

Comparative Study of Yoga and *Prekṣā* Meditation

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Abstract

Philosophical systems are goal oriented. Know thy-self is the message of all saints and sages. *Kaivalya* in yoga system and *mokṣa* in Jainism. To achieve such a goal meditation is one of the essential tools. Man is not only rational animal but also spiritual one. Life without meditation is like horse without reins or boat without rudder.

Patañjal yoga and Jainism

Teachings of *patañjali* and *mahāvira* flourished in India. According to them ignorance is the root cause of suffering and purpose of this life is enlightenment. Spiritual teacher (*guru*) plays an important role in the path of liberation. Theory and practice are equally important in yoga and Jainism. Apparently, they are pessimistic because of teaching of *sarvaṃdukkhaṃ* but in substance they are optimistic as there is path for freedom from suffering. One can see reality as it is with help of yoga and *prekṣā* meditation.

Due to common characteristic between the two religious traditions there is ample scope for comparison.

Teachings of *patañjali* and *mahāvira* are equally useful even today. Though we see apparent similarities between two mediation techniques there are differences also.

This paper is a small attempt to study similarities and differences between yoga and *prekṣā* meditation.

Key words: Yoga, meditation, *prekṣā*

Introduction

There are different goals in different philosophical systems (*darśana*). *Kaivalya* in yoga system and *mokṣa* in Jainism. To achieve such a goal meditation is one of the essential tools. Man is not only rational animal but also spiritual one. Life without meditation is like horse without reins or boat without rudder.

Patañjali Yoga and Jainism

Teachings of *patañjali* and *mahāvira* flourished in India. According to them ignorance is the root cause of suffering and purpose of this life is enlightenment. Spiritual teacher (*guru*) plays an important role in the path of liberation. Theory and practice are equally important in Yoga and Jainism. “Yoga is the practical path of realization of the theoretical ideals of

sāṃkhya philosophy” Apparently, they are pessimistic because of teaching of *sarvaṃdukkhaṃ* but in substance they are optimistic as there is path for freedom from suffering. One can see reality as it is with help of meditation techniques.

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Prekṣā Meditation

Bharata Chakravarti was the founder of *prekṣā* meditation. The word *prekṣā* has two component parts; *pra* and *ikṣā*. ‘*Pra*’ means special with intensity and ‘*ikṣā*’ means survey, overall looking. So *prekṣā*

means look or observe carefully or minutely. ĀcāryaTulsi reintroduced this meditation in India. This meditation is popular in *Terāpanth* tradition. *Śvāsaprekṣā*, *śarīraprekṣā*, *kāyotsarga* and *āntaryātrā* are the four bodies of *prekṣā* meditation. This is a universal, scientific technique to observe the mind and body.

Yoga Meditation - Yoga *darśana* is one of the important *darśanas* of Indian philosophical discipline; *darśana* means direct experience. Yoga- *darśana* gives direct experience of the spiritual realm. Yoga speaks about mind, mental modification, and realization of self. Patanjali defines yoga as yoga is cessation of mental modifications. *Yoga darśana* is also called *Rājayoga-śāstra*, *Bhāratīyamānasa-śāstra* and *Pātañjala- yoga- śāstra*.

The system of yoga is so called because it teaches the means by which individual soul (*jīvātmāna*) can be united with universal soul (*paramātmāna*) and secure liberation. The word Yoga is derived from Sanskrit *√yuj* which means join. Yoga advocates control over body, senses and mind

Yamanīyamāsanapraṇāyāmapratyāhāradhāraṇādhyānsamādhayo 'ṣṭāvāṅgāni

Yama(curb), *niyama*(observance), *āsana*(postures), *prāṇāyāma*(control of breath), *pratyahara* (withdrawal of senses from their sensual objects), *dhāraṇā* (concentration of mind), *dhyāna*(meditation) and *samādhi* (intense contemplation) are the eight limbs of yoga. *Yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra* are the external limbs.

Mind's fixity on particular region is called *dhāraṇā*

Dhyāna is continuous flow of mind towards that object.

Similarities between yoga and prekṣā meditation

- 1) By practice of *prekṣā* and yoga meditation wisdom supposed to be

developed. For *prekṣāpajñā* and for yoga (*ṛtambharāprajñā*). There arises wisdom.

- 2) Enlightenment is the result of *prekṣā* and yoga meditation. By *prekṣāmokṣa* is said to be attained and by yoga meditation goal is attained which is known as *Kaivalya*.
- 3) Destruction of ignorance takes place in *prekṣā* meditation. yoga meditation destroys ignorance.
- 4) One can see one's own nature with help of *prekṣā* and yoga meditation.
- 5) Cycle of birth and death ceases by practice of *prekṣā* and yoga meditation.
- 6) Purpose of yoga and *prekṣā* meditation is the realization of self. Observe the soul through the medium of soul" The soul abides in itself.
- 7) (Postures) *āsana* is one of the important limbs before yoga and *prekṣā* meditation.

Differences between yoga and prekṣā meditation

- 1) With help yoga meditation one can experience supernormal powers. But *prekṣā* meditation is not for any supernormal powers.
- 2) With help of yoga meditation, one can achieve concentration. But purpose of *prekṣā* meditation is not achieve concentration but purification. The aim of *sādhakais* to achieve purification of the mind. The *Prekṣāsādhaka* does not practice meditation to achieve concentration"
- 3) One can learn *prekṣā* meditation. But One cannot teach yoga mediation because it happens.
- 4) No imagination is involved in *prekṣā* mediation as object of concentration is breath but in yoga meditation some kind of imagination is involved

because object of concentration is image of God or deity.

- 5) One cannot create *citta* with help of *prekṣā* mediation but with help of yoga mediation one can create *citta*.
- 6) The purpose of *prekṣā* mediation is *cittanirodhabut* purpose of yoga meditation is *cittavṛttinirodha*. Yoga is cessation of mental modification.
- 7) Noble silence is required to learn *prekṣā* mediation but to learn yoga mediation noble silence is not required.
- 8) One can practice *prekṣā* mediation in any position. But for practice of yoga mediation cross legged position is necessary. According to Badarayana, contemplation is possible only in sitting posture. Śankara explains this as “It is difficult to concentrate while running or walking as any kind of movements tends to cause distraction. We cannot fix attention on subtle object in standing position, since mind

is then partially occupied in keeping the body erect. The reclining position too is unsuitable as one may feel drowsy. A sitting posture avoids all these faults.

- 9) In *prekṣā* mediation *anuprekṣā* is important but in yoga mediation no place for *anuprekṣā*.

Conclusion:

Teachings of *patañjali* and *mahāvira* are equally useful even today. Yoga and *prekṣā* meditations are popular in India and abroad. Both are scientific and universal techniques to observe the mind and body.

Though we see apparent similarities between two mediation techniques there are important differences also which we cannot neglect.

Any kind of meditation is useful for spiritual progress

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