



## VIPASSANĀ MEDITATION COMPARISON TO YOGA

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### Abstract:

#### Introduction:

Yo ca vassasatam jive dupañño asamāhito |  
 Ekaham jivitam seyyo, pañnavantassa  
 zāyino ||<sup>1</sup>  
 (Buddha)

It is better to live single day with pursuit of knowledge and meditation than to live hundred years dull and with wandering mind.

#### What is vipassana?<sup>2</sup>

In the Pali language of the early Buddhist texts, vipassana means insight. It is often used to describe one of the two main categories of Buddhist meditation (the other being samatha or tranquillity).

Meditation which means to see things as they really are, is one of India's most ancient techniques of meditation. It was taught by Buddha in India more than 2500 years ago as a universal remedy for universal ills, i.e.

Rinpoche says “The gift of learning to meditate is the greatest gift you can give yourself in this life”.<sup>3</sup> Every Philosophical system is goal oriented. To achieve such goal meditation is one of the essential tools. Life without meditation is like horse without reins or boat without rudder. Among all spiritual discipline meditation is the highest.

#### Buddhism, Jainism and Yoga

Teachings of Buddha, Mahāvira and Patañjali flourished in India. In the beginning they are pessimistic because of teaching of sabbe sankhara dukkha or sarvaṃ dukhaṃ but in the end they are optimistic because we find path freedom

from suffering. They gave equal importance to theory and practice. Ignorance is the root cause of suffering and purpose is enlightenment.

Due to common characteristics between these traditions there is ample scope of comparison. This paper focuses similarities and differences between vipassanā and yoga meditation.

#### Vipassanā Meditation

One method of exploring inner world is vipassanā meditation. The dictionary meaning of the word vipassanā is inward vision, insight, intuition and introspection. The word vipassanā is composed of prefix vi and passa. Before time of Buddha meditation was one-hour morning and one-hour evening activity. Buddha taught meditation is like a constant phenomenon like breathing then only it transforms your life.

#### Vipassanā Meditation Stages In The Practice

See also: Four stages of enlightenment  
 Vipassanā jhanas are stages that describe the development of vipassanā meditation practice as described in modern Burmese Vipassana meditation. Mahasi Sayadaw's student Sayadaw U Pandita described the four vipassanā jhanas as follows: 4

1. The meditator first explores the body/mind connection as one, nonduality; discovering three characteristics. The first jhana consists in seeing these points and in the presence of vitakka and vicara. Phenomena reveal themselves as appearing and ceasing.

2. In the second jhana, the practice seems effortless. Vitaka and vicara both disappear.  
 3. In the third jhana, piti, the joy, disappears too: there is only happiness (sukha) and concentration.  
 4. The fourth jhana arises, characterised by purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. The practice leads to direct knowledge. The comfort disappears because the dissolution of all phenomena is clearly visible. The practice will show every phenomenon as unstable, transient, disenchanting. The desire of freedom will take place.

Eventually Vipassanā-meditation leads to insight into the impermanence of all phenomena, and thereby lead to a permanent liberation.<sup>5</sup>

### Yoga Meditation

The word yoga is derived from sanskrit yuj which means to join. According to Patanjali yoga means cessation of mental modifications. Yogaḥ cittavṛtti nirodhaḥ.<sup>4</sup>

Yamaniyamāsanaprāṇāyāmpratyahārahāraṇā dhyānasamādhyoḥaṣṭāṅgāni |<sup>5</sup>

Yama (curb), niyama (observance), āsana (posture), prāṇāyāma (control of breath) pratyāhāra (withdrawal of the senses from their sensual objects) dhāraṇa (concentration of mind), dhyāna (meditation) and samadhi (intense contemplation) are the eight limbs of Yoga.

Yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma and pratyāhāra are the external limbs.

Deśabandha cittasya dharaṇā<sup>6</sup>

Mind's fixity on particular region is dhāraṇa

Tatrapratyayaikatānatā dhyānaṃ<sup>7</sup>

Dhyāna is a continuous flow of the mind towards that object.

### Similarities Between Vipassanā And Yoga Meditation

- By practice of vipassanā and Yoga meditation that wisdom is supposed to develop. For vipassanā paññā and for yoga ṛambharā prajñā.
- Enlightenment is the result of vipassanā and Yoga meditation. By vipassanā nirvāṇa

is said to be attained. And by Yoga meditation it's known as kaivalya.

- One can get knowledge of four noble truths by practice of vipassanā and Yoga meditation.
- Vipassanā and Yoga meditation destroys the ignorance.

### Differences Between Vipassanā And Yoga

- One can teach vipassanā meditation to another person but no one will teach Yoga meditation because it happens.
- In vipassanā meditation no verbalization or visualization is involved. But in Yoga meditation some kind of verbalization is involved.
- No imagination is involved in vipassanā meditation. Because starting point of vipassanā meditation is ānāpāna observation of normal natural breath. Breath is not an imagination. But in Yoga meditation imagination is involved. Object of Yoga meditation is image of God which is imagination.
- One can practice vipassanā meditation in any position. But one can practice Yoga meditation in cross-legged position only. According to Badarayana contemplation is possible only in sitting posture. Sankara explains this "it is difficult to concentrate while running or walking as any kind of movements tends to cause distraction. We cannot fix attention on subtle objects 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.<sup>8</sup>
- The purpose of vipassanā meditation is to realize emptiness of self. But purpose of Yoga meditation is to realization of self. Tadā draṣṭu svarupe avasthānam.<sup>9</sup>
- Person is aware of the body during vipassanā meditation. But person is not aware of the body during Yoga meditation.
- Person can experience sensation during vipassanā meditation but one cannot experience sensation during Yoga meditation.
- To learn vipassanā meditation posture is not prerequisite. But to learn Yoga meditation posture is necessary. Āsana is

one of the important limbs of noble eight fold path.

- Noble silence is necessary to learn vipassanā meditation. But to learn Yoga meditation noble silence is not necessary condition.

#### Conclusion:

Vipassanā, yoga and meditative techniques are useful today. They are popular in India and abroad. Vipassanā meditation one can learn in 10 days. The object of meditation is normal natural breath which is common to all. So this meditation universal and anybody can practice it. The purpose of vipassanā meditation is citta nirodha. This is also called cessation of perception and sensation (saññā vedayita - nirodha) this is higher stage compared to citta vrtti nirodha.<sup>10</sup>

No one will teach yoga meditation because it happens. The object of meditation is not universal and sometimes imaginary. So everybody chooses his or her favorite deity. The path of yoga is difficult to practice. If there is any mistake in the practice then there could be an adverse effect on the health. (ayukta abhyāsa yogena sarvarogasamudbhavaḥ).<sup>11</sup>

We observe that vipassanā meditation and yoga has distinct features. Though we find apparent similarities there are important differences. Thus Vipassanā meditation is practiced very easily as compared to the practice of yoga.

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