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Theory and Practice of Meditation

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**Delving into Mindfulness with Yogic and Buddhist Methodologies**:

A Closer Look at a Brief Comparison and Contrast,

With an Outline of My Personal Preference

As I ponder the ways in which I should possibly begin to compose this paper in conclusion of our Introduction to Meditation course, I refer back to the journal entries of mine that I remember (for the class has just recently turned them into the instructor) and filter through the trials and errors for the deeper meaning of it all: specifically, “What have I Iearned, how have I changed, and which of the two primary disciplines/practices taught resonates more clearly and boldly within my soul?” These are the profound questions that have come across my *Swa Dharmic* (personal Path’s) perspective, a Sanskrit (ancient language of India) term that means, according to the below-cited source, “*one’s own* (‘*Swa*’) universal law or principle that 'sustains' or 'upholds' the entire world (‘*Dharma*’)” (Aksharpith).[[1]](#footnote-1) I have recently realized, that through my many attempts--successful and failed--to center my Self and meditate within my unique Oneness, that I have come that much closer to achieving my true “Vantage Point”: “a place of sober-minded initiation of conducive decision-making, with better questions and better answers to those questions” (Ballenger). Maybe I have begun to ascend to the Zenith of my fullest and aspiring potential, with the careful help of taking heed of this *Mantra* I created toward the start of the semester: “I am the Light that illuminates my Path to Oneness.”

To commence the one of the central focuses of this work, I will demonstrate some connectivity and separation between Yoga and Buddhism, to later be followed by my developed interpretation of each and which one of the two is most favorable to me.

As attributed to the Vedanet site I discovered, and referring to class notes and pensive contemplation, Yoga emphasizes the pivotally present spiritual growth and the development of the vital “Self” identity (*Atma* or *Purusha*), for which an individual quietly yearns, while Buddhism somewhat rejects that teaching by enhancing the concept of the “non-Self” (*Anatman*). Buddhism often holds the view that the Self is simply a fictitious aspect of the mind, with the disregard for the Self as a distinctly recognized entity or being, as it is, to the practitioners of Buddhism, merely a fixation of the ego. Buddhists, also, like Siddhartha Gautama, him-Self (the acclaimed original Buddha, or “Enlightened One”), regularly practice asceticism, especially in monk-hood, which is the open rejection of the pleasures of the flesh (which is the opposite of hedonism) for a more meager and modest way of living.

On the other hand, the Yoga-Vedanta aspect of meditation theory and practice reinforces the concept of the realization of the true “you,” so-to-speak, and such an individual’s transparent nature. “The Self transcends the mind-body complex” within this discipline, say the writers of the American Institute of Vedic Studies. Insight into “the Sun of Truth” is a key component of initial *Rig Veda* texts (the most ancient compilation of Hindu sacred verses, comprised mainly of hymns to a variety of deities). Buddhism, however, turned away from the authority of the *Vedas* and many of their principles, despite the fact that Buddhism shared and still shares a number of their teachings, such as *Karma* (the culmination of a person's deeds and behavior throughout the successive stages of the person's periods of living--thought to determine the person's destiny) and rebirth. Regardless of these differences, Yoga and Buddhism are similar in that they are meditation practices that engender motivation and spirit toward realizing one’s whole and undivided consciousness, while transcending *Karma* and rebirth for a marvelous revelation of being-ness, if you will. They possess connections that can never be torn asunder, and bespeak a long-beloved and -honored manner of “seeing” and “seeking” to uplift one’s mind to the highest heights of space and time, forever One with the prevailing and celestially beautiful Cosmos of pervasive enigma and Truth.

Now, it is time to interpret and harness conclusions with respect to the comparative factors of Yoga and Buddhism and my preferences in touching upon their individual and conjoined methods.

I have experienced quite a journey in search of Self-actualization and -fulfillment and wonder since January, when the spring semester began, and when our class was asked to suffer some level of back-ache and ignore the many *Vrittis* (the act of formulating conceptions from individual thoughts that appear in the mind) that introduce and re-introduce themselves to our already straining conscious awareness. But, it was not long until the class members, at their own distinct and sometimes coinciding points in time, were finally able to understand the inspiring and preconception-altering qualities to theorizing about, and practicing, the often harmoniously engaging meditation idealism.

Through this interesting process, during the especially practiced sitting meditation with *Asana* posture, *Mantra*-uttering, *Yantra*-drawing and -painting, *Pranayama* breathing, *Brahma-Vihara* meditation states (and more), I feel more centered within my Self and more capable of making positively charged and balanced decisions with, more than likely, more favorable results. This will continue, I believe, throughout my entire life, as long as I keep these new lessons in mind: Practice **mindfulness** with diligence and fortitude; remember that **non-doing** is meant to assist me in developing the art of awareness by way of action without much conscious effort (the natural way); and keep mental equilibrium (*Upekkha*), lovingkindness and the capacity for friendship (*Metta*), empathy and compassion (*Karuna*), and sympathetic and appreciative joy (*Mudita*) (the ***Brahma Viharas***). These I know will help to guide me along my Path to discovering and cherishing my true nature (which leads me to the newly realized preference of Yogic meditation).

The reasons I tend to lean toward the Yoga side is that I thrive upon the idea of, and the means by which, I come to know my Self--particularly, the “Supreme Self” of the Vedanta teachings. It is irrevocably significant and life-changing for me to encounter a state of being within All That I Am that pulls me in more deeply into the realm of Whom I Can Become. While I nod my head in appreciation for the non-Self concept and traditional concurrence of Buddhism, I consider my outlook on life to be a little more on the hedonist tilt. (This is the ethical theory that the pursuit of pleasure is an essential and irreplaceable facet to human existence.) What I mean by “pleasure” is that one should rethink the import the aesthetically suitable has for him/her, and the reality that, without that which is “pleasing,” such as eating delicious food or creating works of art, we as a species would have died out a long time ago--from sheer boredom and/or just plain apathy.

Stated by Adam Ballenger in class one day, *Karma* in Buddhism explains past actions, oftentimes, while the same term in Yoga typically describes present-to-future actions. Naturally, I am more inclined to focus upon that which I can do to help me progress in a more conducive manner for my overall success and fulfillment, rather than dwell within the pool of dread and regret--and occasional joy--of past experiences. Also, within Yoga, the term *Krama* refers to something “orderly in Time” when pertaining to steps along the Path. I can clearly conceptualize this, as I am one who believes that Time is, inevitably, a powerful and universal presence in every life that has ever been. Moreover, *Vinyasa* speaks to me, in that it means “sequential steps” and begs the question, “What’s next? What else can I do to improve my Self and more greatly edify Who I Am?” In this multi-faceted word, I see Ellen Marie Drummonds thriving more than surviving, ever-intertwined with the obstacle-ridden yet glorious Path to Intention, with each step reflecting this very sense of motivation toward a peak of presiding graciousness and splendor. Yoga, in and of itself, is definitely a time-honored tradition and practice that has moved me to proactively love and live my life to its most breath-taking extent.

I have gleaned so much stunningly important knowledge and wisdom from this course, and am so grateful for the way in which it was taught and the techniques we as a class utilized to further our Selves in our harrowing journey. I have witnessed a tremendous flourishing in my Self along my *Swa Dharma*, and have performed Good Deeds that have strengthened such a sense of *Karma*. I am forever changed for the better.

*“Do not look for happiness outside yourself. The awakened seek happiness inside” (Peter Deunov, author).*

Works Cited

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1. This term is ever-tied with “the Yoga and *Vedãnta* side of Hindu *Dharma*” (Frawley and Frawley). “*Vedãnta*” signifies the ‘Conclusion of the *Vedas*’. (The) school of thought embodied in the *Upanishads* (often thought to form the core of Hindu teachings) which reveal the conclusive teachings of the *Vedas*, centering primarily on the nature of the *ãtmã*, the world, reality and personal experience” (Aksharpith). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)