

Jain Yoga of the 6th Century: Haribhadra's Yogabindu

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Haribhadra provides an early glimpse into the reception of Yoga, reinterpreting its philosophy in light of Jain karma theory. This paper will examine the Yogabindu's analysis of karma, its five-fold Yoga, and its descriptions of religious practices such as paying attention to dreams, recollection of past lives, fasting, and performance of devotional ceremonies. The Yogabindu gives a succinct summary of Jain philosophy and practice.

The five-fold Yoga of the Yogabindu specifies that the practitioner of Yoga must traverse the following three stages: introspective Self-reflection (adhyātma), Cultivation (bhāvanā), and Meditation (dhyāna). These three actively wear away binding karmas. This leads to the spontaneous practice of Equanimity (samatā) and the final stage of Quieting Fluctuations through which one destroys karmas (karma-kṣaya).

The Yogabindu describes ritualized activities that enhance spiritual purification and advancement. These include reverence toward those who have already attained a state of spiritual elevation, the performance of pūjā, control of appetite, and the practice of prayer or japa. These austerities wear away the negative influences of past karma. They cut the knots of attachment (granthi-bheda) so one may reach freedom (mukti) (175-209). These ritualistic undertakings lead to a mind state (citta) characterized as profound (gambhīra, 403).

Other topics covered in the Yogabindu include religious pluralism and critiques of Buddhist, Sāṃkhya, and Vedānta teachings. Haribhadra positively affirms the common goal of freedom from bondage across all traditions. The 527 verses of the text encapsulate Jainism, providing a comprehensive view of the faith and its practice as found in the 6th century. The text also helps one understand Yoga's cross-cultural, inter-religious, and international appeal.

Author: CHAPPLE, Christopher (Loyola Marymount University)

Presenter: CHAPPLE, Christopher (Loyola Marymount University)

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