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HATHA YOGA

by [Swami Sivananda](#)

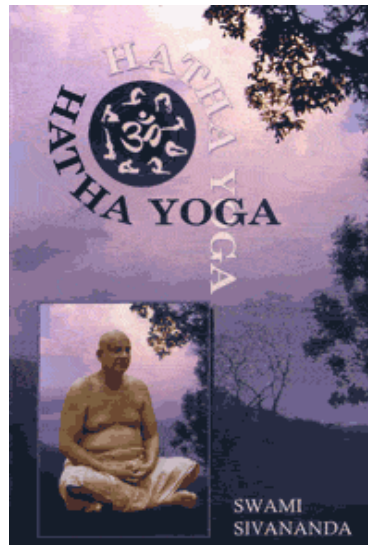


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About This Book

Among all the systems of physical exercises, Hatha Yoga practised and prescribed by the ancient Rishis and sages stands unrivalled and unique. It is the most perfect system. Brain, muscles, nerves, organs, tissues are toned and energised. All chronic diseases are rooted out. It deals with Shat Karmas, Asanas, Pranayamas, Mudras, Bandhas, and exercises on concentration and meditation.

Asanas pertain to the physical body. They render the body firm and steady and eradicate physical ailments. Bandhas pertain to the Prana. They bind and unite the Prana and the Apana and send the united Prana-Apana along the Sushumna Nadi. Mudras concern the mind. They represent seals. They seal the mind with the soul or the Atman. They do not allow the mind to wander outside towards objects. They direct the externalising mind towards the Atman in the chambers of the heart and fix it there. A combination of all these exercises is needed to have the maximum results.

Dedication

OM

Dedicated to Those Men and Women
in the East and the West who
are interested in Hatha Yoga, who
wish to attain good health, Kaya Siddhi,
vigour, vim, vitality and longevity, and to
develop psychic powers and who wish to
attain Self-realisation by awakening
the Kundalini and uniting Her
with Lord Sadasiva
in Sahasrara.

OM

Swami Sivananda's Letter



1st January 1944

Beloved Sadhaks bold,

Hatha Yoga is a Divine blessing for attaining success in any field. Body and mind are instruments which the practice of Hatha Yoga keeps sound, strong, and full of energy.

It is a unique armour of defence to battle opposing forces in the material and spiritual field. By its practice you can control Adi Vyadhi and attain radiant health and God-realisation.

Become a spiritual hero full of physical, mental and spiritual strength.

Sivananda

Publishers' Note

Hatha Yoga by the saintly author Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj is a companion volume to the book Yoga Asanas by him. Besides Yogic exercises, it deals with Pranayamas, Mudras, Bandhas and Shat Karmas in a more detailed and comprehensive manner. It also presents 'Mula Bandha in Yoga' and 'Nava Chakra Viveka.'

Hatha Yoga as delineated and described here is material drawn mainly from the three popular treatises: Siva Samhita, Gheranda Samhita and Hatha Yoga Pradeepika.

By the practice of Hatha Yoga, you can possess a healthy body and mind and attain spiritual experiences also. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was never tired of proclaiming: "I like to serve you all. I like to make you all happy. I like to help you in destroying the ignorance and in attaining the goal of life—God-realisation."

Hatha Yoga is one of the gem among the vast literature of the author. We are happy to present

this invaluable treasure to the readers after a lapse of sixty years and hope that it will be well received by the readers.

—THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

Importance of Hatha Yoga

आलोड्य सर्वशास्त्राणि विचार्य च पुनः पुनः ।

इदमेकं सुनिष्पन्नं योगशास्त्रं परं मतम् ॥

(शिव संहिता)

Having studied all the Sastras and having pondered over them well, again and again, this Yoga Sastra has been found to be the supreme doctrine.

—Siva Samhita

नास्ति मायासमः पाशो नास्ति योगात्परं बलम् ।

नास्ति ज्ञानात्परो बन्धुर्नाहङ्कारात् परो रिपुः ॥

(घेरण्डसंहिता)

There are no fetters like those of Maya (illusion), no strength like that which comes from Yoga, there is no friend higher than Jnana, and no greater enemy than Ahankara (egoism).

—Gheranda Samhita

भ्रान्त्या बहुमत ध्वँते राजयोगमजानताम् ।

हठप्रदीपिकाँ धत्ते स्वात्मारामः कृपाकरः ॥

To those who wander in the darkness of the conflicting sects unable to obtain Raja Yoga, the most merciful Swatmarama Yogi offers the light of Hatha Vidya.

अशेषतापतप्तानां समाश्रयमठो हठः

अशेषयोगयुक्तानामाधारकमठो हठः ॥

The Hatha Vidya is a monastery for those scorched by the three Taapaas (pains). To all those engaged in the practice of Yoga, Hath Yoga is like the Tortoise that supports the world.

युवावृद्धोऽतिवृद्धो वा व्याधितो दुर्बलोऽपि वा ।

अभ्यासात्सिद्धिमाप्नोति सर्वयोगेष्वतंद्रितः ॥

(हठयोगप्रदीपिका)

Any person who actively practises Yoga becomes a Siddha, be he young, old or even very old, sickly or weak.

—Hatha Yoga Pradipika

Introduction

The whole universe from the mightiest sun to the tiniest atom is controlled by law. There is perfect order everywhere. The sun performs its duties quite regularly. It rises at proper time and sets at the proper time. The stars and planets revolve in an orderly manner. They are governed by laws. There are laws in mental plane. There are laws of physics, of astronomy, of mathematics. There are laws of hygiene and health which govern our own being. In the vast universe man only breaks and violates all rules and laws. He is the single example of lawlessness and discord. He wilfully disregards the laws of health, leads a life of dissipation and then wonders why he suffers from disease and disharmony. He deliberately ignores the rules of hygiene and right living and then weeps when he is ailing from an incurable dire malady.

What is that precious thing which makes life worth living? It is health. "*Sariramadhyam khalu dharma sadhanam*"—Body is indeed the foremost essential thing for the attainment of the goal of human existence. Charak Maharishi says in his Samhita: "Dharmartha kama mokshanam arogyam moolamuttamam, Yogastasya apahartara sreyaso jivitayacha"—Health is the best cause of virtue, wealth, desire and emancipation, and is the blessedness of life. Diseases are the destroyers of health. The laws of the preservation of health should receive your foremost consideration. The laws of health are the laws of nature. These should not be violated with impunity. Those who neglect these laws become victims to incurable diseases and drag a cheerless existence.

Health is wealth, Health is a covetable possession indeed. Health is a valuable asset for one and all. You should have physical as well as mental health. If you do not possess good health you can not prosper in any walk of life.

Health is that state in which a man sleeps well, digests his food well, is quite at ease, is free from any sort of disease or uneasiness. When you are in a state of perfect health all the organs, viz., heart, lungs, brain, kidneys, liver, intestines work in perfect harmony and concord and discharge their functions satisfactorily. The pulse rate and the rate of respiration are in perfect order. The bodily temperature is normal. Your bowels move very freely every day.

A healthy man smiles and laughs. He is cheerful and happy. He discharges his daily duties with ease and comfort. A healthy man is capable of doing work for a long time without getting

fatigued. He possesses highest mental and physical efficiency.

A healthy man need not be necessarily strong and a strong man need not be healthy. A very strong man may suffer from diseases. A healthy and strong man becomes a centre of great attraction. He radiates health and strength to all persons with whom he comes in contact.

Strength and size are not always the same. Either a thin or wiry or a heavy-built man may be strong. Besides muscular strength, you must have nerve strength as well. There are different kinds of strength. Some can lift heavy weights. Some can run a long distance quickly. Some can jump higher. Some can bear heat and cold. Some can fast for days together.

Some can bear any amount of pain. Some can bear insult or injury. Some can stop a car and break chains. Some can swim for a long distance. Many have great physical strength but they do not have mental strength. One harsh word can upset their balance of mind. Some people who have immense physical strength cannot bear the pain of an acute disease. They cry like children when they suffer from any disease. They have no mental strength. Some are afraid of public criticisms even though they are physically strong.

He who possesses physical, mental, moral and spiritual strength is an ideal man. Moral strength is superior to physical strength. It is difficult to possess moral strength. Spiritual power is the highest power on earth. A saint or a Yogi who possesses spiritual strength can move the whole world. He is a dynamic personality. The strength of Gandhiji is moral strength. He has gained the strength by the practice of Ahimsa, Satya and Brahmacharya. Gandhiji has no physical strength. He has mental and moral strength. A powerful spiritual soul may dwell in a thin wiry body.

The world needs good healthy mothers, healthy and strong boys and girls. What do you find in these days in India? India, the land which produced Bhishma, Bhima, Arjuna, Drona, Aswatthama, Kripa, Parasurama and countless chivalrous warriors, the soil which contained numberless Rajput Chiefs of undaunted intrepidity, unparalleled chivalry and matchless strength abounds now with effeminate impotent weaklings. Children beget children. The laws of health are ignored and neglected. The nation is dying and suffering. The world requires numberless brave, moral Adhyatamic soldiers who are equipped with five virtues, viz., Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha. Those who possess health and strength, those who are endowed with the above five virtues, those who have knowledge of the Self can secure real freedom for the world.

Good health is the greatest asset for you. Without good health you can hardly expect success in any walk of life. Even for spiritual pursuits good health is the prerequisite. Without good health you cannot penetrate into the hidden depths of the vast ocean of life within and attain the final beatitude of life. Without good health you cannot wage war with the turbulent senses and boisterous mind.

By drinking pure water, by eating pure and wholesome food, by observing the laws of health and hygiene, by taking regular exercise and cold baths in the morning, by practising Japa and meditation, by right living, right thinking, right action, right conduct, by observing Brahmacharya, by living in open air and sunshine for some time daily, you can have wonderful health, vigour and vitality.

Sattvic Ahara or good wholesome food rich in vitamins or a well-balanced diet, systematic practice of Yogic Exercises, right living, right thinking and simple living are the important requisites for the preservation of health and attainment of high standard of vigour and vitality. These are the sublime principles on which the Rishis and Yogins of yore lived a long, peaceful life. These are the important methods on which they based the system of Yoga to achieve perfection in health of body and mind. These are the support on which the sinking nation must fall back if it wishes to regain her lost glory and splendour.

Regular practice of Yogic exercises even for fifteen minutes a day will keep you quite fit and make you hale and hearty. You will have abundant energy, muscular strength and nerve power, a charming personality and longevity.

There are nowadays many systems of physical exercises. Among all the systems, Hatha Yoga practised and prescribed by the ancient Rishis and sages stand unrivalled and unique. It is the most perfect system. Brain, muscles, nerves, organs, tissues are toned and energised. All chronic diseases are rooted out. By practice of exercises of Hatha Yoga, you can possess a healthy body and mind and attain spiritual experiences also.

The subject Hatha Yoga is a systematic course of exercises. It deals with Shat Karmas, Asanas, Pranayams, Mudras, Bandhas, and exercises on concentration and meditation.

Asanas pertain to the physical body. They render the body firm and steady and eradicate physical ailments. Bandhas pertain to the Prana. That which binds is a Bandha. They do not allow the Prana to move upwards and the Apana to move downwards. They bind and unite the Prana with the Apana and send the united Prana-apana along the Sushumna Nadi. Mudras concern the mind. They represent seals. Mudra means a seal. They seal the mind with the soul or Atman. They do not allow the mind to wander outside towards objects. They direct the externalising mind towards Atman in the chambers of the heart and fix it there. A combination of all exercises is needed.

The first Chapter of this book deals with the important exercises of Asanas or postures. For health and strength I have prescribed about 20 exercises. They are divided into 8 groups according to the nature of Asanas and the benefits realised from each. Group 8 gives the technique of four Asanas that are highly suitable for meditative purposes. The second Chapter describes the exercises on Pranayama. Practice of Pranayama exercises improves the lungs, blood circulation and purifies the Nadis and nerves.

In the third Chapter you will find a description of a number of Mudras and Bandhas. At the end I have given important articles on Kundalini, the methods to awaken it, Concentration, Health and Longevity. I have also given in this book a set of exercises prescribed for daily practice. From each group you will have to select 1 or 2 exercises according to your temperament, capacity and time at your disposal. Even if you select one exercise from each group and devote at least 15 minutes daily, you can have an all-round development of body.

May you all attain good health, long life and a high standard of vigour, vitality, through the practice of Yogic Exercises and the blessings of Rishis!

—SWAMI SIVANANDA

Prayer

O Mother Divine, O Serpentine Kundalini Shakti!
 Indweller of our hearts!
 Thou sleepest in the Muladhar
 With three and a half coils,
 Thou art Sakar and Nirakar,
 Thou art Sagun and Nirgun,
 Thou art the Source and support,
 Thou dwellest in electrons.
 Vedas sing of Thee
 Sages contemplate on Thee,
 Yogis meditate on Thee,
 Bhaktas worship Thee.
 Thou art unfathomable!
 Thou art incomprehensible!
 Thou art immovable!
 Thou art unthinkable!
 Let our eyes behold Thee,

Let our tongues praise Thee,
 Let our hands work for Thee,
 Let our minds be fixed on Thee.
 Let me dwell in Sahasrara,
 Let my Sushumna be opened,
 Let my Kundalini be awakened,
 Let me taste the nectar of Hatha Yoga.
 Let me attain Samadhi,
 Let my Prana be in unison with Apana,
 Let me have Kevala Kumbhak,
 And let me become one with Thee.

Glory of Hatha Yoga

O Brother! attain good health.
 Without health how can you live?
 Without health how can you earn?
 Without health how can you succeed?
 Possess the health through Hatha,
 Unite the Ha with Tha,
 Unite the moon with the sun,
 Unite the Prana with Apana,
 Drink the nectar at Sahasrara,
 And live in the Immortal abode.
 Hatha and Raja are inseparable,
 Where Hatha ends Raja Yoga begins.
 Hatha Yoga prepares you
 For Nirvikalpa Samadhi.
 No Hatha Yoga, no success,
 No Hatha Yoga, no Samadhi.
 No Hatha Yoga, no health.
 No Hatha Yoga, no Veerya.
 No Hatha Yoga, no beauty.
 No Hatha Yoga, no long life.
 Salute Ganapathi before you begin.
 Practise Sirsh, the King of Asanas
 And remove all diseases.
 Develop thyroid through Sarvang
 And digest food through Paschimottan.
 Mayur can digest even poison.
 Ardha Matsyendra can make the spine elastic.
 Bhujang, Salab and Dhanur
 Can give you a good motion
 And eradicate constipation.
 Preserve Veerya through Sirsh-Sarvang
 And avoid wet-dreams.
 Relax the muscles in Savasana
 Combine forward backward bending exercises
 Never neglect the spinal twist
 If you wish all-round development.
 The fat in the belly the Paschimottan reduces.
 The spine the Hala makes supple and elastic.
 Drowsiness the Vajra surely will drive.
 The effect of Sarvang the Matsya will add.
 Pranayam removes all diseases
 And the gastric fire it increases.
 A little Kumbhak will give you longevity

Strength, vigour, vim and vitality
And awaken Kundalini in Muladhara.
Sitali can cool your brain and body
And purify the blood.
Bhastrika will remove
Asthma and consumption.
Bandha Traya can make you beautiful.
Suitable is morning for the practice.
Do Asanas to begin with and then Pranayama.
Spend fifteen minutes a day
For practice of Asana and Pranayama.
This will suffice to keep you healthy.
Be regular in your practice.
Drink a little milk in the end.
Wait for one hour for bath.
Be moderate in eating and sleeping.
Hot curries, onions, and garlic abandon,
With empty stomach practise Yogic Exercises.

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