CHAPTER III

THE NATURE AND TYPES OF MEDIATION

BUDDHAM SARANAM GATHYĀMI
DHAMMAM SARANAM GATHYĀMI
SANGAM SARANAM GATHĀM
Indian philosophy is predominantly spiritual in character. Salvation has been its dominant theme of inquiry. Philosophizing in India since the Upaniṣadic times has been a search for ultimate freedom. All the systems, except the materialistic Cārvaka, aim at offering an absolute solution to the problem of existence. The final deliverance that these systems seek to offer is variously called as mokṣa, nirvāna, kaivalya and so on. Salvation here means the deliverance of the individual from saṃsāra which is full of misery. The purpose of philosophy is the liberation of the human being from sorrow. It is to attain immortality by ending the temporal life of repeated births and deaths.
All the systems that aim at liberation recognize Yoga as the most efficacious means to it. Yoga means yoking. The term “Yoke” has two meanings. Firstly, it means uniting the individual soul with the universal soul. In its second sense, yoking means to restrain or to constrain. Accordingly, Yoga here means going to trance by ending the mental modifications through controlling or restraining the senses.

The method of Yoga embodies concentration and meditation. It is through concentration that a Yogi seeks to control the senses and the mind. And meditation is nothing but intensified concentration. A deep and an uninterrupted concentration becomes meditation. And meditation reaches the state of trance or Samādhi when the former is intensified further. Samādhi is a state of final deliverance from sorrow. It is a state of omniscience coupled with bliss. It is a state of immortality which is beyond the round of births and deaths. And Samādhi is the goal of many systems of Yoga. The final step of Patanjali’s Rāja Yoga and the Buddha’s Aṣṭāngamārga is the same, namely, Samādhi.

Thus the term “Yoga” and the term “meditation” mean the same thing. They are synonymous and can be used interchangeably. The term “Yoga” comes from the Sanskrit root “Yuj” which means to go to trance or to meditate. The term is also said have derived from another root which means to join or to yoke. “Both roots are feasible — in
the sense of the root 'to join', Yoga would mean the science that teaches the method of joining the human soul with God"¹. The term "meditation" has several senses. It means many things to many people. It has been used in a variety of ways. Etymologically, "meditation" means not only "to contemplate" but also "to heal". In this sense meditation may be regarded as the science or the art of healing. "To meditate is to set in motion processes that lead to the restoration of one's well-being – physical, mental and spiritual"².

The term "meditation" has also been used in various other senses. It refers to a broad spectrum of mental functions ranging from scandalous scheming to deep contemplation. In this sense Descartes wrote his Meditations to arrive at an indubitable knowledge of his own existence and that of the world and God. The aim of his Meditations was to deduce knowledge which is as definite and certain as that of mathematics and geometry. Husserl wrote his Cartesian Meditations to have an intuitive knowledge about the nature and structure of consciousness. Mahatma Gandhi may be said to have meditated upon seeing God or Truth face to face. He may also be said to have meditated on the establishment of Rāma Rājya or Swarāj in India. In its pejorative sense, Nathu Ram Gadse may be said to have meditated on the assassination of Gandhiji. Hitler may be said to have meditated on the extermination of the Jewish race³. Besides these, the term "meditation" may also be used in other senses. A
scholar meditates on the topic of his research. A detective meditates on the case of his investigation. "Meditation in a general sense means deep contemplation. It requires continuous application of concentration of the mind on something in particular, objective or subjective".

Above all, the term meditation has a spiritual connotation in the Indian context. In this sense meditation means attaining trance (Samādhi) by gaining perfect control over the turbulent senses and the fluctuations of the mind. It is in this sense that meditation has been used in the Indian philosophical systems including Buddhism. Meditation here is regarded as a path to moksa, nirvāna or kaivalya. A Yogi practices meditation, an uninterrupted concentration, in order to research the goal of freedom from sorrow and ignorance. Meditation is a sādhana to the sādhya which is Samādhi. "This, the power of concentration is the key to the treasure house of knowledge".

The distinctive character of meditation is that it is a practical affair. The efficacy of any of its forms has to be understood by experience. It cannot be understood in theoretical and abstract terms. One has to learn meditation by doing it. Meditation is not something to be talked and discussed about. Meditation is a heightened awareness and insight in the light which alone life has to be lived. Meditation is a lived experience of the present, moment by moment.
It is wrong to think that the purpose of meditation is to achieve supernatural powers like levitation, becoming invisible, reading others' mind. It is said that there is a link between meditation and psychic powers. A Yogi may gain some such powers as clairvoyance and clairaudience in the process of meditation. But the real goal of meditator is liberation from the sorrow of life and death. A meditator should not succumb to these powers. One should not use them since they distract the mind from developing more and more awareness. It is also wrong to think that meditation is meant for a few who are holy and saintly. Indeed, meditation can be practiced by all and become holy or saintly. The holy men are holy because they meditated. "Meditation is how they got there. And they started meditating before they became holy, otherwise they can not be holy". But the practice meditation warrants a certain degree of morality and self-control to begin with. Moral principles like ahimsa, satya, saucha, tapah and so on are a perquisite for practicing meditation. They help in controlling the fluctuating mind.

It is not correct to think that meditation is a way of escape from reality. Meditation is not a process of insulating oneself from the life-world. On the contrary, meditation is running into reality and delving deep into the life-world. It is a process of going beyond suffering by facing the fact of our existence directly. The purpose of meditation is to dispel the illusions and falsehood about oneself and the world. It is
learning to look at oneself as one exactly is and accept it fully. Only then can one change oneself radically. It is a misconception to think that meditation is a selfish activity. A mediator may not involve himself in doing any outward activity. But the real activity of the meditator lies in his inner being. The purpose of his meditation is to cleanse his mind and heart of their defilements. His motive is to purge himself of prejudice, anger and ill-will. He is actively engaged in getting rid of desire, hatred and delusion. His aim is to overcome all barriers to virtue which is essential for a right way of living. Meditation is a means of living in a genuinely selfless way. Cleansing oneself of selfishness is not a self-centred but an altruistic activity. “Through meditation we become aware of ourselves exactly as we are, by waking up to the numerous subtle ways that we manifest our own selfishness. Then we truly begin to be genuinely selfless. Cleansing yourself of selfishness is not a selfish activity”.

In the Indian tradition there are five important systems of meditation or Yoga. They are (1) Jñāna Yoga, (2) Rāja Yoga, (3) Bhakti Yoga, (4) Karma Yoga, and (5) The Buddhist Eightfold path.

**Jñāna Yoga**

Jñāna-Yoga is the way of knowledge. It is a direct path of realizing the ultimate reality, namely, Ātman or Brahman. Upaniṣads and the Advita Vedanta advocate it as the method of attaining mokṣa. Mokṣa is the union of the individual soul with the universal Soul. It is
possible to attain mokṣa while one is alive (Jīvanmukti). It is through the discriminating knowledge that one attains liberation. Liberation lies in the discrimination between the Self and the not-self. Salvation is knowing that the Self is not the body. Ignorance is mistaking the body for the Self. It is the root cause of bondage and sorrow. Wisdom of clearly distinguishing between the Self and the body puts an end to ignorance and bondage. Jñāna-Yoga is the direct experience of the ultimately Reality which is Ātman or Brahma. “Knowledge of the non-dual Brahma-Ātman (the self free of limitations) effects release of the soul from restrictions superimposed on it, by removing ignorance. Release is only another name for the eternal Self (Brahman-Ātman)”, says T.M.P. Mahadevan.

There are four basic requirements that a Yogi on the path of Jñāna-Yoga has to fulfil. They are: (1) Viveka (discrimination), (2) Vairāgya (dispassionateness), (3) Saṃsārārthi (six attainments), and (4) Mumukṣatva (longing for liberation).

Viveka means the ability to discriminate between what is impermanent or fleeting and lasting or eternal. It is recognizing the distinction between the superficial and the essential, the illusory and the absolutely real. It implies constant analysis and evaluation of one’s experiences to realize the inner, deeper dimension of existence as a whole.
**Vairagya** is guarding oneself against passions and sensual desires. It is the ability to control the mind from attachment to things that generate infatuation. It is conquering *rāga* that obstructs the mind from clear vision. Clarity of mind is essential for the wisdom of the *Brahman*.

**Saṃsampatti** consists of six instructions meant for self-education. They are: (1) *Śama*, the cultivation of tranquility of mind; (2) *Dama*, self-control in acting; (3) *Uparati*, the eradication of the eagerness to possess; (4) *Titikṣa*, patience; (5) *Śraddha*, sincerity; and (6) *Samādhiṇa*, the concentration of mind.

**Mumukṣatva** is the cultivation of a strong and positive longing for final liberation. It comes about through the successful development of the three preceding steps. It is dependent mainly upon the “advanced ability to discriminate between the unsatisfactory superficial reality and safety promising spiritual dimension of higher experience”⁹.

Besides the above four requirements, the Yogi has to go through the following three stages. They are: (1) *Śravaṇa*, (2) *Maṇaṇa* and (3) *Nididhyāsana*.

*Śravaṇa* literally means hearing. It involves constant listening to and an extensive and intensive study of the sacred texts of the Vedanta like the Upaniṣads and Śankara’s commentaries. It also requires listening to teachings of one’s master. Constant listening and study give the mind of the aspirant right direction and outlook.
Maṇana literally means mentation. It is the analysis of the knowledge gained by listening and study. It is a deep thinking about oneself and the world. It is the intellectual realization of the undivided knowledge which is beyond the world of the senses and the mind. Intellectual comprehension of the absolute truth will enable the aspirant to reach the final stage of meditation.

Nididhyāsana may be translated as constant meditation. Meditation here means continuous thinking about the ultimate reality, namely, Brahma. Meditation is not merely a mental exercise but a direct intuition of the reality. Meditation is a deep vision of the undivided truth which brings the aspirant the final goal of liberation, namely, moksa.

Nididhyāsana is a process of concentration and meditation. It is of two kinds: (1) Meditation on the Brahma with attributes (saguṇa) and (2) meditation on the Brahma without attributes (nirguṇa). The two Brahmans are not different. In fact, there is only one Brahma which is without attributes. It appears to be having attributes when it is viewed in relation to the empirical word. Nirguṇa Brahma becomes God when the former is looked at from the lower level of relative experience. Meditation on Nirguṇa Brahma is superior to meditation on Saguṇa Brahma. The aspirant comes closer to the ultimate and absolute reality only when he meditates on the Brahma without qualities. Meditation on the attributeless
Brahman may also take the form of meditation on the sacred syllable Om. "Om is the sound which is indicative of Brahman. It is inclusive of all sounds; and hence it is the support of the world of speech (Vāk-prapañca). And of all that is denoted by sound, the ground is Brahman"¹⁰.

Upanisads like the Mandūkya, the Katha and the Prāsa advocate meditation on Om (praṇavadvhyāna) for Brahman realization. They hold that a step by step meditation on the Om leads to the realization of the truth of non-duality. Om is the symbol of the invisible and attributeless Reality. Meditation or Upāsana on it is the best of all kinds of meditation. Meditation is "directing a continuous flow of even modes of the mind towards it, without the intervention of any other cognition contrary to it"¹¹.

The mind should be yoked to the praṇava which is Brahman itself. There is no fear for the mind which is identified with it. Just as Brahman, praṇava is without cause and attribute. It is immutable and without the second. It is omnipresent and the beginning, the middle and the end of all. He who knows it never grieves about anything. "Omkāra is without measure (amātra), and is without limits (ananta-matva). It is that in which all duality ceases. It is bliss. He who knows this is a saint, and no other"¹². And meditation on Omkāra is also known as Praṇava Yoga or Praṇava Dhyāna.

RĀJA YOGA

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Patanjali is the exponent of Rāja-Yoga. Rāja-Yoga has its roots in the ancient Indian texts. The major Upaniṣads like the Brhadāranyaka, the Chandogya and the Katha have references to Yoga as the means of realizing Brahmān. Patanjali has not said anything new about Yoga. He has only edited and codified what was already there in the sacred texts. He has expounded Rāja-Yoga in his text, Yoga-Sūtras. The text contains 195 aphorisms. It is divided into four parts: (1) Samādhipāda which deals with concentration and meditation, (2) Sādhanāpāda which is an elaboration of the means of attaining freedom, (3) Vibhuthipāda which narrates the attainment of supernatural powers, and (4) Kaivalyapāda which explains the nature of the ultimate freedom.

Rāja-Yoga is considered to be the king of all other Yogas. This is the best way to attain the knowledge of the ultimate reality. It is the means of directly realizing the final truth. It is through concentration of the powers of the mind that Rāja-Yoga seeks to attain liberation. It is by turning the powers of the mind upon itself that Rāja-Yoga transcends the mind. The concentrated mind penetrates its own secrets and goes beyond its own limits. Rāja-Yoga is theoretically highly rational. Practically it is completely transparent. There is no place for ambiguity or faith in it. Everything can be intellectually analysed and practically experienced. That is why Raja-Yoga is called the science and art of Yoga. Swami Vivekananda says, “So far, we see
that in the study of Rāja-Yoga no faith or belief is necessary. Believe nothing until you find it out for yourself; that is what it teaches us.\textsuperscript{13}

Patanjali defines Yoga as the cessation of mental fluctuations. (Yogachittrauṛttiniruddha). It consists of eight steps. That is why it is also known as Aṣṭānga Yoga. The eight steps are: (1) \textit{Yama}, (2) \textit{Niyama}, (3) Āsana, (4) Prāṇayāma, (5) Pratyāhāra, (6) Dharāna, (7) Dhyāna, and (8) Samādhi.

\textit{Yama} means abstinence. It means abstaining from doing things that keep the mind involved in an indiscriminate way of life. The abstinences are five in number. They are: (1) \textit{Ahimsa}. It is abstaining from killing and hurting other beings. (2) \textit{Satya}. It is being truthful and abstaining from falsehood of all kinds. (3) \textit{Asteya}. It is abstaining from stealing. (4) \textit{Brahmacarya}. It means celibacy. It is abstaining from all sensual pleasures including sexual union. (5) \textit{Aparigraha}. It is abstaining from accepting gifts. It means possessing things that are absolutely essential.

These five abstinences are categorical imperatives. They are to be observed under all circumstances irrespective of place and time, irrespective of the status of the person.\textsuperscript{14}

\textit{Niyama} means discipline. There are five principles of discipline that the aspirant has to follow. They are: (1) \textit{Saucha} (2) \textit{Santosha}, (3) \textit{Tapah}, (4) \textit{Svādhyāya}, and (5) \textit{Īśvarapranidhāna}.
Saucha means cleanliness. It is the purification of the body and
the mind. Both body and mind have to be sound. Purification of the
mind from all evil thoughts makes it calm. Calmness is achieved by
being friendly with those who are happy, and being compassionate for
those who are in misery. It is achieved also by having regard for the
virtuous and being indifferent to the dishonest.

Santoṣa means contentment. Being contentful with what one
has gives happiness. And a happy mind alone can practice Yoga. It
helps for the attainment of concentration.

Tapah means austerity. It is the practice of controlling the
senses, the body and the mind. It means restraining the organ of
speech in particular. Controlling the organ of speech leads to the
control of the other organs including the mind.

Svadhyāya means continuous study of the scripture dealing
with the attainment of final liberation. It includes learning of the
sacred literature for the development of one’s intelligence. It also
includes the repetition of the sacred syllable Om.

Īśvarapranidāna is the constant thought of the Divine. It also
means surrender to the Lord. It includes continuous awareness of the
goal that the aspirant has to reach. It involves making Īśvara the
motive of all actions. “The making of Īśvara the motive of all actions
means the doing of all actions to fulfil the purpose of that Great
Teacher”.
Āsana means posture. The practice of the succeeding steps on the path warrants a good posture. Patanjali says that a firm and comfortable posture suits the purpose. In other words, the posture should be steady and easy. Pādamāsana, Bhadrāsana, Svastikāsana are some of the asanas that an aspirant can select.∗∗

Prāṇāyāma is the regulation of the breath. It comprises three movements. They are inhalation (Pūraka), exhalation (Rechaka) and restraining (Kumbhaka). Inhalation is drawing the breath in and exhalation is throwing the breath out. Restraining is holding the breath in the lungs by stopping the breath from entering the lungs. The intensity of Prāṇāyāma depends on the time taken for each motion. Swami Vivekananda says, “The result of this Prāṇāyāma is Udgatha, awkening of the Kundalini.”∗∗∗

Pratyāhāra means the withdrawing of the sense organs from the world by giving up their objects. With this the senses take the form of the mind-stuff. Then the mind will not take the form of the sense object. It will remain calm and quiet.∗∗∗∗

Dhāraṇa means concentration or attention. It is fixing the mind-stuff on a particular point of space. The mind may be fixed on the navel circle, on the lotus of the heart, on the effulgent centre of the head, or on the tip of the nose or tongue. The fixation may be on some such other part of the body. It may also be on any external object like sounds, forms and the like. “That fixation of the mind in
which there is consciousness only of the region or object on which it has been fixed, is of the nature of controlled Dhāraṇa and it is an aid to Samādhi.19

Dhayāna means meditation. It is the constant flow of concentration on a particular desired object. It is also the continuous flow of the knowledge relating to the object of meditation. It is not interrupted by any other knowledge or thought. "If flow of knowledge in Dhāraṇa is like succession of similar drops of water, in Dhyāna the flow of knowledge is continuous like flow of oil or honey.20"

Samādhi is a state of trance or unification. It is the fully conscious and actual unification of the Yogi’s mind with the heart of reality in its wholeness. In Samādhi, the Yogi reaches final liberation from the bondage of Saṁsāra. Samādhi is not a single and simple state of experience. It is a complex experience realized in stages. Broadly, Samādhi is of two kinds: (1) Saṁprajñāta and (2) Asaṁprajñāta. The former is the unification based on the process of conceiving while the latter is the unification beyond the process of conceiving. Saṁprajñāta Samādhi has several stages like Savitarka, Nirvitarka, Savicāra, Nirvicāra, Sānanda and Sāsmita. Savitarka is the intelligible unification with the object of meditation. It is meditating on the external gross elements by questioning them so that "they may give their truths and powers to the man who meditates on them.21 Nirvitarka Samādhi is meditation on the elements without question
and by taking them out of time and space. Savicāra is meditating with discrimination on the subtle elements (tanmatrās) as they are in space and time. Nirvicāra is meditating without discrimination on the subtle elements by eliminating them from space and time. Sānanda Samādhi is meditation on the chitta itself. Here "the thinking organ is thought of as bereft of the qualities of activity and dullness." Sānanda Samādhi is a state of bliss. It becomes Sāsmīta Samādhi when the Sattva state of the Ego remains to be the only distinct object of meditation. The Yogis who attain to this state sustain with subtle bodies only. They may get merged in nature without attaining Kaivalya. They are called the Prakrtilayas.

And Asaṁprajñāta Samādhi is a superconscious state which gives the Yogi the final freedom. Here Soul goes beyond the Nature and attains purity and perfection. This state is also known as the Seedless Samādhi (Nirbīja Samādhi). Here the mind is completely empty of the tendencies (seeds) which give rise to the Chittavṛttis. With this the Yogi attains Kaivalya. "But when you have destroyed all these tendencies, almost destroyed the mind, then the Samādhi becomes seedless, there are no more seeds in the mind out of which to manufacture again and again this plant of life, this ceaseless round of birth and death."24

** BHAKTI YOGA **
Bhakti Yoga is the path of Divine Love. It is based on a belief in a personal God. Here God with attributes is the object of meditation. Realization of God is the highest goal of the aspirant. Identification with Isvara is the ultimate destiny on the path of spiritual journey. Bhagavad Gita regards Bhakti Yoga as the best of all Yogas. It treats personal God itself as the highest reality. Kṛṣṇa says that all other paths of Yoga do lead to the realization of the supreme reality. But they are too difficult and meant for only a few. But Bhakti Yoga is very simple and easy. Anyone can follow it and reach the same goal as that of other systems of Yoga. It also leads the Yogi to the unmanifest transcendental reality. It can be followed by the young and old, men and woman. Kṛṣṇa says, "Those that take refuse in me and meditate on me with extreme faith always, they alone are great".

In Bhakti Yoga one can meditate on God with attributes or without attributes. But what is important is faith. Steadfast devotion alone produces good results. Method of devotion is more important than its object. Serving Saguna Brahman with love makes the mind pure by His grace. God with attributes endows the devotee with the strength required for meditating on God without attributes. Surrendering to God extinguishes the ego. Devotion to Him puts an end to the attachment of body. The devotee should perform all actions as offerings to God. He should give up the idea of agency. He should also practice the virtues like truth, non-violence, compassion and
dispassion. He has to develop the purity of mind and heart. He should dedicate the fruits of his action to God. "The Lord loves him most and is compassionate towards him. One who possesses such characteristics alone is entitled to be called a devotee. As is the touchstone to the test of gold, so are these characteristics to test the devotee."  

Swami Vivekananda says that Bhakti-Yoga is the genuine search after the Lord. Love is the basis of Bhakti-Yoga. It begins, sustains and culminates in Love. "One single moment of the madness of extreme love of God brings us eternal freedom," says Swami Vivekananda. Bhakti is greater than Karma and Jñāna, for it is its own fruition. It is its own means and its own end. Karma and Jñāna are intended for an object in view. They are incomplete with out devotion. Bhakti is the most natural way to reach the highest goal. The personal God the devotee worships is not different from the Brahman. The God of love is the same as the Sat-Chit-Ānanda. But the nirguṇa Brahman is too much of an abstraction to be worshipped. So the devotee choosesĪśvara as the object of meditation. Īśvara is a relative aspect of the Brahman itself. He is the highest manifestation of the absolute. So the devotee has to love him without any motive. His love for the Almighty should not be for the sake of anything except itself. Then the whole universe becomes full of love. The devotee becomes eternally happy and blessed. The blessed madness of divine
love cures the disease of the worldliness in the devotee. The effulgent light of the divine dawns on him. His finite self becomes one with the Infinite. Swami Vivekananda says, “Man himself is transfigured in the presence of this Light of love, and he realizes at last the beautiful and inspiring truth that Love, the Lover, and the Beloved are one.”

**KARMA YOGA**

*Karma Yoga* is the path of action. It is regarded as the most fundamental of all Yogas. No body can escape from action. Life and action are one the same. One has to perform actions as long as one is alive. All kinds of living warrant action. Even an aspirant on the spiritual path cannot abstain from active life. Action is inevitable also because it arises from the *Brahman* itself. *Brahman* is the source of the manifest world. Action is something which human being shares with the divine. Bhagavad-Gita extensively deals with action (*Karma*) as the means of realizing the Supreme. Explaining the inescapability of action, Sri *Krṣṇa* says, “Everyone is forced to act helplessly according to the qualities he has acquired from the modes of material nature; therefore no one can refrain from doing something, not even for a moment.”

But action should be performed in a meditative mood. Only action without a motive and an end in view can lead to liberation. Action should be devoid of selfish desire (*Kāma*) and anger (*Krodha*). Karma Yoga is not renunciation of action but renunciation of the
fruits of action. It is performing action without attachment to its fruits. A sincere devotee is one who performs his actions as a duty and with a sense of sacrifice. One has to perform actions not for one’s enjoyment but for the satisfaction of the Lord. Disinterested action (Niṣkāma Karma) is Karma Yoga in its true sense. It does not bind the person who performs it. It always keeps him free from bondage. Sri Kṛṣṇa says, “Work done as a sacrifice for Viṣṇu has to be performed; otherwise work causes bondage in this material world. Therefore, O son of Kunti, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain free from bondage”\textsuperscript{30}.

Swami Vivekananda says that everyone works in some way or the other. Our actions determine what we are. We are responsible for what we are. What we are now has been the result of what we did in the past. And what we do in the present will determine our future. But Karma-Yoga is doing work by knowing how to do it. It is doing something as an art or as a science. Work brings out the power of the mind. It also wakes up the Soul. Various people work with various motives and for various results—some for money, some for fame, and some for power. Some others perform actions as a penance. For instance, some construct a temple and do charity as a penance for their evil deeds. “They think that this kind of beneficence will clear them and they will go scot-free in spite of their selfishness. Such are some of the various motives for work”\textsuperscript{31}.
But there are those who work for work's sake. They do not care for name, fame or heaven. They work simply because of their good will. Vivekananda says that even those who work without any motive will be rewarded. They gain the highest power, namely, the moral power. Unselfishness action is more paying than the selfish one. One should have patience to practice it. Its rewards are not immediate. Working without any selfish motive makes man a powerful moral giant. "It is the greatest manifestation of power — this tremendous restraint; self-restraint is the manifestation of greater power than all outgoing action".

Meditation is precisely the action with restraint. It is work without motive and results in view. Meditation is sacrificing all our work to God. It is working by leaving the results to Isvara. Swami Vivekananda maintains that the secret of restrain is being intensely active in the midst of silence and being silent in the midst of intense activity. One who knows this secret is the ideal man. He has successfully controlled himself. He is the one who can truly meditate. "He goes through the streets of a big city with all its traffic, and his mind is as calm as if he were in a cave where not a sound could reach him and he is intensely working all the time. That is the ideal of Karma-Yoga; and if you have attained to that you have really learnt the secret of work."
ASTÃOÇA MĀRGĀ

Buddhism, like many other Indian systems, aims at liberating the human being from the round of rebirths (Samsāra). An individual can attain the final freedom (nirvāṇa) by acquiring insight into the nature of existence. The Buddha taught that one can reach liberation by abandoning the desire (tanha) to live. Nirvāṇa means extinction of thirst or craving for life. It also means the annihilation of the three defilements of human personality, namely, desire, hatred and delusion (lobha, dosa, moha). They are also characterized as the three roots of evil. The Buddha was highly pragmatic. He taught his disciples to practice the eightfold path. He discouraged them from indulging in metaphysical inquiries. He refused to answer the questions of transcendence. He refrained from discussing the issues that are not yet accessible to the questioner. He urged the questioner to develop his own vision of Nirvāṇa. He insisted on mindfulness and meditation and shunned all speculation and theorizing.

According to the Buddha, life is a full sorrow (Dukkha). Birth, living and death are sorrowful. Losing what one likes and having what one does not like is sorrowful. Nirvāṇa is the only solution to Dukkha. Nirvāṇa is a ‘transcendental’ state which is not accessible to sense perception. It is beyond perceptual and inferential knowledge. It is also not amenable to the intellectual deliberations. Nirvāṇa is not a part of the reality around us. It is not within the sphere of the
existential universe. "Nirvāṇa is nowhere to be found within, or in connection with the structure of the universe".35

At the same time, Nirvāṇa has to be viewed as being immanent. It can be experienced by the one who has achieved it by himself. In this sense Nirvāṇa is inherent to living and direct experience. But this experience does not happen to each and everybody. It happens only to the mind that has undergone a complete transformation. The personality as a whole has to undergo a deep change. The experience of Nirvāṇa is unconnected to the senses and conceptual thinking. It is associated with the higher faculties of higher vision and meditation. "When the saṁsāric planes and normal means of cognition have been transcended, the direct experience of nirvāṇa cannot be classified as objective or external. It is internal to the experiencing mind and therefore immanent. In this way nirvāṇa can be paraphrased as an experience of transcendence in immanence".36

The Buddha has advocated the Noble Eightfold Path as the means of attaining nirvāṇa. This path is also known as the Buddhist path of Yoga. Just as the other systems of Yoga, like those of Patanjali and the Gita, the Buddhist Yoga is a process of concentration and meditation. The aim of it is Samādhi, although there are some differences among them. "Yoga in the sense of mental resolve is also common to Buddhist literature. It connotes concentration and
devotion, the keynote of the Gita, which is also found in the Pali Canon”.

The Eightfold Path is one of the Four Noble Truths taught by the Buddha. The four truths are: (1) the Noble Truth of Dukkha, (2) the Noble Truth of the cause of Dukkha, (3) the Noble Truth of the removal of Dukkha, and (4) the Noble Truth of the Path of removing Dukkha. Eightfold path is the fourth and the last Noble Truth.

The first truth says that life is full of sorrow. Everything in life is filled with misery. Birth is misery, aging is misery and death is misery. Association with those that we dislike is misery. The craving for what we cannot get is also misery. In short, “the five aggregates which are the objects of clinging are dukkha”.

The second noble truth says that there is a cause for the arising of dukkha. The Buddha says that craving (tanha) is the cause of dukkha. Craving gives rise to fresh rebirth which is accompanied by passion. It finds great pleasure in existence. It arises in the five skandhas, namely, rūpa, vedana, sanjñā, saṃskāra and vijñāna. "When this craving arises and establishes, it does so in the delightful and pleasurable characteristics of the upādānakkhandas.".

The third noble truth says that it is possible to remove dukkha. One can be totally liberated from dukkha. Complete extinction and cessation of craving leads to the removal of dukkha. Craving has to be abandoned from the delightful characteristics which support the five
skandhas. “When this craving is abandoned or ceases, it is abandoned or it ceases in the delightful and pleasurable characteristics of the upādānakkhandas”.

And the fourth noble truth, namely, the path leading to the cessation of dukkha consists of eight steps. They are: (1) Right View (Sammādiṭṭhi), (2) Right Thinking (Sammāsankappa), (3) Right Speech (Sammāvāca), (4) Right Action (Sammākāmmanta), (5) Right Livelihood (Sammā-ājīva), (6) Right Effort (Sammāvāyama), (7) Right Mindfulness (Sammāsati), and (8) Right Concentration (Sammāsamādhi).

Right View means the insight-knowing of the origin, the cessation, and the path leading to the cessation of dukkha Right Thinking is that which liberates the mind from sensuality, ill will and cruelty. It is directed towards loving-kindness and compassion. Right Speech is abstaining from falsehood, back-biting, coarse and unbeneifical talk. Right Action is refraining from killing, from taking what is not given, and from indulgence in sensual pleasures. Right Livelihood is not resorting to wrong means of livelihood. It is making one’s living by strictly right means advocated by the Buddhist dhamma. Right Effort marks the beginning of the Buddhist Yoga or meditation. It comprises the four great efforts, namely, (1) the effort to avoid unsuitable states of mind, (2) to overcome the unsuitable states that have already entered the mind, (3) to cultivate the new suitable states of mind, and (4) to maintain the suitable states of mind that one has already
cultivated. Suitability means being conducive to the attainment of Samādhi. Right Effort also means the employment of strong will required for progress on the path. Volitional drive is necessary for the avoidance of any distraction from the path. It has to be repeated and maintained from moment to moment till “the vision of the goal becomes so clear and strong that deviation is virtually out of the question”\textsuperscript{42}.

**Right Mindfulness** constitutes the core of the Buddhist meditation. Its purpose is training the mind in awareness. Mindfulness is constant watchfulness of what is going on in the body and the mind. It is focusing one's attention on bodily and mental movements. It is constant awareness of one's feelings, thoughts and actions. Its objective is to enable us to perform actions in the full light of our consciousness and will. It prevents us from acting instinctively, unconsciously or automatically. “The result of this training is increasing self-knowledge and a growing capacity for acting according to his (Yogi) fully conscious will”\textsuperscript{43}

**Right Concentration** is the progressive development of the right mindfulness. The intense practice of the right mindfulness foreshadows the right concentration. In this last stage, the Yogi completely withdraws his attention from the outer world. He focuses his mindfulness inside his mind. He completely restrains the impressions entering his mind through the senses. Then he frees the
mind from the ideas and images it has accumulated. He also frees it from conceptual problems and emotional involvements. Eventually, the meditator experiences "a pure and radiant stream of consciousness which has transcended both the external world of things and the internal world of the personal ego".

The process of purifying the mind proceeds through four states of meditation (jhānas). In the first stage, the mind concentrates on a single object of its choice. It is marked by the process of mentation and sustained thought (vittaka-vicāra). The second is reached when the Yogi relinquishes the object of meditation and all thoughts relating to it. Here the mind remains concentrated and experiences joy (pīti) since it has emptied itself of all worldly thoughts and concerns. When the ecstasy of emptiness subsides, the mind of the Yogi enters the third stage of meditation. Here the Yogi experiences a subtle and intense feeling of happiness (sukha). Having fully experienced this happiness, he moves on to the fourth stage. It is a state of complete equanimity (upekkha) in which the Yogi looks at saṁsāra without being attracted by it. It is a state of wisdom combined with alertness and perfection. The fourth stage of concentration needs to be further intensified by tranquility (samatha) and insight (vipassana). The development of tranquility (samathābhāvāna) and insight (vipassanabhāvāna) in the mind have to be brought to perfection for the complete realization of Nirvāṇa.
Thus the Eightfold Path leads to the cessation of the sorrow of *saṃsāra* and to the achievement of the bliss of *nirvāṇa*. The eight steps of the path contain the moral, cognitive and spiritual dimensions. The Buddha has divided the eight steps into three disciplines namely, *Śīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Prajñā*. Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood come under *Śīla*. They are conducive to self-control of speech and bodily action. Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration come under *Samādhi*. They are conducive to establishing and maintaining concentration. And Right View and Right Thought come under *Prajñā*. They are conducive to knowledge or wisdom. The Four Noble Truth briefly examined above constitutes the whole of the Buddhist *dhamma*. They embody all the essential doctrines of the Buddha’s teachings. They encompass the doctrines of no-self (*anātmanavāda*), momentariness (*kṣanikavāda*), and dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpādavāda*).

All the schools of Buddhism unanimously subscribe to the Noble Eightfold Path. They recognize it as the only means of crossing the ocean of *Saṃsāra*. But the two major schools, namely, Theravāda and Mahāyāna differ from each other with respect to the *Samādhi* part of the path. They have a slightly different approach to the right mindfulness and right concentration. That is, the nature and method of meditation that we find in the Pali Canon differs from what we find in the Buddhist Sanskrit literature. The Prāśangikā Mādhyamikā
branch of the Mahāyāna speaks of meditation as the realization of the non-inherent nature (Śūnyatā) of everything including the atoms as the means to nirvāṇa. Śūnyatā and meditation on it is there even in the Theravāda teachings. But the Mādhyamikā meditation on emptiness is coupled with universal compassion which we do not find in the orthodox school of the Theravāda. Meditation in the Theravāda is rather individualistic whereas that of the Mahāyāna is altruistic.

Buddhist Schools

Before going to explain in brief the methods of meditation in the Theravāda and Mahāyāna let us briefly mention the origins and the main characteristics of the two schools. According to the Pali canonical records several councils (Sangitis) were held after the Buddha’s Mahāparinirvāṇa in 483 B.C. The purpose of the councils was to draw up the canonical texts and the creed in their proper form.

The First Council was held at Rajagrha, the capital of Magadha Kingdom, immediately after the Buddha’s demise. Around five hundred monks gathered to examine the teachings of the Buddha and codify the rules of the Order. It is held that Mahakassapa presided over the assembly. Upali and Ananda also took active part in it. There was hardly any dissension over the doctrinal matters. The Council after critical scholarship settled the Dhamma and Vinaya of the teachings. It accepted the teachings of the 11th Khandhaka of the Cullavagga as authoritative. And it is not correct to say that “the
Abhidhamma formed part of the canon adopted at the First Council⁴⁸.

A hundred years after the First Council, the Second Council was held at Vaisali in the Bihar Province. Thousands of monks attended the Council. It was held under less harmonious and agreeable conditions. There was a difference of opinion among certain groups of the monks regarding the teachings. A schism had occurred between the two groups of monks over the points of Vinaya. The minority group upheld the tradition as it is. They did not subscribe to any kind of relaxation in the stringent rules. They stood for the orthodoxy in the Dhamma and the Vinaya. This minority group of the orthodox monks was called the Theravadins. "Thera" in Pali means "elder". So the Theravāda School is otherwise known as the School of the Elders. The Theravādins are also known as Sthaviravadins. The opponents called them Hinayanists since they were less in number. The word Hinayāna was an invention by the Mahāyāna. The Hinayānists preferred to call themselves as the Theravādins. "The minority party, claiming to uphold traditional views, withdrew and eventually evolved into the Theravāda school—the school of the Teaching of the Elders, pejoratively described by its opponents as Hinayāna, the Lesser Vehicle⁴⁹.

The Council was in favour the orthodox monks. So it expelled the liberals from the Sangha. The liberals convened another Council
in which thousands of monks and common people participated. The Council was a great congregation. So it was called a Mahasāngiti. The monks who attended were called Mahasāṅgikas. Their school came to be known as Mahāyāna, the vehicle of the great majority. Thus there occurred the first division in the Buddhist Sangha. "It was rather a division between the conservative and the liberal, the hierarchic and the democratic".\(^5\)

Theravāda School is also known as the Southern School. It established itself as the major form of Buddhism in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia. Mahāyāna School is called the Northern School. It spread throughout the bordering areas of the Himalayas like Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Ladak and Tibet. It also became popular in the Eastern countries like China, Korea and Japan.

Besides Theravāda and Mahāyāna there is also the third phase of Buddhism, known as Tantrayana. It is said to have flourished from 500 A.D. to 1000 A.D. The main interest of this school is Cosmic soteriology. Its emphasis is on the harmony with the Cosmos and achieving enlightenment by mantric and occult methods. The main Tantric schools are Mantryāna, Vijrayāna, Sahajayāna and Kalacakrayāna\(^5\). Here we are not concerned with the Tantryāna at all. We are concerned only with Theravāda and Mahāyāna, and the Prāsangikā Mādhyamikā branch of Mahāyāna in particular.
Let us now enumerate some important characteristics of Theravāda and Mahāyāna Schools.

(1) Theravāda is the orthodox School of Buddhism which follows the earliest teachings of the Buddha available in Pali.

(2) It represents the Buddha in human character having human foibles like being impatient with the indisciplined monks, and weakness of complaining that he was eighty year old and had a pain in the back. At the same time Theravāda regarded the Buddha as possessing certain superhuman qualities. The Catuma-Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya has described the Buddhas as Devatideva.

(3) Śīla, Samādhi and Prajñā constitute the central teachings of the Theravāda.

(4) All worldly phenomena are without any self-being and subject to impermanence and suffering.

(5) All compound things are made up of two elements, namely, nama, the non-material part, and rupa, the material part. They are constituted by the five groups, namely, (1) rūpa, the material quality, (2) vedana, sensation, (3) sanjñā, perception, (4) saṃskāra, the mental formatives, and (5) vijñāna, consciousness. The five groups are classified into twelve
ayatanas and the six dhatus. The ayatanas are the six organs of sense and their objects. They are the eye and the material objects, the ear and the sounds, the nose and the smells, the tongue and the flavours, the body and the tangibles, and the mind and the ideas. The six dhatus are the six consciousnesses, namely, (1) the eye-consciousness, the ear-consciousness, the nose-consciousness, the tongue consciousness, the body-consciousness and the mind—consciousness. “Hence this most orthodox school of Buddhism has a pluralistic conception of the constituent elements of the universe”53.

(6) A clear understanding of the truth that everything — persons, things and events — is composed of nama-rupa leads to the understanding of the true nature of things. The seeker follows the middle Path and renounces the worldly life. He meditates on the true nature of things. Meditation keeps the mind perfectly balanced to have insight into the real nature of things.

(7) Cultivation of insight (prajna) leads to the perfect state of dispassionateness which is Nirvana. “Nirvana is a happy state which is free from passion, ill-will and delusion; in reality it is a state which is beyond description”54.

(8) By attaining Nirvana, an individual becomes an Arhat, a worthy man. He is not subject to the round of births and deaths. He
lives a life of perfect tranquility. He is one who has blown out the flame of worldly life. He is not subject to retrogression. His life is “a life where all future birth is at an end, where the holy life is fully achieved, where all that had to be done has been done, and there is no more return to worldly life”\textsuperscript{55}.

(9) The ideal of the Arhat is the achievement of personal freedom. He is interested in gaining freedom for himself and by himself.

(10) Theravāda school consists of the sub-schools like Sarvastivāda, Abhidhārmika, Vaibhāsika and Sautrantika. Sarvastivādins assert that everything is real. Abhidharmikas are those who developed a philosophical literature of their own known as Abhidhamma Pitaka on the lines of the Pali Canon. At first it was written in Prakrit and later in Sanskrit. Vaibhāsikas are those who wrote a commentary (\textit{Vibhāsa}) on the Abhidhamma Pitaka. Sautratrikas are those who opposed the Abhidhārmikas and Vaibhāsikas saying that the Abhidharma texts and their commentaries had no authority. They adhered only to the \textit{Sutras} of the Pali Canon. They accepted the Sarvastivādins and Vaibhāsikas except where they conflicted with their own ideas\textsuperscript{56}.

Following are some of the distinctive characteristics of the Mahāyāna school:
1. The Mahāsaṅghikas were the forerunners of the Mahāyāna. They revolutionized the Buddhist Sanga by adopting the existing rules of the Vinaya to their doctrine. They introduced new rules also. They made alternations in the arrangement and interpretation of the Sutta and Vinaya Pitakas. They also included a good number Sutras which they claimed to be the sayings of the Buddha. They also rejected certain portion of the Pali Canon. They did not recognize as authentic the Parivāra, the Abhidhamma, the Patisambhida, the Niddesa and some parts of the Jātaka literature. "The compilation of the Mahāsaṅghikas was designated the Acariyavāda as distinguished from Theravāda, compiled at the first council."

2. The Mahāsaṅghikas employed Prākrit and Sanskrit as their literary medium. Mahāvattu is considered to be the first book of the Lokottaravādin sect of the Mahāsaṅghika School. It was written partly in Sanskrit and partly in Prākrit, a mixed Indian dialect related to Sanskrit. It was probably composed between the 2nd Century B.C. and the 4th Century A.D. The biography of the Buddha and the history of the formation of the Sangha constitute the theme of the Mahāvattu. Besides Sanskrit, the Mahāsaṅghika (Mahāyāna) literature is found in Tibetan and Chinese languages also.
3. The Lokottaravadins believe that the Buddhas are supramundane (lokottara) and connected only externally with the worldly life. The Buddhas neither sleep nor dream but are in a state of Samādhi or meditation. This conception of the Buddha contributed much to the growth of the Mahāyāna Philosophy and its conception of the Bodhisattva.

4. The Mahāyānists, like the Theravādins, accept the cardinal principles of Buddhism like the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, the non-existence of the soul, the theory of Karma, the doctrine of dependent origination, and the gradual stages of spiritual advancement.

5. In contradistinction to the Hinayāna ideal of the Arhathood, Mahāyāna believes in the ideal of the Bodhisattva. Bodhisattva possesses all the qualities of the Arhat but foregoes Nirvāṇa because of his compassion for all living beings. He abstains himself from attaining Nirvāṇa and takes innumerable births and suffers innumerable deaths to redeem all other beings from suffering. Unlike the Arhat who is unconnected with the public and unconcerned about other’s suffering, the Bodhisattva takes a vow to do nothing but help others. The Bodhisattvas are always at the threshold of Enlightenment but they refrain from attaining it. They take several incarnations preceding
Enlightenment spanning innumerable aeons of cosmic time. "They could escape to the Buddhahood if they wished, but they vow to remain within the framework of phenomenal existence until all creatures achieve Enlightenment. Their ultimate aim is altruism"68.

6. Mahāyāna subscribes to the proliferation of both the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas. It tends to hold that there is an unconditioned reality beyond the Hinayānic Nirvāṇa. It believes in a type of salvation by faith and invocation. It has raised the Buddhas to a kind of Savior or God and introduced the tradition of devotion. A devotee can seek salvation by love and faith rather than by trance or by knowledge. This is meant mainly to the Buddhist laity69.

7. Mahāyāna scriptures say that there is absolutely no difference between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. Nāgārjuna in his Mādhyamikā Sastra says that saṃsāra is nirvāṇa and nirvāṇa is Saṃsāra. That is, a liberated one does not acquire anything. He does not go to any other place from where he has always been.

8. The Buddhahood is not a state of mind to be created and developed in the mind of a person. This is not possible because perfection cannot be developed by someone who is totally imperfect. Buddhahood is obtainable because one is already in
possession of it. It is the true nature of everybody and everything.

9. Mahāyāna is metaphysical and religious while Hinayāna is historical and ethical. Former is experiential and intuitive while the latter is negativistic and scholastic. One is altruistic while the other is individualistic. Hinayāna emphasizes on abstaining from doing evil, while Mahāyāna considered the active method of helping the other as superior. Hinayāna emphasized the importance of the Four Noble truths and the Eightfold path. Mahāyāna emphasizes on the practice of the Pāramitās. To Hinayāna, nirvāṇa is a tranquil state of separation from transmigration. To Mahāyāna the tranquil state arising out of the understanding and experiencing the true meaning of emptiness itself is nirvāṇa. Hinayāna lays more emphasis on the Order, on the Tripitakas and on renunciation by dwelling in the forest. Mahāyāna emphasizes on salvation, on the Buddha's fundamental teachings and on opening the Buddhist life to all, to the monks and to laymen alike.

10. The idea that the Buddha is of the nature of the supramundane, that everything is empty of self-being, and that the original nature of consciousness is pure play an important role in the Mahāyāna system. And it is important to note that all these
ideas are there in the Theravāda in their seed form. Mahāyāna has taken up these ideas and developed them in the Mahāyāna Sutras like the Lankavatara Sūtra, Lotus Sūtra, Heart Sūtra and Prajñāpāramita Sūtras.

Theravāda and Mahāyāna schools are not opposed to each other. Mahāyāna has only reformulated in new and positive terms what was already there in the traditional teachings of the early Buddhism. The new formulations were warranted, since the practices of the monks after the Buddha's death became rigid and unfruitful. The monks concentrated totally on their own spiritual progress. This made them narrow-mind, selfish and led them into isolation from the community of lay followers. Thus they lost the goal of transcending the prison of individuality. "In his pursuit of the ideal of becoming an Arhat who had to overcome all the fetters that tied him to the world, but who did not have to gain the full knowledge of a Buddha, it was possible to mistake cultivated indifference to the world and people around him for the balance of a really freed mind."

Therefore the Mahāyānists emphasize on acquiring full enlightenment equal to that of a Buddha. They hold that realizing perfect Buddhahood is a natural safeguard against the possible self-deception on the part of a follower who aspires to become an Arhat only. One need not follow the historical Buddha for attaining
salvation. One can reach final freedom by following the footsteps of all previous Buddhas. One can acquire perfect enlightenment and become a teacher of mankind. Mahāyāna does not radically differ from the Theravāda. It only pointed out the limitations of the Early Buddhism and made improvements over them. In fact, it has broadened the concepts of the Theravāda Buddhism. Thus the two principal schools of Buddhism, namely, Hinayāna and Mahāyāna are rather complementary than opposed to each other.62

It is also held that the Hinayāna tradition did not fade away after the rise of the Mahāyāna. The two survived simultaneously and flourished together. In fact Nāgārjuna, the great Mādhyamikā saint unified the two schools. He revived the realistic teaching of the Hinayana by giving it a new interpretation. "Mahāyānists claim that while Hinayana may provide the letter of the Buddha’s teaching Mahāyāna has endeavoured to catch up the true spirit of it. The difference therefore is a difference of interpretation."63

Mahāyāna developed itself into two important schools known as Mādhyamikā and Yogacara. Mādhyamikā is also known as Sūnyavada. Yogacara is also known as Vijñānavāda. Mādhyamikā is the earlier phase of the Mahāyāna while Vijñānavāda is its latter one. The two phases lasted from 2nd A.D to 500 A.D. Mādhyamikā philosophy is contained mainly in the works of Nāgārjuna, Candrakirti
and Aryadeva. Śūnyatā is the central theme of the Mādhyamikā. Etymologically, "Śūnyā" is derived from the root "svi" which means "to swell", "to expand". The term "Brahman" is derived from the root "brh" or "brmh" which also means "to swell", "to expand". In its ontological sense "Śūnyā" means void which is fullness. Since it is nothing in particular, it has the possibility of being everything. "It has been identified with Nirvāṇa, with the Absolute, with Paramārtha-sat (the supreme Reality), with Tattva (Reality)".

Mādhyamikā school has been further divided into two other sub-schools known the Svātantrika Mādhyamikā and the Prāsaṅgikā Mādhyamikā. Both the schools are dialectical in their approach to the understanding of the true nature of Reality. The Svātantrikas put forward their own thesis while refuting that of others. But the Prāsaṅgikas do not establish any thesis of their own. They refute a thesis without proposing a counter thesis. Bhāvaviveka represents the Svātantrika Mādhyamikā, while Nāgārjuna, Candrakirti, Bhudhapālitha, Śāntideva and Āryadeva represent the Prāsaṅgikā Mādhyamikā. Svātantrika school very soon disappeared from the scene. The Prāsaṅgikā Mādhyamikā flourished in India till 12th Century. Today it remains in the Tantric form as conceived by Santarakṣita and Kamaśīla. This is the dominant philosophy in the Buddhist circles in Tibet and Mongolia. It is the official philosophy of
the Ge-lug-pa, the yellow Hat sect. The present Dalai Lama is presiding over this branch of the Mahāyāna.

Vijñānavāda-Yogacāras are the idealists who say that the Mind or Consciousness is ultimately real. They hold that the storehouse of Consciousness (ālayavijñāna) is originally pure and it becomes impure when it comes into contact with the world of objects. It is by an inveterate error that consciousness imagines itself to be infected or defiled. Thus it conceives itself under the three forms of the subject, object and knowledge. All things are internal but appear to be external. External reality cannot possibly exist. If it existed it could not possibly be known. The Vijñāvādins argue that it is absurd to assert the existence of something of which we can have no knowledge. The world as it appears to us is the result of mental construction. A perception involves an apparent datum, but what is known is the mental construction imposed on this datum. It is not possible to speak of the datum as anything external. Without mental construction, the datum is simply nothing. There is no real water. Water is the impression constructed by our sense of smoothness. Similarly the sense of heat and movement constructs our belief in external fire and wind.

Vijñānavāda holds that internal reality should not be mistaken for anything absolutely real. The apparent distinction of subject, object and knowledge is not real. Thought cannot know itself any
more than it can know anything else. Thought knowing itself involves duality and it would not be pure thought. The internal objects, including the internal chain of causation, are not anything real. They are merely the result of the infection of the purity of thought. The infection is the source of the illusion of the external world. The Vijñānavāda admits of the Mādhyamikā doctrine of emptiness (Śūnyatā). But it does not accept the view that emptiness can exist by itself and for itself without any support. For emptiness to be, there must be a thought of it. Emptiness connotes a receptacle without any content. Emptiness means "Void thought devoid of any characteristic, and free from the distinction of subject, object and knowledge". Dinnāga and Dharmakīrthi are the important exponents of the Vijñānavāda. They have developed the Buddhist logic in their encounter with the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school. Maitreyanātha, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu also belong to this school.

**Buddhist Meditation**

The Therāvāda process of meditation contains in the last three steps of the Eightfold path, viz., Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. Right Effort means generating will and energy to practice the preceding steps of the path. It means the application of the mind to the relentless practice of the eightfold path. It is ardently striving to prevent the arising of demeritorious states of mind and to
attain the meritorious states of mind. It is also striving to increase, to
grow and develop in full the meritorious states of mind\textsuperscript{67}.

Right Mindfulness is keeping the mind steadfastly on the body
\textit{(Kaya)} and perceiving its impermanent and repulsive nature. It is
keeping the mind steadfastly on sensation \textit{(Vedana)} and
comprehending its impermanent nature. It is keeping the mind
steadfastly on the mind and its thoughts \textit{(citta)} and comprehending its
impermanent and soulless nature. And right mindfulness is also
keeping the mind steadfastly on the \textit{dhamma} and comprehending its
impermanent and insecure nature. Thus right mindfulness keeps the
disciple away from covetousness and distress\textsuperscript{68}.

And right concentration marks the entrance of the disciple into
the realm of meditation \textit{(Jh\={a}na)}. Having strictly and systematically
followed the preceding seven steps the disciple gets detached from all
sensual and demeritorious factors. Consequently his mind acquires
the power of concentration and meditation.

Firstly, he achieves and remains in the first stage of meditation
\textit{(Jh\={a}na)}. It has the initial \textit{(vitakka)} and the sustained \textit{(vicara)}
application of the mind. It also has delightful satisfaction \textit{(P\={i}ti)} and
bliss \textit{(sukkha)} born of detachment from hindrances\textsuperscript{69}.

The disciple enters the second stage of meditation by getting rid
of the initial and sustained application of the mind. Here he enhances
the one-pointed concentration and enters into tranquility. There is
delightful satisfaction and bliss born of concentration.

The disciple achieves the third stage of meditation by detaching
himself from delightful satisfaction. Here he dwells in equanimity and
experiences bliss in mind and body.

And finally, the disciple gains and remains in the fourth stage of
meditation. He achieves this by dispelling both pain and pleasure,
sadness and gladness. It is a state of equanimity and absolute purity
of mindfulness.

The Prāśaṅgikā Mādhyamikā way of meditation involves
refutation of the four extremes in which the phenomena is asserted to
exist (Catuskotivinirmukta). Mediation is the realization of Prajñā
which is beyond the four positions, namely, ‘is’, ‘is-not’, ‘both is and
is-not’ and ‘neither is nor is-not’. Reality transcends the four-
cornered conspectus through which reason tries to understand it.
Reality is the suchness (tathatā) that is beyond all predication and
categorization. Meditative criticism of the predicates and categories
reveals the truth, namely, the Śūnyatā nature of the phenomena.
Meditation is the reflective awareness of eternalism (sāsvatavāda) and
annihilationism (ucchedavāda) as the species of dogmatism. It is a
process of criticism which brings about Nirvāṇa. “Criticism is
deliverance of the human mind from all entanglements and passions. It is freedom itself. This is the true Mādhyamikā standpoint.⁷¹

In the Mādhyamikā system meditation (dhyāna) and wisdom (prajñā) are intimately connected. They are complementary to each other. Of the six pāramitās, meditation and wisdom constitute the fifth and the sixth of them. The other four being, (1) charity (dāna), (2) moral conduct (śīla), (3) forbearance (kṣānti) and (4) effort (vīrya). The Bodhisattva cultivates all these virtues to their perfection. Charity means giving away everything internal and external, with full knowledge of all forms and with complete non-clinging. Moral conduct means not clinging to sin or merit as absolute and unconditioned. It is overcoming the attitude of despising the sinner or praising the merited. Forbearance is the cultivation of endurance for all kinds of things and beings without any thought of vengeance. Effort means putting forth energy in the direction of cultivating dhyāna. It means strong determination and absence of languor and lassitude. Dhyāna means concentration and meditation. It gives rise to prajñā and sustains it. Wisdom emits light only when it is supported by meditation, like the lamp giving light when it is fed by fuel. The mind has to be self-collected and calm by virtue of concentration and meditation. It is only in such a mind that wisdom arises. And wisdom is the complete knowledge of all dharmas in their ultimate nature. It is the total comprehension of the true nature of all things,
namely, emptiness (Śūnyatā). It is a state of nirvāṇa, perfect peace, equanimity and tranquility\textsuperscript{72}.

The six virtues (pāramitās) are known as the prajñāpāramitās. At times, the last virtue, namely, wisdom alone is called the prajñāpāramitā, since it is the crown of all other virtues. Without it, they lose their significance.
REFERENCES


3. Ibid., p. 12.


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11. Ibid., p. 87.

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18. Ibid., p. 217.

20. Ibid., p. 279.


22. Ibid., pp. 132-33.

23. Ibid., p. 133.

24. Ibid., p. 134.


26. Ibid., p. 442.


28. Ibid., p. 113.


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32. Ibid., p. 9.

33. Ibid., p. 12.


35. Ibid., p. 78.

36. Ibid., p. 79.


39. Ibid., p.334.
40. Ibid., p. 338.
41. Ibid., p.340.
43. Ibid., p.127.
44. Ibid., p.128.
45. Ibid., pp.129-30.
54. Ibid., p. 91.
55. Ibid., p. 92.
59. Ibid., p. 20.


66. Ibid., p. 244.


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69. Ibid., p. 341.

70. Ibid., p. 342.
