

The Yogatattvabindu

योगतत्त्वबिन्दु

Yogatattvabindu

Critical Edition
with annotated Translation

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Introduction

General remarks

The *Yogatattvabindu* is a premodern Sanskrit Yoga text on Rājayoga that was written in the first half of the seventeenth century¹ in northern India.² The most salient feature of the work that makes it historically significant is its highly differentiated taxonomy of types of Yoga. In the *Yogatattvabindu*'s introduction, most manuscripts name fifteen types of Yoga, presented as subtypes of Rājayoga. The text is a yogic compendium written in a mix of mainly prose and 41 verses in textbook-style, where its 58 topics are introduced in sections launched by recognizable phrases. Most sections deal with the subtypes of Rājayoga and their effects, but others also cover topics like yogic physiology and cosmogony.

The *Yogatattvabindu* has not been discussed or considered in secondary literature on Yoga. The only exception is BIRCH (2014: 415–416) who briefly described its list of fifteen Yogas in the context of the “fifteen medieval Yogas” and noted that a similar³ list occurs in Nārāyaṇatīrtha's *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā* (17th - 18th century), a commentary on the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* that integrates almost an identical taxonomy of yogas within the *aṣṭāṅga* format. An incomplete account of the fifteen Yogas is found within the Sanskrit Yoga text *Yogasvarodaya*, which is known only through quotations in the *Prāṇatoṣinī* and *Yogakarnīkā*.⁴ The *Yogasvarodaya* provides a total of fifteen Yogas but names only eight of them in its introductory *ślokas*. A complete account of the text is yet to be found and might be lost forever. The *Yogasvarodaya* is the primary source and template for the compilation of the *Yogatattvabindu*. Rāmacandra closely follows the content and structure by rewriting the *Yogasvarodaya*'s *ślokas* into prose. Due to the incomplete transmission of the *Yogasvarodaya*, Rāmacandra's *Yogatattvabindu* is a natural and valuable starting point for an in-depth study of the taxonomy of the fifteen types of Yoga. The other source text that Rāmacandra used is the *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* whose content he draws on, particularly in the last third of his composition. Another text that in-

¹The dating of the text is discussed on p.5.

²The detailed discussion of the place of origin is found on p.??.

³My research suggests that list of fifteen Yogas in Nārāyaṇatīrtha's *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā* must be chronologically later than the ones found in the *Yogatattvabindu* and its sources. As I will show in the discussion of the fifteen Yogas on p.??, we have to assume that Nārāyaṇatīrtha saw the need to map the fifteen Yogas onto system of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* due to their popularity among practitioners in his sphere of activity.

⁴Manuscripts under the name of *Yogasvarodaya* seem to be lost. I was not able to allocate the manuscripts of the text in any manuscript catalogue at hand.

cludes a similar taxonomy of twelve Yogas divided into three tetrads is Sundardās's *brāj bhāṣa* Yoga text named *Sarvāṅgayogapradīpikā* which not just shares most of the types of Yogas but also many of the practices and contents found within the *Yogatattvabindu* and *Yogasvarodaya*.⁵

These complex taxonomies that emerged during the 17th and 18th centuries crossed sectarian divides and were adapted to the specific needs of different authors and traditions. The *Yogatattvabindu* thus encapsulates the diversity of Haṭha- and Rājayoga types and teachings after the *Haṭhapradīpikā* (15th century) that were adopted by a broad spectrum of religious traditions and strata of Indian society. In the particular case of the *Yogatattvabindu*, there are various statements throughout the text that reveal a strategy to detach Yoga from its renunciate connotations and to enforce the supremacy and universality of Rājayoga as a practice that can yield the highest benefits even for practitioners who enjoy worldly pleasures and an extravagant lifestyle. Textual evidence suggests the possibility that *Yogatattvabindu* may be a unique example of a Rājayoga text that was composed for warrior aristocracy and members of an royal court.

In addition, the analysis of the *Yogatattvabindu* and the historical retracing of its teachings provides insight into a complex network of at least twenty texts,⁶ all of which include one specific set of yoga theorems and practices with minor deviations - three to five *cakras*, sixteen *ādhāras*, two to five *lakṣyas*, and five *vyomas*. This intertextual network spans at least an entire millennium. It begins in early śivaite Tantras such as the *Netratantra* and ends in the large premodern Yoga compendiums like the *Haṭhatattvakaumudī* and *Haṭhasaṅketacandrikā*. The examination of this network provides insights into the history of the related yoga traditions and enables, for example, the reconstruction of the genesis of individual yoga categories mentioned in the fifteen Yogas, such as Lakṣyayoga, whose techniques were originally taught in early śivaite Tantras, but were only labeled as a separate type of yoga from the 17th century onwards.

⁵For a comparative table of the complex Yoga taxonomies see table ?? on p.??.

⁶This intertextual network which shares those specific teachings consists of the *Netratantra*, *Śāradatilakatantra*, *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*, *Ūrmikaulārnavatantra*, *Tantrāloka*, *Manthanabhairavatatantra*, *Śārīṅgadhārapaddhati*, *Vivekamārtanḍa*, *Śivayogapradīpikā*, (recensions of the *Haṭhapradīpikā*), *Amaraughasāsana*, *Yogasvarodaya*, *Sarvāṅgayogapradīpikā*, *Nityanāthapaddhati*, *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati*, *Yogatattvabindu*, *Yogacūḍāmanyupaniṣad*, *Maṇḍalabrāhmaṇopaniṣad*, *Haṭhatattvakaumudī* and *Haṭhasaṅketacandrikā*.

One printed edition of the *Yogatattvabindu* was published in 1905 with a Hindi translation and based on an unknown manuscript(s). This publication has the title '*Binduyoga*' confirmed by the printed text's colophon. However, as I discuss in the course of the introduction, the text was likely known as *Yogatattvabindu*. The consulted manuscripts contain significant discrepancies, structural differences and variant readings between them and the printed edition. Furthermore, the manuscripts are scattered over the Indian subcontinent, which suggests that it was widely transmitted at some point. Lengthy passages of the *Yogatattvabindu* are quoted without attribution in a text called *Yogasamgraha* and Sundaradeva's *Haṭhasaṅketacandrikā*. A critical edition will undoubtedly improve on the published edition and shed further light on the transmission of this important work.

This book contains an introduction, critical edition and annotated translation of the *Yogatattvabindu*. The introduction discusses provenance, authorship and the audience of the *Yogatattvabindu*. A comprehensive discussion of the taxonomy of the fifteen Yogas based on the critical edition of the *Yogatattvabindu*, together with a close examination of the above-mentioned related texts with similar taxonomies, aims to establish their position within the broader history of yoga and particularly elucidates the development of Haṭha- and Rājayoga traditions in the late medieval period. The remainder of the introduction contains an overview of the manuscript evidence and the editorial policies underlying the edition.

Dating the *Yogatattvabindu*

The oldest dated manuscript of the *Yogatattvabindu* N₁⁷ was written in Nepal *saṃvat* 837, which is 1716 CE. Since the text of this manuscript is missing a significant and lengthy passage (ca. 25% of the entire text) and contains various corruptions, one can assume that some time had passed from the original composition for the transmission to deteriorate to this extent. Therefore, it is likely that the work was composed at least a few decades before the creation of this Nepalese manuscript, perhaps sometime in the 17th century. The discovery that Sundaradeva's *Haṭhasaṅketacandrikā* quotes a lengthy passage of the *Yogatattvabindu* without attribution confirms this suspicion. The passages quoted from the *Yo-*

⁷For a description of the manuscript see p.??.

gatattvabindu include the teachings on the sixteen *ādhāras*⁸ and the teachings on Lakṣyayoga and its subtypes.⁹ The dating of the *Haṭhasaṅketacandrikā* just recently had to be revised due to the discovery that some first-hand notes surrounding the main text of the Ujjain *Yogacintāmaṇi* were in all likelihood borrowed from Sundaradeva's *Haṭhasaṅketacandrikā*.¹⁰ BIRCH (2018) dated the Ujjain *Yogacintāmaṇi* to 1659 CE.¹¹ Thus, the *terminus ante quem* for the compilation of the *Haṭhasaṅketacandrikā* is 1659 CE which automatically makes it also the *terminus ante quem* for the *Yogatattvabindu* and the *Yogasvarodaya*, due to the fact that Sundaradeva quoted from the *Yogatattvabindu* and Rāmacandra quoted from and rewrote the contents of the *Yogasvarodaya*. Thus, we can safely assume that the *Yogatattvabindu* was written in the course of the first half of the 17th century or earlier. Because of that Rāmacandra's main source text *Yogasvarodaya* must have been written even earlier.

Implications for the dating of the *Yogasvarodaya* and the *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati*

Furthermore, MALLINSON (2013) estimated the age of the *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* to circa 1700. Due to the above-mentioned new date of the *Haṭhasaṅketacandrikā* and because Rāmacandra extensively quotes from *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* the new terminus *terminus ante quem* for the dating of the *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* likewise must be set to 1659 CE. Thus, the *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* was also likely composed during the first half of the 17th century or even earlier.

Kriyāyoga

Kriyāyoga¹² is the first Yoga within the list of fifteen Yogas presented by Rāmacandra and his source text *Yogasvarodaya*. Remarkably, Nārāyaṇatīrtha also positions Kriyāyoga at the first position within the list of 15 Yogas in his *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā*. Sundarādās, on the other hand, omits Kriyāyoga within his taxonomy.

⁸ *Haṭhasaṅketacandrikā* (ms. no. 2244, f. 95r l. 3 – f. 96r l. 4).

⁹ *Haṭhasaṅketacandrikā* (ms. no. 2244, f. 124r l. 7 – f. 125r l. 3).

¹⁰ Cf. BIRCH (2024:52-54).

¹¹ Cf. BIRCH (2018: p.50 n. 111).

¹² See section II. on p.??-??.

The concept of Kriyāyoga in the *Yogatattvabindu* and *Yogasvarodaya*

Since Rāmacandra refers to all fifteen Yogas as variants of Rājayoga in his initial definition of Yoga, and no explicit hierarchy is recognisable from his formulations in the text, all variants of Rājayoga appear to have been regarded by him as equally effective. All Yogas aim towards the same goal: long-term durability of the body (*bahutarakālaṃ śarīrasthitiḥ*). The positioning of Kriyāyoga does not initially provide any information about the efficiency or the assignment of differently talented practitioners to a particular type of Yoga, as was the case in the older fourfold taxonomies.¹³ Implicit hierarchical aspects are nevertheless present - although all Yoga types are a type of Rājayoga, Rāmacandra nonetheless places Rājayoga in the final position of his taxonomy. The only apparent reason why Rāmacandra specifies Kriyāyoga as the first Yoga seems to be that his primary source text, whose content structure he largely follows,¹⁴ specifies this type of Yoga as the first.

The passage on Kriyāyoga in the *Yogatattvabindu* is relatively short. The four verses presented by Rāmacandra are quoted without attribution from the *Yogasvarodaya*. A prose section repeats the content of the verses. By definition, Kriyāyoga in *Yogatattvabindu* is “liberation through [mental] action” (*kriyāmuktir ayaṃ yogaḥ*). In contrast to Rāmacandra’s worldly definition of Rājayoga and its subcategories, here, liberation (*mukti*) overrides this initial goal. In addition, the practitioner achieves “success in one’s own body” (*svapiṇḍe siddhidāyakaḥ*). The method of Kriyāyoga involves restraining any [mental] wave before an action. This restraint consists of reducing negative [mind-]waves and cultivating positive ones. Noticeably, the number of negative waves significantly exceeds the number of positive waves.

The one who cultivates positive [mind-]waves and reduces the negative is called a *kriyāyogī*. In the prose passage of the section, the term *bahukriyāyogī* is used. The term is unprecedented in the rest of the yoga literature and presumably intends to express many reduced and cultivated waves.

¹³According to *Amaraughaprabodha* 18-24, Mantrayoga is best suited for the weak, Layayoga for the average, Haṭhayoga for the talented and Rājayoga for the exceptionally talented practitioner. In *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* 14, one finds the statement that the lowest practitioner should perform mantra yoga, which is then also referred to as the lowest Yoga. *Śivasamhitā* 12-28 expands this fourfold scheme of Yogas and practitioners with a temporal dimension. The weak practitioner needs twelve years to succeed with Mantrayoga, the average practitioner needs eight years with Laya, the able practitioner six years with Haṭha and the exceptional practitioner three years with Rājayoga

¹⁴see the chapter on “structural inconsistencies” on p.??,

Mental waves to be cultivated	Mental waves to be reduced
Patience (<i>kṣamā</i>)	Envy (<i>matsārya</i>)
Discrimination (<i>viveka</i>)	Selfishness (<i>mamatā</i>)
Equanimity (<i>vairāgya</i>)	Cheating (<i>māyā</i>)
Peace (<i>śānti</i>)	Violence (<i>hiṃsā</i>)
Modesty (<i>santoṣa</i>)	Intoxication (<i>mada</i>)
Desirelessness (<i>niṣpraha</i>)	Pride (<i>garvata</i>)
	Lust (<i>kāma</i>)
	Anger (<i>krodha</i>)
	Fear (<i>bhaya</i>)
	Laziness (<i>lajjā</i>)
	Greed (<i>lobha</i>)
	Error (<i>moha</i>)
	Impurity (<i>aśuci</i>)
	Attachment and aversion (<i>rāgadveśau</i>)
	Disgust and laziness (<i>ghrṇālasya</i>)
	error (<i>bhrānti</i>)
	Deceit (<i>dam̐bha</i>)
	Envy (repeatedly) (<i>akṣama</i>)
	Confusion (<i>bhrama</i>)

Table 0.1: Mental waves to be cultivated and reduced in Rāmacandra's Kriyāyoga

A closer examination of the *Yogasvarodaya* reveals Rāmacandra's reductionism since he excludes significant aspects of the original concept of the *Yogasvarodaya*'s Kriyāyoga.

dhyānapūjādānayaññajapahomādikāḥ kriyāḥ |
*kriyāmuktimayo yogaḥ svapiṇḍe siddhidāyakaḥ*¹⁵ || 1 ||

(1) Actions are meditation, ritual veneration, donation, recitation, fire sacrifice, etc. The Yoga made of liberation through action[s] bestows success in one's own body.

yat karomīti saṅkalpaṃ kāryārambhe manaḥ sadā |
tat sāṅgācaraṇaṃ kurvan kriyāyogarato bhavet || 2 ||

¹⁵ svapiṇḍe siddhidāyakaḥ YTB] sapiṇḍisiddhidāyakaḥ YSv sapiṇḍisiddhidāyakaḥ YK

(2) “Whatever I do” at the beginning of an action, the mind always has intention. Doing that undertaking with all its parts, one becomes established in Kriyāyoga.

*kṣamāvivekavairāgyaśāntiśantoṣanispṛhāḥ |
etaḍ yuktiyuto yo’sau kriyāyogo nigadyate || 3 ||*

(3) Patience, discrimination, equanimity, peace, modesty, desirelessness: The one endowed with these means is said to be a Kriyāyogī.

*mātsaryam mamatā māyā hiṃsā ca madagarvitā |
kāmaḥ krodho bhayaṃ lajjā lobho mohas tathāśuciḥ || 4 ||*

(4) Envy, selfishness, cheating, violence, intoxication and pride, lust, anger, fear, laziness, greed, error, and impurity.

*rāgadveṣau ghrṇālasyaśrāntidambhakṣamābhramāḥ |
yasyaitāni na vidyante kriyāyogī sa ucyate || 5 ||*

(5) Attachment and aversion, disgust and laziness, error, deceit, envy [and] confusion: Whoever does not experience these is called a Kriyāyogī.

*sa eva muktaḥ sa jñānī caṇḍināśena īśvaraḥ |
kriyāmuktikaro yo’sau rājayogaḥ sa muktidaḥ || 6 || (om. YK)*

(6) He alone, the wise one, the lord, through the destruction of impetuous [behaviour] who performs the actions of liberation is liberated. This Rājayoga is the giver of liberation.

*yāvan mano layaṃ yāti kṛṣṇe svātmani cinmaye |
bhaved iṣṭamanā mantrī japahomau samabhyaset || 7 || (om. YSv)*

(7) Until the mind enters absorption [and] would be in Kṛṣṇa, in one’s own self, filled with consciousness, the mantra practitioner should practise recitation and fire sacrifice with an aspiring mind.

*vidite paratattve tu samastair niyamair alam |
tālavr̥ṇtena kiṃ kāryaṃ lavdhe malayamārute || 8 || (om. YSv)*

(8) When the highest principle has been realised through all the *niyamas*, as is proper, Why should one wave the palm frond when the wind from the Himalayas has already reached?

tāvat karmmāṇi kurvanti yāvajjñānaṃ na vidyate |
jñāne jāte pareśāni karmākarma na vidyate || 9 ||(om. YSv)

(9) As long as [regular?] actions are performed, so long realisation is unknown. When knowledge ensues, oh, Supreme Goddess, neither action nor non-action is known.

Diese Verse¹⁶ entstammen den beiden einzigen derzeit vorhanden Quellen des *Yogasvarodaya*, nämlich den Zitaten aus der *Prāṇatoṣiṇī*¹⁷ und der *Yogakarṇikā*¹⁸ Die Zitate stimmen größtenteils überein, allerdings unterscheiden sich die letzten Verse voneinander. Es ist nicht auszuschließen, dass insbesondere die letzten drei Verse von einer anderen Quelle stammen, aber inhaltlich so eng mit der vorausgehenden Verse verwoben, dass dieses Szenario eher unwahrscheinlich erscheint.

Der offensichtliche Hauptunterschied zum Kriyāyoga bei Rāmacandra ist die unmittelbar am Anfang der Verse genannte Information, dass die Handlungen (*kriyāḥ*) des Kriyāyoga aus Meditation, ritueller Gottesverehrung, Gaben, Rezitation und Feueropferung bestehen.

The concept of Kriyāyoga in the *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā*

The Kriyāyoga in Nārāyaṇatīrtha's commentary on *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* entitled *Yogasiddhāntacandrikā* presents Kriyāyoga as the first of his fifteen yogas, which he locates in Pātañjalayoga. The term occurs in the context of *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 2.1. According to the introduction to this Sūtra, in the *bhāṣya* part of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*, Kriyāyoga is a means by which someone with a distracted mind can also attain Yoga (*vyutthitacitto 'pi yogayuktaḥ*). In the Sūtra itself, Kriyāyoga is defined as follows:

¹⁶Die hier verwendete Nummerierung wurde von mir aus praktischen Gründen eingeführt und stimmt nicht mit der Originalnummerierung der Verse in den Zitaten der Quelltexten überein. Die *Prāṇatoṣiṇī* nummiert die Verse überhaupt nicht. Die Verse finden sich in der Druckausgabe der *Prāṇatoṣiṇī* auf S. 831. Die hiesigen Verse sind in der *Yogakarṇikā* mit der Nummerierung 1.209-216 und befinden sich in der Edition auf S. 17.

¹⁷Ein sehr großer Teil des *Yogasvarodaya* ist mit mit Quellangabe (*yogasvarodaya* zitiert).

¹⁸Im Normalfall zitiert die *Yogakarṇikā* ihre Quellen. Diese Passage ist der einzige Fall in dem die Verse aus dem *Yogasvarodaya* ohne Quellangabe übernommen worden sind. Diese Passage endet nach Vers 1.216 mit "*iti yogasaṅketāḥ |*".

tapaḥsvādhyāyeśvaraṇidhānāni kriyāyogaḥ |
Pātañjalayogaśāstra 2.1

Kriyāyoga, or “yoga through action”, consists of three elements. Namely, abstinence (*tapas*), which according to *bhāṣya* should be practised both mentally and physically, the repetition of *mantras* or the study of sacred literature (*svadhyāya*) and devotion to God (*īśvaraṇidhāna*).

According to *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 2.2, these three elements of Kriyāyoga should lead the practitioner to attain Samādhi by reducing the so-called *kleśas*. This explanatory model is also used by Nārāyaṇatīrtha (VIMALĀ, 2000:71). The five *kleśas* consist of ignorance (*avidyā*), self-centredness (*asmitā*), attachment (*rāga*), aversion (*dveṣa*) and fear of death (*abhiniveśa*).

Kriyāyoga in the complex late-medieval Yoga taxonomies

All three main components of Patañjali’s Kriyāyoga are not mentioned in the *Yogatattvabindu* and *Yogasvarodaya*. Nevertheless, a practice similar to the reduction of the *kleśas* can also be found here. Although the specific fear of death (*abhiniveśa*) is not mentioned, the more general term for fear (*bhaya*) is cited.

The Kriyāyoga in *Yogatattvabindu* and *Yogasvarodaya* could, therefore, be perhaps regarded as a degenerated or simplified variant of the Pātañjalean model, which replaces the three main components *tapas*, *svadhyāya* and *īśvaraṇidhāna* with and instead restricts itself entirely to the aspect of *kleśa* reduction. The *Yogatattvabindu* extends the more ancient list of *kleśas* with various terms and adds positive “waves” to be mix. In both discussed systems, Kriyāyoga is a means for liberation.

It is likely that there is a historical connection between two models that is primarily transmitted through the tantric Shivaite traditions. This is supported by the general observation that the roots of Rājayoga reach back to shaivaite-Tantric traditions¹⁹. Additionally, and earlier texts of Rājayoga in which the term *kriyāyoga* is mentioned.

¹⁹Cf. birch2019saiva (2019).