CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO
SAMMA SAMBHUDDHASSA
Etymologically the term "meditation" is derived from the Latin term "meditari" which means "to contemplate" or "to heal". In this sense meditation may be defined as the art as well as the science of contemplation or healing. Meditation is the means of restoring one's physical, mental and emotional well-being. Besides its root meaning, "meditation" is a portmanteau word which has multiple meanings. Different people have used it in different senses. It has been used in its sacred, secular and profane senses. It has been employed to signify a variety of psychological, intellectual and spiritual states of mind.

According to the Oxford English dictionary meditation means 'focusing of one's mind for a time for spiritual purpose or for relaxation'. It also defines meditation as contemplating or thinking carefully about something. In other words, meditation is involving or absorbing oneself in something or some activity. The object of
meditation may be either sacred or profane. The meditative act may be either noble or scandalous. Accordingly, it may be said that Descartes’ Meditations are philosophical contemplations to arrive at a lucid and definite knowledge about the existence of oneself, the world and God. Mahatma Gandhi may be said to have meditated on the God he wanted to see face to face. So also, Hitler should have deeply meditated on accomplishing the holocaust of the Jews. Gadse should have contemplated on assassinating the martyr Gandhi. Similarly, a thief meditates about the way of stealing or robbing things. A soldier meditates about the strategy of conquering the enemy. And a terrorist meditates on the target of extermination.

In its profound sense the term “meditation” is used as a synonym of the term “Yoga”. These two terms are often employed interchangeably. The term “Yoga” is derived from the Sanskrit root “yuj” which means to concentrate or to meditate. Yoga is a process of concentration (Dhāraṇa) and meditation (Dhyāna) culminating in the state of ultimate freedom, known as Samādhi. Meditation is the intensified form of concentration. And Samādhi is the perfect state of meditation. Meditation is an integral part of all systems of Yoga. In the Indian tradition, Yoga is meant for overcoming the triple kinds of sorrow namely, sorrow arising within oneself (ādhyātmika), inflicted by some other creature (ādhibautika), and caused by natural calamity (ādhidaivika). Meditation is also a means to elevate oneself from the
worldly routine of fear, anxiety and unhappiness to the transcendental life of equanimity, peace and bliss. Meditation is the way of crossing the river of saṃsāra, the round of births and deaths. It is an effective and direct means of attaining mokṣa, nirvāṇa or kaivalya which is Enlightenment, the final liberation.

Yoga or meditation is an ancient spiritual practice having its roots in the Vedic and Upaniṣadic literature. It has its roots in the Buddhist tradition also. Realization of oneness 'within' and 'without' is the main objective of meditation. All types of meditation centre round the concentration of mind on an object or idea. Deep and prolonged concentration leads to a blissful relaxation and supreme tranquility. It gives a form of happiness which lies beyond the normal states of consciousness. Meditation is a means to a profound insight which purifies and transforms our everyday life. Meditation should not be mistaken for hypnotic trance. Meditation is not blocking out the mind and becoming unconscious. It is not a process of turning oneself into an emotionless vegetable. True meditation is concentration in which the mediator is highly alert and in complete self-control. Meditation is a form of heightened awareness which works like a dynamo emitting bright light around. But in the modern times meditation has almost lost its 'religiosity'. It has become a routine affair handled by behavioural scientists, medical practitioners and business consultants. The way meditation is being practiced now-a-
days was largely unknown a few decades ago. Some forms and centres of meditation have become scandalous and money spinning rackets.

In the Indian philosophy there are five important types of meditation or Yoga. They are: Jñāna Yoga, Rāja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga and the Eightfold Path. The first four belong to the Hindu tradition and the last one to the Buddhist tradition.

Jñāna Yoga is the path of knowledge advocated by the Upaniṣads and the Advaita Vedanta. It is a direct means of attaining final freedom (mokṣa) by realizing the ultimate reality, namely, the Brahmān or Ātman. It is through the discriminating knowledge that one attains liberation. It is by discriminating between the Self and the not-self, the Ātman and the world or the Soul and the body that one overcomes ignorance and bondage. Jñāna-Yoga comprises four steps to reach the goal of deliverance. They are: (1) Viveka, which is the ability to discriminate between the illusory and the real, the transitory and the eternal, the superficial and the essential. (2) Vairāgya, which means guarding oneself against the desires and passions, attachment and infatuation. (3) Saṭsampatti, the six instructions, namely, (i) śama, the cultivation of the tranquility of mind, (ii) damā, self-control in action, (iii) uparati, eradication of eagerness to possess, (iv) titikṣa, patience, (v) śradha, sincerity, and (vi) samādhana, concentration of mind. (4) mumukṣatva which is longing for liberation. Besides the
four basic requirements, a Yogi has to follow three more steps, namely, Śravana, Manana and Nididhyāsana. Śravana means extensive and intensive study of the sacred literature dealing with the subject of mokṣa, the summum bonum of life. It also means listening to the teachings of one's master. Manana means intellectual analysis and understanding of what is learnt by constant study and hearing. And Nididhyāsana means meditating on what is intellectually understood. It is contemplating on the Brahman to have a direct perception. It also involves meditation on Omkāra which represents Brahman without attributes. Constant meditation on the Om without the intervention of other thought will lead to a vision of the Brahman. Nididhyāsana is a form of upāsana, an insight into the nature of ultimate reality.

Raja Yoga is the path of concentration. It is also known as Dhyāna Yoga. Patanjali is its founder. He defines Yoga as the cessation of mental modifications (Yogachittavṛttiniruddha). Since it consists of eight steps, it is also called Astānga Yoga. The eight steps are: (i) Yama, (ii) Niyama, (iii) Āsana, (iv) Prānayāma, (v) Pratyāhāra, (vi) Dhāraṇa, (vii) Dhyāna and (viii) Samādhi. (i) Yama consists of five abstinences: They are: ahimsa, abstaining from hurting and killing other beings; satya, abstaining from falsehood and being truthful in thought, word and deed; asteya, abstaining from stealing; bṛamhacarya, abstaining from sensual pleasures including sexual
union; and *aparigraha*, non-acceptance of gifts and possessing things that are essential for sustenance (ii) *Niyamas* are five: *saucha*, cleanliness of the body and mind; *santośa*, contentment; *tapas*, austerity of speech, body and mind; *svādhyāya*, study of scriptures; and *īśvarapranidhāna*, surrendering the fruits of action to God. (iii) *Āsana* means firm and comfortable posture. (iv) *Prānayāma* is the control of the breath by regulating inhalation, exhalation and retention. (v) *Pratyāhāra* is the withdrawal of the senses from the world and making the mind calm by preventing it from taking the shape of its objects. (vi) *Dhāraṇa* means concentration of the mind on any external object or on a particular point of space in the body. (vii) *Dhyāna* is meditation, a continuous flow of concentration on a desired object. It is an uninterrupted flow of the knowledge of the object like the flow of oil or honey, and (viii) *Samādhi*, the culminating stage of *Aṣṭānga Yoga*. When meditation on *Omkāra*, the manifest symbol of the *Brahman*, becomes constant and continuous, the mind takes the form of the *Brahman*. The individual self becomes the *Brahman*. This is the state of *Samādhi*. Fundamentally, it is of two stages. The first stage is called the *Samprajñāta Samādhi* and the second *Asamprajñāta Samādhi*.

*Samprajñāta Samādhi* is a state of conscious unification of the mind with the object of meditation. It proceeds by several stages like *Savitarka, Nirvitarka, Savicāra* and *Nirvicāra*. *Savitarka Samādhi* is
meditation on the gross elements by questioning them. *Nirvitarka* is meditation on the gross elements without questioning them and by taking them out of time and space. *Savicāra* is meditation on the subtle elements with discrimination. And *Nirvicāra* is meditation on the subtle elements without discrimination and by eliminating them form space and time. There are two more stage of *Samādhi*, namely, *Sananda* and *Sasmita*. In the former, the Yogi experiences bliss and in the latter only the *sattva guna* remains. And the *Asamprajnata Samādhi* is the unification of the mind with the object of meditation without knowledge. It is a state of pure consciousness without the subject and object division. It is also known as *Nirvikalpa* or *Nirbija Samādhi* in which the Yogi remains in his real nature of supreme peace and bliss. This is the state of *Kaivalya*, the ultimate liberation.

*Bhakti Yoga* is the path of celestial love based a firm faith in the personal God. In *Bhakti*, God with attributes is the object of meditation. It advocates that the God with attributes is the same as the *Brahman* who is without attributes. Devotion to God results in the identification with the supreme reality. In Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krsna says that Bhakti Yoga is the simple and easy path. Anybody can follow it and reach the same goal as that of other paths. Serving God with love makes the mind pure. Sacrificing all actions to God by giving up the ego puts an end to attachment to the fruits of the action. Then only one can become a true devotee. The Lord loves him most
and showers his blessing on him. The effulgent light of the Divine
dawns on the devotee. The division between the lover and the beloved
ceases to be. There is only Love in which the lover and the beloved are
one. Swami Vivekananda says that a single moment of the madness
of extreme love of God brings eternal freedom.

Karma Yoga is the path of action. It is regarded as the most
fundamental kind of meditation, for action is the basic mode of life.
Everyone has to keep doing some action or the other. No one can
refrain from action even for a moment. And Brahman is the source of
all actions, including human action. So disinterested action (niskama
karma) is Karma Yoga. Performing actions by sacrificing their results
to the Lord is Yoga. In Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krsna says that doing one's
duties to His satisfaction saves the devotee from bondage. Swami
Vivekananda says that Karma Yoga is seeing action in inaction and
inaction in action. That is, it is being active 'within' while being
inactive 'without', and being inactive 'within', while being active
'without'. He also says that performing work for the sake of work is
Karma Yoga. Action with restraint, without motive and end in view is
the greatest form of meditation.

Buddha's Eightfold Path is the path of morality, meditation and
knowledge. Nirvana, the cessation of sorrow is its goal. It is otherwise
known as the middle path since it avoids the extremes eternalism and
annihilationism, self-indulgence and self-mortification. The Eightfold
Path is the fourth noble truth advocated by the Buddha. The four truths are: (1) the truth that everything in life is sorrowful, (2) that craving is the cause of suffering, (3) that it is possible to eradicate suffering, and (4) that the Eightfold Path is the way of overcoming suffering. As its name suggests, the Eightfold Path consists of eight steps. They are: (1) right view, (2) right thought, (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right livelihood, (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness, and (8) right concentration.

Right View is insight into the impermanent nature of everything in life. It is a deep understanding of the origin, cessation and the path leading to the cessation of sorrow. Right Thought is that which is free from desire, hatred and delusion. It is directed towards compassion for all beings. Right Speech is abstaining from falsehood, vain and unbefitting talk. It is also avoidance of base news monging. Right Action is refraining from taking what is not given, indulging in pleasures and harming others. Right Livelihood is making one's living strictly by right means. It is avoidance of the ways of livelihood like fortune-telling, controlling of evil spirits, selling narcotics, perfumes and arms.

Right Effort consists of four kinds of striving: (1) striving to prevent arising of evil thoughts that have already formed in the mind; (2) striving to abandon evil thoughts that have not yet arisen, (3) striving to produce good thoughts, and (4) striving to improve good
thoughts that have been already produced. Right Mindfulness generally means doing one's work with attention and awareness. In the Buddhist parlance, mindfulness means focusing one's attention steadfastly on the object of mindfulness. It is comprehending with great diligence the truth or the falsity of the object. It is the perception of the impermanent and soulless nature of the phenomena. The Buddha has spoken four kinds of mindfulness in his *Mahāsatihipṭṭhāna Sutta*. They are: (1) the mindfulness of the body including respiration; (2) mindfulness of the sensations or feelings; (3) the mindfulness of the mental contents, including the conceptual formations of the whole Teaching. The four kinds of mindfulness reveal the transitory and insecure nature of the four kinds of the phenomena. They liberate the monk from covetousness, attachment and sorrow. Right Mindfulness is also known as Insight meditation (*Vipassana Dhyāna*). It penetrates and reveals the true nature of everything, inner as well as the outer.

And, Right Concentration means entering the intense states of meditation (*jhanas*). It is establishing the mind in four such states. In the first state, the mind having detached itself from sensual objects, experiences delightful satisfaction and bliss. In the second state, the mind experiences oneness and tranquility along with delight and bliss. In the third state, the mind comes to an awareness of equanimity devoid of delight and bliss. And, in the fourth and final state, the
mind attains perfect and complete equanimity. With this, the monk transcends samsāra and achieves *Nibbāna*, the state of Enlightenment.

In Buddhism there are two fundamental methods of Yoga or meditation: (1) the Yoga of the Theravāda school and (2) The Yoga of the Mahāyāna school. The Eightfold Path, and its last three steps in particular, constitutes the Theravāda type of meditation. The right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration as explained above represents the meditative method of the Early Buddhism of the Pali Canon.

And the Mahāyāna method of meditation is known as the meditation on emptiness. It is advocated by the Prāsaṅgikā Mādhyamikā school of Mahāyāna. It is contained in the Sanskrit writings of the thinkers like Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti. It is also found in the Chinese and Tibetan translations of the original texts. The Mādhyamikā School was founded by Nāgārjuna in the second century A.D. It is a logical development from the early Buddhist doctrines of the middle path, no substantial-self and the impermanence of the elements (*dharmas*). According to this school, everything, the self as well as the *dharmas*, are unreal. Supreme reality is *Śūnya* or Void which is the middle path steering clear of the extremes of existence and non-existence, affirmation and negation. This is why the Mādhyamikā is also known as *Śūnyavāda*.
Meditation, according to the Prāsaṅgikā Mādhyamikā, is viewing everything as empty of inherent being. Its aim is to generate a deep insight into the true nature of everything, namely, *suchness* (*tathatā*). *Tathatā* signifies the transitory nature of the all phenomena which simply and constantly comes into being and goes out of being. The modus operandi of meditation on emptiness is that it refutes a thesis by analyzing and exposing the contradictions involved in it. For instance, the thesis that there is the "self" or the "I" which is independent of everything. Analytical meditation on this thesis reveals that nothing is existing independently of every other thing. Nothing has an intrinsic being of its own. The "self" is only an aggregate of the five groups (*skandhas*), namely, form (*rūpa*), feeling (*Vedana*), discrimination (*saṃyāna*), compositional factors (*samskāras*) and consciousness (*viśnāna*). When we think of the "I", we only perceive one of these aggregates. The thought of the "I" arises from them only. But we believe that the "I" is real and inherently existent. We cannot find the "I" anywhere in the body-mind complex. Neither the body nor the mind is the "I".

Thus the analytical meditation on the conception of the "I" or the "self" reveals that there is no "I" independent of the body, the mind or their parts. We can never find an "I" existing separately from our body and mind. This non-finding of the "I" indicates that the "I" or the "self" is a mere appearance to the mind. The Mādhyamikā
analytical meditation is dialectical in nature. The movement of the
dialectic is as follows: if the "I" is the same of the body-mind complex,
the body-mind complex itself should be the "I"; if it is separate from
the complex, it should be findable independent of the complex; the "I"
is neither the same as the complex nor different from it; so the "I" does
not exist as an independent entity; the "I" is only a name, a convenient
designation given to the body-mind complex; the "I" is empty (Śūnya)
of self-being. Realization of emptiness of all phenomena is Nirvāṇa. It
liberates the mind from the illusion of the inherent "I". It generates
wisdom (prajñā) which marks the cessation of attachment, hatred and
delusion, the three sources of suffering.

In Mahāyāna, there is another system of meditation known as
the Zen. The word "Zen" comes from the Chinese "Chan", a
transcription of the Sanskrit "Dhyāna" which means contemplation.
Zen Buddhism originated in Japan in the twelfth century A.D. It is
still flourishing in Japan and China in different forms. Zen Buddhism
holds that meditation is the only way to enlightenment. The essence of
Zen meditation is: 'Look into the mind and you will find the
Buddhahood'. It says that all human beings have already been
enlightened. We are the Buddhas by nature. The practice of
meditation is nothing but the Buddha's act itself. The Buddha's acts
continue to improve human society. Nevertheless, we should also
constantly strive for the welfare of the community. Zen meditation is
a process of concentration on a riddle (Koan) given to the seeker by the master. The seeker is expected to solve the illogical problem as quickly as possible. For instance, the riddle, ‘what is the sound of one hand clapping?’ has to be solved. But constant meditation on the riddle suspends reasoning. When concentration becomes prolonged and intense the riddle gets dissolved. The dissolution is the release known as Satori. It is a state of enlightenment and non-duality. In this thesis we are not concerned with Zen meditation. It falls outside the scope of the thesis. The theme of the thesis is confined to the study of meditation in Theravāda Buddhism and the Prāsaṅgikā Mādhyamikā.

OBJECTIVES OF THE THESIS

The objective of the thesis is to bring out in detail the Buddhist system of meditation as contained in the Theravāda and the Prāsaṅgikā Mādhyamikā School of the Mahāyāna. It aims at explaining the Theravāda meditation as mindfulness and the Prāsaṅgikā meditation on emptiness. It aims at highlighting the point that the two methods of meditation are not opposed but complementary to each other. The Mādhyamikā method is only an extension over the Theravāda system of meditation. One is more comprehensive and unifying than the other. Both the systems are in conformity with the Buddha’s original teaching of impermanence, selflessness and dependent origination. It is for the actual realization
of the truth of these doctrines that the Theravāda and the Mādhyamikā have advocated their systems of meditation.

THE SCOPE

The scope of the present thesis is limited to a detailed exposition of the Theravāda and the Mādhyamikā systems of meditation. In respect of the Theravāda, the thesis is confined to the study of meditation as mindfulness as contained in the Ānapānasati Sutta and the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya and the Mījima Nikāya. As regards the Mahāyāna, the thesis limits itself to the exposition of the Mādhyamikā method of meditation on emptiness as contained in the Mahā Prajñāpāramita Śāstra and Mūla Mādhyamikā Kārika of Nāgārjuna. The study is based on the English translations of the Pali, Sanskrit and Chinese original sources. The scope is also confined to the practical aspect of Buddhism, namely, meditation. The thesis does not attempt to explain the doctrines of no-self (Anātmavāda), dependent origination (Pratītyasamutpādavāda), and impermanence (Kṣanikavāda). Buddhist meditation is the process through which the truth of these doctrines is practically realized. The whole discussion of the theme of the thesis is embedded in the following six chapters.

Chapter One is Introduction. This chapter explains in brief the root meaning and various other meanings of the term “meditation”. It indicates the objective and the scope of the thesis. It also mentions in
outline the contents of the chapters under which the theme of the thesis is discussed.

**Chapter Two** is *The Nature and the Schools of Meditation*. This chapter begins with a brief account of the nature and purpose of meditation or Yoga in general. It deals with the schools of meditation such as *Jñāna Yoga, Rāja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga*, and *Karma Yoga*. And it also explains the Buddhist meditation in the Theravāda, and the Prāsangikā Mādhyamikā of the Mahāyāna.

**Chapter Three** is *The Four Noble Truths*. This chapter is devoted to a detailed elucidation of the Four Noble Truths. It highlights the fourth Noble Truth, namely, the *Aṣṭāṅga Marga* with an emphasis on its meditative part.

**Chapter Four** is *Meditation as Steadfast Mindfulness — The Theravāda Way*. In it is given an elaborate exposition of nature and purpose of mindfulness. An exhaustive account of the application of mindfulness to the breath, the body, the sensations, the mind, and the *dhamma* has been given. It also elucidates the four stages through which the steadfast mindfulness progresses and culminates in *nibbāna*.

**Chapter Five** is *Meditation on Emptiness — The Mahāyāna Way*. This chapter is devoted to an exposition of the Prāsangikā Mādhyamikā method of meditation known as meditation on emptiness. The chapter begins with an explanation of the nominalist
ontological position of the Prāsaṅgikā. Then it explains the analytical or dialectical nature of the Prāsaṅgikā meditation. Further, the chapter deals with the application of the analytical meditation to the concept of the self-substance, the I, and the body. It shows how the meditation on them discloses the emptiness of the inherent existence of all phenomena, physical, mental, and both physical and mental. Besides explaining the nature and meaning of emptiness, it also elucidates the ten perfections which the bodhisattva cultivates in order to stabilize the wisdom of emptiness.

Chapter Six is Conclusion. This chapter is devoted to a brief review of the preceding chapters and to making some critical comments on the meditative methods of the Theravāda and the Prāsaṅgikā Mādhyamikā. The significant observation is that the two methods of meditation are not opposed but complementary to each other. The Mādhyamikā transforms the Theravāda introvert kind of meditation into an altruistic meditation of the bodhisattva. Cultivation of friendship and compassion is the distinctive mark of the Prāsaṅgikā meditation. The Mādhyamikā meditation is a development over the Theravāda meditation. The concept of the arhat is an extension over the concept of the bodhisattva.