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TANTRIK HATHA YOGA



PRANAYAMA GUIDEBOOK

FREE PDF BY GRANT T. IFFLANDER

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

Prāṇāyāma is the traditional term given to what is commonly referred to as "breathwork", but there are deeper layers to this ancient practice that are often forgotten in modern application. Hidden within its methods are powerful techniques—kriya, bandha, and mudra—that transform simple breathing into a profound yogic process of purification and awakening.

This PDF will offer a brief historical contextualization along with important details and principles about pranayama practice, such as the activity of kriya, bandha and mudra, which **transform breathing techniques into bona fide yoga practices**; the result is a more powerful and controlled purification affect.

Science suggests that regular breath regulation activity has the power to reduce stress, improve blood flow, and increase our overall sense of well-being and health. By the end of this short read, we hope that you receive inspiration to continue deepening into your personal practice.

A word of warning: incorrect practice can further exacerbate symptoms of anxiety or mental instability.

Allow us to approach this topic with reverence and respect to the ancient traditions from which these practices come, and to apply the knowledge as it was passed down, while also integrating the modern science to deepen our understanding and expertise.

Let's jump in.



ABOUT

PREFACE

This document was created with the intention to inspire practitioners to take a deeper look at their **sādhana**. Many yoga systems have become diluted and watered versions of their ancient counterparts. Clear methodology and progression are necessary to advance beyond the merely *physical* components of yoga and into the subtler realms of energy.

Whilst yoga can be incredibly therapeutic and does offer significant healing benefit to the mind and various systems of the body – the muscles, the bones, the organs, the nervous system, the circulatory system, the respiratory system, etc. – **this spiritual science was originally intended as a method of awakening to Reality**, and through the gradual awakening process, **the Light of Consciousness floods the system**. **“Healing” is a by-product**. Proceed accordingly with the correct attitude and receive the benefits of complete transformation on all levels.

SĀDHANA

Literally, “the way of attainment;” refers to the practices one performs to bring about spiritual transformation



Our method and approach to the spiritual science of Yoga is based on interpretation and analysis of the traditional teachings of Tantra and Hatha Yoga. We call this approach Bhūta Yoga, which integrates the ancient metaphysical systems and cosmology of Yoga into a modern framework of practice.

This guidebook is meant to clarify for the reader concepts related specifically to prāṇāyāma.

Should one wish to go deeper into these studies, additional materials will be provided.

APPROACH

INTRODUCTION TO
PRANAYAMA
OF
HATHA
YOGA

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.2
prāṇasya śleṣaṇe yuktāḥ śleṣyante yogino manaḥ

“When the breath is unsteady, the mind is unsteady;
when the breath is steady, the mind becomes steady.”



HISTORY & TIMELINE

VEDIC ORIGINS

~2000 BC

Prāṇa considered cosmological / ritual concept — the ground that animates gods, humans and sacrifices — rather than a technical breath-work protocol.

The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali (the classical Rāja yoga framework) treats prāṇāyāma as one limb of the eightfold path, presented immediately after āsana. Patañjali's sutras succinctly define the practice and its purpose: regulation of incoming and outgoing breath plus retention to still the fluctuations of mind

CLASSICAL YOGA OF PATAÑJALI

~300 CE

HAṬHA YOGA

~900 - 1700 CE

Haṭha corpus moves prāṇāyāma into a practical, somatic technology — links breath to bandhas, naḍīs, kundalinī, and specific kriyās. Retention (kumbhaka) and locks (bandha) are foregrounded as essential for energetic containment and transmutation.

Modern science catches up to the healing effects of breath control practices. Mounting evidence & research suggesting the connection between mind, body, and breath and the powers of regulating respiratory processes.

MODERN ERA

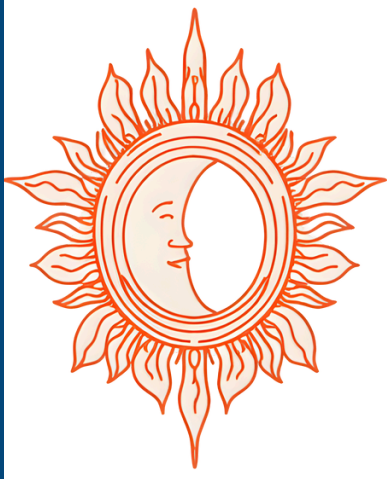
1900 - PRESENT DAY

BHŪTA YOGA

2023 ONWARD

Bhūta Yoga established as a school of genuine Hatha Yoga to preserve and carry forward the torch of the great wisdom traditions of Yoga & Tantra. Integrates ancient wisdom with modern science.





HATHA YOGA

THE SPIRITUAL SCIENCE OF MERGING
POLARITIES OF THE SOLAR & LUNAR
ENERGIES

In order to properly understand the processes related to prāṇāyāma, one must first understand the spiritual science from whence these practices come to us, and where they might lead.

Hatha Yoga, in its original form, was a systematization of breath-body-mind practices designed to bring one's energy into balance, which would result in a state of concentration, leading to advanced yoga practice (where "advanced yoga" was considered Rāja Yoga: complete absorption into the Self).

Once proper concentration was established, one could then go on to contemplate (and furthermore, experience) the nature of one's essential Reality.

**"THERE CAN BE NO PERFECTION IF HATHA YOGA IS
WITHOUT RAJA YOGA OR RAJA YOGA WITHOUT HATHA
YOGA. THEREFORE, THROUGH PRACTICE OF BOTH,
PERFECTION IS ATTAINED."**

HATHA YOGA PRADĪPIKĀ, CH 2.76

These were the steps laid out by the ancient masters of this sophisticated spiritual science – the goal of which was to lead one beyond death and into the realization of the Eternal Being. This is what is meant by Rāja Yoga (the Royal Path).

Hatha Yoga is the ancient yogic science that purifies and strengthens the body, breath, and subtle energy system so that the life-force (prāṇa) can flow freely through the nāḍīs and awaken higher states of awareness. Through the disciplined use of āsana, prāṇāyāma, bandha, mudrā, and cleansing practices, it creates the inner stability and energetic alignment necessary for meditation to deepen. Ultimately, Hatha Yoga serves as the foundation for Rāja Yoga, transforming the practitioner from the gross to the subtle and opening the pathway toward self-realization.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE MODERN DAY

Prāṇāyāma practices today that have been divorced from their context may retain some therapeutic benefit, but the spiritual foundation remains absent. To remedy this, the practitioner must seek the knowledge behind these methods of transformation.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- When engaging in breath control activity, what is the intended goal or result that one is after?
- How might the earlier teachings of Yoga, as per the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali (Raja Yoga), offer insight to support and enhance the practices of the modern day?
- In relation to the concept of prana, what might the restraint and/or control of the prana bring about for the practitioner? Is this a desirable outcome?

FINAL THOUGHTS

For the reader, the information presented here is meant to help clarify their conclusions with regards to the subject of breath control.

However, in order to more deeply understand prāṇāyāma, the subject of bandha & mudra must be discussed.

For the yogi interested in energetic mastery, bandha & mudra is thus the subsequent topic of interest, and is to be discussed next, beginning with a historical analysis of this topic...

HAṬHA YOGA PRADĪPIKĀ 2.5

“Just as lions, elephants, and tigers are tamed gradually, so the breath must be controlled gently; otherwise it destroys the practitioner.”

GHERAṆḌA SAMĤITĀ 5.59

“Through prāṇāyāma the body becomes healthy, radiant, and full of vitality, and the fire within blazes up.”



BANDHA & MUDRĀ

HISTORICAL REVIEW

Gorakṣaśataka (ca. 11th–12th century CE)

A foundational Nātha text attributed to Gorakṣanātha.

This is the earliest text that clearly and explicitly describes the three bandhas used in classical Haṭha Yoga:

- Mula Bandha
- Uḍḍiyāna Bandha
- Jālandhara Bandha

All three are presented as essential preparations for attaining kumbhaka (breath retention) and awakening the central channel (suṣumṇā).

Scholarly source: Jason Birch & James Mallinson identify this text as containing the earliest clear bandha instructions.

Dattātreya yogaśāstra (late 13th century)

This text includes:

- Detailed instructions on kumbhaka
- References to locks and seals
- Integration of bandha-like practices with mudrā

While not as systematic as later works, it is one of the earliest texts where bandha terminology begins to standardize.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā (Svātmārāma, 15th century)

This text is the first surviving full manual that formally teaches the system of three bandhas as a cohesive energetic technology.

It explicitly names and defines:

1. Mula Bandha — the Root Lock
2. Uḍḍiyāna Bandha — the Abdominal Lock
3. Jālandhara Bandha — the Throat Lock

“Contracting the perineum is Mula Bandha; lifting the navel is Uddiyana; pressing the throat is Jalandhara.” – HYP 3.75

This text solidifies bandha practice into the four-part structure of early Haṭha Yoga:

- āsana
- prāṇāyāma
- mudrā/bandha
- samādhi



BANDHA & MUDRĀ

THE CONSCIOUS CHANNELING OF ENERGY THROUGH RESPONSIVE AND COOPERATIVE MUSCULO-ENERGETIC ACTIVITY UTILIZED IN CONJUNCTION WITH BREATH

MULA BANDHA

Pressing Yoni (perineum) with the heel, contract up the anus. By drawing the Apana thus, Mula Bandha is made.

-HYP 3.62*

UDDIYĀNA BANDHA

The belly above the navel is pressed backwards towards the spine. This Uddiyana Bandha is like a lion for the elephant of death. - HYP 3.56*

Of all the Bandhas, Uddiyana is the best; for by binding it firmly liberation comes spontaneously. - HYP 3.59*

JĀLANDHARA BANDHA

Contract the throat and press the chin firmly against the chest. This is called Jalandhara Bandha, which destroys old age and death.

It stops the opening (hole) of the group of Nadis, through which the juice from the sky (from the Soma or Chandra in the brain) falls down. It is, therefore, called the Jalandhara Bandha -- the destroyer of a host of diseases of the throat. - HYP 3.69-70*

* HATHA YOGA PRADIPIKA

ANALYSIS & REVIEW

- The term “bandha” (Sanskrit for “lock,” “seal,” or “bind”) appears as a technical discipline in what is broadly classed as “Haṭha–Tantra” texts — yoga-manuals that integrate breath-control (prāṇāyāma), energetic/energetic-anatomy (nāḍīs, cakras), cleansing practices, mudrā, and subtle-body work.
- The most influential—and earliest surviving—such text that clearly describes bandhas systematically is the Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā (often dated to roughly the 14th–15th century CE). In it, **bandha practice** (with Mula, Uḍḍiyāna, and Jālandhara) **is codified as part of a complete yogic system.**
- Earlier yoga texts — for example the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali (approx. 4th–2nd century BCE) — list “prāṇāyāma” as one of the eight limbs of yoga, but they **do not** elaborate the subtle-body anatomy (nāḍīs, cakras) or mention bandha, mudrā, or much internal energetic technology. That suggests that bandha as a technical practice likely developed later.



BANDHA & MUDRĀ

THE CONSCIOUS CHANNELING OF ENERGY THROUGH RESPONSIVE AND COOPERATIVE MUSCULO-ENERGETIC ACTIVITY UTILIZED IN CONJUNCTION WITH BREATH

MAHA BANDHA

Pressing the left heel to the perineum and place the right foot on the left thigh.

Fill in the air, keeping the chin firm against the chest, and, having pressed the air, and the mind should be fixed on the middle of the eyebrows or in the susumna (the spine).

– HYP 3.19–20

This stops the upward motion of all the nadis. Verily this Maha Bandha is the giver of great Siddhis.

This Maha Bandha is the most skillful means for cutting away the snares of death. It brings about the conjunction of the Triveni (Ida, Pingala and Susumna) and carries the mind to Kedar (the space between the eyebrows, which is the seat of Siva).

– HYP 3.23–24

MAHA MUDRA

Pressing the Yoni (perineum) with the heel of the left foot, and stretching forth the right foot, its toes should be grasped by the thumb and first finger.

– HYP 3.10

Great evils and pains, like death, are destroyed by it, and for this reason wise men call it the Maha Mudra. – HYP 3.14

ANALYSIS & REVIEW

- Between the Yoga Sūtras and classical Haṭha-Yoga texts there existed many Tantric / Nātha / Haṭha lineages (medieval India, 1st–13th centuries CE) where breath, energy, rites, and inner-body practices evolved.
- Therefore, the “first appearance in surviving literature” is in medieval/late-medieval Haṭha Yoga manuals; but whether that coincides with origin is unknown.
- The development of bandha (and allied practices: nāḍī work, cakra theory, mudrā, prāṇāyāma with kumbhaka) reflects the influence of Tantric, Nātha and Haṭha lineages seeking more internal, embodied, and energetic paths — a shift from external ascetic/meditative practices toward subtle-body science.

IN PRACTICAL TERMS:

Modern breath-work or “yoga” that doesn’t acknowledge energy-anatomy, bandha, or subtle-body work is quite different (structurally & philosophically) from classical Haṭha Yoga as codified in texts like Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā.

HISTORICAL REVIEW

Earliest appearances of "kriyā" , specifically in the context of Haṭha Yoga:

The term kriyā appears in early and foundational Haṭha Yoga texts such as:

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā (14th–15th c.)

Kriyā most prominently appears in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4.

It is often used in two ways:

1. As a general term for “a yogic action,” “practice,” or “technique.”
 - a. (Derived from the Sanskrit root √kṛ = “to do, to act.”)
2. As part of specific phrases indicating energetic action, such as:
 - nauli-kriyā (a churning of the abdominal muscles)
 - kapālabhātī-kriyā
 - trāṭaka-kriyā
 - These are included among the ṣaṭ-karmas (six cleansing actions).

In HYP 2.33–2.35, for example, kriyās are listed as purificatory acts required before pranayama.

Kriyā as Physical Cleansing (Ṣaṭkarma)

- dhauti, basti, neti, trāṭaka, nauli, kapālabhātī
- These kriyās purify the digestive system, sinuses, navel region, eyes, and pranic channels.

Purpose:

- ☞ Purify the nāḍīs
- ☞ Prepare the body for pranayama
- ☞ Remove blockages so prāṇa can move freely

Kriyā as Energetic Action

In HYP and other texts, kriyā is also used to describe:

- Nauli-kriyā — churning the abdominal muscles
- Viparīta-karaṇī-kriyā — reversing the flow of energy

These are not “cleansings” but energetic manipulations.

Purpose:

- ☞ Mobilize prāṇa
- ☞ Activate the central channel (suṣūmṇā)
- ☞ Support mudrā and bandha

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2.23

Describing the need for kriyā before prāṇāyāma:

“If the body is full of impurities, the practice of prāṇāyāma is fruitless. Therefore the body should first be cleansed by kriyās.”

KRIYĀ IN THE YOGA SŪTRAS

Although kriyā was **not** given specific, technical instruction until Hatha Yoga, it appears in the earlier, seminal text of the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali:

Yoga Sūtra 2.1 — [Definition of Kriyā Yoga]

This is the only formal definition that Patañjali gives:
“tapaḥ–svādhyāya–īśvara–praṇidhānāni kriyā–yogaḥ”

Translation:

Kriyā Yoga is composed of **tapas** (discipline/heat), **svādhyāya** (self-study or study of sacred texts), and **īśvara–praṇidhāna** (devotion/surrender to the Divine).

✓ What this means:

In the Yoga Sūtras:

- Kriyā = Action, not technique.
- Kriyā Yoga = Yoga of purposeful action, meaning the intentional lifestyle practices that reduce inner impurities and make the mind ready for meditation.

Patañjali further explains why Kriyā Yoga is done:

Yoga Sūtra 2.2:

“Its purpose is to reduce the obstacles (kleśas) and bring about samādhi.”

So in the Yoga Sūtras, kriyā is psychological–spiritual discipline, **not** physical/energetic practice (as it is in Hatha Yoga).

SUMMARY

Patañjali defined kriyā as = disciplined, intentional yogic action.

Later Haṭha Yoga expands the idea of kriyā into:

- Śatkriyā (six cleansing actions)
- Internal energetic “activities” that transform prāṇa and purify subtle channels
- Repetitive inner movements (like Nauli) used as purification tools
- Actions that activate bandhas, mudrās, or circulatory winds

Purpose of Kriyā is TWO-FOLD:

purification of mind, weakening of the kleśas, opening the path to samādhi (**Rāja Yoga**)
purification of energy pathways in preparation for pranayama (**Hatha Yoga**)

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE MODERN DAY

If the goal of the yogic process is **yoga**, then the activities of kriyā, along with bandha & mudrā play a key role in the context of traditional pranayama practice. Prāṇāyāma occurs when prana has been channelized. The practitioner may find that these energy-intensive activities induce a purificatory effect, designed to “clean” the subtle body, **so that the prana can flow unobstructed in its passage through the nadi system.** When and if this takes place, **the doorway to the higher stages of yoga becomes available.** Until then, the purification of the various techniques is welcomed, and the prana is gradually trained. All of this helps one to gain mastery over the mind and the senses.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How might my perception of “breathwork” be changed through a re-orientation to the traditional methods as they were designed?
- Are the results of ultimate peace, happiness & liberation promised via the technologies of yoga desirable outcomes?
- Is this knowledge helpful for those on the path of yoga?

YOGA-KUNḌALĪ UPANIṢAD

“Through the fire generated by prāṇa and apāna
in kumbhaka,
the five gross elements (bhūtas) are consumed.
The body becomes light and pure.” 2.13-15

“When kuṇḍalinī ascends the suṣumnā,
the elements dissolve one into another
and the yogin becomes free from elemental
limitation.” 3.6



FINAL WORDS

This guidebook is intended to be a jump-off point for those out there who are sincere and curious about the great wisdom tradition of Yoga, the knowledge of which is rapidly fading during a time where social media has cherry-picked the most marketable information and, perhaps inadvertently, “tossed the baby out with the bath water”.

May we seek to remember and awaken in this lifetime; through our devoted efforts, preserve the wisdom as it was passed down and drink from the eternal well of consciousness that has been flowing since time immemorial.

The torch is now in your hands, yogi.

Should you wish to put these teachings into practice immediately, view the resources section below which will cover some of the fundamental prāṇāyāma & kriyā techniques of traditional Hatha Yoga.

If the teaching in this PDF resonates and you would like to explore further, please consider joining me for an upcoming Bhūta Yoga [course](#) or [training](#), or dive into the [Bhūta Yoga Book](#).

I'll see you there.

The human is comprised of five constituent elements, known as the *pañcā mahā bhūtas*, and health is the result of bringing balance to this Elemental Nature.

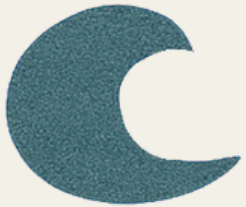


RESOURCES

Below are additional resources, practices and technical guidance for pranayama & kriya of traditional Hatha Yoga.



UDDIYANA
BANDHA



NAULI KRIYA



KAPALABHATI
KRIYA



BEGINNER FRIENDLY
12 MINUTES PRACTICE



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hatha Yoga Pradipika (~15th century CE)

<https://archive.org/details/HathaYogaPradipika-SanskritTextWithEnglishTranslatlionAndNotes?>

Best Scholarly Edition (Sanskrit + English)

James Mallinson (trans.) — Hatha Yoga Pradipika

- YogaVidya.com / YogaTexts.org version (free)
- Based on critical comparison of manuscripts
- Mallinson is the leading Haṭha Yoga scholar today.

Gheranda Samhita (~17th century CE)

https://ia600301.us.archive.org/4/items/Gheranda_Samhita/Gheranda%20samhita.pdf?

Best Modern Scholarly Edition (Sanskrit + English)

James Mallinson — The Gheranda Samhita: The Original Sanskrit and an English Translation (YogaVidya)

- The gold-standard modern translation
- Clear, accurate, based on manuscript variants
- Includes notes, parallels, and textual discussions.

Shiva Samhita (~14-15th century CE)

https://ia801201.us.archive.org/24/items/Sanskrit_EBooks_Assorted_Titles/Siva_samhitaWithEnglishTranslation-SrisaChandraVasu1914.pdf?

Best Modern Translation

James Mallinson — The Shiva Samhita

- Most reliable modern English translation
- Includes scholarly apparatus and cross-references.

(Note: No perfect modern critical Sanskrit edition exists; researchers generally use Mallinson's translation.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hatha Tattva Kaumudi (~18th century CE)

<https://www.hathajoga.lt/hathatattvakaumudi.pdf?>

This is rare and not widely translated.

Best Available Critical Edition

G. Bühnemann — Hathatattvakaumudi: A Treatise on Hatha Yoga by Sundaradeva (1997, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts)

- This is the scholarly standard edition
- Sanskrit + English introduction

Shat-Chakra-Nirūpaṇa (16th century CE)

<https://archive.org/details/dli.ministry.06283?>

Best Scholarly Edition

G. Bühnemann — The Six Chakras and the Representation of the Human Body: The Ṣaṭ-Cakra-Nirūpaṇa of Pūrṇānanda (E.J. Brill, 2000)

- Contains Sanskrit text, translation, diagrams, and commentary
- This is the modern critical study of the text

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Shiva Swarodaya (uncertain date but possibly 10th century CE)

<https://www.scribd.com/document/427130472/Shiva-Swarodaya-pdf>

Best Modern Edition

Rama Prasad — The Science of Breath and the Philosophy of the Tatwas

- Victorian-era but surprisingly scholarly
- Often used by modern academics for comparison.

Amaraugha or Amaraugha Prabodha of Goraksanatha (12-13th century CE)

https://www.academia.edu/39741423/The_Amaraughaprabodha_New_Evidence_on_the_Manuscript_Transmission_of_an_Early_Work_on_Ha%E1%B9%ADha_and_R%C4%81jayoga

Gorakṣaśataka (11-12th century CE)

https://www.academia.edu/39741423/The_Amaraughaprabodha_New_Evidence_on_the_Manuscript_Transmission_of_an_Early_Work_on_Ha%E1%B9%ADha_and_R%C4%81jayoga

Hatha Ratnavali (17th century CE)

<https://www.scribd.com/document/551529026/Hath-Ratnavali-Introduction>



thus concludes our review of...

PRANAYAMA

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Giving thanks to the path and teachings of Yoga, to all my teachers for transmitting their living sparks of wisdom, and to our sangha of incredible people with their devotion to learn and grow together.

-GI