

## A Comparative Analysis of Philosophical Concepts of Yoga Darshan and Zen Buddhist Japanese Philosophy

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### Abstract:

**Background of the Study:** This comparative study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of two ancient and profound philosophical traditions, Yoga Darshan from India and Zen Buddhist Japanese philosophy from Japan. By delving into the intricate realms of self-realization, meditation, and the pursuit of enlightenment, this research aims to uncover the common threads and unique nuances that define both philosophies. As Yoga Darshan's emphasis on disciplined self-discovery converges with Zen Buddhism's path of direct experience, the study offers a unique opportunity to explore how yoga and zen Buddhist Japanese traditions have influenced literature, culture, and human consciousness. This comparative analysis bridges the gap between two distinct philosophical heritages and offers insights that can enrich the global understanding of human spirituality and existence. **Need of the Study:** The study embarks on a journey to unravel the threads of commonality and distinction between yoga philosophy and Zen Buddhism, two ancient and influential spiritual paths. It seeks to reveal how the practice of Za-Zen and the quest for clarity in Zen aligns with the essence of yoga's spiritual journey and self-realization. **Objective:** The objective of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis between the philosophical concepts of Yoga Darshan, originating from India, and Zen Buddhist Japanese Philosophy. The study aims to explore the core principles of yoga darshan and zen Buddhist Japanese philosophical traditions, particularly focusing on their meditation practices (za-zen in Zen Buddhism and meditation in Yoga Darshan). The research seeks to identify commonalities and distinctions in their approaches to self-realization, enlightenment (satori in Zen), and the embodiment of non-discriminatory wisdom. Furthermore, it aims to highlight how both philosophies transcend dualistic thinking and enable a holistic, nondualist perspective in cognition. **Method:** The researcher conducted an extensive review of primary texts and secondary literature related to Yoga philosophy and Zen Buddhist Japanese philosophy. This involved a comprehensive examination of key Yoga texts such as the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, as well as Zen Buddhist Japanese texts by Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. The researcher also examined case studies of literary works influenced by yoga and zen Buddhist Japanese philosophies to illustrate their impact on global literature. **Discussion:** Zen Buddhism and Yoga Darshan share common ground in their pursuit of spiritual realization through meditation practices. Both traditions emphasize the importance of quieting the mind and achieving a state of profound awareness. However, they differ in their approaches and techniques. Zen focuses on practices such as za-zen (sitting meditation), challenging the practitioner's ego-consciousness. In contrast, Yoga Darshan encompasses a broader range of practices, including physical postures (asanas), breath control (pranayama), and concentration exercises, with a goal of unifying body, mind, and spirit. While Zen emphasizes "no-mind" as the culmination of meditation, Yoga aims for "union" or "yoga" between the individual and the divine. Both traditions offer practical methods for self-cultivation and personal transformation, ultimately guiding individuals toward greater wisdom and enlightenment in their everyday lives. **Conclusion:** Through this exploration, the study concludes by emphasizing the enduring relevance of yoga and Zen Buddhism in the context of global literature, offering profound insights into their timeless wisdom. As the world evolves, the wisdom of yoga and zen Buddhist Japanese traditions continues to inspire individuals on a quest for inner peace, self-discovery, and universal interconnectedness.

**Key Words:** Zen Buddhist Japanese Philosophy; Yoga Darshan; Za-Zen; Non-Dualism

**Introduction:** In the realm of spiritual exploration and philosophical contemplation, two ancient traditions, Patanjali Yoga Darshana (*Swami Satyananda, 2006*) and Zen Buddhist Japanese Philosophy (*Suzuki, 1994*), stand as distinct yet profound paths to the realization of human potential and the quest for enlightenment. Both ancient philosophical wisdom's inventor originates from India. Yoga Darshan by Maharshi Patanjali, and Buddhist philosophy by lord Buddha. Yoga Darshan and Zen Buddhism share a cultural heritage and a foundational belief in the transformative journey toward self-realization. Rooted in different geographic and cultural landscapes, yoga darshan and zen Buddhist Japanese traditions offer unique approaches to the perfection of personhood and the attainment of spiritual wisdom. In this comparative analysis, the researcher embarks on a journey to explore the philosophical concepts that underpin Yoga Darshan and Zen Buddhism, shedding light on their commonalities and distinctions.

**Zen:** Zen Buddhism, with its origin in early Indian Buddhism, is centered around meditation and practical wisdom. The term "Zen" stems from "Chán," a Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit "dhyāna," emphasizing meditation's significance. Zen's primary focus is on the embodiment of practical, experiential wisdom (*hannyaharamitsu*) rather than theoretical or intellectual knowledge, which is considered illusory. The tradition underscores the importance of self-cultivation, a process that prioritizes practice over theory, enabling individuals to transform their psychophysiological constitution. This brief summary highlights Zen's emphasis on meditation and the practical application of wisdom, making it distinct from theoretical understanding. (*Bankei, 2000*).

#### **Practice of Meditation According to Zen:**

In Zen Buddhism, two main meditation methods are practiced. The Rinzai school primarily employs the *kōan* method, involving riddles or puzzles designed to transcend intellectual reasoning, ultimately leading to the embodiment of wisdom and compassion. The Sōtō school, founded by Dōgen, focuses on "just sitting" (*shikantaza*), a form of meditation without ego-driven interference, emphasizing practice-realization and the integration of practice and realization. While Rinzai is known for "sudden enlightenment," Sōtō follows a "gradual enlightenment" path. Both schools utilize sitting meditation as a common practice, with variations in their approach to meditational experiences and articulation. (*Dogen & Masunaga, 1979*).

#### **Rinzai School:**

The Rinzai school of Zen Buddhism, known for its rigorous approach, utilizes the *kōan* method to guide practitioners toward enlightenment. These *kōans* are formulated as

enigmatic questions or statements that challenge ordinary, dualistic thinking. A practitioner must engage with a Zen master to resolve these kōans, often involving an intense dialogue or interaction aimed at breaking through the confines of ego-consciousness. This process requires facing the limitations of conceptual thinking and directly experiencing one's true nature.

One of the most influential figures in the Rinzai school is Hakuin (1685–1768), who systematized kōans. He categorized them into five groups, each serving distinct purposes, from attaining enlightenment experiences to mastering the skilful use of language. The Rinzai school emphasizes "sudden enlightenment," emphasizing that the transformation can occur in a single moment of profound insight. (*Hakuin, 1971*)

### **Sōtō School:**

In contrast, the Sōtō school, founded by Dōgen (1200–54), relies on the "just sitting" (shikantaza) method. This practice involves sitting in meditation without any intervention from ego-logical interests, concerns, or desires. The term "just" implies maintaining pure and undefiled meditation. Sōtō Zen stresses that the practitioner engages in meditation amid the original enlightenment, making it a practice of "practice-realization." By bridging the gap between potentiality and actuality, Sōtō Zen collapses the distinction between "acquired enlightenment" and "original enlightenment." According to this school, practice and realization are non-dual, meaning they are inseparable. (*Dogen & Masunaga, 1979*)

### **Common Ground:**

While the two schools follow different approaches to meditation and enlightenment, they both emphasize the practice of sitting meditation as a means to embody wisdom and compassion. Differences in meditational experiences and articulation often stem from individual practitioners' personalities, dispositions, intellectual capacities, and linguistic abilities.

In both Rinzai and Sōtō schools, Zen practitioners engage in profound self-cultivation, transcending the limitations of ordinary, dualistic thinking to experience moments of enlightenment. Rinzai and Sōtō schools' insights not only transform the practitioner's understanding of reality but also allow them to live in harmony with themselves, others, and the natural world.

**Patanjali Yoga Sutra:** Patanjali's Yoga Darshana, a foundational text in the realm of Indian philosophy and spirituality, provides profound insights into the philosophy and practice of yoga. This ancient work, comprised of 195 sutras divided into 4 chapters; 1. Samadhi pada, 2. Shadana Pada, 3. Bibhuti Pada, 4. Kaivalya Pada, serves as a guide for seekers on the path to self-realization and spiritual enlightenment. Beyond its practical teachings on yoga and meditation, it encompasses a rich philosophical framework that underpins the entire system. (*Saraswati, 1976*)

The first chapter, Samadhi Pada, lays the foundation for the entire text, defining yoga as the "restraint of the fluctuations of the mind" and introducing the concept of Chitta Vritti Nirodha, which is the cessation of the modifications of the mind. This chapter emphasizes the importance of single-pointed concentration and the Savitarka, Nirvitarka, Savichara, Nirvichara, Savikalpa, Nirvikalpa Samadhi, setting the stage for the journey of self-realization. (Saraswati, 1976)s

Sadhana Pada, the second chapter, focuses on practical guidelines for the practice of yoga. It introduces the eightfold path of Ashtanga Yoga, including ethical principles, physical postures, breath control, and meditation. The chapter also addresses the obstacles that hinder progress on the yogic path and stresses the importance of regular practice, discipline, and cultivating a one-pointed mind. (Saraswati, 1976)

Vibhuti Pada, the third chapter, explores supernatural powers (Siddhis) that can be attained through advanced yoga practices. While describing these powers, Patanjali warns against becoming distracted by them and losing sight of the ultimate goal of Samadhi. This chapter highlights the idea that Siddhis can be a distraction and should not be the primary focus of yoga practice. (Saraswati, 1976)

The final chapter, Kaivalya Pada, addresses the concept of Kaivalya, which is the ultimate liberation and realization of the self. Patanjali describes the nature of the self (Purusha) and the mind (Prakriti), emphasizing their distinction. The chapter explains how the realization of the self leads to liberation from the cycle of birth and death (samsara) and the role of discrimination and dispassion in achieving Kaivalya. Patanjali concludes by emphasizing that when the mind reaches a state of absolute purity and knowledge, liberation is attained. (Saraswati, 1976)

The Patanjali's yoga sutra's four chapters collectively provide a comprehensive guide to the philosophy and practice of yoga, from the initial stages of concentration and ethical living to the ultimate state of liberation and self-realization. They offer valuable insights into the human experience, consciousness, and the path to spiritual awakening. (Saraswati, 1976)

### **A Comparative Exploration:**

This comparative analysis, traversing the landscapes of Zen and Yoga, they uncover shared philosophical principles and distinct methods of practice inherent in Yoga Darshan from India and Zen Buddhistjapanese philosophy from Japan. Zen Buddhism places a strong emphasis on simplicity and immediacy, where the practice of za-zen, or sitting meditation, takes centre stage. The Rinzai school employs the kōan method, using riddles or puzzles to transcend intellectual reasoning, while the Sōtō school focuses on 'just sitting' (shikantaza), a form of meditation without ego-driven interference.(Lomas et al., 2017).

In contrast, Yoga Darshan unfolds its transformative journey through a systematic roadmap to self-realization. This includes a multifaceted approach involving the practice of Yama (Self Discipline), Niyama (Internal Cleanness) asanas (physical

postures), pranayama (breath control), Pratyahara (Withdrawal of Sense), Dharana (Concentration), Dhyana (Meditation) and Samadhi (Self-Realization). The meditation practices in Yoga Darshan are disciplined and systematic, encompassing various stages as outlined in the Eight Limbs of Yoga. This systematic approach emphasizes the profound interconnectedness of all aspects of existence. The researchers recognize the significance of simplicity and immediacy in Zen, where 'here and now' is cherished as the gateway to enlightenment, offering a compelling contrast to Yoga Darshan's structured and comprehensive methods."

### **Discussion:**

The comparative analysis of Yoga Darshan and Zen Buddhist Japanese Philosophy, investigator have delved into the core principles of yoga darshan and zen Buddhism ancient philosophical traditions, focusing primarily on Yoga Darshan and Zen Buddhist Japanese Philosophy meditation practices. The researcher's exploration has revealed several commonalities and distinctions in their approaches to self-realization, enlightenment (satori in Zen), and the embodiment of non-discriminatory wisdom. (*Schlütter, Morten, 2008*)

Both Yoga Darshan and Zen place a strong emphasis on meditation as a means to attain self-realization and enlightenment. In Yoga Darshan, meditation is seen as a systematic and disciplined practice that leads to the union of the individual self (Atman) with the universal self (Brahman). Similarly, Zen Buddhism employs the practice of za-zen, which involves sitting meditation and aims to lead the practitioner to the experiential apprehension of the equality of all thing-events, culminating in satori or enlightenment.

One commonality that emerges is the focus on transcending dualistic thinking. Both traditions recognize the limitations of conventional, ego-logical, dualistic paradigms and the psychological states associated with them, such as stress and anxiety. They advocate for a shift towards a holistic and non-dualistic perspective in cognition. In Zen, the practitioner seeks to celebrate everyday life and nature with stillness of mind, while in Yoga Darshan, the goal is to realize the oneness of all existence.

While these commonalities are evident, distinctions also arise. Yoga Darshan, with its systematic approach, incorporates various stages of meditation and philosophical concepts such as the Eight Limbs of Yoga. In contrast, Zen Buddhism, especially in the Rinzai school, employs the kōan method, which uses riddles or puzzles to disrupt intellectual reasoning and drive practitioners to break through ego-consciousness.

**Table-1 Similarities between Yoga Darshan and Zen Buddhist Japanese Philosophy**

Aspect	Yoga Darshan	Zen Buddhist Japanese Philosophy
<b>Empasis on Meditation</b>	Yoga darshan emphasized discuss about (Dhyana) Meditation in Ashtanga Yoga eight limb of Yoga.	Zen Buddhistalso profound especially in za-zen (sitting meditation).
<b>Goal of Self Realization</b>	Yoga Darshan discussed aim to achieve to the self-realization.	Zen Buddhist also focus on Attainment of enlightenment (satori) through direct experience.
<b>Importance of Inner Peace</b>	Meditation as a tool for achieving inner peace	Cultivation of stillness of mind for a peaceful existence

**Table-2 Dissimilarities between Yoga Darshan and Zen Buddhist Japanese Philosophy**

Aspect	Yoga Darshan	Zen Buddhist Japanese Philosophy
<b>Philosophical Framework</b>	Systematic Eight Limbs of Yoga provide a comprehensive structure	Kōan method challenges conventional thinking, emphasizing direct experience
<b>Approach to Meditation</b>	Systematic stages of meditation, including asanas, pranayama, and concentration	Za-zen (sitting meditation) and kōan meditation, challenging ego-consciousness
<b>Concepts Used in Practice</b>	Concepts like Eight Limbs, Chitta Vritti Nirodha, and Savikalpa/Nirvikalpa Samadhi	Concepts like shikantaza (just sitting) and kōans for experiential wisdom

**Conclusion:**

This comparative analysis of Yoga Darshan and Zen Buddhist Japanese Philosophy highlights the richness and depth of yoga darshan and zen Buddhist Japanese ancient philosophical traditions. While both traditions share a commitment to meditation as a path to self-realization and the embodiment of wisdom, yoga darshan and zen Buddhist Japanese both ancient wisdoms offer distinct methods and approaches.

Yoga Darshan's systematic and structured Eight Limbs of Yoga provide a comprehensive framework for the practitioner, guiding through various stages of meditation and self-realization. Zen, on the other hand, emphasizes direct experience through practices like kōan meditation and just sitting, challenging the practitioner to transcend intellectual reasoning and dualistic thinking.

The ultimate aim in both traditions is to transcend dualism, realize the oneness of existence, and embody non-discriminatory wisdom. The yoga darshan and zen Buddhist Japanese philosophies offer profound insights into the human condition, offering paths to inner peace, enlightenment, and the celebration of everyday life.

In conclusion, the study of Yoga Darshan and Zen Buddhist Japanese Philosophy enriches understanding of human consciousness and the potential for transformation through contemplative practices. It encourages to explore the depths of inner worlds and seek a holistic, nondualist perspective in our cognitive endeavours.

**Conflict of Interest:** NIL

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