

P. V. Kane puts the matter in the following way: "...(t)here are really only two main systems of Yoga, viz., the one expounded in the *Yogasūtra* and its *Bhāṣya* by Vyāsa and the other dealt with in such works as the *Gorakṣaśataka*, the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* of Svātmārāmayogin with the commentary called *Jyotsnā* by Brahmānanda. Briefly, the difference between the two is that the Yoga of Patañjali concentrates all effort on the discipline of the mind, while Haṭhayoga mainly concerns itself with the body, its health, its purity and freedom from diseases."¹⁰⁰

The origins of Haṭha Yoga, apart from the possible tenuous links with Pātañjala Yoga, are usually traced to two famous spiritual figures (*mahāsiddhas*), namely Matsyendranātha and Gorakṣanātha, who lived probably c. 900 CE. Both were Śaiva ascetics. Elaborate legends surround both figures, and some have suggested that both figures may only be legendary.¹⁰¹ The current scholarly consensus, however, is that both were historical figures.

Matsyendranātha is said to be the founder of Haṭha Yoga and may have been as well the founder of the Nātha sect.¹⁰² He is also said to have been a proponent of (or possibly even the founder of) the Yoginī Kaula tradition, an important Tantra lineage in the region of Kashmir. In Nepal he is considered to be a Buddhist *bodhisattva*, Avalokiteśvara. The important text, *Kaulajñānanirṇaya*, is attributed to him.

Gorakṣanātha was supposedly a student of Matsyendranātha and is said to be the founder of the Kānpḥaṭa ("split-eared") sect of yogis.¹⁰³ The sect gets its name from the special earrings worn, which require ear piercing. Many Haṭha Yoga texts are attributed to Gorakṣanātha, for example, the *Gorakṣaśataka* and so forth. Other important Haṭha Yoga works are the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* (c. fourteenth century), the *Gheraṇḍa-saṃhitā* (c. seventeenth century), and the *Śivasamhitā* (c. seventeenth century).

According to the *Yogatattva Upaniṣad*, Haṭha Yoga has twenty basic subdivisions.¹⁰⁴ The first eight are the same as the

"eight-limbed" Yoga of Pātañjala Yoga, enumerated at YS II.29. The additional twelve subdivisions are for the most part the various bonds (*bandha*) and "bodily exercises" (*mudrā*) of Haṭha Yoga practice. These have to do with positions of the body that block off and redirect the various breaths and fluids. The focus overall is on an elaborate network of bodily postures and an elaborate system of breathing exercises for the sake of bodily purification and control. The term "*haṭha*" is from the root *haṭh* meaning "to treat with violence" or "to oppress", and hence, the expression "Haṭha Yoga" means something like "the discipline of (bodily) exertion. [The word "Haṭha" is to be pronounced in English simply as "hut" as in English "grass-hut", followed by the syllable "ha"—hence, "hut-ha" and never "hath" as in English "bath".] Some of the *mudrās* of Haṭha Yoga involve peculiar exercises such as sucking the seminal fluids back up the urethra after ejaculation (*vajrolīmudrā*), drinking urine and using the fluid as a nasal douche (*amarolīmudrā*), and so forth.¹⁰⁵ Haṭha Yoga also involves "six actions" of cleansing. These include cleaning the teeth and body (*dhauti*), cleansing the bladder (*vasti*), cleansing the nasal passages (*neti*), exercising the muscles of the abdomen (*naulī*), cleansing the eyes by staring until the eyes water (*trāṭaka*), and removing phlegm (*kapāla-bhāti*).

In terms of the basically Śaiva theology of Haṭha Yoga, the body is made up of an elaborate network of channels or veins (*nāḍīs*), three of which are especially important. There is the *īḍā* channel that functions on the left side of the body, and the *piṅgalā* channel that functions on the right side. In the center is the *sūṣumnā* channel. Running up through the body from the base of the spine to the top of the head is a series of vital centers (*cakra*) that control the various functions of the body. Usually six or seven vital centers are discussed, but the numbers vary depending on various textual traditions. The theory of vital centers may possibly derive from medical texts such as the *Carakasamhitā* in which the body's vulnerable places (*marman*) are listed, for example, the head, throat, heart, navel, bladder,

and rectum.¹⁰⁶ At the base of the spine in the area of the rectum and the genitals is the *mūlādhāracakra*, the vital center in which is located the psycho-spiritual energy of the body symbolized as the *kuṇḍalinīśakti* ("serpent power"). Ordinarily this powerful spiritual energy is blocked or "sleeping". The purpose of Hatha Yoga is to awaken the serpent power and redirect the energies of the two sides of the body into the *susumnā* channel. The *yogin* then raises the *kuṇḍalinīśakti* up through the various vital centers of the body until the spiritual energy reaches the top of the head, known as the "thousand-petalled lotus" (*sahasrāra*), the abode of Śiva. When the spiritual power has reached the top of the head, the *kuṇḍalinīśakti* "unites" (*yoga*) with Śiva, and spiritual enlightenment or spiritual liberation occurs.

Many Hatha Yoga texts give a folk etymology of the term "*hatha*", breaking the word into two syllables, *ha*, signifying the sun, and *tha*, signifying the moon. This allows various correlations such as the "union" of the body's breaths, the "union" of male and female, the "union" of sound and silence, and, of course, the "union" of macrocosm (the world) and microcosm (the body of the *yogin*.) Finally, of course, there is the "union" of Śakti (*kuṇḍalinīśakti*, *kula*) and Śiva (the supreme *akula*).

Pāñcarātras

These satellite Yoga traditions are overwhelmingly Śaivite in their sectarian orientation, but there is also the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra tradition worth mentioning as well. Of some significance is the *Ahirbudhnyasaṃhitā* of the Pāñcarātra, which derives from somewhere between 300 and 800 CE.¹⁰⁷ The text is important because it mentions five major philosophical traditions, namely Trayī (the Vedic tradition), Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Pāsupata and Sāttvata. The *Ahirbudhnyā* describes Sāṃkhya in section 12 (verses. 18-30) as a *ṣaṣṭitantra* ("system of sixty topics"), composed by the Vaiṣṇava sage Kapila, and divided

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