

# Study Guide 6

DVD series vol. 6

Kundalini Yoga: Charting the Inner Landscape  
Hatha Yoga and Natha traditions: Spiritual and Physical Alchemy

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The Wisdom of Yoga

# **Kuṇḍalinī Yoga: Charting the Inner Landscape**

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## **Haṭha Yoga and Nātha Traditions: Spiritual and Physical Alchemy**

### **1. Welcome to the Study of Yoga**

Dear friend,

Welcome to volume 6 of The Wisdom of Yoga series.

It is our belief that yoga has a lot to offer to our lives and we are happy to present here the essence of the most important yoga traditions that India has produced throughout its rich history.

Enjoy!

Carlos Pomedá and the Yogakula team

### **2. How to use this study guide**

The purpose of this study guide is to guide you through the study of yoga. Here you will find suggestions that may help you to draw the most out of your study. The DVDs are designed to break down each topic into smaller segments that can be more easily followed in one sitting, although their duration varies.

We advise that you read the study guide first and then apply the steps for each section in sequence. Or, if you want to zero in on only one or two topics, just go directly to those sections. Then watch the appropriate segments and complete any other assignments or recommended exercises.

### **3. About this DVD series**

This series is designed to provide a complete course of study that covers the major systems of yoga in their chronological development.

The first volume includes an overview of the history of yoga, followed by an exploration of the upāṣadic teachings and practices. The second volume delves into the Bhagavad Gītā and its innovations, followed by the tradition of Bhakti Yoga, the yoga of devotion. The third examines the yoga of Patañjali and his Yoga Sūtras, whereas number four looks at the system of Advaita Vedānta. Finally, volume five explores Tantra and the last

one in the series, volume six, takes a look at Kuṇḍalinī Yoga and Haṭha Yoga, completing the historical perspective the series provides.

At the same time, each volume provides practices representative of the particular system of yoga examined in that volume. This design provides the opportunity of focusing on one specific school or exploring the entire spectrum. In either case, we recommend that you take your time with each volume, considering not only the teachings of each, but particularly their application and practice over at least a period of a month for each system.

#### 4. Invocation

*Oṃ. Saha nāv avatu; saha nau bhunaktu; saha vīryaṃ karavāvahai.*

*Tejasvi nāv adhitam astu; mā vidviṣāvahai. Oṃ śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ*

"Oṃ. May He protect us; may He help us; may we attain strength. May our study become luminous; let there be no enmity between us. Oṃ. Peace, peace, peace."

#### 5. Introduction to the Alchemical Tradition

This is an introduction to material that serves as background to the rise of Tantra. Therefore, your objectives for this segment are:

- Understand the historical development of the alchemical tradition in India
- Become acquainted with the evolving goals of the alchemical tradition
- Map the ways in which alchemical concerns will be reflected in Tantra

Ask yourself:

- Why would anyone want to become immortal?
- What would be required in order to make the body immortal?

Before you start, look at the notes for this section, below. When you are ready, please watch the segment titled, "Introduction to the Alchemical Tradition". Take your time to pause, write down thoughts, reflexions, questions and any items you may want to record. You may also want to refer to the notes and write down any Sanskrit terms that are not included below, as well as their meaning.

#### a) The Alchemical Tradition

##### *(1) Background*

kāya-sādhana, purification of body

##### *(2) Classification<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Acc. to David White in *The Alchemical Body*. Chicago University Press, 1996.

- Magical alchemy, 2<sup>nd</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> c
- Tantric alchemy, 10<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> c.
- Siddha alchemy, 13<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> c.

Lohavāda (science of metals) and dehavāda (science of body).

### ***(3) The Siddha Movement***

Māheśvara siddhas

Nāthas: Matsyendra, Gorakṣa, Gahini, Bhartṛhari, etc.

### ***(4) Teachings***

#### **(a) The 16 Saṃskāras**

1. Svedana, "sweating"
2. Mardana, "grinding"
3. Mūrccana, "fainting" or swooning
4. Utthāpana, "rising"
5. Pātana, "sublimation", distillation
6. Bodhana, "awakening"
7. Niyamana, "restraint"
8. Dīpana, "kindling"
9. Grāsa, "swallowing"
10. Cāraṇa, "agitating"
11. Garbhadruti, internal processing and liquification
12. Bāhyadruti, external processing and liquification
13. Jāraṇa, "digestion"
14. Rañjana, "coloring"
15. Sāraṇa, "flowing"
16. Krāmaṇa, "sequencing, progression"
17. Vedha, "piercing", and
18. Śarīra-yoga, "transubstantiation".

## **6. Introduction to Kuṇḍalinī Yoga**

Your objectives for this segment are:

- Understand the historical development of the knowledge of the subtle body and Kuṇḍalinī, leading to Tantra
- Understand the importance of the guru in connection with Kuṇḍalinī
- Explore the various types of Tantric initiation and their significance

Ask yourself:

- What do I know about Kuṇḍalinī? How would I describe it?
- What do I know about Kuṇḍalinī Yoga?

Before you start, look at the notes for this section, below. When you are ready, please watch the segment titled, "Introduction to Kuṇḍalinī Yoga". Take your time to pause, write down thoughts, reflexions, questions and any items you may want to record. You may also want to refer to the notes and write down any Sanskrit terms that are not included below, as well as their meaning.

### a) Notes on Kuṇḍalinī Yoga

Early upaniṣads (Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Chāndogya, etc.)

Post-Patañjali, Yoga Upaniṣads: Amṛta-bindu, Tejo-bindu, Advaya-tāraka, Yoga-śikhā, etc.

Guru tattva (Guru-principle), grace function:

Initiation:

- Sāmayī (general) and putraka (filial)
- Kriyā-vatī, through rituals
- Varṇa-mayī, through mantras
- Kalātma, awakening energy in body
- Vedha-mayī, "piercing" the centers

"Coiled one", 3 ½ coils

## 7. Kuṇḍalinī Yoga and the Subtle Body

Now we will explore the subtle body and the process of unfolding of Kuṇḍalinī. Therefore, your objectives are:

- Become acquainted with the main elements within the subtle body
- Form an understanding of the traditional methods to awaken Kuṇḍalinī
- Gain perspective on the evolution of Kuṇḍalinī in the subtle body

Ask yourself:

- What do I know about the cakras? How would I describe them?
- What does Kuṇḍalinī do once it becomes active?
- What is the culmination of that process?

At this point, you might want to take a look at the notes below, before you watch this segment. This will acquaint you with some of the main terms discussed in it. When you are ready, please watch the segment titled, "Kuṇḍalinī Yoga and the Subtle Body". As you watch, take your time to pause, write down thoughts, reflexions, questions and any items you may want to record. You may also want to write down the Sanskrit terms that appear on the screen, as well as their meaning.

### a) Subtle Body

Nāḍīs and cakras:

- Suṣumnā, idā, piṅgalā
- Mūlādhāra, svādhiṣṭhāna, maṇipura, anāhata, viśuddha, ājñā, sahasrāra

Three bandhas (mūla, jālaṃdhara and uḍḍiyāna)

## 8. Meditation on the Cakras

This is a quintessentially Tantric meditation, but one that uses complex imagery. Therefore, the first time you do it you might prefer to watch the entire section and take notes as you wish, as well as referring to the cakra table below. After that, you can view it again to try the practice, without worrying about the notes.

Choose a quiet place where you can follow the meditation instructions from the DVD and also sit comfortably for meditation.

As you follow the instructions, be ready to either pause your DVD player or stop it at the end of those instructions. Otherwise, the DVD will return to the main menu and the background music may distract you.

Meditate as long as you wish (anywhere between 20 minutes and 1 hour is a good duration) and allow yourself plenty of time to come out of meditation gently.

Then, take a few moments to reflect on your meditation process and experience, and take a few notes reflecting what worked, what was challenging, what you learned, what you experienced, what insights you had, etc.

### a) What are the cakras

Cakras, meeting points of nāḍīs (energy channels)

| Center    | Name      | Color    | Petals | Sound |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------|-------|
| Mūlādhāra | "support" | deep red | 4      | laṃ   |

|              |              |               |      |            |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|------|------------|
| Svādhiṣṭhāna | "own basis"  | crimson       | 6    | vaṃ        |
| Maṇipura     | "jewel-city" | bright yellow | 10   | raṃ        |
| Anāhata      | "unstruck"   | blue          | 12   | yaṃ        |
| Viśuddha     | "pure"       | smoky violet  | 16   | haṃ        |
| Ājñā         | "command"    | grayish/white | 2    | auṃ        |
| Sahasrāra    | "thousands"  | white         | 1000 | all sounds |

## 9. Haṭha Yoga

This is the main segment in terms of teachings and information about the system. Therefore, your objectives are:

- Identify the meaning of the term Haṭha and the goals of this system
- Gain a clear understanding of the goal of Haṭha Yoga
- Investigate the role of Kuṇḍalinī in Haṭha Yoga
- Explore the main teachings and practices of the system, drawing from traditional sources

Ask yourself:

- What is the role of the body in spiritual practice?
- How is it connected with the practice of meditation?
- How does the body affect my inner state?

At this point, you might want to take a look at the notes below, before you watch this third segment. This will acquaint you with some of the main terms discussed in it. When you are ready, please watch the segment titled, "Haṭha Yoga". As you watch, take your time to pause, write down thoughts, reflexions, questions and any items you may want to record. You may also want to write down the Sanskrit terms that appear on the screen, as well as their meaning.

### a) The Tradition of Haṭha Yoga

From Gorakṣanātha (and his teacher Matsyendra)

Haṭha: "forceful". Also, ha=sun, ṭha=moon, pairs of opposites

Three vital transformations of mercury:

Mūrcchana ("fainting"), bandhana ("binding") and Māraṇa ("killing")

### b) Sādhana (Practices)

Ṣat-karma:

- Dhauti
- Vasti
- Neti
- Nauli
- Trātaka
- Kapāla-bhāti

Siddhāsana, padmāsana

Three bandhas (mūla, jālaṃdhara and uḍḍiyāna)

Khecārī mudrā

Viparīta-karaṇī

Pratyāhāra

Prāṇāyāma

Kumbhaka

Dhyāna

Nāda and bindu

Samādhi

## 10. Meditation from Haṭha-yoga-pradīpikā

Choose a quiet place where you can follow the meditation instructions from the DVD and also sit comfortably for meditation.

As you follow the instructions, be ready to either pause your DVD player or stop it at the end of those instructions. Otherwise, the DVD will return to the main menu and the background music may distract you.

Meditate as long as you wish (anywhere between 20 minutes and 1 hour is a good duration) and allow yourself plenty of time to come out of meditation gently.

Then, take a few moments to reflect on your meditation process and experience, and take a few notes reflecting what worked, what was challenging, what you learned, what you experienced, what insights you had, etc.

## 11. Workshop Recap

Watch the final recap segment and contemplate the following:

- What do I take from this session?
- How can I summarize the concerns and influence of the alchemical tradition?
- How can I describe the subtle body? Kuṇḍalinī? Nāḍīs and cakras?



- How does Haṭha Yoga arise?
- What is its purpose? What are its main practices?

For further study and practice, you may want to continue with the study suggestions given below.

## 12. Q&A

Take look at the Q&A submenu and explore any or all themes you may be interested in, for additional information.

## 13. Study Suggestions

**Reading Assignment:** Read Feuerstein, Georg. *Tantra, The Path of Ecstasy*. Boston: Shambhala, 1998. (Chapter 7, "Initiation: Bringing Down the Light;" chapter 10, "The Subtle Body and Its Environment;" chapter 11, "Awakening the Serpent Power;" chapter 13, "Creating Sacred Space: Nyāsa, Mudrā, Yantra")

**Items for reflection:**

- How does this understanding of the body compare with other yoga philosophies explored previously, particularly those of classical yoga and vedānta?
- What understandings and insights can you apply to your practice of haṭha yoga?
- What is your attitude towards your own body? Any attitudes that need to be sublimated, purified? If so, how?

**Practices:**

- Take one major practice from the haṭha yoga system (such as a particular form of prāṇāyāma), get instruction if necessary and incorporate it into your practice. Note down the results, challenges, questions, insights, etc. that arise from your practice.
- Make it a point to meditate daily, even if for a short time only. Allow the breath to slow down, and allow it to stop without forcing it. Notice the effect of this practice on your mind.