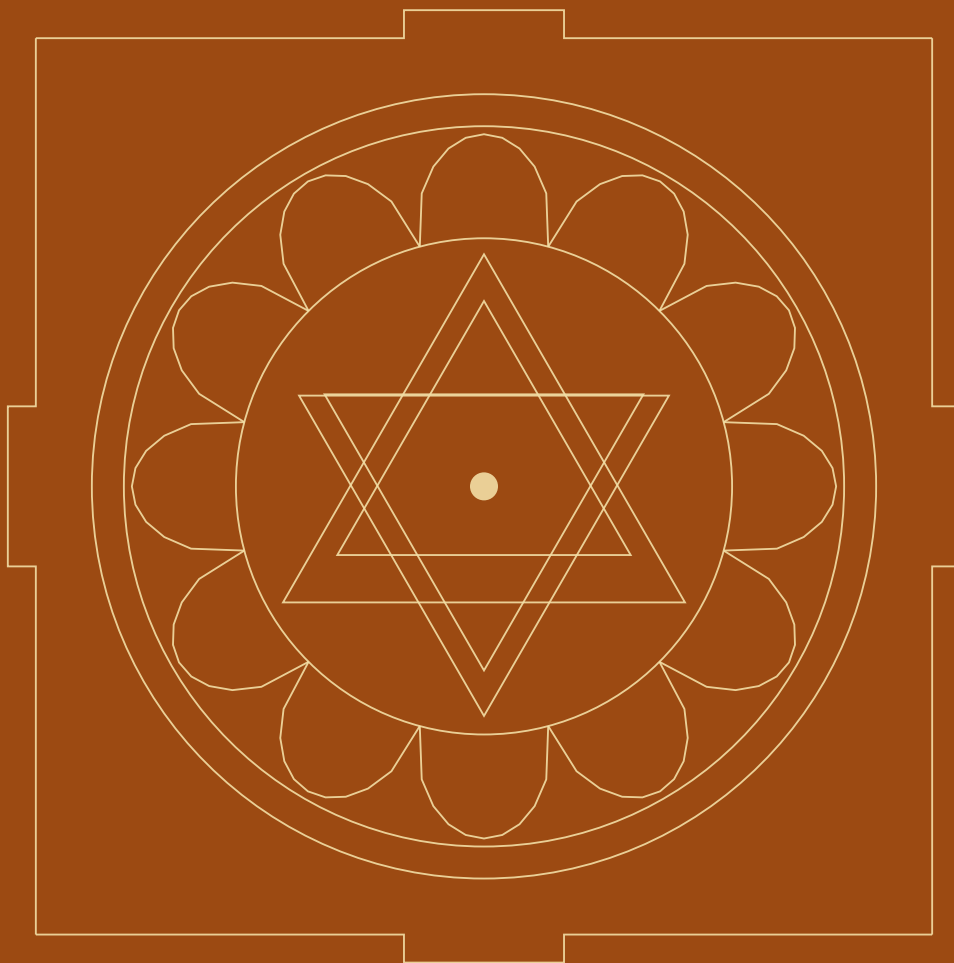


PRACTICE

The Yogi's Sacred Year

*Twelve festivals of the Indian year, their meaning, their texts and a practice for each
one at home, with the calendar to fill in every year*



योग

yoga

YOGIDE

Free sample

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

Before you begin

In India, the year does not turn only with the seasons. It turns with the moon, with the sun entering a new sign, with nights of vigil and mornings of bathing in the river, with lamps on doorsteps and colours thrown in the street. A yogi in Rishikesh lives inside this rhythm without having to think about it: the bells of Shivaratri, the crowds of pilgrims in the month of Shravan, the full moon of the teacher, the lamps of Diwali. Away from India, most practitioners never meet it.

This book brings twelve of these appointments into your practice. For each one, you will find what it celebrates, told with respect and without folklore; a verse or a mantra from the texts, in devanāgarī, transliteration and our own translation; and a practice you can do at home, alone or with others, whether or not you are Hindu. Practised through a year, these twelve days give your sādhanā a second rhythm, wider than the daily one: the rhythm of a year that has a sacred shape.

Why no dates are printed here

Most Indian festivals follow the lunar calendar. Their date in the Western calendar changes every year, sometimes by several weeks, and it can differ by a day from one region or one almanac to another. We could have printed a list of dates for one year; it would have been wrong the next. Instead, Chapter 1 explains how the Indian calendar works and how to find each date in a pañcāṅga (an almanac) or on the website of a temple near you, and Chapter 15 gives a wall calendar with an empty box for each date, to fill in at the start of every year.

A word of respect.

These festivals are, first of all, the religious life of hundreds of millions of people. This book presents them as they are lived in India and offers practices that a yogi of any background can do with respect: reading, chanting, meditating, lighting a lamp, giving. It does not invite you to perform rituals that require a priest, an initiation or belonging to a community, and it says so where it matters. If you are invited to a celebration, follow your hosts: that is always the best rule.

Health and safety

Several festivals are traditionally kept with a fast or a night of vigil. This book never asks you to fast. If your tradition includes it, fast only if you are in good health, never if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, diabetic, taking medicines that must be taken with food, or have had an eating disorder, and ask your doctor if you are unsure. A night of vigil can be kept until midnight; you do not need to go without sleep to honour it. In crowds, at rivers and with festival colours, take the precautions given in each chapter.

Chapter 1. How the Indian sacred calendar works

Two calendars at once

Indian religious life uses two calendars together. A **solar** calendar counts the passage of the sun from one sign of the zodiac to the next; each entry into a sign is a *saṅkrānti* (संक्रान्ति), "a passing". A **lunar** calendar counts the phases of the moon. Most festivals are lunar; a few, such as Makara Saṅkrānti, are solar. The two are kept in step by adding a lunar month about every three years.

The lunar day: tithi

A tithi (तिथि) is a lunar day: the time the moon takes to move twelve degrees away from the sun. Because the moon's speed varies, a tithi does not coincide with a solar day; it can begin in the middle of the afternoon and end the next morning. That is why almanacs sometimes disagree about the day of a festival, and why a festival can be "on the 14th in one city and the 15th in another".

A lunar month has thirty tithis, divided into two halves (pakṣa, पक्ष):

Half	Sanskrit	From	To
Bright half (waxing moon)	śukla pakṣa (शुक्ल पक्ष)	the day after the new moon	full moon, pūrṇimā (पूर्णिमा)
Dark half (waning moon)	kṛṣṇa pakṣa (कृष्ण पक्ष)	the day after the full moon	new moon, amāvasyā (अमावस्या)

Each half counts fifteen tithis: pratipad (1), dvitīyā (2), tṛtīyā (3), caturthī (4), pañcamī (5), ṣaṣṭhī (6), saptamī (7), aṣṭamī (8), navamī (9), daśamī (10), ekādaśī (11), dvādaśī (12), trayodaśī (13), caturdaśī (14), and the fifteenth, which is the full moon or the new moon. The names of many festivals simply give the tithi: Ratha Saptamī is on a seventh, Gaṇeśa Caturthī on a fourth, Rāma Navamī on a ninth.

The twelve lunar months

Month	Devanāgarī	Usually falls around
Caitra	चैत्र	March-April
Vaiśākha	वैशाख	April-May
Jyeṣṭha	ज्येष्ठ	May-June
Āṣāḍha	आषाढ	June-July
Śrāvaṇa	श्रावण	July-August
Bhādrapada	भाद्रपद	August-September
Āśvina	आश्विन	September-October

Month	Devanāgarī	Usually falls around
Kārttika	कार्तिक	October-November
Mārgaśīrṣa	मार्गशीर्ष	November-December
Pauṣa	पौष	December-January
Māgha	माघ	January-February
Phālguna	फाल्गुन	February-March

Why the same festival can be "in different months"

India uses two ways of ending a lunar month. In much of the south and west, the month ends at the new moon (the *amānta* system). In much of the north, it ends at the full moon (the *pūrṇimānta* system). The bright halves carry the same month name in both systems; the dark halves do not. So Mahāśivarātri, on the fourteenth night of a dark half, is said to fall in Phālguna in the north and in Māgha in the south: it is the same night, named differently. This book gives the northern name first and the other where it matters. The date in the Western calendar is the same; only the label changes.

The extra month

Twelve lunar months make about 354 days, eleven days fewer than the solar year. To keep the festivals in their seasons, an extra month, *adhika māsa* (अधिक मास), is inserted about every two and a half to three years. In such a year, the festivals after the extra month fall later than usual. Your almanac takes care of this.

Reading a pañcāṅga

A *pañcāṅga* (पञ्चाङ्ग), "five limbs", is the traditional almanac. It gives each day five elements: the *tithi*, the weekday (*vāra*), the lunar mansion (*nakṣatra*), and two further divisions called *yoga* and *karaṇa*. For the purposes of this book, you need only the first: which *tithi* it is, in which month and which half. Many temples and Indian cultural associations publish the festival dates of the year in advance; a reliable printed or online *pañcāṅga* for your city does too, because the *tithi* in force at sunrise depends on where you are.

At the start of each year, take one hour with this book and an almanac, and fill in the wall calendar of Chapter 15. That hour is itself a small ritual: it sets the sacred shape of your year.

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 38 pages.

Get it here: <https://yogide.com/>

One-time payment, instant PDF.