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Back page photograph

*Hanumanji near Lord Jagannath Temple, Puri, Odisha by Robert Moses.*

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**NĀMARŪPA** uses diacritical marks, as per the chart, for the transliteration of all Saṁskṛta words. Many of the articles do contain these marks, but it is not a universal occurrence in the magazine. In those cases where authors have elected not to use diacritics, Saṁskṛta words remain in their romanized form.

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū
ए	ऐ	ओ	औ		
e	ai	o	au		
ऋ	ॠ	ऌ	ॡ	अं	अः
r̥	r̄	l̥	l̄	am̐	aḥ
क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	
ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa	
च	छ	ज	झ	ञ	
ca	cha	ja	jha	ña	
ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	
ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa	
त	थ	द	ध	न	
ta	tha	da	dha	na	
प	फ	ब	भ	म	
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma	
य	र	ल	व		
ya	ra	la	va		
श	ष	स	ह		
śa	ṣa	sa	ha		
क्ष	त्र	ज्ञ			
kṣa	tra	jña			

*Lord Jagannath prasad being delivered.  
Puri July 2014 ©Robert Moses*





# THE YOGATĀRĀVALĪ

AND THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF YOGA<sup>1</sup>

JASON BIRCH

*Kṛṣṇamācārya performing the three locks in Padmāsana.*

THOSE WHO HAVE ATTENDED AN Aṣṭāṅgayoga class in the tradition of Pattabhi Jois are probably familiar with at least one verse of the *Yogatārāvalī*, whether they know the name of the text or not. Pattabhi Jois would chant the first verse of the *Yogatārāvalī* at the beginning of a morning class, and many of his students continue to do this before their yoga practice:

*vande gurūnāṃ caraṇāravinde  
sāndarsitasvātmāsukhāvabodhe |  
niṣṭreyase jāṅgalikāyamāne  
saṃsārahālāhalamohaśāntyai ||1||*

"I pay homage to the gurus' lotus feet, which have revealed the knowledge of the bliss of one's own self. Unsurpassed, [these lotus-feet] act like toxicologists<sup>2</sup> for curing the delusion that is the poison [known as] transmigration."

The name *Yogatārāvalī* can be understood as: 'A String of Stars on Yoga.' Each verse of this short text is likened to a shining star, which illuminates the topic of yoga. Its first verse acknowledges the importance of the teacher, who transmits to the student the liberating knowledge that extinguishes the suffering of worldly life.

In the *Yogatārāvalī*, the means to liberation is the practice of Haṭha and Rājayoga. Its Haṭhayoga consists of physical techniques; in particular, the three locks (*mūla*, *uddīyana*<sup>3</sup> and *jālandhara*). These locks are applied during breath retentions (*kumbhaka*) and, as a result of this practice, the Haṭhayogin is able to immerse the mind in an internal resonance (*nāḍānusandhāna*).

In contrast to this, Rājayoga is simply the practice of *samādhi*, a profound state of meditation in which there is

no mental activity, no breathing and no positional consciousness. That is to say, Rājayoga is something beyond the common experience of "I" and "mine". The *Yogatārāvalī* puts it this way:

*ahaṃmatu vādī vihāya sarvaṃ  
śrīrājayoge sthīramānasānām |  
na draṣṭṛtā nāsti ca dṛṣṭyābhāvaḥ  
sā jṛmbhate kevalasaṃvid eva ||16||*

"Having left behind everything beginning with the states of 'I' and 'mine', those whose minds are steady in the sacred [state of] Rājayoga are neither observers nor objects of observation. Only an isolated awareness prevails."

The main difference between Haṭha and Rājayoga is that the latter is beyond all techniques. In other words, once the Rājayogin has achieved *samādhi*, other



*Sri K. Pattabhi Jois and Sri R. Sharath Jois chanting the first verse of the Yogatārāvalī before class at the Puck Building, New York ©Jesse Gordon*

yoga practices such as concentration and meditation become redundant.

*na dṛṣṭilakṣyāṇi na cittabandho  
na deśakālau na ca vāyuvrodhaḥ |  
na dhāraṇādhyanāparīśramo vā  
samedhamāne sati rājayoge ||14||*

"There are no gazing points, no fixing of the mind [on a meditation object], no time or place, no [deliberate] stopping of the breath, nor the effort of concentration (*dhāraṇā*) and meditation (*dhyāna*), when Rājayoga is flourishing."

It is likely that Haṭha and Rājayoga began as separate traditions. Much of the *Yogatārāvalī*'s teachings on Rājayoga appear to derive from those of the earliest extant Rājayoga text called the *Amanaska*, which can be dated to the twelfth century. The *Amanaska* teaches

a system of yoga called Rājayoga, which it says is 'the king (*rāja*) of all yogas.' It omits the first seven auxiliaries of aṣṭāṅgayoga. In fact, the author considers these auxiliaries and the techniques of Haṭhayoga to be not just ineffectual practices, but hindrances on the path to attaining *samādhi*.

In effect, the *Amanaska* says that there is little point in trying to master difficult postures, breathing exercises and meditation techniques when the goal of these techniques, *samādhi*, otherwise known as the no-mind state (*amanaska*), can be achieved easily by Śāmbhavi Mudrā.

The yogin who is practising this Mudrā is described as gazing outwards (*bahirdṛṣṭi*) with eyes half open, half closed, while directing the mind inwards to an internal focal point (*antaralakṣya*).

The *Yogatārāvalī* teaches this technique and calls it *Amanaskamudrā*. This



name and other technical vocabulary common to both texts suggest that the *Amanaska* influenced the author of the *Yogatārāvalī*.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, the *Yogatārāvalī* was probably composed sometime after the twelfth century.

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Eddie Stern for encouraging me to write this article and for his valuable comments on it. Thanks also to Jacqueline Hargreaves, James Mallinson, Mark Singleton and Elizabeth De Michelis for their many helpful comments on early drafts of this article. The illustration of Śāmbhavi Mudrā and figures 1 and 2 are by Jacqueline Hargreaves. Figures 1 and 2 contain images by Febrian Anugrah.

<sup>2</sup> The term *jāṅgalika* is usually spelt *jāṅgulika* in Sanskrit texts and it is often translated as 'snake doctor.' For example, in Sures Chandra Banerji's "A Companion to Sanskrit Literature" (1989, p. 427), *jāṅgulika* is defined as a "snake doctor; dealer in antidotes of poison." Also, Monier-Williams dictionary defines *jāṅgulika* as a "snake charmer." However, in the *Yogatārāvalī*'s first verse, *jāṅgalika* is being used metaphorically to describe gurus who can cure a poison called Hālāhala. Rather than a snake poison, Hālāhala probably refers to either the mythological poison produced at the churning of the ocean and swallowed by Śiva (thereby causing the blueness of his neck) or some plant-based poison. Therefore, it appears that the guru is being likened to a doctor who specializes in the general treatment of poisons (i.e., a toxicologist) rather than a snake doctor or charmer. This is somewhat supported by a Sanskrit commentary on the *Yogatārāvalī* called the *Yogabhāvaṇaprakāśikā*, which glosses *jāṅgalika* as a *viṣavaidya* (i.e., 'a poison specialist' or 'toxicologist'), and so does the *Amarakośa* (1.8.510).

<sup>3</sup> There are two different spellings of this *bandha* in the *Yogatārāvalī*: *uddīyana* and *udīyāna*. The difference is due to the metre of the verses. In manuscripts of the *Haṭhapradipikā* and *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*, this *bandha* is usually spelt *uddīyāna* or *udīyāna*.

<sup>4</sup> Other similarities between the *Yogatārāvalī*'s and the *Amanaska*'s Rājayoga include descriptions of *samādhi* as devoid of waking, sleep, life and death; the mention of the eyes becoming still, the breath stopping and the mind being free from both intentional (*saṅkalpa*) and discursive (*vikalpa*) thought in the no-mind state; the use of the simile of a 'lamp in a windless place' in regard to the yogin in the no-mind state; the reference to detachment (*udāśīnatā*); and the use of the compounds *sahajāmanaska* and *yoganidrā* as synonyms for *samādhi*.

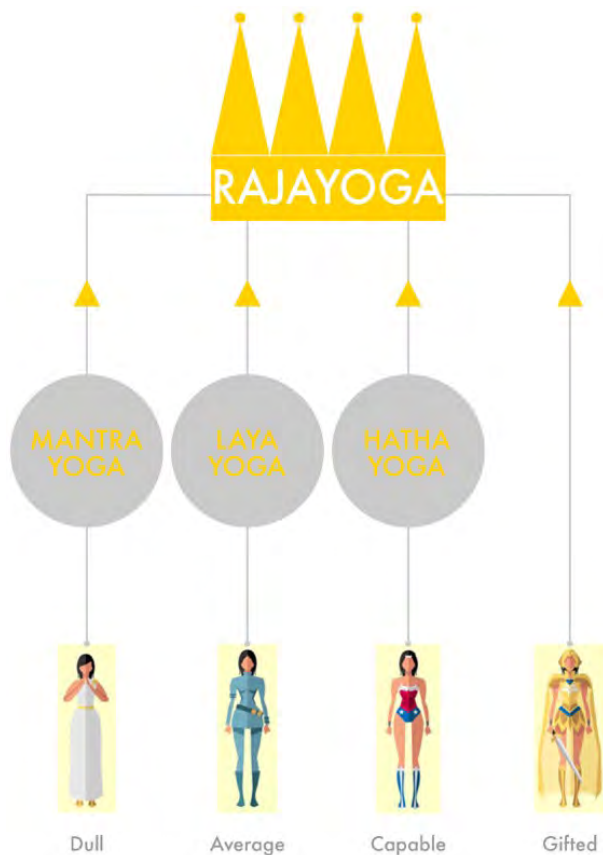


Figure 1: The fourfold system of yoga in the Dattatreya yogaśāstra and the Amaraughaprabodha.

Haṭha and Rājayoga were combined in other medieval yoga texts that were probably written only one or two centuries after the *Amanaska*. Examples of such texts include the *Dattatreya yogaśāstra* (12–13<sup>th</sup> c.) and the *Amaraughaprabodha* (14<sup>th</sup> c.). These texts combined Haṭha and Rājayoga in a hierarchical relationship, along with Mantra and Layayoga. The idea behind

this fourfold scheme was that the duller students were taught Mantrayoga, the most gifted, Rājayoga, and those in between, Laya and Haṭhayoga. In this system, Mantra, Laya and Haṭhayoga were auxiliary practices aimed solely at the achievement of *samādhi* (i.e., Rājayoga). However, presumably, one could dispense with Haṭhayoga altogether and achieve *samādhi* by

practising Mantra or Layayoga. Furthermore, it appears that neither Mantra, Laya nor Haṭhayoga were of any use to those gifted students who could readily achieve *samādhi*. This fourfold system is depicted in figure 1.

The *Yogatārāvalī* changed this fourfold hierarchical relationship in a subtle yet very significant way. It omitted Mantrayoga and integrated Layayoga with Haṭha, thereby creating a system in which Haṭhayoga was the sole means to Rājayoga for all practitioners, regardless of their capabilities. In doing so, the physical practices of Haṭhayoga became indispensable for achieving *samādhi* in this system. This new relationship is seen in figure 2.

The fifteenth-century *Haṭhapradīpikā* adopted a scheme similar to the twofold system.<sup>5</sup> The author of this text stated explicitly the mutual dependence of Haṭha and Rājayoga as follows:

*haṭhaṃ vinā rājayogo  
rājayogaṃ vinā haṭhaḥ |  
na siddhyati tato yugmam  
ā nispatteḥ samabhyaset ||2.76||*

"Without Haṭhayoga, Rāja is not accomplished, and without Rājayoga, nor is Haṭha. Therefore, the yogin should practice both until the final stage [of yoga is attained]."

The *Yogatārāvalī* describes a process whereby the three locks (*bandha*) are practised during deliberate breath retentions (*kumbhaka*) to bring about a special type of breath retention called *Kevala Kumbhaka*. Unlike deliberate breath retentions that are performed by holding the breath according to one's capacity (*yathāśakti*), *Kevala Kumbhaka* is a spontaneous cessation of the flow of the breath, along with all sensory and mental activity. In the *Yogatārāvalī*, *Kevala Kumbhaka* is the central mechanism that connects



Figure 2: The twofold system of yoga in the *Yogatārāvalī*

Haṭha and Rājayoga. This explains why nearly one fifth of its verses are devoted to describing this special type of breath retention.

The similarities between the *Yogatārāvalī* and the *Haṭhapradīpikā* seem extensive enough to suggest that one influenced the other. In fact, both texts share a verse on immersing the mind in the internal resonance (*nāḍānusandhāna*):

*sadāśivoktāni sapādadalakṣa-  
layāvadhānāni vasanti loke |  
nāḍānusandhānasamādhiṃ ekam  
manyāmahe mānyatamaṃ layānām  
||2||<sup>6</sup>*

"One hundred and twenty-five thousand concentration [techniques?] of meditative absorption (*laya*), which were taught by Śiva [still] remain in the world. We think

the *samādhi* that is brought about by immersing [the mind] in the internal resonance (*nāḍa*) is the principal and most venerable of [all the techniques of] meditative absorption."

Seeing that the author of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* compiled his work from earlier yoga texts, it is likely that he borrowed and slightly modified the above verse from the *Yogatārāvalī*. If this is the case, the *Yogatārāvalī* must have been written before the fifteenth century. The *Haṭhapradīpikā*'s borrowing from the *Yogatārāvalī* is further suggested by the similar teachings of these two texts on *Kevala Kumbhaka*, immersing the mind in the internal resonance (*nāḍānusandhāna*) and Śāmbhavi Mudrā.

Reading the *Yogatārāvalī* in conjunction with yoga texts of the same era sheds much light on its terminology and content. Apart from what I have mentioned above, another striking example is the usage of various words for *samādhi* in the *Yogatārāvalī*. The terms *manonmani*, *unmani*, *sahajāmanaska*, *turiya* and *yoganidrā* appear to have the same meaning as *rājayoga* and *samādhi*. This is also the case in the *Amanaska* and the *Haṭhapradīpikā*, the latter of which explicitly states that these terms are to be understood as synonyms (*ekavācaka*):

*rājayogah samādhiś ca  
unmani ca manonmani |  
amaratvaṃ layas tattvaṃ  
śūnyāśūnyaṃ paraṃ padam ||  
amanaskaṃ tatbādvaitaṃ  
nirālambaṃ nirāñjanaṃ |  
jīvanmuktis ca sahajā  
turyā cety ekavācakaḥ ||4.3–4||*

"Rājayoga, *samādhi*, *unmani*, *manonmani*, *amaratva*, *laya*, *tattva*, *śūnyāśūnya*, *para-pada*, *amanaska*, *advaita*, *nirālamba*, *nirāñjana*, *jīvanmukti*, *sahajā* and *turyā* [all] say the same thing."

<sup>5</sup> The difference between the twofold system of the *Yogatārāvalī* and the *Haṭhapradīpikā* is that the latter integrated Layayoga with both Haṭha and Rājayoga. For example, the Layayoga technique of lying on the ground like a corpse until the mind dissolves (*cittalaya*) becomes a Haṭhayogic posture called *Savāsana* in the *Haṭhapradīpikā*'s first chapter, whereas the Layayoga practice of *Nāḍānusandhāna* is described in the *Haṭhapradīpikā*'s fourth chapter, which is on Rājayoga.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Haṭhapradīpikā* 4.66 (*śrīādimāthēna sapādakoṭīlayaprakārāḥ kathitā jayanti | nāḍānusandhānakam ekam eva manyāmahe mukhyatamaṃ layānām*).

<sup>7</sup> The meaning of *avadhānāni* as literally 'concentrations' can be found in Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka* (2.12). Jayaratha's commentary glosses *avadhāna* as, "one-pointedness on a particular object of attention" (*pratīnīyatāvadheyaviśayāniṣṭham ekāgryam*).



Medieval discourse on Rājayoga does not mention different levels of *samādhi* as seen in Buddhism and Patañjali's *Yogaśāstra*. Rājayoga texts consistently described *samādhi* as the stone-like state of complete inactivity; mental, respiratory and physical. Like meditating ascetics in the *Mahābhārata*, the Rājayogin in *samādhi* is sometimes said to be lifeless like a piece of wood or, according to the *Yogatārāvali*, as still as a lamp's flame in a windless place:

*cittendriyāṇāṃ ciraṇigraheṇa  
śūśāpaprācāre samite yamindrāḥ |  
nivātaḍipā iva niścalāṅgā  
manonmanimagnadhiyo bhavanti  
||18||*

"When the movement of the breath has stopped because of the prolonged restraint of the mind and senses, the bodies of the best yogins become unmoving, like the flames [of lamps] in a windless place, and their minds immersed in the no-mind [state] of mind."

As I have mentioned above, the connections between the *Yogatārāvali*, the *Amanaska* and the *Haṭhapradīpikā* indicate that the *Yogatārāvali* was probably written between the twelfth and fifteen centuries. However, the colophon<sup>8</sup> of at least one manuscript and several printed editions attribute the *Yogatārāvali*'s authorship to the great Advaitavedāntin philosopher, Śaṅkarācārya, who is generally believed to have lived in the eighth century. Colophons are not a certain indication of authorship, for they may be composed and modified after the text was written. In this case, a sectarian claim to the *Yogatārāvali*

could have prompted someone to compose colophons that attributed the text to Śaṅkarācārya. Terminology such as *ātma*, *turiya*, etc., which is reasonably common in Tantras and medieval yoga texts of this time but also prominent in Advaitavedāntin texts, could have been used to justify the attribution. It is also possible that the author was a yogin by the name of Śaṅkara and, at some more recent time, a scribe embellished his name in the colophon with the honorific titles reserved for the famous Śaṅkarācārya. In my opinion, the *Yogatārāvali* was not composed before the twelfth century because its technical terminology, such as Rāja and Haṭhayoga, is absent in Sanskrit works written before this time, including the famous commentaries and works widely attributed to the great Advaitavedāntin philosopher.

THE TWELFTH TO THE FIFTEENTH century was a remarkable time in the history of yoga. It saw the emergence and advance of physical yoga techniques and the supremacy of the practice of *samādhi* as the means to liberation in yoga traditions. Early Haṭha and Rājayoga traditions created simple soteriological systems, which were based solely on the practice of yoga (rather than ritual, gnosis or devotion). In doing so, they omitted the doctrinal and ritualistic complexity of earlier tantric and philosophical traditions.

These yoga traditions incorporated some of the techniques and terminology found in earlier Tantras. However, it is misleading to refer to medieval Haṭha and Rājayoga as types of tantric yoga because, not only did their early texts omit tantric ritual and doctrine, but

they also fashioned new systems of yoga out of simpler methods of meditation and more physical techniques than are found in older traditions of Tantra. Generally speaking, tantric yoga is usually characterised by complex meditative practices that integrate elaborate metaphysics and doctrine with visualisation.<sup>9</sup> The complexity of tantric yoga contrasts sharply with the simple meditation techniques of early Haṭha and Rājayoga texts, such as Śambhavi Mudrā and nāḍānusandhāna.

The shift towards physical practice, doctrinal simplicity and stone-like *samādhi* (as opposed to gnostic meditation techniques<sup>10</sup>) suggest that Haṭha and Rājayoga were influenced by older ascetic traditions. Indeed, the emphasis on retaining semen (*bindudhāraṇa*) and the physical techniques peculiar to Haṭhayoga, such as the three locks (*bandha*) and inversions (*viparītakaraṇī*), is absent in earlier Tantras.

Nonetheless, the label 'ascetic' does not capture the ingenuity of early Haṭha and Rājayoga systems, which omitted extreme ascetic practices such as sitting amid five fires, standing on one leg for twelve years, lying on a bed of nails or holding the arms up until they wither away. Some of their texts denounce afflicting the body (*kāiyakleśa*), and those who would practise headstand are advised against fasting, which is a moderate form of asceticism that has been acceptable to most orthodox Hindus.

Haṭhayoga, the yoga of force (*haṭha*), was a yoga that could force certain changes to occur. For example, it could force downward moving vitality (i.e., *apānavāyu*) to rise.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, the difficulty of its techniques was probably a matter of one's perspective.



*An Ascetic in Bound Lotus Sitting in a Circle of Smouldering Fires.*

*Some physically demanding postures probably derive from ancient ascetic traditions. For example, Bound Lotus pose (baddhapadmasana) is described in some of the earliest Haṭha texts (e.g., Vivekamārtaṇḍa 8, Gorakṣaśataka 59-60, Haṭhapradīpikā 1.46) as well as more recent ones. However, extreme acts of asceticism such as sitting amid smouldering cow dung fires are not included among the practices of medieval Haṭha texts. Photo: James Mallinson, Haridwar, 2010*

<sup>8</sup> A colophon is a brief statement about the text's author, name and, sometimes, its date. Colophons are usually placed at the end of each chapter and the end of the text itself.

<sup>9</sup> I am aware of two earlier tantric works which are exceptions to this. They are known as the *Vijñānabhairavatantra* and the *Svābodhodayamañjarī*. They teach simple contemplative practices without much doctrine and metaphysics. Their emphasis on dissolving the mind (*cittalaya*) suggests they may have inspired later Layayoga traditions.

<sup>10</sup> On the differences between ascetic and gnostic meditative practices, see Johannes Bronkhorst, *Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993.

<sup>11</sup> See *Dattatreya-yogaśāstra* 144, *Śāringadharapaddhati* 4416 and *Yogabijī* 116: "Having pressed the anus with the heel, the [yogin] should forcibly contract *apānavāyu*, so that [this] *vāyu* goes upwards repeatedly." (*gudaṃ pārṣṇyā tu sampīḍya vāyum ākuñcayed balāt | vāraṃ vāraṃ yathā cordhvaṃ samāyāti samiraṇaḥ*).



On the one hand, Jain ascetics and many wandering renunciants must have seen Haṭhayoga as child's play or, perhaps, they thought it was asceticism watered down for the masses. On the other hand, the physical practices of Haṭhayoga would have seemed strenuous and difficult for gnostics who believed that liberation could be attained through listening to the Upaniṣads, contemplative techniques and the like.

In order to appeal to a wide audience, early Haṭha and Rājayoga traditions combined tantric and ascetic techniques within a radically simplified doctrinal framework. As an early Haṭha text made clear:

*brāhmaṇaḥ śramaṇo vāpi  
bauddho vāpy ārḥato 'rhavā |  
kāpālika vā cārvākaḥ  
śraddhayaḥ sabhāḥ sudhīḥ ||  
yogābhyāsaratō nityaṃ  
sarvasiddhim avāpnuyāt |<sup>12</sup>*

“Whether a Brahmin, ascetic, Buddhist, Jain, skull-bearer (*kāpālika*) or materialist; one who is wise, has confidence [in the teachings of Haṭha and Rājayoga] and is devoted to the practice of yoga, will always obtain success in all things.”

The strategy of attracting a wide audience was stated explicitly by a more recent Haṭha text called the *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati*, which was probably composed in the eighteenth century. The opening line of this text claims that its teachings are for anyone who is afflicted by the pain of transmigrating (*saṃsāra*), much like the *Yogatārāvalī*'s first verse.

However, the *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati* also mentions specifically that its

teachings are for women, as well as those people who are completely attached to sense objects, those fallen from caste and those who do extremely reckless actions.<sup>13</sup> The explicit inclusion of women here has much to do with the fact that they were excluded from certain religious activities in orthodox Hinduism. For example, women were generally prohibited from learning the *Vedas*, using vedic mantras, renouncing society to become ascetics and so on.

Some other yoga texts such as the *Sivasamhitā* and *Yogatārāvalī* reveal that householders, women and members of the lowest orthodox caste (*śūdra*) were among their audience. Though most texts do not identify the people for which their teachings were intended, explicit prohibitions against teaching a particular group of people are absent.

The inclusivity of these yoga traditions is further indicated by the marginal role of theism in their texts. Though the teachings are presented within either a Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava framework, the theistic elements are very much in the background, so much so that a text's orientation may not always be clear to the reader. The *Yogatārāvalī* is a good example of such minimal theism. In one verse, Śiva is mentioned as the first teacher of the many methods of absorption (*laya*) and, in two other verses, *śamādhi* is referred to as the state of Viṣṇu (*viṣṇupada*). Nothing further is said of these deities, nor their pantheons, myths, mantras and the devotional practices associated with them.

On the whole, the texts of early Haṭha and Rājayoga traditions reveal varying degrees of universalism. In other words, they reduced the religious and philosophical elements that may

have excluded people of different creeds. They offered a minimalist system of yoga for attaining liberation. The only essential requirement was that one practised the methods of these yogas, having learnt them from a guru. The *Yogatārāvalī*'s emphasis on practice and its omission of complex metaphysics, doctrine, ritual and extreme asceticism is in keeping with this.

The emphasis on practice (*abhyāsa*) is at the heart of Haṭha and Rājayoga texts, which frequently reiterate the importance of practice for attaining the goals of yoga. For example,

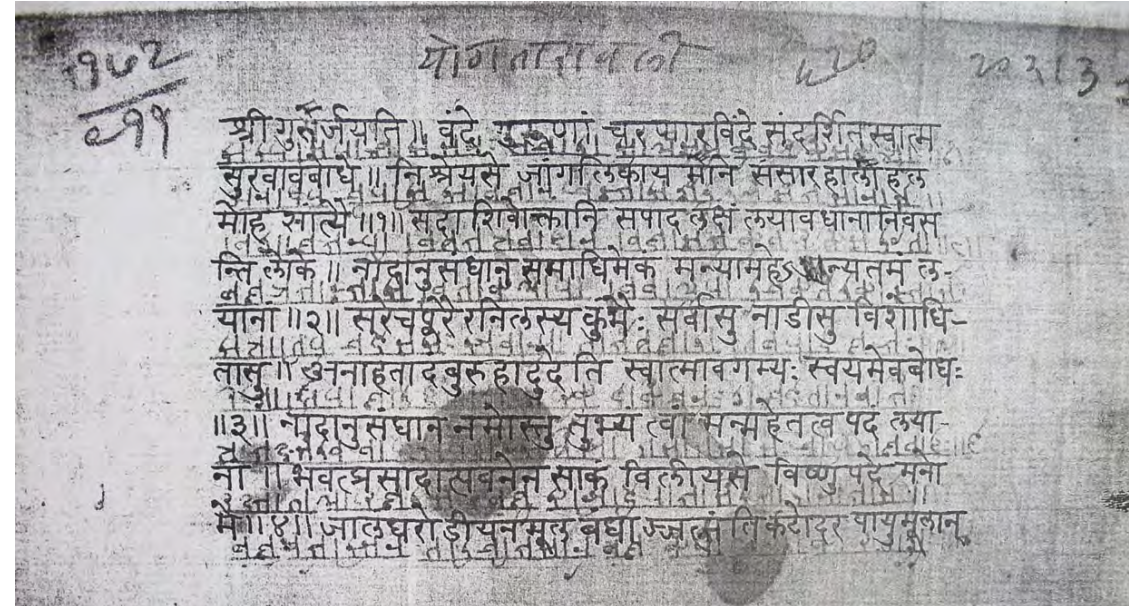
*avismṛtya guror vākyam  
abhyaset tad ahaṁśam ||  
evaṃ bhaved ghaṭāvasthā  
satatābhyāsayogataḥ |  
anabhyāseṇa yogasya vrthā  
gosthyā na siddhyati ||  
tasmāt sarvaprayatnena  
yogam eva samabhyaset ||<sup>14</sup>*

“Having remembered the teachings of the guru, one should practise [yoga] night and day. In this way, the [second] stage [of yoga called] ‘the pot’ arises through constant practice. Without the practice of yoga, all is in vain. It is not accomplished by socialising. Therefore, with every effort, one should practise only yoga.”

And in the *Yogatārāvalī*:

*vicchinnaśaṅkalpavikalpamūle  
niḥśeṣanirmūlitakarmajāle |  
nirantarābhyāsanitāntabhadra  
śa jṛmbhate yogini yoganidrā ||25||*

“The yogic sleep [of *Samādhi*,<sup>15</sup>] in which extraordinary happiness arises from ceaseless practice, blossoms in the yogin whose roots of intentional



First Folio of a Manuscript of the *Yogatārāvalī* at the *Prājña Pāṭhaśālā Maṇḍal, Wai*.

and unintentional thought have been cut away and whose network of karma has been completely uprooted.”

#### SCHOLARSHIP ON HAṬHA AND RĀJAYOGA IS IN ITS INFANCY

MUCH OF THE HISTORY OF YOGA remains undiscovered. In particular, a detailed and comprehensive history of Rāja and Haṭhayoga has not been written. Indeed, such a history cannot be written until more evidence has been made available. If one looks at the textual sources in most historical accounts of yoga that have been published in the last thirty years, very few new sources have been brought to light.<sup>16</sup> Certainly, new observations and theories have been advanced in regard to yoga's history, but attempts to construct the history of Haṭhayoga with only a few widely known texts such as the *Haṭhāpradīpikā*, *Sivasamhitā* and

*Gheraṇḍasamhitā* are failing to advance our knowledge in any significant way. The omission of texts such as the *Yogatārāvalī* in secondary sources is proof of the premature attempts at writing the history of Haṭhayoga. Various other yoga texts remain in Indian libraries, unedited, unstudied and unknown to scholars and practitioners.

A good example of the rudimentary state of scholarship on yoga is the fact that scholars are still wondering why there are so few postures (*āsana*) in medieval yoga sources compared with the large number known at the beginning of the twentieth century. The *Haṭhāpradīpikā* has fifteen *āsana* and the *Gheraṇḍasamhitā*, thirty-two, but Kṛṣṇamācārya taught more than two hundred. Part of the answer to this quandary can be found in some Haṭhayoga texts written between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. In the aggregate, these texts list and

describe hundreds of *āsana*. When this textual evidence is edited, translated and published, only then will more complete histories of yoga be written.

The other part of the answer consists of the influence of European physical culture and Indian traditions such as wrestling (*mallavidyā*) and martial arts, as well as the innovative genius of twentieth-century yoga gurus such as Kṛṣṇamācārya and Pattābhi Jois. Though some late medieval Haṭhayoga traditions practised numerous *āsana*, their texts do not mention special sequences of *āsana*, the movements called *vināsa*, nor the sun salutations known as *sūryanamaskāra*. In fact, the two types of *sūryanamaskāra* taught by Pattābhi Jois are based on Kṛṣṇamācārya's *vināsa* format.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, it is likely that *sūryanamaskāra* in one form or another is an ancient practice. Brahmananda, the nineteenth-century commentator on the *Haṭhāpradīpikā*, knew of a rather

<sup>12</sup> *Dattatrayayogaśāstra* 41–42ab. This text can be dated to the 12–13th c. and is one of the earliest extant texts to teach Haṭha-yoga (see the article on ‘Haṭhayoga’ by James Mallinson at <https://soas.academia.edu/JamesMallinson>).

<sup>13</sup> The opening lines of the *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati* state: “For those afflicted by the pain of Saṃsāra; those completely attached to sense objects; women; those fallen from their caste and those who do extremely reckless actions; for their sake, this *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati*, composed by Kapālakuraṇṭaka, was written [...]” (*saṃsāratāpataptānām || aṣṭantaviśayasaktānām || straiṇānām jātibhṛaṣṭānām || atisāhasakarmakartīṇām || tatkrte || iyaṃ kapālakuraṇṭakakṛtahaṭhābhyāsapaddhatir [...] likhyate*).

<sup>14</sup> *Dattatrayayogaśāstra* 105cd–107ab. Also see *Dattatrayayogaśāstra* 41–42ab. (footnote 12).

<sup>15</sup> For more information on the use of the term *yoganidrā* as a synonym for *śamādhi*, see: <http://theluminous.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/yoganidra.html>

<sup>16</sup> The main exceptions to this are the publications of the Kaivalyadhama Yoga Institute and the Lonavla Yoga Institute.

<sup>17</sup> I wish to thank Eddie Stern for pointing this out to me (p.c. 28.10.2014).



strenuous practice of sun salutations, which he believed to be inappropriate for Haṭhayoga.<sup>18</sup> His comments were prompted by the *Haṭhapradīpikā*'s caveat against afflicting the body (*kāyakeśā*).<sup>19</sup>

#### THE NEED FOR CRITICAL EDITIONS

THE LACK OF CRITICAL EDITIONS IS impeding progress in scholarship on yoga. Of the dozens of medieval Haṭha and Rājayoga texts that are still extant, only a few have been critically edited according to modern academic standards. It is very difficult to study carefully a yoga text if the text itself has scribal errors and omissions. Unfortunately, medieval yoga texts have not been well preserved. Their manuscripts tend to be roughly copied. Therefore, rarely can one rely on a single manuscript to read and understand a text. It is more a matter of using several manuscripts of the same text in order to piece together a complete and reasonably coherent version.

I would like to have included a translation of the *Yogatārāvalī* in this edition of *Nāmarūpa*, but I am unable to do so because there are many unresolved differences between its printed editions. As far as I am aware, no one has looked at all the available manuscripts of the *Yogatārāvalī* in order to resolve these differences. Some editions and manuscripts have twenty-eight verses, others twenty-nine or thirty. And there are many textual variations. The *Yogatārāvalī*'s first verse is a good example of this, for a manuscript at a library in Pune and three printed editions have the following reading:

vande gurūṇāṃ carāṇāravinde  
sandarśitasvātmāsukhāvabodhe |  
janasya ye jāṅgalikāyamāne  
saṃsārahālāhalaṃmohāśāntyai ||

"I pay homage to the gurus' lotus feet [...] which act like toxicologists for people in order to cure their delusion, which is the poison [known as] worldly life."

The first line is the same, but the second begins with *janasya ye* instead of *niḥśreyase*, which is found in a manuscript of the *Yogatārāvalī* at a library in Wai. Which reading did the author intend? Though an editor might speculate that the word *niḥśreyase* ("unsurpassed") has greater poetic value than *janasya ye* ("which for people") and is more comparable with the *Yogatārāvalī*'s register of Sanskrit, such an editor could not make an informed decision on this without examining the available manuscripts and their relationship to one another. Indeed, someone may have changed *janasya ye* to *niḥśreyase* at a relatively recent time because that person believed the text could be improved this way. Moreover, regardless of whether an editor decides to read *janasya ye* or *niḥśreyase*, a good critical edition will provide readers with the available textual evidence so that they can judge for themselves.

Owing to problems such as *janasya ye* in the first verse, all my above translations of the *Yogatārāvalī*'s verses in this article are provisional. Academic funding for five years has been offered to James Mallinson (the principal investigator), Mark Singleton and myself to critically edit and translate ten Haṭhayoga texts, including the *Yogatārāvalī*. We intend to consult all of the *Yogatārāvalī*'s available manuscripts, of which there are at least twenty. If all goes according to plan, the new edition should be completed by 2018.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTORY OF YOGA

WITH OVER TWO THOUSAND YEARS of tradition behind the word 'yoga', there is much to learn from its history. When modern yoga is criticized for teaching a physical practice without a sophisticated intellectual philosophy, one might cite the early Haṭha and Rājayoga traditions as a precedent for the effectiveness of this approach. Indeed, I suspect the author of the *Yogatārāvalī* would have agreed with Patañjali's statement that yoga is ninety-nine percent practice and one percent theory. Medieval yoga traditions were a great inspiration to Kṛṣṇamācārya and his students, and there's no reason why it will not be so for future yoga practitioners.

The history of yoga might also inform us of the fate of minimalist yoga traditions. After the sixteenth century, Haṭha and Rājayoga were absorbed by more orthodox Brahmanical traditions, which integrated the teachings of earlier Haṭha and Rājayoga texts with more sophisticated philosophical and metaphysical doctrines. This gave rise to many of the so-called Yoga Upaniṣads and other large yoga compilations such as the *Yogacintāmaṇi*. As yoga becomes a contemporary mainstream practice, history is repeating itself. Those who believe they are advancing Haṭha yoga by combining it with some other therapy, science, philosophy or religion are travelling down a well-worn path. ❦

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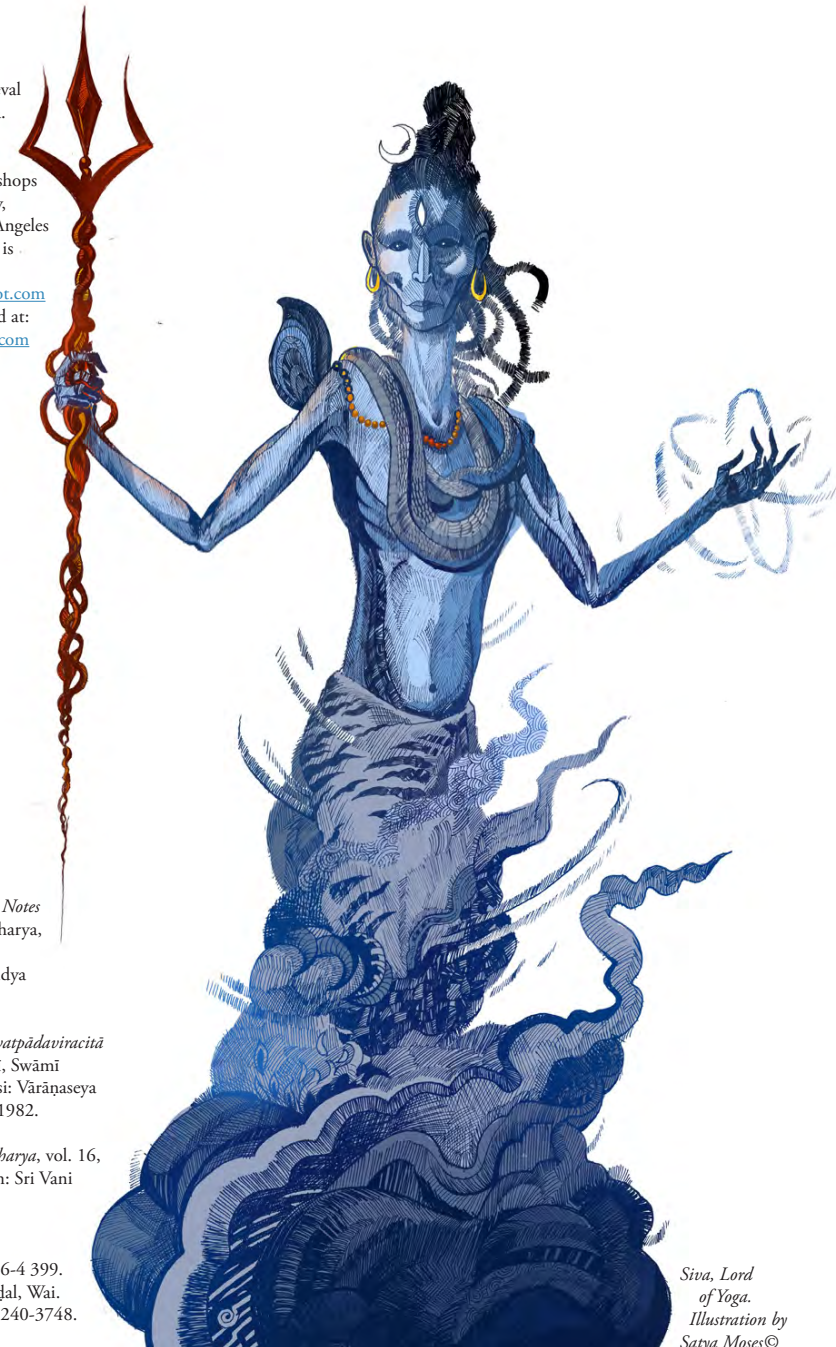
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Siva, Lord  
of Yoga.  
Illustration by  
Satya Moses ©

<sup>18</sup> A translation of Brahmānanda's comment on *sūryanamakāra* can be found in my published article on the 'Meaning of haṭha in Early Haṭhayoga', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, issue 131.4 (2011), page 536, footnote 35. This article can be downloaded at: [https://www.academia.edu/1539699/Meaning\\_of\\_ha%E1%B9%ADha\\_in\\_Early\\_Ha%E1%B9%ADhyoga](https://www.academia.edu/1539699/Meaning_of_ha%E1%B9%ADha_in_Early_Ha%E1%B9%ADhyoga)

<sup>19</sup> Caveats against afflicting the body (*kāyakeśā*), occur in various Haṭha texts. See *Amaraughaprabodha* 15, *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.64, *Haṭharatnāvalī* 1.73 and *Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā* 5.31. In an auto-commentary on his *Yogaśāstra*, the twelfth-century Jain scholar Hemacandra gave the following examples of ways of afflicting the body: "There are many methods for afflicting the body. For example, standing [for a long time], Virāsana, Utkāṭukāsana, lying down outstretched like a stick on one side, ascetic heating [practices], remaining uncovered and so on. Thus it is taught in the commentary on the *Tattvārthasūtra* (*kāyakeśā* 'nekaavidha | tadāyathā - sthānavirāsanaotkāṭukāsanaikapārsavadāṇḍāyasaṃyānatāpanāpnāvr̥tādīni || iti tattvārthabhāṣye).