

## Vipashyana and Preksha

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If the term yoga can be taken as a common noun to indicate an ancient Indian meditation, the terms like 'Hatha,' 'Pātañjala' etc. may be said to be the proper nouns. Vipashyana also may be included among such particular meditations. This meditation, however, had lost its tradition on Indian soil. Recent events have proved its Indian origin. On the other hand, the continuity of the basic nature of that meditation is now found in preksha. In order to understand the Preksha, therefore, one has to turn to the tradition of the Vipashyana.

Vipashyana is well known among the Buddhists in the countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bangala Desh, Burma, etc. It is also accepted in some other sects like Rajaneeshism. In the present context, however, we are concerned only with the Vipashyana procedure which is handed down through a Burmese tradition. Venerable U Ba khin received the traditional procedure of Vipashyana which might have been acquired by the Burmese monks from those who were originally trained in India. Respected Satyanarayan Goenka is one of the direct disciples of U Ba Khin. The later has formed the present Institutionalised expression of the Vipashyana procedure. U Ba Khin, in a way, is responsible for the reincarnation of Vipashyana. Shri Goenkaji further institutionalised it in such a way so as to fit it in the Indian setting.

While tracing this journey of the Vipashyana, one has to note that the outward loss of the techniques like Vipashyana does not prove their complete non-existence. Even in India, in some Buddhist monastery, monks may be knowing and preserving the practice of Vipashyana, without making it known to the 'non-bhikkhu—'s. Such an esoteric practice is, of course, out of the scope of the present consideration. U Ba Khin and Goenkaji made Vipashyana open for non-Buddhist also. In other words, Vipashyana, like any other ancient Indian yoga system, became free from a cultish condition—so free that any other religious cult can freely accept it (even non-religious meditational techniques). Goenkaji has added another aspect to the tradition of Vipashyana, namely, he encouraged the production of literature in Indian languages so as to explain the procedure and profits of that meditation. This view itself is at the root of the research and development of Vipashyana. And here lies the seed of Preksha also.

About ten Jain munis and twenty-two Jain nuns participated in the Vipashyana course organized at Bhadreswar in 1973. Since then Vipashyana

was spreading more and more amongst the Jains. Aṇarya Tuṣi arranged special Vipashyana camps led by Goenkaji at Delhi and Ladnu for the monks and nuns of his own Saṅgha. Further his chief disciple Yuvaṇarya Mahapragya (Muni Nathmal) started teaching Vipashyana by giving it a new name of Preksha<sup>1</sup>.

‘Vipashyana’ and ‘Preksha’ are the popular spellings of the Sanskrit words *vipaśyanā* and *prekṣā* respectively. It is well-known that the influence of Sanskrit is a special mark of the later phases of Jainism as well as Buddhism. Those later phases developed the philosophical and other literature in Sanskrit. The meditational technique, however, did not produce any formula or hand book in Sanskrit. Does this indicate that, during the period, Vipashyana was being preserved only in the region where influence of Sanskrit was absent? Whatever may be the reason, in the Burmese tradition, the Vipashyana meditation is centred round the Pali word *vipassanā*, and not the Sanskrit word *vipaśyanā*. To find out the Jain expression of Vipashyana, therefore, we have to turn to Ardhamagadhi, another Mid-Indian language, like Pali, and not to Sanskrit.

So, if one has to search for the Jain origin of Vipashyana, he should turn to the Ardhamagadhi literature, and not the Jain Sanskrit one, though Yuvaṇarya Mahapragya has preferred the Sanskrit term *prekṣā*. It would have been better if Venerable Mahapragya would have chosen some Ardhamagadhi equivalent for the Pali term *vipassanā*. Discovery of Ardhamagadhi equivalent of Pali *Vipassanā* would definitely lead to the better understanding of the original nature of the process of Vipashyana, because, in the words of Yuvaṇarya Mahapragya, ‘the Jains have the fundamental theories of Vipassana, but the practice is lost. These fundamentals help us to estimate that at some time this technique was practised by the Jains. It is a fact that Bhagawan Mahavir used to practise this technique’.<sup>2</sup>

On this background, let us consider the attempts towards the research in the Jain canon to find out the corresponding expressions for Vipashyana. *Āyāro* is the foremost scripture of the Jain canon. One who has read it cannot be unacquainted with the word *logavipassi*. According to Mahapragya, *loga* or *loka* means ‘the body’, and *vipassi* means ‘penetrating observer.’ A meditator is to observe the body. Mahapragya further writes, ‘In *Āyāranga* we have both the words *vipassi* as well as *samprekṣā*. After practising the technique of *Vipassanā*, I got the opportunity to go deeply into the meaning of both these words. It is not at all amazing that both the streams of same *samaṇa* tradition had Vipassana or Sampreksha.’

Goenkaji construes the *Āyāranga* sentence as follows :

आयतचक्षु लोवविपस्सी  
एस वीरे पसंसिते ।

आसमस्थ तम  
आत्मस्थ मम  
तव हो सके  
आश्चर्य जम

He comments on this sentence as follows :

The word *loga* is derived from *luj*—, to destroy. Body, a collection of atoms, is destroyed at each and every moment. And one, who discerns his body, acquires clear insight. Such a person is, indeed, a hero and, therefore, the praiseworthy one<sup>3</sup>.

The full *Āyāra* passage may be quoted as follows :

आयतचक्खू लोगविपस्सी लोगस्स ग्रहेभागं जाणति, उड्ढं भागं जाणति, तिरियं भागं जाणति, गढिए अणुपरियट्टमाणे । संधिं विदित्ता इह मच्चिएहि, एस वीरे पसंसिते जे बद्धे पडिमोयए ।<sup>4</sup>

It may be noted that in the place of लोग० and ग्रहे० we have variant readings लोक० and ग्रहो०.

It can be said that it does not matter if we have not exact word to word correspondance for Vipashyana in Jain Ardhmagadhi canon. Conceptual correspondance also has the equal value. It has been pointed out, for example, that there is a verse in the *Uttarajjhayana*<sup>5</sup> which says.

A meditator monk who  
desires good concentration  
Needs less food,  
but appropriate food,  
Needs the guidance of  
an experienced, wise person  
And needs a suitable  
and secluded place.

—And, it may be noted that, all these three are readily available in a Vipashyana camp.

In this manner, we can put forth the verbal and conceptual similarities which lead us to the common origin of Preksha and Vipashyana. Semantically also there is not difference. Preksha (as it is popularly spelt) can be said to be an abbreviation of Sanskrit word *samprekṣā* (sam-pra-īkṣ), where as Vipashyana (as popularly spelt) is originally Pali *vipassanā* (vi passa).

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1. See Muni Shri Vinod Chandarji's article, 'Jain Mumukshus and Vipassana', reprinted in *Vipassana Journal*, pp. 125-128.
2. "A Journey into the past with Vipassana", *ibid*, p. 121.
3. Goenkaji's public discourse, published in *Vipassana* (Monthly), year 13, issue 12, p. 2.
4. *Āyārāṅga* I. ii. 5. 4.
5. XXXII. 4.

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