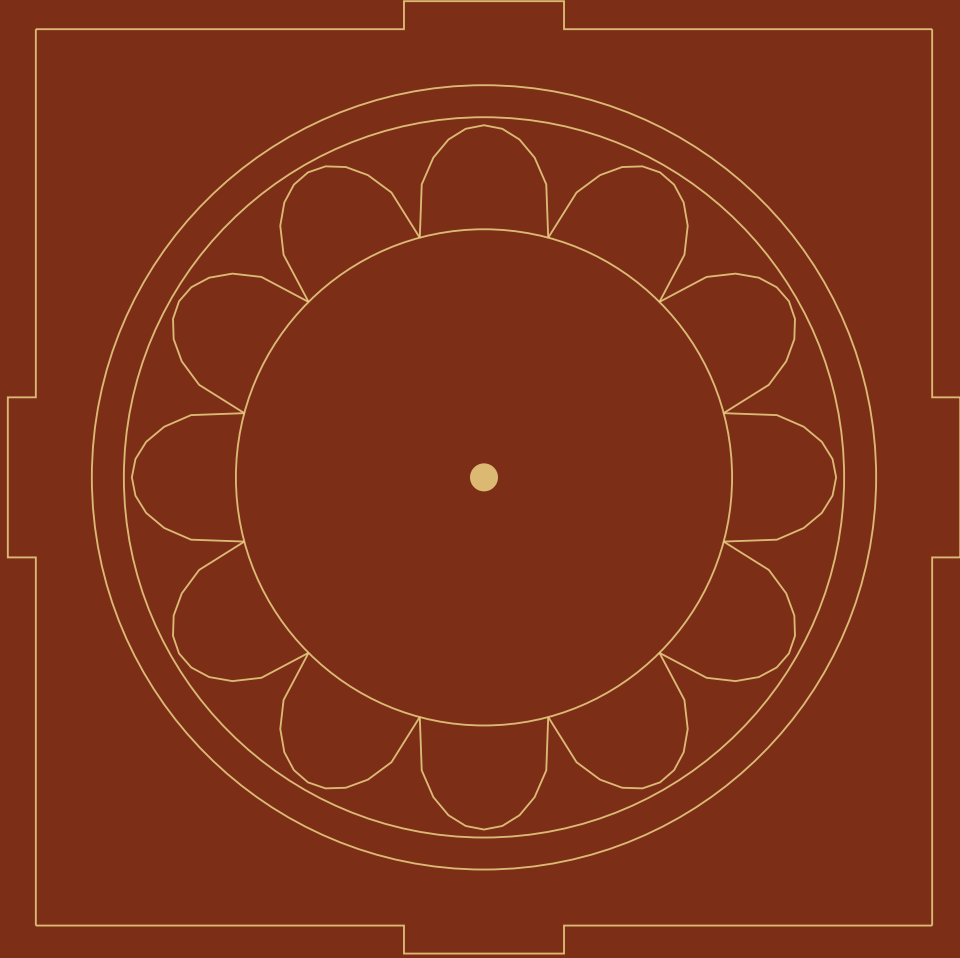


SACRED TEXTS

Hatha Yoga Pradipika Explained

*The classical manual of haṭha yoga, chapter by chapter, with key verses in Sanskrit and
our own translation*



हठयोग

haṭhayoga

YOGIDE

Free sample

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teacher or medical advice. Questions: administration@lacangel.fr

Before you begin

If you have ever held a forward bend, ended a class lying in śavāsana, practised alternate-nostril breathing or heard a teacher speak of bandhas and Kuṇḍalinī, you have touched the Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā (हठयोगप्रदीपिका), "the Little Lamp on Haṭha Yoga". Composed in Sanskrit, most likely in the fifteenth century, by a yogi called Svātmārāma, it is the best-known classical manual of haṭha yoga, and the text that many teachers in Rishikesh still quote first.

This book is an explained reading of the whole work. It does three things:

1. **It tells the story of the text:** who Svātmārāma was (as far as we know), the Nāth yogis he honours, the older texts he drew on, and how the Pradīpikā reached the modern yoga world.
2. **It walks through the four chapters** (upadeśa, "teachings") in order, explaining what each one contains, with the key verses given in Devanāgarī, in IAST transliteration and in our own English translation, followed by an explanation.
3. **It helps you practise safely what can be practised safely today**, and tells you clearly which practices should not be attempted from a book.

About the translations.

All translations of verses in this book were written for Yogide from the Sanskrit. They are not copied or adapted from any modern published translation. Older translations mentioned for comparison (Srinivasa Iyengar, 1893; Pancham Sinh, 1914) are in the public domain.

Which Sanskrit text we use

The Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā exists in many manuscripts and printed editions, which differ in the number and order of verses. The most widespread version, and the one followed here, has four chapters. We use the Sanskrit text in the electronic edition of GRETIL (Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages, version of 31 July 2020), in which the chapters contain 70, 78, 130 and 114 verses. The GRETIL file does not name the printed edition from which it was typed. All verse numbers in this book are those of GRETIL. Where the file contains obvious typing errors, we have corrected them in the verses quoted, following the usual reading: 1.16 tattva-jñānāc (file: jñānāś), 1.34 śavavad (śabavad), 1.37 vinyasen meṇḍhre (vinyaset), 1.67 yuvā (yuvo), 2.1 dṛḍhe (dṛdhe), 2.2 (line broken in the file), 2.68 yogīndrāṇām (garbled), 3.4 brahma-randhraṃ (-randhrah), 3.79 viparītākhyā (viparītākhā), 4.114 bindur (vidur). The Devanāgarī was generated from the transliteration and checked verse by verse.

Other editions number some verses differently. The public-domain English translation by Pancham Sinh (1914), still the most widely read, has 69 verses in chapter 1 (it joins the half-verse 1.63 to the previous one), the same numbering in chapter 2, and fewer verses in chapters 3 and 4. For the key verses of this book where the numbers differ:

This book (GRETIL)	Pancham Sinh 1914
1.67, 1.68, 1.69	1.66, 1.67, 1.68
3.57, 3.61, 3.70, 3.79	3.56, 3.60, 3.69, 3.78
3.110, 3.126	3.103, 3.119
4.36, 4.56	4.35, 4.55
4.66, 4.67, 4.69	4.65, 4.66, 4.68
4.85, 4.90, 4.98	4.84, 4.89, 4.97
4.104, 4.114	4.103, 4.113

All other key verses (1.1 to 1.60, the whole of chapter 2, 3.1 to 3.32, 4.1 to 4.29) have the same number in both.

What this book will not do

The Pradīpikā describes practices that can harm you if done without guidance: prolonged breath retention, forceful cleansing techniques, cutting the frenulum of the tongue, and sexual practices. We describe them because they are part of the text and you deserve to know what it says. We do **not** give instructions for the risky ones. Svātmārāma himself insists, again and again, that these methods are learnt from a guru.

Health first.

The text makes many claims that a practice "destroys all diseases". These are claims of a fifteenth-century manual, not medical facts. If you have high or low blood pressure, heart disease, glaucoma, epilepsy, a hernia, recent surgery, a psychiatric condition, or if you are pregnant, talk to your doctor before practising breath retention, inversions, bandhas or intense cleansing, and learn them from a qualified teacher.

Chapter 1. The text and its world

What does haṭha mean?

Haṭha (हठ) means "force" or "effort" in Sanskrit. Haṭhayoga is therefore "the yoga of force", a yoga that works on the body and the breath with deliberate, sometimes strenuous methods, as opposed to purely contemplative approaches. A later, symbolic interpretation, quoted by the nineteenth-century commentator Brahmānanda, reads ha as the sun and ṭha as the moon: haṭha yoga would be the union of the solar and lunar currents in the body. This is a beautiful teaching image, but historians consider "force" to be the original meaning.

Svātmārāma

The author names himself in verse 1.2: Svātmārāma, "the one who delights in his own Self", a yogi of the Nāth tradition. We know nothing reliable about his life. The text is usually dated to the fifteenth century, partly because it borrows from earlier works that can be dated, and because later works quote it. Historians such as James Mallinson have shown that the Pradīpikā is largely a compilation: many of its verses come from some twenty earlier texts on yoga. Svātmārāma's achievement was to bring scattered methods together into a single, ordered system, and his book became the reference work on the subject.

The Nāth yogis

Verses 1.4 to 1.9 list the great adepts (mahāsiddha) of haṭha yoga, beginning with Ādinātha (Śiva), Matsyendra and Gorakṣa (Gorakhnāth), followed by names such as Śābara, Ānanda-bhairava, Cauraṅgī, Mīna, Virūpākṣa, Bileśaya, Manthāna, Bhairava, Siddhi, Buddha, Kanthaḍi, Koraṇṭaka, Surānanda, Siddhapāda, Carpaṭi, Kānerī, Pūjyapāda, Nityanātha, Nirañjana, Kapālī, Bindunātha, Kākacaṇḍīśvara, Allāma, Prabhudeva, Ghoḍā Colī, Ṭiṇṭiṇi, Bhānukī, Nāradeva, Khaṇḍa and Kāpālīka. "These and other great adepts," says verse 1.9, "having broken the rod of time through the power of haṭha yoga, wander about the universe."

The Nāths (nātha, "lord") are an order of yogis who trace their lineage to Matsyendranātha and his disciple Gorakṣanātha, probably active around the twelfth or thirteenth century, although legends place them much earlier. Their monasteries are found across North India and Nepal; the Gorakhnath temple in Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh) is one of their main centres. Many Nāth yogis wear large earrings through the cartilage of the ear, which gave them the popular name Kānpaṭa, "split-eared". Hindi and regional literatures are full of stories about Gorakhnāth, often presented as a master of yogic powers.

The sources of haṭha

The Pradīpikā was not the first haṭha text. Scholars have identified earlier works whose verses it borrows, among them the Amṛtasiddhi (around the eleventh century, from a Buddhist tantric milieu), the

Dattātreyayogaśāstra (around the thirteenth century), the Vivekamārtaṇḍa and Gorakṣaśataka attributed to Gorakṣa, the Khecarīvidyā (on the mudrā of the same name) and the Amanaska (on the "no-mind" state). Haṭha yoga thus grew from several sources: Śaiva and Buddhist tantra, ascetic traditions, and older yoga. The Pradīpikā also explicitly links haṭha to rāja yoga, the meditative yoga that later tradition associated with Patañjali.

After the Pradīpikā

The text was commented upon, the best-known commentary being the Jyotsnā ("Moonlight") of Brahmānanda, written in the nineteenth century. Later haṭha works, such as the Haṭharatnāvalī (seventeenth century) and the Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā (around 1700), expanded the lists of postures and practices. Longer versions of the Pradīpikā with more chapters are also known from manuscripts.

At the end of the nineteenth and in the early twentieth century, the Pradīpikā was printed and translated into English, notably by Srinivasa Iyengar (1893) and Pancham Sinh (1914). Twentieth-century teachers in Mysore, Rishikesh, Lonavla and Munger used it as a classical reference, and it became part of the reading list of most teacher-training courses. Today, when a yoga teacher in Rishikesh speaks of "the haṭha texts", the Pradīpikā is almost always the first one meant.

Why read it today?

Because it shows the original purpose of practices that are now often taught for fitness alone. In the Pradīpikā, posture, breath and locks are not ends in themselves; they are a staircase to stillness of mind. Because it is honest about risk: few modern manuals warn as clearly as verse 2.15 that breath practice done wrongly can harm. And because it is the bridge between the yoga of the Yoga Sūtras and the yoga practised in studios today.

End of the sample

Thank you for reading this far. We hope these first pages already help your practice, and that they show how the rest of the book is built: clear steps, texts quoted with their source, nothing invented.

The full book has 41 pages.

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