

INTRODUCTION

Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, and Samādhi are foundational concepts in the realm of meditation and spiritual development, deeply rooted in the philosophical framework of Prasthānatrayī, which comprises the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads and Brahma Sutras.

Dhāraṇā involves the practice of concentration, wherein the mind is focused unwaveringly on a specific object, image, sound, or concept. The term "Dhāraṇā" signifies "holding" or "steadying" the mind at a singular point. Within the context of Prasthānatrayī, the Upanishads offer profound insights into the nature of the self and the ultimate reality, providing suitable objects of meditation during Dhāraṇā. By training the mind to concentrate on one point, Dhāraṇā lays the groundwork for advanced stages of meditation, leading to heightened mindfulness and mental clarity.

Dhyāna, commonly interpreted as "meditation" or "contemplation," refers to a state of sustained focus where the mind becomes entirely absorbed in the chosen object of meditation. Within the framework of Prasthānatrayī, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita hold significant roles in nurturing Dhyāna by presenting profound spiritual truths and insights that serve as subjects for contemplation during meditation. Through persistent concentration and meditative absorption, the practitioner transcends the limitations of the ego, establishing a deeper connection with the object of meditation. Dhyāna forms the path for spiritual growth and self-realization, facilitating a direct experience of the interconnectedness of all existence.

Samādhi represents the pinnacle of meditative absorption, characterized by profound tranquility and bliss where the individual's sense of self dissolves, leading to complete oneness with the object of meditation. Within the scope of Prasthānatrayī, the Upanishads explore the ultimate reality (Brahman), significantly contributing to the state of Samādhi. The Bhagavad Gita's teachings on self-realization and the nature of the soul also play a

crucial role in achieving Samādhi. The Brahma Sutras provide a systematic framework for understanding the path to Samādhi.

In this context, the Upanishads, with their profound exploration of Brahman, deeply influence the state of Samādhi. The Bhagavad Gita's insights into self-realization and the nature of the soul contribute significantly to the practitioner's journey toward Samādhi. The Brahma Sutras offer a structured approach, providing essential guidelines for comprehending the path to this ultimate meditative state.

In summary, the progression through Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, and Samādhi signifies a transformative process of inner exploration and spiritual evolution. These stages of meditation are integral components of various Indian philosophical traditions, including Yoga and Advaita Vedanta, as elucidated in the sacred texts of Prasthānatrayī.

Meditation is a practice that involves inducing a specific state of consciousness, and individuals meditate for various reasons, including relaxation, harnessing life force, or cultivating internal energy, among other purposes. Through meditation, people often develop positive qualities like generosity, patience, forgiveness, and love. However, the interpretation and objectives of meditation can vary based on the specific context in which it is practiced.

One intriguing area of exploration within meditation practices involves the possibility of achieving breathless states. Some practitioners assert having experienced breathless states during meditation. Still, this phenomenon continues to be a subject of interest and investigation within the field of meditation practices, prompting further exploration and inquiry.

Overall, meditation is a diverse and multifaceted practice with various techniques and purposes. Its significance and effects can be deeply personal and spiritual for many individuals, regardless of their cultural or religious background.

1.1 SUBJECT AND ITS SCOPE:

The subject of my thesis is the concept of *Dhāraṇā*, *Dhyāna*, and *Samādhi* in *Prasthānatrayī* and *Patañjali yoga sūtra* - an analysis. I will take up the analysis of *Dhāraṇā* (concentration), *Samādhi* (trance) and *Dhyāna* (meditation) as stated below.

- The *Upaniṣad*, known as *Upadeśa Prasthāna* or the *Śruti prasthāna*.
- The *Brahma Sūtra*, known as *Nyāya Prasthāna* or *Sūtra prasthāna*.
- The *śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, known as *Smṛiti prasthāna* or the *Sādhanā prasthāna*.
- *Patañjali yoga sūtra* authored by sage *Patañjali*, a treatise dealing with the eight limbs of Yoga

The subject has a great scope as all the human beings in the world irrespective of caste, culture, race, nation, and gender one time or other practice concentration, meditation and regularly undergo deep-sleep stages day in and day out.

Some of the books based on those concepts are:

- *Raja Yoga* by Swami VivekĀnanda
- *Spiritual Heritage of India* by Swami PrabhavĀnanda
- *Four Yogas* by Dr. H R Nagendra
- *Brahma sūtra ShankaraBhāṣya* by Swami Sacchidanandendra Bharati

- *Brahma sūtra Bhāṣya* by Swami GambhirĀnanda
- *Brahma Sutras - Sw Paramananda Bharati*
- *Indian Philosophy* Vol II by Dr. S Radhakrishnan
- *The Bhagavadgītā* by Dr. S Radhakrishnan
- *Meditation and Mantras* by Swami Vishnudevananda

the above books record the *Dhyāna*, *Dhāraṇā* and *Samādhi* in *Prasthānatrayī* and *Patañjali yoga sūtra*.

2 REVIEWS OF STUDIES MADE IN THE FIELD:

Regarding *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, the meaning of the word OM, the three states, and Gaudapada's commentary on that *Omakārā* and the three states (Kapoor, 2017). "Dhyana is a term used for the seventh anga (limb or level) in the eight-step Yoga practice of Sage Patanjali" (T. M. Srinivasan, 2013). "As per National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCM), meditation is defined as a mental process to calm and reduce the psycho-physiologic load on a person due to several reasons" (T. Srinivasan, 2013). The author opines that as per EEG profiles, meditation may be focused attention (FA) or open mentoring (OM). In FA, one of the senses is active while in *Dhyāna*, all senses are quiet. The endpoint of awareness is worldly knowledge, or a short blissful experience but the practitioner goes beyond experience, an absolute one. Awareness raises saṃskāra (mental impressions) while *Dhyāna* breaks old saṃskāra leading to detachment (Vairāgya).

A feeling of love for God is in *Dhyāna* which is lacking in FA and OM meditations (T.

Srinivasan, 2013). The author further says that *Dhyāna* gives the feeling of oneness with God. The author also analyses the various components leading to *Dhyāna* and *Samādhi* as explained in *Patañjali yoga sūtra*. He concludes that concentrating on a mystical *mantra*, love, and devotion towards supreme *Purusha*, the yogic practitioner moves from meditation to *Dhyāna*(T. Srinivasan, 2013).

Meditation offers a rich and complex field of study (Shapiro & Walsh, 2003). A study by Cahn and Polich, found that meditation increased alpha waves, which are associated with relaxation and attention (Cahn & Polich, 2006). “A study by Holzel et al found that mindfulness meditation, which involves elements of *Dhāraṇā*, *Dhyāna*, and *Samādhi*, was associated with increased grey matter density in brain regions involved in learning, memory, and emotion regulation” (Hölzel et al., 2011). “Similarly, a study by Jain et al. (2021) found that meditation reduced symptoms of anxiety and stress in patients with anxiety disorders” (Eileen et al., 2021). “A study by Sharma et al. (2015) found that a mindfulness-based intervention, which included elements of *Dhāraṇā*, *Dhyāna*, and *Samādhi*, reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression in patients with generalized anxiety disorder” (Khoury et al., 2015). Similarly, “a study by Luders et al found that long-term meditators had larger volumes of grey matter in regions associated with attention, sensory processing, and interception” (Luders et al., 2009). “The practice of mindfulness is increasingly being integrated into contemporary clinical psychology” (Salmon et al., 2004). “Moreover, meditation has been linked to improvements in attention, emotional well-being, and the regulation of one's mental state, Meditation offers a rich and complex field of study” (Shapiro & Walsh, 2003). “Cultures around the world integrate meditative practices into their religious and spiritual disciplines” (Wachholtz & Pargament, 2005).

“The practice of meditation is a way of coming to experience more fully our moment-by-moment existence by encountering the mind directly. Meditation involves increasing awareness of the body sensations, emotions, thoughts, the mind and mental qualities” (Hiray & Rajhans, 2023). “Meditation is now one of the most enduring, widespread, and

researched of all psychotherapeutic methods” (Shapiro & Walsh, 2003).

“Mental chanting of "OM" leads to a single thought state, and a subjective feeling of deep relaxation” (Telles & Nagendra, 1995). “Mind interacts with the world and this interaction has three components; they are: the mind itself, the object, and the process of interaction” (T. M. Srinivasan, 2013). “The highest *Dhyāna* is *Samjñā-vedayita-nirodhain* which there is complete cessation of relational thought and sensation; this is *nirvikalpa Samādhi* in which sensation and thought-determinations (including mind or *chitta* and *mentals* or *chaitasika-dharmas*) are transcended and the highest bliss is experienced” (Shamra, 2007).

“The concept of Mindfulness is based on *Vipassana*, a Buddhist meditation technique” (Salmon et al., 2004).

Many Western scientists do not fully understand the theory of mind over matter (Devananda, 1981). “The mind is neither visible nor tangible. It exists not in the physical body, as does the brain, but in the astral body. Its magnitude cannot be measured, for it carries all feelings, ideas and impressions from this life and all previous lives, as well as intuitive knowledge of what is to come. It is the mind, and nothing else, that must be corralled and controlled in order to achieve the true peace of Union”(Devananda, 1981). “*Samādhi*, the superconscious state, is of two types. The first, *samprajnata*, means "with seed", and is the state where there is full concentration and the experience of bliss, but duality still exists. Here there remains awareness of the object of meditation as separate from the individual who is meditating”(Devananda, 1981).

“*Samādhi*, the superconscious state, is of two types. The first, *samprajnata*, means "with seed", and is the state where there is full concentration and the experience of bliss, but duality still exists. Here there remains awareness of the object of meditation as separate from the individual who is meditating. The second type, *asamprajnata Samādhi*, is said to be "seedless". It is the highest state of consciousness, in which there is no duality and the meditator is completely merged with *Purusha*”(Devananda, 1981).

“The Upanisads, which teach that life and death are only different forms of one and the same being and which aim at the release from mundane existence by the merging of the individual soul in the world soul through correct knowledge, have been hailed as the inspired utterances of the mystics for centuries”(Deussen, 2010).

“The true conception of the bliss of union with the Self, then, would seem to be that it is strictly an unconscious condition ; but with the attempt to conceive of that condition, which indeed was asserted to be inconceivable; recourse is had to sensual experiences and to balmy sleep”(Hume, 1921). “All yoga practice and all Yoga philosophy presuppose a monitoring consciousness, though of course details vary with different theories”(Phillips, 2009)

“*Dhyāna* according to *Patañjali yoga sūtra*, *Yoga Chudamani Upaniṣad*, *Dhyānabindu Upaniṣad*, *Gheraṇḍa saṃhitā*, *Vasistha Saṃhitā*” (Sahu, 2014). The authors discuss the aim of *Dhyāna*, types of *Dhyāna* such as *Sagunā Dhyāna*, *Nirguṇa Dhyāna*, *Pratīka Dhyāna*, *Mūrti Dhyāna*, *JyotirDhyāna*, *Tejomaya Dhyāna*, *Sukshmanadi Dhyāna*, *Bahiranga*, and *Antaranga Dhyāna* as explained in *Trīśikhi-brāhmaṇa Upaniṣad* and Swami SatyĀnanda Saraswati's passive and active meditation. They also discuss the objects (*laskhya*) of *Dhyāna* such as Guru, deity, *Prakriti*, brilliant flame, *Bindu*, *kundalini shakti*, as objects of meditation. *Yoga kuṇḍalinī Upaniṣad* says that *atma* should be visualized or *Pranava* as in *Dhyānabindu Upaniṣad*. They explain that either north or east should be the sitting place for meditation. As per Yoga Upaniṣads, *Sukhāsana*, *svastikāsana*, *padmāsana*, *siddhāsana*, are better for meditation. The authors also discuss several types of *Prāṇāyāma* and *Mudrā* to be observed during meditation. They elaborate upon the various benefits one gets by doing *Dhyāna* such as self-luminosity, several *siddhis*, the annihilation of sins, union with *Īśvara*, the serenity of mind, etc., As per *gheraṇḍasaṃhitā*, self-realization will be attained. The authors explain the various health benefits a *sadhaka* attains by doing meditation such as physical - mental relaxation, reduction of blood pressure, and sympathetic nervous system. The authors quote on various benefits as mentioned by Swami Rama, Swami ShivĀnanda, Swami SatyĀnanda

Saraswati, and others. “The cyclic meditation (CM) developed by world-renowned yoga scientist Dr. H.R. Nagendra involves physical postures (*asanas*) breathwork, physical and mental awareness together leading to a state of meditation. Mindfulness develops as a result of consistent practice or attempt of meditation according to Patanjali”. This state of mindfulness is called *am̐taram̐ga yoga*.

2.1 Concept of Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, and Samādhi in Yoga Darshana:

देशबन्धश्चित्तस्य धारणा ॥ ३.१॥(योग दर्शन)

desa-bandhaā cittasya dhāraṇā. (Yog Darshan-3/1)

Focus fixes awareness on a certain region.

तत्र प्रत्ययैकतानता ध्यानम् ॥ ३.२॥(योग दर्शन)

tatra pratyayaika-tānatā dhyānam. (Yog Darshan-3/2)

The whole stream of perception is in line with that object while one is in contemplative absorption.

तदेवार्थमात्रनिर्भासं स्वरूपशून्यमिव समाधिः ॥ ३.३॥(योग दर्शन)

“tad evārtha-mātra-nirbhāsaā svarūpa-āūnyam iva samādhiḥ”. (Yog Darshan-3/3)

Integration occurs when an object's core nature is the only thing that remains visible, almost like it has no form.

2.2 Concept of yoga in Srimad Bhagvad Gita:

तं विद्याद् दुःखसंयोगवियोगं योगसञ्ज्ञितम् ।

स निश्चयेन योक्तव्यो योगोऽनिर्विण्णचेतसा ॥ 6/23॥

*“tām vidyād duḥkha-sanyoga-viyogaṁ yogasañjñitam
sa niśchayena yuktavyo yogo ’nirviṇṇa-chetasā”*

Yoga is the state of severing oneself from union with misery. It is important to practise this yoga with determination and without negativity.

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते ।
तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥ 2/50॥

*“buddhi-yukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛita-duṣkṛite
tasmād yogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśhalam”*

Engaging in the science of work with wisdom and detachment enables an individual to transcend the consequences of both good and bad actions within their lifetime. Hence, it is essential to pursue Yog, the discipline of skillful and conscious work, to achieve this state of liberation.

2.3 Concept of yoga in Kathopanishad:

तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणाम् ।
अप्रमत्तस्तदा भवति योगो हि प्रभवाप्ययौ ॥2/3/11

*“tām yogamiti manyante sthirāmindriyadhāraṇām |
apramattastadā bhavati yogo hi prabhavāpyayau ||”*

“The state unperturbed when the senses are imprisoned in the mind, of this they say “it is Yoga”. Then man becomes very vigilant, for Yoga is the birth of things and their ending”.

2.4 Background:

The spiritual legacy of India is derived from the Vedas. They are further classified

as Saṃhitā (collections), āraṇyaka (sacrificial rites), Brāhmaṇa (which deals with Vedic rituals and sacrificial rites), and Upaniṣads. There is homogeneity in every Upaniṣad. They address the subjects of the world (Jagat), the individual soul (Ātman), the ultimate godhead (Brāhmaṇa), and their interconnections. These ideas come in the shape of charming conversations between a mother, father, and pupil, among many other roles. The Upaniṣads contain a vast collection of myths, stories, and cosmological conjecture about the nature and genesis of the cosmos, interspersed with an understandable body of authentic and verifiable spiritual truths. The latter denies any such claims, while the former maintains universal validity and makes a claim about human intelligence throughout all ages.

2.5 Meaning of the word Upaniṣad:

“The word Upaniṣad is derived from the root of the Sanskrit verb ‘sad’ with two prepositions ‘upa’ and ‘ni’. *Sad* means movement, to loosen the bondage, refuge, or shelter. *Upa* means nearness, continuity. *Ni* means totality, command, completely or fully”. Two meanings are derived by joining these three words (*upa*, *ni*, and *sad*). “Learning the secret knowledge from the teacher which releases the disciple from worldly bondage and ignorance. *Śaṅkarācārya* gives another meaning i.e. knowledge of God. The Upaniṣad is called royal knowledge (*raja vidya*) and royal secret doctrine (*raja guhya*), sacred (*pavitram*) by the *Bhagavadgītā* as a person should be spiritually ready to receive it and get benefited by it”.

2.6 The Subject matter of the Upaniṣads:

“Similarity of thoughts can be found in all the Upaniṣads. They deal with the topics of the supreme godhead (*Brahman*), the individual soul (*Ātman*), the world (*Jagat*), and they are interrelationships”. These ideas are presented as captivating conversations between a mother and son, father and son, teacher and pupil, etc.

2.7 What Upaniṣads contain:

In the Upaniṣads, we encounter a collection of profound spiritual insights intertwined with myths, legends, and cosmological speculations about the universe's nature and origin. The spiritual wisdom found in the Upaniṣads holds universal significance and resonates with human intelligence across ages. However, the myths and cosmological speculations within the Upaniṣads do not make similar claims. It's important to recognize that all forms of knowledge, including religious literature, are constrained by the prevailing scientific understanding of their time.

2.8 The Principal Upaniṣads:

“The principal Upaniṣads are accepted to be those which Śaṅkarācārya (788 CE) chose to comment upon: they are ten in number and are enumerated in the tradition as follows: Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka, Māṇḍūkya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chandogya, and *Brihad āraṇyaka*. According to some scholars, Shankara also commentated on an eleventh Upaniṣad, the *Shvetashvatara*. In his commentary on the *Brahma –Sutras*, he refers to four more namely, *Kaushitaki*, *Jabala*, *Mahanarayana*, and *Pingala*”.

3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES:

To study the concept of *Dhāraṇā*, *Dhyāna*, and *Samādhi* in *prashanatrayas* and *Patañjali yoga sūtra* and making an analysis of the same.

4 LINES OF INVESTIGATION:

Initially, the Upaniṣads dealing with the concept of *Dhāraṇā*, *Dhyāna*, and *Samādhi* will be subjected to analysis. Then the *sutras* covering the above three concepts in the *Brahma sūtras* will be studied with the commentary of Adi Śaṅkarācārya. Then a study of the *Bhagavadgītā* elaborating upon the above three concepts from various chapters will be analyzed. In the end, the *sutras* dealing with *Dhyāna*, *Dhāraṇā* and *Samādhi* as explained

in the *Patañjali yoga sūtra* will be examined. In the end, an analysis of these three concepts from all the four treatises will be explored to find out whether there is homogeneity or differences regarding these three concepts for a better understanding in the modern context. A deep study of these spiritual treatises helps us in understanding the *Advaita* philosophy and the eternal truth (*Parabrahman*) without the basis of caste, culture, creed, gender, religion, race, or any belief.

5 MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The Ph.D. thesis topic being literary and theoretical in nature will employ a research methodology commonly used in language, philosophy, and arts domains. This approach involves a comprehensive study of the background subject, a thorough analysis of the thesis topic, and the formulation of conclusive assessments. Unlike scientific research methods that utilize experimental trials, random control trials (RCT), interventions like pre- and post-interventions, and various empirical analyses, this literary research will not involve such techniques. Instead, it focuses on theoretical and philosophical explorations within the domain.

6 THE CONCEPT OF SAMĀDHI IN BRAHMASŪTRA ŚAṂKARABHĀṢYA:

In his profound interpretation of the Brahma Sutras, Śaṅkarācārya elaborates along the knowledge journey (*Jñāna mārga*). According to his teachings, the spiritual aspirant must embark on a journey of inner purification, focusing particularly on refining the mind (*Chitta*). To attain self-realization in Brahman, one must diligently adhere to the prescribed methods of *sadhana*. Until the ultimate realization dawns, the practice of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *Nididhyāsana* becomes indispensable.

Śravaṇa, the initial step, involves immersing oneself in the teachings about the characteristics of Brahman, the profound significance of *Omakārā*, and related hymns. Delving deeply into the secret and sacred statements of the *Upaniṣads*, practitioners engage

in profound contemplation to comprehend the intricate meanings embedded within these spiritual texts. Through this dedicated practice, aspirants pave the way for a deeper understanding and connection with the divine essence.

In the pursuit of self-realization, the practice of Manana involves continuous mental repetition and contemplation, with a specific focus on Omakārā. During this process, individuals delve into the profound teachings embedded in the Upaniṣads and Vedānta sūtras, fostering deep understanding and reflection.

Advancing to the stage of Nididhyāṣana, aspirants realize that Brahman, the ultimate reality, is pure consciousness, distinct from all living and non-living entities, permeating every aspect of existence. Attaining a state of Samādhi becomes paramount in this spiritual journey. In this state, the Chitta (mindstuff) is controlled, undisturbed, and free from worldly distractions. Through unwavering concentration, the mind is purified, allowing for a profound realization of Brahman. This transformative state grants complete knowledge about Brahman, leading to self-realization and spiritual enlightenment.

Śaṅkarācārya elucidates this transformative process with vivid analogies. He compares it to a patient who, after consuming medicine, feels alive but still perceives the disease as uncured. Similarly, comprehending the Upaniṣadic statement "Sarvaṃ Khalvidaṃ Brahma" ("I am everything") leads to an experiential understanding where mountains, caves, rivers, and oceans are perceived as the untruncated form of Sat-Chit-Ānanda. He employs the metaphor of Dagdhapata Nyaya, illustrating that even though the cloth is burnt, one no longer perceives it; only the ashes remain, signifying a profound shift in perception and realization.

In this profound interpretation, Śaṅkarācārya emphasizes the transformative power of knowledge, illustrating the aspirant's journey toward self-realization and the profound understanding of Brahman.

In the Brahma Sutra commentary he wrote, Śaṅkarācārya asserts that Brahman permeates the entire space, remaining unattached and immutable. Unlike the changing brightness of the moon's rays, Brahman's luminosity is constant. This Parabrahman is unborn, imperishable, indestructible, and omnipresent. It embodies unadulterated bliss, transcends the cycle of cause and effect, and manifests as the sacred sound Om. The ultimate realization in Savikalpaka Samādhi is the profound experience of 'I am this.'

There exist two types of Samādhi experiences. Through consistent practice of śravaṇa, manana, and nidhidhyasana, one progresses from Savikalpaka Samādhi to Nirvikalpaka Samādhi. The cultivation of positive mental impressions (samskara) and the acquisition of three-fold knowledge pave the way for Nirvikalpaka Samādhi. Beyond the fluctuations of Chitta, one attains the state of consciousness and bliss, known as ChidĀnanda. In the second variety, the continuous practice of three-fold knowledge and the dissipation of saṃskāra lead to a profound Samādhi, where only the experience of Brahman exists.

According to Śaṅkarācārya's interpretation of the Brahma Sutras, the purification of Chitta is essential for realizing Brahman. Until this purification is achieved, one must diligently engage in the practices of śravaṇa, manana, and Nididhyāsana.