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Notebook

All Items

Introduction

Location 217

Śramaṇas Around 500 BCE we see the rise of new groups of renunciant ascetics in India, sometimes collectively referred to as Śramaṇas ('strivers'), and identified by Johannes Bronkhorst as originating in the 'Greater Magadha' region, the area east of the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna rivers in modern-day Allahabad in northern India.

Highlight

Location 327

Yogācāra Buddhism

Highlight

Location 386

One of the most influential models of the tantric body is first described in the c. tenth-century Kubjikāmatatantra, which belongs to the Kaula tantric cult of the goddess Kubjikā, known as the 'Western Transmission' (paścimāmnāya). In this tradition a system of six power centres (cakras, literally 'wheels') equivalent to six variant forms of Kubjikā and her consort are invested in the body of the yogi.⁴⁰ Although other such systems are found in tantric texts, it was the cakra system of Kubjikā that came to be accepted as the blueprint of the 'yogic body'. Another key feature of many later tantric yogas, which, in its developed form, is also first found in the Kubjikāmatatantra, is the goddess Kuṇḍalinī. Kuṇḍalinī resides at the base of the spine and, through practices that initially only included visualization, but subsequently, in the haṭhayogic traditions, acquired physical components, is made to rise up through the central channel (Sūṣumnā) 41 to the crown of the head, where she is united with her male counterpart, Śiva. Kuṇḍalinī's ascent is a development from the earlier systems of sequential visualization of increasingly subtle elements mentioned above.

Highlight

Location 385

Although these practices are taught for the first time in haṭhayoga texts, many of them, in particular the āsanas and mudrās, bear a close similarity to ascetic practices first mentioned in the latter half of the first millennium BCE, shortly after the time of the Buddha.

greatly superior (1.5.7). A much later instance of similar sentiments occurs in the eighteenth-century *Haṃsavilāsa* (1.5.8), which rejects a 'forceful' approach (here *haṭhayoga* is identified with the yoga of Patañjali) in favour of a quietistic *rājayoga* 'conceived of as an esoteric, sensual rapture' whose 'superiority lies in the admission of sexual practices'.²⁵ *Haṭhayoga* is also identified with the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*'s *aṣṭāṅgayoga* in the *Yogamārgaprakāśikā* (Chapter 3) and *Aparokṣānubhūti Dīpikā* (143). Given the common modern identification of Patañjali's yoga with a 'mental' or 'spiritual' *rājayoga* that stands in opposition to the merely physical *haṭhayoga* (a notion popularized in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by Swami Vivekananda and Theosophical Society authors), such references to *haṭhayoga* as the yoga of Patañjali are particularly striking.

So although *haṭhayoga* largely became the de facto method of yoga practice in India in the centuries following the *Haṭhpradīpikā*, it was by no means without its opponents, and there is a strong counter-current – often within Advaita Vedānta traditions – which promotes quietistic practices of *samādhi* over and above the effortful yoga practices.

The criticisms of the *Amanaska* (1.5.6) and the *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* (1.5.9) target an impressive array of censured practices. In addition to making clear the preferences of the tradition at hand, these criticisms paint a colourful picture of the kinds of practices that may have been prominent within other yogic systems of the time. Vernacular poets could be equally scathing of what they considered fraudulent yoga practice. Gorakhnāth dismisses the esoteric physiology and

10% Page 12 of 510 • Location 999 of 10623

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