



Ashtanga Yoga in The Vaikhānasa Tradition : A Comparative Theistic Interpretation with Patanjali's Yogic Vision

Dr. Ramakrishna Ganjam

Asst. Professor, Department of Vaikhānasa Āgama, Sri Venkateswara Vedic University, Tirupati

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Abstract - This paper offers a comparative study of the aṣṭāṅga yoga systems described in the Yoga Sūtras of Maharshi Patanjali and the Vimānārcana Kalpa of the Vaikhānasa Āgama as expounded by Maharshi Marīchi. While Patanjali's path is introspective and centered on the cessation of mental fluctuations, the Vaikhānasa approach presents yoga as a theistic journey, culminating in loving service to the Supreme Being. The paper analyses individual limbs of yoga—particularly yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhyāna, dhāraṇā, and samādhi—highlighting both convergences and divergences. The Vaikhānasa emphasis on saṁguṇa dhyāna, inner visualization of the Lord's blissful form, and the ultimate experience of jīvanmukti through devotional samādhi reveals a unique synthesis of yogic discipline and bhakti. Through this exploration, the paper illuminates how the Vaikhānasa tradition preserves a distinctive and sacred vision of yoga rooted in Vedic ritual, devotion, and divine realization.

Keywords : Vaikhānasa Āgama, Patanjali Yoga, Aṣṭāṅga Yoga, Marīchi Maharshi, Vimānārcana Kalpa, Saṁguṇa Dhyāna, Dhāraṇā, Samādhi, Bhakti Yoga, Jīvanmukti, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Vedic Ritual, Temple Worship, Hindu Philosophy.

Introduction- Yoga holds a place of paramount importance in Indian culture. It is the fundamental strength behind the pursuit of meditative disciplines and various modes of devotional practice (upāsana) as prescribed in the Vedas and Upanishads. From the time of Maharshi Patanjali, numerous sages have expounded the science of yoga through aphorisms, verses, and elaborate commentaries, offering profound insights to humanity.

This spiritual and philosophical wealth of yoga is not confined merely to the classical yogic texts but also occupies a central role within the Āgama traditions. Among these, the Vaikhānasa, Pāñcarātra, and Śaiva Āgamas ascribe great significance to yoga in the context of divine worship—be it icon worship (vighrahārdhana) or liṅgārchana. Yoga serves as a bridge between internal realization and external ritual.

In the Vaikhānasa tradition, Maharshi Marīchi delineates the principles of yoga with remarkable clarity in the Vimānārcana Kalpa, a core text of the Vaikhānasa Āgama. His treatment of the aṣṭāṅga-yoga

path presents both convergences and divergences when compared to the classical aṣṭāṅga-yoga system outlined by Maharshi Patanjali in his Yoga Sūtras.

This paper seeks to explore the philosophical parallels and distinctions between these two systems, while also highlighting the distinctive place and function of yoga within the Vaikhānasa Āgama tradition.

Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga: A Foundational Overview- The classical system of Yoga, as codified by Maharshi Patanjali, is deeply rooted in the philosophical framework of the Sāṅkhya Darśana attributed to Sage Kapila. Comprising 196 aphorisms (sūtras), the Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali outline the renowned eight-limbed path (aṣṭāṅga-yoga), which has served as a spiritual guide for seekers across diverse traditions, including those of Vedānta, Advaita, and other schools that emphasize liberation (mokṣa) through meditative absorption.

The eight limbs of this yogic discipline—yama (ethical restraints), niyama (observances), āsana (posture), prāṇāyāma (breath control), pratyāhāra (withdrawal of senses), dhāraṇā (concentration), dhyāna (meditation), and samādhi (absorption)—serve as progressive stages in mastering the mind and attaining inner stillness.

योगश्चित्तवृत्ति निरोधः तदा द्रष्टुः स्वरूपेऽवस्थानम्¹

Succinctly captures the goal of Yoga: liberation through the complete stilling of mental fluctuations and abiding in the pure awareness of the self.

While Patanjali's system culminates in samādhi, the Āgamic traditions present a broader and more ritual-integrated vision of yogic attainment. In these traditions, spiritual realization is not seen as the end of the journey, but rather as the beginning of continued divine service and ritual participation.

In this context, the Āgamas, and particularly the Vaikhānasa Āgama, carry forward the yogic vision by embedding it within the framework of temple worship (arcana) and deity-centric devotion. The next section explores the importance and unique role of Yoga as presented by Maharshi Marīchi in the Vimānārcana Kalpa, thereby situating yogic practice within the Vaikhānasa tradition.

The Role and Significance of Yoga In the Āgama Tradition with Special Reference to the Vaikhānasa Sampradāya

The Āgama scriptures form the ritual and theological foundation of various schools of deity worship in the Hindu tradition. These include the Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Śākta, Gāṇapatya, Saura, and Kaumāra traditions, each of which outlines modes of devotion and ritual worship—such as vighrahārādhanā and liṅgārcana—to their respective deities. Within the Vaiṣṇava school, two primary branches of Āgamas are recognized: the Vaikhānasa Āgama and the Pāñcarātra Āgama.

These Āgamas delineate the paths of devotion through four essential divisions: Carita, Kriyā, Yoga, and Jñāna. Notably, the Vimānārcana Kalpa, a principal text of the Vaikhānasa tradition, offers profound insight into this quadripartite structure. A significant verse from the 85th chapter of the Vimānārcana Kalpa reads:

अथातो मरीचिं मुनयः प्रणम्य चरितक्रिया ज्ञानयोगेषु चतुर्षु पूजामार्गेषु चरितं भगवता विखनसा सूत्रे विस्तरेण प्रणीतम्।

अन्यत्सङ्क्षेपेणोक्तं, तदुपन्यासो बहुप्रयोगक्रमेण क्रियामार्गस्त्वया प्रणीतः। भगवत्तत्त्वज्ञानयोगं च श्रोतुमिच्छाम इति अयाचन्त।²

¹. Yogadarshanam, p.1 s 2, 3

This passage indicates that unlike in the Śaiva and Pāñcarātra Āgamas, where the carya (conduct) section outlines service to the deity, the Vaikhānasa tradition refers to this segment as carita, which is primarily the lifestyle rooted in the sūtras of Sage Vikhanasa.

In the Vaikhānasa system, the Kriyā Mārga encompasses detailed procedures such as temple construction, icon-making, installation (pratiṣṭhā), worship (arcana), ritual bathing (snāpana), festivals (utsava), and expiations (prāyaścitta). The Carita Mārga emphasizes Vedic samskāras (eighteen in number), pañcamahāyajñas, and adherence to scriptural duties through tapas and dhyāna, leading towards mokṣa. The Yoga Mārga elaborates on the aṣṭāṅga yoga system, while the Jñāna Mārga deals with the metaphysical knowledge of the Supreme Being.

Importantly, each path—Carita, Kriyā, Yoga, and Jñāna—is distinct yet complementary. Even if a devotee primarily follows one path, the remaining aspects are inherently present and support the overarching goal of liberation through divine service. However, among these, the Kriyā Mārga holds a place of prominence in the practical Vaikhānasa tradition, especially with its focus on vighrahārādhana, or worship of Lord Viṣṇu in divine form.

Yet, this ritual worship is not isolated from inner disciplines. For one to be eligible to perform such sacred acts, the practitioner must be grounded in the Carita Mārga through samskāras, cultivated in knowledge of Viṣṇu (Jñāna Mārga), and disciplined through yogic restraint (Yoga Mārga).

This integrated view is beautifully expressed in the verse prescribing the qualifications of a priest (archaka):

श्रीवैखानससूत्रेण निषेकादिक्रियान्वितः। आध्यात्मगुणसंयुक्तः नित्यस्वाध्यायतत्परः।

वृत्तवान् सत्यवादी च स्नानशीलश्च योगवित्। गृहस्थो ब्रह्मचारी वा भक्तैर्वाचनमारभेत्॥³

Here, the terms निषेकादिक्रियान्वितः (initiated through the samskāras), स्वाध्यायतत्परः (committed to scriptural study), and योगवित् (proficient in yoga) underscore that the priest's eligibility stems from holistic adherence to all four disciplines.

Similarly, the Jñāna Kāṇḍa of the Vaikhānasa tradition, attributed to Sage Kaśyapa, emphasizes that the ācārya—who conducts major rituals such as pratiṣṭhā and brahmotsava—must possess yogic strength:

वैखानसविदः शिष्टान् वेदतत्त्वार्थदर्शिनः सौम्यान् जितेन्द्रियान् शुद्धान् विष्णुवाकारधरानात्मारामान् ज्ञानामृतानन्दहृदयान् नृहापोहविधानेन ध्वस्तनंशयमानसान् ध्यानयुक्तान् ब्रह्मरत्नमयान् विप्रान्...⁴

The attributes जितेन्द्रियान् (self-controlled) and आत्मारामान् (self-content) clearly allude to the necessity of yoga in the life of a qualified ācārya.

Thus, Yoga is not an optional adjunct but an essential, inseparable part of the Vaikhānasa tradition, deeply woven into the spiritual fabric of ritual, knowledge, and righteous living. Its integration with ritual action (kriyā) and inner realization makes the Vaikhānasa path a complete and holistic spiritual pursuit.

². Vimānārcana Kalpaḥ – Paṭala 85

³. Kriyādhikāraḥ, chapter 16, v.7

⁴. Kāśyapa Jñāna Kāṇḍa, chapter 12

Divergence in Ethical Disciplines: A Comparative Study of Yama and Niyama in Patanjali's Yoga Sūtras and Marīchi's Vimānārcana Kalpa

One of the significant areas of philosophical and practical divergence between Patanjali's classical yoga system and the yogic framework described in the Vimānārcana Kalpa of the Vaikhānasa Āgama lies in the interpretation and enumeration of yama (ethical restraints) and niyama (observances). While Patanjali's system is widely accepted for its precise codification of these disciplines, Maharshi Marīchi offers a broader and uniquely devotional perspective rooted in the Vaikhānasa tradition.

The Vimānārcana Kalpa introduces the aṣṭāṅga yoga system as follows:

अथातो अष्टाङ्गयोगं वक्ष्ये जीवात्मपरमात्मनोर्योगो योग इत्यामनन्ति यमनियमाऽऽसन प्राणायाम प्रत्याहार ध्यान धारण समाधय इति योगाङ्गानि।⁵

Here, yoga is defined not as citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ (cessation of mental modifications) as in Patanjali's Samādhi Pāda (1.2), but as the union of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul (jīvātma-paramātma-samyogaḥ), emphasizing a theistic and bhakti-oriented orientation.

Yamas (Ethical Restraints)

Patanjali enumerates five yamas in his Sādhana Pāda

अहिंसा सत्यम् अस्तेयं ब्रह्मचर्यं अपरिग्रहाः यमाः ॥⁶

Marīchi, however, expands this into ten qualities, as described:

यमस्य लक्षणम्—तेषु यमः अहिंसा, सत्यम्, अचौर्यं, गृहस्थस्य स्वदारनिरतिरन्येषां सर्वत्र मैथुनत्यागः, दया, आर्जवम्, क्षान्तिः, धैर्यम्, मिताशनम्, शौचम् इति यमगुणा दशधा भवन्ति।⁷

अहिंसा (non-violence), सत्यम् (truthfulness), अचौर्यं (non-stealing) appear in both systems.

Divergence in Brahmacharya- Patanjali prescribes total celibacy, while Marīchi permits conjugal relations with one's lawful spouse (gṛhasthasya svadāranirataḥ), making a contextual distinction suitable to the gṛhastha āśrama. Aparigraha (non-possessiveness): Included by Patanjali but notably absent in Marīchi's list, where instead qualities like dayā (compassion), ārjava (sincerity), kṣānti (forbearance), and dhairya (courage) are emphasized.

Additional Qualities: Mitāśanam (moderate eating) and śauca (cleanliness) are counted as yamas by Marīchi, whereas Patanjali categorizes śauca under niyama.

Niyamas (Personal Observances)

Patanjali's niyamas, as stated in Sādhana Pāda, are:

शौचं सन्तोषं तपः स्वाध्याय ईश्वरप्रणिधानानि नियमाः ॥⁸

⁵ Vimānārcana Kalpaḥ, Paṭala 96

⁶ Sādhana Pāda (2.30)

⁷ Vimānārcana Kalpaḥ, Paṭala 96

⁸ Sādhana Pāda (2.32)

Marīchi lists ten niyamas, reflecting a more theistic and ritual-integrated approach:

नियमस्य लक्षणम् — नियमस्तु तपः, सन्तोष, आस्तिक्य, दान, विष्णुपूजा, वेदार्थश्रवण, कुत्सितकर्मसु लज्जा, गुरूपदेशश्रद्धा, मन्त्राभ्यासः, होमः इति नियमगुणा दशधा भवन्ति।⁹

तपः (austerity), सन्तोष (contentment) are present in both lists.

Divergence in Īśvarapraṇidhāna: Patanjali's concept of surrender to God is interpreted more specifically in Marīchi's system as viṣṇu-pūjā (worship of Lord Viṣṇu).

Expanded Framework- Marīchi includes additional observances such as:

Āstikya (faith in Vedas and God), Dāna (charity), Vedārtha-śravaṇa (listening to Vedic teachings), Laajjā in kucitakarmas (modesty in inappropriate acts), Guru-upadeśa-śraddhā (faith in the Guru's teachings), Mantra-abhyāsaḥ (practice of mantras), Homāḥ (sacrificial offerings).

These additions strongly reflect the devotional and ritualistic ethos of the Vaikhānasa tradition, positioning niyama not merely as personal discipline, but as a vehicle for sacred engagement.

Conclusion of Section: This detailed comparison highlights that while the structural terminology of aṣṭāṅga yoga is retained in both systems, the philosophical grounding and practical applications diverge considerably. The Patanjalian model is oriented toward samādhi through viveka and inner stillness, whereas the Vaikhānasa model incorporates a bhakti-laden, deity-centric sādhanā, in which yama and niyama become preparatory instruments for qualifying the practitioner in temple-based worship and liberation through service to Lord Viṣṇu.

Āsana and Prāṇāyāma in the Vaikhānasa Tradition- In the aṣṭāṅga yoga system, āsana and prāṇāyāma serve as vital preparatory stages for deeper contemplative and ritual engagement. While Patanjali offers succinct definitions emphasizing meditative purpose, the Vimānārcana Kalpa enriches these practices with specificity, symbolism, and a strong connection to worship.

Regarding āsana, Patanjali provides a terse but profound definition:

स्थिरसुखमासनम्¹⁰ “Āsana is a posture that is steady and comfortable.”

Patanjali does not list specific postures, implying that any posture conducive to prolonged meditation with comfort and stability qualifies. His focus is clearly on enabling dhyāna and samādhi through bodily stillness. However, Maharshi Marīchi, in the Vimānārcana Kalpa, outlines nine distinct āsanās with evaluative gradation based on their appropriateness for worship and contemplation:

आसनानि नव भेदानि ब्राह्म स्वस्तिक पद्म गोमुख सिंह मुक्त वीर भद्र मयूराः। इत्येतेषु ब्राह्म, स्वस्तिक, पद्मासनानि उत्तमानि, गोमुख, सिंह, मुक्तानि मध्यमानि, वीर, भद्र, मयूराणी अथमानीति विज्ञायते।¹¹

This classification reflects a deeper functional perspective where āsanās are chosen not just for meditative stability but also for ritual propriety. The emphasis is on physical readiness that harmonizes the

⁹ Vimānārcana Kalpaḥ, Pāṭala 96

¹⁰. Yoga Sūtra, Sādhana Pāda 2.46

¹¹. Vimānārcana Kalpaḥ, Pāṭala 96

body with the devotional intent of arcana. Among these, brāhma, svastika, and padmāsana are marked as superior, denoting their suitability for sacred acts.

Turning to prāṇāyāma, Patanjali describes it with characteristic brevity:

तस्मिन् सति श्वासप्रश्वासयोः गति विच्छेदः प्राणायामः¹² “Prāṇāyāma is the regulation of the movements of inhalation and exhalation.”

This is a general principle highlighting the role of breath control in stilling the mind and preparing for sensory withdrawal. Though the three modes—rechakā (exhalation), pūrakā (inhalation), and kumbhaka (retention)—are implied, they are not elaborately explained in Patanjali’s system. In contrast, Maharshi Marīchi offers a detailed and mystically rich explanation of prāṇāyāma, identifying it as the harmonious unification of prāṇa and apāna:

प्राणापानसमानयोगः प्राणायामः। रेचक, पूरक, कुम्भक इति स त्रिविधो भवेत्। निश्वासविसर्गो रेचकः। निश्वासोऽध्मानं पूरकः। निश्वासनिरोधनं कुम्भकमिति।¹³

This is followed by an esoteric instruction involving the internal movement of the breath through energy centers (nāḍīs) and vital zones (marma sthānas), as well as visualizations of divine energy centers:

प्राणमपानेन संयोज्य देहमध्ये रेफबीजान्वितं वह्निमण्डलं प्रवेश्य...अमृतं स्रवन्तमिन्दुमण्डलं... अर्कमण्डलं... तत्रस्थ पुरुषं पश्येत्...¹⁴

Through this multilayered process, prāṇāyāma is elevated from a mechanical discipline to a spiritual tool for inner ritual and self-transcendence. This approach reflects the Vaikhānasa tradition’s commitment to harmonizing yogic practice with temple worship and theistic realization.

Thus, while Patanjali offers foundational guidance rooted in meditative minimalism, Maharshi Marīchi expands these limbs into a sophisticated system tailored to the needs of the archaka, seamlessly blending yoga with devotion and ritual action. These practices prepare the aspirant not only for inner purity and self-mastery but also for external eligibility in divine service.

Pratyāhāra in Vaikhānasa Yoga: Beyond Sensory Withdrawal

The fifth limb of aṣṭāṅga yoga—pratyāhāra—marks a crucial transition from external discipline to internal concentration. In Patanjali’s Yoga Sūtras, it is defined in purely psychological terms:

स्वविषयासंप्रयोगे चित्तस्य स्वरूपानुकार इव इन्द्रियाणां प्रत्याहारः ॥

ततः परमावश्यतेन्द्रियाणाम्॥¹⁵

Here, pratyāhāra is described as the withdrawal of the senses from their respective objects, wherein they follow the nature of the mind, turning inward. As a result, the senses become perfectly restrained and obedient, laying the groundwork for deeper meditative states. However, the Vimānārcana Kalpa of the

¹².Yoga Sūtra, Sādhana Pāda 2.49

¹³.Vimānārcana Kalpaḥ, Paṭala 96

¹⁴. Vimānārcana Kalpaḥ, Paṭala 96

¹⁵. Yoga Sūtra – Sādhana Pāda, 2.54–55.

Vaikhānasa tradition expands this concept with more vivid and embodied practices, blending physical, mental, and energetic disciplines. Maharshi Marīchi introduces *pratyāhāra* as a fivefold process:

अथातः प्रत्याहारः पञ्चधा भवति। इन्द्रियाणां सर्वेभ्यो विषयेभ्यो बलादाहरणम्, आत्मनि सर्वमात्मवदीक्षमाणं, विहितकर्माणि बहिर्विना मनसाकृतं, पादाङ्गुष्ठादिमूर्धान्तम् अष्टादशमर्मस्थानेषु वायुमारोप्य, धारयित्वा स्थानात् स्थनादूर्ध्वतोऽधस्ताच्च समाकर्षणं, नाडीमार्गेषु वायुमारोप्य, निरोधनमिति च।¹⁶

According to this description, *pratyāhāra* in the Vaikhānasa system is not limited to passive sensory withdrawal. Rather, it is an active, dynamic process involving:

This fivefold method emphasizes that *pratyāhāra* is not merely detachment from sense objects but is a fully integrated yogic exercise involving visualization, breath control, mental focus, and spiritual perception. While Patanjali focuses on turning the senses inward under the guidance of the mind, Marīchi's system employs internal yogic *kriyās* that purify and prepare the practitioner for the higher states of *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi*. It also aligns with the Vaikhānasa emphasis on integrating *tapas* and *mantra-abhyāsa* with *arcana*, even when performed internally.

Dhyāna, Dhāraṇā, and Samādhi: A Comparative Philosophical View in Vaikhānasa and Pātañjala Traditions

In the classical *aṣṭāṅga* yoga system of Maharshi Patanjali, the three higher limbs—*dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi*—are sequentially ordered and collectively known as *saṁyama*, which forms the basis for attaining extraordinary spiritual powers and insights. In the *Vibhūti Pāda*, Patanjali defines them as follows:

देशबन्धश्चित्तस्य धारणा “*Dhāraṇā* is the fixation of the mind on a specific locus.”

तत्र प्रत्ययैकतानता ध्यानम् “*Dhyāna* is the uninterrupted flow of concentration on that object.”

तदेवार्थमात्रनिर्भासं स्वरूपशून्यमिव समाधिः¹⁷ “*Samādhi* is the absorption wherein only the object remains, and the self-sense disappears.”

According to this view, the practitioner first fixes the mind on a particular location—such as the navel, heart, throat, tip of the nose, or between the eyebrows—this is *dhāraṇā*. When this focus becomes continuous and unbroken, it becomes *dhyāna*. Eventually, when the meditator merges with the object of meditation to such a degree that only the object remains in consciousness, that state is called *samādhi*. Patanjali emphasizes the impersonal absorption and the transcendence of individuality, often leading to *siddhis* such as levitation, omniscience, and *parakāya-praveśa* (entering another body). In contrast, the *Vimānārcana Kalpa* of the Vaikhānasa Āgama presents different sequence—*dhyāna*, *dhāraṇā*, and then *samādhi*—and emphasizes devotional meditation on the personal form of the Supreme Being. This variation is not merely structural but deeply philosophical.

The text describes meditation as:

¹⁶. *Vimānārcana Kalpa*, Pāṭala 97.

¹⁷. *Yoga Sūtras* – *Vibhūti Pāda*, Sūtras 1–3

अथातो ध्यानं वक्ष्ये। परमात्मनो जीवात्मना चिन्तनं ध्यानं। निष्कलं सकलं इति तत् द्विविधम्। निष्कलं देवैरप्यनभिलक्ष्यमदृश्यं स्यात्।

सकलं द्विविधं निर्गुणं सगुणं चेति।¹⁸

Here, dhyāna is described as contemplation (cintana) of the Supreme Being (paramātman) by the individual self (jīvātman), divided into two types—saguṇa (with form and attributes) and nirguṇa (formless and beyond attributes). The nirguṇa aspect is said to be imperceptible even to the gods, while saguṇa is further divided into sākāra forms such as Viṣṇu, Puruṣa, Satya, Acyuta, and Aniruddha. The practitioner first meditates on the auspicious divine form (divya maṅgala vighraha) of the Lord, cultivating deep devotion and visualizing the Lord's iconographic features with reverence. Following this, dhāraṇā is undertaken—not as abstract mental fixation, but as the internalization and stabilization of that meditative image. The Vimānārcana Kalpa states:

अथातो धारणानि अष्टधा भवन्ति। तेष्वाम्नि यमादिगुणयुक्त मनसा स्थितिः, हृत्पद्मान्तराकाशे बाह्याकाशे धारणं च, पृथिव्यादि महाभूतेषु पञ्चसु देवानां पञ्चधारणानि, हृत्पद्ममध्ये परमात्मानन्दविग्रहधारणमिति।¹⁹

Dhāraṇā here is described in eight forms:

Mental concentration through the control of the preliminary limbs (yama, niyama, etc.), Contemplation within the heart-lotus (hṛt-padma) and external space,

Visualization of the five elemental deities in the corresponding bodily elements (pañca-mahābhūtas), Establishing the blissful form of the Supreme in the heart center.

Thus, dhāraṇā in the Vaikhānasa tradition is more than mental concentration; it is devotional stabilization (sthiti) of the divine presence within, connected deeply to bhakti and arcana. The sādḥaka is not merely concentrating but lovingly holding the form of the Lord in their inner vision.

Finally, the text describes samādhi as follows:

अथातः समाधिं वक्ष्ये – जीवात्म परमात्मनोऽस्मावस्था समाधिः। यथा अनुष्णोपलमादित्यदर्शनादुष्णत्वमाश्रितमिव, परमात्मदर्शनात् प्रत्यगात्मा नित्यशुद्धबुद्धमुक्तस्वभाव परमानन्दमयत्वं प्राप्य, परमात्मानं नारायणं सदा पश्यत्यनुभवत्येव। अष्टाङ्गयोगमार्गेण नित्यमणिमाद्यैश्वर्यं च प्राप्नोति। जीवन्मुक्तो भवेत्।²⁰

Samādhi here is described as the samyavasthā—complete merging—of the individual self with the Supreme. A vivid metaphor is employed: just as a cold stone becomes hot through exposure to the sun, the individual soul, by constant meditation and dhāraṇā of the Supreme Lord's form, attains qualities akin to the Divine. The practitioner becomes nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta-svabhāva, perceives and experiences the Lord always, and attains liberation while still embodied (jīvanmukti). The siddhis mentioned in classical yoga are also attainable, but are secondary to the experience of divine union.

This treatment of samādhi underscores the Vaikhānasa philosophy of Lakṣmī-viśiṣṭādvaita, where the Supreme is both transcendent and immanent, nirguṇa and saguṇa. The highest goal is not formless absorption

¹⁸. Vimānārcana Kalpaḥ, Paṭala 97.

¹⁹. Vimānārcana Kalpaḥ, Paṭala 98.

²⁰. Vimānārcana Kalpaḥ, Paṭala 100.

but eternal service (nitya-kainkarya) to the personal form of Lord Nārāyaṇa, attained through meditative devotion and internal worship. While certain yogic mechanisms are shared with the classical path, the emphasis on seeing, serving, and merging with the sākāra-paramātmā sets the Vaikhāṇasa approach apart as a distinct and theistic refinement of yogic realization.

Conclusion- The comparative exploration of aṣṭāṅga yoga as presented in Patanjali's Yoga Sūtras and Marīchi Maharshi's Vimānārcana Kalpa reveals both philosophical consonance and spiritual divergence. While Patanjali's path emphasizes the inner purification and psychological stillness necessary for transcendental realization, the Vaikhāṇasa tradition integrates these yogic disciplines within a rich framework of personal devotion and temple worship.

In the Vimānārcana Kalpa, the limbs of yoga—yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhyāna, dhāraṇā, and samādhi—are not treated as abstract tools of mental mastery alone, but as sacred practices that prepare the aspirant for bhagavad-ārādhana, or divine service. The emphasis on saṅga dhyāna, the visualization and stabilization (dhāraṇā) of the blissful form of Viṣṇu, and the experience of divine presence through samādhi, underscore the theistic and devotional heart of the Vaikhāṇasa yogic path.

Whereas Patanjali's system culminates in kaivalya—isolation of the puruṣa from prakṛti—the Vaikhāṇasa system culminates in jīvanmukti and eternal kainkarya (service) to the Lord, highlighting a profound philosophical distinction. In the Vaikhāṇasa view, yoga is not merely a means to liberation, but a sanctified journey towards loving communion with the ever-present, ever-gracious Nārāyaṇa. In light of this, it becomes clear that the Vaikhāṇasa Āgama preserves within its ritual framework a fully developed yogic vision, one that is inseparable from its vision of dharma, devotion, and liberation. By examining these nuanced parallels and divergences, one not only appreciates the depth of the Vaikhāṇasa tradition but also gains insight into how yoga, far from being monolithic, expresses itself uniquely within diverse Vedic streams—each guiding the seeker toward the same eternal truth.

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