

Review Article

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22192/ijamr.2022.09.04.010>

## Literature review on various philosophies of Dhiyanam (meditation) in different traditional system of medicine

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### Abstract

**Background:** *Dhiyanam* is a branch of yoga practice and extremely beneficial to the mankind in maintaining the physical and mental health of the body. Collection, compilation and interpretation of these views from various school of thoughts is a necessity today. **Aim & objective:** The aim of this study is to Collect and document the literary evidence and philosophies of meditation (*Dhiyanam*) in different traditional system of medicine. **Methodology:** Many classical texts of Siddha system, Tamil literatures from various libraries like Ambedkar Library, GSMC, chennai, CCRS library, Chennai, Connemara library, Chennai, Tamarai library, Chennai., Anna centenary library, Chennai., Saraswathimahall library, Thanjavur and from various standard search engines were reviewed and the obtained data was compiled and documented **Result:** The knowledge about various aspects of *Dhiyanam* will be perceived. The methodized procedure for practicing is formulated and it will be an initiative for further study on *dhiyanam*. The results and explanations from this study will justify the incorporation of *dhiyanam* as part of our lifestyle in promoting health.

### Keywords

Meditation,  
Dhiyanam,  
Yogam,  
Siddha.

### Introduction

Siddha system of medicine is one of the ancient systems of medicine conceived by *siddhars*, who lived a spiritual life in the southern region of India. *Siddhars* were the embodiment of divine knowledge, with which they served the people to cure diseases, this practice has been hereditarily nurtured by their successors for generations.

The siddha system of medicine is not only used to cure but also to prevent diseases and in turn to increase the life span of human beings. The *siddhars* pursued to protect the mortal body free from the ravages of old age and death. Therefore, the concept of siddha system of medicine is “To treat the man as a whole and not merely the disease alone”. According to the siddha medicine,

various psychological and physiological functions of the body are attributed to the combination of seven elements like *Saaram* (plasma), *Cheneer* (blood), *Oon* (muscle), *Koluppu/kozhuppu* (fatty tissue), *Elumbu* (bone), *Moolai*(bone marrow), *Sukkilam* (semen). Siddha medicine combines physical and breathing exercise, mind training, emotional detoxification and nutrition. It aims to treat the person, rather than the disease.

**Yogam** is a part of the siddha system and it is practiced in the form of ASANAM, PRANAYAMAM and DHIYANAM. It is performed for controlling the flow of vital energy that governs all the physiological process in the body. In humans, the breath is vital and it's an active connection between the body and mind. Being so, siddhars underwent this technique to enhance their inner soul and longevity of life. Concentrating in one's own breathing with eyes closed, leads to enhancement in physiological and psychological states of the body. In short, "DHIYANAM" is the "art of relaxation" and here it will be discussed of its various postulates. So, hereby I chose this topic to compile and document the various perspectives of *Dhiyanam*.

### Aim & objective:

The aim of this study is to Collect and document the literary evidence and philosophies of meditation (Dhiyanam) in different traditional system of medicine.

### Methodology

#### Literature search:

The various classical texts of Siddha system, Tamil literatures from the libraries of all the over Tamil Nadu and from the standard search engines were reviewed and the collected data was compiled and documented. The data's are collected from the following libraries:

- ) Ambedkar library, GSMC Chennai.
- ) Library ,GSMC palayamkottai,

- ) CCRS library,Chennai.
- ) Connemara library,Chennai.
- ) Tamarailibrary,Chennai.
- ) Anna centenary library,Chennai.
- ) Saraswathimahallibrary,Thanjavur.

#### Search strategies:

The key phrase used to retrieve the data from the libraries,websites,journal was required for this study was Dhiyanam,meditation.Overall,we have visited 7 libraries and reviewed some types of literatures.Among them some were related to Siddha and Yogam texts and also few were from standard search engines.

#### Various philosophies of dhyanam:

**Meditation** is a practice where an individual uses a technique – such as mindfulness, or focusing the mind on a particular object, thought, or activity – to train attention and awareness, and achieve a mentally clear and emotionally calm and stable state. Scholars have found meditation elusive to define, as practices vary both between traditions and within them.

Meditation is practiced in numerous religious traditions. The earliest records of meditation (*dhyana*) are found in the Vedas, and meditation exerts a salient role in the contemplative repertoire of Hinduism and Buddhism Since the 19th century, Asian meditative techniques have spread to other cultures where they have also found application in non-spiritual contexts, such as business and health.

Meditation may significantly reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and pain and enhance peace, perceptionself-concept, and well-being Meditation is under research to substantiate its health (psychological, neurological, and cardiovascular) benefits and other effects.

#### Siddhar Yogam:

In *Thirumanthiram*, *Thirumoolar* emphasize a new type of yoga called Siva Yogam. Siva yogam deals with individual soul with the removal of

ignorance, once the wisdom dawns. It is also a method by which *athma* identifies itself with Siva. It is process of drinking the ambrosial juice oozing from the *sahasaram*. Siva yogam can be referred as *kundalini yoga*.

He mentioned Sun (*Pingalai*), moon (*Idakalai*) and fire (*Sulumunai*) through which he reaches cranium (*Sahasaram*). Thirumoolar does not used the term *Kundalini yoga*, but the above steps clearly indicate the *kundalini yoga* itself.

Thirumoolar explained the following aspects of yoga:

- ) *AttangaYogam*
- ) *KesariYogam*
- ) *ChandhiraYogam*
- ) *PariyangaYogam*

### ***AttangaYogam:***

“*EyamamNiyamam* and *Asanam* numberless, *Pranayamam* whole some and *prathiyakaram* alike *Tharanai*, *Thyanam* and *Samathi* to triumph, these eight are the steely limbs of *Yoga*”

**Eyamam:** The ten *eyamams* are non-violence, truth, honesty, sexual continence, forbearance, attitude, kindness, straight forwardness, bodily cleansing. Making a habit of constantly practising *eyamam* purifies words, thoughts and deeds.

**Niyamam:** The ten *niyamam* are austerity, contentment, belief in God, charity, worship of God, listening to explanation of doctrines, scriptures, modesty, having a discerning mind, repetition of prayers and sacrifice.

**Asanam:**Thirumoolar described that, *asanas* are countless; however, he emphasised few *asanas* to attain *Yoga Siddhi*. *Pathirasanam*, *Veerasanam*, *Padhumasanam*, *Kukkudasanam*, *Komugasanam*.

**Prathiyakaram:** It is the restraint of the senses and the withdrawal of the mind from external things. It maintains an inner focus and avoidance of dispersion and distraction.

**Tharanai:** It means to retain the mind and keep it steadfast inside, which has been obtained by *prathiyakaram*.

**Thiyanam:** It is consistent, uninterrupted meditation.

**Samathi:** It is the final goal of *AttangaYogam*. It is attainment of tranquillity. It is an eight limbed yoga.

**Pranayamam:** It is a practice of ordered breathing. The process of *pranayamam* consists of three acts, namely *Pooragam* (inspiration) *Kumbakam* (retention) and *Resagam* (expiration). The above terms are used by Tantrics and Siddhars and not by Patanjali. The inspiration should be of twelve *mathirai* and expiration should be of eight *mathirai* and retention should be of four *mathirai*. In second section of *Thanthiram*– 3, Thirumoolar deals with measurement of life span and breath rhythm in days of week. If one knows the rhythm of breadth, one is aware of “*Nadai*”. The *Nadai* and God are one in consciousness. The breathing occurs through the nostrils alternatively. The air passing through the left nostril is called *Idakalai*, while the air passing through the right nostril is called *Pingalai*. The left one is also known as *ChandhiraNaadi* while the right one is known as *SuriyaNaadi*. Persons who have obtained mastery over *Pranayamam*, his/her breathing through middle one is called *SulumunaiNaadi*. A person who attained mastery over *Pranayamam* is physically, mentally healthy and ready for higher spiritual practices.

### **Other Types Of Meditation:**

- ) 1) Buddhist Meditation Techniques
  - o Zen Meditation (Zazen)
  - o Vipassana Meditation
  - o Mindfulness Meditation
  - o Loving Kindness Meditation (Metta Meditation)
- ) 2) Hindu Meditation Techniques (Vedic & Yogic)
  - o Mantra Meditation (Om Meditation)
  - o Transcendental Meditation (Tm)

- Yogic Meditations
- Self-Enquiry And “I Am” Meditation
- J 3) Chinese Meditation Techniques
- Taoist Meditations
- Qigong (Chi Kung)
- J 4) Christian Meditation
- J 5) Sufi Meditation Techniques
- J 6) Guided Meditations

## 1) Buddhist meditation techniques

### Zen Meditation (*Zazen*)

*Zazen* (坐禪) means “seated Zen”, or “seated meditation”, in Japanese. It has its roots in the Chinese Zen Buddhism (Ch’an) tradition, tracing back to Indian monk Bodhidharma (6th century CE). In the West, its most popular forms comes from DogenZenji (1200~1253), the founder of Soto Zen movement in Japan. Similar modalities are practiced in the *Rinzai* school of Zen, in Japan and Korea.

### Vipassana Meditation

“Vipassana” is a Pali word that means “insight” or “clear seeing”. It is a traditional Buddhist practice, dating back to 6th century BC. Vipassana-meditation, as taught in the last few decades, comes from the Theravada Buddhist tradition, and was popularized by S. N. Goenka and the Vipassana movement.

Due to the popularity of Vipassan -meditation, the “mindfulness of breathing” has gained further popularity in the West as “mindfulness”.

### Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness Meditation is an adaptation from traditional Buddhist meditation practices, especially Vipassana, but also having strong influence from other lineages (such as the Vietnamese Zen Buddhism from ThichNhatHanh). “Mindfulness” is the common western translation for the Buddhist term *sati*. *Anapanasati*, “mindfulness of breathing”, is part of the Buddhist practice of Vipassana or insight

meditation, and other Buddhist meditational practices, such as *zazen*

One of the main influencers for Mindfulness in the West is John Kabat-Zinn. His *Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction* program (MBSR) – which he developed in 1979 at the University of Massachusetts Medical School – has been used in several hospitals and health clinic on the past decades

### Loving Kindness Meditation (*Metta Meditation*)

*Metta* is a Pali word that means kindness, benevolence, and good will. This practice comes from the Buddhist traditions, especially the Theravada and Tibetan lineages. “Compassion meditation” is a contemporary scientific field that demonstrates the efficacy of *metta* and related meditative practices.

Demonstrated benefits include: boosting one’s ability to empathize with others; development of positive emotions through compassion, including a more loving attitude towards oneself; increased self-acceptance; greater feeling of competence about one’s life; and increased feeling of purpose in life.

## 2) Hindu meditation techniques (Vedic & Yogic)

### Mantra Meditation (OM Meditation)

A *mantra* is a syllable or word, usually without any particular meaning, that is repeated for the purpose of focusing your mind. It is *not* an affirmation used to convince yourself of something.

Some meditation teachers insist that both the choice of word, and its correct pronunciation, is very important, due to the “vibration” associated to the sound and meaning, and that for this reason an initiation into it is essential. Others say that the mantra itself is only a tool to focus the mind, and the chosen word is completely irrelevant.

Mantras are used in Hindu traditions, Buddhist traditions (especially Tibetan and “Pure Land” Buddhism), as well as in Jainism, Sikhism and Daoism (Taoism). Some people call mantra meditation “om meditation”, but that is just one of the mantras that can be used. A more devotion oriented practice of mantras is called *japa*, and consists of repeating sacred sounds (name of God) with love.

### Transcendental Meditation (TM)

Transcendental Meditation is a specific form of Mantra Meditation introduced by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in 1955 in India and the West. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Maharishi achieved fame as the guru to the Beatles, The Beach Boys and other celebrities.

It is a widely practiced form of meditation, with over 5 million practitioners worldwide, and there is a lot of scientific research, many sponsored by the organization, demonstrating the benefits of the practice. There are over 600 scientific papers, many of them peer-reviewed, and I have used part of their research when composing my benefits of meditation page.

### Yogic Meditations

There is not one type of meditation which is “Yogic Meditation”, so here it is meant the several meditation types taught in the yoga tradition. Yoga means “union”. Tradition goes as far as 1700 B.C and has as its highest goal spiritual purification and Self-Knowledge. Classical Yoga divides the practice into rules of conduct (*yamas* and *niyamas*), physical postures (*asanas*), breathing exercises (*pranayama*), and contemplative practices of meditation (*pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, *samadhi*).-The Yoga tradition is the oldest meditation tradition on earth, and also the one with the widest variety of practices.

### Third Eye Meditation

Focusing the attention on the “spot between the eyebrows” (called by some “the third eye” or

“*ajna chakra*”). The attention is constantly redirected to this point, as a means to silence the mind. By time the “silent gaps” between thoughts get wider and deeper. Sometimes this is accompanied by physically “looking”, with eyes closed, towards that spot.

### Chakra Meditation

The practitioner focuses on one of the seven chakras of the body (“centers of energy”), typically doing some visualizations and chanting a specific mantra for each chakra (*lam*, *vam*, *ram*, *yam*, *ham*, *om*). Most commonly it is done on the heart chakra, third eye, and crown chakra.

### Gazing Meditation (Trataka)

Fixing the gaze on an external object, typically a candle, image or a symbol (*yantras*). It is done with eyes open, and then with eyes closed, to train both the concentration and visualization powers of the mind. After closing the eyes, you should still keep the image of the object in your “mind’s eye”. This meditation is so important and powerful, that I wrote this post on the subject.

### Kundalini Meditation

This is a very complex system of practice. The goal is the awakening of the “kundalini energy” which lies dormant on the base of the spine, the development of several psychic centers in the body, and, finally, enlightenment. There are several dangers associated with this practice, and it should not be attempted without the guidance of a qualified yogi.

### Kriya Yoga

It is a set of energization, breathing, and meditation exercises taught by Paramahansa Yogananda. This is more suited for those who have a devotional temperament, and are seeking the spiritual aspects of meditation. To learn it, you can apply to receive the Self-Realization lessons, free of charge.

### Sound Meditation (Nada Yoga)

Focusing on sound. Starts with meditation on “external sounds”, such as calming ambient music (like Native American flute music), whereby the student focuses all his attention on just hearing, as a help to quieten and collect the mind. By time the practice evolves to hearing the “internal sounds” of the body and mind. The ultimate goal is to hear the “Ultimate Sound” (*para nada*), which is a sound without vibration, and that manifests as “OM”.

### Tantra

Unlike the popular view in the West, most Tantra practices have nothing to do with ritualized sex (this was practiced by a minority of lineages). Tantra is a very rich tradition, with dozens of different contemplative practices. The text VijnanabhairavaTantra, for instance, lists 108 “meditations”, most of them more advanced (already requiring a certain degree of stillness and mind control).

### Pranayama

It is a breathing regulation. It is not exactly meditation, but an excellent practice to calm the mind and prepare it for meditation. There are several different types of *Pranayama*, but the simplest and most commonly taught one is the 4-4-4-4. This means breathing in counting up to 4, holding for 4 seconds, breathing out for 4 seconds, and holding empty for 4 seconds. Breathe through your nose and let the abdomen (and not the chest) be the one that moves. Go through a few cycles like this. This regulation of breathing balances the moods and pacifies the body and can be done anywhere.

### Self-Enquiry and “I Am” Meditation

Self-Enquiry is the English translation for the Sanskrit term *atmavichara*. It means to “investigate” our true nature, to find the answer to the “Who am I?” question, which culminates with the intimate knowledge of our true Self, our true being. We see references to this meditation in

very old Indian texts; however, it was greatly popularized and expanded upon by the 20th-century Indian sage RamanaMaharshi (1879~1950).

The modern non-duality movement (or *neo-advaita*), which is greatly inspired in his teachings – as well as those of NisargadattaMaharaj (1897~1981) and Papaji – strongly uses this technique and variations. Many contemporary teachers to employ this technique, the most famous ones being Mooji, Adyashanti, and Eckhart Tolle.

### 3) Chinese meditation techniques

#### Taoist Meditations

Daoism is a Chinese philosophy and religion, dating back to Lao Tzu (or Laozi). It emphasizes living in harmony with Nature, or Tao, and it’s main text is the Tao TeChing, dating back to 6th century B.C. Later-on some lineages of Taoism were also influenced by Buddhist meditation practices brought from India, especially on the 8th century C.E.

The chief characteristic of this type of meditation is the generation, transformation, and circulation of inner energy. The purpose is to quieten the body and mind, unify body and spirit, find inner peace, and harmonize with the Tao. Some styles of Taoist Meditation are specifically focused on improving health and giving longevity.

#### Qigong (Chi kung)

Qigong (also spelled *chi kung*, or *chi gung*) is a Chinese word that means “life energy cultivation”, and is a body-mind exercise for health, meditation, and martial arts training. It typically involves slow body movement, inner focus, and regulated breathing. Traditionally it was practiced and taught in secrecy in the Chinese Buddhist, Taoist and Confucianist traditions. In the 20th century, Qigong movement has incorporated and popularized Daoist meditation, and “mainly employs concentrative exercises but

also favors the circulation of energy in an inner-chemical mode” (Kohn 2008a:120).

#### 4) Christian meditation

In Eastern traditions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Daoism) meditation is usually practiced with the purpose of transcending the mind and attaining enlightenment. On the other hand, in the Christian tradition the goal of contemplative practices is, one may say, moral purification and deeper understanding of the Bible; or a closer intimacy with God/Christ, for the more mystic stream of the tradition.

Here are some forms of Christian contemplative practice:

) **contemplative prayer** — which usually involves the silent repetition of sacred words or sentences, with focus and devotion

) **contemplative reading** — or simply “contemplation”, which involves thinking deeply about the teachings and events in the Bible.

) **“sitting with God”** — a silent meditation, usually preceded by contemplation or reading, in which we focus all our mind, heart and soul on the presence of God

#### *Bahá í Faith*

In the teachings of the Bahá í Faith, meditation is a primary tool for spiritual development, involving reflection on the words of God. While prayer and meditation are linked, where meditation happens generally in a prayerful attitude, prayer is seen specifically as turning toward God and meditation is seen as a communion with one's self where one focuses on the divine.

In Bahá í teachings the purpose of meditation is to strengthen one's understanding of the words of God, and to make one's soul more susceptible to their potentially transformative power, more receptive to the need for both prayer and meditation to bring about and maintain a spiritual communion with God.

#### 5) Sufi meditation techniques

Sufism is the esoteric path within Islam, where the goal is to purify oneself and achieve mystical union with the Supreme (named *Allah* in this tradition). The practitioners of Sufism are called *Sufis*, and they follow a variety of spiritual practices, many of which were influenced by the tradition of Yoga in India.

Their main techniques include:

- ) Contemplation of God (*muraqabah*)
- ) Sufi Mantra meditation (*zikr,jikr* or *dhikr*)
- ) Heartbeat meditation
- ) Sufi breathing meditation (including Five Elements Breathing)
- ) Bond of Love meditation
- ) Gazing meditation
- ) Sufi walking meditation
- ) Sufi whirling

#### 6) Guided meditations

Guided Meditation is, in great part, a modern phenomenon. It is an easier way to start, and you will find guided meditations based on several of the above traditions. The practice of meditation requires some dose of determination and will-power. In the past, people that were into meditation were more committed to it, and also had strong ideals fuelling their motivation. Their life was more simple, with less distractions.

We live in very different times now. Our life is busier. Distractions are everywhere, and meditation is often sought as a means to develop better health, enhance performance, or improve oneself. For these reasons, guided meditations are very useful. They are both a great help in introducing you to the practice, help you experiment different techniques, or keep your attention more present in the meditation.

#### Conclusion

Siddharyogam techniques appears to widespread across many countries in different terms, although

most studies emerge from Asian countries. Stakeholders involved in the healthcare sector in these countries should be mindful of this vital role of yogam in healthcare service delivery across these countries. Further research in yogam should be encouraged and by compiling these techniques can provide safe, efficient, affordable and harmonised healthcare practice in all over Asian countries.

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Quick Response Code	
DOI: <a href="https://doi.org/10.22192/ijamr.2022.09.04.010">10.22192/ijamr.2022.09.04.010</a>	

### How to cite this article:

R. Gurulakshmi@Kavitha, M. Thivya sundari, K. Saibudeen, A. Satheeshkumar. (2022). Literature review on various philosophies of Dhiyanam (meditation) in different traditional system of medicine. Int. J. Adv. Multidiscip. Res. 9(4): 77-84.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22192/ijamr.2022.09.04.010>