

How and why do the Jains abandon their Bodies?: *Kāyotsarga* according to *Yogaśāstra* of Hemacandra

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Who does not know the colossus of Śravaṇa Beḷgoḷa? Bāhubali, a saint of ancient Jainism, standing on the small hill of the sacred place of Jainism in Karnāṭaka, India, keeps himself motionless with his arms at his side in the meditative posture for ten of hundreds years. This posture is called *kāyotsarga* which literally means abandoning of one's body. Practicing *kāyotsarga* is highly recommended to Jaina mendicants as well as lay-followers. It means this practice is very common and popular among the Jains.

In this paper we are going to explore how and why the Jains practise *kāyotsarga* based upon *Yogaśāstra* by the Jaina monk-scholar Hemacandra in 12th century.¹ Though the book mainly discusses duties required for Jaina lay-persons, it gives us essential and wide information on this subject.

The *kāyotsarga* is usually regarded as a part of six daily necessary duties of the Jains along with worship etc.² Hemacandra explains the *kāyotsarga* in auto commentary on YŚ III-123 which shows the rules of action in temple. The verse runs;

Having entered there, according to the rules, one should circumambulate the jina three times, then, having worshiped him with flowers, etc., one should praise with excellent hymns.³

In the auto commentary, *kāyotsarga* follows *ālocanā* and *pratikramaṇa*. According to Hemacandra, one who is going to perform it should recite a part of *ĀvS*. To quote the first portion;

*tassa uttarīkaraṇeṇaṃ pāyacchitakaraṇeṇaṃ visohīkaraṇeṇaṃ visallīkaraṇeṇaṃ
pāvāṇaṃ nigghāyaṇaṭṭhāe ṭhāmi kāussaggaṃ //*⁴

By reciting this, the performer declares how and why he/she does the *kāyotsarga*. Let us check details of this sentence following Hemacandra's interpretation shown in the auto commentary.⁵ First *ṭhāmi* (Skt. *tisthāmi*) does not mean "I sand", but "I do, perform" (Skt. *karomi*), and object of this action or performing is *kāyotsarga* or abandoning of body with motion. Then what is the purpose of the action, or why does he /she do this? It is performed in order to cutting off bad karmas. In this sentence the word *kamma* (Skt. *karman*) does not designate mere physical acts but karmic matters such as knowledge obstructing (*jñānāvaraṇīya*) which make us remain in cycle of rebirths or *saṃsāra*.

Then how we can cutting off the karmic matters, or with what kind of instrument the karmic matters can be eliminated from our soul? The immediate method or instrument for it must be *kāyotsarga* itself.⁶

There are three instruments, so to say, that help *kāyotsarga*; partial purification (*pāyacchitta*, Skt. *prāyaścitta*), complete purification (*visohi*, Skt. *viśuddhi*), and picking out 'arrow' (*visallī*, Skt. *viśalya*).⁷ These four including *kāyotsarga* are in cause-result relation one after another. Partial atonement, for example, causes *kāyotsarga*, partial atonement, in turn, is caused by purification.

About complete purification, Hemacandra gives no detailed explanation, but he points out that 'arrow' in this context means mental illusion (*māyā*) etc.⁸ With these instruments we abandon acts of our body to destroy bad karmic matters. But completely or partially? Of course even if we move some portion of our body during the

kāyotsarga, it does not mean to break the practice. First we can exhale because we cannot stop exhalation and without it our life will end. Other acts we can do during the *kāyotsarga* are; inhalation, coughing, sneezing, yawning, belching, passing gas, giddiness, swooning, slight movements of phlegm⁹ and the eyes.¹⁰ Hemacandra adds that we do not break the *kāyotsarga* even if we take some clothes to cover our body when fire, lightning or meteor spread over the air.¹¹

Then how long should we keep the posture of *kāyotsarga*? It should be kept for a period during which we declare a homage to the *arihantas* or 24 *tīrthaṃkaras*.¹² This means, judging from the context, that we chant this phrase in our mind but not in voice because, as we have seen before, basically we cannot move our body which include the mouth too. For the duration of *kāyotsarga*, Williams says that it “is to be marked by the the recitation of the *pañca-namaskāra*.”¹³ As we mentioned just above, however, it is not the whole five mantras that mark the period but homage to the honourable ones or 24 *tīrthaṃkaras*. Hemacandra says it more clearly that one keeps the posture for period measured with 25 breathings.¹⁴ We can easily count how many times we breathe. Even then, a text which seems to be written before the time of Hemacandra shows a standard measure of breathing during the *kāyotsarga* as follows;

Breaths used as a measure of time are known as *pāda-sama* (‘equal to a metrical foot’). This measure of time must be kept in mind during the *kāyotsarga*.¹⁵

Following this statement, the duration of 25 breathing is equal to 25 *pādas*, and this means that we must keep *kāyotsarga* for chanting (of course in mind) six *ślokas* and one *pāda* because one *śloka* consists of four *pādas*. Though any verses with that length can be chanted, Hemacandra suggests, as shown above, that those for praising the honourable ones are recommended. Malayagiri, a junior contemporary of Hemacandra and commentator on the work quoted above, clearly mentions that hom-

age of 24 (honourable persons) ending with 'caṃdesu nimmalayarā' should be chanted in mind during the *kāyosarga*.¹⁶ The *pāda* quoted here is the first part of ninth verse of second chapter in ĀvS and six verses before it, i. e., verses the third to the eight express homage to the 24 *tīrthaṃkaras*.¹⁷ Thus, we can conclude that during the *kāyotsarga* six verses with one *pāda* in ĀvS should be chanted to pay homage for the 24 *tīrthaṃkaras*.

Moreover, we can break the posture even if a small animal like cat or mouse moves around us. And the same is the case when a thief or a king disturbs us or a snake bits us well as others such as monks.¹⁸ These interruptions are allowed because the reasons to cause them are all irrelevant to person who practise the *kāyotsarga*.

There are three types of *kāyotsarga* posture according to Hemacandra; uprighting, seated, and lying.¹⁹ Among them, the first two are well known and mentioned above. The last one, which reminds us of Buddha lying on the earth when he was just to get *nirvāṇa*, is somehow strange. Standard reference books on Jainism do not mention this.²⁰ This posture seems to not be performed by *tīrthaṃkaras* or ordinary mendicants because we have never seen statues or pictures of them in this posture. Then who is supposed to take this posture? Hemacandra explains the standard posture as follows;²¹

The position in which one indifferent towards the body [and in which] one is either seated or standing with both the arms hanging down, that is called *kāyotsarga*.²²

Explaining this, Hemacandra says that this posture of standing is for mendicants who live alone (*jinakalpika*) or for those who will be saviours (*chadmasthatīrthakaras*). For ordinary ones or mendicants who live in group (*sthavirakalpika*) the expression of standing or sitting is a kind of synecdoche. They can per-

form *kāyotsarga* in the position of lying in accordance with their own abilities. The Jains classify humans into six classes in terms of strength of their joints. *Tīrthaṃkaras* or those to be *tīrthaṃkaras* have the strongest joints, therefore they can perform *kāyotsarga* in any postures. Ordinary mendicants living in group also could do so, but some of them who have weak joints can do only in lying posture.²³ Here we see the flexibility of Jainism or Jaina mendicant rules. Generally the Jainism is famous for their rigorous rules of daily life for mendicants as well as for lay-persons. For example, the formers do not use any vehicle to move from one place to another during wandering. Aged mendicant, however, can stay one place in dry season during which normal monks and nuns must wander with bare feet. The same is the case here on *kāyotsarga*.²⁴

This *kāyotsarga* of lying was not coined by Hemacandra but has a long history. A verse of *Āvaśyakaniryukti*, traditionally ascribed to Bhadrabāhu,²⁵ reads as follows:²⁶

If a person in sitting performs *dharma* and *śukla* meditations, it should be known as *kāyotsarga* in sitting.²⁷

According to the commentator Haribhadra, this meditation in sitting should be performed by a sick or aged person. Therefore, even a mendicant who can not stand or sit for 25 breathings can do *kāyotsarga* properly. Hemacandra gives varieties of posture more than ten, for example, that of curved mango (*āmrakubjyāsana*). We are not sure if these postures refer to *kāyotsarga* or not.

References and Abbreviations

Primary Sources

ĀNi = ĀvS with Niryukti of Bhadrabāhu, and Vṛtti of Haribhadra. Mumbai 1916.

ĀvS = *Āvaśyaka Sūtra* in “Dasaveyāliyasuttaṃ Uttarajhayaṇāim and Āvassayasuttaṃ,” ed. by Muni Puṇyavijaya and A. M Bhojak. Bombay 1977.

SS = *Sarvārthasiddhi* of Pūjyapāda on *Tattvārtha Sūtra*. Ed. by C. S. Mallinathan. Jaipur 1951.

TS = See SS.

YŚ II, III = *Yogaśāstra* of Hemacandra. Ed. by Muni Jambuvijaya. Delhi, Ahmedabad and Bhavnagar 2009.

VBh = *Vyavahāra Sūtra* with Niryukti, Bhāṣya, and Vivaraṇa of Malayagiri. Ed. by Muncan-
dra. Surat 2010.

VBh M = See VBh.

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1 For the life and writings of Hemacandra, see Wiley [2004: 95].

2 Cf. Willams [1983: 184].

3 *praviśya vidhinā tatra triḥ pradakṣiṇayeḥ jinam / puṣpādibhis tam abhyarcya stavanair ut-*
tamaiḥ stuyāt //

For translation of this verse, refer to Qvarnström [2002: 70].

4 Quoted in YŚ II p.582.

5 We refrain from quoting the whole original text. For that, please refer to YŚ II, p.382, l.9
~p.383, l.11.

6 6. *kāyotsargakaraṇam uttarakaraṇam, tena pāpakarmanirghātānā bhavati*. (YŚ II p.638,
l.2. The term *uttarīkaraṇa* used in the sentence usually means secondly instrument or
method, but here we understand it to denote “dominant one”).

7 The term *prāyaścitta* usually denotes atonement for the wrong mendicants have done. But
here Hemacandra (and the ĀvS itself) talks rites performed by lay-follower. Therefore we
understand it in general meaning.

8 For variety of *śīlya*, see SS on TS VII-19.

9 “*Suhamehiṃ khelasamcālehiṃ*” (Skt.comm. *sūkṣmebhyaḥ khelasya śleṣmaṇaḥ,*
sañcārebhyaḥ). We are not sure what this phrase actually denote. Does it mean a kind of
palpitation? Hemacandra explains as follows; *ātmano hi vīryayuktadravyatayā antaḥ*

- sūkṣmaśleṣmasañcārah sambhvatī... (YŚ II p.684, 1.11).*
- 10 Compare translation by Williams [1983: 212] which shows some different understandings.
 - 11 YŚ II. p.685, 1.5; *yadā agner vidyuto vā jyotiḥ sprśati tadā prāvaranāyopadhigrahaṇaṃ kurvato na kāyotsargabhaṅgaḥ /*
 - 12 YŚ II. p.685, 1.5: *yo tatparimāṇaḥ kāyotsargas tasmin pūrṇa eva 'namo arahaṃtāṇaṃ' iti vaktavyam.*
 - 13 Willams [1983: 214].
 - 14 YŚ II. p.686, 1.10: *pañcaviṃśatyucchvāsamānaṃ kālaṃ yāvad....*
 - 15 VBh M on 112. p.69, 1.21: *caturviṃśatistavaḥ 'caṃdesu nimmalayārā' iti pādaparyantaḥ kāyotsarge cintanīya iti bhāvaḥ.*
 - 16 VBh M on 112. p.69, 1.21: *caturviṃśatistavaḥ 'caṃdesu nimmalayārā' iti pādaparyantaḥ kāyotsarge cintanīya iti bhāvaḥ.*
 - 17 See ĀvS sūtras 38~44.
 - 18 Cf. YŚ II. p.684, 1.10~11.
 - 19 YŚ II. p.794, 1.3: *sa ca kāyotsarga ucchrita-niṣaṇṇa-śayitabhedena tredhā.*
 - 20 For example, Jaini [1979: 190] says "... kāyotsarga, abandonment of the body (standing or sitting motionless for various lengths of time)".
 - 21 I'm glad to mention that Dr Yang Yong Sun from Tonggok Univ., Korea, kindly informed me on the Hemacandra's reference to this portion.
 - 22 YŚ III -133 (p.1068): *prambitabhujadvandvam ūrdhavasthasyāsitasya vā/sthānaṃ kāyānapekṣaṃ yat kāyotsargaḥ sa kīrtitaḥ //* For English translation, we follow that of Quarnström [2002: 99].
 - 23 As we will see afterwards, aged mendicants or those with some physical difficulties can take this posture.
 - 24 On the flexibility of Jaina mendicant rules on aged one, for example, see VBh 2258.
 - 25 There are several monks called Bhadrabāhu in the Jaina tradition. See Wiley s.v.
 - 26 Dr Kawasaki Yutaka from Univ. of Tokyo kindly informed me reference on *kāyotsarga* in ĀvNi.
 - 27 ĀvNi 1000: *dhammaṃ sukkaṃ ca duve jhāyati jhānāi jo nisaṇṇo u/ eso kāussaggo nisa-nusio hoti nātavvo //*