed scriptures, the *Tawrat* (Torah) and the *Injil* (Gospels), had become distorted—either in interpretation, in text, or both.

Islam's fundamental theological concept is *tawhid*—the belief that there is only one god. The Arabic term for God is *Allah*; most scholars believe it was derived from a contraction

of the words *al-* (the) and *ilah* (deity, masculine form), meaning 'the god' (*al-ilah*), but others trace its origin to the Aramaic *Alaha*. The first of the five pillars of Islam, *tawhid* is expressed in the *shahadah* (testification), which declares that there is no god but God, and that Muhammad is God's messenger. In traditional Islamic theology, God is beyond all comprehension; Muslims are not expected to visualize God but to worship and adore him as a protector. Although Muslims believe that Jesus was a prophet, they reject the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, comparing it to polytheism.

Muslims consider the Qur'an to be the literal word of God; it is the central religious text of Islam. Muslims believe that the verses of the Qur'an were revealed to Muhammad by God through the angel Gabriel on many occasions between 610 and his death on June 8, 632. The Qur'an was reportedly written down by Muhammad's companions (*sahabah*) while he was alive, although the prime method of transmission was orally. It was compiled in the time of Abu bakr, the first caliph, and was standardized under the administration of Uthman, the third caliph. From textual evidence modern western academics find that the Qur'an of today has not changed significantly over the years.

The Quran is divided into 114 suras, or chapters, which combined, contain 6,236 *āyāt*, or verses. The chronologically earlier suras, revealed at Mecca, are primarily concerned with ethical and spiritual topics. The later Medinan suras mostly discuss social and moral issues relevant to the Muslim community. The Quran is more concerned with moral guidance than legal instruction, and is considered as the sourcebook of Islamic principles and values. Muslim jurists consult the *hadith*, or the written record of Muhammad's life, to both supplement the Qur'an and assist with its interpretation. The science of Qur'anic commentary and exegesis is known as *tafsir*.

The word Quran means "recitation". When muslims speak in the abstract about "the Qur'an", they usually mean the scripture as recited in Arabic rather than the printed work or any translation of it. To muslims, the Qur'an is perfect only as revealed in the original Arabic; translations are necessarily deficient because of language differences, the fallibility of translators, and the impossibility of preserving the original's

inspired style. Translations are therefore regarded only as commentaries on the Qur'an, or the interpretations of its meaning, not as the Qur'an itself.

Belief in angels is crucial to the faith of Islam. The Arabic word for Angels (*malak*) means "messenger", like its counterparts in Hebrew (*malakh*) and Greek (*angelos*). According to the Qur'an, angels do not possess free will, and worship God in perfect obedience. Angels' duties include communicating revelations from God, glorifying God, recording every person's actions, and taking a person's soul at the time of death. They are also thought to intercede on man's behalf.

Muhammad (c. 570 – June 8, 632) was an Arab religious, political, and military leader who founded the religion of Islam as a historical phenomenon. Muslims view him not as the creator of a new religion, but as the restorer of the original, uncorrupted monotheistic faith of Adam, Abraham and others. In muslim tradition, Muhammad is viewed as the last and the greatest in a series of prophets—as the man closest to perfection, the possessor of all virtues. For the last 23 years of his life, beginning at age 40, Muhammad reported receiving revelations from God. The content of these revelations, known as the Qur'an, was memorized and recorded by his companions.

During this time, Muhammad preached to the people of Mecca, imploring them to abandon polytheism. Although some converted to Islam, Muhammad and his followers were persecuted by the leading Meccan authorities. After 13 years of preaching, Muhammad and the Muslims performed the *Hijra* ("emigration") to the city of Medina (formerly known as *Yathrib*) in 622. There, with the Medina converts (*Ansar*) and the Meccan migrants (*Muhajirun*), Muhammad established his political and religious authority. Within years, two battles had been fought against Meccan forces: the battle of Badr in 624, which was a Muslim victory, and the battle of Uhud in 625, which ended inconclusively. Conflict with Medinan Jewish clans who opposed the Muslims led to their exile, enslavement or death, and the Jewish enclave of Khaybar was subdued. At the same time, Meccan trade routes were cut off as Muhammad brought surrounding desert tribes under his control. By 629 Muhammad was victorious in the nearly bloodless conquest of

Mecca, and by the time of his death in 632 he ruled over the Arabian peninsula.

In Islam, the ‘normative’ example of Muhammad's life is called the *Sunnah* (trodden path). This example is preserved in traditions known as hadith (reports), which recount his words, his actions, and his personal characteristics. The classical Muslim jurist ash-Shafi'i (d. 820) emphasized the importance of the Sunnah in Islamic law, and Muslims are encouraged to emulate Muhammad's actions in their daily lives. The Sunnah is seen as crucial to guiding interpretation of the Qur'an.

Belief in the ‘day of resurrection’, yawm al-Qiyamah (also known as yawm ad-din, ‘day of judgment’ and as-sa`a, ‘the last hour’) is also crucial for Muslims. They believe that the time of Qiyamah is preordained by God but unknown to man. The trials and tribulations preceding and during the Qiyāmah are described in the Qur'an and the hadith, and also in the commentaries of Islamic scholars. The Qur'an emphasizes bodily resurrection, a break from the pre-Islamic Arabian understanding of death. It states that resurrection will be followed by the gathering of mankind, culminating in their judgment by God.

The Qur'an lists several sins that can condemn a person to hell, such as disbelief, usury and dishonesty. Muslims view paradise (jannah) as a place of joy and bliss, with Qur'anic references describing its features and the physical pleasures to come. There are also references to a greater joy—acceptance by God (ridwān). Mystical traditions in Islam place these heavenly delights in the context of an ecstatic awareness of God.

In accordance with the Islamic belief in predestination, or divine preordainment (*al-qadā wa'l-qadar*), God has full knowledge and control over all that occurs. For Muslims, everything in the world that occurs, good or evil, has been preordained and nothing can happen unless permitted by God. In Islamic theology, divine preordainment does not suggest an absence of God's indignation against evil, because any evils that do occur are thought to result in future benefits men may not be able to see. According to Muslim theologians, although events are pre-ordained, man possesses free will in that he has

the faculty to choose between right and wrong, and is thus responsible for his actions.

The Shi'a understanding of predestination is called 'divine justice' (*Adalah*). This doctrine, originally developed by the Mu'tazila, stresses the importance of man's responsibility for his own actions. In contrast, the Sunni deemphasize the role of individual free will in the context of God's creation and foreknowledge of all things.

The five pillars of Islam are five practices essential to Sunni Islam. Shi'a Muslims subscribe to eight ritual practices which substantially overlap with the five pillars. They are as follows. The first is *shahadah*, is the basic creed or tenet of Islam. Muslims must repeat the *shahadah* in prayer, and non-Muslims wishing to convert to Islam are required to recite the creed. The second is *Salah*, or ritual prayer, which must be performed five times a day.

Each salah is done facing towards the Kaaba in Mecca. Salah is intended to focus the mind on God, and is seen as a personal communication with him that expresses gratitude and worship. The third is *Zakat*, or alms-giving. This is the practice of giving based on accumulated wealth, and is obligatory for all Muslims who can afford it. A fixed portion is spent to help the poor or needy, and also to assist the spread of Islam. The fourth is *Sawm*, or fasting during the month of Ramajan. Muslims must not eat or drink (among other things) from dawn to dusk during this month, and must be mindful of other sins.

The fast is to encourage a feeling of nearness to God, and during it Muslims should express their gratitude for and dependence on him, atone for their past sins, and think of the needy. The fifth is *Hajj*, which is the pilgrimage during the Islamic month of *Dhu al-Hijjah* in the city of Mecca. Every able-bodied Muslim who can afford it must make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his or her lifetime. When the pilgrim is about ten kilometers from Mecca, he must dress in *Ihram* clothing, which consists of two white seamless sheets.

Rituals of the Hajj include walking seven times around the Kaaba, touching the black stone, running seven times between mount safa and mount marwah, and symbolically stoning the devil in Mina. The pilgrim, or the *hajji*, is honored in his or her community, although Islamic teachers say that the

Hajj should be an expression of devotion to God instead of a means to gain social standing.

The *Sharia* (the path leading to the watering place) is Islamic law formed by traditional Islamic scholarship. In Islam, Sharia is the expression of the divine will. Islamic law covers all aspects of life, from matters of state, like governance and foreign relations, to issues of daily living. The Qur'an defines *hudud* as the punishments for five specific crimes: unlawful intercourse, false accusation of unlawful intercourse, consumption of alcohol, theft, and highway robbery. The Qur'an and Sunnah also contain laws of inheritance, marriage, and restitution for injuries and murder, as well as rules for fasting, charity, and prayer. However, these prescriptions and prohibitions may be broad, so their application in practice varies.

Many practices fall in the category of *adab*, or Islamic etiquette. This includes greeting others with *as-salamu `alaykum* (peace be unto you), saying *bismillah* (in the name of God) before meals, and using only the right hand for eating and drinking. Islamic hygienic practices mainly fall into the category of personal cleanliness and health, such as the circumcision of male offspring. Islamic burial rituals include saying the *Salat al-Janazah* (funeral prayer) over the bathed and enshrouded dead body, and burying it in a grave. Muslims, like Jews, are restricted in their diet, and prohibited foods include pig products, blood, carrion, and alcohol. All meat must come from an herbivorous animal slaughtered in the name of God by a Muslim, Jew, or Christian, with the exception of game that one has hunted or fished for oneself.

2.11 Sufism

The path of Sufi is centered on the two fundamental doctrines of the transcendental unity of being (*wahdut al-wujud*) and universal or perfect man (*Al-nsan al-kamil*). The concept of extinction of ego (*fana*) is the very heart of Sufism. Sufism signifies the esoteric dimension of Islam where spiritual evolution is sought through inner transformation of heart as opposed to the rigid theology and formalism of religion.

Sufism is a mystical dimension of Islam. Sufism spreads the message of divine love and selfless service. A practitioner of this tradition is generally known as a Sufi

however some devotees of the tradition reserve this term only for those practitioners who have attained the goals of the Sufi tradition. Another name sometimes used for the Sufi seeker is dervish. The Sufi movement has covered various continents over a millennium. Initially it expressed through Arabic, then through Persian, Turkish, and a dozen other languages. Sufi orders, most of which are Sunni in doctrine, trace their origins from the prophet Muhammad, through his cousin Ali or his father-in-law Abu bakr.

The root of the word Sufi is variously traced to '*Suf*', the Arabic word for wool. This refers either to the simple cloaks the early Muslim ascetics wore, or possibly to the Arabic word '*safa*', which means purity. The two were combined by al-Rudhabari and according to him the Sufi is the one who wears wool on top of purity. Whereas others suggest the origin of the word Sufi is from *Ashab as-Suffa*, who were a group of poor Muslims during the time of the prophet Mohammad who spent much of their time on the veranda of the prophet's mosque, devoted to prayer and eager to memorize each new augmentation of the Quran as it was revealed. Yet another etymology, advanced by the 10th century Persian historian Biruni is that the word is linked with the word sophia.

Sufism in its early stages of development referred to nothing more than the internalization of Islam. According to one view point, it is directly from the Quran, persistently recited, meditated, and experienced, that Sufism progressed, in its origin and its development. According to others, Sufism is the strict emulation of the way of Muhammad, through which the heart's connection to the divine is strengthened.

According to the traditional Sufi perspective, the mysterious teachings of Sufism were transmitted from the prophet Muhammad to those who had the capacity to acquire the direct experiential knowledge (gnosis) of God, which was passed on from teacher to student through the centuries. Some of this transmission is summarized in texts, but most is not.

Important contributions in writing are attributed to *Uwais al-Qarni*, *Harrm bin Hian*, *Hasan Basri* and *Sayid ibn al-Mussib* are regarded as the first Sufis in the earliest generations of Islam. *Harith al-Muhasibi* was the first one to write about moral psychology. *Rabia basri* was a female Sufi

and known for her love and passion for God, expressed through her poetry. *Bayazid Bastami* was among the first theorists of Sufism. He concerned himself with *fanā* and *baqa*, the state of annihilating the self in the presence of the divine, accompanied by clarity concerning worldly phenomena derived from that point of view.

“Like leaders of other religious traditions the Sufi leaders too considered meditation as essential for spiritual growth. Meditation does not mean philosophical thought or poetic flight, but something more. It is by means of meditation that an aspirant is able to penetrate the very depths of reality.”¹¹

Sufism had a long history already before the consequent establishment of Sufi teachings into devotional orders (*tariqât*) in the early middle ages. Nearly all existing Sufi orders trace their chains of transmission (*silsila*) back to Prophet Muhammad through his cousin and son-in-law Ali. The Naqshbandi order is a notable exception to this rule, as it traces the origin of its teachings from the Prophet Muhammad to the first Islamic caliph Abu bakr.

Different devotional methods and traditions developed over time, reflecting the perspectives of different masters and the accumulated cultural wisdom of the orders. Usually all of these concerned themselves with the understanding of subtle knowledge (gnosis), education of the heart to purify it of baser instincts, the love of God, and approaching God through a well-described ladder of enduring spiritual stations (*maqâmât*) and more transient spiritual states (*ahwâl*).

All Muslims believe that they are on the pathway to God and will become close to God in paradise after death and after the ‘final judgment.’ Sufis also believe that it is possible to draw closer to God and to more fully embrace the divine presence in this very life. The main aim of all Sufis is to seek the bliss of God by working to restore within them the primordial state of *fitra* which is described in the Quran.

In the state of *fitra* nothing one does defies God, and all is undertaken by the single motivation of love of God. A secondary result of this is that the seeker may be led to abandon all notions of dualism or multiplicity. This includes the conception of an individual self and to realize the divine unity. From the point of view of some modern proponents, Sufi

philosophy is rooted prior to the modern day religions and is universal in nature. However, mainstream Sufis strongly reject the notion of Sufism without Islam.

Hence Sufism has been described as the science of the states of the lower self (the ego), and the way of purifying this lower self of its reprehensible qualities, while adorning it instead with what is praiseworthy, *whether or not* this process of sanitizing and purifying the heart is in time rewarded by mysterious knowledge of God. This can be considered in terms of two basic types of law (*fiqh*), an outer law concerned with actions, and an inner law concerned with the human heart. The outer law consists of rules pertaining to worship, transactions, marriage, judicial rulings, and criminal law which is often referred broadly as *shariah*. The inner law of Sufism consists of rules about repentance from sin, the purging of disreputable qualities and evil traits of character, and adornment with virtues and good character.

To begin in the way of Sufism, the seeker starts by finding a teacher, as the connection to the teacher is considered necessary for the growth of the student. The teacher, to be genuine, must have received the approval to teach (*ijazah*) of another master of the way, in an unbroken succession (*silsilah*) leading back to Sufism's origin with the prophet Muhammad. It is the transmission of the divine light from the teacher's heart to the heart of the student, rather than of worldly knowledge transmitted from mouth to ear, that allows the adept to progress. In addition, the genuine teacher will be utterly strict in his adherence to the divine law.

Scholars and adherents of Sufism are unanimous in agreeing that Sufism cannot be learned through books. To reach the highest levels of success in Sufism typically requires that the disciple live with and serve the teacher for many, many years. For example, Baha-ud-din naqshband Bukhari, considered founder of the Naqshbandi order, served his first teacher, Sayyid muhammad baba as-samasi, for 20 years, until as-Samasi died. He subsequently served several other teachers for lengthy periods of time. Some teachers, especially when addressing more general audiences, or mixed groups of Muslims and non-Muslims, make extensive use of parable, allegory, and metaphor. Although approaches to teaching vary

among different Sufi orders, Sufism as a whole is primarily concerned with direct personal experience, and as such has sometimes been compared to other, non-Islamic forms of mysticism.

There are wide variations in the devotional practices of Sufis. This is because an acknowledged and authorized master of the Sufi path is in effect a physician of the heart, able to diagnose the seeker's impediments to knowledge and pure intention in serving God, and to prescribe to the seeker a course of treatment appropriate to his or her problems. The consent among Sufi scholars is that the seeker cannot self-diagnose, and that it can be extremely harmful to undertake any of these practices alone and without formal authorization.

Basics to practice include rigorous devotion to Islamic norms (ritual prayer in its five prescribed times each day, the fast of Ramadan, and so forth). Additionally, the seeker ought to be firmly grounded in supererogatory practices known from the life of the prophet Muhammad (such as the so-called 'sunna prayers'). It is also necessary for the seeker to have a correct creed (*Aqidah*), and to embrace with certainty its doctrine. The seeker must also, of necessity, turn away from sins, love of this world, the love of company and renown, obedience to satanic impulse, and the promptings of the lower self.

The way in which this purification of the heart is achieved is outlined in certain books, but must be prescribed in detail by a Sufi master. The seeker must also be trained to prevent the corruption of those good deeds which have accrued to his or her credit by overcoming the traps of ostentation, pride, arrogance, envy, and long hopes (meaning the hope for a long life allowing us to mend our ways later, rather than immediately, here and now).

Sufi practices are not a way for gaining knowledge. The traditional scholars of Sufism hold it as absolutely obvious that knowledge of God is not a psychological state generated through breath control. Thus, practice of 'techniques' is not the cause, but instead the *occasion* for such knowledge to be obtained, given proper prerequisites and proper guidance by a master of the way. Furthermore, the emphasis on practices may obscure a far more important fact: The seeker is, in a sense, to become a broken person, stripped of all habits through the

practice of (in the words of Imam Al-Ghazali words) solitude, silence, sleeplessness, and hunger.

Near the end of the first millennium CE, a number of manuals began to be written summarizing the doctrines of Sufism and describing some typical Sufi practices. Two of the most famous of these are namely- the *Kashf al-Mahjûb* of Hujwiri, and the *Risâla* of Qushayri.

Traditional Islamic scholars have recognized two major branches within the practice of Sufism, and use this as one key to differentiating among the approaches of different masters and devotional lineages.

On the one hand there is the path from the signs to the Signifier (or from the arts to the Artisan). In this branch, the seeker begins by purifying the lower self of every corrupting influence that stands in the way of recognizing all of creation as the work of God, as God's active self-disclosure. This is the way of Imam Al-Ghazali and of the majority of the Sufi orders.

On the other hand there is the path from the signifier to his signs, from the artisan to his works. In this branch, the seeker experiences divine attraction (*jadhba*), and is able to enter the path with a glimpse of its endpoint, of direct apprehension of the divine presence towards which all spiritual striving is directed. This does not replace the striving to purify the heart, as in the other branch; it simply stems from a different point of entry into the path. This is the way primarily of the masters of the Naqshbandi and Shadhili orders.

Contemporary scholars may also recognize a third branch, attributed to the late ottoman scholar Said Nursi and explicated in his vast Qur'an commentary called the *Risale-i nur*. This approach entails strict adherence to the way of the prophet Muhammad, in the understanding that this *wont*, or *sunnah*, proposes a complete devotional spirituality adequate to those without access to a master of the Sufi way.

Sufism has contributed significantly to the elaboration of theoretical perspectives in many domains of intellectual endeavor. For instance, the doctrine of 'subtle centers' or centers of subtle cognition (known as *Lataif-e-sitta*) addresses the matter of the awakening of spiritual intuition in ways that some consider similar to certain models of *chakra* in Hinduism. In general, these subtle centers or *lata'if* are thought of as

faculties that are to be purified sequentially in order to bring the seeker's wayfaring to completion. A concise and useful summary of this system from a living exponent of this tradition has been published by Muhammad Emin Er.

Sufi psychology has influenced many areas of thinking both within and outside of Islam, drawing primarily upon three concepts. Ja'far al-Sadiq (both an imam in the Shia tradition and a respected scholar and link in chains of Sufi transmission in all Islamic sects) held that human beings are dominated by a lower self called the nafs, a faculty of spiritual intuition called the qalb or spiritual heart, and a spirit or soul called ruh. These interact in various ways, producing the spiritual types of the tyrant (dominated by nafs), the person of faith and moderation (dominated by the spiritual heart), and the person lost in love for God (dominated by the ruh). Sufi cosmology and Sufi metaphysics are also noteworthy areas of intellectual accomplishment.

Dhikr is the remembrance of God commanded in the Qur'an for all Muslims. To engage in dhikr is to practice consciousness of the divine presence (some would say "to seek a state of godwariness") according to a variety of means. Some types of dhikr are prescribed for all Muslims, and do not require Sufi initiation or the prescription of a Sufi master because they are deemed to be good for every seeker under every circumstance. Other types of dhikr require specific instruction and permission. Dhikr as a devotional act includes the repetition of divine names, supplications and aphorisms from hadith literature, and sections of the Qur'an. More generally, any activity in which the Muslim maintains awareness of God is considered dhikr.

Some Sufi orders stress and extensive reliance upon dhikr and termed it the source to attain divine love likewise in Qadri Al-Muntahi Sufi tariqa, which was originated by Riaz Ahmed gohar shahi. This practice of dhikr called dhikr-e-qulb (remembrance of Allah by heartbeats). The basic idea of this practice is to visualize the Arabic name of God, Allah as having been written on the disciple's heart.

Some Sufi orders engage in ritualized dhikr ceremonies, the liturgy of which may include recitation, singing, instrumental

music, dance, costumes, incense, meditation, ecstasy, and trance.

The practice of *muraqaba* can be likened to the practices of meditation attested in many faith communities. The word *muraqaba* is derived from the same root (*r-q-b*) occurring as one of the 99 names of God in the Qur'an, al-Raqīb, meaning "the vigilant" and attested in verse 4: 1 of the Qur'an. Through *muraqaba*, a person watches over or takes care of the spiritual heart, acquires knowledge about it, and becomes attuned to the divine presence, which is ever vigilant.

Many Sufi masters in the past as well as the present day have also been acknowledged masters of Islamic law. The claim that Sufism is a heretical innovation within Islam has always been a fringe position, gaining traction mainly among partisans of Islamic modernism who have not had access to rigorous training in the traditional sources of Islamic learning. Even today, most Islamic madrasa continue teaching from books authored by renowned Sufis.

Scholars and adherents of Sufism sometimes describe Sufism in terms of a threefold approach to God as explained by a tradition (*hadīth*) attributed to the prophet Muhammad, "*The Shariah is my words, the tariqa is my actions, and the haqiqa is my interior states*". *Shariah*, *tariqa* and *haqiqa* are mutually interdependent. The *tariqa*, the 'path' on which the mystics walk, has been defined as 'the path which comes out of the *Shariah*, for the main road is called *shar*, the path, *tariq*.' No mystical experience can be realized if the binding injunctions of the shariah are not followed faithfully first. The path, *tariqa*, however, is narrower and more difficult to walk. It leads the adept, called *salik* (wayfarer), in his *suluk* (wayfaring), through different stations (*maqamat*) until he reaches his goal, the perfect *tawhid*, the existential confession that God is one. This perspective is also emphasized by Imam Malik, founder of the Maliki school in Islamic law, who stated that the one who attempts to practice Sufism without learning sacred law corrupts his faith, while he who learns sacred law without practicing Sufism corrupts himself.

While virtually all classical Islamic scholars agreed with the understanding of Imam Al-Ghazali that the practice of Sufism is personally obligatory for Muslims as a way to purify

the intention (*niyya*) behind one's actions, a growing number of Muslims in the present day reject this view. A concise summary of both sides of this recent controversy is available on line.

2.12 Sikhism

In Sikhism, the practices of simran and nam japo encourage quiet meditation. This is focusing one's attention on the attributes of God. Sikhs believe that there are 10 'gates' to the body. 'Gates' is another word for chakras (energy centers). The top most energy level is the called the tenth gate or dasam dwar. When one reaches this stage through continuous practice, meditation becomes a habit that continues whilst walking, talking, eating, awake and even sleeping. There is a distinct taste or flavour when a meditator reaches this lofty stage of meditation, as one experiences absolute peace and tranquility inside and outside the body.

Followers of the Sikh religion also believe that love comes through meditation on the lord's name since meditation only conjures up positive emotions in oneself which are portrayed through our actions. The first Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Nanak dev ji preached the equality of all humankind and stressed the importance of living a householder's life instead of wandering around jungles meditating, the latter of which being a popular practice at the time. The Guru preached that we can obtain liberation from life and death by living a totally normal family life and by spreading love amongst every human being regardless of religion.

Sikhism is the fifth-largest organized religion in the world, founded on the teachings of Nanak and nine successive gurus in fifteenth century Northern India. This system of religious philosophy and expression has been traditionally known as the Gurmat (*the counsel of the gurus*) or the Sikh dharma.

Sikhism originated from the word *Sikh*, which in turn comes from the Sanskrit root *sisya* meaning 'disciple' or *siksa* meaning 'instruction.' The principal belief of Sikhism is faith in *Vahiguru* represented using the sacred symbol of *ek oankar* (the universal God). Sikhism advocates the pursuit of salvation through disciplined, personal meditation on the name and message of God. A key distinctive feature of Sikhism is a non-

anthropomorphic concept of God, to the extent that one can interpret God as the universe itself.

The followers of Sikhism are ordained to follow the teachings of the ten Sikh gurus, or enlightened leaders, as well as the holy scripture entitled the *Guru Granth Sāhib*, which includes selected works of many devotees from diverse socio-economic and religious backgrounds. The text was decreed by Gobind Singh, the tenth guru, as the final guru of the Khalsa panth. Sikhism's traditions and teachings are distinctively associated with the history, society and culture of the Punjab. Adherents of Sikhism are known as Sikhs (students or disciples).

The origins of Sikhism lie in the teachings of Nanak and his successors. Nanak disapproved of many religious beliefs and practices of his time. The essence of Sikh teaching is summed up by Guru Nanak's words – 'realization of truth is higher than all else. Higher still is truthful living'. Sikhism believes in equality of all humans and rejects caste system. Sikhism also does not attach any importance to asceticism as a means to attain salvation, but stresses on the need of leading life as a householder. For Sikhs, initiation into the *Khalsa* strengthens their identity and also signifies the Sikh teaching of equality. The Sikhs are required to follow the teachings of their Guru and serve him, under all circumstances.

According to Sikhism, the goal of life for a person is to progress on a spiritual scale from *Manmukh*, or 'self-centered', to *Gurmukh*, or 'God-centered'. *Gurmukh* implies the qualities of humility, selfless service, adhering to the teachings of Guru and not being a recluse.

Guru Nanak (1469–1538) was born in the village of *Rai bhoi di talvai*, now called Nankana sahib, near Lahore (in what is present-day Pakistan). His father, Mehta Kalu was a *Patwari* (an accountant of land revenue in the government). Nanak's mother was Tripta devi and he had one older sister, Nanaki. His parents were Khatri hindus of the bedi clan. As a boy, Nanak was fascinated by religion, and his desire to explore the mysteries of life eventually led him to leave home.

Sikh tradition states that at the age of thirty, Nanak went missing and was presumed to have drowned after going for one of his morning baths to a local stream called the *Kali Bein*.

Three days later he reappeared and would give the same answer to any question posed to him which was - 'There is no Hindu, there is no Muslim'. It was from this moment that Nanak would begin to spread the teachings of what was then the beginning of Sikhism. Although the exact account of his itinerary is disputed, he is widely acknowledged to have made four major journeys, spanning thousands of kilometres.

Nanak was married to Sulakhni, the daughter of Moolchand Chona, a rice trader from the town of Batala. They had two sons. The elder son, Sri chand, was an ascetic, and he came to have a considerable following of his own, known as the Udasis. The younger son, Lakshmi das, on the other hand, was totally immersed in worldly life. To Nanak, who believed in the ideal of *raj maim jog* (detachment in civic life), both his sons were unfit to carry on the guruship.

In 1538, Nanak chose his disciple Lahina, a Khatri of the Trehan clan, as a successor to the guruship rather than either of his sons. Lahina was named Angad dev and became the second guru of the Sikhs. Nanak conferred his choice at the town of Kartarpur on the banks of the river Ravi, where Nanak had finally settled down after his travels. Though Sri chand was not an ambitious man, the Udasis believed that the guruship should have gone to him, since he was a man of pious habits in addition to being Nanak's son. They refused to accept Angad's succession. On Nanak's advice, Angad shifted from Kartarpur to Khadur, where his wife Khivi and children were living, until he was able to bridge the divide between his followers and the Udasis. Angad continued the work started by Nanak and is widely credited for standardising the Gurmukhī script as used in the sacred scripture of the Sikhs.

Amar das, a Khatri of the Bhalla clan, became the third Sikh guru in 1552 at the age of 73. Goindval became an important centre for Sikhism during the guruship of Amar das. He preached the principle of equality for women by prohibiting purdah and sati. Amar das also encouraged the practice of langar and made all those who visited him attend langar before they could speak to him. In 1567, emperor Akbar sat with the ordinary and poor people of Punjab to have langar. Amar das also trained 146 apostles of which 52 were women, to manage the rapid expansion of the religion. Before he died in 1574

aged 95, he appointed his son-in-law Jetha, a Khatri of the Sodhi clan, as the fourth Sikh guru.

Jetha became Ram das and vigorously undertook his duties as the new guru. He is responsible for the establishment of the city of Ramdaspur later to be named Amritsar. In 1581, Arjan dev (youngest son of the fourth guru) became the fifth guru of the Sikhs. In addition to being responsible for building the Harimandir sahib (often called the Golden Temple), he prepared the Sikh sacred text known as the Ādi Granth (literally the first book) and included the writings of the first five gurus.

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion. In Sikhism, God is termed as *Vahiguru* who is *nirankar* (formless), *akal* (eternal), and *alakh* (unobserved). The beginning of the first composition of Sikh scripture is the figure '1' which signifies the universality of God. It states that God is omnipresent and infinite, and is signified by the term *ek oankar*. Sikhs believe that prior to creation, all that existed was God and his *hukam* (will or order). When God willed, the entire cosmos was created. From these beginnings, God nurtured 'enticement and attachment' to maya, or the human perception of reality.

While a full understanding of God is beyond human beings, Nanak described God as not wholly unknowable. God is omnipresent (*sarav viāpak*) in all creation and visible everywhere to the spiritually awakened. Nanak stressed that God must be seen from 'the inward eye', or the 'heart', of a human being: devotees must meditate to progress towards enlightenment. Guru Nanak dev emphasized the revelation through meditation, as its rigorous application permits the existence of communication between God and human beings.

Nanak's teachings are founded not on a final destination of heaven or hell, but on a spiritual union with God which results in salvation. The chief obstacles to the attainment of salvation are social conflicts and an attachment to worldly pursuits, which commit men and women to an endless cycle of birth and death.

'Maya' is defined as illusion or unreality. It is one of the core deviations from the pursuit of God and salvation. People are distracted from devotion by worldly attractions which give only illusive satisfaction. However, Nanak emphasized maya as not a reference to the unreality of the world, but of its values. In

Sikhism, the influences of ego, anger, greed, attachment and lust—known as the five evils—are believed to be particularly pernicious. The fate of people vulnerable to the five evils is separation from God, and the situation may be remedied only after intensive and relentless devotion.

Nanak described God's revelation—the path to salvation—with terms such as *nam* (the divine *name*) and *sabad* (the divine word) to emphasize the totality of the revelation. Nanak designated the word *guru* (meaning *teacher*) as the voice of God and the source and guide for knowledge and salvation. Salvation can be reached only through rigorous and disciplined devotion to God. Nanak distinctly emphasized the irrelevance of outwardly observations such as rites, pilgrimages or asceticism. He stressed that devotion must take place through the heart, with the spirit and the soul.

A key practice to be pursued is *nam simran* (remembrance of the divine name). The verbal repetition of the name of God or a sacred syllable is an established practice in religious traditions in India, but Nanak's interpretation emphasized inward, personal observance. Nanak's ideal is the total exposure of one's being to the divine name and a total conforming to dharma or the 'divine order'. Nanak described the result of the disciplined application of *nam simran* as a 'growing towards and into God' through a gradual process of five stages. The last of these is *sac khand* (The realm of truth) the final union of the spirit with God.

Nanak stressed *kirat karō* which means that a Sikh should balance work, worship, and charity, and should defend the rights of all creatures, and in particular, fellow human beings. They are encouraged to have a *cardi kala* or optimistic, view of life. Sikh teachings also stress the concept of sharing *vand chakko* through the distribution of free food at Sikh gurdwaras (*langar*), giving charitable donations, and working for the good of the community and others (*seva*).

The term *guru* comes from the Sanskrit *guru*, meaning teacher, guide or mentor. The traditions and philosophy of Sikhism were established by ten specific gurus from 1507 to 1708. Each guru added to and reinforced the message taught by the previous, resulting in the creation of the Sikh religion. Nanak was the first guru and appointed a disciple as successor.

Gobind Singh was the final guru in human form. Before his death, Gobind Singh decreed that the Gurū Granth sahib would be the final and perpetual guru of the Sikhs. The Sikhs believe that the spirit of Nanak was passed from one guru to the next.

After Nanak's passing, the most important phase in the development of Sikhism came with the third successor, Amar das. Nanak's teachings emphasized the pursuit of salvation. Amar das began building a cohesive community of followers with initiatives such as sanctioning distinctive ceremonies for birth, marriage and death.

Amar das's successor and son-in-law Ram das founded the city of Amritsar, which is home of the Harimandir sahib and regarded widely as the holiest city for all Sikhs. When Ram das's youngest son Arjan dev succeeded him, the line of male gurus from the *Sodhi Khatri* family was established: all succeeding gurus were direct descendants of this line. Arjan dev was responsible for compiling the Sikh scriptures.

The Sikh gurus established a mechanism which allowed the Sikh religion to react as a community to changing circumstances. The sixth guru, Har Gobind, was responsible for the creation of the Akal Takht (*throne of the timeless one*) which serves as the supreme decision-making centre of Sikhdom and sits opposite the Harimandir sahib. The *Sarbat Khalsa* (a representative portion of the Khalsa panth) historically gathers at the Akal Takht on special festivals such as Vaisakhi or Diwali and when there is a need to discuss matters that affect the entire Sikh nation. A *gurmatā* (literally, *guru's intention*) is an order passed by the Sarbat Khalsa in the presence of the Guru Granth sahib. A *gurmatā* may only be passed on a subject that affects the fundamental principles of Sikh religion; it is binding upon all Sikhs. The term *hukamnāmā* (literally, *edict* or *royal order*) is often used interchangeably with the term *gurmata*. However, a *hukamnama* formally refers to a hymn from the Guru Granth sahib which is given as an order to Sikhs.

Har Gobind, became the sixth guru of the Sikhs. He carried two swords—one for spiritual and the other for temporal reasons (known as *miri* and *piri* in Sikhism). Sikhs grew as an organized community and always had a trained fighting force to defend their independence. In 1644, Har Rai

became guru followed by Har Krishan, the boy guru, in 1661. No hymns composed by these three gurus are included in the Sikh holy book.

Tegh Bahadur became guru in 1665 and led the Sikhs until 1675. Teg Bahadur was executed by Aurangzeb for helping to protect Hindus, after a delegation of Kashmiri pandits came to him for help when the emperor condemned them to death for failing to convert to Islam. He was succeeded by his son, Gobind Rai who was just nine years old at the time of his father's death. Gobind Rai further militarized his followers, and was baptized by the *Panj Piare* when he formed the Khalsa in 1699. From here on in he was known as Gobind Singh.

From the time of Nanak, when it was a loose collection of followers who focused entirely on the attainment of salvation and God, the Sikh community had significantly transformed. Even though the core Sikh religious philosophy was never affected, the followers now began to develop a political identity. Conflict with Mughal authorities escalated during the lifetime of Teg Bahadur and Gobind Singh. The latter founded the Khalsa in 1699. The Khalsa is a disciplined community that combines its religious purpose and goals with political and military duties. After Aurangzeb killed four of his sons, Gobind Singh sent Aurangzeb the Zafarnama (*notification/ epistle of victory*).

Shortly before his death, Gobind Singh ordered that the Guru Granth sahib (the Sikh holy scripture), would be the ultimate spiritual authority for the Sikhs and temporal authority would be vested in the Khalsa panth – the Sikh nation/ community. The first scripture was compiled and edited by the fifth guru, Arjan dev, in 1604. A former ascetic was charged by Gobind Singh with the duty of punishing those who had persecuted the Sikhs.

The Sikh community's embrace of military and political organization made it a considerable regional force in medieval India and it continued to evolve after the demise of the gurus. After the death of Banda Bahadur, a loose confederation of Sikh warrior bands known as *misls* formed. With the decline of the Mughal empire, a Sikh empire arose in the Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, with its capital in Lahore and limits

reaching the Khyber pass and the borders of China. The order, traditions and discipline developed over centuries culminated at the time of Ranjit Singh to give rise to the common religious and social identity that the term 'Sikhism' describes.

There are two primary sources of scripture for the Sikhs namely- the Guru Granth sahib and the Dasam granth. The Guru Granth sahib may be referred to as the Adi Granth (*The first volume*) and the two terms are often used synonymously. Here, however, the Adi Granth refers to the version of the scripture created by Arjan dev in 1604. The Guru Granth sahib refers to the final version of the scripture created by Gobind Singh.

It is believed that the Adi Granth was compiled primarily by Bhai Gurdas under the supervision of Arjan dev between the years 1603 and 1604. It is written in the Gurmukhi script, which is a descendant of the landa script used in the Punjab at that time. The Gurmukhi script was standardised by Arjan dev for use in the Sikh scriptures and is thought to have been influenced by the sarada and devanagari scripts. An authoritative scripture was created to protect the integrity of hymns and teachings of the Sikh gurus and selected bhagats. At the time, Arjan dev tried to prevent undue influence from the followers of Prithi chand, the guru's older brother and rival. The original version of the Adi Granth is known as the *katarpur bir* and is currently held by the sodhi family of Kartarpur.

The final version of the Guru Granth sahib was compiled by Gobind Singh. It consists of the original Adi Granth with the addition of Teg Bahadur's hymns. It was decreed by Gobind Singh that the Granth was to be considered the eternal guru of all Sikhs, however, this tradition is not mentioned either in 'Guru Granth sahib' or in 'dasam granth'. It contains compositions by the first five gurus, Teg Bahadur and just one *Salok (couplet)* from Gobind Singh. It also contains the traditions and teachings of *saints* such as Kabir, Namdev, Ravidas and Sheikh Farid along with several others.

The bulk of the scripture is classified into *rags*, with each rag subdivided according to length and author. There are 31 main rags within the Guru Granth sahib. In addition to the rags, there are clear references to the folk music of Punjab. The main language used in the scripture is known as *sant bhasa*, a

language related to both Punjabi and Hindi and used extensively across medieval northern India by proponents of popular devotional religion. The text further comprises over 5000 *sabads*, or hymns, which are poetically constructed and set to classical form of music rendition, can be set to predetermined musical *tal*, or rhythmic beats.

All text within the Granth is known as *gurbani*. Gurbani, according to Nanak, was revealed by God directly, and the authors wrote it down for the followers. The status accorded to the scripture is defined by the evolving interpretation of the concept of *guru*. In the *Sant* tradition of Nanak, the guru was literally the word of God. The Sikh community soon transferred the role to a line of men who gave authoritative and practical expression to religious teachings and traditions, in addition to taking socio-political leadership of Sikh adherents. Gobind Singh declared an end of the line of human gurus, and now the Guru Granth sahib serves as the eternal guru, with its interpretation vested with the community.

The dasam granth is an eighteenth-century collection of miscellaneous works generally attributed to Gobind Singh. The teachings of Gobind Singh were not included in Guru Granth sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs, and instead were collected in the dasam granth. Unlike the Guru Granth sahib, the dasam granth was never declared to hold guruship. The authenticity of some portions of the Granth has been questioned and the appropriateness of the Granth's content still causes much debate. The entire Granth is written in the Gurmukhi script, although most of the language is Braj and not Punjabi. Sikh tradition states that Mani Singh collected the writings of Gobind Singh after his death to create the Granth.

From 1892 to 1897, scholars assembled at the Akal Takht, Amritsar, to study the various printed dasam granths and prepare the authoritative version. They concluded that the dasam granth was entirely the work of Gobind Singh. Further re-examinations and reviews took place in 1931, under the Darbar sahib committee of the Shiromani gurdwara prabandhak committee they too vindicated the earlier conclusion.

The Janamsakhis (literally *birth stories*), are writings which profess to be biographies of Nanak. Although not scripture in the strictest sense, they provide an interesting look

at Nanak's life and the early start of Sikhism. There are several often contradictory and sometimes unreliable Janamsakhis and they are not held in the same regard as other sources of scriptural knowledge.

Observant Sikhs adhere to long-standing practices and traditions to strengthen and express their faith. The daily recitation from memory of specific passages from the Guru Granth sahib, especially the *Japu* (or *Japjī*, literally *chant*) hymns is recommended immediately after rising and bathing. Family customs include both reading passages from the scripture and attending the gurdwara (also *gurduārā*, meaning *the doorway to God*). There are many gurdwaras prominently constructed and maintained across India, as well as in almost every nation where Sikhs reside. Gurdwaras are open to all, regardless of religion, background, caste or race.

Worship in a gurdwara consists chiefly of singing of passages from the scripture. Sikhs will commonly enter the temple, touch the ground before the holy scripture with their foreheads, and make an offering. The recitation of the eighteenth century *ardas* is also customary for attending Sikhs. The *ardas* recalls past sufferings and glories of the community, invoking divine grace for all humanity.

The most sacred shrine is the Harimandir sahib in Amritsar, famously known as the *Golden Temple*. Groups of Sikhs regularly visit and congregate at the Harimandir sahib. On specific occasions, groups of Sikhs are permitted to undertake a pilgrimage to Sikh shrines in the province of Punjab in Pakistan, especially at Nankana sahib and the *samadhi* (place of cremation) of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Lahore.

Nanak taught that rituals, religious ceremonies or empty worship is of little use and Sikhs are discouraged from fasting or going on pilgrimages. However, during the period of the later gurus, and due to increased institutionalization of the religion, some ceremonies and rites did arise.

Khalsa (meaning *pure*) is the name given by Gobind Singh to all Sikhs who have been baptised or initiated by taking *ammrit* in a ceremony called *ammrit sancar*. The first time that this ceremony took place was on Vaisakhi, which fell on 30 March 1699 at Anandpur sahib in India. It was on that occasion

that Gobind Singh baptized the Panj piare who in turn baptized Gobind Singh himself.

Baptised Sikhs are bound to wear the five Ks (in Punjabi known as *panj kakke* or *panj kakar*), or articles of faith, at all times. The tenth guru, Gobind Singh, ordered these five Ks to be worn so that a Sikh could actively use them to make a difference to their own and to others' spirituality. The 5 items are namely- *kes* (uncut hair), *kangha* (small comb), *kada* (circular heavy metal bracelet), *kirpan* (ceremonial short sword), and *kaccha* (special undergarment). The Five Ks have both practical and symbolic purposes.

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Chapter-3

MEDITATION AND TOTAL HEALTH

Health is a gift of nature to every living being. If a living being lives in accord with nature health can be maintained. But if this harmony between the nature and a living being disrupts than it hampers health. The concise Oxford English Dictionary defines health as “the state of being free from illness and injury.”¹

Here it seems that health is defined as condition which is liberated from illness and injury. Illness is defined as “a disease or period of sickness.”² So it is clear that the word health is defined as an opposite to the state of illness. This is because health is the true nature of a living being. “Sickness comes from the outside hence it can be defined; health comes from within hence it cannot be defined.

We can only say that the absence of sickness is health. But this is not the definition of health, you have not said anything directly about health. The truth is health does not have to be created; it is either hidden by illness or it reveals itself when the illness goes away or is cured. Health is inside us. Health is our intrinsic nature.”³

Traditional medical doctors treat the body and ignore the mind whereas conventional mental health professionals treat the mind and ignore the body. Neither one of them address the spiritual. Both of them treat symptoms with drugs or surgery rather than looking for what causes the symptom. The body, mind and soul are not independent of one another. They are united and they are complement to each other. A viewpoint that focuses on only one aspect is an incomplete approach.

Respiration, consumption, digestion, assimilation of food and water, removal of waste products, circulation of blood, secretion of hormones, etc. are the main functions of the body. A person is in a state of perfect health only if the above mentioned activities are proper and in harmony. But health is not only a state of physical health. Mental state is equally important for perfect health. Mental stability, sense of values and intellectual capacity are the basis of mental health. And soul is the true state of life. To realize the existence of soul a human being should be mentally and physically pure, aware,

harmonious and fit. Bliss, awareness and peace are the main components of spiritual health.

Following are the benefits of Meditation on various diseases

3.1 Anxiety

- (i) Meditation reduces both cognitive and body anxiety.
- (ii) Meditation reduces hostility resulting from obligatory waiting.

3.2 Cancer

- (i) Because of stress reduction through meditation, carcinoma cancer in the breast regresses.
- (ii) Meditation reduces anxiety and depression in cancer patients.
- (iii) Regular meditation has been associated with remission of massive metastasis from undifferentiated carcinoma of the lung.
- (iv) Meditation regress the cancer of the rectum.
- (v) Meditation has been associated with regression of osteogenic sarcoma metastasis.
- (vi) Meditation has been associated with the alleviation of breast cancer.
- (vii) Meditation has been associated with the improvement of diplopia and ataxia.
- (viii) Meditation significantly strengthens the immune system functions, reducing pathology and increasing healing.
- (ix) Meditation produces higher levels of melatonin, a major hormone with important anti-oxidant (anti-cancer) and overall immune enhancement function.
- (x) Meditation produces higher levels of DHEA, a major hormone used in cancer therapy with powerful immune enhancement properties.

3.3 Cardiovascular disease

- (i) Meditation preserves the health and integrity of heart tissue.
- (ii) Meditation slows the heart rate and decreases its electrical activity.
- (iii) It also redistributes the blood flow for mental clarity, well-being, and increased energy.

- (iv) Meditation helps to lower blood pressure. Often high blood pressure diminishes or disappears entirely even if meditation is discontinued.
- (v) Meditation helps to relax the large muscle groups pressing on the circulatory system in various parts of the body.
- (vi) Meditation helps to relax the small vessels that control the blood vessels themselves, reducing the pressure inside them.

3.4 Chronic fatigue syndrome

- (i) Meditation produces endorphins known as pleasure hormones that give a sense of happiness and well being while blocking pain.
- (ii) Meditation reduces anxiety and accompanying neuromuscular tension that wastes vital energy. Meditation saves vital energy that would be lost to anxiety and hypertension.
- (iii) Meditation quiets the mind that wastes substantial energy in its incessant drives. Thus, meditation saves vital energy that is lost in the mind.
- (iv) Meditation provides physical and mental rest that enhances energy restoration.
- (v) Meditation can renew breathing that normally functions inefficiently, wasting energy and providing insufficient oxygen to the body. Oxygen is vital for energy production. Meditation increases oxygen intake.

3.5 Depression

- (i) Meditation increases energy and improves hormonal function. It is good for the heart and spirit. It makes people feel good, and when people feel good depression is prevented.
- (ii) Meditation produces endorphins - pleasure hormones that make people feel good.
- (iii) Meditation develops calm and patience so people feel better about themselves.
- (iv) Meditation develops insight that helps free people from emotional states.
- (v) Meditation increases confidence in the ability to shift function to a state of higher energy.

3.6 Hiv / Aids

- (i) Meditation may bring optimal breathing to the patient, directly enhancing the immune system and strengthening neural function. Energy is gained and may replace a sense of sickness with a sense of wellness.
- (ii) Meditation can bring a calming to the body and mind and increase the desire to live.
- (iii) Meditation brings significant immune system enhancement through higher counts of T-cells, B-cells, interleukin-2, gamma interferon and natural killer (nk) cells, immunological allies that the body relies on in fighting disease.
- (iv) Meditation techniques and the willingness to adhere to protocol (discipline) strengthen both the psyche and the immune system.

3.7 Infertility

If an infertile couple practice meditation it helps in relaxing body and mind which considerably increases the chance of an infertile mother to get pregnant.

3.8 Insomnia

- (i) Melatonin treatments are often administered to patients with insomnia and other sleep disorders. Meditation helps increase levels of melatonin in the blood, so patients are able to relax better and get more sleep.
- (ii) Meditation has been shown to regulate the levels of serotonin in the body. Low levels of serotonin can possibly lead to depression, migraine, and insomnia.

3.9 Irritable bowel syndrome and ulcers

Meditation brings physical and mental relaxation which is very beneficial to cure Irritable bowel syndrome and ulcers.

3.10 Pain management

- (i) Meditation may not eradicate pain totally but helps to cope up with pain.
- (ii) Meditation reduces psychological pain (anxiety) and direct physical pain (arthritis, backache, headache, etc.).

3.11 Psoriasis

Meditation reduces the scaly red patches from the skin.

3.12 Stress

- (i) Meditation alleviates pressure and stress, offering reserve, restoration, and renewal.

- (ii) Meditation has been shown to lower the cortisol in the blood, allowing stressed patients to become more relaxed and have the ability to think more clearly.

3.13 CONCLUSION

Meditation gives the prospect to human beings to realize their true nature of existence. It is a way to get connected with the source of their being. It connects the individual spirit with the supreme spirit. Meditation is a state which leads to enlightenment. It is the source of pure existence.

The essence of all the spiritual traditions and religions is meditation. It is a state of unity between the human being and the highest power of the universe (God / *Isvara* / *Khuda* / Ultimate reality / Truth / Infinite Emptiness / Eternity). All the pious practices (of every spiritual tradition and religion) results in the ultimate state of meditation.

Meditation connects a human being with the supreme energy. This supreme energy sustains the life in the whole universe. So it has the potential to discard the negative energies which get accumulated in human beings in the form of diseases. Every material body in the universe is the compilation of atoms. Atom consists of energy. The effect of meditation is on this energy. Diseases and disorders are caused due to imbalance and impurity in the energy level. Hence meditation cures the root cause of diseases and disorders.

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Chapter-4

MEDITATION TECHNIQUES

4.1 Yogic meditations

4.1.1 Tanbodha dhyan

It is preparatory meditation technique to attain higher state of meditation for yoga. Who am I and what is in me and where I should use it and how and what are they for and what to do and how to accept and how to reflect. It's all truth.

Steps

1. Look at the whole body outwardly from the tip of the hair to the sole of the feet (including the moles, marks, etc.) for 10 minutes.
2. Closing the eyes see inside organs of the body within for 10 minutes.
3. Repeat all the parts of the body within very quickly. You can feel like in heaven. A very beautiful experience. Feel very healthy and nice.
4. It is just like removing all the pain, worries and the bad thoughts from the body. Hence there will be feeling of drowsiness. Take rest for 5-7 minutes.
5. Then slowly come out of it and slowly open your eyes and be in this peaceful state.

Reference: Diary of yogi raj, Esh

4.1.2 Antaha chakshu drishti or sthula dhyan

Time: 20 – 40 minutes.

Meaning: Rishi Gheranda says that on any object concentrate in such a way that the eyes watch and as the mind implements through the sub-conscious mind, very deeply get involved.

See the colour of the idol, view its ornaments, costume, hair, the style, the instruments (hear the sound of the music (flute, damru)), smell the flowers around and enjoy the fragrance, view, feel, using the sense organs and involve deeply into it and then you can see it from within.

Steps:

1. See the idol of the deity you love with a pure heart. Get connected with the idol. Then close your eyes and see the idol between your eyebrows (Antaha chakshu).
2. In the beginning you will not see anything still maintain the sketch of the idol in your mind.

3. Continue watching the replica of the idol with your imagination power.
4. Now this state will become deeper.
5. Then you will get to see the image.
6. Maintenance of the state of this sight is meditation.

Tips : If the focus is powerful than concentration transforms into meditation. This is not practice but a state of mind.

Results:

1. Concentration = dharana.
2. Dharana transformed into meditation.
3. Intraworld.
4. Development of mind powers.

Reference: Gheranda Samhita

4.1.3 Saguna dhyan – 1

Steps:

1. Sit in Padmasana or Siddhasana.
2. Focus on the middle of the eye-brows.
3. Mentally see the self in the form of light raised from the middle of the body to the head (Imagine).
4. Be in this state.

4.1.4 Saguna dhyan – 2

Steps:

1. Mentally see (imagine) within the circle of very bright sun, the self of the entire world, the golden person.
2. Imagine Lord Hari having golden beard, hair and nails, having the complexion of the fire coming forth at the end of the time of destruction of manifest world.
3. He is the cause of creation, sustenance and destruction.
4. He is seated in the lotus posture. He is gentle with the face resembling a blossomed lotus, the eyes resembling the inner petals of a lotus and making all the beings dauntless.
5. He is beset with jewels, adorned with diadem, etc.
6. He is illuminating the whole world and the only witness of the universe.
7. Perceive this mentally and set the conviction that ‘I am that’.

Reference : Vasistha samhita

4.1.5 Nirguna Dhyan

Nirguna dhyan is attribute-less meditation.

One, lustrous, pure, all pervasive like the sky, immovable, very clean, immaculate, eternal, devoid of beginning, middle and end. Untouched by (either) gross (or) subtle space, invisible, beyond taste and smell, beyond any source of knowledge and similes.

Blissful, ever new, permanent, cause of all being and non-being, substratum of all, assuming the form of the universe, abstract, beginning-less, and indestructible. Invisible, occupying the objects inside and outside, present in all directions, seeing everything, and touching everything.

May I be also united with that Brahman. Such feeling is the attribute-less meditation.

Reference : Vasistha samhita.

4.1.6 Meditation of Muladhara chakra

Tools : Power of imagination and concentration

Steps:

1. Sit in Padmasana or Sukhasana.
2. Relax the whole body.
3. Relax the breath.
4. Focus on mooladhara chakra (situated at the base of spinal column). for 10 minutes
5. Chant the bija mantra लं (Lam) for 10 minutes.
6. Imagine red coloured flames of fire in that chakra for 10 minutes.
7. Let the sparkling flames rise upwards and spread throughout the body for 15 minutes.
8. Let the flames spread beyond the structure of the physical body.
9. Stop the process and be in silence for 20 minutes.

Result:

1. This is the first step to awaken the Kundalini energy.
2. This meditation technique bestows optimum sexual health.
3. It is very beneficial for the health of kidneys and bladder.
4. It increases the level of energy.

4.1.7 Meditation of swadhasthan chakra

Tools: Power of imagination and concentration

Steps:

1. Sit in Padmasana or Sukhasana.

2. Relax the whole body.
3. Relax the breath.
4. Focus on swadhisthan chakra (situated at the root of reproductive organs) for 10 minutes.
5. Chant the bija mantra ब्रं (Bam) for 10 minutes.
6. Imagine the orange coloured flames in that chakra for 10 minutes.
7. Let the flames spread throughout the body for 15 minutes.
8. Stop the process and be in silence for 20 minutes.

Result:

1. This meditation technique increases sexual energy and vigor.
2. It is very crucial for the health of reproductive organs.

4.1.8 Meditation of Manipura chakra

Tools: Power of imagination and concentration.

Steps:

1. Sit in Padmasana or Sukhasana.
2. Relax the whole body.
3. Relax the breath.
4. Focus on Manipura chakra (located in the navel region) for 10 minutes.
5. Chant the bija mantra रं (Ram) for 10 minutes.
6. Imagine the yellow coloured light in that chakra for 10 minutes.
7. Let the light spread throughout the body for 15 minutes.
8. Stop the process and be in silence for 20 minutes.

Result:

1. This meditation technique increases the gastric fire and promotes the health of the digestive system.
2. It gives beneficial effect on liver, large intestine and spleen.
3. It enhances physical power and strength.

4.1.9 Meditation of Anahata chakra

Tools : Power of imagination and concentration

Steps:

1. Sit in Padmasana or Sukhasana.
2. Relax the whole body.
3. Relax the breath.

4. Focus on Anahata chakra (located at the center of chest) for 10 minutes.
5. Chant the bija mantra हं (Ham) for 10 minutes.
6. Imagine the green coloured light in that chakra for 10 minutes.
7. Let the light spread throughout the body for 15 minutes.
8. Stop the process and be in silence for 20 minutes.

Result:

1. This meditation technique balances the emotional energy.
2. This meditation brings a sense of love and compassion.
3. It is very beneficial for the health of heart, lungs, and blood circulation.

4.1.10 Meditation of Vishuddha chakra

Tools : Power of imagination and concentration

Steps:

1. Sit in Padmasana or Sukhasana.
2. Relax the whole body.
3. Relax the breath.
4. Focus on Vishuddha chakra (located at the base of throat) for 10 minutes.
5. Chant the bija mantra ञं (Gam) for 10 minutes.
6. Imagine the sky blue coloured light in that chakra for 10 minutes.
7. Let the light spread throughout the body for 15 minutes.
8. Stop the process and be in silence for 20 minutes.

Result:

1. This meditation technique is very effective in the proper secretion of thyroid gland.
2. It promotes the effective function of lymphatic system.
3. It is very useful for the health of throat.

4.1.11 Meditation of Ajna chakra

Tools: Power of imagination and concentration

Steps:

1. Sit in Padmasana or Sukhasana.
2. Relax the whole body.
3. Relax the breath.
4. Focus on Ajna chakra (located at the space between the eye-brows) for 10 minutes.
5. Chant the bija mantra ॐ (Aum) for 10 minutes.

6. Imagine the royal blue coloured light in that chakra for 10 minutes.
7. Let the light spread throughout the body for 15 minutes.
8. Stop the process and be in silence for 20 minutes.

Result:

1. This meditation technique promotes proper secretion of pituitary gland.
2. It is responsible for appropriate function of autonomous nervous system.
3. It increases intelligence quotient (I.Q.).

4.1.12 Meditation of Sahasrara chakra

Tools: Power of imagination and concentration

Steps:

1. Sit in Padmasana or Sukhasana.
2. Relax the whole body.
3. Relax the breath.
4. Focus on Sahasrara chakra (situated at the crown of the head) for 10 minutes.
5. Chant the bija mantra ॐ (Ohm) for 10 minutes.
6. Inhale and exhale by focusing on the sahasrara chakra. Feel that with each inhalation the prana (life-force) is flowing through this chakra and entering the body from the cosmos and with each exhalation it is merging back into the cosmos for 10 minutes.
7. Stop the process and be in silence for 20 minutes.

Result:

1. This meditation connects the practitioner with the divine energy of the universe.
2. It gives a feeling of absolute peace.
3. It leads to Kevala kumbhaka.
4. It is a way to realize the cosmic consciousness.

4.2 Meditations from Tantras

Meditation Techniques from Vijnana Bhairava

4.2.1 Meditation - 1

Concept : After exhalation from the inner center of the body (*hrt*) there is non-return of breath for a split second from a distance of twelve fingers from the nose in the outer space (*dvadasanta*). And after inhalation from a distance of twelve fingers from the nose in the outer space (*dvadasanta*) there is non-return of breath for a split second from the center of the

body (*hrt*). So between each exhalation and inhalation and between each inhalation and exhalation there is a pause in the flow of breath.

Technique:

1. After exhalation focus on the pause occurred before inhalation.
2. Then after inhalation focus on the pause occurred before exhalation.
3. As you focus continuously on the pause the duration of the pause increases.

Result : The mind gets steadily fixed in the two points of pause. This leads to dissolution of dichotomizing thought-constructs. The individual consciousness merges into cosmic consciousness. This is the state of meditation.

4.2.2 Meditation - 2

Tools: Big jar

Steps:

1. Adopt a comfortable posture.
2. The practitioner should cast his eyes in the empty space inside the jar leaving aside the enclosing partitions.
3. Instantly his mind will get absorbed in the empty space inside the jar.
4. When his mind gets absorbed in that empty space he should imagine that his mind is absorbed in a total void.

Result : When the concentration reaches at the highest state the mind gets absorbed in the absolute void (*Siva*). This is the state of meditation.

4.2.3 Meditation - 3

Time: Dark fortnight

Meditation Technique

Concept : In the dark night distinct objects are not visible. Hence the mind does not get distracted. After concentration on the infinite darkness for long hours, the individual consciousness merges into the light of cosmic consciousness.

Dharana transforms into dhyana and dhyana transforms into samadhi.

Steps:

1. Lie down in supine position in an open space facing towards the sky.
2. Relax the whole body and the breath.

3. Look at the darkness of night. Focus on it.
4. Concentrate on the infinite darkness.
5. Be in this contemplative state.

Result : As the final state is prolonged, concentration transforms into meditation.

4.2.4 Meditation - 4

Tools: Imagination power and consistency of focus

Steps:

1. Sit in a comfortable posture.
2. Relax your whole body.
3. Relax your breath and let it flow naturally.
4. Close your eyes and visualize that the whole universe is totally void.
5. Concentrate intensely on this idea.

Note : When the practitioner becomes an expert in this technique, he / she can perform this process with open eyes also.

Result : When the concentration reaches at the highest state the mind gets absorbed in the absolute void (*Siva*). This is the state of meditation.

4.2.5 Meditation - 5

Tools: Pointed needle or similar instrument

Steps:

1. Sit in a comfortable posture.
2. Take a pointed needle or a similar instrument in one hand and slightly pierce the other limb.
3. Concentrate on that spot.

Concept : Due to pleasure or pain, mind becomes extremely attentive.

Result : In the intensity of attention because of pain there is one-pointedness of mind. In this state the nature of the true self is revealed.

4.2.6 Tantra Dhyan

Results:

1. Vital energy transforms into supreme experience.
2. Experience or feel energy.
3. Energy moves against gravity. Time: 2 hours (120 minutes).

Tools: Vital energy (sex) and imagination power.

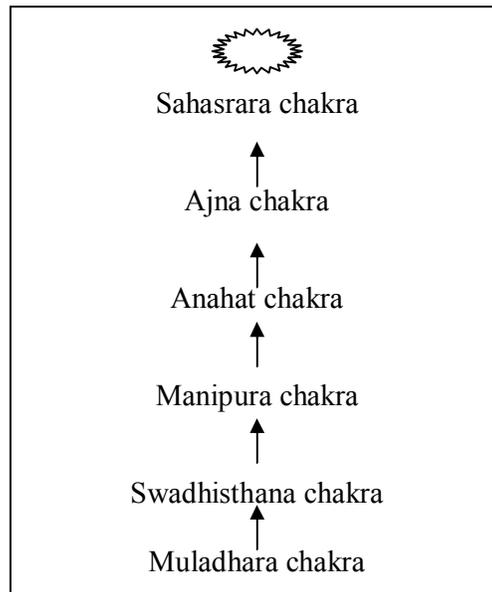
Tips:

1. Don't stop in between the process or experiment.
2. Don't hesitate if you become unconscious.
3. Don't get afraid with any other signs and symptoms or reactions.

Process: Imagination to energy to chakra to Brhamarandhra (Sahasrara).

Experiment:

1. Imagine sex emotions, sex ideas, sex fantasies, visuals, memories, thoughts, etc for 20 minutes.
2. Feel the energy (you feel hot) for 13 minutes.
3. Energy that has created we have to imagine where the energy goes for 25 minutes.
4. Then rest for the next part. Initially 1-2 hours. Then the duration gets reduced. (Its right time is 48 minutes).



Reference: Raj. yogi Esh's diary

4.2.7 Mantra meditation

Steps:

1. Sit in Siddhasana or Padmasana.
2. Relax the whole body.

3. Relax the breath.
4. Sit in silence for 5 minutes.
5. Focus on your each body part and chant the mantra 'Om'. (legs, hands, chest, back, shoulder, etc.).
6. Observe the vibrations created in the whole body by the mantra.
7. Maitain this divine state.

Result:

1. This meditation technique energizes each and every part of the body.
2. The vibrations created in this meditation remove the toxins from the body.
3. The mantra calms the mind and removes stress and tensions.
4. The practioner experiences the feeling of absolute peace and bliss.

4.3 Buddhist meditations

* Tathata Dhyana

1. Flow : Close the eyes after lying in supine position. Flow in the water (Imagine) for 20 minutes.
2. Get dissolved in fire : You feel heaviness of body. You will feel sleepy.
3. Accept : Accept everything. Air, sound, good things, bad things, etc. for 20 minutes.
4. Repeat the procedure again from beginning.

Result : You feel lightness, peaceful and happy. Stress and tensions get relaxed.

Reference: Raj. yogi Esh's diary

4.3.1 Anapanasati dhyana

Place: A comfortable and peaceful environment.

Steps:

1. Sit in a comfortable posture with the back and neck straight.
2. Breathe naturally (don't manipulate breathing).
3. Focus on your natural flow of breath
4. Feel every sensation.
5. Observe the mind.
6. Be in this state of absolute peace.

Tips: If the breath is long, the meditator should simply observe that the breath is long. If the breath is short, the meditator

should simply observe that the breath is short. Don't attempt to change the length or depth of the breath.

Result:

1. Mind becomes sensitive towards the entire body, pleasure, pain, and the mind itself.
2. Thoughts slowly get faded and disappear.
3. Ultimate state of absolute peace.

4.3.2 Vipassana

Vipassana is an insight meditation in order to see things-in-themselves. It is concentration of mind on body where mindfulness and concentration are shared. The main purpose of Vipassana is to perceive things as they really are, in order to free one from all types of mind-diverting activities, and be enlightened from being captivated by the dark forces of illusion. It is done through contemplation of impermanence in order to counteract craving, conceit, ignorance and develops inner peace, freedom, clarity regarding nature of self, wisdom, and compassion in personality.

To perform Vipassana, one should refrain from stealing, killing, telling lies, sexual misconduct, all intoxicants. One should also avoid eating after noon, bodily decoration and sleeping on high or luxurious beds.

Day 1: Start observing the breath whether you are inhaling or exhaling. Breathe a little hard for a few moments if you are incapable to concentrate your minds or if you are unable to feel the breath.

Day 2: Start observing the breath as before, with the further understanding and awareness of where the breath is touching the skin in the nasal region of nose.

Day 3: The awareness of breath includes what sensations one is feeling on the skin in the nasal region (on the nostril rings, on the nose, above the upper lip and below the nose).

Day 4: The sensations of breath continue with further control and limitation of the area on which you are believed to focus and shift their focus to the top of the head and carefully move it through each part of the body till the focus reaches the tips of the toes, feeling the sensations on each part of the body as they pass through the body. Try to feel the sensations and the new area of concentration should be below the nostrils and above the upper lips. Don't

ever try to either like or dislike the sensations. Be calm and peaceful with your breathing sensations.

Day 5: Proceed traversal of focus through the body in both directions: from the head to the toes and then from the toes to the head. Sensations are to be experienced with balanced mind and equanimity in order to understand impermanence in meditation.

Day 6: Keep on further traversal of focus through both the arms, both the legs simultaneously and symmetrically through the body in both directions.

Day 7: Continue traversal process through as many parts as possible simultaneously through the entire body. Feel fine sensations all over the body are asked to perceive if you can feel the sensations inside the body as well by moving their focus sharply and penetratingly through the body.

After completing these above mentioned steps, you start feeling delicate sensations all over the body and get a free flow. You start feeling satisfying inside your body. You start feeling fine both inside and outside the body. You start feeling pleasing in the spinal cord as well.

4.4 Taoist Meditation

4.4.1 Master Han's Central Channel Meditation

This is an ancient Taoist method modified and taught by master Han Yu-mo at his Sung Yang Tao centers in Taiwan and Canada. It is a simple and effective way for beginners rapidly to develop a tangible awareness of internal energy and a familiarity with the major power points through which energy is circulated and exchanged with the surrounding sources of heaven and earth. It relaxes the body, replenishes energy, and invigorates the spirit.

Method : Adopt a comfortable sitting posture. First, take a deep breath and bend forward slowly, exhaling audibly through the mouth in order to expel stale breath from the lungs; repeat three times.

Then sit still and breathe naturally, letting the abdomen expand and contract with each breath. However, instead of focusing attention on the flow of air through the nostrils, focus on the beam of energy entering the crown of the head at a point about two inches above the hairline, called the 'medicine palace'. Feel the beam of energy flowing in through this point

as you begin each inhalation and follow it down through the central channel into the lower elixir field below the navel, then follow it back up the Central Channel and out through the medicine palace point on exhalation.

The sensation at the crown point is most noticeable at the beginning of inhalation and the end of exhalation and feels somewhat like a flap or valve opening and closing as energy flows through it. There may also be feelings of warmth, tingling, or numbness in the scalp, all of which are signs of energy moving under the scrutiny of awareness.

After practicing this method for a few weeks or months and developing a conscious feel for energy as it moves through the Medicine Palace point, you may start to work with other points of exit during exhalation, always drawing energy in through the crown point on inhalation. For example, you may bring energy in through the crown and down to the abdomen on inhalation, then push it back up and out through the 'celestial eye' point between the brows.

This point usually brings rapid results - a distinct tingling or throbbing sensation between the brows. The celestial eye is the point through which adepts with 'psychic vision' perceive aspects of the world that are hidden to ordinary eyesight. The mass of magnetite crystals between the forehead and the pituitary gland is sensitive to subtle fluctuations in surrounding electromagnetic fields.

In other words, psychic vision perceives by virtue of its sensitivity to electromagnetic energy rather than the light or sound energy perceived by eyes and ears. So-called 'psychics' are those who have learned how to interpret the electromagnetic signals from the magnetic organ between the eyes in terms of ordinary perception and rational thought.

In addition to the brow point, you may also practice expelling energy on exhalation through the points in the centers of the palms, the centers of the soles, and the perineum point midway between genitals and anus. In each case, look for sensations of warmth or tingling at the point of exit.

After practicing this method for a while, your head may start to rock spontaneously back and forth or from side to side after fifteen or twenty minutes of sitting, or else your entire body may start trembling and shaking. This is a good sign, for

it means that your channels are opening and that energy is coursing strongly through them. Try neither to suppress nor encourage these spontaneous tremors; instead just let them run their course naturally.

Timen : Twenty to forty minutes, once or twice a day, preferably around dawn and midnight.

4.4.2 Taoist meditation: breath and navel meditation

Breath and navel meditation is the oldest meditation method on record in China as well as India, and it is the method usually taught to beginners. Breath and navel meditation works directly with the natural flow of breath in the nostrils and the expansion and contraction of the abdomen. This Taoist meditation is a good way to develop focused attention and one-pointed awareness.

Method : Sit cross-legged on a cushion on the floor or upright on a low stool and adjust the body's posture until well balanced and comfortable. Press tongue to palate, close your mouth without clenching the teeth, and lower the eyelids until almost closed.

Breathe naturally through the nose, drawing the inhalation deep down into the abdomen and making the exhalation long and smooth. Focus your attention on two sensations, one above and the other below. Above, focus on the gentle breeze of air flowing in and out of the nostrils like a bellows, and on exhalation try to 'follow' the breath out as far as possible, from 3 to 18 inches.

Below, focus on the navel rising and falling and the entire abdomen expanding and contracting like a balloon with each inhalation and exhalation. You may focus attention on the nostrils or the abdomen, or on both, or on one and then the other, whichever suits you best.

From time to time, mentally check your posture and adjust it if necessary. Whenever you catch your mind wandering off or getting cluttered with thoughts, consciously shift your attention back to your breath. Sometimes it helps to count either inhalations or exhalations, until your mind is stably focused. If you manage to achieve stability in this method after ten to twenty minutes of practice, you may wish to switch over to one of the other two methods given below. All three of these

methods may be practiced in a single sitting in the order that they are presented here, or in separate sittings.

Time : Twenty to thirty minutes, once or twice a day.

4.4.3 Microcosmic orbit meditation

This is the classic Taoist meditation method for refining, raising, and circulating internal energy via the 'orbit' formed by the 'governing channel' from perineum up to head and the conception channel from head back down to perineum. Activating the microcosmic orbit is a key step that leads to more advanced practices. Taoists believe that microcosmic orbit meditation fills the reservoirs of the governing and conception channels with energy, which is then distributed to all the major organ-energy meridians, thereby energizing the internal organs.

It draws abundant energy up from the sacrum into the brain, thereby enhancing cerebral circulation of blood and stimulating secretions of vital neurochemicals. It is also the first stage for cultivating the 'spiritual embryo' or 'golden elixir' of immortality, a process that begins in the lower abdomen and culminates in the mid-brain. This is probably the best of all Taoist methods for cultivating health and longevity while also 'opening the three passes' to higher spiritual awareness.

Taoists often refer things in symbolic languages. (See the section *on Human anatomy from the Taoist perspective* for a description of the symbolism used in referring to the human anatomy.). 'Opening the three passes' is another name for this meditation method and refers to the three critical junctions which pave the way for energy to travel up from the sacrum through the Governing Channel along the spine into the head.

Method : The first step is to still the body, calm the mind, and regulate the breath. With this settled mind, sit alone in a quiet room, senses shut and eyelids lowered. Turn your attention within, and inwardly visualize a pocket of energy in the umbilical region; within it is a point of golden light, clear and bright, immaculately pure. Focus attention on the navel until you feel the 'pocket of energy' glowing in the umbilical region.

The breath through your nose will naturally become light and subtle, going out and in evenly and finely, continuously and quietly, gradually becoming slighter and subtler. When the feeling is stable and the energy there is full,

use your mind to guide energy down to the perineum and back up through the aperture in the coccyx.

Steadily visualize this true energy as being like a small snake gradually passing through the nine apertures of the coccyx. When you feel the energy has gone through this pass, visualize this true energy rising up to where the ribs meet the spine, then going through this pass and right on up to the Jade Pillow, the back of the brain.

Then imagine your true spirit in the nirvana chamber in the center of the brain, taking in the energy. When this true energy goes through the Jade Pillow, press the tongue against the palate. The head should move forward and tilt slightly upwards to help it. When you feel this true energy penetrating the nirvana chamber, this may feel hot or swollen. This means the pass has been cleared and the energy has reached the nirvana center.

Next, focus attention on the celestial eye between the eyebrows and draw energy forwards from the midbrain and out through the point between the brows. This may cause a tingling or throbbing sensation there. Then the center of the brows will throb - this means the celestial eye is about to open. Then move the spirit into the center of the brows and draw the true energy through the celestial eye. If you see the eighteen thousand pores and three hundred and sixty joints of the whole body explode open all at once, each joint parting three-tenths of an inch, this is evidence of the opening of the celestial eye.

This is what is meant when it is said that when one pass opens all the passes open, and when one opening is cleared all the openings are cleared.

You may wish to stay and work with this point for a few minutes, before letting energy sink down through the palate and tongue into the throat to the heart. This may feel as though there is cool water going down the Multistoried Tower of the windpipe. Do not swallow; let it go down by itself, bathing the bronchial tubes.

Then the vital energy will bathe the internal organs and then return to the genitals. This is what is called return to the root.

From the heart, draw it down through the middle elixir field in the solar plexus, past the navel, and down into the

ocean of energy reservoir in the lower elixir field, where energy gathers, mixes, and is reserved for internal circulation. Then begin another cycle up through the coccyx to the mid-spine behind the heart and up past the Jade Pillow into the brain.

Breathe naturally with your abdomen, and don't worry whether energy moves up or down on inhalation or exhalation; coordinate the flow of breath and energy in whatever manner suits you best.

However, if you reach the stage where you can complete a full microcosmic orbit in a single breath, it's best to raise energy up from coccyx to head on exhalation and draw it down from upper to lower elixir field on inhalation.

If you practice this way for a long time, eventually you can complete a whole cycle of ascent and descent in one visualization. If you can quietly practice this inner work continuously, whether walking, standing still, sitting, or lying down, then the vital energy will circulate within, and there will naturally be no problem of leakage. Chronic physical ailments, Taoists believe, will naturally disappear.

Also, once the inner energy is circulating, the breath will naturally become fine, and the true positive energy of heaven and earth will be inhaled by way of the breath and go down to join your own generative energy. The two energies will mix together, both to be circulated by you together, descending and ascending over and over, circulating up and down to replenish the depleted true energy in your body.

This true energy harmonizes and reforms, so that the vital fluids produced by the energy of daily life again produce true vitality. When true vitality is fully developed, it naturally produces true energy, and when true energy is fully developed it naturally produces our true spirit.

If you have any physical problems or discomforts in a particular section of your body, focus your energy at the pass closest to the discomfort and let it throb there for a while. This will help heal and rejuvenate the injured tissues. For example, if you have pelvic problems, focus energy on the coccyx pass; for lower-back pain focus on the lowest lumbar vertebra just above the sacrum; for upper-back and shoulder pain focus on the fifth thoracic vertebra, and so forth.

This meditation may also cause the head to rock or the body to tremble, which, Taoists believe, are signs of progress.

Time : Thirty to forty-five minutes, once or twice a day.

Reference : www.holistic-online.com

4.5 Zen meditation techniques

4.5.1 Zazen

Step 1 – Concentration

1. Sit in a cross-legged position.
2. Focus on the breath at hara.
3. Count each breath.

Step 2 – Koan introspection

Now the practitioner should focus his/ her attention on a koan as an object of meditation.

Step 3 – Shikantaza (just sitting)

Here the practitioner does not use any specific object of meditation, but uses the power developed in concentration to remain completely aware of all phenomena that arise and pass in the present moment. Shikantaza is objectless meditation.

4.5.2 Focused breathing

One of the basic ways of clearing your head of distractions so that you can concentrate is focusing on your breathing. In Zen it is called zazen or sitting meditation but I do this while jogging, reading and working. When you are relaxed you are more focused and effective in the task at hand.

To do this you must relax your diaphragm and be fully conscious of your breathing. This is not easy to do when you are tense. It takes true self-awareness to realize that your body is tense. It takes effort to relax those muscles in your stomach and discipline to breath steadily. But try to focus on your breathing; here is a long breath in, here is a long breath out, here is a short breath in, here is a short breath out. You will find that you will be more in tune to the present moment.

As your mind is focused on your breathing, your senses take in the situation around you unencumbered and unfiltered. You begin to see things as they unfold, hear and listen to sounds as they come, feel and smell aromas as they arise without automatically shutting any of it out or reflexively reacting to them.

Continued practice of focused breathing will help you deal with situations in a more rational and objective manner. It lets you put things in perspective. And it gives you insight into the way your body responds under different situations.

Focused Breathing is the foundation for adopting many of the other techniques of Zen. Practiced on its own it will yield immense benefit to you.

4.5.3 Beginner's mind

Zen is known for some very esoteric notions, 'no mind', 'without thinking' and a refutation of all concepts in general. This is one reason Zen appears inaccessible and nonsensical to the casual observer. These notions are meant to encourage us to adopt a basic tenant of Zen, the Beginner's mind. When we first learn something we may be anxious, nervous, excited and looking forward to it but we begin without concepts, knowledge or any ideas about the subject. Maintaining a beginner's mind, even in things that we are already experts, means not to carry any preconceived ideas and beliefs when confronting situations.

His students asked a Zen teacher if he ever got tired of being asked the same question day in and day out. He replied that each student was different and their question, though worded the same, had a different meaning.

A beginner's mind protects us from over-conceptualizing, over-thinking and over-analyzing a situation. We are better able to think outside of the box because we respond appropriately to the needs of each situation. When we think we already know what is going on or that we are already experts in our field we are trapped in one mode of thinking. Many physicists, scientists, philosophers, economists and corporate leaders practice Zen-like techniques because they are aware of such traps.

The next time you think 'here comes an annoying co-worker' or 'someone has let me down again, they're always like this' or 'how am I ever going to get this done', go back to focusing on your breathing, take in the situation unencumbered and unfiltered by your knowledge and conditioning and learning.

Trust that you have all of the prerequisite abilities that have taken you this far in life to respond to any situation. Once

your initial, reflexive thoughts subside you will find that by not categorize situations as they arise you will be open to more alternatives, more opportunities and more ways of responding to the situation appropriately and effectively.

4.5.4 Mindfulness

It is not easy to let go of our thoughts, feelings and tension as they arise. Commotion, distractions and other people requiring our attention surround us. We cannot always maintain a beginner's mind and often we cannot afford to focus on our breathing because we are actively responding to something; this is especially true with first applying Zen techniques. But like everything else, continued practice allows us to live these techniques not just merely apply them. One way to overcome the initial hurdles of applying Zen in a busy day is to be Mindful; basically to be self-aware and self-monitoring with the aim of accepting all of the thoughts and feelings that arise in us without judging them or shutting them out.

When you are focused on your breathing, with a Beginner's Mind you will sense feelings and thoughts arising. Focusing on your breathing will keep you centered, and with a Beginner's Mind you will observe thoughts and feelings without judging them; rather let thoughts and feelings rise and subside while you pay attention but not cling to them. In Zen, all that arises within us are natural; they are a result of what we are and how we are connected to the world. Our eyes, ears and nose sense the world; we perceive, conceptualize and feel because that is the statement of our body.

When we are mindful of anger, sadness, nervousness and joy we acknowledge them, welcome them when they appear but we do not cling to them. When we feel love or happiness we welcome these feelings. It should be the same with anger and nervousness. All these feelings are our mind, body and consciousness communicating to us. When we are mindful of them we can only become wiser and more insightful.

I may get nervous before a test. 'I am nervous. Hello nervousness, how are you today? Glad to feel you again.' Focused breathing keeps me centered. When the test begins my nervousness naturally subsides. 'Farewell nervousness,' and I am completely in tuned with the task at hand.

Do not try to resist or suppress your feelings. That only means you have turned your mind to them and are clinging to them even more. Let your feelings and thoughts. Be mindful of them. I find that as the situation dictates my distracting feelings and thoughts subside allowing me to respond unencumbered by the task at hand.

Focused breathing, beginner's mind and mindfulness are basic Zen practices. They are almost common sense but often we become mired in the complexities and details of every day living and lose sight of common sense wisdom. Zen is not a monastic way of life. The Zen ideal is to experience and embrace life experiences full on; not editing out the bad bits because there are no bad bits, just things are they are.

Reference : Zen for everyday living, by Tu Hoang, www.healingwell.com

4.6 Meditation Techniques from various schools

4.6.1 Hara Meditation

Method: “Whenever you have nothing to do, just sit silently and move inside to the place two inches below the navel, and remain there.

“Becoming aware of this center is going to help you tremendously. So the more you abide there, the better. It will create a great centering in your life energies. You just have to start looking into it and it will start functioning; you will start feeling that the whole of life moves around that center. It is from the hara that life begins, and it is in the hara that life ends. All our body centers are far away, the hara is exactly in the center – which is where we are balanced and rooted. So once one becomes aware of the hara, many things start happening.

For example, there will be less thinking because energy will not move to the head, it will go to the hara. The more you think of the hara, the more you concentrate there, the more you will find a discipline arising in you. That comes naturally, it has not to be forced.

The more you are aware of the hara, the less you will become afraid of life and death – because that is the center of life and death. Once you become attuned to the hara center, you can live courageously. Courage arises out of it: less thinking, more silence, less uncontrolled moments, natural discipline, courage and rootedness, a groundedness.”

Reference : This is it!, awareness Inc., awareness techniques from Osho

4.6.2 Laughter and relaxation

“There are a few moments when, without being aware, you are in a let-go. For example, when you are really laughing – a belly laughter, not just from the head, but from your belly – you are relaxed without your knowing, you are in a let-go. That’s why laughter is so health-giving. There is no other medicine that can help you more in attaining well being. Next time you laugh, be alert about how relaxed you are.”

When: In the night before sleeping and morning.

Duration: 10-40 minutes.

Step 1: Create a giggle

Sitting silently just create a giggle in your being, as if the whole body is giggling, laughing. Start swaying with the laughter – let it spread to your hands and your feet. If it comes uproariously, allow it; if it comes quietly, allow it. Let your body be involved – not just lips and throat, but rising up from the soles of your feet and then those subtle ripples moving to the belly. Visualize yourself as a small child, and if you feel like it, roll on the floor like a child. The noise is not as meaningful as the totality of your involvement.

“Don’t remain stiff; relax and co-operate. If at the beginning you exaggerate it a little it will help.

Step2: Get earthed

Lie down on the earth or the floor, facing the floor; on the earth and naked is the best. Make contact with the earth, feel that the earth is your mother and you are a child – get lost in that feeling. Breathe with the earth, feel one with the earth.

Step 3: Dance

“Dance for 20 minutes – put on music and dance, outside if it is warm enough, otherwise inside. After this time of contact with the earth, your dancing will have a different quality to it, because the earth is energizing. Within six to eight months you will find great changes happening.

“The laughter at night will set a trend in your sleep. Your dreams will become more joyous, more uproarious, and they will help your morning laughter; they will create the background. And the morning laughter will set the trend for the

whole day. Throughout the day, whenever there is an opportunity to laugh, laugh.”

Reference: Satyam, Shivam, Sunderam

The Sun behind the sun, awareness Inc., awareness techniques from Osho.

4.6.3 Running For Release

When: Morning

Step1: Run Totally

“Run on the road, starting with half a mile and then one mile and come to at least 3 miles eventually. Use the whole body. Don’t run as if you are in a straitjacket. Run like a small child using the whole body – hands and feet – and breath deeply, from the belly.

Step 2: Sit and relax

“Sit under a tree, rest, perspire, and let the cool breeze come; feel peaceful. You are simply a throbbing body, an alive body, an organism in tune with the whole – just like an animal.

The musculature has to be relaxed. If you like swimming, go swimming also – that will help. But that too has to be done as totally as possible. Anything in which you can become totally involved will be helpful. It is not a question of anger or any other emotion; the question is of getting into anything totally. Then you will be able to get into anger and love too. One who knows how to get into anything totally can get into everything totally.

“It is difficult to work with anger directly because it may be deeply repressed; so work indirectly. Running will help much anger and fear to evaporate. When you are running for a long time, and breathing deeply, the mind stops functioning and the body takes over.”

Reference:

Beloved of my heart, awareness Inc., awareness techniques from Osho

4.6.4 The Art of Listening

“Your mind is continuously bombarded from all sides by all kinds of thoughts. To protect itself, each mind has created a subtle wall of buffers so those thoughts are turned back, they don’t enter your mind. It is basically good, but then slowly those buffers have grown so much that now they don’t allow anything in. even if you want, they are no longer in your

control. And the only way to break them is the same way as breaking your own thoughts.

“Just become a witness of your thoughts. And as your thoughts start disappearing, the need for the buffers to protect those thoughts will not be there; those buffers will start falling. These are all abstract phenomena, so you cannot see them – but their effects are there.

Only the man who knows how to meditate knows how to listen, or vice-versa. The man who knows how to listen knows how to meditate, because it is the same thing.”

Step 1: Sit by the side of a tree, on your bed, anywhere – just try to listen to the traffic noise, but intensely and totally, with no judgement that that it is good or bad.

"Your thoughts will drop, and with that your buffers will drop – and suddenly a gap opens up which leads you into silence and peace."

For centuries this has been the only way for anyone to come close to the reality of his own being and the mystery of existence. And as you came closer, you start feeling cooler, you start feeling happier; you start feeling fulfilled, contented, blissful. A point comes where you are so full of bliss that you share with the whole world; still your blissfulness will remain the same. You can go on giving, but there is no way to exhaust it.

“Here you can only learn the method; then you have to use that method whenever you can, wherever you can. And you have so much time – standing in a bus, sitting in a train, lying down on the bed”

Reference:

The Osho Upanishad, awareness inc., awareness techniques from Osho.

4.6.5 Be a Buddha

“You have to learn to function ...in Buddha-consciousness, in all kinds of situations – in the marketplace, in the monastery; with people in the crowd or alone in a cave; with friends or with enemies; with family, familiar people, and with strangers; with men and with animals. In all kinds of situations, in all kinds of challenges, you have to learn to function in compassion, in meditation – because all these

experiences of different situations will make your Buddha-consciousness more and more ripe.

“Don’t escape from any situations – if you escape, then something will remain missing in you. Then your Buddha consciousness will not be that ripe, will not be that rich. Live life in its multidimensionality.”

“That’s what I teach you too: Live life in its totality. And living in the world, don’t be of it. Live in the world like a lotus flower in water: it lives in water, but the water touches it not. Only then will Buddha consciousness flower in you, bloom in you. Only then will you come to know the ultimate consciousness that is freedom, which is joy, eternal joy, which is benediction. Not to know it is to miss the whole point of life; to know it is the only goal. The only goal – remember it.”

Reference:

The Book of wisdom, awareness Inc., awareness techniques from Osho.

4.6.6 Meditation as a Quality

“Only in the beginning is meditation a separate phenomenon that you have to give special time to. But that is only for the beginning, only for the learner. Once you have learned the art, then you have to bring the quality to everyday life. One can drive meditatively, one can write meditatively. The quality is so definitely different that when you know it, you see the difference: each act becomes a deep relaxation; it is no longer tense, it is no longer worry.

“And if a man can work without tension his work becomes play.”

Reference:

The rainbow bridge, awareness inc., awareness techniques from Osho

4.7 Pragyān Dhyān Kriyā

Pragyān dhyān kriyā is a type of meditation which is holistic in nature. It is a technique where the concentration is shifted from physical then mental and then spiritual level. Pragyān means “wisdom”; it is the supreme knowledge which is achieved when the Pragyān dhyān kriyā is done regularly.

When this technique of meditation is followed it gives us a healthy body because of the exercises and yogasanas performed, a health mind because of the pranayamas done and

a healthy soul because of the breathing techniques. A special music has been composed for each level which helps to concentrate in the activity of its own level.

(A) Physical level

In the physical level some very light exercises and yogic kriyas are done to prepare the body for the mental aspect of meditation.

4.7.1 Brisk walking

There are distinctive types of exercises that one can perform in order to keep fit, but one exercise that is suitable for all age groups is brisk walking. There are many benefits of brisk walking, especially for obese people, as it helps them a great deal in exhilarating their weight loss program. The ideal brisk walking speed is, in which we are capable of talking with our walking companion, while carrying on with our walking.

Walking is one of the easiest ways to stay fit. We may have a busy life, but we should try and introduce physical activities in our life. A moderate dose of physical exercise for 30 minutes a day is enough to keep you healthy. This form of aerobic fitness can, make us physically fit and improve the quality of our life.

Here are a couple of benefits of brisk walking:

- (i) It helps to fight against stress, by providing complete relaxation to your mind.
- (ii) It protects you from the clutches of diseases like osteoporosis, colon cancer, constipation etc.
- (iii) It increases the longevity of your life, by maintaining your fitness.
- (iv) It helps in reducing the problem of depression, thus enabling you to derive mental peace.
- (v) It relieves you from backache trouble and also acts as a great remedy for arthritis problem.
- (vi) It helps in increasing your flexibility, by strengthening your muscles, bones and joints, thereby toning your body.
- (vii) It ensures that you have a proper sleep at night.

4.7.2 Jogging

Jogging is a form of trotting or running a slow and leisurely pace and it aims at increasing fitness with less stress

on the body that normally results from faster running. The normal body aches and injuries associated with running are uncommon in jogging so it is a lot safer, especially for people who are just starting with vigorous exercises.

Jogging, as an exercise, is free and does not require membership in gyms and health clubs which could be very expensive considering the economic conditions nowadays. It has no age bar as any individual, regardless of age, can go jogging. It also does not require any special venue as you can go jogging anywhere, in city streets, in parks, or even around your house.

Jogging helps build the confidence of an individual by allowing himself to improve trial after trial, growing stronger after each jog and becoming surer of himself with each foot strike. The jogger gets that power of strength as he climbs hills and clears obstacles, feeling that his legs and body are becoming strong and capable each day that he goes out to jog. The jogger will feel that his confidence level rises when he notices that he is losing weight and is gaining a better self-image through the new-found power of his body and legs.

Jogging helps relieve the stress of daily living. As a person jogs, he will find time to reflect on his problems and find solution for the same or he may escape them for a while as he covers the distance while jogging. Either way, the tension that accumulated throughout the day will dissipate as a jogger focuses his attention to the distance ahead.

The rise and fall of feet sometimes have a hypnotic-like effect that draws the jogger's attention from the distractions of problems into the focus of emotions to the distance he aims to cover in his jogging. An hour or so of jogging alone can be a catharsis of one's burdened emotions.

Jogging improves attitude. It is believed that jogging, especially outside of city limits like on trails, releases endorphins that can cause euphoria or a simple sense of happiness as you cover the distance of tree-lined trails while you hear the chirping of the birds. It is therefore common to hear that people with clinical depressions or with addictions are asked to jog as a form of therapy. Jogging gives these people a distraction from their depression or addiction and they



experience less tension, less depression, less fatigue, and less confusion after a regular jogging program.

Jogging also trains the mind in the same way that it trains the body. By experiencing how to overcome distance and obstacle, a person can also train his mind to focus and be determined on other things that really matter in life. The will and determination that a person used in overcoming the challenge of distance while jogging can be used also to focus on the other areas of his life.

Stage I: Slow jogging

- Come to Sthiti Tadasana.
- Make loose fists of your hands and place them on the chest.
- Collapse and relax your shoulders.
- Start jogging on your toes slowly.
- Jog about 20 times (As days go by, gradually increase up to 100 times).

Stage II: Backward jogging

- Lean a little forward and increase the speed of jogging gradually.
- Start hitting the buttocks with the heels.
- Repeat this 20 times at your maximum speed.
- Then gradually slow down the speed (Do not stop).
- Continue and move on to slow jogging for at least 10 times.

Stage III: Forward jogging

- Lean backward a little and now as you increase the speed again try to raise the knees higher and higher.
- Raise the knees forwards to reach the chest level.
- Repeat 20 times at your maximum speed.
- Slow down the practice coming back to the stage of slow jogging again.
- Continue slow jogging for a few rounds, count 10 times.

Stage IV: Side jogging

- Gradually increase the speed taking the heels sideways.
- As the speed increases bring the heels as close to the elbows as possible.

- Repeat this movement 20 times at your maximum speed.
- Gradually slow down to come back to slow jogging stage.
- Keep jogging a few more rounds (10 times) and finally stop the practice.

Jogging is not only an aerobic exercise; it is also a way of life once you put your heart into it. Keep on jogging.

Stage V: Mukha dhouti

- Stand with forward bend of the trunk, palm on your thighs and legs about a meter apart.
- Inhale deeply and expel the air forcibly as in a jet through the mouth continuously.
- Repeat several times.

4.7.3 Stretching

Stretching has so many benefits. Just start a program of stretching, and you'll soon notice many of them. Some of the benefits of stretching are–

- relief from pain
- increased energy levels
- increased flexibility
- better range of motion of the joints
- greater circulation of blood to various parts of the body
- relaxation and stress relief
- enhanced muscular coordination
- improved posture
- greater sense of well-being
- Increased flexibility and range of motion

As we age, our muscles tighten and we have less range of motion in our joints. Simple activities that we once took for granted, like cutting our toenails, picking things up from the floor or zipping a dress, can all become difficult. A regular stretching program can help lengthen your muscles and make these daily activities easier and more enjoyable.

Improved circulation

Stretching improves circulation of blood to the muscles and joints. Increased blood circulation, of course, brings nutrients to our cells and removes waste byproducts.

Better posture

Chronically tense and tight muscles contribute to poor posture, which in turn can affect the functioning of our internal organs, not to mention our appearance. Stretching the muscles of the lower back, shoulders and chest can help keep the back in better alignment and improve posture.

Relaxation and stress relief.

Stretching, done properly, helps to relax tense muscles which result from stress. The feeling of relaxation brings a sense of well-being and relief from tension. Reduce or prevent lower back pain.

Greater flexibility and range of motion in the hamstrings and muscles of the hips and pelvis help to reduce the stress on your spine that causes lower back pain. The program below combines simple stretching exercises with modified yoga poses:

4.7.4 Side Stretch

Step A: Stand up straight with your feet together, fingers interlaced at chest level. Turn your palms away and raise your arms overhead. Lengthen your arms, torso and legs. Relax your neck and hold for a count of five.

Step B: Now bend slowly to the right and hold for a count of five. Return to the starting position. Then gently bend to the left and hold for a count of five.

4.7.5 Forward Bend

Step A: Bring your arms back down to your sides and pause. Now bend your knees slightly. Place your feet about six inches apart. Then bend slowly at the waist until your chest is resting on your thighs. Let your arms dangle in front of you and hold the position for about 20 seconds.

Step B: Slowly straighten your legs as much as feels comfortable. Keep your upper body and arms relaxed and in roughly the same position, and hold again for about 20 seconds. If you need a little extra support, place your hands on a 12-inch stool or block of wood.

4.7.6 Downward-facing dog

Step A: Straighten back up, then get down on all fours, hands and knees on the floor. Tuck your toes under so the balls of your feet are on the ground. Contracting your abdominal muscles, slowly lift your hips to form an upside-down V with

your body. Allow your knees to bend slightly and your heels to rise off the floor.

Step B: Keeping your back straight, gently straighten your knees and press your heels toward the floor. Hold for 20 seconds.

4.7.7 Quad stretch

Now slowly lower yourself to the floor and lie on your left side, your left arm supporting your head. With your right hand, grasp your right ankle. Gently pull your right foot toward your buttocks, feeling the muscles in the front of your leg stretch. Your right knee should be in line with your left one. Hold for 20 seconds, then roll over and repeat with your left foot.

4.7.8 Cobra

Return to resting position, face down on the floor with your legs together and the tops of your feet touching the mat or carpet. Place your hands on either side of your head, palms down and shoulder-width apart. Press up, raising your shoulders and resting on your forearms. Gaze forward or slightly up. Feel your lower back stretch and relax. Hold for 20 seconds.

4.7.9 Child's pose

Return to the starting position of the cobra. Now slowly press up and back, bending at the knees and waist until you are sitting on the backs of your heels. The tops of your feet should be flat against the floor and your arms stretched flat on the floor in front of you. Lower your shoulders and your forehead to the ground, and hold for 20 seconds.

4.7.10 Hip stretch

Roll over onto your back. Roll your pelvis to the right, gently lowering your right knee as close to the floor as you can. Hold for 20 seconds. Then repeat on the left side.

4.7.11 Corpse Pose

Slowly slide your feet out until your legs are flat on the floor. With your arms about 45 degrees from your side, palms up, and your legs about one to two feet apart, let your feet fall away from each other. Close your eyes and relax. Concentrate on releasing tension from the center of your body outward to your fingertips and toes.

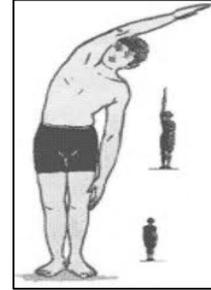
4.7.12 Asanas

(I) Standing postures

(1) Ardhakati Chakrasana:

Technique :

- (a) Stand firmly along with legs together (as in Tadasana). Press the heels and feet on the floor.
- (b) Slowly stretch and raise the right arm above the head and extend with inhalation.
- (c) Exhale slowly and move the trunk and right arm towards left side, the ear will touch the right upper arm. The left hand should be sided on left leg thigh.
- (d) Stay in this position for 15 to 30 seconds with normal breathing.
- (e) Inhale, slowly move the trunk and arm in order to come back to the normal position.
- (f) Repeat the same by bending on the other side.
- (g) Practice this exercise two times on both the sides.



Therapeutic Advantages



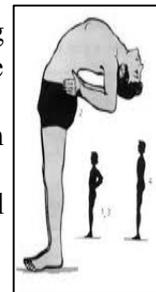
- (i) Performing this exercise will help those who are suffering from back pain, stiff back etc.
- (ii) This helps to promote the function of liver and hence performing this exercise will help to cure liver problems.
- (iii) Simultaneously stretching on

both sides will help to eliminate extra fat in the abdomen region and also provides good shape to the body.

(2) Ardha Chakrasana:(Half-Wheel Posture)

Technique :

- (a) Stand firmly. Inhale slowly and bend forward along with hands. The hands should be locked with the fingers
- (b) As the legs are coming down behind the head, stretch the ribs and abdomen so that arch is formed.
- (c) Hold in this position for few seconds with normal breathing.
- (d) Slowly go back to the normal position and relax.



Therapeutic Advantages



- (i) In this exercise the shoulder, the back, the neck and the things are stretched very well.
- (ii) Full body stretching gives good body shape.
- (iii) Back pain and pains in the region of neck will be effectively cured.

(iv) It provides good vitality and energy to the entire body.

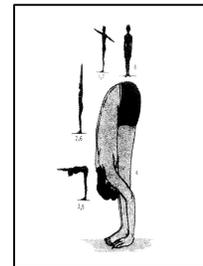
(v) Because of formation of arch, the abdominal muscle and chest are fully extended.

(3) Padhastasana:

'Pada' refers 'foot' and 'hasta' refers 'hand'. Here in this exercise the requirement is to stretch the back and legs down.

Technique

- (a) Stand as in position. Ensure to keep the feet together.
- (b) Inhale slowly, stretch the hands up.
- (c) Exhale slowly, bend forward and place the palm on the ground adjacent to feet, and now touch the knees with the head. Ensure to keep the legs straight.
- (d) Stay in this position for about 15 to 20 seconds and breathe evenly.
- (e) Slowly place the palms below the foot. Remain in this position and take 2 to 4 breaths.
- (f) Inhale slowly, raise the head and slowly resume to a normal position.



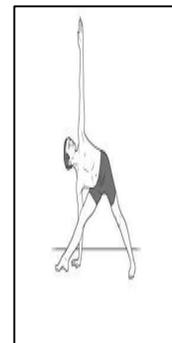
Therapeutic Advantages



- (i) This exercise gives nourishing effect to; the organs like abdomen, liver and kidney.
- (ii) Practicing this exercise will help to cure all digestive problems and gastric problems.
- (iii) It has a curative effect for back pain and pain in the

region of ankle.

(4) Trikonasana: (Triangle Posture)



"Trikona" refers to 'triangle' and this exercise exhibits revolving triangular posture.

Technique :

- (a) Stand firmly and keep the legs straight.
- (b) Inhale, move the legs about 3 to 4 feet from one another. The knees and body should be straight. Raise both hands to the level of shoulder to the respective side
- (c) Turn right foot towards right side at 90 degrees to the right and turn left foot slightly to the right.
- (d) Exhale slowly and simultaneously lower the right hand palm in order to place the palm on the ground and raise the left hand upward, and see the tips of the left-hand fingers.
- (e) Hold this position for about a minute and while doing so breathing should be deep and even.
- (f) After that come back to the normal position. Repeat the same on the other side.

Therapeutic Advantages

- (i) Helps to strengthen the muscles of the back, hips, and legs. It cures backache, shoulder pain and joints pain.
- (ii) Strengthens the ankles, knees and shoulder.
- (iii) Spinal problems will be cured.

(II) Sitting postures

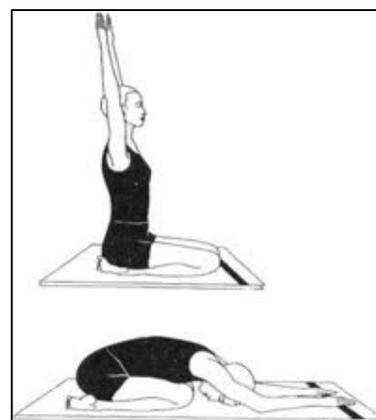
(5) Vajrasana

'Vajra' refers to 'diamond' and this yogic posture resembles diamond. More particularly, this exercise is very useful and invaluable as it retains youthfulness and vigor. The entire body becomes strong like a diamond.

Technique :

- (a) Start the position.
- (b) Fold the knees. Place the hands in the middle as in yoga mudra position. Yoga mudra is the highest form of meditation. In fact, Lord Buddha meditated in this posture for spiritual attainment.
- (c) Ensure that the head, the back, wrist are straight.
- (d) The entire body weight should rest on the heels
- (e) Close the eyes and start meditation.

Therapeutic Advantages





(i) As explained earlier, this exercise provides youthfulness and vigor. The body becomes more and more strong.

(ii) This exercise is recommended for those who are suffering from weakness of semen and vigor.

(iii) Practicing this exercise helps to cure heart disease.

(iv) This exercise gives mental equilibrium and develops concentration.

(6) Shashank Asana Technique :



(i) Sit in Vajrasana.

(ii) Inhale and raise your hands slowly above your shoulder.

(iii) Exhale and slowly bend forward and try to place the head on the floor and resting the hands from elbow onwards on the floor.

(iv) Stay for 20 to 30 breath counts and then come back to original position slowly with exhalation. If practice for around 5 minutes and more it will be more beneficial. While practicing this pose just concentrate on the breathing.

(v) Repeat the pose once more.

Those who are unable to touch the head on the floor should use a pillow or something similar on which they can rest their head.



Benefits of Shashank Asana

- (a) Activates the Adrenal gland and leads to more adrenaline being secreted when done for a longer duration. If done before the asthma starts and done for more than 10 minutes you can avoid the Asthma attack.
- (b) Calms the mind hence it is good for Epilepsy, migraine, anger management.
- (c) Massages the abdominal organs.
- (d) Good for reducing abdomen fat.

(7) Pashchimottanasana:

'Paschima' refers to 'West'. In this exercise the spinal cord gets more exercise and becomes more elastic. 'Paschima' here refers to the 'Dorsal or backside'. 'Thana' means stretch. The name itself suggests that the back is stretched very well.



Technique :

- (a) Sit on the ground with extended leg forward
- (b) The legs and thighs should remain straight. Slowly bend forward and hold the big toes with hands.
- (c) Exhale slowly and bend the head and trunk downwards till it touches the knee. Hold in this position about 20 seconds with normal breathing.
- (d) Ensure to hold the toes while exercise is in process. The legs should remain straight and touched to the ground.
- (e) Inhale slowly and raise the head from the knees and come back to the original position.

Therapeutic Advantages

- (i) Since the stomach is exercised heavily, it removes obesity. For obese people though it appears to be difficult to perform in the initial stage, but with gradual practice one can easily perform this exercise.
- (ii) This exercise tones up the spine, nerve system and abdominal area. As such problems in the area of spine, nervous system and abdomen are cured.
- (iii) This exercise activates stomach, liver, kidneys and pancreas. The diabetic people invariably perform this exercise in order to get good benefit.
- (iv) Practicing this exercise helps to better blood circulation and problems in prostate gland, uterus and urinary bladder will be cured.
- (v) This is an effective exercise for those who are suffering from kidney problems.

(8) Shithila Dandasana

Technique :

- (i) Do the Dandasana Pose in Yoga
- (ii) Dandasana or Staff Pose is a seated pose in yoga. It is the most basic seated pose and it is from Dandasana that all the others originate. If you are familiar with yoga, you might think of Dandasana as the seated version of Tadasana or Mountain Pose. If while performing the Dandasana Pose you feel like you are just sitting on the floor, then you are doing it incorrectly. Though it is a relatively simple pose, it does require the body to be fully contracted and engaged, using the muscles and joints in each part of the body. Dandasana works to strengthen the legs and improve the bodies overall alignment.
- (iii) Sit down with your legs stretched out in front of you. Your knees and big toes should be touching and the bottoms of your legs should be touching and parallel to the floor.
- (iv) Sit up straight. Place your hands around your hips, with your thumbs at the top of your hips bones and shift your hips so that your tailbone is pointing down into the floor. Keep your spine straight and lifted.

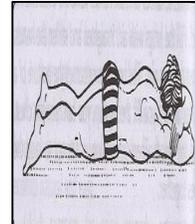
- (v) Engage your thighs muscles. Flex your feet, pointing your toes toward the ceiling and flex your thigh muscles, so that your heels gently lift off the floor.
- (vi) Contract your core muscles. The core muscles are the girdle of muscles that surround your lower back and abdomen and are the key to performing all yoga poses. Engage your core muscles by drawing your abdomen toward your spine and cinching your waist as if there was an actual girdle around your middle.
- (vii) Align your upper body. Roll your shoulders back and open your chest, but do not arch your back. Stack your shoulders so that they are directly aligned with your hips.
- (viii) Elongate your neck. Looking straight ahead, pull your chin into your chest, so that the crown of your head is lifted toward the ceiling.

(III) Prone postures

(9) Makarasana

Technique :

- (a) Lie down on the floor with the face and body downward.
- (b) Stretch the hands above the head and ensure to stretch both the legs to a maximum extent.
- (c) Inhale slowly, raise both the legs and head upward . Hold in this posture for a few seconds with normal breathing. The hands and legs should be stretched firmly.
- (d) Exhale slowly, lower the legs and head simultaneously.



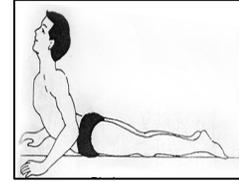
Therapeutic Advantages

- (i) This posture gives maximum stretch to the back, legs and hands.
- (ii) It cures back pain, and provides elasticity to the spinal cord.
- (iii) As it gives maximum stretch it helps the children to grow fast and also helps to increase the height.
- (iv) The fat in the region of hips and abdomen are effectively reduced.
- (v) Very good exercise to solve all the digestive problems.

(vi) This exercise provides maximum stretch and hence it is more suitable to athletes and sportsmen, particularly to basketball players.

(10) Bhujangasana

In Sanskrit 'Bhuja' refers to 'upper arm' and 'Bhujanga' means a 'serpent'. This exercise resembles a large snake. Hence it is termed as Bhujangasana.



Technique :

- (a) Lie down on the ground with face downward.
- (b) Keep the palm on the ground beside the chest.
- (c) Inhale slowly and raise the hand and trunk as in the shape of hood of the Cobra.
- (d) Hold in this position for few seconds and take normal breath
- (e) Exhale slowly and come back to normal position.

Caution: Those who are suffering from stiffness in spinal column are advised to practice this exercise slowly.

Therapeutic Advantages

- (i) This exercise gives stretching to muscles of the neck, back and trunk, hence the pains in the region of neck, back and trunk are cured.
- (ii) This exercise helps to cure slipped disc and backache.
- (iii) The abdominal area is activated and hence the pancreas, stomach, liver, and other digestive organs will be strengthened. This cures indigestion and other abdominal disorders.
- (iv) This exercise cures various menstrual problems

(11) Shalabhasana:

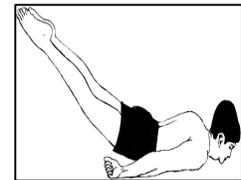
There are two types of exercises in shalabhasana.

- A. Ekapada Shalabhasana
- B. Dwipada Shalabhasana

(11 A) Ekapada Shalabhasana

Technique :

- (a) Lie down on the floor with the face downwards.
- (b) Stretch the legs so that the toes are flat down on the ground. The whole body should be straight and stiff.
- (c) Stretch the arms and place the thumbs freely on the ground.
- (d) Inhale slowly; raise the left leg slowly as high as possible.



- (e) This exercise is termed as Ardha Shalabhasana and those who feel it difficult to raise both the legs are advised to perform this exercise alternatively for both the legs. Stay for about 30 seconds on each side. Slowly bring down the legs and release.
- (f) In Dwipada Shalabhasana try to raise both the legs slowly to the possible extent as shown in the posture.
- (g) Hold few seconds with normal breathing.
- (h) Exhale slowly and bring the legs down towards the ground and relax.

Suggestion: It is advised to practice Ardha Shalabhasana first which helps to perform Shalabhasana once practice is continued for some time.

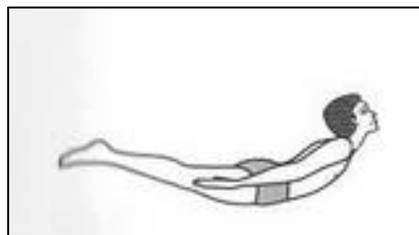
Therapeutic Advantages

- (i) This exercise helps to cure diabetes and prostate gland problems.
- (ii) This exercise gives good effect to the whole body and helps to tone up spine, lungs, chest, neck and shoulder.
- (iii) This cures various abdominal troubles including problems in the area of kidneys, liver, and pancreas.
- (iv) It cures pains in the region of thighs and legs and hence it is recommended for athletes and sportsmen.
- (v) This exercise helps to cure chronic constipation.

(The therapeutic use of Ardha Shalabhasana is similar to Shalabhasana as explained above.)

(11 B) Dwipada Shalabhasana

This is an advanced exercise of shalabhasana. The simplest form starts with Ekapada Shalabhasana and once the simplest form is practiced well, one can try this advanced posture of Shalabhasana. In the initial stage one can find it difficult to perform and attain the balance. Regular practice can help to perform this exercise quite easily.



Technique :

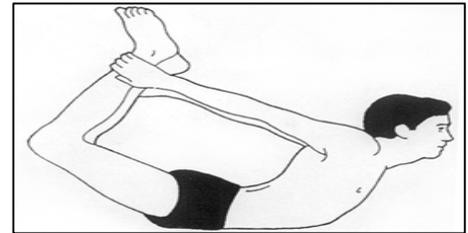
- (a) Perform Shalabhasana
- (b) Slowly lift the body upwards so that the entire body balance lies on the shoulder and on the chin. The shoulder and the chin should touch the ground.

- (c) The body should be straight, erect and stretched well.
- (d) Hold in this position for about 8 to 10 seconds.

(12) Dhanurasana: (The Bow Posture)

Technique

- (a) Lie down with face and stomach downward.
- (b) Stretch the arms and hold the feet firmly.
- (c) Inhale slowly, raise the trunk and head. Continue to raise trunk, simultaneously raise the knees and head, so that the body stretches like a bow. Hold for few seconds with normal breathing.
- (d) Start exhaling, slowly lower the knees and the head. Repeat the exercise 2 or 3 times.
- (e) Release the feet, hands and relax completely.



Therapeutic Advantages

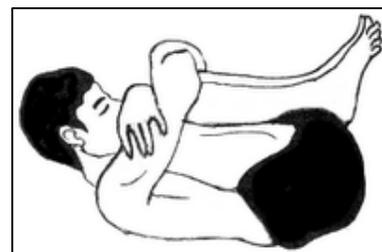
- (i) This exercise removes all the intestinal and the abdominal disorders. It improves the digestive system and cures constipation.
- (ii) This exercise is recommended to; those who are obese as it eliminates fat in the region of stomach, hips and thighs.
- (iii) This is the most suitable exercise for women suffering from irregular menstruation, because in this exercise endocrine glands are toned up.
- (iv) This exercise cures problems in the area of adrenal thyroid, parathyroid, pituitary and sexual glands.
- (v) It cures the disorder of joints, spinal cord and lungs. Urinary diseases, piles and gastric problems will be cured.
- (vi) This exercise helps to provide flexibility to the spinal column and strengthens the nervous system.

(IV) Supine Position

(13) Pavanmuktasana

Technique :

- (a) Lie down on the floor with the face upward. Bend both the knees and wrap the hands around the legs as shown in the posture.



- (b) Ensure that the hands are locked with the support of fingers.
- (c) Exhale slowly; raise the head forward till the forehead is in between the knees. The thighs should be pressed against the stomach.
- (d) Inhale and bring the forehead near the knees. Repeat the process for about 10 times.
- (e) Inhale deeply and gradually lower the head and relax.
- (f) This exercise is performed on each side, wherein each thigh presses against the stomach in ekapada Pavanmuktasana. Those who find it difficult perform dwipada Pavanamukthasana, can start with ekpadas Pavanmuktasana and with practice it is easier to perform Dwipada Pavanmuktasana. Since both the thighs together press against the abdomen, it is called as dwipada Pavanmuktasana.

Therapeutic Advantages



- (i) The therapeutic advantages of ekpada Pavanmuktasana and Dwipada Pavanmuktasana are more or less

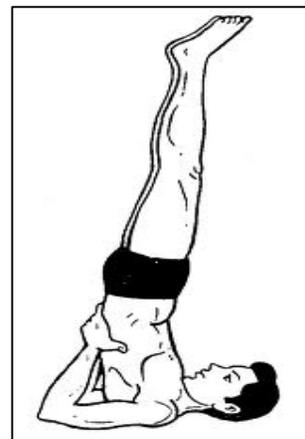
same.

- (ii) This is an effective exercise to cure constipation and digestive disorders. It cures indigestion and promotes digestive function.
- (iii) In this exercise abdominal region is exercised very well and all the abdominal diseases are cured.
- (iv) It cures gastric trouble and also those suffering from piles get relief.
- (v) Straight-leg raise.

(14) Sarvangasana: (shoulder stand posture)

Technique :

- (a) Resume the posture of viparitha karni and then slowly raise the hips still higher so that the entire back is perpendicular to the ground and the chin is pressed against the chest. Legs should be straight..



- (b) Few people experience watering in the eyes. In such cases, they are advised to practice by closing eyes. Hold for about a minute and slowly bend the legs down.
- (c) Relax completely for about a minute.

Therapeutic Advantages:



(i) Performing this exercise gives several benefits since the entire body is in action. The entire body is activated and the complete

body system is toned up.

- (ii) Those who are suffering from eyesight defects, this exercise will help considerably.
- (iii) Due to increased supply of blood to the brain the students must perform this exercise which gives increased memory power and concentration.
- (iv) The problems in the area of thyroid glands are cured.
- (v) The pains in the region of leg and diseases of the nervous system are eliminated.
- (vi) Arrests premature aging gives youthfulness and vigor and serves as a beautification tool.
- (vii) This is the best exercise for those who are suffering from ovarian problems. It also ensures the good functioning of sexual and reproductive organs. People suffering from impotency are advised to practice this exercise without fail.

(B) Mental Level

After the physical exercises the body becomes ready for the mental level breathing exercises which will prepare it for the spiritual level concentration.

(1) Bhastrika Pranayama:



Sit in Sukha asana and take deep breathe so that your lungs are full with fresh air. Hold the air for a few seconds and release it through

nose. Repeat this for 5-10 times till your breathing system is perfect.

(2) Kapal Bhati Pranayama

Sit in Sukha asana and take a deep breath. Exhale the air by pushing the stomach inside and let the process of fresh air inhalation be done with least effort. Repeat this process of exhaling the air by pushing the stomach inside and inhaling fresh air with least efforts at least 100 times or say for about 5 minutes. By doing this kapal bhati Pranayam for 5 minutes or more every day you can cure the following diseases.

- Indigestion
- Acidity and gas.
- Obesity.
- All other abdominal related diseases

(3) Anulom Vilom Pranayama:

Sit in Sukha asana and take deep breathe with one nostril open and the other closed by use of your fingers. Now release the air by another nostril which was closed while inhaling the air and closing the other nostril by use of fingers. Take deep breathe by the nostril through which air was exhaled last time and exhale the air through another nostril.

By doing this anulom vilom ranayams for about 15 minutes a day you can cure the following diseases:

- Hypertension or high blood pressure.
- Diabetes.
- Migraine Pain.
- Asthma.
- Bronchitis.

(4) Bhramari Pranayama:

A person should sit in Sukha Asana or dhyanasan , close his eyes , keep his fingers in such a way that three fingers cover the eyes and one finger gives a little pressure on the forehead . The thumb should cover the ears by giving the little pressure. Now he has to take deep breath and release the air slowly through nose so that a sound similar to the humming of bees comes out. Repeat the process for about 15 minutes.

By doing Bramari pranayams you can cure all diseases related to:

- Ears
- Nose
- Throat
- Eyes
- Nervous system

(5) Deep breathing exercises

Deep breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress in the body. This is because when we breathe deeply it sends a message to our brain to calm down and relax. The brain then sends this message to our body. Those things that happen when we are stressed, such as increased heart rate, fast breathing, and high blood pressure, all decrease as we breathe deeply to relax. Pranayama is the most important under this.

Benefits of Pranayama

Reduced breathing rate. With yoga breathing you can train yourself to breathe more slowly and more deeply. You can reduce your breathing rate from about fifteen breaths a minute to 5-6 breaths a minute, which amounts to reducing the breathing rate by one third. Reduced breathing rate leads to:

- Slowing down the heart rate as more oxygen can be pumped even with less number of breaths. Follow the ration of 1:2 for inhalation: exhalation.
- Reduced wear and tear of internal organs.
- Lowering of blood pressure, relaxation of body tensions and quieter nerves.

Pranayama helps to Increases life. As per yoga philosophy, longevity depends on your breathing rate. Lowering of breathing rate is likely to increase your life. For example, a tortoise takes four to five breaths in a minute and it lives up to 200 years or more.

Blood Circulation Improves. As a result of breathing, the freshly oxygenated blood travels from lungs to the heart.

The heart pumps it through the arteries and blood vessels to every part of the body, where in turn it seeps into every tissue and cell. This improves the blood circulation and more oxygen/ Prana or cosmic energy reaches all parts of your body.

Pranayama for healthy heart: Our heart beats 100,000 times a day. It is pumping blood day in and day out non-stop all your life. The health of our heart determines our life and quality of life in old age. More oxygen in the blood means more oxygen to muscles of the heart.

Benefits of Pranayama for Functioning Of Body Organs:

- Better functioning of autonomic system improves the working of lungs, heart, diaphragm, abdomen, intestines, kidneys and pancreas.
- Digestive system improves and diseases pertaining to digestive organs are cured.
- General irritability due to lethargy/ fatigue vanishes.
- By Pranayama practice all body organs gets more oxygen, toxins are removed from body, therefore onset of various diseases is prevented. Pranayama strengthens the immune system.

Better Mental Health.

- Pranayama practice provides freedom from negative and harmful mental conditions like anger, depression, lasciviousness, greed for money, arrogance etc.
- With Pranayama fluctuations of mind are controlled and it prepares the mind for meditation. With practice of Pranayama, you will start experiencing lightness of body, feeling of inner peace, better sleep, better memory and better concentration whereby improving the spiritual powers/ skills.
- Better breathing improves the quality of life in old age.
- As a person with sedentary lifestyle reaches middle age, lung tissues tend to grow less and less elastic and lung capacity decreases.

- Pranayama can help to reduce the effects of following old age problems:
- Loss of vitality.
- Accumulation of uric acid in the blood stream which often leads to frequent joint pains and discomfort.
- Backaches, headaches, rheumatism, stiffening muscles and joints.
- Proper circulation of blood is impeded by a sluggish diaphragm or hardening arteries.

Benefits of yoga breathing can be realized only by experience. Begin a daily routine of yoga breathing exercises. If you want to start on your own, first start with rhythmic deep breathing to get into the rhythm.

(C) Spiritual Level

After the pranayamas the concentration level becomes very high and one can easily enter into the state of meditation by following the simple steps:

- Spectacles should be removed.
- One should sit with back straight and not with a slouch.
- One may sit on chair or ground but with a correct posture.
- Body and mind should be relaxed.
- No force or tension should be applied anywhere.
- The attitude should be positive.
- One should not talk.
- One should sit still.
- Eyes must be kept close.
- Breathing must be natural
- Focus should be on breath. Inhale-exhale....
- One may choose to repeat his/her desired words or mantras to encourage and enlighten himself / herself.
- One must be grateful to the supreme power.



A healthy body, mind and soul is achieved by following the Pragyana meditation technique, it takes care of the physical, mental and spiritual aspect of the meditator.



When meditation is done inside a pyramid or underneath a pyramid is called Pyramid Meditation and it is thrice more powerful. Pyramids help to reduce the level of stress and tension in the physical body.



It is historically evident that man knew about the beneficial effects of pyramid energy as early as 6000 years ago. The ancient Egyptians used pyramids to preserve their dead. The Mayans used the pyramid for religious ceremonies. The Vedas have references to pyramid geometry. Even temple tops and church steeples were designed in the shape of a pyramid. But why the pyramid? Scientists have focused attention on this issue for the past century. It was intriguing how flowers grew better and faster, how fruits and food products improved in taste and how dead animals did not decay for weeks within a pyramid. It was



found that all life forms and all matter when placed within the

pyramid structure, improved in performance, behavior and appearance. Pyramid energy has, from then on, been successfully applied in healing, as well as in relieving fatigue and tension.

4.8 EFFECTS OF MEDITATION

(1) The effects of meditation on physical level are as follows.

- There is reduction of free radicals- unstable oxygen molecules that can cause tissue damage. They are now thought to be a major factor in aging and in many diseases.
- There is decrease in high blood pressure.
- Meditation gives deep rest as measured by decreased metabolic rate, lower heart rate, and reduced work load of the heart.
- Levels of cortisol and lactate-two chemicals associated with stress are reduced.
- Low skin resistance is correlated with higher stress and anxiety levels. Meditation results in higher skin resistance.
- In meditation there is improved flow of air to the lungs resulting in easier breathing. This has been very helpful to asthma patients.
- High cholesterol is associated with cardiovascular disease. In meditation cholesterol level drops.
- Meditation increases serotonin which influences moods and behaviour. Low levels of serotonin are associated with depression, headaches and insomnia.
- Meditation enhances energy, strength and vigor.

(2) The effects of meditation on psychological level are as follows.

- Meditation leads to decrease of anxiety, depression, irritability and sadness
- There is increased happiness, emotional stability, and self actualization.
- There is increased feeling of vitality and rejuvenation.
- Meditation increases brain wave coherence. Meditation results in harmony of brain wave activity in different parts of the brain which is associated with greater creativity and higher intelligence quotient (IQ).

- Meditation also improves learning ability and memory.
 - Meditation increases concentration and strengthens the mind.
- (3) The effects of Meditation on spiritual level are as follows.
- Meditation increases the level sensitivity and awareness.
 - Meditation bestows absolute peace.
 - Meditation leads to Self-realization.

Effects of Meditation on Nervous system

Meditation induces certain changes in the body, particularly the body's 'fight or flight' response. The system responsible for this response is the autonomic nervous system (sometimes called the involuntary nervous system). The autonomic system regulates many organs and muscles, including the heartbeat, breathing, sweating and digestion.

The autonomic nervous system is divided into two parts namely- sympathetic nervous system & parasympathetic nervous system. The sympathetic nervous system helps mobilize the body for action. When a person is under stress, it produces the fight-or-flight response: the heart rate and breathing rate go up, for example, the blood vessels narrow (restricting the flow of blood), and muscles tighten.

The parasympathetic nervous system creates what some call the 'rest and digest' response. This system's responses oppose those of the sympathetic nervous system. For example, it causes the heart rate and breathing rate to slow down, the blood vessels to dilate (improving blood flow), and activity to increase in many parts of the digestive tract.

Meditation reduces the activity in the sympathetic nervous system and increasing activity in the parasympathetic nervous system.

4.9 Case studies

Method: Pragyan dhyan kriya

Participants: A study was conducted with the focus of evaluating the meditative experience of 40 people at Kolkata, (West Bengal). There were 24 males and 16 females. Some of them had previous exposure to yoga and meditation and were practicing it.

Procedure: It was a session of one hour. Total 7 hours for one week. They were instructed in Pragyān dhyan kriya. The steps of this meditation are as follows.

1. Relax the whole body in sitting position.
2. Do the very light physical exercises and yogic asanas as mentioned in Pragyān dhyan kriya-physical Level.
3. Sit in cross-legged position with the spinal cord straight and eyes closed.
4. Relax your body and mind completely.
5. Do the pranayamas mentioned in the Pragyān dhyan kriya-mental level.
6. Sit with eyes closed and breathe normal to prepare yourself for spiritual level.
7. Inhale air through the nose and exhale through the nose. Repeat this process 8 to 10 times or as per capacity.
8. Be in silence and feel the warmth within the body [5 minutes].
9. Experience the supreme silence.

Precaution: Practice this meditation technique 3 hours after diet and 20 minutes before diet.

Result: At the end of 7 sessions the participants provided feedback about their experiences. Majority of the participants experienced relaxation, inner peace, awareness, freshness and enhanced energy level. Some of the participants experienced connection with higher universal energy. Some of them experienced purification and realization of their own self. All these experiences were not same throughout the 7 days sessions. On the first and second day, most of them experienced physical and mental relaxation. From the third day onwards they experienced calmness, awareness and spiritual insights.

But some of them experienced certain difficulties to achieve these states. Mainly these difficulties were physical. Some of these experiences were - pain in the back, difficulty to sit erect for longer duration, and numbness of legs.

Following are some of the experiences of the participants:

- (a) “It was a pleasant experience. Mental stress and strain reduced to a great extent.” – Mr. Ramesh.
- (b) “Felt absolute ecstasy in the silence after the completion of all the practices.” – Ms. Suman.

- (c) “In the initial two days, I was feeling sleepy at the end of the meditation technique. But later the feeling of mental calmness increased day by day.” – Mr. Sujeet.
- (d) “After performing the physical exercises and then the pranayamas the body felt very relaxed and it became very easy to concentrate – Mr. Ajay.
- (e) “During the first 3-4 days the body felt resistant to asanas but later the body became flexible for the poses and some lights could be seen while meditation” – Ms. Shaw.
- (f) “I was suffering from back ache since many years; the 7 day programme helped me feel my back lighter again. I wish to continue Pragyan dhyana kriya throughout my life” – Ms. Parul Jatin Shah.
- (g) “I have learnt to practice meditation many years back but I never continued it as I could not concentrate, but after doing yogasanas and pranayamas, the concentration comes immediately and a unique sense of peacefulness could be felt” – Ms. Jayashree Badani.
- (h) “Pragyan dhyana kriya is an innovative type of meditation which is very adequately taught by Dr. S. K. Agarwal. He starts with some light exercises and specific asanas then breathing exercises and then meditation. It’s a wonderful experience” – Ms. Vinodini Mehta.
- (i) “I was a patient of insomnia and in a very less time I could sleep peacefully, due to lack of sleep my nature had become irritable but now I am happy and stress-free, thanks to Dr. Agarwal.” – Mr. Pradip Damodia.
- (j) “I am a yoga teacher, but when meditation was merged with yogasanas and pranayamas, the result was heart wrenching. The body seems strong and full of energy, as we had done the meditation in pyramid and with a especially composed music, the mind seems clear and outlook becomes positive” – Dr. Pran Krishna Pramanik.
- (k) “I am feeling tremendous relief in my ear pain” – Ms. Pubali Mondal.
- (l) “While doing meditation I could visualize myself as someone else, and it helped me in taking many

important decisions in life, I am determined to continue meditation lifelong” – Mr. T. C. Jain.

- (m) “I am a tabla player but I could not concentrate while live concerts but after following the regime of Pragyan dhyana kriya, I feel more confident and focused” – Mr. Ujjwal Das.
- (n) “I had chronic migraine, but since I am doing meditation the attack has not appeared” – Ms. Mita Doshi.
- (o) “I am a Psychologist in Andhra Pradesh, I have joined Pragyan dhyana kriya and found it works amazingly to relief mental tension, stress and fatigue, the combination of physical, mental and spiritual level while meditation is extraordinary” – Dr. Mahalakshmi Nandika Kumar.

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DEDICATION

I am proud of being an Indian and I Solemnly pledge-

1. To honour our constitution, national flag and national anthem.
2. To follow the lofty ideals motivating national movement.
3. To maintain the unity, integrity and sovereignty of India and to save the forests, lakes, rivers and wild animals.
4. To serve the nation.
5. To honour women and not to discriminate on the basis of religion, language, state, class or creed.
6. To have compassion for all living beings.
7. To keep away from violence.
8. To protect public property.
9. To develop scientific approach, humanistic outlook and feeling of improvement.
10. To form the feelings of fraternity, equanimity and honour in my countrymen.
11. To aim at excellence in all personal and group activities.

“Be aware of your rights; be devoted to your duties.”

Prof. (Dr.) Sohan Raj Tater

National Human Rights Commission expects from all children, students and citizens to observe and repeat daily the above pledges given in the constitution “Article 51” by attaching their photographs and signatures.