Hatha yoga – in history and practice.

Hatha yoga as tantric yoga

Gitte Poulsen
Abstract:

The study investigates the field of haṭha yoga as it is described in the medieval Haṭhayogapradīpikā, a work on yoga composed in Sanskrit from the Nāth tradition. The study have then compared these practices, practitioners and the attitudes towards them, with interviews conducted in modern Varanasi, India. The focus in the assignment is the connection between haṭha yoga and tantric practices since tantra has been crucial in the forming of the early haṭha yoga and classical haṭha yoga, but slowly has been removed through different reformations such as under the Kashmir Śaivism. The tantric practices, especially those associated with left hand tantra, became less progressive and were slowly absorbed in mainstream Hinduism under several reformations during the 9th-15th century. Ideas about topics like austerities and alchemy were more and more replaced by conceptions of the subtle body and kuṇḍalinī and the practices became more symbolized and viewed as happening inside the practitioner’s body. Tantra was important in the framework of haṭha yoga but the philosophy and practitioners of haṭha yoga has like tantra been absorbed and mixed into different philosophies and forms of yoga practice. The practitioners has gone from alchemists, ascetics and left hand tantrics to be absorbed into the wider community which is evident in modern Varanasi. None of the haṭha yoga practitioners interviewed were Nāths, ascetics or alchemists and combined their haṭha practice with not only tantric philosophy but many different philosophies from India.
Indholdsfortegnelse

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Introduction:

The religious landscape of India is a vivid and pulsating part of the Indian culture, a culture and religion who has fascinated the western world for centuries as the significant and exotic “other”. The Orientalism gave birth to both romantic yearning after Mother India and a lost spiritualism but also the birth of the academic discipline Indology in the western world. Already Goethe pointed out that Hinduism challenged the western categorizing and perception of religion, not because the religions of India lacked form but because it is so different from the forms found in the studies of the monotheistic religions. (Olesen, 2013c, 2) Another issue of great interest for the academic discipline of India was to construct the “mainstream” Hinduism, and also here significant shifts in paradigms has happened.

One of the newest approaches in the world of science is the pursuit for the golden age of tantra and the proclamation of tantra as an important part of mainstream Hinduism. (Flood, 1996, 193) This approach is in high degree a reaction to the “bhakti paradigm” which dominated the field of Indology during 19th and 20th century. This perspective favored the Vedic-Brahmanical perspective and was especially interested with the Bhagavadgītā and Vaiṣṇavism. (Olesen, 2013c, 2)

According to this approach the impact of tantra in the history of India has been neglected due to both the low status and reputation of tantric religion, especially in connection with the British imperialism. Of course, the search for the mainstream Hinduism is an ambitious affair, and tantra is also just a layer in the enormous construction we label Hinduism. The study subject is tantra and yoga, and the connection between the two with a focus on Śaktism and Śaivism.

Goddess-centered or Śākta Tantric traditions are essential for understanding Hinduism. While exoteric Hindu goddess traditions have received increasing attention in recent years, esoteric Tantric forms of goddess worship are rarely mentioned. Tantric Śaktism is usually consigned to the back of textbooks and more often than not treated as a mere subsect of Saivism and Vaiṣṇavism. The time has come to reclaim the field of Tantric studies, to expand our understanding of the worship of the goddess in India, and to correct our understanding of Hinduism in general” (Brooks, 1990,preface ix)
Aim of the thesis and research questions:

The theme and issue presented, tantric traditions in Śaivism and Śaktism, will be searched for through the practice of classical haṭha yoga as it appears in the Haṭhayogapradīpikā (HYP), a medieval script from the philosophy of the Kashmir Śaivism composed in Sanskrit, and then compare these practices, and especially the general attitude towards haṭha yoga practices in modern Varanasi, the most sacred space of India’s religious landscape. The paper will focus on these three issues in the study of haṭha yoga:

1) What are the tantric elements found in HYP?

2) How is the philosophy and practical part of haṭha yoga connected?

3) How are the tantric elements in haṭha yoga visible in modern Varanasi?

The timeline considered in the thesis will be mainly around the 5th -15th century where tantra was gradually developed by both elite philosophers and the wild Kāpālika style ascetics, associated with the cremation grounds and their worship of wild gods and goddesses like Bhairava and Kāli. In this way, both the theoretical and practical approach to tantra will be incorporated since both have had significant influence in the development of haṭha yoga. The core of the tantric philosophy will be approached as it has evolved with a special focus on the reformations in philosophy of the Kashmir Śaivism as this was the environment for the composition of HYP.

The understanding and working with tantra also has a high complexity incorporated, and the methodical approach to both India in general and tantra has been given great importance in this thesis. Tantra is a large subject and is not a form of religion found exclusively in Hinduism but is a form of crossover religious thoughts found in Buddhism, Jainism, Daoism and even Islam but the focus in the thesis will only center on the developments in the tantric Śaivism and Śaktism.

To make these medieval practices both understandable and comparable to the modern day Varanasi the reading and analysis of HYP will be complemented with interviews from Varanasi conducted from September-December in 2013 with various yoga-teachers and scholars.
Delamination of research object:
The paper will keep a main focus on the tantric branch of yoga, and will not try to trace the origins of yoga as so. Previous developments and thoughts of yoga will be mentioned shortly but the main focus will be kept on the developments in the tantric *haṭha yoga* practice.

The focus will be on the Indian development and interpretation of yoga and will mostly leave the western world’s influence out, even though it has also played a significant role in the modern times, especially when one considers the business opportunities for yoga teachers both in the west and in India. Varanasi is a city who has attracted spiritual seekers for many years and especially yoga has grown in popularity and hereby in market opportunities.

Methodical approach:
The understanding of what qualifies as science is an inescapable question to consider when you approach the religion, culture and history of India. For example, yoga is often referred to as a science in the Indian tradition which also is stated in HYP, but it wouldn’t qualify as a science in western terms and standards. This conception of religious scriptures as science has existed at least since the *Vedas* was composed, and still today, this is an important aspect of the transmission of Indian religion.¹

Kundalini is not a myth or an illusion. It is not a hypothesis or hypnotic suggestion. Kundalini is a biological substance that exists within the framework of the body. Its awakening generates electrical impulses throughout the whole body and these impulses can be detected by modern scientific instruments and machines. (Kundalini Tantra, 2012,12)

Calling yoga a science and claiming that *kūṇḍalinī* and the *cakras* can be measured scientifically is of great importance, also in the modern yoga guides as this example from the Bihar Yoga trust² states

¹ Mishra 2013, interview 1. 22/09 2013.
² Internal yoga school founded in 1964 with the purpose of propagating the wisdom of yoga all over the world. Is used as an example of a modern Indian approach to tantric yoga.
This is closely connected to the general approach and understanding of religion. In the west the written religious transmission where teachings in close contact with a main church have been transmitted through has provided a solid and comparatively homogenous institution, which hasn’t been the case in India. The scripture and the written tradition have never gained a very high status in India and the guru-based religion has not provided the same established religious institution. Working with HYP is then working with a mainly oral tradition which later on established a Sanskrit literature. It is also working with what my informant Kamalakar Mishra calls “ideal-Hinduism”, a constructed Hinduism, as the elite and philosophers believed it, and there is a great deal of difference between this scripture-based Hinduism and the mainstream Hinduism you encounter daily. Kamalakar Mishra came with an example of this: the caste system in Hinduism, he says, is not practiced as it was meant to. If you read the Bhagavadgītā you will see that caste is determined by your action, and not by birth – this is a fundamental difference, and of his opinion, this caste system is a cancer of Hinduism and should not be practiced.

**Sanskrit and Hindi terminology:**
A tool box of conceptions and philosophical terms are always necessary for approaching any kind of subject. Translating some conceptions from one language to another can sometimes be an impossible task, because the conception is merely not present in other languages, terms or philosophical systems. An example of this with Sanskrit/English is the translation of the noun *manas*. *Manas* are often translated as “mind” but it is not the same conception as the English concept of the mind. *Manas* are a product of prakṛti (nature, matter) and are material, like the nose and eyes. *Manas* are like the medium through which puruṣa (the self) thinks. Like puruṣa sees through the eyes puruṣa also thinks through manas which is also physical, as an organ and instrument which is not included in the English conception of the mind. This is also noted in the standard dictionaries by Arthur Macdonell and Monier Williams where *manas* are defined as: “mind (in its widest sense as the seat of intellectual operations and of emotions.” (Macdonell, 2007 [1924], 216) Furthermore, when you translate many of the tantric texts with a standard glossary and dictionary you can get some difficulties. Tantra is often written in a mystical and symbolic

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5 Mishra 2013, interview 3. 2/11 2013.
language and you have to remember that the standard dictionaries often are of little or no use for this philosophical direction since it haven’t been translated much until recent times and in general tantra has been neglected in the study of India.

I will in the paper use the term yogi instead of the more correct yogin since this is generally accepted in both Indian and western terminology. Also, I had to make another distinction in this area, which is the distinction between yogis on one hand and the practitioners of yoga or yoga teachers on the other. In general terms you would expect that yogis are practitioners of yoga, but today there are so many yoga-teachers, yogis and practitioners that the distinction can be useful. Also, the term yogi has a long association with ascetics and alchemists, especially the Nāth Siddhas, the order that developed and systemized hatha yoga. A yogi in general is often identified by their exclusion from orthodox practice, and their yoga is more associated with black magic and perversion than the conventional yoga practices. (White, 1996, 8-9) Furthermore the term yogi is in Hindu folklore and tradition a negative term and the yogi’s are often the sinister in tales, such as the famous 25 tales of the “corpse-demon” (Vetālapaṇḍavīṃśati) where a Kāpālika yogi tries to cheat the king with 25 riddles.

Only one out of the four practitioners I interviewed would call themselves yogi’s and this is only because the society calls him a yogi. Out of the 4 yoga teachers I interviewed all of them said that the term yogi was both highly valued but also a dangerous title and that the Nāths were the true yogis, even though they don’t engage in the practice of conventional yoga today.

The translations of respectively HYP and Yoga-Sūtra(YS) of Patañjali are my own translations. The translation of HYP is connected to a translation project of the script at Aarhus University(SAR) and the few verses from the YS are translated with help from my dear friend and informant, Kamalakar Mishra.

Fieldwork – practical possibilities and problems:

The study is based on qualitative interviews which can be seen as primarily semi-structured interviews. I had an interview guide that I followed loosely, but I found it important giving space in the interview to break the guide lines and go with the flow, so to speak. I also recorded most of

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Pandey, interview 1, 17/9 2013
my interviews, but it was a general tendency that as soon I turned off the recorder, the interview became more interesting. My best interviews were, so to say, conducted after my interviews had ended officially. All of my interviews were conducted in the home of the teacher/instructor and not once have I not been offered chai during an interview. This is probably closely connected to the theme of tantra since I experienced over and over again that my informants became quiet when they found out that this was the type of yoga I was investigating. Tantra has a bad reputation and is surrounded by misunderstandings both in the west and in India where tantra mainly is perceived as black magic and superstition. Therefore I also chose very few informants and then did long interviews, and with some of them, more interviews. In that way I had a better change in gaining their trust. These difficulties were luckily not a shocking discovery I made in Varanasi and before coming there I kept reading and remembering a passage from David Gordon Whites book “The Alchemical Body- Siddha traditions in medieval India” about the research he had conducted in India.

“It had been my intention, in undertaking my research tour, to find a living yogin-alchemist and to sit at his feet until I had solved all the riddles the Rasārṇava and the Gorak Bānī had posed for me. This endeavor was a total failure. There were no alchemists to be found in the places in which I sought out (although I did meet a number of amateurs and charlatans), and the few nāth siddhas who struck me as genuine practitioners of the hatha yoga taught by Goraknāth made it clear to me that they would be willing to divulge their secrets to me only after a long period of discipleship” (White, 1996, XI preface)

I chose to only work with English speaking informants, since my own Hindi is not advanced enough yet to conduct interviews, and working with a translator is complicated because you get the informants statements in a translated and thereby interpreted form. All kinds of translation will always be interpretation and even though my informants spoke quit good English it was still a process for them explaining and translating in a language that is not their native tongue.

Other practical considerations were that I am a western woman in India, which provides a complication of its own, especially in Varanasi. Varanasi is in some points a time warp of preserved and “traditional” Hinduism, and this is especially visible in the scene of the genders. There are few female yoga teachers in Varanasi but I chose only to work with males, not having to worry about
this in my analysis, even though women have played a more crucial role in *tantra* and tantric yoga than any other places in the Indian religion.

I also heard many stories both from friends who have travelled India, other girls I met in Yoga studios and various yoga teachers that some yoga teachers take sexual advantage of western women, especially in the field of *tantra*. Tantra has a reputation which is highly associated with sexual practice, and many are cheated into believing that having sex with your guru will gain your spiritual growth. I had to come close to my study subjects to gain their trust, but I also had to keep a physical distance and be clear about that I wasn’t interested in these “spiritual” practices, even though the dialogue sometimes tended towards sexual practices and its meaning. I had one informant which I didn’t complete an interview with, because he clearly was more interested in me than my project. With this came also the discovery that three out of four informants clearly wouldn’t share much without me taking their yoga classes and hereby providing them business.

**Informants and interviews:**

The paper is based on various interviews and teachings with six informants of various backgrounds and with different approaches and understandings of yoga. The group of informants can roughly be divided into the practitioners or yoga-teachers, and the scholars and philosophers which provides the theoretical approach. 5 out of 6 informants are national Indians where Mark S.G. Dyzckowski being the only foreigner. This provided a natural balance between my theoretical informants, Mishra and Dyzckowski, one of the being more “western” in their terminology, the other being Indian. The informants are as follows:

**Informant 1, Rakesh Pandey:**

Yoga practitioner and teacher. Ph.D. from Benares Hindu University (BHU) initiated in: *hatha yoga*, *siddha yoga*, *kriya yoga* and lately the *sāṃkhya* tradition. The first three times i saw him he was dressed like a “real” yogi, in short lungi and mālās around his neck, but later on he started coming in jeans with a I-phone in his hand.

**Informant 2, Peetamber Ji:**

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7 Sanskrit: “action, effort, deed” There are different forms of kriya yoga. The *Bhagavadgītā* has a section on it. Patañjali describes it in his second chapter but in modern times it is especially associated with Mahavatar Babaji.
Also yoga practitioner and teacher with a Ph.D. from BHU in Sanskrit and āyurveda. He was my personal yoga teacher as well and it took 2½ months before he agreed to conduct an interview. I couldn’t record the interviews as well. He clearly favors tantric practices but speaks in the language of both sāmkhya and tantra, combining the hatha yoga with the meditation aspects from Patañjalis yoga. He saw the goddess as the highest manifestation of consciousness and admitted after many long conversations that he was fond of Saktism and tantric practices which he wouldn’t discuss further.

Informant 3, Siddharth:

Yoga teacher and practitioner. Does only practice hatha yoga, and will not teach kundalinī yoga unless it is a part of hatha. He cares a lot about safety and the importance of the guru. Does not see himself as a yogi of any kind, and says it’s impossible to find them in Varanasi as well. Most sadhus in Varanasi are fake in his opinion and the few real yogis still alive live in the Himalayas and only come out for Kumbha Mela.

Informant 4, anonymous, yoga teacher in Assi Ghat:

When I first met this yoga teacher I think that he hoped I was going to take his yoga classes for as soon he found out I was there for an interview he became quiet and had no more interest in me. When I asked about bindu, tantra and alchemy he laughed and said this was rubbish. However, he said that he only would use the HYP in personal practice and not in teaching, which were stated by all of my informants. I had some experiences like this one and in the beginning I got frustrated when i couldn’t find any answers until I realized that not finding answers might be an answer of its own.

Informant 5, Kamalakar Mishra:

Retired from BHU but an earlier PhD. from The Department of Philosophy and Religion. My intention was to have an interview with him but after I had met him the first time he offered that I could be his student for free, because he saw this as a part of his duty, his guru-sādhana⁸. He is old

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⁸ From Sanskrit. “a means of accomplishing something” and is a spiritual practice that includes different disciplines. Found in Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikh and Muslim traditions.
and struggles with his hearing, making it necessary to shout at him during conversations. The first time I came to his house he apologized for his bad health because he wasn’t able to stand up and welcome me like every woman should be welcomed as the goddess. He is the author of “Kashmir Śaivism: The central philosophy of tantrism” and consider himself a tantric. He was a foundation for the study as he guided me through the philosophy of India in a playful and understandable manner.

Informant 6, Mark Dyczkowski:

Mark has a PhD. from Oxford where he studied Kashmir Śaivism along with an undergraduate from BHU and he has lived and worked in India for around 40 years. 3 times a week he gives free lectures in general philosophy of Kashmir Śaivism centered around his PhD. "The Doctrine Of Vibration" which I followed during my Varanasi stay, even though this is a text from the Trika tradition, it still served as an important philosophical background. He is himself initiated in the tantric tradition and he says the most important aspect of his teachings is to give space to the experience in tantra and not only work as a scholar.

This establishment of informants allowed me to look closer at both the practical aspect of yoga, and the theoretical part with focus on the translation of the main text – Haṭhayogapradīpikā. However, the story of Yoga is ancient and before turning to the roots of Haṭhayoga the general history and philosophy of yoga will be traced back in the story of India ending with an attempt on defining both yoga and tantra.

Ethics:

I have followed the general guidelines for humanistic and social sciences. More specific according to this project was especially the question of the security for my informants. This is a general value in field research, but since I worked with themes who are perceived taboo in the general Indian society I had to explain my aim of the thesis to my informants before starting the interview. I made it standard to explain that I was interested in the tantric practices associated with haṭhayoga and the philosophy of Kashmir shaivism, furthermore I made a great deal of explaining my definition on tantric religion, to avoid the modern sexual

connotations connected to the subject. I also made clear that I was more interested in their personal experience than what the scriptures said, but that I had worked with hathayogapradipika. All of the informants said they were happy I didn’t perceive tantra as being only a sexual spiritual experience, since all of them agreed this was a misconception. I gave all the informants the possibility of being anonymous, which one chose. Also, I agreed with all of them that the interviews would be recorded, and that I would use their answers in the paper. I quickly discovered the formality that came with the recorder, and how surprisingly more they had to say when I turned it off. I have decided not to use anything that wasn’t part of the official interview with the recorder, since I share the deepest respect for my informants.

Yoga – an attempt on definition:

To trace the origin of yoga is an uncertain and highly discussed subject both in the Indian and the Western tradition. You would think that the most obvious place to search is of course in the “beginning” - the religion of The Indus Valley, placed in today’s Pakistan and Western India where some of the earliest urban societies existed around 2600-1900 BCE. (Samuels, 2008, 3) It is from this period the famous seal which Sir John Marshall thought was the prototype of Śiva seated in what he interpreted as a yogic posture. (Samuels, 2008, 4) This interpretation might be, as both Samuel and Gordon suggest, an interpretation where later known practices and gods are projected into this context by Marshall. Śiva is a relatively new god, and there are no known texts about seated or unseated postures, (āsanas) at this time. David Gordon White suggest that it might have nothing to do with Śiva or yoga’s ancestors at all, but that this seated posture might be a sign of royalty or at least, something that’s not necessarily yoga (White, 2009, 56)

This example only illustrates the problem with the work on these ancient and today, well-known religious practices. It will always be impossible to trace the origin of yoga because it’s a mixture of so much ancient culture and history and also different types of religion. Especially, when we are aware of the later practices it becomes easy and tempting to see a context between these, but as Geoffrey Samuel notes: “In particular, it seems to me that the evidence for the yogic or “Tantric” practices is so dependent on reading later practices into the material that it is of little or no use for constructing any kind of history of practices” (Samuels, 2008,8) Every group in every age has
created its own version of yoga which has been possible because of the broad range of the semantic field of meanings on the term of yoga. It has therefore been possible to morph it into nearly any practice or process one chooses (White, 2012, 2)

Not being able to start from the “beginning” - the etymology serves as the next trace in the quest for defining yoga:

The term yoga derived from the Sanskrit root yuj, “to control”, “to yoke” or “to unite”, and refers to these technologies or disciplines of ascetism and meditation which are thought to lead to spiritual experience and profound understanding or insight into the nature of existence (Flood, 2005, 95)

The famous grammarian Pāṇini had proposed two separate etmiologies of yuj, one meaning “to yoke” and the other meaning “to contemplate” (sam –a –dha from which samādhi is generated) (White, 2009, 41) This might explain the two-folded nature of yoga, the one being meditative and the other being more physical, but the relation between the two is a complex affair. According to Rakesh Pandey the meaning of the word yoga is more to “combine” “train” and “meet” and especially the meeting with the self and thereby god is emphasized by all informants.

Yoga is one of the many paths to gnosis10, the general goal in most Indian philosophy. To obtain this, there are many different paths. For example, there is the jñāna-mārga where you by knowledge seek “the truth”. Then there is bhakti-mārga where the devotion to the deity will give the ultimate insight. Another path – is the path of yoga in which liberation is searched through the “mastering of the self”. For the yogi, this is the most valuable and direct path to liberation because all other paths will lead to the path of yoga (Dyzckowski, 1989, 33) In Yoga philosophy the general goal is often described as samādhi and even though the conception of samādhi vary a little it is one of the most consistent elements in yoga. It is not equal gnosis or liberation, but is a state of mind.

10 Not understood as knowledge about things, but more like metaphysical insight.
Yoga Philosophy:
Yoga can be interpreted and approached in many ways, but as an example of approach I will use the information gathered from Kamalakar Mishra on yogic philosophy. According to Mishra, yoga must be approached from two perspectives, the aim or goal of yoga and the technique of yoga. The general goal of yoga, he explains, is the realization of the self or god-realization which is the same in the Indian traditions. In the Indian tradition god and man are not made from different substances but the one same substance. God is not something “out there” but an all-embracing consciousness where everything is an aspect of this. To explain this Mishra uses an analogy with the ocean and the wave. Water as in the ocean is unlimited and formless while the wave is limited and formed water – the same goes for the man and god, we are the waves in the ocean of god. God is generally formless in the Indian tradition, which also is why you see so many different gods and idols. The idols are not the god, but are a form god freely has taken, so it is the form of god through which the followers can worship the deity. ¹¹This is also reflected in the general relationship with god who is described by the artist and scholar Alice Boner:

“Or is it perhaps that the relation which the Hindu religion establishes between God an the soul takes the poignancy and ecstasy of human relationship, a love between man and woman, instead of remaining in the calm, warm but less ecstatic relationship of the child and parent?... Between parent and child there can never be that union, that identity between true lovers. That is why in the Christian religion we never quite get rid of the fear of God, and we never attain that familiarity and unity with him, which seems to be the ultimate aim of Hindu religion, no matter what school it follows” (Boner, 1993, 103)

In general, in the philosophy of yoga there are the type of sāṃkhya and later advaita vedānta, which are very much alike – both in philosophy but especially in the practical aspect of yoga, and then the yoga of tantra who opposes it. The most famous work in the sāṃkhya tradition is the YS composed by Patañjali around the second century BC. The opening of the YS states according to Kamalakar Mishra the goal and the technique of this form of yoga.

1.2) yogaḥ citta vṛtti nirodhah // (Hartranft 2002, www.arlingtoncenter.org)

“Yoga is the restriction of the movements of consciousness”

This is the technique of Patañjali yoga. The meaning of the verse is not to stop the thoughts of the mind with force, but to not get involved in the thoughts. Mishra explains this with another analogy. You can compare it to a river. The river is the thoughts and they are always flowing with the stream. You shouldn’t stop this stream by building a dam, and then your mind and the river would float over at some point. Instead, you should rise from the river and stand on the bank of the river and hereby still let the thoughts flow without letting them affect you or so to say – be thought by you.

The next verse then states:

1.3) tadā draṣṭuh svārūpe avasthānam // (Hartranft 2002, www.arlingtoncenter.org)

“Then the seer(draṣṭuh) will abide in its very own nature”

This classifies of the goal for PT’s yoga. This is generally speaking a state of not acting and is one of the main philosophical differences between sāṃkhya and tantra, since this is the highest state for sāṃkhya where tantra takes it even further.

When puruṣa has removed prakṛti and hereby the three guṇas there are full knowledge to puruṣa, there is no suffering (duḥka) but also not any activity, bliss, (ānanda) or happiness (sukha) since this is in the sphere of the now negated prakṛti. The only thing that remains is the pure puruṣa in its true form as a seer (draṣṭuh). The philosophy of advaita vedānta is similar, but in this philosophy prakṛti is māyā (illusion) and the happiness (sukha) and bliss (ānanda) is here connected to the sphere of puruṣa, and not the doctrine of māyā. So there is still happiness and bliss according to the advaita vedānta but both agree that there is no action (karma) in the pure state of puruṣa.

Tantra would say that there definitely still is action when you are realized/liberated – just not the action of karma but the action of kriya spanda, and this is the reason why both Kamalakar Mishra

12 In sāṃkhya philosophy, 3 guṇas: sattva (creation) ṛajas (preservation) tamas(destruction/transformation)
and Mark Dyzckowski would call the yoga of sāṃkhya and advaita vedānta a negating type of yoga, and that of tantra as being affirmative.\(^{13}\)

*Kriya spanda* has three characteristics of which it is consistent.

1) It is automatic and effortless. There is no will behind the action, no motive. Mishra explains it as when you suddenly start singing, or a child that plays out of happiness, not because of the lack of happiness.

2) It’s a free action. Even though it’s not done voluntary, you can still stop doing it. It’s a free automatic action, not a mechanical action like for example the action of a fan. When we turn on the switch, it moves, there is no freedom or possibility not to move.

3) This separates the action from the action of karma: there is always a motive behind the action of karma; you do it out of lack, imperfection. *Karma* is the kind of action that rises from imperfection opposed to that of *spanda kriya*. The action of *spanda* is not done out of lack but from bliss and joy, when Śiva dances and with this destroys and creates the world he doesn’t do it FOR joy, but FROM joy. *Karma* is something we do, *spanda* happens.\(^{14}\)

So, the techniques of yoga are many and various, and even though Kamalakar Mishra states that the goal always is gnosis, the conception of gnosis varies. Gnosis is equal to liberation: mokṣa, kaivalya and nirvāṇa which are some of the terms for it according to different traditions. In the tantric tradition however, liberation can also be achieved while still alive, (*jīvanmukti*). The techniques of reaching liberation are many both in the theistic and non-theistic Indian traditions (Flood 2005, 94) In this point of sense, yoga is a sādhanā, a practical way to reach god and also a soteriology (White 2012, 29) Furthermore, It should also be added that in tantric yoga and in HYP the goal is replaced or supplied by becoming a *siddha* or obtaining certain magical powers (*siddhis*), and this form of yoga then aims for both this-worldly and other-worldly pleasures.

The obtaining of magical powers is not new in yoga philosophy and the third chapter of Patañjali's *YS*, *vibhūti*, is focused on the obtainment of magical powers. However, in this connection, attaining magical powers is a hindrance to the higher consciousness caused by the creation of attachment

\(^{13}\)Mishra, interview 3 d. 2/11 2013.  
\(^{14}\)Mishra, Interview 6 d. 20/12 2013.
to puruṣa. (Flood 2005, 101) This is not the point of view in tantra where the conception of siddha “perfected” or “accomplished” in some parts of the tradition is more important than the actual liberation. Yogi’s has been known for obtaining these magical powers since ancient times and levitation along with the ability to take over a dead body is often viewed as a result of yoga.

In the context of siddhis my informants were of divided opinions. Rakesh Pandey and Peetamber said the goal of hatha yoga indeed could be attainment of different powers, Rakesh even said he obtained some himself during his practice such as the possibility to stop the heart rate as result of yogic practice. Mishra along with the rest of the practitioners saw the attainment of powers as being an hindrance to spiritual growth as well. However, all informants stated that they often disappeared quickly and that the greatest importance was on the mastering of the siddhis and not to desire them.

The rise of Śiva:

Yoga and especially tantra is also deeply connected to Śiva, along with worship of the Goddess especially in their terrible forms like Bhairava or Kālī. Though the goddess is commonly perceived at the consort of Śiva and as the gods inherent power (Śakti) but she is also the defining mark of certain forms of Śaivism where she is seen as transcending this marital and logical subordination (Sanderson 1988, 660)

Śiva in his modern form is a relatively new deity in the Indian pantheon, even though he can be traced back to Rudra who is described in the Rgveda as: “The embodiment of wilderness and unpredictable danger” and he is addressed more with the hope of keeping him at bay than with the wish to bring him near. (Samuels 2002, 204) Rudra was also the archetypical ascetic but were peripheral in the Vedic pantheon with only 3 hymns in the Rgveda(Flood 2005, 78) Śiva also emerged as a god on the edge of the established order and pantheon, smeared in ashes, mediating, dressed in tiger skin and dancing on the cremation ground. However, Śiva is not known as a mahayogin before somewhere between 200 BCE-400 CE and Rudra is never addressed with this title. Being an outsider Śiva still grew bigger in importance and around the third and fourth century CE the worship of Śiva had become important in the forming of the classical Hinduism. Śiva is addressed as the “God of Paradox” by Gavin Flood, being both the perfect ascetic and the
perfect householder. Furthermore he is described by Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty as the erotic ascetic. On one hand he is the ithyphallic and promiscuous god, but is also the celibate and wild yogi. Śiva contains all opposites within him and is even described as half male and half female, *ardhanārīśvara* “(Flood 2005, 149-151)

Generally the followers of Śiva are divided in puranic and non-puranic traditions which is where the tantric teachings belong. The first Śaiva cults came within what is known as the *atimārga* (the outer path), a path only open for ascetics and thereby were consistent of a completely gnostic form of religion, only focused on mokṣa.

The earliest known worshippers of this kind are the Pāśupatas who are mentioned in the famous *Mahābhārata* in the 4th century CE. Except few references we only know one text which is dated much later even though it’s probably composed somewhere before the 10th century (Dyzckowski 1989, 8). The Pāśupatas were as well on the edge of the householder society and had an antisocial behavior, living in the cremation ground and thereby hoping to gain union with Rudra when they died. (Flood 2005, 156-157)

Out of the *atimārga* the later *mantramārga* (path of mantras) developed. *Mantramārga* is not only gnostic but is considered about both *mukti* and *siddhi* and is open for householders as well as ascetics. In the *mantramārga* the number of rituals, mantras and deities are increased and it is here we find the Nāth Siddhas who are credited for the composition of HYP. Also the famous Kāpālikas, which first are mentioned around the third to fifth century, belongs to the *mantramārga*. The Kāpālikas carried a drinking bowl made of a human skull, (*a khatvāṅga*), and a skull for a begging bowl as well. Again the context was the cremation ground and the antisocial and taboo breaking attitude which the Kāpālikas used to attain *siddhis*. (Flood 2005, 165) So, the ascetic traditions inside the *atimārga* and *mantramārga* differ in relation to the aim/goal. In the *mantramārga* ascetics like the Kāpālikas were primarily concerned with the attainment of powers where the path of liberation was in the domain of the householders (Sanderson 1988, 667)

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15 Dumont made the term but it has gradually developed. The idea is that Hinduism can be seen in forms of a dialogue between the world-renouncer and the man-in-the-world, the householder, (Flood 2005, 89)

16 The model is still under construction, since the tantric areas still are quit unexplored. The model have been developed and changed by scientists as Alexis Sanderson, Gavin Flood and Bjarne Wernicke Olesen. (Appendix 1)
Another important point according to the tantric connection to Śiva is that most of the village goddesses (Kāli, Parvati, Durga) more often is seen as forms of Śiva and his consort than Viṣṇu and his consort Lakṣmī. This gradual transformation of local and regional wild goddesses gained great importance in these traditions and it seems that Śiva and his consort in many ways were perfectly shaped for the philosophy of tantra. (Samuels 2002, 247) Śiva has in general maintained a more edgier, dangerous and destroyable image than Viṣṇu, and in general Vaiṣṇavism contains more orthopraxy than Śaivism (Flood 2005, 149)

**What is Tantra?:**

It is hard to determine when the scriptures of tantra emerged but the first text groups are estimated to have been composed somewhere between 400-800 CE, following the dating of Alexis Sanderson. We know little about where they were composed geographically but we know that the cults of Śiva and Viṣṇu were almost firmly established and so, forming the main branches of the classical Hinduism, Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism. (Sanderson 1988, 663) Another important branch is Śaktism – worship of the goddess, which especially developed in the tantric Śaiva oriented milieus. It can in the tantric traditions be very difficult to decide whether Śiva, the goddess or both is the central deity of worship and the area can be approached as an “area of confusion” in the current research as seen in appendix 1.

The scriptures on tantra engage in the topics of yogic practices, magic, metaphysics and philosophy. Āgamas are the first text group to represent tantric philosophy and are like the Vedas classified as Śruti literature. Śruti literature is understood to be the direct revelation experienced and given to the rṣi’s (seers) and they are supreme to the smṛti literature which is literature based on the traditions in practice. (Olesen 2013b, 221) The Tantras claim a revelation supreme to the Vedas and in tantra in general, each tradition consider its own revelation to be supreme. The conception of what this revelation is consistent of is also different from the Vedic perspective. It is not a rṣi who has been given this sight by the help of gods but more like a yogi who received the revelation through the experience. Experience is highly valued in tantra and the experience is the sublime revelation which also is stated by Mark Dyczkowski:

17 There are text groups who can be viewed as tantric for both Śaktism (Tantras), Śaivism (Āgamas) and for Vaiṣṇavism, the Saṃhitās (Olesen 2013b, 222)
When the Kashmiri Śaiva talks of deity and reality as light, he is trying to express the direct experience of the real; this is more important to the mystic than any concept of reality. The yogi’s concern is realization, not philosophical speculation or theological discussion” (Dyzckowski 1989, 61.)

In tantra, the experience of unity is the most important, and the philosophical theoretical approach is not useful without practice as stated in the HYP:

1.65) kriyāyuktasya siddhiḥ syād akiyasya katham bhavet /
na śastrapāṭhamātreṇa yogasiddhiḥ prajāyate //

“Siddhi can be for the one engaged in practice. How could it be for the non-practitioner? Success in yoga is not achieved by text study only” (Akers 2002, 32)

Tantra arises in this frame and context, also as a reaction and reformation of the established religious society, the Brahmanical religion. The reformation is not entirely anti-Vedic, but can be seen as a counterpart to Vedic religion instead. The focus on high and complex ritualism known from Vedic religion is also present in tantric religions with important rituals of initiation, complex micro- and macro-cosmos relations along with mandalas and yantras. (Sanderson 1988, 662)

Especially the initiation ritual known as dikṣa is important in tantric practice and they were held to destroy the karma in the sphere of Veda-determined values and to be initiated in the kula, the family of the clan (Sanderson 1988, 660) Where the Vedic perspective has an huge focus on the social structures and hierarchy the tantric line has a larger focus on the individual and the individual contact with the deity and the consciousness this whole world is made of. This makes tantra a mystical form of religion, and the reunion or even becoming the Bhairava incarnate is the central aim of the worship. (White 2009, s 11) The social hierarchy is also reformed and many tantric traditions is open both to women and people from all casts which is also stated in the HYP.

3.99) puṁso binduṁ samakuñcya samyagabhyāsapāṭavāt /
Yadi nārī rajo rakṣedvajrolyā sāpi yoginī //
“If a woman can preserve her seminal fluid with vajrolyā simultaneous with binding the male semen, then she too is a yoginī” (Akers 2002, 76)

However, this” liberal” attitude towards woman is also connected both to the practice of Śaktism and that of alchemy which were a great part of these traditions. It’s a basic assumption that the fluid lineage or clan nectar (kula) is naturally present in women, and this is one of the reasons the tantrics engaged in sexual intercourse. (White 1996, 200) It’s important to note that even though some forms of tantra are open to women, it is not liberation of women as so, since they primarily were used as ritual objects.

**Right and left hand tantra:**

Tantra is roughly divided in the left (vāmācārin) and right handed (dakṣinacārin) practices in accordance with the Indian conception of pure and impure in relation to the usage of left and right hand. This also means that even within tantra the differences in practice are huge, especially on the reading and interpretation of the texts. For example did Kamalakar Mishra, who views himself a tantric, tell me: “I will not favor meaningless ritualism and animal sacrifice as well. This is a negative interpretation of tantra, and it is black magic, they call themselves tantrics but are sorcerers doing black magic” (Mishra 2013, interview 3)

The left hand practices are associated with the cremation ground, sexual rituals and usage of the 5 substances (panchamakara)\(^\text{18}\), in general all things considered taboo in the Brahmanical Hinduism. The logic of the left hand practice is the strong force associated with the “evil/impurity/taboo” - for example the cremation ground which is extremely impure according to the general Hindu conception but becomes the main power center for the tantrics. You could even, with Mircea Eliades conception of Axis Mundi in mind be tempted to use the phrase Anus Mundi since the cremation surely is viewed as center of the world by the tantrics.(Olesen 2013a, 4) Left handed tends to be extremely based on the liminal phase in religious practices with rituals that strongly mark the difference between the sacred and the profane space. This means that the most powerful and quick results will come from tantra, but it is also the most dangerous and risky path to take. If the smallest thing goes wrong for example the recitation of a mantra the wild deities can backfire. This is also known in the modern concept of tantra:

\(^{\text{18}}\)Wine, meat, fish, parched grain and sexual intercourse
I am not criticizing non-tantric methods. They are the mild methods which do not bring you any trouble. They are just like beer, you drink a little and nothing happens. If you drink four to ten classes not much will happen. But tantric methods are like LSD, you have a little and it takes you right out. If something is wrong, it is wrong; if something is right, it is right. (Kundalini Tantra 1984, 47)

This power and usage of impurity has caused a lot of fear for the tantrics in India, but they are also respected as powerful and are still consulted with certain problems in the modern India, especially in Bengal (Samuels 2002, 233) Rakesh Pandey was the only one of the four yoga teachers were the conversation sometime took a “left-handed” turn. In general everything was viewed symbolic by my informants, but when the talk came to the mudrā known as khecari, the symbolic layer were replaced for a brief moment. After questioning me about my knowledge of khecari he opened his mouth and showed me the result of the practice, sealing the cranial vault with the reversed tongue. This was the only of the more progressive practices in HYP that any of my informants would agree could and should be done literal.

As mentioned earlier tantric texts are often composed in a symbolic language and have many possible interpretations. An aspect of this is also that much tantric literature is not consistent with the classical Pāṇini grammar and is written in “wrong” hybrid Sanskrit. Both the grammar and the use of the standard glossary can be different when it is used by tantrics and Agehananda Bharati states that tantra is written in Sandhābhāṣā “intentional language” or, as it has been read earlier: Sandhyabhāsa “twilight language”. The meaning of the language is exactly this duality between principles, balancing between different symbols and possible meanings: (Bharati 1993, 164-165) “Sandhyabhāsa is a language of light and darkness, partly light, partly darkness; some passages can be understood, others cannot” (Bharati 1993, 166) An example on the symbolic use and wordplays is given from the HYP

3.47 gomāṃsaṃ bhakṣayen nityaṃ pibed amaravāruṇīm/

kulīnaṃ tam aham manye cetare kulaghātakāḥ //

If one continuously would eat cow meat and drink divine liquor. I regard him as honorable and the others for destroyers of the family (kula) (Akers 2002, 63)
This passage has nothing to do with the consumption of cow meat, but is a reference to the practice of *Khecarī mudrā*, a *haṭha yoga* technique. However, the esoteric value of the sentence is in HYP removed when Svātmārāma states the meaning as well: (White 1996, 173)

3,48) gośabdenoditā jihvā tat praveśo hi tāluni /
gomāṃsabhekṣaṇaṁ tat tu māhāpātakanāśanam//

With the word "cow" is meant the tongue and its penetration of the palate is “eating cow meat”. This is the destruction of the 5 big sins¹⁹ (Akers 2002, 63)

At this point both the main topics, yoga ans tantra has been presented shortly. Both terms vary and covers major streams and traditions in the religions of India. However, the tantric forms of yoga seems to have been developed in the connection of extreme śaiva ascetics as the Pāśupatas and later Kāpālikas which has been closely connected to the worship of Śiva. However, the growing importance of the local goddesses is also note-worthy in the period. Yoga is then merged into tantra in different ways, which we now will turn to with the HYP and the practitioners of tantric yoga in this period.

**Haṭhayogapradīpikā:**

Although, some aspects of these practices are much older the complete system for *haṭha yoga* were developed by the Nāth Siddhas from about the 9th century forward. (Flood 2005, 98) The HYP is also the first work claiming to teach only techniques of *haṭha* above other methods (Mallinson 2011b, 3) The HYP is used in this assignment since it’s great importance both today and at the time – it is one of the most popular works on *haṭha yoga* and presents what is called the classical *haṭha yoga* by Mallinson(Mallinson 2012,11). Classical *haṭha yoga* is in reality a great ball of mixture of the tantric forms of yoga from previous times and incorporates many different practices under the label of *haṭha*. The *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* includes 28 verses from the *Gorakṣaśatātaka*, one of the oldest texts on *Haṭhayoga* along with other stanzas from more than 20 previous works on *haṭha yoga*. (Mallinson 2012a, 262) It is also the first text on *haṭha yoga* to teach complex *asanas*, which

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¹⁹ Great crime or sin (of which there are five: killing a Brahman, drinking spirituous liquor, theft, adultery with a teacher’s wife, and association with persons guilty of those four crimes)(Macdonell 2007 [1924], 221)
haṭha yoga since has been known for. In the HYP you can then see traces of different general tendencies for the period:

First of all, as a result of the Kashmir Śaivism the practices are expanded to a wider audience, removing and explaining some of the esoteric material and making it more approachable for all – which the author Svātmārāma states already in the title of HYP – the light of haṭha yoga.20 However, this is not the only motivation for Svātmārāma when he composed HYP:

“Svātmārāma, in addition to casting a light on haṭha, had two unspoken further aims when compiling the haṭhapradipikā. He sought to lay claim to haṭhayoga for the siddha tradition while continuing a process that had started at least two centuries earlier, in which Śaiva yoga was being severed from its sectarian roots” (Mallinson 2012,12) So, during this period different forms of yoga practices were claimed to be haṭha and claimed to the Nāth Siddhas.

HYP is divided in four chapters. In the first chapter Svātmārāma glorifies the previous gurus of the tradition starting with Śiva as the lord of yoga - Kāpālika, Matsyendra and Gorakśa are also noted in the listing. (Akers 2002, 2) Asanas are also described and it prescribes how haṭha yoga should be practiced, including the yogic diet. Many things are stated in this context, and some places there are set up a strict yogic diet, one which my informant Siddharth found important as a practitioner of yoga. He ate Mung Dahl every day and also insisted on inviting me to lunch. When I referred to verse 3,16) from HYP stating that all food can be digested, even poison, he said that this only included “real yogis” and that the perfect diet for them was whatever they liked but especially milk and mercury –(this was furthermore the only alchemical reference I gained during my research)

In chapter two he focuses on the connection between the prāṇa (breath), mind, nāḍīs (channels) and hereby describes the subtle physiology. In chapter three he describes mudrās and in chapter four the topic is samādhi and rāja yoga.


20 Pradipikā: a small oil lamp.
The Kashmir Śaivism:

it’s difficult to decide when the Śaivism first emerged in Kashmir, but when the first scriptures from the tradition came around the 9th century we know there were many Śaivas present. However, it is especially in the 11th century the Brahmin elite began transforming the extreme tantric practices into a more respectable religion for the higher casts. (Flood 2005, 161) The Kashmir Śaivism thrived for a couple of centuries but all Hindu tantrism struggled with the Muslim invasions and had almost been exterminated. The Cult of Kubjikā, which is closely linked to HYP is today only alive in Nepal and in small numbers.

To understand the developments in the philosophy and the forming of Kashmir Śaivism we have to look further on the divisions inside the mantramārga. Mantramārga divided further into the school of Śaiva siddhānta which has a dualistic philosophy, and the non-dualistic school of non-siddhānta. The school of non-siddhānta have both the more right-handed tantric practices along with the esoteric traditions from the context of the cremation ground and inside this tradition the tantric core of liberation lies in the disengagement of the differences between good and evil, and hereby the abolition of them. (Dyzckowski 1989, 8) It should be noted that the non-dualistic schools of Kashmir includes more than one school, and in general it is important to remember that the Kashmir Śaivism was not a school or tradition, but a philosophy on which different schools are grounded.

Again, we see two new traditions emerge known as the mantrapitha and the vidyapitha where the kula and later kaula 21 tradition belongs. The traditions from vidyapitha sees itself as offering a more powerful and more esoteric system than mantrapitha, through further initiation. (dikṣa)(Sanderson 1988, 669) In the vidyapitha things start to complicate even more, and we have to turn to the concept of kula (clan) traditions and kaulism.

The kula tradition is hard to define since it’s not a group of scriptures or one fixed tradition, as kula is a broader generic term for a number of major traditions, each having different branches and the concept of “kula” refers both to the family clan, the single cult, and the general goddess worship (Flood 2005, 165-166) These traditions were strongly Śakta-oriented and were involved in

21 Kula, Sanskrit: “herd, flock, swarm, family community, noble lineage.” Kaula, Sanskrit: “realting to a family, inherited,; worshipper of Śakti according to the left-hand ritual.” (Macdonell 2007 [1924], 71+75)
worship with terrible gods and goddesses, especially Kālī. (Dyzckowski 1989, 9) Not all scholars make an distinction between kula-clans and kaulism, some traditions are even named kula-kaula, but following David Gordon White the kaulism can be seen as the first reformation within the kula-clans. (Samuel 2002, 326)

This first reformation happened around the 9th century and here the focus in the kaulism becomes less associated with the cremation ground and the meaning of the ritual intercourse is spiritualized along with playing down of the alchemical and magical use of substances. In the kaulism the mysticism of the Kāpālikas were discontaminated, the symbolic understanding of extreme practices increased, and then flowed into the wider community – leading us towards the environment for the composition of HYP. (Sanderson 1988, 679-80)

Further reformations in the 11th century lead to the four transmissions, where the philosophers developed an even more sophisticated philosophy for the kaulism. This also meant that the extreme practices of the kaulism only survived in limited form when they were passed to the majority (Sanderson 1988, 661)

So following White, we see three stages of development during this period. In the first stage within the kula clans the primarily use and understanding of sex is connected to the dikṣa where the sexual substances produced by the guru and his consort is thought to give liberating insight in the tradition and connecting the initiate to the family (kula). In this period the magical and alchemical use of sexual substances were the main reason for the sexual rites and practices. (Samuel 2002, 326)

These practices became more spiritualized in the kaulism, and further made adaptable to householders in the Kashmir Śaivism. (Samuel 2002, 291) However the incorporation of the internal sexual yoga in the kaulism meant that the transmutation of sexual experience was an increasingly central part, especially in third stage. Deities and the ritual locations became in this period more and more perceived as being inside the body of the practitioner. With Bhairava and Kālī seen less as cosmic powers, that could be evoked and used for the ritual purpose, and more as symbols of the practitioners internal transcendence of the limits of ordinary consciousness, the role of sexuality and transgression within the system could also transform (Samuel 2002, 328)
Along with struggling with the Muslims tantric Hinduism struggled with itself in different stages in its evolvement. Many of the extreme tantric practices were simply to revolting to the established social order and their principles of non-difference between principles like good and bad and other antisocial behavior became an obstacle. Also, following the philosophers of the Kashmir Śaivism the path to became esoteric for the common man and was too complicated to become a mainstream form of religion.

The four transmissions that grew from the kaulism were the western, eastern, northern and southern transmission. The eastern were known as the school of Trika and it is here the philosophy of Kashmir Śaivism is said to be firmly established. The shift has now gone from the cremation ground cult to a form of tantra that is absorbed in the mainstream Hindu traditions (Flood 2005, 166-167) The western transmission(Paścimāmnāya) where the first Nāths belonged are based on the philosophy of Trika but adds more goddesses, gods and mantras to the tradition with the central goddess Kubjikā, the contracted one, an alloform of kundalinī and is placed in the aforementioned “area of confusion”(White 1996, 79)

Especially the monistic outlook in philosophy is challenged in this area where the goddess is very independent and something that looks like duality emerges. “Duality in the sense of Kashmir Śaivism is a unity, but still a duality which you can only understand when you put aside the rationality and categorizing of the western mind” (Dyzckowski 2013, lecture 6) The union of Śiva and Śakti is to be understood monistic, but in the sense of tantric philosophy where all opposites are a part of the same unity. Śiva and Śakti might seem different and paradox, but when they unite there is no state of duality. The shift from the progressive tantrics like the Kāpālikas to the Kashmir Śaivism involves a progressive shift from male deities to fierce female goddesses and the goddesses role changes from being a part of the rituals to being the central focus of worship and challenging both the conception of duality and unity.

Nāth Sampradāya:

Before turning to the content of tantric yoga in the HYP the Nāth tradition or the Nāth Siddhas will be introduced, since the author of HYP Svātmārāma is associated with the Nāths. The Guru who is credited for the foundation of the Nāths are Goraksa who along with Matsyendra, known for the kula/kaula reformations, probably lived somewhere between the 9-12th century. The earliest
dating references to Goraksa are from the early 13\textsuperscript{th} century where he is described as a master of yoga. The texts that describe him is from opposite places in the country, which suggest that his reputation were firmly established at this time and that he lived centuries earlier (Mallinson 2012a, 263)

The Nāths trace their order back to a line of 9 gurus started with Adinath, an epithet for Śiva.

V1.1) śrī ādināthāya namo astu tasmai yenopadiṣṭā haṭhayogavidyā /
vibhrājate pronnatarājayogam ārodum icchor adhirohinīva //

“Salutions to adinath, the one who pointed out the science of haṭhayoga. [The science of haṭhayoga] shines through the elevated rājayoga just like a ladder for the one wishing to rise” (Akers 2002, 1)

Rakesh Pandey, as my only informant, called Śiva by the name of Adinath almost every time he mentioned him. Both Rakesh and Peetamber stated that there were 14 gurus in the Nāth tradition with Svātmārāma being the last one. The tradition, and 3 out of 4 informants, claims that Svātmārāma was a student of Goraksa, but since the HYP is composed in 1450 this is not possible.

The Nāth tradition is not only consistent of ascetics but traces origins to both ascetic and householder practices. The householders see themselves as descendants of Nāth ascetics who broke their vow of celibacy and settled as householders. (Mallinson 2011a, 2) The relatively late establishment is visible in the tradition, having many different outlooks and primary goals. This is especially in connection with the siddha part of the tradition. The Siddhas were known as semi-divine humans who had become perfected (siddha) as a result of their yogic practices and other esoteric means. (Mallinson 2011a, 3) The term siddha were at the time used for different groups of both Buddhist and Hindu origin but the most interesting of them in this context is the cult of the Rasa Siddhas. They existed before the Nāths were established as order, but in the western transmission of the Kashmir Śaivism the two crossed over. The Rasa Siddhas had lacked guidance for practice and the Nāths provided this. (White 1996, 2) The Rasa Siddhas are originally concerned about alchemy which along with the practice of haṭha yoga provides interesting parallels and different goals in practice. The siddha alchemy thrived from 13-17\textsuperscript{th} but it is
interpreted differently over the times and the reformations that came along with the Kashmir Śaivism.

Alchemy and the subtle body:
Today the practice of kuṇḍalinī and the cakra systems is more identified with the practice of hātha yoga than alchemy and preservation of bindu/amṛta, even though both have been central goals in the history of hātha yoga. A source like Marco Polo describes a yogi first of all as being an alchemist. Yogis were healthy, had good digestion, and lived for hundreds of years because they ingested mercury and sulfur as part of their daily regime (White 1996, 9)

Ever since the time of the Vedas the fluid element of the universe (rasa) has been more or less identified by Indians with the fount of life. If the universe is seen as a great pulsating flow of essence and manifestation, rasa is the fluid “stuff” of that flow (White 1996, 184) In the connection with tantra, and especially the medieval alchemists Rasa Siddhas the substances came to be seen as power substances connected to both magical powers and liberation (White 1996, 3)
Connecting this to hātha yoga, however, is related to the production of amṛta, the divine nectar of immortality. Amṛta is closely connected to soma which again is connected to the moon. The moon was viewed as a drop of this nectar or soma in the heavens, and yet again was associated with rasa. Rasa is both the male and female “drops” which are both lunar and solar – both Śiva and Śakti (White 1996, 185)
The siddha alchemy fits perfectly with the tantric thoughts on both taboo breaking behavior and the two principles of Śiva and Śakti is seen in a large symbolic and complex system of pairs and interconnections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fluid</th>
<th>Fire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Śiva</td>
<td>Śakti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semen</td>
<td>Blood (menstrual blood, female sexual emission)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I will in this context only investigate the concepts of *bindu* and *kuṇḍalinī* since both have been crucial in the forming of the classical *hatha yoga*. In the standard Sanskrit dictionaries *bindu* is said to primarily mean “dot, drop, spot” (Macdonell 2007 [1924], 196) but there are much more to the term *bindu*. The *bindu* is the dot in the sacred syllable Aum, the *bindu* is the point of which a *mandala* is created and furthermore – *bindu* has a meaning as semen in the tantric and alchemical context. In some texts it is explained that there are both a white *bindu* being male, and a red *bindu* being the female “semen”. However, 4 out of 4 informants stated that the interpretation of *bindu* as sexual fluid was wrong and exaggerated. “*Bindu* is everything – it is blood, *prāṇa* – all vital fluids in the body is *bindu*” 23 However, the same informant, Rakesh, stated in a later interview that *bindu* in the context of the practices in HYP were concerned about the preservation of semen, to which I will return when *khecarī mudrā* will be discussed in a later section.

**The subtle physiology:**

The breath channels had already been discussed in the classical *Upaniṣads* but a full system of the subtle body first emerged around the 8-10th century in the western transmission of the *vidyapitha*. (White 2012, 204) Even though there are various systems with different numbers of *cakras* the one that became the standardized model of the subtle anatomy was the one that emerged from the Kubjikā tradition, and hereby the Nāth ascetics. (Flood 2005, 99) Here, the practitioner’s body became identified with the entire universe, such that all of the processes and transformations occurring to his body in the world were now described as occurring to a world inside the body.

This subtle physiology is made of *nāḍī*’s (inner channels) and the places they meet, the knots/wheels known as the *cakras*. In this subtle body substances flow through and meet in the

22 Mercury is of the most important chemical. Mercury is a shining liquid, quite fitting for the phallus god, Śiva. Mercury is nothing but divine semen, and it’s principle reagent (sulfur) is the uterine blood of the goddess, (White 1996, 187)

2323 Pandey, interview 1, 17/09 2013.
chakras. Also many bandhas (locks) which are muscular constrictions of breath and energy which then flow through the body is present (Flood 2005, 98). Prāṇāyama or breath-control has a long history in Indian yoga and plays an important role in both Patañjalis yoga and haṭha yoga. When the breath is stable, mind and semen are stabilized; but even more important, when the yogi through Prāṇāyama opens the medial channel, that same causes the reversal of mundane polarities. Instead of the semen and energy moving downwards it is now forced to travel up into the cranial vault, effecting the total yogic integration, samādhi. Furthermore it is the breathing in and out that unites the microcosm to the macrocosm and the practitioners consciousness to the one consciousness the world is consist of. (White 1996, 45-46.)

The practices related to this are highly concerned with moving the substances through the body to the knots and direct them to a central channel along the spine known as Susumṇā. Two other main nādi’s are Idā and Piṅgala which connects the base of the trunk to the crown of the head and in this way forming a vertical axis in the body. In this hydraulic system the vital fluids, especially bindu, is refined as they travel upwards to become amṛta. (White 2012,16)

Along with the channels and the transformation of bindu to amṛta, kuṇḍalinī also became a dominant part of the subtle physiology, especially through the reformations in the Kashmir Śaivism where the alchemy became less important and kuṇḍalinī more important. Kuṇḍalinī is perceived as the manifestation of Śakti, the feminine principle. Kuṇḍalinī is described as coiled in the base of the trunk while sleeping, like a snake.

V 3.2) suptā guruprasādena yadā jāgarti kuṇḍalī /

tadā sarvani padmāni bhidyante granthayo api ca //

“When all lotuses and knots are split open the sleeping kuṇḍalinī is awakened by the grace of the guru” (Akers 2002, 52)

When kuṇḍalinī is awakened she pierces trough the cakras, giving the liberating insight in the tradition. It is also kuṇḍalinī that brings the transmutation of raw semen into nectar in the cranial vault (White 1996, 218) Kuṇḍalinī has in the modern times gained great popularity and kuṇḍalinī is

24 Cakras are known as lotuses.
described as follows by Bihar yoga trust: “This kundalini is the greatest discovery of tantra and yoga. Scientists have begun to look into this...” (Kundalini Tantra 1984, 4)

In connection with this is the great importance of the guru in tantra. Indian religions general represents a guru tradition, but in tantra where these forceful cosmic powers is used the guru obtains a special status, which also can be seen in the modern practice of *haṭha yoga* in association with the raising of kundalini “Without a guru you can practice any form of yoga, but not kundalini. This is an extremely powerful system” (Kundalini Tantra 1984, 48)

All of my informants as well stated that some yoga can be practiced without a guru, but if you reach for tantra, especially in the sphere of *kundalini*, a guru is needed and very important since tantric practices can be dangerous if done wrong.

Rakesh Pandey was the only of my informants who functioned as a guru for other Indians and under some of the interviews, people came to kiss his feet and hear his knowledge. The other of my informants worked almost exclusively with western people and didn’t consider themselves as yogis. However, in the yoga center of Siddharth I encountered the same western female every time I was there, and it was clear that she in some aspects perceived Siddharth as her guru.

In this section I have tried to establish an overlook in the philosophy and practices that consisted the early haṭhayoga. I have furthermore tried to trace the practitioners of the time, finding both different kinds of ascetics (celibate and non-celibate), alchemists and elite-philosophers as possible practitioners. The nāth tradition were closely linked to the Kashmir Śaivism and I have tried to show that both left and right handed practices were found in the milieu of the HYP and Nāths and that already in this period, the practices became more spiritualized and perceived as visualization techniques, as seen in the reformations.

**Transformations in the subtle physiology – from early to classical haṭha yoga:**
To exemplify these reformations and the different techniques classical haṭhayoga came to be consistent of I will show the transformation from bindu-oriented early haṭhayoga practices to a classical kūṇḍalinī oriented form of haṭhayoga. For this purpose the translations and comparison of various old yoga texts by Mallinson has been crucial.
Jim Mallinson has in many studies and translations investigated the field of *ḥaṭha yoga* and notices great difference in early *ḥaṭha* practice and the classical *ḥaṭha yoga* found in the HYP. In earlier works on yoga, a division in the forms of yoga is known:

**Mantra yoga:** the recitation of mantras

**Laya yoga:** “the yoga of dissolution” Laya-yoga has been shown to be connected to the strong Šakta-oriented traditions, and the techniques for raising *Kuṇḍalinī* are first seen in this milieu.

**Haṭha yoga:** In its earliest formulations *haṭha* was used to raise and conserve the physical essence of life identified in men as *bindu* (semen) which is otherwise dripping from a store in the head and being expended (Mallinson 2011b, 1)

**Rāja yoga:** is according to the HYP the ultimate aim of yoga and is equal to *samādhi*. A discussion on the term *rāja yoga* will be found in a later section.

In the HYP these different forms of yoga are mixed and every practice is labelled as *haṭha*. In the earlier texts *laya, mantra* and *haṭha* were taught as different methods for achieving *rāja yoga*. (Mallinson 2011b, 2) in the HYP, *mantra yoga* is totally excluded and the techniques from *laya* and *haṭha yoga* are now both named *haṭha* and with the aim of yoga as being *rāja yoga*.

What you see in the HYP is as mentioned this great ball of mixture where techniques for both storing *bindu* and raising *kuṇḍalinī* is mixed together. The techniques earlier said to raise and keep *bindu* in the head is in this reformation slowly mixed together with the raising of *kuṇḍalinī*. An example of this is the practice of a mudra called *khecarī mudrā* as mentioned earlier. *Mudrā* literally means “seal” and is a variety of techniques to control vital energies, including *kuṇḍalinī, prāṇa* and *bindu*. According to Rakesh Pandey it can be understood as advanced *asanas*, being more complex and a higher level of yoga. *Khecarī mudrā* involves cutting the string below the tongue gradually and hereby being able to direct the tongue backwards in the skull and reach the *bindu* or *amṛta* so it will not drip into the digestive fire in the stomach and disappear. *Kha* means “what moves in the airspace (5th element, ether) and *carī* from the root car meaning “to move”. In the HYP *khecarī mudrā* is described:

25 Pandey, interview 1, 17/09 2013.
V 3.32) kapālakuhare jihvā praviṣṭā viparītagā /
bhruvor antargatā dṛṣṭir mudrā bhavati khecarī //</p>

“The reversed tongue is inserted in the skull. Move the gaze between the brows. [This] is khecarī mudrā”

The Bihar Yoga Trust describes khecarī mudrā as a simple but important mudrā in the field of kriya yoga and not of haṭha yoga. There is no mention of cutting in the tongue, put it is said that it will gradually get longer by itself. It is still said to be for the purpose of amṛta, but the sexual and magical traces are all gone and left is the spiritualization (Kundalini Tantra 1984, 99-100)

Rāja yoga:
The concept of rāja yoga is today very affected by later developments, but has had a firm seat in haṭha yoga for centuries. It is generally accepted that rāja yoga refers to types of yoga which are based more on meditation than physical postures. The first time rāja yoga is mentioned is in a Śaiva yoga text from the 12th century, and from the 12-15th century rāja yoga in general served as a synonym for samādhi. (Birch 2014, 401) The text is called Amanaska and in this, rāja yoga is defined as being superior to all other types of yoga and furthermore it enables the yogi to reach the illustrious king - the supreme self. The text however rejects mantras, asanas and prāṇāyama and is one of the few texts rejecting all of these techniques as a mean of attaining rāja yoga.

The Amanaska has a hostile attitude towards liberation and dislikes austerities. (ascetism) This point towards the reformations found in the kaulism where the ascetic dimension is slowly removed, and the practice of the householder is promoted. Texts like these often use the synonyms Amanaska an unmani as synonyms for samādhi – which also is present in the HYP. (Birch 2014, 409)

“Rāja yoga, samādhi, unmani, manonmani, amaratva, laya, tattva ... and turya are synonyms” (Akers 2002, 85)

However, Svātmārāma did not, like the Amanaska, refuse all the techniques for achieving rāja yoga, and he solved the problem by promoting haṭha as indispensable for rāja yoga, including laya yoga under the label of haṭha and excluding mantra yoga.
V. 2.76) “Rāja yoga will not be complete without haṭha, nor haṭha without rāja yoga. Therefore practice the pair to perfection” 2.76 s. 51.

When I asked Rakesh Pandey about rāja yoga he started saying that rāja yoga is the type of yoga that came to America with a monk (Swami Vivekananda) but he also stated that rāja yoga was the same as samādhi, and said that when you start practice rāja yoga, there is no more need for haṭha. (Pandey 2013, interview 1) The other 3 informants all said that rāja yoga was equal to Patañjali yoga and had no space in haṭha yoga at all. However, the term rāja yoga was first time used about Patañjali yoga around the 16th century. (Birch 2014, 401)

Swami Vivekananda and modern conceptions of yoga:
The modern conception of both haṭha yoga and rāja yoga is deeply affected by Swami Vivekananda(1863-1902): “more than any south Asian commentator or western scholar, the thinker who has cast the longest shadow on modern appreciations (both popular and scholarly) of yoga and yogis was Swami Vivekananda who, while indisputably a giant of neo-vedānta reform was a dilettante on the subject of yoga” (White 2009, 45)

Swami Vivekananda was a great participant in the neo-vedānta reformation of Hinduism and he founded the Ramakrishna mission. He had a great deal of influence bringing the philosophy of neo-vedānta and yoga to the west and he named Patañjali yoga to be the classical yoga of Hinduism - rāja yoga which he opposed to the physical haṭha yoga (White 2009, 46)

“We have nothing to do with [haṭha yoga] here, because it’s practices are very difficult, and cannot be learned in a day, and, after all, do not lead to any spiritual growth”(2003:17) (Birch 2014, 407)

For Vivekananda rāja yoga or classical yoga was the science of yoga taught in the YS, a notion he took from the theosophist Madame Blavatsky who had a strong Indian following in the late 19th century, followed by Swamis success in introducing rāja yoga to a western audience at the 1892 World Parliament of Religions at Chicago. Vivekananda remained in the US for much of the next decade lecturing and writing on the YS. It should be noted here that within India, the tradition of haṭha yoga had been all but lost, and that it, was not until the publication of a number of editions
on late *haṭha* texts by the theosophical society and others, that interest in it was renewed. (White 2009, 20-21)

**Concluding discussion:**

I started by questioning the coherence between *haṭha yoga* and tantric practices, both in the time HYP was composed and in the modern context of Varanasi. There is no doubt that in the forming of *haṭha yoga* the *śaivas* from the tantric traditions has been crucial in forming of both the early *haṭha yoga* and the classical *haṭha yoga* from HYP. However, already during the time of the *Kashmir Śaivism haṭha yoga* had undergone several reformation which slowly removed some of the original practices such as the playing down of alchemical purposes from sexual rites, adapting the subtle body and the force of *kuṇḍalinī* on the cost of *bindu*, etc.. Even though tantra has been crucial in the framework and history of HYP already by the time of the *Kashmir Saivism*, less and less of the progressive rituals were enhanced and interpreted as literal, and even the subtle body at some point became more and more symbolic especially in the context of *haṭhayoga*. It is still uncertain in which degree the practices were understood and practiced literal or symbolic.

All in all it is the complexity of the tantric rituals along with the esoteric elements that are removed slowly over the years, and there is not much left of it in HYP. Tantra is made less esoteric and more approachable, a form of democratization. Tantric practices were slowly absorbed in the mainstream Hindu religion. Even though the importance of tantra still is a subject of discussion it is widely stated that many forms of modern Hinduism and Buddhism still are tantric today. The practitioners of *haṭhayoga today* are not the Nāths whom today are known as split-ear yogis (Kāṇphaṭās), mostly known as wandering sadhus engaged in smoking chillum which all of my informants also agreed to. My informants were neither Nāths nor ascetics and not all of them were tantrics as well. They all combined different forms of yoga in the practice and classes; tantra and *sāṃkhya, aṣṭāṅga yoga* and *haṭha yoga* and they combine the practices in their personal philosophy as well. Most modern yoga classes will have both parts of physical postures from *haṭha yoga and* a part of mantra reciting and meditation from the Patañjali yoga or other systems. Furthermore the labels for yoga have just gone wider and more has come. Modern examples are Bikram yoga, Acro yoga, Anusara yoga. Also, as seen in the Bihar Yoga trust *kuṇḍalinī* is being taught as an independent form of yoga and not under the label *haṭha*.
Hathayoga has become even less tantric now than in the days of HYP, and hathayoga is in general perceived as a physical and lower form of yoga. The hierarchic composition in yoga that was known at the time of HYP between laya, haṭha, mantra and rāja yoga is not the competitors today. Rāja yoga has with Swami Vivekananda become almost equal to Patañjali yoga, and haṭha is demoted and is seen as preceding both kriya yoga, rāja yoga and kuṇḍalinī yoga in most modern schools.

In this sense, like tantric religion has been absorbed in mainstream Hinduism, haṭha yoga has been absorbed in all kinds of modern yoga, and the yoga taught all over the world today has more in common with the physical haṭha yoga than the Patañjali yoga. However, the mixture and destiny of tantra has also leaded to that the tantric practices almost are gone, or at least reformed and renewed, just as the conception of yoga in general has been in its history in India.

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