

# The YogaVidya.com Style Guide

## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide you with the information you need to write a book for us. It contains information specific to YogaVidya.com and beyond the scope of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. It assumes you have read the submission guidelines on our web site and our books or the free PDFs. We recommend that you also read Beth Luey's *Handbook for Academic Authors* and Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*.

This Guide further assumes that you will be translating a Sanskrit text, although we are looking for other types of books as well. Its final assumption is that you are committed to writing not just another translation of your text, but rather the standard translation, worthy of remaining in print for the rest of this century.

This Style Guide is revised from time to time. Check that you have the latest version before beginning work on your manuscript. Questions or suggestions for improvements are most welcome.

Permission to reproduce and use this Guide is granted to any individual or organization, provided the Guide remains unaltered and unincorporated into larger works.

## Our approach

Your audience is the intelligent general public. They are educated, but not professional academics. Think of them as alumni, undergraduates, or spiritual seekers—not as your postgraduate peers. They are also a global audience. Use international standard written English and employ American spelling

and stylistic conventions. Avoid transient colloquialisms and Indic syntax.

Writing for us is therefore a challenge, because you must balance academic rigor with accessibility and literary values. Many popular works are bloated and vacuous; many scholarly works are hyperdense and impenetrable. Once a book becomes a sea of diacritics, italics, brackets, parentheses, and footnotes, the nonspecialist is lost and intimidated. Princeton's Readings in Religions series is close, but still too academic. Inclusion of the original text means the translation can lean towards accessibility. Consider yourself heir to the British tradition of dons who write engagingly for a broad public.

Most importantly, present the text as it is, without the imposition of jargon, trendy theories, or your own beliefs. Bring the text to life and let it breathe; don't suffocate or embalm it. You could think of your book as similar to the Macintosh user interface—simple and elegant for the user, but the product of prodigious brain power and talent. Or you could liken yourself to a restorer, removing layers of grime from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

Your writing should be fresh, immediate, lively, engaging, clear, succinct, and precise. When we come to the copyediting stage, we will concentrate on achieving clarity, conciseness, correctness, and consistency.

## Your book, piece by piece

### Title

For a translation, generally speaking your title should be the most commonly used title for the text, broken into as many words as possible. For example, Hatha Yoga Pradipika is preferable to Hathapradipika. Variants can be discussed in the Introduction. For books other than translations, you are welcome to suggest up to a dozen candidates and we will work together to create the best one. YogaVidya.com has the final say on which title is finally used.

### Authorship

If authorship can be attributed to a specific individual, it should be.

### Dedication

Optional. You are welcome to omit it or dedicate your book to one or more people. You can simply name them or also include a short phrase. Popular choices are parents, spouses, children, and teachers.

### Introduction

Give the reader a firm footing, the anticipation that your book will be worth reading, and the reassuring feeling that they are in good hands. Do this by carefully crafting an introduction that provides them with the information and context they need to comprehend your book. Some possible topics follow.

What does the title mean and what is the book about? Does the title contain any interesting or illuminating etymologies? Are there any variant titles? Have you ascribed authorship to an individual? If nothing is known for sure about the author, are there any anecdotes, legends, folk tales, or etymologies? Is it a composite text

or anthology of verses from many different sources? Who was the original audience for the book? Why was it written? When was it written? At least take a stab at the century of composition. Where was it written? Was there any period of oral transmission? Which manuscripts and printed editions did you consult and how would you characterize them? Identify the book's narrator or interlocutors. A capsule summary of the contents can be very helpful in orienting the reader. What was your approach to the translation? Any pointers to understanding the text? Any colleagues to acknowledge? Any comments regarding the smaller elements of the book, such as the photographs, chapter titles, or colophons? No doubt you may wish to touch on other topics as well.

### Sanskrit original

After examining manuscripts and earlier printed editions of your book, you will be creating "the" version of your text and sending it to us in Devanagari in a computer file. Our computer system (i.e., your target system) will always be a Macintosh, but operating systems and font encodings change over time, so we'll be testing compatibility between our systems early in the publishing process.

Why include the original Sanskrit? First, it really is the text in question. No matter how good, your translation is still a translation. Scholars will want to read the original. Second, for posterity. Publication is the only sure method of preservation. If not published, the text will eventually perish. Third, it makes our editions book length instead of pamphlet length. Fourth, the readers respond positively to its inclusion. Fifth, some of our readers use our books for teaching themselves Sanskrit because the type is large and clear, properly edited and typeset, etc., and is directly above the English. Sixth, its inclusion—allowing easy comparison with the English—is a statement of confidence in the quality of your translation.

Make the verse the unit of translation to improve

fidelity to the original. Group lines and verses the way they are translated, but leave the numbering unchanged. Use Arabic numerals for the Sanskrit and leave the translation unnumbered to avoid clutter. Some orthographic tips: Use maximum sandhi consistent with meter. Leave a word space between words when there is no sandhi. Use an avagraha only to mark the loss of an initial "a". Represent nasals consistently and do not overuse anusvara.

## English translation

This is the heart of your task—a task too large to do more than give a few guidelines here. If you hit upon an approach or method that may be useful to future authors, you are entirely welcome to add it to this section. Here are a few words on accuracy, accessibility, and a few technicalities.

As mentioned above, stay in the background and put yourself at the service of the author and the text. Whether you're a Shaiva, a Vaishnava, or a Presbyterian, tell us what the text says, not what you think about it. Utilize the medieval commentators with a critical eye, as they are not infallible. Although your translation will not be word for word, you may be surprised at how few words need to be added or deleted.

Which words to leave untranslated is a series of judgment calls. Too few words translated leaves the text partially submerged in Sanskrit. Too many can result in strained and silly constructions. A simple check is to see if the word has found its way into an English dictionary or not. For example, *yogi*, *karma*, and *samsara* have found their way into Webster's and can probably be left untranslated. You can also discuss your decisions in the introduction or back matter.

Regarding synonyms and epithets, we generally feel that normalizing them down to a single term makes a book less flavorful and informative. A wide variety of terms could

easily confuse the reader, however, so we recommend making lists of the synonyms and epithets employed in the text and then laying them all out in the introduction or back matter.

Offentimes Sanskritists have difficulty bringing their translations fully into English. One thing you can try is to look at your translation purely as an English construct and then improve it. A bell will go off in the back of your head if this excessively violates the original—a bell that won't be there for an English-speaking copyeditor.

Regarding Sanskrit's gender, voice, person, mood, and tense, the transformation into English should be rather intuitive, but you may need to frequently remind yourself to change the passive voice into active. Changing the third person potential mood found in many descriptions to a simple imperative is also an effective strategy. You may also want to break a long Sanskrit sentence into shorter English ones, substantially change the word order and, of course, add all the necessary punctuation, including the serial comma. For transliterated words, make the English as close as possible without using diacritics.

Sanskrit compounds should generally be open to avoid long strings of unfamiliar letter combinations, although when compounded, the words *bandha*, *mudra*, *kumbhaka*, and *karman* are the final members of a closed compound for consistency within each category and with the *asanas*. Append "asana" to some asana names for consistency.

## Illustrations

Illustrations fall into two categories—line illustrations and halftones, which include photographs and any material with gray tones.

Line illustrations can be sent as computer files, such as Adobe Illustrator files, or as hardcopy. Halftones can also be submitted as computer files, such as TIFF files, or as prints. They typically require less additional effort than line

illustrations. If submitting as prints, the photographs should be treated with great care to ensure quality reproduction. To start, you should obtain a good glossy print. Keep in mind that any mark or dent on the photo will show up in the printed book. Never use paper clips to attach anything to your photo. To identify the photograph, write lightly on the back in a soft pencil. Do not write or paste anything on the photo itself. Anything that you want superimposed on the photo should be indicated on a separate sheet (an overlay), taped to the photo at the top. Package the photographs carefully inside cardboard to prevent bending.

Traditionally, as with the rest of the manuscript, illustrations are the author's responsibility. In an effort to unburden the author of responsibilities that are usually outside their area of expertise and to improve quality, YogaVidya.com subsidizes creation of the illustrations if done under our control. In this case, you should send us a photo guide containing, typically, photographs or drawings of the asanas and mudras described in your book, along with your translations of the descriptions. (We can send you a sample photo guide.) Send this as soon as possible, preferably before you deliver the manuscript. Your translations of the asana descriptions don't have to be polished—the first draft is fine. Keep in mind that photographers and models are very visually oriented and will base their work mostly on the pictures you provide.

## Chapter titles

Our current practice is to start each chapter with the number of the chapter in both Sanskrit and English, followed by an English chapter title. The first two balance the colophon at the end of the chapter; the title should encapsulate the chapter's content. Looking at the top of each page, the verso head is in Sanskrit and the recto head is in English. We are open to other configurations.

## Colophons

If they exist for your text, the flowery little sentences that bring each chapter to a satisfying conclusion should be included. We recommend creating a separate file to facilitate comparison and consistency.

## Notes

How should you handle all the ancillary text—the footnotes, endnotes, bibliography, appendices, and any other back matter?

Our basic goal is to present the texts as they are, with a minimum of distraction and interpretation. While each note is a help, it is also a hurdle, an interruption of the narrative flow. So include the required amount of explanation, but no more. Too much and it feels like a textbook; too little and the reader can't understand it.

We typically use footnotes rather than endnotes to keep notes to a minimum and readily accessible to the reader. All other material will go into the ebook and onto our web site. There are two reasons for this. The first is that your translation will outlive the secondary literature. For example, your bibliography will be obsolescent the moment the book is published. In just a few years, readers will begin noticing that no book mentioned has a publication date more recent than your publication date. In ten years a printed bibliography will make your translation seem like a relic. But of course, the web is perfect for this sort of thing, as it is easily updated. The second is that the economics of print publishing generally favors concision. Putting material on the web costs essentially nothing, drives traffic to the site, and gives the search engines more to chew on.

## Contributors

Your life boiled down to a couple sentences. What are your qualifications and what is your connection to Yoga?

## Index

Traditionally, as with the rest of the manuscript, the index is the author's responsibility, on the theory that the author is the most familiar with the book, knows best what should be indexed, and is, therefore, the best person for the job. If you would like to prepare the index, you are welcome to, otherwise we will have a specialist prepare it.

Should you choose to prepare it, consult *Chicago* and Luey for instructions and follow these basic principles.

When compiling the entries, look at the index from the intelligent reader's point of view. The reader will look for the more general entry first, then for more specific topics under that entry. If the reader cannot find the topic they are looking for, they will consider synonymous terms. Make the index as extensive as possible, but do not include items that a reader would never think of searching for.

Index by significant words or phrases. Main entries should be nouns or noun phrases. Choose concrete nouns rather than general descriptive nouns as entries. List entries under the key word of a phrase. Never use an adjective alone as an entry. When an adjective is part of several entries, repeat the adjective for each entry.

Entries should be alphabetized by their major words, disregarding prepositions and conjunctions. Page numbers should appear in ascending order. Use *See also* to refer to additional information on the same topic.

## Back-cover copy

We have one paragraph and fifteen seconds to tell the browsing bookstore patron why your book is worth further examination. What's it about? What benefits does it offer to the reader? Why is it worth buying?

Some questions to consider when assembling

ideas and material for the back cover are: What is the essence of the book? What makes it unique? What makes it worth reading? Has it been published before? Has it been translated into English before? Has it been translated into any language before? Has it been illustrated before? Give us your ideas and we'll write it.

## Blurbers

If you have someone you would like to write a one-sentence recommendation for the back cover of your book, send me their contact information; otherwise we will locate an appropriate authority.

Speaking of contact information, you are encouraged to send us the URLs of any periodicals you think might review your book, any prizes it could win, any conferences it should be exhibited at, and any organizations it may be of interest to. Additions to our marketing database of entities located outside the United States are especially welcome.

## Permissions

It is the author's responsibility to obtain permissions to reprint copyrighted material. Determining if something is still copyrighted is not always straightforward and we can help you reach a determination. Locating the copyright owner and receiving permission can take a long time, so make an early start and keep a log sheet. Any fees charged are the author's responsibility. The publisher you are sending the request to may have a form that they will require you to use. Submit copies of all completed permissions forms to us along with your manuscript. You can find out more about permissions in both Luey and *Chicago*.