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Speak Up

REDISCOVERING THE JOGA BATRĪSĪ: NEW MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE FROM A JAIN YOGA RESEARCH STAY IN PUNE

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Introduction

During my current research stay in Pune with the International School for Jain Studies (ISJS), I have been working intensively on a little-known vernacular Jain yoga text titled *Joga Batrīsī* (“Thirty-Two Verses on Yoga”). This compact didactic composition, attributed to the Śvetāmbara monk Pārśvacandra (ca. 16th century), represents an important yet previously understudied witness to Jain engagements with yogic discourse in early modern western India.

While Jain yoga has increasingly attracted scholarly attention in recent years, research has focused primarily on Sanskrit treatises such as Hemacandra’s *Yogāsāstra* or later scholastic works. Vernacular compositions preserved in manuscript collections (particularly short mnemonic verse texts intended for pedagogical use) remain largely unexplored. The *Joga Batrīsī* therefore offers a valuable opportunity to reassess how Jain authors participated in wider ascetic and yogic conversations while maintaining distinct doctrinal priorities.

Discovery of a Second Manuscript Witness

An important development during my research stay has been the identification of additional manuscript evidence relating to the *Joga Batrīsī* tradition: The initial manuscript studied was preserved in the collection of the Ācārya Śrī Kailāśasāgara Sūri Jñānamandir (AKGM) in Koba. This manuscript not only transmits the *Joga Batrīsī* attributed to Pārśvacandra but also



contains a second didactic poem of thirty-two verses “The 32 verses of Svadhyay”, attributed to Samaracandra Sūri, explicitly identified in the manuscript as a disciple of Pārśvacandra.

This internal lineage reference suggests that the manuscript preserves a small teacher–disciple corpus structured around parallel didactic compositions, each consisting of thirty-two verses. Such paired textual formations are characteristic of Jain pedagogical traditions, where mnemonic verse units were organised according to thematic clusters.

During discussions in Pune with Mahopādhyāya Śrī Bhuvanacandra Muni, the present head of the Pārśvacandra-gaccha, further confirmation was obtained regarding the traditional attribution of these works. Significantly, he indicated that additional manuscript material connected to this textual tradition may survive within gaccha collections. Shortly thereafter, he kindly shared images of another manuscript witness related to the *Joga Batrīsī* corpus.

This development opens promising new possibilities for comparative philological work, including the reconstruction of textual variants, transmission history, and pedagogical usage contexts.

Research Questions

The emerging manuscript evidence raises several important research questions:

- How widely did the *Joga Batrīsī* circulate within Śvetāmbara monastic networks?
- What role did such vernacular yoga compositions play in doctrinal instruction?
- How should we interpret the relationship between the yoga-themed text attributed to Pārśvacandra and the svādhyāya-focused composition of his disciple?
- To what extent do these texts reflect participation in trans-sectarian yogic discourse involving subtle-body imagery, breath regulation, and aṣṭāṅga frameworks?

These questions are particularly relevant for understanding how Jain authors engaged with shared ascetic vocabularies while maintaining a soteriological emphasis on karmic purification, equanimity, and ethical discipline.



Preliminary Observations

Initial analysis suggests that the *Joga Batrīsī* adopts a vocabulary familiar from wider yogic traditions (including references to *nāḍīs*, *prāṇāyāma*, *ajapā-japa*, and *aṣṭāṅga yoga*) yet it consistently reorganises these elements within a Jain ethical framework grounded in the five great vows (*mahāvratā*) and the triadic discipline of body, speech, and mind.

Rather than presenting yoga as an autonomous technical path, the text integrates yogic practice into a vow-governed model of spiritual progress culminating in equanimity (*samatā*) and liberation from karmic bondage.

The discovery of additional manuscript material will make it possible to test whether this doctrinal structuring remains consistent across textual witnesses.

Next Steps

The next phase of the project will involve:

- Detailed comparison of the manuscript witnesses
- Preparation of a critical transliteration and annotated translation
- Study of linguistic features reflecting late western Indo-Aryan Jain vernaculars
- Contextualisation within the Tapāgaccha intellectual milieu
- Exploration of the relationship between vernacular didactic verse literature and Sanskrit scholastic yoga traditions

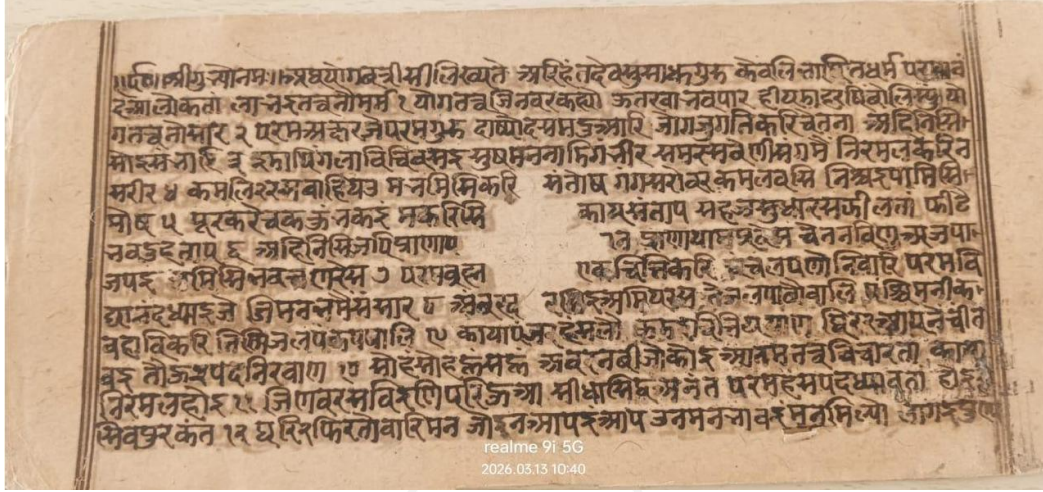
The findings will form the basis of a longer research article currently in preparation.

Conclusion

The identification of further manuscript evidence for the *Joga Batrīsī* highlights the richness of Jain vernacular yoga literature and underscores the importance of collaborative research with monastic communities and manuscript custodians.

Such discoveries not only deepen our understanding of Jain intellectual history but also contribute to a more plural and regionally grounded history of yoga in South Asia.

The ongoing research carried out during the ISJS stay demonstrates how fieldwork, philology, and dialogue with traditional knowledge holders can together illuminate neglected textual traditions and open new directions for scholarship.



Nani Khakhar Manuscript, Courtesy of Mahopādhyāya Śrī Bhuvanacandra Muni
(head Pārśvacandra-gaccha)
