



# Yogi Heroes and Poets: Histories and Legends of the Naths

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## Yogi Heroes and Poets: Histories and Legends of the Naths

*An exploration of the history, religion, and folklore of the Naths, a Hindu lineage known for Hatha yoga practice.*

This book provides a remarkable range of information on the history, religion, and folklore of the Nath Yogis. A Hindu lineage prominent in North India since the eleventh century, Naths are well-known as adepts of Hatha yoga and alchemical practices said to increase longevity. Long a heterogeneous group, some Naths are ascetics and some are householders; some are dedicated to personified forms of Shiva, others to a formless god, still others to Vishnu.

The essays in the first part of the book deal with the history and historiography of the Naths, their literature, and their relationships with other religious movements in India. Essays in the second part discuss the legends and folklore of the Naths and provide an exploration of their religious ideas. Contributors to the volume depict a variety of local areas where this lineage is prominent and highlight how the Naths have been a link between religious, metaphysical, and even medical traditions in India.

“This book has three merits: it fosters the interest in Naths, it provides a summative evaluation of previous studies and it presents on-going research ... The many approaches ... used in this book may give the impression of an intimidating and somehow discordant pluralism of interpretations. This reviewer, however, found such richness fitting the multifaceted essence of Nathism itself.” — Fabrizio M. Ferrari, *Religions of South Asia*

“Several of the contributions cast new and important light on specific aspects of the Naths and will be of great interest to scholars and students of a variety of Indian religious traditions.” — *Religious Studies Review*

“There is no book on the market now that can compete directly with this volume. It brings out new data for a fresh understanding of the religious landscape of medieval India.” — Pashaura Singh, author of *Life and Work of Guru Arjan*

“*Yogi Heroes and Poets* expands our knowledge of historical, textual, and ethnographic issues related to the Nath Yogis. These essays provide a strong sense of the context that helped them emerge, as well as their later evolution.” — Gurinder Singh Mann, author of *The Making of Sikh Scripture*

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