

# Yoga

The Indian tradition



Edited by

Ian Whicher and  
David Carpenter

# YOGA

The Indian tradition of yoga, first codified in the *Yoga Sūtra* of Patañjali in the third or fourth century CE, constitutes one of the world's earliest and most influential traditions of spiritual practice. It is a tradition that, by the time of Patañjali, already had an extensive (if obscure) prehistory and one that was to have, after Patañjali, an extraordinarily rich and diverse future. As a tradition, yoga has been far from monolithic. It has embraced a variety of practices and orientations, borrowing from and influencing a vast array of Indic religious traditions down through the centuries.

Recent years have witnessed an increased production in scholarly works on the yoga tradition, which have helped to chart this complex and multifaceted evolution and to demonstrate the important role that it has played in the development of India's religious and philosophical traditions. And yet the popular perception of yoga in the West remains for the most part that of a physical fitness program, largely divorced from its historical and spiritual roots.

The essays collected here provide a sense of the historical emergence of the classical system presented by Patañjali, a careful examination of the key elements, overall character and contemporary relevance of that system, as found in the *Yoga Sūtra*, and a glimpse of some of the tradition's many important ramifications in later Indian religious history.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ĀDS	<i>Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra</i>
AP	<i>Agni Purāṇa</i>
BDS	<i>Baudhyāna Dharma Sūtra</i>
BGBh	<i>Bhagavadgītā Bhāṣya</i> of Śaṅkara
BhagP	<i>Bhāgavata Purāṇa</i>
BhG	<i>Bhagavadgītā</i>
BS	<i>Brahmasūtra</i>
BSBh	<i>Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya</i>
BU	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad</i>
BUBh	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya</i> of Śaṅkara
BUBhV	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya Vārttika</i> of Sureśvara
CU	<i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i>
CUBh	<i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya</i> of Śaṅkara
GDS	<i>Gautama Dharma Sūtra</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
KJñN	<i>Kaulajñānanirṇaya</i>
KM	<i>Kubjikāmata</i>
Manu	<i>Manu Smṛti</i>
MBh	<i>Mahābhārata</i>
MU	<i>Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad</i>
NI	<i>The Necklace of Immortality or Amṛtaratnāvalī</i>
NS	<i>Naiṣkarmyasiddhi</i> of Sureśvara
RM	<i>Rāja-Mārtaṇḍa</i> of Bhoja Rāja
RV	<i>Ṛg Veda</i>
RYT	<i>Rudrayāmala Tantra</i>
SB	<i>Svopajña Bhāṣya</i>
SK	<i>Sāṃkhya Kārikā</i> of Īśvara Kṛṣṇa
SV	<i>Sāma Veda</i>
TĀ	<i>Taittirīya Āraṇyaka</i>
TAS	<i>Tattvārthasūtra</i> of Umāsvāti
TU	<i>Taittirīya Upaniṣad</i>
TUBh	<i>Taittirīya Upaniṣad Bhāṣya</i> of Śaṅkara

## ABBREVIATIONS

TV	<i>Tattva Vaiśāradī</i> of Vācaspati Mīśra
US	<i>Upadeśasāhasrī</i> of Śāṅkara
VaDS	<i>Vasiṣṭha Dharma Sūtra</i>
WZKM	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>
WZKSO	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens und Archiv für indische Philosophie</i>
YS	<i>Yoga Sūtra</i> of Patañjali
YSBh	<i>Yoga Sūtra Bhāṣya</i>
YSS	<i>Yoga Sāra Saṃgraha</i> of Vijñāna Bhikṣu
YV	<i>Yoga Vārttika</i> of Vijñāna Bhikṣu

# INTRODUCTION

The Indian tradition of yoga, first codified in the *Yoga Sūtra* of Patañjali in perhaps the third or fourth century CE, constitutes one of the world's earliest and most influential traditions of spiritual practice. It is a tradition that, by the time of Patañjali, already had an extensive (if obscure) prehistory and one that was to have, after Patañjali, an extraordinarily rich and diverse future. As a tradition yoga has been far from monolithic. It has embraced a variety of practices and orientations, borrowing from and influencing a vast array of Indic religious traditions down through the centuries.

Recent years have witnessed an increased production of scholarly works on the yoga tradition that have helped to chart this complex and multifaceted evolution and to demonstrate the important role that it has played in the development of India's religious and philosophical traditions. And yet the popular perception of yoga in the West, determined in large part by the commodification of yoga techniques, remains for the most part that of a program of physical fitness, largely divorced from its historical and spiritual roots.

The essays collected here, while not constituting a systematic survey of the yoga tradition, provide a sense of the historical emergence of the classical system presented by Patañjali, a careful examination of the key elements, overall character and contemporary relevance of that system, as found in the *Yoga Sūtra*, and a glimpse of some of the tradition's many important ramifications in later Indian religious history. It is hoped that these essays will contribute not only to the ongoing scholarly study of yoga within its broader Indian context, but will also contribute to a deeper understanding of Patañjala yoga and its offshoots on the part of the increasing number of its Western practitioners.

## The essays

John Brockington's essay on yoga in the *Mahābhārata* introduces Part I, Classical Foundations, and provides a valuable orientation to the historical development of the yoga tradition prior to its initial systematization by

Patañjali. Whether we can speak meaningfully of a “tradition” at this point is of course an important question. In the epic, Brockington argues, the term yoga, as well as the term *sāṃkhya* with which it is often associated, do not refer to the carefully thought out philosophical positions such as we will find later in Patañjali, Īśvaraḥṣṇa and their commentators, but often have the much more general meanings of “practice” and “theory” respectively. Yoga in particular refers to widely diffused spiritual methodologies which on the one hand can be linked with such thoroughly Brahmanical practices as *tapas* or “ascetic heating” and yet, on the other hand, seem clearly to have originated, at least in part, in non-Brahmanical circles and to be widely practiced without regard to specific ideological allegiances. The tension between traditional Brahmanical spiritual practices and widely available yogic alternatives is perhaps what underlies Bhīṣma’s promotion, in the *Jāpakopākhyāna* (12.189–193), of the practice of *japa* as an independent discipline and way of life belonging to the Vedic sacrificial tradition and differing from the practice of yoga, even though his actual description of the practices of the *jāpaka* is clearly indebted to yoga.

There is no unanimity concerning which practices properly constitute the practice of yoga in the *Mahābhārata*, but rather a wide variety of configurations, with greater or lesser resemblance to the later classical system. Thus one can find reference to an “eightfold” yoga, but also to the “twelve yogas” and the “seven *dhāraṇas*.” Still, according to Brockington, yoga practice as presented in the epic tends to have four main aspects: general preparations through such things as moral conduct; diet, posture and surroundings; the practice of breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*); the withdrawal of the senses (*pratyāhāra*); and concentration and meditation. Thus it seems clear that we find reflected in the epic, especially in the *Mokṣadharmaparvan*, a variety of practices that are in one way or another the precursors of the classical system.

We also find evidence in the epic of yoga’s proclivity for theism, in contrast to the non-theistic orientation of Sāṃkhya, whether in the form of a recognition of Īśvara, parallel to what we will find in Patañjali, or in the much more elaborate form of the Bhagavadgītā, with its focus on Kṛṣṇa.

Another theme that makes its appearance in the epic and which continues to be of importance to the later tradition is an ambivalence in regard to the status of the spiritual powers (*aiśvarya*, *siddhi*) that accompany yogic practice. We find clear warnings as to the dangers of such powers for the spiritual aspirant, while at the same time such powers are recognized as an inevitable result of yogic practice and are frequently approved or even made the primary goal of such practice. This is an issue with clear importance for the later tradition, which becomes especially prominent with the emergence of tantra.

The remaining four essays in Part I all focus on the classical formulation of the yoga tradition as presented in Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtra*. The essays are united by a common concern for understanding Pātañjala yoga as a form of practice, as a spiritual path, and for understanding how the metaphysical dualism of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* that informs Patañjali's worldview, and its association with traditions of world renunciation, affect the character of yoga as a practice, and its place in the world.

Following upon Brockington's examination of yoga in the epic, David Carpenter considers the place of Patañjali's yoga in the context of early classical Brahmanical society. Focusing on the concept of yoga as practice (*abhyāsa*) and in particular on what Patañjali calls *kriyāyoga*, or the "yoga of action," he details the rootedness of these practices in the broader Brahmanical tradition. Carpenter finds a degree of continuity between the traditional formative practices of Brahmanical society and the spiritually formative practices of Patañjali's yoga, and argues that in Patañjali's historical context the renunciatory goals of yoga did not necessarily exclude a real concern for the ritual forms of Brahmanical orthopraxy. A key instance of this assimilation is Patañjali's incorporation of the traditional Brahmanical practice of *svādhyāya* into the practice of *kriyāyoga*. This is in keeping with a general trend of Patañjali's time, namely the appropriation of renouncer values by the Brahmanical mainstream, and recalls Bhīṣma's promotion, noted by Brockington, of the practice of *jaṇa* (which also figures prominently in the *Yoga Sūtra*) as a kind of "Vedic" alternative to the yoga of the renunciators. Thus Patañjali's *kriyāyoga* was a practice that could be appropriate both to the Brahmin "householder," who embodied the values of Brahmanical society, as well as to the "renouncer" who sought to abandon that society.

The final three essays of Part I, while focusing on the *Yoga Sūtra* of Patañjali as a historical document, do so with an eye to questions of its contemporary relevance. Ian Whicher's essay presents a forceful argument that, contrary to some common scholarly representations of it, Patañjali yoga was not as an otherworldly pursuit of spiritual isolation but rather was "a responsible engagement of spirit and matter." Rather than approach Patañjali's thought from the perspective of a set of dualistic metaphysical assumptions derived from Sāṃkhya, Whicher pursues a reading of the *sūtras* that privileges the *experience* of yoga over metaphysical abstraction. While Whicher recognizes that aspects of yoga practice, specifically that attainment of *asaṃprañāta-samādhi*, entail an actual cessation of all mental activity (*vṛtti*), he argues that it would be a serious misreading of Pātañjala yoga to assume that such cessation is permanent, cutting the yogin off from meaningful engagement with the world. Such an outcome, he notes, would have quickly brought the tradition to an end! Rather, such cessation of mental activity is episodic, and the true goal is not cessation of mental activity *per se*, but the cessation of the *misidentification*



with thought. It is not thought itself, or the dynamism of *prakṛti* as a whole, that is the source of suffering (*duḥkha*), but rather one's attachment to it. Through a process of spiritual practice aimed at the progressive purification of the *citta*, a process which Whicher refers to as the "sattvification" of consciousness, it is the mistaken identifications born of ignorance (*avidyā*) that are dissolved, not *prakṛti* itself, which is on the contrary purified and illuminated. The ultimate state of *kaivalya*, "aleness," at which yoga practice ultimately aims, is not then so much a state of spiritual isolation, as it is frequently interpreted, as it is a state of unattached seeing not only of the transcendence of *puruṣa* but also of the play of *prakṛti*. As Whicher nicely puts it, "Yoga is not simply 'puruṣa-realization;' it equally implies 'getting it right with *prakṛti*.'" Thus the *yogin* achieves a spiritual freedom that is not only a freedom *from* the world but also a freedom *for* the world, through a balance of theory and practice, metaphysical discrimination of *puruṣa* and ethical engagement with the products of *prakṛti*. For Whicher, Patañjali's *yogin* is what the later tradition will know as a *jīvanmukti*, one liberated in this life, free from the sufferings of *saṃsāra* and yet still active within it.

Lloyd Pflueger's essay offers a counter-point to Whicher's advocacy of what one might call an "engaged yoga." Whereas Whicher sets out to demonstrate the relevance of Pātañjala yoga for contemporary concerns for spiritual renewal, Pflueger cautions that such revisionist projects, while legitimate as part of a living spiritual tradition, nevertheless run the risk, for the scholar, of misrepresenting the significance of Patañjali in his own historical context, a context in which the metaphysical dualism of Sāṃkhya was taken quite seriously. And whereas Whicher begins with the experiential or "epistemological" aspect of yoga, and de-emphasizes this dualist metaphysics, Pflueger accepts as a given that Patañjali's yoga must be properly understood as Sāṃkhya-Yoga, embraces the ontological perspective eschewed by Whicher, and argues that the "mind-boggling, mad, paradoxical dualism" of Sāṃkhya-Yoga is one of its finest achievements. Pflueger argues that while it might be the case that metaphysical dualism is a view with little resonance for contemporary Western practitioners of yoga, nevertheless Patañjali fully accepted the Sāṃkhyan dualism of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* as the essential theoretical context in which the practice of yoga was to make sense. Key to a retrieval of the significance of Pātañjala yoga today then is a retrieval of the resonance that such a paradoxical dualism had for Patañjali.

What is paradoxical about this dualism is that it is interactive. In addition to the binary opposition between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* there is also what Pflueger calls a "binary function," in which these two opposite principles "are made to function mysteriously together as a virtual system," a system in which each principle is meaningless without the other. Together, through the mystery of their interaction (*saṃyoga*), they produce the *līlā*, the "play,"

of phenomenal existence. Furthermore, for Pflueger the real climax of this mysterious play of cosmic opposites is not to be found in the return of each principle to a state of isolation (*kaivalya*), which brings *saṃyoga* to an end, but in the moment just before, which is a “climax of recognition” in which “matter is still manifest but in perfect association, perfect balance with consciousness. They are equally pure.”

Pflueger, unlike Whicher, takes the state of *kaivalya* to be a state of otherworldly perfection in quite a strong sense. And yet, for Pflueger, it is not this state that seems most to hold the interest of Īśvarakṛṣṇa and Patañjali. For the former it is the “glory of the complex permutations of matter,” for the latter the “glory of the complex meditative states and their dazzling supernormal fruits” that occupy the attention. Thus both Sāṃkhya and Yoga “glorify the path itself,” such that the real goal of spiritual practice becomes indistinguishable from the path itself. In the end for Pflueger the paradoxical dualism of Sāṃkhya-Yoga preserves “a sublime and uncompromising spiritual vision” of a “non-dual transcendence” which “enriches the meaning of life.”

Ironically, though their approaches to Patañjali differ widely, each being critical of the approach taken by the other, the interpretations offered by Whicher and Pflueger ultimately converge in a common emphasis on yoga as a path, as a spiritual practice which involves an ongoing interaction with the world while leading ultimately beyond it.

Chris Chapple’s essay also addresses this issue of yoga’s engagement with the world, and like Whicher he is concerned to demonstrate that an ongoing relationship with the world is compatible with ultimate goals of *nirodha* and *kaivalya*. Chapple’s approach to this issue is to examine the metaphors of light, lightness and clarity which Patañjali uses to express the actual experience of the “shining forth” of *puruṣa*. Chapple argues that there are numerous passages in the *Yoga Sūtra* where Patañjali describes the pure, clarified witness consciousness of *puruṣa* “with-out insisting that the world itself dissolve.” It is this experience of luminosity, somewhat akin perhaps to Pflueger’s “climax of recognition,” that for Chapple sets Pātañjala yoga apart from Sāṃkhya, for which such dissolution of the world is required. A key passage in this regard is YS 1.41, where Patañjali describes the mind of “diminished fluctuations” (*kṣīṇa-vṛtti*) experiencing a state of unity (*samāpatti*) among the “grasper, grasping, and grasped,” in other words, the subject, the act of perception, and the object perceived. The cessation (*nirodha*) of mental fluctuations leads here not to the dissolution of the world as such, but to a non-dual experience of it.

The experience of *samādhi* is also described using metaphors of light, as a “shining forth” of things as they truly are, through the “splendor of wisdom.” Such a description, for Chapple, “clearly allows for a world engaged through the aegis of wisdom.” The same is true of the “cloud

of *dharma samādhi*” with which the *Yoga Sūtra* culminates, and the attendant “power of higher awareness” (*citi-śakti*). As Chapple puts it, “the *Yoga Sūtra* does not conclude with a negation of materiality but with a celebration of the ongoing process of dispassionate yet celebratory consciousness.” Such a conclusion casts a new light on the standard image of Pātañjala yoga and Hinduism generally as world denying, and Chapple ends his essay by drawing a parallel between the “dispassionate yet celebratory consciousness” of the liberated yogin and the environmental consciousness of the modern Chipko movement.

In Part II, The Expanding Tradition, the focus shifts away from Patañjali and toward the later development of the yoga tradition in India. As Pflueger noted, no clear Pātañjala teaching lineage or *paramparā* has survived in India, but the historical influence of the *Yoga Sūtra* is beyond doubt. Beyond the extensive commentarial literature on the *Yoga Sūtras* themselves, the classical form that Patañjali gave to the tradition of yoga has had an important influence on other Hindu schools of thought. This is amply illustrated by Vidyasankar Sundaresan’s study of the place of yoga in the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara. Sundaresan argues persuasively that the common view that Śaṅkara simply rejected yoga is in need of revision. True, for Śaṅkara liberation comes through self-knowledge, mediated through the *Upaniṣads*. But as Sundaresan demonstrates at length, this does not exclude a significant role for the traditional yogic practices described by Patañjali. In fact, as he notes, “the daily life of the typical *saṁnyāsīn* in the Śaṅkaran tradition incorporates a substantial amount of meditation and yoga practice, while the term *aṣṭāṅgayoga-anuṣṭhāna-niṣṭha* is a time-honored title of the Śaṅkaracāryas of Śṛṅgeri . . .” As for Śaṅkara himself, while he clearly rejects the dualism of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, he just as clearly endorses many aspects of yoga practice.

Focusing in particular on Śaṅkara’s commentary of the Bhagavadgītā and on his Bṛhadāraṇyaka *Upaniṣad* Bhāṣya, as well as on Sureśvara’s commentary on the latter, Sundaresan examines Śaṅkara’s treatment of the concept of *cittavṛttinirodha*, which Patañjali uses to define yoga at *Yoga Sūtra* 1.2. While it is clearly Śaṅkara’s position that *cittavṛttinirodha* is not enjoined in Vedānta, to take this position as a wholesale rejection of yoga would be a serious, if rather common, mistake. Sundaresan shows that what is at stake in this apparent rejection of yoga is actually an opposition to the position of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā concerning the injunctive status of the scriptures generally. Self-knowledge cannot be enjoined. Without the Upaniṣadic teaching of the unity of Ātman and Brahman *cittavṛttinirodha* will reveal nothing. But Śaṅkara doesn’t intend to oppose the two. On the contrary, the steady recollection of self-knowledge leads naturally to *cittavṛttinirodha*, and such steady recollection is quite important, given the *saṁnyāsīn*’s karmic tendency toward action even after the dawn of liberating knowledge.

In his subsequent examination of Śaṅkara's references to the traditional eight limbs of Pātañjala yoga, Sundaresan is able to show that each one of them plays a role in Advaita Vedānta as well. In fact, Śaṅkara's discussion of them at times exhibits a close verbal dependence on the *Yoga Sūtra* and its commentarial tradition, as when he uses the technical terms *pūraka*, *recaka* and *kumbhaka* in commenting on Bhagavadgītā 4.29, even though this passage makes no use of these terms. Śaṅkara was clearly not averse to incorporating elements of yoga practice into his own understanding of the spiritual path. As Sundaresan notes, Śaṅkara's attitude here is best reflected in his disciple Sureśvara, who explicitly recommends the practice of yoga, *yogābhyāsa*, for one who has renounced *karma*. Yoga practice, if not its metaphysical underpinnings, thus occupied a significant place in the life of the Advaitin.

Beyond the influence that it has exerted on Hindu schools such as Advaita Vedānta, Pātañjala yoga has also had made itself felt beyond the Hindu tradition itself. This is made particularly clear by Olle Qvarnström who, in discussing the concept of yoga in Śvetāmbara Jainism, speaks of the influence of the classical tradition of yoga associated with Patañjali in creating the "pan-Indian debate" on yoga in which the Jains took part. Qvarnström examines the terminology used by a series of Jain teachers in discussing the path to liberation (*mokṣamārga*). As described in the *Tattvārthasūtra* of Umāsvāti, a rough contemporary of Patañjali, this path, like that described in the *Yoga Sūtras*, involved the repeated practice of meditation (*dhyaṇa*) in order gradually to bring about the cessation of the activity of the mind, *cittanirodha*. And yet quite unlike Patañjali's definition of yoga as precisely this cessation of mental activity (YS 1.2: *yogaś cittavṛtīnirodhaḥ*), in the *Tattvārthasūtra* Umāsvāti uses the term yoga to refer to activity itself, rather than to the process of its reduction. By the time of Haribhadra in the eighth century, however, the term yoga has come to refer to the entire Jaina soteriological path and we find an appropriation of Patañjali's "eight limbs" (*aṣṭāṅga*) in an explicit attempt to assimilate the yoga system of Patañjali into that of the Jains. Indeed, according to Qvarnström, Hemacandra was himself familiar with the *Yoga Sūtra* and the doctrine of yoga presented in the twelfth chapter of his major work, the *Yogaśāstra*, while still differing somewhat in terminology and detail, is consistent with a pan-Indian yogic doctrine that was systematized by Patañjali.

It is noteworthy, given the issue raised by Whicher and Pflueger concerning the *yogin's* relationship to the world of everyday activity, that the Jains explicitly recognize the possibility of an enlightened sage who remains active in the world. Such a person is called a *sayogin* or a *sayogakevalin*, one who possesses enlightenment while in a state of activity (yoga). At the same time, the Jains also recognize a state beyond this, the state of the *ayogin* or *ayogakevalin*, for whom all activity, mental, verbal and physical, has come to an end.

While the *Yogaśāstra* of Hemacandra provides clear evidence of the lasting influence of the *Yoga Sūtra* in the Indian tradition of yoga as a whole, it has also apparently been influenced by a further permutation of that tradition, namely the development of haṭhayogic practices of the Kānpḥaṭa or Nāth Siddha tradition said to have originated with Matsyendranātha, and associated particularly with the name of Gorakhnātha. Qvarnström argues that some of the key terminology used by Hemachandra in the twelfth chapter of his *Yogaśāstra* derived from sources that came to be part of the Nāth Sampradāya, another example of the cross-fertilization of yogic traditions in India, even across traditional religious boundaries. Terms for the state of complete mental cessation such as *amanaskatā* and *unmānībhāva* are unknown to the earlier Jain tradition and are yet present both in the *Yogaśāstra* and in key Nāth texts such as the *Amanaskayoga* attributed to Gorakhnātha. And as yet another indication of the complex interweavings of India's yogic traditions, Qvarnström notes that some of this terminology, while new to Jain texts, can be traced back as far as the *Upaniṣads*.

Qvarnström's reference to the Nāth Siddhas provides a helpful connection to the next two essays in the volume, which shift away from the classical forms of yoga influenced by Pātañjala tradition. Starting perhaps as early as the sixth century CE a strikingly original form of yoga, which came to be known as *haṭha* yoga, appeared in India. *Haṭha* yoga seems to have only tenuous ties to the practice described by Patañjali. These tantric forms of practice gave new prominence to the role of the body, not only through greatly expanded interest in the physical postures or *āsanas* that Patañjali mentions only briefly, but in particular to the notion of a "subtle" body, the system of energy centers or *cakras* that make up its structure, the feminine energy that flows through these centers, and the powers (*siddhis*) which result from its mastery.

David White begins his essay on yoga in early Hindu tantra by discussing the status of powers or *siddhis* in yoga practice. As we have seen, this is an issue that dates back at least to the *Mahābhārata*, if not before. The ambivalent attitude toward such powers in the epic has been noted, and the same ambivalence can be found in the *Yoga Sūtra*. Whereas Patañjali, at YS 3.37, warns that *siddhis* can distract the yogin from the pure practice of *samādhi*, he nevertheless devotes a substantial portion of his work to the description of such powers and the means of their attainment, without a hint of disapproval. These powers, long recognized by the tradition as a result of yogic practice, take on a new prominence within the *haṭha* yoga tradition associated with Hindu tantra.

The main focus of White's essay is not the *siddhis*, however, but the historical emergence of the notion of the subtle body and its structure in a variety of Hindu and Buddhist texts dating from the eighth to the twelfth centuries. Contrary to the impression created by Arthur Avalon's widely

read work, *The Serpent Power*, the system of the *cakras* presented there as if normative is actually the result of a complex historical evolution and expresses but one of many possible configurations. In the earliest discussions of the *cakras*, dating from the eighth century, we find reference to only four. Some early sources speak of five. Nor are they necessarily called *cakras*. This term is first applied to them in the ninth- to tenth-century *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* of Matsyendranātha, which enumerates seven *cakras* as well as an expanded list of eleven. This system of eleven *cakras* was subsequently appropriated by Abhinavagupta.

Of particular interest is the description of a ritual of self-sacrifice revealed by Bhairava in the tenth-century *Kubjikāmata* wherein the practitioner lays out a *maṇḍala* traced in his own blood and proceeds to offer a series of fearsome goddesses parts of his own body, including semen and blood, parts which correlate with the seven *dhātus* of the Hindu medical tradition. In exchange the goddesses confer supernatural knowledge upon the practitioner. This ritual is presented in the text as a special form of “bolt practice” that “impels the crooked one upward.” White argues that we can see in this ritual a rudimentary form of *haṭha* yoga, noting that elsewhere in the text one finds goddesses correlated with locations within the subtle body of the practitioner, as well as references to a “feminine energy” (*śakti*) in the form of a sleeping serpent, a possible reference to *kuṇḍalinī*. A closer examination of early tantric material leads White to conclude that what we have in the classic *haṭha* yoga practices involving the “flying up” of *kuṇḍalinī* through the *cakras* to unite with Śiva is, when viewed historically, an internalization of what was originally a system of ritual transactions of actual sexual fluids. Furthermore, these transactions seem to have been grounded historically in the cremation-ground offerings to Yoginīs and Dākinīs such as those described in the *Kubjikāmata*.

White notes that, unlike the phonematic metaphors that one finds in the Trika Kaula system of Abhinavagupta, in the classical *haṭhayogic* texts attributed to Gorakhnātha one finds transactions and transfers involving *kuṇḍalinī* conveyed through fluid metaphors. Glen Hayes notes that the same is true of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā tradition of medieval Bengal, where one finds a preference for metaphors of fluids and substances rather than metaphors of energy, sound, power and light. In what is methodologically the most self-conscious essay in the volume, Hayes argues for the importance of attention to metaphor for our understanding of tantric texts. Drawing upon the work of George Lakoff and especially upon Mark Johnson’s notions of “image schemata” and “metaphorical projections” Hayes examines the metaphorical structure of the cosmophysiology (*dehatattva*) and the psychophysical ritual practices (*sādhana*) of the Sahajiyās, focusing on the *Amṛtaratnāvalī* or *Necklace of Immortality* attributed to the seventeenth-century Sahajiyā author Mukunda-dāsa. Like White, Hayes is primarily interested in the representation of the subtle