



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DHARANA ACCORDING TO VASISTHA AND GHERAND SAMHITA

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ABSTRACT

Dharana means concentration or focussing. So, Dharana can be translated as the process of focusing or fixing the attention of mind onto one object or place; or in simple terms, Concentration. Dharana is also mentioned in Gheranda Samhita where it is clubbed under the practice of Mudras. Here the focus is on concentrating on the five chakras starting from Mooladhara Chakra (root centre) to the Vishhudhi Chakra (throat centre). This is called Pancha Dharana or Concentration on the five centres.

The famous works on Yoga do not prescribe the performance of daily and other duties. The Vasistha Samhita, on the other hand, lays down two ways for the performance of rituals. At first it divides Karma into two classes, Pravartaka and Nivartaka. As both ways are of positive action, it becomes evident that Vasistha does not approve of Karmasamnyasa or renunciation of all actions.

How to do Dharana or Concentration in Yoga.

Dharana or concentration in yoga can be on any object, external or internal. To start with, one has to choose an object for concentration. Externally, it can be a candle flame or a dot on the wall or a picture of your desired deity or any other object like the symbol of Om, cross, star, any yantra, etc. Internally, one can choose to concentrate on internal light at the eyebrow or the heart centre or on one of the energy centres or chakras in the body, or simply on the breath. Or just focus your attention at the tip of the nose or the eye brow centre. One may even concentrate on the sound a chosen mantra.

Please remember that during Concentration, the mind has to put effort to focus attention at a point. Practice this for some time. In due course, the attention can be maintained as a continuous flow even without any effort. When effort ceases, then you have moved on to the process of Dhyana or meditation. Meditation is always effortless while concentration needs effort.

This Dharana or concentration in yoga is a prelude to Dhyana or meditation.

To master Dharana, one has to prepare the mind with practices related to Pratyahara or internalizing the mind. It is Pratyahara that leads us to process of Dharana.

Benefits of Dharana or Concentration in Yoga

1. Dharana leads us to the higher states of Dhayana and Samadhi in progressive stages.
2. It removes Vikshepa or the agitation of the mind and creates calmness and peace inside.
3. Practice of Dharana or concentration in yoga can improve memory and attention in our day to day activities.
4. According to Patanjali Yoga Sutras, Dharana on esoteric subjects along with Dhyana and Samadhi can give Siddhis or supernatural powers.

Dharana according to Vasistha Samhita

The Yogis well versed in Yogic science, define Dharana as a stability of mind at one's own self who has mastered the attributes of Yamas etc. The Dharana is also said to be the concentration of external Akasa (ether) combined with internal Akasa within one's heart. Such a person gets ability to move (mentally) into the void.

Vasistha also describes the region of these elements in the body with the respective letter and deity to be imagined in each of these regions which are shown in the table below. Concentrating the five mystical letters (la, va, ra, ya, ha) of these five elements viz. earth, water, fire, air and ether - is supposed to be Dharana.

Moreover, concentrating the five deities of these (five elements) is also Dharana.

From toes (feet) to knees is the place of earth. From knees to anus is the place of water. From anus to heart is said to be the place of fire.

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| Element | Location | Letter | Deity |
|---------|--|--------|---------|
| Earth | From feet to knees | (la) | Brahma |
| Water | From knees to anus | (va) | Visnu |
| Fire | From anus to heart | (ra) | Rudra |
| Air | From heart to the middle Of the eyebrows | (ya) | Mahat |
| Ether | From the middle Of the eyebrows to the top of the head | (ha) | Avyakta |

Vyasa, in his commentary on the Sutra includes regions external to the body also. Vasistha does not accept external regions for Dharana. Moreover, it becomes clear from the above that, whereas Patanjali gives a general definition of Dharana, Vasistha is more specific about the process of Dharana. The inner regions accepted by Vasistha for Dharana are particular regions named as Prthvi etc. Goraksa(69-73) describes Dharana as fixation of Prana to a particular element like Prthvi etc. for the duration of five Ghatikas (Ghatika - 24 minutes). His idea about Dharana are tabulated below

| Name of Dharana | Element | Location | Letter |
|----------------------|---------|---------------------------|--------|
| 1. Bhudharana | Earth | Heart | (la) |
| 2. Varidharana | Water | Throat. | (va) |
| 3. Vaisvanaridharana | Fire | Palate | (ra) |
| 4. Vayavidharana | Air | Middle of the eyebrows | (ya) |
| 5. Nabhodharana | Ether | Brahmarandhra | (ha) |

From the middle of heart to the middle of eyebrows is the place pertaining to air and from the middle of eyebrows to the head

Among them, Yogi should concentrate the letter 'la' at the place of earth, the letter 'va' at the water, the letter 'ra' at the fire, the letter 'ya' at the air and the letter 'ha' at the ether.

(In that very order), a learned person should concentrate Lord Brahma, the supreme deity at earth. Visnu at the water, Rudra at the fire, the mahat-tattva at the air and the un-manifest highest Lord at the ether. Taking air (Prana) to the earth together with the letter (la) and deity (Brahma) retaining it for five Ghatikas (two hours), he may get victory on the earth element.

If one retains the air (Prana Vayu) at the region of water alongwith its respective letter and deity for five Ghatikas, he is relieved of all the diseases. By retaining at the fire as previously stated Prana Vayu, the person is not burnt by fire. If he retains the Prana at the air-spot together with its letter and deity for five Ghatikas, he can become mover in the sky like air. Imposing the Prana at the ether together with its letter and deity, if he retains it for five Ghatikas, his excretion will be less and within a year he shall be liberated even while alive.

| Name of Dharana | Colour | Deity | Form |
|----------------------|------------|--------|------------|
| 1. Bhudharana | Yellow | Brahma | Quadrangle |
| 2. Varidharana | White | Visnu | Half-moon |
| 3. Vaisvanaridharana | Red | Rudra | Triangle |
| 4. Vayavidharana | Black | Tsvara | Circle |
| 5. Nabhodharana | Colourless | Sada | siva |



These Dharanas, described by Goraksa, seem to be different from those described by Vasistha. Though, in both the descriptions all the letters are common, the regions where the Tattvas are to be meditated upon are different. Vasistha (like Goraksa) prescribes the duration of Dharana to five Ghatikas. It mentions Dharana after Dhyana. Dharana itself is defined by BY as fixing the self on the heart.

This fifth type of Dharana dissipates all the sorrows. This denotes that one who has practised these Pancadharanas to an extent, will be well established in his practise. This reminds the sutra of Patanjali.

ACCORDING TO GERAND SAMHITA

Why this, with the human body one can visit and revisit Svarga-loka, he can go wherever he likes, as Swiftly as mind, he acquires the faculty of walking in the sky. These five Dharanas are: Prithvi (earthy), Ambhasi (Watery), Vyavi(aerial), Agneyi (Fiery), and Akashi (Ethereal)

The Prithvi-Tattva has the colour of orpiment (yellow), the letter (la) Vis its secret symbol or seed, its form is four-sided, and Brahman, its presiding deity. Place this Tattva in the heart, and fix by Eumbhaki the PrApa-VAYus and the Chitta there for the period of five ghatikas (2J hours). This is called AdhodhArana. By this, one conquers the Earth, and no earthy-elements can injure him: and it causes steadiness.

He who practices this dharana, becomes like the conqueror of Death; as an Adept he walks over this earth,

The Water-Tattva is white like the Kuuda-flower or a conch or the moon, its form is circular like the moon, the letter. (va) is the seed of this ambrosial element, and Vishnu is its presiding deity. By Yoga, produce the water-tattva in the heart, and fix there the Prana with the Chitta (consciousness), for five ghatikas, practicing Kumbhaka. This is Watery Dharana; it is the destroyer of all sorrows. Water cannot injure him who practices this

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Its benefits.

If the practitioner is thrown into burning fire, by virtue of this Mudra he remains alive, without fear of death.

The Air-tattva is black as unguent for the eyes (collirium), the letter U (ya) is its seed, and tsvara its presiding deity. This Tattva is full of Sattva quality. Fix the Prana and the Chitta for five ghatikas in this Tattva. This is V&yavi-Dh&rana. By this, the practitioner walks in the air.

Its benefits.

This great Mudra destroys decay and death. Its practitioner is never killed by any aerial disturbances; by its virtue one walks in the air. This should not be taught to the wicked or to those devoid of faith. By so doing success is lost; Oh Chanda! this is verily the truth.

The Ether-Tattva has the colour of pure sea-water, W (ha) is its seed, its presiding deity is Sadashiv. Fix the Prana along with Chitta for five ghatikas in this Tattva. This is Ether-Dharana- It opens the gates of emancipation.

SUMMARY

Dharana is usually translated as "concentration". Dharana as "tying the mind to a single focus." Yogis often use the breath as their focus, but it can also be bodily feelings, mantras, and images. dharana is to your consciousness to one particular object, place, or idea.

For example, when you sit quietly and just remain focused on the breath for a long time, you are practicing dharana. At first, the mind wanders with all kinds of thoughts, but over time, with practice, the distraction will diminish and the mind becomes more focused.



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