

## **BUDDHIST MEDITATION: TRANQUILITY AND PEACE OF MIND**

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### **Abstract:**

The Upaniṣads talks about how the sages meditated. These are some of the oldest writings about meditation. But it's hard to say exactly when meditation started because these ancient techniques were passed down orally. Mindfulness meditation comes from ancient yogic writings. Yoga used to focus more on being still and paying attention to your breath and body. Mindfulness is also linked to early Buddhist practices, which emphasize breathing and self-awareness. *Satipaṭṭhāna* meditation helps people to observe that things are always changing. Many religions have meditation practices that help people focus on themselves and be present. These are all similar to mindfulness. Mainly there are two kinds of Meditation in Buddhism like first is *Samatha* Meditation which is known as calming meditation and Buddhists believe that it leads to deeper concentration. It is important as it allows Buddhists to let go of cravings and therefore achieve *Nibbāna*. Second is *Vipassanā* Meditation which is known as insight meditation. Also, these are seven types of most popular Meditation are 1 *Vipassanā* meditation - in mindfulness techniques this type of breathing meditation is used, raising awareness about it and inhaling and exhaling through the nose; 2 *Kundalini* Meditation; 3 *Chakra* Meditation; 4 *Zazen* Meditation; 5 *Mantra* Meditation; 6 *Tonglen* Meditation; and 7 Transcendental Meditation.

**Key-words:** Yoga, Mindfulness, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, *Vipassanā*, *Nibbāna*

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The Upaniṣads talk about how the sages meditated. These are some of the oldest writings about meditation. But it's hard to say exactly when meditation started because these ancient techniques were passed down orally. Mindfulness meditation comes from ancient yogic writings. Yoga used to focus more on being still and paying attention to your breath and body. Mindfulness is also linked to early Buddhist practices, which emphasize breathing and self-awareness. *Satipaṭṭhāna* meditation helps people to observe that things are always changing. Many religions have meditation practices that help people focus on themselves and be present. These are all similar to mindfulness.

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*Kundalini* Meditation; 3 *Chakra* Meditation; 4 *Zazen* Meditation; 5 *Mantra* Meditation; 6 *Tonglen* Meditation; and 7 Transcendental Meditation.

### **Buddhist Meditation Traditions**

Today, there are three main types of Buddhist Meditations practice like Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna. Theravāda is the most common in South Asia. Its main teachings are found in the Tripitaka, or Pāli Canon, which is the earliest record of Gautama the Buddha, taught.

In Theravāda Buddhism, two main meditation techniques are used: *Samatha* and *Vipassanā*. *Samatha* is about focusing on one thing without getting distracted. *Vipassanā* is about understanding that everything changes and finding peace in that understanding. It's like seeing the truth about how things are.

Mahāyāna Buddhism includes the teachings of Theravāda Buddhism but adds many more philosophical and devotional texts. One key idea is "great compassion," which Bodhisattvas show as they work toward enlightenment. Mahāyāna Buddhism is the biggest branch and is popular in North Asia.

Mahāyāna Buddhists do different types of meditation, mainly based on *Samatha* and *Vipassanā*. They often practice meditation from the Tiantai tradition. Chinese Tiantai tradition remains a living tradition to day. Zen meditation is similar to *Samatha* because it focuses on one thing, like the breath, to achieve deep concentration.

Vajrayāna Buddhism, also known as Tantric Buddhism, is a central part of Tibetan Buddhism. It combines elements from Hindu Tantric methods and Mahāyāna Buddhism. While some practices come from Mahāyāna and Theravāda Buddhism, they are used differently in Vajrayāna. There are three main types of Vajrayāna practice: Generation, Completion with Sign, and Completion without Sign. Generation practices involve visualizing oneself as a deity. Completion practices without a sign involve meditation on emptiness. Advanced practices include the

“Six Yogas of Naropa,”<sup>1</sup> one of which is *g-Tummo*, focusing on generating intense bodily heat through breathing, muscle exercises, and visualization.

Vajrayāna practices have roots in Hindu Tantric practices, which originated in ancient Hinduism and are described in texts like the *Yoga-Sūtras*. Hindu Tantric practices also have different stages. In the *Dhāranā* stage, the focus is on concentrating deeply on one thing, often a deity. This comes before *Dhyana*, where the focus shifts to a complete absorption in meditation, leading to a state of deep awareness without thinking. Both Hindu and Buddhist Tantric practices have similarities. They focus on concentrating deeply on religious objects or deities, go through similar stages of practice, and aim to reach a state of awareness without thinking.

Different Buddhist teachings have different ways to achieve liberation from

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<sup>1</sup> The Tibetan tradition known as the Six Yogas of Naropa is one of the most popular tantric systems with all schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Structured and arranged by the eleventh-century Indian masters Tilopa and Naropa from various Buddhist tantric legacies, this system of yogic practice was carried to Tibet by Marpa the Translator a generation later. These six yogas—inner heat, illusory body, clear light, consciousness transference, forceful projection, and bardo yoga—continue to be one of the most important living meditation traditions in the Land of the Snows. This book on the Six Yogas contains important texts on this esoteric doctrine,

including original Indian works by Tilopa and Naropa and writings by great Tibetan lamas. It contains an important practice manual on the Six Yogas as well as other works that discuss the practices, their context, and the historical continuity of this most important tradition. (The Practice of the Six Yogas of Naropa, 2006, by Glenn C. Mullin (Editor), Glenn H. Mullin (Tr.) Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, New York)

thinking too much. Theravāda meditation, like Samatha and Vipassanā, focuses on calming the mind to realize its true nature clearly. Mahāyāna practices, like Zen meditation, also focus on calmness and concentration.

In contrast, Vajrayāna teachings focus less on keeping the mind still and more on realizing the natural wakefulness of the mind, free from thinking in terms of “this” or “that.” They say that focusing too much on being calm can block this wakefulness. In Vajrayāna, stillness is not always seen as necessary. Instead, the emphasis is on awakening the mind, which might involve more energy than relaxation.

In 1979, Kabat-Zinn<sup>2</sup> started a clinic to help people with stress using mindfulness. This program has been proven to help with many conditions like depression, anxiety, and chronic pain.

Buddhist meditation is a key practice leading to spiritual freedom, called *nirvāna*. It's central to Buddhism and involves deep concentration and wisdom. Different Buddhist traditions have

variations in meditation. In China and Japan meditation became so important that it formed its own school, called Chan and Zen. Buddhist meditation shares similarities with the Hindu meditation. Though both are originated in ancient India, Buddhists realise the final state as temporary; true *nirvāna* requires wisdom.

Buddhist meditation shares similarities with Hindu meditation, both coming from ancient India. But Buddhists realise the final state as temporary; true nirvana requires wisdom. Exercises focus on understanding reality and the elements that make up everything. After deep meditation, practitioners focus on four spiritual exercises called samapattis, including awareness of infinite space and cognition, realizing the unreality of things, and focusing on the concept of unreality itself.

### **Samatha**

The Sanskrit word ‘Samatha’ can mean various things like tranquility, serenity, calmness, or meditative calm. It's about bringing a sense of peace and quiet to

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<sup>2</sup> Jon Kabat-Zinn is an internationally known speaker and teacher of mindfulness meditation and studied Zen Buddhism and practicing meditation as an MIT graduate student in molecular biology working in the laboratory of Nobel Laureate Salvador Luria. It prompted to understand the

biology of consciousness itself.” After finishing at MIT, he founded the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Clinic at UMass Medical School in 1979. In 1995, Kabat-Zinn expanded the original clinic to include a new Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society.

the mind and awareness. In Tibetan, 'Samatha' is called 'shyine' (Wylie: zhi-gnas), which refers to calming down and finding rest. It is about pacifying the mind and thoughts.

In the Theravāda tradition, 'samatha' involves techniques to calm the mind, often through concentration meditation. One popular technique is mindfulness of breathing (Pāli: *ānāpānasati*). Samatha is often practiced before and alongside wisdom practices. Some meditation practices, like focusing on a *kasiṇa* object, aim to cultivate Samatha, or tranquility. Others, such as contemplating the aggregates, are geared toward developing Vipassanā, or insight. Yet there are practices, like mindfulness of breathing, that are traditionally used to cultivate both qualities.

The *Visuddhimagga*, written in the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, lists forty meditation objects. Among them, mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) is the most common for Samatha practice, although the term is also used for Vipassanā meditation. Samatha can involve various concentration practices beyond just mindfulness of breathing.

**Signs and stages of joy in Samatha mediation**

According to Theravāda Buddhism, the development of samatha involves three successive mental images or 'signs' (*nimitta*) and five stages of joy (*Pīti*). Pīti, a feeling of joy or rapture, arises when the five hindrances are abandoned in favor of focusing on a single object. These stages are explained by Buddhaghosa in his *Visuddhimagga* and by Upatissa in the *Vimuttimaggā*. Once access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*) is established, one can enter the four *jhānas*, profound states of absorption characterized by intense joy that permeates the entire body.

### **Vipassanā**

Vipassanā is one of the oldest meditation techniques in India, rediscovered by Gautama the Buddha about 2600 years ago. It's a non-sectarian method, meaning it is not tied to any specific religion or belief system. The main goal of Vipassanā is to purify the mind completely, making it a universal remedy for all mental illnesses. Vipassanā is all about self-transformation and self-realization. It focuses on the deep connection between the body and mind, helping practitioners explore their inner mind. Unlike some other forms of meditation, Vipassanā is not about reading, writing, or thinking, it is about personal experience and practice.

During a ten-day Vipassanā course<sup>3</sup>, participants follow a strict Code of Discipline, which includes abstaining from harmful actions like killing and lying. They learn to focus their attention on their breath, which helps calm the mind and prepare for deeper meditation. By observing sensations throughout the body and developing equanimity, practitioners gain insight into the nature of reality and experience increased awareness and peace.

Vipassanā is not taught for profit, it's freely offered, supported by donations from those who have benefited from it. While the benefits of Vipassanā may take time to fully realize, even a ten-day course can lead to noticeable improvements in everyday life. With continued practice, Vipassanā can bring greater freedom from suffering and move practitioners closer to ultimate liberation.

### **Transcendental Meditation (TM)**

Transcendental Meditation (TM) is a meditation technique where practitioners repeat a specific sound, called a mantra, for about 15 to 20 minutes twice a day. This

helps them enter a state of relaxed awareness. The technique was established by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in the 1950s. He was inspired by his spiritual leader, Swami Brahmananda Saraswati, and began teaching TM in India in 1955. Through global tours and celebrity endorsements in the 1970s, TM gained popularity. Maharishi also trained others as teachers and set up TM centers worldwide.

TM continued to grow in popularity through the 1980s and 1990s, expanding to include health products, educational programs, and teacher training courses. Millions of people practice TM today, and it's remained largely unchanged since its beginnings. It's also one of the most researched forms of meditation.

### **Psychological Relaxation in Buddhist Meditation**

The study of meditation practices from a scientific perspective has been a significant focus of recent research efforts. One of the earliest scientific interpretations of meditation was presented by Herbert Benson<sup>4</sup>, who described it as a method that

<sup>3</sup> The technique of Vipassanā Meditation is taught at ten-day residential courses during which participants learn the basics of the method, and practice sufficiently to experience its beneficial results.

<sup>4</sup> Herbert Benson (April 24, 1935 - February 3, 2022) was an American medical doctor, cardiologist, and founder of the Mind/Body Medical Institute at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in Boston. He was a professor of mind/body medicine at Harvard Medical School and director emeritus of the Benson-Henry Institute (BHI) at MGH. He was a

induces a "relaxation response." Benson's research focused on practices like Transcendental Meditation (TM) and Mindfulness meditation, which involves stabilizing attention by observing sensory events without reacting emotionally. He found that both TM and Mindfulness meditation produce physiological changes indicative of increased parasympathetic nervous system activity and reduced sympathetic activity, leading to relaxation. This included decreased heart and respiratory rates, as well as psychological indicators of relaxation.

This review aims to demonstrate that different Buddhist meditation techniques can lead to either relaxation or arousal, depending on the specific practice. It will show that some meditations enhance tonic alertness and relaxation through parasympathetic activation, while others increase phasic alertness, boosting cognitive performance and indicating sympathetic activation. The review will cover the autonomic nervous system's role in inducing relaxation and arousal states, followed by scientific evidence of relaxation responses during Theravāda and

Mahāyāna meditations, as well as instances of tonic alertness. Finally, it is explored a study demonstrating arousal responses and phasic alertness during Vajrayāna and Hindu Tantric practices.

### **Measuring Relaxation and Stimulation**

Anatomically, the autonomic nervous system (ANS) consists nerve cells from both the central nervous system (CNS) and the peripheral nervous system (PNS). It receives signals from parts of the body and surroundings. The ANS's work is to keep an eye on vital body functions that mostly happen without us thinking about them, such as heart rate, breathing, and digestion.

The ANS has two main parts: the sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system. They work together but often do opposite things. The sympathetic system is like the "fight or flight" mode. It speeds up the heart, tightens blood vessels, and raises blood pressure to help you react quickly to danger. Meanwhile, the parasympathetic system is more about "rest and digest." It slows the

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founding trustee of The American Institute of Stress. He contributed more than 190 scientific publications and 12 books.

heart, lowers blood pressure, boosts digestion, and relaxes muscles.

When the sympathetic system kicks in, it increases what's called phasic alertness, making you more responsive to what's going on around you. This cannot happen at the same time as the parasympathetic system, which is about relaxation.

However, even when you are not feeling sleepy or relaxed, you can still have what's called tonic alertness. This means you are alert but not in a stressed-out way. It can happen alongside a moderate level of parasympathetic activity or during times when you are feeling relaxed.

Scientists use different methods to study how the sympathetic (stimulation) and parasympathetic (relaxation) systems work. One common way is by looking at heart rate variability, which is controlled by the autonomic nervous system. They measure heart rate variability using electrocardiogram (ECG) readings. Heart

rate variability can be studied in two main ways: time domain methods and frequency domain methods.<sup>5</sup>

Normally, a decrease in high frequencies (HF) indicates less parasympathetic and more sympathetic activity, though in extreme situations like heavy exercise or intense stress, HF might increase along with sympathetic response. Another measure related to HF is respiratory sinus arrhythmia (RSA), which shows vagal modulation on heart rate and correlates with parasympathetic activity. Scientists also study the heart rate pressure product and the double product, which show how much oxygen the heart uses and the load it carries. These increase when the sympathetic system is active.

Another way to measure autonomic activity is through galvanic skin response (GSR). When GSR increases, it usually means more sympathetic activation, while decreased GSR indicates more parasympathetic activity. Body temperature

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<sup>5</sup> In frequency domain methods, they look at specific frequencies in the EKG readings. High frequencies (HF), usually between 0.15 and 0.4 Hz, are linked to parasympathetic activity. The ratio between low and high frequencies (LF/HF) is also studied. Some researchers believe that low frequencies (LF), typically between 0.04 and 0.15 Hz, show

sympathetic activity, while others think they represent both sympathetic and parasympathetic influences. (Article entitled An Overview of Heart Rate Variability Metrics and Norms, Fred Shaffer and J. P. Ginsberg, pub Online journal in Front Public Health, 2017).

increases, called thermogenesis, are also controlled by the sympathetic system. Changes in blood pressure are used to study the autonomic system too. Parasympathetic activity decreases blood pressure, while sympathetic activity increases it.

Relaxation levels are often measured using self-report scales. Some scales focus on negative emotions like distress, which show reduced relaxation, while others focus on positive emotions indicating increased well-being and relaxation.

Studies have found that during stimulation (arousal), there's a temporary boost in the ability to respond to things, called phasic alertness. This shows up as better performance on visual and memory tasks. Tonic alertness, on the other hand, is more about sustained alertness. Studies have used both brain scans and behavior tests to look into it. Behavior studies have shown that being more alert can improve performance on certain tasks. Brain scans have linked tonic alertness to activity in specific parts of the brain.

### **Relaxation and Alertness during Meditation**

In Buddhist teachings, there are different types of meditation. Theravāda meditation aims for a state of relaxation and

alertness, not just calmness. Some Mahāyāna practices, like Zen concentration meditation, focus more on being calm. Studies, like those by Benson in the 1970s and 1980s, show that certain meditation practices can bring about relaxation. More recent research confirms this, even with short periods of meditation, like 20 minutes. Most studies have looked at Mindfulness Meditation, but there have also been studies on Zen concentration and Vipassanā.

It's widely agreed that Mindfulness Meditation can help with stress, depression, and relaxation. Before it was called "Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction," today it is simply known as "Stress Reduction and Relaxation Programs." Based on Buddhist teachings, which warn against drowsiness during meditation, some researchers think that meditation not only relaxes but also keeps you alert. Their review of over 20 studies found that certain types of meditation can activate parts of the brain associated with alertness. These studies mostly focused on Mindfulness and Zen practices but also included Vipassanā and Loving-Kindness Meditation. These practices have been shown to activate brain areas linked to alertness, like the thalamus and brain stem.

### Relaxation Response during Meditation

Several studies have looked at how different types of meditation affect the body's nervous system. One study compared two groups of people who hadn't meditated before. One group did a type of meditation called "Integrative Body-Mind Training (IBMT)"<sup>6</sup> for 20 minutes each day for 5 days, while the other group did muscle relaxation exercises. They found that the meditation group showed more activity in the part of the nervous system that helps relaxation and less activity in the part related to stress compared to the relaxation group.

<sup>6</sup> Integrative Body-Mind Training (IBMT) originates from ancient Eastern tradition. The IBMT method is based on traditional Chinese medicine combined with the latest neuroscience findings. It was developed in the 1990s, and its effects have been studied in China since 1995. Based on the results from hundreds of adults and children ranging from 4 to 90 years old in China, IBMT practice has been shown to improve attention and self-regulation.  
<sup>7</sup> Mindfulness meditation is a way to train your mind. It helps you slow down your thoughts, release negativity, and make your mind and body calm. It mixes meditation with mindfulness, which is all about focusing fully on the present moment without judging your thoughts or feelings. There are different ways to do it, but basically, it involves breathing deeply and being aware of your body and mind. You don't need any special stuff like candles or oils to do it. Just find a comfy spot to sit, set aside a few minutes, and be open-minded. Mindfulness Meditation has beneficial effects on brain and body, yet the impact of Vipassana, a type of mindfulness meditation, on heart rate variability (HRV) - a psychophysiological marker of mental and physical health - is unknown.

Similarly, on one studied people doing Mindfulness Meditation<sup>7</sup> and found that their bodies showed signs of relaxation compared to those doing muscle relaxation exercises. Another study by Krygier et al. looked at Vipassanā meditation and found similar results.

In a different study, a great scholar compared experienced meditators doing Zen Chakra meditation with non-meditators. They found that meditation increased relaxation signals in the body compared to resting. Another study showed similar results for Su-soku meditation, another type of Zen meditation.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The designation of this school of the Buddha-Way as Zen, which means meditation, is derived from a transliteration of the Chinese word Chán. Because the Chinese term is in turn a transliteration of the Sanskrit term dhyāna, however, Zen owes its historical origin to early Indian Buddhism, where a deepened state of meditation, called samādhi, was singled out as one of the three components of study a Buddhist was required to master, the other two being an observation of ethical precepts (sīla) and an embodiment of nondiscriminatory wisdom (prajñā). Meditation was picked as the name for this school because the historical Buddha achieved enlightenment (nirvāna) through the practice of meditation.

In the context of Zen Buddhism, the perfection of nondiscriminatory wisdom (Jpn.: hannya haramitsu; Skrt.: prajñāpāramitā) designates practical, experiential knowledge. Only secondarily and derivatively does it mean theoretical, intellectual knowledge. This is, Zen explains, because theoretical knowledge is a form of "language game" (Jpn.: keron; Skrt.: prapañca), i.e., discrimination through the use of language, constructed as it is at least in part on distinction-making. Zen believes that

Many studies have shown that Mindfulness Meditation helps people relax and reduces stress. Clinical programs using Mindfulness Meditation have been effective in reducing stress even after just a few weeks of practice. For example, R. K. Jain<sup>9</sup> introduced a program where participants did Mindfulness meditation for four weeks. Compare to a group doing muscle relaxation exercises, those who meditated reported feeling better emotionally and had less stress.

Similarly, in a study finds participants who did Mindfulness Meditation for four weeks reported feeling more relaxed and satisfied with their lives compared to those who didn't meditate. This positive effect of Mindfulness Meditation on relaxation and stress reduction has been seen in many studies over several weeks of practice. It's widely accepted in both scientific research and clinical settings.

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theoretical reference in itself ultimately carries no existential meaning for emancipating a human being from his or her predicaments, for it maintains that discriminatory knowledge of any kind is illusory in nature. To this effect it holds that it is through a practical transformation of the psychophysiological constitution of one's being that one prepares for embodying nondiscriminatory wisdom. This preparation involves the training of the whole person and is called "self-cultivation" (shugyō) in Japanese.

Yoga practices that focus on relaxation techniques, like Yoga-Nidrā, and concentrating on one thing, like the breath, also help people relax and reduce stress. Just like with Mindfulness Meditation, studies have shown the benefits of these practices in scientific literature.

### **Some Observations in Meditation**

Neuroimaging studies, like the one discussed by Graham J Britton have found that certain types of meditation, like Theravāda and Mahāyāna, can boost activity in brain areas linked to sustained awareness.

In a study, they looked at experienced Theravāda monks who had done a lot of Shamatha and Vipassanā meditation, as well as novices with just 10 days of meditation practice. Both groups did Shamatha and Vipassanā meditation in the MRI machine. The experienced monks showed stronger brain activity in areas linked to sustained awareness during both types of meditation. Novices showed

It is a practical method of correcting the modality of one's mind by correcting the modality of one's body, in which practice (prāxis) is given precedence over theory (theōria) (Yuasa, 1987: *The Body: An Eastern Mind-Body Theory*, Nagatomo Shigenori and Thomas P. Kasulis (Tr.), Albany: State University of New York Press.).

<sup>9</sup> Professor of Computer Science and Engineering, Washington University in Saint Louis.

increased activity in the dACC<sup>10</sup> during Vipassanā, suggesting that even short-term practice can affect these brain areas.

Another scholar conducted a study with 61 people who had never meditated before. They split them into two groups: one did a 6-week Mindfulness Meditation course, while the other did an “active-control” activity involving group discussions. This control activity aimed to engage the mind in creating imaginary stories, unlike the focused awareness of Mindfulness Meditation. The researchers found that the meditation group showed more activity in brain, a brain region linked to sustained attention, compared to the control group. They also discovered that the more the participants practiced meditation, the more their dACC, another part of the brain associated with attention, became active.

Other studies reviewed found similar results in different types of meditation, like Vipassanā, Mindfulness, and Zen meditation. They observed

increased activation in brain areas related to sustained awareness.

### **Arousal and Phasic Alertness in Vajrayana Practices**

While Theravada meditation focuses on relaxation and tranquility, Vajrayana practices take a different approach, emphasizing arousal and wakefulness. Vajrayana Buddhist teachings highlight the importance of realizing an alert and awake quality of the mind, cautioning against excessive tranquility. This is unlike Theravāda scriptures, which emphasize calmness, and Mahāyāna meditation instructions that also stress serenity.

Empirical evidence supports the idea that arousal is generated during specific meditative practices, including Hindu Tantric practices and various Vajrayāna techniques. However, there have been fewer studies on Vajrayāna and Hindu Tantric practices compared to Theravāda and Mahāyāna, making it an area with less research.

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<sup>10</sup> Dorsal anterior cingulate cortex (dACC) is a brain region that subserves cognition and motor control, but the mechanisms of these functions remain unknown. Human neuroimaging and monkey electrophysiology studies have provided valuable insights, but it has been difficult to link the two literatures. Based on monkey single-unit recordings, we hypothesized that human dACC is comprised of

a mixture of functionally distinct cells that variously anticipate and detect targets, indicate novelty, influence motor responses, encode reward values, and signal errors. As an initial test of this conceptualization, the current event-related functional MRI study used a reward-based decision-making task to isolate responses from a subpopulation of dACC cells sensitive to reward reduction.

Maria Kozhevnikov, National University of Singapore, explored how different types of meditation affect cognitive and physiological responses. She compared experienced Theravāda and Vajrayāna meditators as they practiced their respective techniques. Theravāda meditators practiced Vipassanā and Kasina meditation<sup>11</sup>, while Vajrayāna practitioners focused on Deity and Rig-pa meditation<sup>12</sup>.

During the study, Theravāda meditators showed signs of relaxation, indicated by increased HF (heart rate variability) during meditation compared to resting. In contrast, Vajrayāna practices led

to arousal, as seen by decreased HF during meditation.

Additionally, participants were given visual tests before and after meditation. Only Vajrayāna meditators showed significant improvements in performance immediately after their practice, indicating heightened alertness. Theravāda meditators didn't show any such improvement.

These findings suggest that Vajrayāna practices, unlike Theravada meditation, trigger arousal responses and enhance alertness.

<sup>11</sup> There are two meditation methods that relate to “space” (*akasa*) in Pali Buddhism: *akasa-kasina* and *akasanañcayatana*. The two used to be similar until the thoughts about them changed variedly with the progress of time. Here I have separated the Pali age into 6 periods and described their details and development.

In the early age, “space” was used for practicing both the *akasa-kasina* and the *akasanañcayatana* that made them hard to distinguish. As the age advanced, *akasa-kasina* was changed from *rupasamapatti* to *arupasamapatti* that made *akasa-kasina* and *akasanañcayatana* similar in the method of meditation.

Until Atthakatha age, the Vimuttimagga separated *akasa-kasina* into *rupakasina* and *arupa-kasina*. *arupa-kasina* of *akasa-kasina* was assumed to be *akasanañcayatana*. After that, the Visuddhimagga set the new series of *dasa-kasina* by changing *akasa-kasina* and *viññana-kasina* into *aloka-kasina* and *paricchinnakasakasina* that were used for the practice of *rupasamapatti*.

On the other hand, *akasa-kasina* and *viññana-kasina* were changed to *akasanañcayatana* and *viññananacayatana* that divide into 4 *arupasamapatti*. The literature after the Visuddhimagga references the methods in the

Visuddhimagga for practice space meditation. (Buddha’s model of Deliverance: An Analysis, Bodhendra Kumar, International Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences (IJEAS) ISSN: 2394-3661, Volume-6, Issue-8, August, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Indian Buddhists and their Tibetan followers have seen “mindfulness” as crucial for wisdom development, involving study, reflection, and cultivation. In Tibet, this formed the basis of a gradual path to enlightenment, while a simultaneous approach emphasized a state beyond regular mindfulness. Both methods are important, especially in the Nyingma tradition, which values direct Dzogchen teachings highly.

To explore mindfulness in this context, two texts by Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa (1730–1798) are analyzed: “Ocean of Qualities: Advice on Mindfulness” and “Cudgel to Discern the Real: Advice that Shines from Mindfulness and Meta-Awareness,” the latter translated here for the first time. Jigme Lingpa describes two types of mindfulness: one requiring effort and conditioning, and another unique to Dzogchen, inseparable from pure awareness or rigpa (*rig pa*). This shows how Jigme Lingpa uses mindfulness to unify Buddhist teachings and understand different practices on the Dzogchen path.

## Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to explore how different types of Buddhist meditation affect the autonomic system and attention mechanisms. We found that Theravāda and Mahāyāna meditations promote relaxation by increasing parasympathetic activation, while Vajrayāna Tantric practices stimulate by enhancing sympathetic activation. We also discussed the cultural and philosophical reasons behind these practices. Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions focus on achieving tranquility and mental stability through meditation, while Vajrayāna practices aim to induce heightened states of arousal.

Now we will discuss various meditation techniques in Buddhism and suggests that different techniques can help achieve different goals, such as peace, compassion, and enlightenment. It lists common meditation techniques found in various Buddhist traditions and emphasizes that the choice of technique depends on personal preference and current state of mind. The passage also acknowledges that each meditation technique has numerous benefits beyond what is listed, focusing on describing their intended purposes and primary aims.

## A. Developing One-Pointed

### Concentration:

#### 1. Samatha Meditation

This meditation focuses on watching our breath to calm and concentrate our mind. We can also count our breaths to help us stay focused. Instead of the breath, we can also meditate on an object like a Buddha statue or a small item. This meditation helps bring peace and clarity to our lives, especially if done regularly. Its main goal is to help us develop deep awareness, leading to ultimate peace and happiness, which Buddhists call Awakening or Enlightenment. Here is a guided meditation on practicing Samatha.

#### 2. Walking Meditation

If sitting for a long time isn't your thing, there's walking meditation! During full-day retreats, people often switch between sitting and walking meditation. For example, after an hour of sitting, they might do 30 minutes of walking. Walking meditation helps keep our focus between sitting sessions. It involves walking slowly in a small area and paying close attention to the movement of our feet.

## B. Developing Wisdom and Insight (Enlightenment):

#### 3. Vipassanā Meditation

This meditation focuses on observing sensations in different parts of your body as they come and go. In Theravada Buddhism, it's considered the most important for gaining insight into our true selves. Usually, practitioners start with calming practices before doing this meditation. Other Buddhist schools also practice Vipassanā, sometimes using analytical questioning to free them from self-grasping.

#### 4. Koans

Koans are phrases or questions that meditators focus on repeatedly. They're not meant to be solved through regular thinking; instead, they push the mind into a state beyond thoughts. The idea is that this can lead to direct realization. One famous koan is "What is your original face before you were born?"

#### 5. Shikantaza

"Just sitting," also known as Shikantaza, is a meditation without a specific object. The goal is to focus on the act of sitting while being aware of whatever comes up in your mind. Various schools may have different methods, but if insight isn't gained from koan practice, the strong concentration developed through breathing meditation or koans can lead to insight in Shikantaza. Here, practitioners can observe

the arising and passing away of all phenomena in each moment.

### C. Developing Loving-Kindness and Compassion

#### 6. Metta (Loving-Kindness) Meditation

This meditation aims to boost our sense of loving-kindness towards everyone. We start by cultivating metta, which means wishing others happiness. We begin by focusing on objects that naturally evoke feelings of loving-kindness, then gradually shift to more challenging objects, even including our enemies. This practice helps reduce our feelings of hatred and anger towards others.

#### 7. Meditation on the Sameness of Self and Others

This meditation aims at highlighting our shared humanity and that no one wants to experience suffering. By putting ourselves in others' shoes, it can increase our compassion for everyone regardless of who they are.

#### 8. Tonglen Meditation –

Tonglen, which translates to "giving and receiving," involves imagining taking on the suffering of others and giving them what they need to relieve their suffering. This practice, also called "the secret," is potent in enhancing our compassion and

diminishing selfishness and self-centeredness.

#### **D. Analytical Meditations to Enhance the Buddha's Teachings**

##### **9. Meditation on the Faults of Samsara**

This meditation examines the many sufferings that beings, especially humans, can endure. While it cultivates compassion for others, its main focus is on showing that worldly pursuits like wealth and fame don't bring lasting happiness. It emphasizes that true happiness comes from within, not from external things. This meditation is useful for reinforcing our commitment to meditation and avoiding getting caught up in the fleeting pleasures of the world.

##### **10. Meditation on our Precious Human Life**

According to the Buddha, getting a human rebirth is very rare. And even rarer is getting a human life with the right conditions for practicing his teachings. This meditation reminds us of how hard it is to get this chance to practice, so we can value and make the most of it.

##### **11. Meditation on Impermanence**

This meditation connects closely with the previous one. When we deeply understand how brief our time on Earth is,

it motivates us to practice now and not delay. Also, when we truly feel the reality of impermanence, we're more willing to accept life's changes and let go of things and people more easily, knowing that everything is destined to change.

##### **12. Meditation on Equanimity**

We often categorize people in our lives as those we love, hate, or feel indifferent towards. But according to the Buddha, these are illusions; we shouldn't attach permanent labels to things that are always changing. This meditation helps us break down the labels we've assigned to people so we can develop loving-kindness and compassion for everyone equally.

##### **13. Meditation on Remembering the Kindness of Mother Sentient Beings –**

This meditation aims to make us appreciate the kindness of our mothers, nurturing a sense of gratitude. It also encourages us to feel responsible for repaying their kindness, not just to them but to all beings who have been our mothers in past lives. This practice is especially effective in overcoming any negative feelings we may have toward our current mothers.

##### **14. Meditation on the Impurities of our Bodies –**

This meditation is aimed at reducing our desire and craving for sexual experiences. Originally taught to celibate monks by the Buddha, it helps control sexual impulses and keeps the mind focused on meditation and reaching nirvana. The meditation involves examining all parts of the body in detail, including its less appealing aspects like blood, skin, pus, and hair. This helps us see the human body more realistically and reduces the tendency to exaggerate physical beauty.

#### **E. Meditations to Allay Meditative Obstacles & Quicken One's Realization of Emptiness**

##### **15. Deity Meditations**

Vajrayāna Buddhism, including Tibetan Buddhism, incorporates many deity meditation practices. These can involve visualizing deities externally for blessings, but the most transformative meditations involve visualizing oneself as the deity. By imagining ourselves as already enlightened beings with qualities like compassion and wisdom, we help those qualities grow faster. This also helps loosen our attachment to our ordinary selves and ego. There are numerous deity practices, each school favouring different ones.

Below are some common deity practices and their purposes.

a. **Green Tara** – Seen as the female embodiment of all the Buddha's wisdom, she is considered the mother who dispels all fears.

b. **Chenrezig (4 or 1000 armed)** – Gautama the Buddha of compassion. Meditating on him increases our compassion for all sentient beings without discrimination. In the female form, he appears as Quan Yin, especially in Chinese Buddhist schools.

c. **Medicine Buddha** – meditating on his form and mantra increases our compassion and can bring healing to ourselves and others.

d. **Vajrasattva** – recognized to be the superior of all the practices to help purify our negative karma.

e. **White Tara** – she is another form of Tara, but her meditation is designed specifically to increase our lifespan so we can continue to practice Dharma and help others.

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