



## Unit 3.5. Cause of Success and Failure in Hatha Yoga Sadhana

### Unit 3: Foundations of Haṭha Yoga — Texts, Principles, and Practice

#### Unit 3.5: Cause of Success and Failure in Haṭha Yoga Sādhana

### 3.5.1 Orientation: Why some practices flourish—and others don't

Haṭha Yoga is designed as a **reliable pathway** from bodily steadiness to mental stillness. Yet outcomes vary widely between students. Classical manuals diagnose **specific habits** that quietly erode practice, and name **precise antidotes** that make progress stable and safe. This unit gathers those teachings and translates them into **clear, semester-level guidance**.

### 3.5.2 Classical touchstones (original lines with simple sense)

#### Causes of failure (traditional six)

“अत्याहारः प्रयासश्च प्रजल्पो नियमाग्रहः ।

जनसङ्गश्च लौल्यम् च षड्भिर्योगो विनश्यति ॥” (traditionally taught in Haṭha lineages; HYP I.15 in common recensions)

Over-eating, over-exertion, useless talk, rigid/ill-timed observances, crowding with distracting company, and fickleness—by these six Yoga is ruined.

#### Causes of success (traditional six)

“उत्साहात् साहसाद् धैर्यात् तत्त्वज्ञानात् निश्चयात् ।

जनसङ्गपरित्यागात् षड्भिर्योगः प्रसिद्ध्यति ॥” (commonly taught as HYP I.16)

By enthusiasm, intelligent courage, patience, knowledge of principles, firm resolve, and leaving unhelpful company—by these six Yoga succeeds.

#### Moderation principle (Bhagavad Gītā 6.16-17)

“नात्यशनतस्तु योगोऽस्ति ... युक्ताहारविहारस्य ... योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥”

Yoga is not for one who eats to excess or starves; for one balanced in food, recreation, action, sleep and waking, Yoga becomes a destroyer of sorrow.

#### Practice tenure (Pātañjala Yoga Sūtra 1.14)

“सा तु दीर्घकालनैरन्तर्यसत्कारासेवितो दृढभूमिः ॥”

Practice becomes well-rooted when cultivated for a long time, without break, and with reverence.

Together these verses define the **ethic of steady, moderate, principle-guided practice**.

### 3.5.3 The six causes of failure—mechanisms, examples, remedies

Cause	What it looks like in student life	Why it derails sādhana	Practical antidote
<b>Atyāhāra</b> (over-eating/poor diet)	Heavy late dinners; frequent fried/reheated foods	Sluggish breath, poor sleep → unstable praṇāyāma/dhyāna	<b>Mitāhāra</b> : early light dinner; ½ solids + ¼ liquids + ¼ space; sāttvic emphasis

Cause	What it looks like in student life	Why it derails sādhanā	Practical antidote
<b>Prayāsa</b> (over-exertion)	Daily max-intensity flows; chasing extreme ranges	Sympathetic overdrive; injuries; aversion to mat	“Minimum effective dose,” <b>sthira-sukha</b> pacing; peak → neutralize → Śavāsana
<b>Prajalpa</b> (idle talk/screens)	Scrolling/chatting before practice; gossip	Fragmented attention; agitation in sitting	10-minute <b>digital sunset</b> pre-practice; begin with 6 slow breaths
<b>Niyamāgraha</b> (rigid/ill-timed observances)	Fasting + strong kumbhaka; strict rules despite illness	Metabolic/pressure stress; burnout	<b>Appropriate</b> niyama: conserve energy when unwell; gentle ratios; respect contraindications
<b>Jana-saṅga</b> (distracting company)	Practising in noisy, competitive settings	Comparison & showmanship override interoception	Quiet corner; non-competitive peer culture; brief check-in, longer check-out (silence)
<b>Laulya</b> (fickleness)	Hopping methods/teachers weekly; no log	No adaptation window; random stimuli	8–12 week <b>plan</b> , one anchor method; maintain a simple practice journal

### 3.5.4 The six causes of success—how they work in you

Success factor	Inner mechanism	How to cultivate it this semester
<b>Utsāha</b> (enthusiasm)	Positive affect sustains repetition	Choose a <b>pleasant</b> , achievable sequence you look forward to
<b>Sāhasa</b> (intelligent courage)	Willingness to meet edges safely	Try a <i>new but safe</i> variation weekly; respect red flags
<b>Dhairya</b> (patience)	Allows slow neuro-muscular learning	Measure progress by <b>breath smoothness</b> and <b>after-feel</b> , not feats
<b>Tattva-jñāna</b> (knowing principles)	Prevents harmful myths/practices	Study core ideas: <b>sthira-sukha</b> , <b>mitāhāra</b> , contraindications
<b>Nīscaya</b> (resolve)	Reduces decision fatigue	Fix <b>practice times</b> , kit, and room; 1% done > 100% planned
<b>Jana-saṅga-parityāga</b> (leaving noise)	Removes comparison pressure	Practise without mirrors/metrics once a week; cultivate silence before/after

### 3.5.5 Early signs of success vs warning signs of failure

Domain	Early success indicators	Warning signs—course-correct now
<b>Body</b>	Less morning stiffness; fewer aches; steadier seat	Joint pain >48h; chasing end-range; repeated strains
<b>Breath</b>	Even nasal flow; easier lengthened exhale	Mouth-breathing in holds; frequent sighing/gasping
<b>Mind</b>	Quicker settling; kinder self-talk; post-practice clarity	Irritability after sessions; comparison, showmanship
<b>Daily life</b>	Better sleep onset; calmer responses	Wired or depleted evenings; caffeine dependence rising

### 3.5.6 Risk management in Haṭha Yoga (what the manuals imply)

- **Ahiṃsā**: never injure to progress. If breath destabilizes, **scale down**.
- **Contraindications**: avoid strong inversions/bandhas/kumbhaka with uncontrolled hypertension, glaucoma, pregnancy, hernia, acute GI/respiratory illness.
- **Cleansings**: for first-semester students, **jala-neti** and **trāṭaka** suffice; naulī, basti, advanced dhauti need expert supervision.
- **Recovery**: always **close with Śavāsana**, then a brief seat; integrate before screens or meals.



### 3.5.7 Two brief case vignettes

#### A. The enthusiastic over-doer (Prayāsa + Laulya)

Week 1-3: daily intense vinyāsa; adds kapālabhāti, long retentions; by Week 4, knee pain, insomnia, aversion.

**Turnaround:** 4-week stabilization—reduce load; switch to breath-paced āsana; nāḍī-śodhana without holds; no late caffeine; early dinner. Sleep restores; attention steadies.

#### B. The scattered starter (Prajalpa + Jana-saṅga)

Practises in living room with TV noise; toggles between apps/teachers; irregular meals.

**Turnaround:** sets a **silent corner**; 25-minute fixed template; logs 3 feelings (breath/mood/body) post-practice; adopts **mitāhāra** evenings. Settling improves by Week 2.

### 3.5.8 A simple correction flow (chart)

Noticing struggle →

Check: Sleep? Meal timing? Screen load? Pain?

↓

If breath not smooth → reduce intensity / shorten holds / simpler shape

If mind noisy → 6 rounds nāḍī-śodhana → brief seated focus → then āsana

If body sore >48h → rest 24-48h; replace peak with restoratives; consult if persisting

Always end → Śavāsana (5-8 min) → quiet sitting (2-5 min)

## Unit Summary

Classical Haṭha wisdom is **practical**: Yoga falters with excess, strain, distraction, rigidity, noisy company, and fickleness; it thrives with **enthusiasm, intelligent courage, patience, principle-knowledge, resolve, and simplicity of setting**. Moderation in **food, sleep, effort, and speech** protects prāṇa and clears the mind. Anchored in **long-term, uninterrupted, respectful practice**, Haṭha methods become what they were meant to be: a **physiological bridge to psychological stillness** and **equanimity**.

## Key Terms

- **Atyāhāra** — over-eating/ill-timed eating
- **Prayāsa** — over-exertion / pushing beyond wise dose
- **Prajalpa** — idle, distracting speech/screens
- **Niyamāgraha** — rigid/ill-timed observance (missing context)
- **Laulya** — restlessness/fickleness
- **Utsāha / Sāhasa / Dhairya / Tattva-jñāna / Niścaya** — six success qualities
- **Mitāhāra** — measured diet; **Sthira-sukha** — steady-easeful posture

## Self-Assessment



## MCQs

1. Which pair belongs to the **six causes of failure** in Haṭha sādhanā?  
a) Utsāha & Dhairya b) Atyāhāra & Prajalpa c) Niścaya & Tattva-jñāna d) Maitrī & Karuṇā
2. According to **Gītā 6.16-17**, Yoga thrives with:  
a) Extreme fasting b) Balanced food, activity, sleep and waking c) Night-only practice d) Constant travel
3. **YS 1.14** emphasizes that stable progress requires:  
a) Variety every day b) Long-term, unbroken, respectful practice c) Peak performance weekly d) Only weekend retreats
4. A reliable **early success** marker is:  
a) Persistent joint pain b) Compulsory intense sweating c) Breath smoothness and quick post-practice settling d) Social media likes
5. The **success factor** that reduces decision fatigue is:  
a) Laulya b) Niścaya c) Prajalpa d) Jana-saṅga

**Answer key:** 1-b, 2-b, 3-b, 4-c, 5-b

## Short Answer

1. Explain how **mitāhāra** and **prajalpa-reduction** support prāṇāyāma and dhyāna.
2. Describe **prayāsa** with one bodily and one mental consequence, and propose a correction.
3. In 5-7 sentences, relate **utsāha-dhairya-niścaya** to the idea of **“dirgha-kāla-nairantarya”** (YS 1.14).

## Reflective Prompts

1. Identify two personal risk factors from the **six failures** and design a one-week micro-plan (environment, timing, diet, pacing) to neutralize them.
2. After a fortnight, write a brief note on whether your **after-feel** (calm alertness vs wired/depleted) has shifted. Which single change contributed most?

---

*End of Unit 3.5: Cause of Success and Failure in Haṭha Yoga Sādhanā*