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CHAPTER ELEVEN

LIBERATION AND IMMORTALITY: BHUŚUNḌA'S YOGA OF PRĀṆA IN THE YOGAVĀSISṬHA

Shaneshwar Timalšina

CONTEXTUALIZING THE NARRATIVE OF BHUŚUNḌA

This essay explores the nature of Bhuśunḍa's liberating experience as depicted in the *Nirvāṇa* section of the text, the *Yogavāsisṭha* (YV). Bhuśunḍa identifies himself as 'liberated while living' (*jīvanmukta*). Unlike other *jīvanmuktas* in the narratives, such as Janaka or Śuka who eventually succumb to death, Bhuśunḍa, the protagonist, a crow born of a father crow and a mother goose, is immortal and thus he is literally 'living' while being 'liberated'. The course of practice that Bhuśunḍa adopts, the breathing exercise, is somewhat different from those given in the rest of the narratives that highlight sudden realization with the knowledge of the true nature of mind and a recognition of the illusory nature of the appearance that is considered to be other than awareness itself. As the narrative of Bhuśunḍa challenges common assumptions with regard to the yoga introduced in the YV in other sections, it is essential to have a close textual analysis in order to explore the alternative approaches to yoga and the nature of *siddhi* that results from this yoga practice.

Even a text by a single author presenting a single stream of argument may embody different and sometimes contradictory strands of thought. YV is unique. We do not know the real author of the text and the text was most likely compiled over a long span of time by different authors. Scholars have even suggested *Mokṣopāya* as a different title for YV in its earlier version.¹ This philosophical epic, filled with graphic narratives provided to illuminate Rāma, following the genre

¹ See Walter Slaje, *Vom Mokṣopāya-Śāstra zum Yogavāsisṭha-Mahānāmāya: Philologische Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung und Überlieferungsgeschichte eines indischen Lehrwerks mit Anspruch auf Heilsrelevanz* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1994), and Jürgen Hameder, *Studies on the Mokṣopāya* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006) for discussion.

of a *śāstrakāvya* in classical India,² examines various idealistic positions by means of narratives that at the same time synthesize multiple philosophical positions. Although the title identifies the text with yoga, the yogic methods addressed here are not identical either to Patañjalian or to Nātha Yoga literature. Beneath the layers of poetry and narratives, this text weaves idealistic thoughts from different strands of classical Indian philosophical schools such as the Upaniṣadic Advaita, Yogācāra Buddhism, and Trika Śaivism. Due to the overwhelming presence of poetic tropes and enchanting narratives in the YV that give the sense of classical *kāvya*, and because it addresses philosophical themes that present one form of Advaita thought which may not be completely identical to that promulgated by Śaṅkara, the identification of the text with yoga has occasionally been questioned. This tendency has overshadowed an investigation of the Tantric and *haṭhayoga* materials within the text.

The narrative of Bhuṣuṇḍa is one among select discourses in the text that challenges an over-simplified understanding of YV that the text does not fit in the category of yoga literature in the familiar applications of yoga as *haṭhayoga* or Patañjalian yoga, as this discourse between Vasiṣṭha and Bhuṣuṇḍa places the yoga of breathing in the same status as the contemplative techniques generally addressed as *jñāna* or *jñānyoga*. In the first section of the sixth book, *Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa*, of the lengthy text YV, chapters 14–28 are dedicated to the discourse of Bhuṣuṇḍa. Chapter 13 presents itself as a preface for the upcoming discourse by describing two types of yoga, the yoga of *prāṇa* and the yoga of self-realization (chap. 13, 7). The passage further confirms that although these both are *yogas*, the term *yoga* is conventionally (*rūḍha*) used to address the approach to *prāṇa* (*prāṇayukti*) (chap. 13, 6). This preface indicates a shifting dynamic in the upcoming chapters. What makes the liberation of Bhuṣuṇḍa unique is his immortality: Bhuṣuṇḍa tells the self-realized Vasiṣṭha that there have been multiple Vasiṣṭhas in different eons that come to converse with him. And the focus on *prāṇa*, a theme of *haṭhayoga*, comes to the forefront in the narrative of Bhuṣuṇḍa. The shifting dynamics in which Bhuṣuṇḍa appears is indicated by his perfection, and the yogic course demonstrates an alternative path to liberation while living

(*jīvanmukti*). Jürgen Hanneder has identified Śaiva Tantric elements in the narrative of Bhuṣuṇḍa, particularly in its earlier *Mokṣopāya* version.³ This essay proceeds taking his arguments for granted.

In general, the texts discussing liberation somehow subordinate the body, and thus, living. What makes the case of Bhuṣuṇḍa different from the other narratives of liberation is his living aspect, and through that, the affirmation of corporeality. This also distinguishes Bhuṣuṇḍa from Vasiṣṭha, as in this narrative Bhuṣuṇḍa claims to have met Vasiṣṭha for eight times in different eons. This difference demonstrates a contrast in the final goal of yogic practice in the lives of Vasiṣṭha and Bhuṣuṇḍa: although Vasiṣṭha is liberated, he is not living eternally as is Bhuṣuṇḍa. This shift brings to the forefront some central constituents of *haṭhayoga*: the quest for immortality, its assurance of immortality through the balance of *prāṇa*, its confirmation of non-duality while embracing embodiment, and its link to Advaita and Tantric themes while not entirely following either of these. As *prāṇa* is considered to be the link between the body and mind, as 'life' that bridges the self and the corporeality, the liberation of Bhuṣuṇḍa warrants a closer look through the perspective of embodiment as well. And for this, the connecting thread is *prāṇa*. But before entering into the philosophical issues relating to the liberation of Bhuṣuṇḍa, a few metaphors found in the poetic depiction deserve a closer look, as these metaphors buttress the argument for embodiment.

Two prominent metaphors in the narrative are those of the protagonist, Bhuṣuṇḍa, and the Kalpa tree, his abode. Bhuṣuṇḍa is a crow born of the orgy of the male crow Caṇḍa the vehicle of Alambuṣā, and seven geese, the vehicle of Sarasvatī. This very birth of a hybrid crow indicates two different colors, the black crow and white geese. The deities that ride upon them match the color of their vehicles: Sarasvatī is the goddess with the white complexion and Alambuṣā is a ferocious black deity. The description of the birth of Bhuṣuṇḍa identifies a Tantric Kulayāga ritual, and just as Tantric literature suggests the ritual union of Yoginīs and Viras in the Kulayāga resulting in the birth of a *yoginībhu*, our protagonist, although not explicitly claiming that he is one, indicates his noble birth, although in the body of a crow. Woven into the Tantric background, the metaphor of a wise bird is

² For discussion, see Bruno Lo Turco, "The Metaphorical Logic of the Mokṣopāya," in *The Mokṣopāya, Yogavāsiṣṭha, and Related Texts*, ed. Jürgen Hanneder (Aachen: Shaker, 2005), 131–138.

³ Jürgen Hanneder, "Śaiva Tantric Material in the Yogavāsiṣṭha," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens und Archiv für indische Philosophie* 42 (1998): 67–76.

rather unusual. A crow is, in Indian culture, an inauspicious carrion-eater, living by scavenging dead bodies. A crow is considered the messenger of Yama, the Lord of death, and the widow goddess, Dhūmāvatī, worshipped for the magical ritual of killing, who has a crow as her emblem. A crow in Indian depiction is also an Omen-creature, with the very term *śakuna*, referring to omen in Sanskrit, also stands for 'bird'.⁴ Bhuśuṇḍa, the crow of our narrative, as if liberating the clan from their bad fame, stands for *yoga*, immortality, and the much-sought liberating wisdom. This metaphor indicates that the yoga of Bhuśuṇḍa comes from the lower strata of the society, since a crow is considered untouchable in India. The body of Bhuśuṇḍa is a metaphor for bodies in general. Bhuśuṇḍa nevertheless indicates that while there may not be a reason for clinging to the body, there is equally no point in rejecting it. The next visible metaphor in the narrative is the Kalpadruma, the tree lasting till one *kalpa*. In many cataclysmic events, Bhuśuṇḍa narrates that this tree is not even shaken. Generally in Indian metaphor, a tree, with its deep roots of *vāsanās*, stands for the world, nested by birds that depict the individual selves (*jīvanān*). A liberated being, in our case Bhuśuṇḍa, is sitting atop this tree, witnessing the events that occur in the lower spheres of the world. Core to the argument of the metaphor is that although the body carries impurities, it is nevertheless instrumental to liberation. Since the experience of being liberated relies on being in the body, Bhuśuṇḍa's being in the body provides the platform for this experience. And the means for achieving *jīvanmukti* is the practice of the flow of *prāṇa*. Thus the focus on *prāṇa* becomes a central differentiating factor of the specific yoga being discussed here from other contemplative techniques. The metaphor of the Mount Meru parallels *merudaṇḍa*, the spine and thus binds the metaphor for the world to the metaphor for the body. This relation is vivid in one instance from the YV, "the flames of the fire from the crater of this mountain appears as if the *jāṭhara* fire that has surged up to the head" (chap. 14.18), that resonates of the yogic practice of Kuṇḍalinī while describing the glow of the mountain.

The practice of *prāṇa* as found in the YV is interconnected with Bhuśuṇḍa's immortality. Although human destiny is finite, being

identified as the 'one that succumbs to death' (*martya*), classical Indian literature is filled with multiple approaches to attain immortality. Four among them pertinent to this discourse highlight the balance of the binary opposites. The Vedic seers seek immortality through the libation of the cooling juice of *soma* into the fire, Agni. The alchemists search for this immortality through the refinement of mercury with the application of sulfur. Tantrics find this through harmonizing the sexual fluids. The *haṭhayogins*, the context of this paper, strive for immortality through the balance of two channels that are equated with the moon and the sun or fire. The narrative of Bhuśuṇḍa loosely matches the narrative of Gorakṣanātha. Traditionally, Gorakṣa is considered as one of the founders of *haṭhayoga*, while himself being a disciple of Matsyendranātha, founder of the Tantric Kaula lineage. In the case of Bhuśuṇḍa, he regulates the flow of *prāṇa* and is thus a *haṭhayogin*, and is born of Caṇḍa and the mother goddesses, demonstrating his Tantric origins. Additionally, *haṭhayoga* literature and the discourse of Bhuśuṇḍa stress the practice of Kuṇḍalinī and the visualization of *cakras*. These elements also demonstrate an imprint of Tantric philosophy.

TWO YOGAS: BHUŚUṆḌA AS VAŚIṢṬHA'S COUNTERPART

Contrary to the conventional understanding of yoga and the perception that *Yogavāsīṣṭha* is a manual for yogis, the overwhelming focus of the text is neither the Patañjalian practices nor *haṭhayoga*. Nevertheless, if we follow this very text to define yoga, we do come to the understanding that yoga explains the methods for liberation from the world so that the practitioner can be united with the supreme reality. If we oversimplify the approaches to this 'union', we can identify some physical approaches and other contemplative and thus mental approaches. Analyzing yoga in two different ways resonates of the classic categorization found in the *Bhagavadgītā* (*BhG*). It provides an early account of two yogas: *sāṃkhyā* yoga or the yoga of self-realization through contemplation upon the nature of the reality, and *karmayoga* or the yoga of self-realization through action. While expanding upon the discourse of karma, *BhG* also presents the yoga of concentration in the sixth chapter and this in particular is closer to the yoga in the discourse of Bhuśuṇḍa. In sum, the yoga of Bhuśuṇḍa is the cessation of the pulsation of breathing (*prāṇaspandanirodha*) that gives

⁴ For Omen reading in India, see David Gordon White, "Predicting the Future with Dogs," in *Religions of India in Practice*, ed. Donald Lopez (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 288-303.

rise to the state of the dissolution of mental imprints (*vāsanā*), which in turn leads to immersion in the state of liberation while living (*jīvanmukti*) (YV 6.1.13.2). The text provides the root *√yujir* for the etymology of *yoga*, and identifies it as a method (*yukti*) for liberating from transmigration (13.3). The text, then, identifies two types of *yoga*: the realization of the self and the control of breath (13.4). Elaborating upon this, Vasiṣṭha states: “Although both types are identified with the term *yoga*, it has been conventional [to use] this term in the method of *prāṇa*. In the sequence of liberating from the world, one is *yoga* and the other is realization. These both are considered equal approaches that give the same result” (YV 6.1.13.6-7)⁵.

Both the practices of the contemplation upon the self and the breathing exercise are presented here as equal instruments for the pacification (*upaśāma*) of mind (13.3). Unlike the two distinct yogas discussed in *BhG* in which *karma yoga* is prescribed as being easier for practitioners, YV holds that the ascertainment through wisdom is easier for some, while *yoga*, i.e., the practice of *prāṇa*, is easier for others. Just as Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa to tell him which one of the two yogas is better (*BhG*, chap. 3, 1-2), Rāma asks Vasiṣṭha, traditionally the author of the text, which one of the yogas is easier (YV, VI. 13.5). Although Vasiṣṭha indicates that his preference is the determination through wisdom (*jñāna-niścaya*) (YV 6.1.13.8), telling that the *yoga* through *dhāraṇā* and *āsana* is not easy to practice (13.10), the chapter and the entire narrative is about *yoga* as opposed to the ascertainment of the reality through contemplation. Described in terms of *prāṇa* and *apāna* (13.12), *prāṇāyāma* is identified as the central component of the *yoga* under consideration. Placing the practice of *prāṇa* at the core of the practice also allows us to argue that the *yoga* of Bhuṣuṇḍa is not identical to Patañjalian *yoga*.

THE PRACTICE OF PRĀṆA

The term *prāṇa*, central to the discourse of Bhuṣuṇḍa, appears in its early use to describe embodied and lived breath that gives rise to the

⁵ *prakāraṇa dvān api proktaṇa yogasābhādena yady api | tathāpi nūllīn āyātāḥ prāṇayuktān asau bhṛṣam || 6 || eko yogas tathā jñānaṇi saṁsārottanamkṛaṇe | samān upāyau dvān eva proktān ekaphalapradau || 7 ||* (YV 6.1.13.6-7).

air.⁶ Recognition of *prāṇa* as means to self-realization becomes meaningful only when we take the term *prāṇa* to describe the supreme reality.⁷ This *prāṇa* sustains life and is found within the body and thus the term *prāṇa* relates to both phenomenal and absolute reality.⁸ Early preceptors have apparently noticed this complementary nature of *prāṇa* in both maintaining the body and entering into the inner aspects of mind. *Prāṇāyāma* as one of the six limbs of *yoga* is found in the *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad* (VI. 18), the text generally dated as 2nd C. BCE.⁹ Likewise, in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*, *prāṇāyāma* is one of the eight limbs (YS 2.29). Patañjali identifies four different types of *prāṇāyāma* (YS 50-51). Defined as the suspension of breath, *prāṇāyāma* in the Patañjalian depiction varies depending upon the breath controlled after inhaling, after exhaling, and the third one, a sudden suspense of breathing. The first one is identified as the inner suspension (*ābhyāntara*), the second as external (*bāhya*) and the third one as the stilled mode (*stambha vr̥tti*) (YS 2.50). The fourth *prāṇāyāma* is when both the spheres identified in earlier practice are transcended. Viññānabhikṣu identifies this fourth one as ‘isolated retention’ (*kevala kumbhaka*).¹⁰ Although Gorakṣanātha also identifies four types of *prāṇāyāma*, he does not focus on four types of breath control, but rather identifies four different flows (*āyāma*) of the breath: exhaling,

⁶ *prāṇād vāyur ajāyuta | R̥gveda* 10.90.13.

⁷ For the application of *prāṇa* in the sense of the Brahman, see the Bhāṣya of Śaṅkara on *ata eva prāṇaḥ | Brahmasūtra* 1.1.23.

⁸ For discussion on the textual history of the application of *prāṇa*, its variants, and the practice of *prāṇāyāma*, see Pandurang Vaman Kane, *Dharmasāstra ka itihāsa*, trans. into Hindi by Arjun Caube Kashyap (Lucknow: Uter Pradesh Hindi Samsthan, 1973), chapter 32. Besides the *Dharmasāstra* literature pointed out by Kane, the practice of breath control (*prāṇāyāma*) is also addressed in the *Mahābhārata* (*Mahābhārata* 3.3.14; 12.294.7-8; *Bhagavadgītā* 4.29). One remarkable episode from *Mahābhārata* that relates to the narrative of Bhuṣuṇḍa is when Droṇa determines to die, he becomes yoked with *yoga* (*yogayukti*) (For discussion, see John Brockington, “Yoga in the Mahābhārata,” in *Yoga: The Indian Tradition*, ed. Ian Whicher and David Carpenter (New York: Routledge, 2003), 19.

⁹ For six limbs of *yoga*, see Günter Grönbold, *The Yoga of Six Limbs: An Introduction to the History of Śaṅkayoga*, trans. by Robert L. Hutwoli (New Mexico: Spirit of the Sun Publications, 1996), and Francesco Sferra, *The Śaṅkayoga by Anupamaśāstīa: With Ravisirjāna's Guṇabharanīnāmasādaṇyagatiprayaṇi* (Rome: Istituto Italiano Per L'Africa e L'Oriente, 1999). For references on six limbs of *yoga*, see Somadeva Vasudeva, *The Yoga of the Mālinīyāyottaratantra* (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondicherry, 2004), 129. Notes on Adhikāra 17.

¹⁰ *Yogavārtika* of Viññānabhikṣu 2.51. See T. S. Rukmani, *Yogavārtika* of Viññānabhikṣu (Vol. 2), *Sādhanapāṭha* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1981), 229.

inhaling, holding the breath, and the constellation of different flows (*saṅghatākaraṇa*).¹¹

Since the yoga of Bhuṣuṇḍa is the regulation of the flow of *prāṇa*, we can identify it with *haṭhayoga*.¹² *Haṭhayoga* texts elaborate upon *prāṇāyāma*, identifying it as the means to liberation.¹³ This elevation of *prāṇāyāma* from the subordinate limb in Patañjali's system to the direct means to liberation, as found in *haṭhayoga* texts, is congruent with Bhuṣuṇḍa's practice. The etymology of *haṭha*, as provided by Gorakṣanātha is that "the syllable 'ha' refers to the sun and the syllable 'ṭha' to the moon. It is called *haṭhayoga* due to the union of the sun and the moon."¹⁴ Another definition of *haṭha* is that the letter 'ha' describes the solar channel *idā* and 'ṭha', the lunar channel *piṅgalā*, *haṭhayoga* thus describes the union of these two channels.¹⁵ Consistent with the practice of Bhuṣuṇḍa and the *haṭhayoga* literature is the identification of yoga with the practice of *prāṇāyāma*.

The contemplation upon breathing and regulation of breath is addressed in YV as the 'cogitation of the breath' (*prāṇacintā*). From the verbal root √*ciñ*, with a general application of the term for 'thoughts', *cintā* often denotes mental agitation or anxiety. In order to regulate the mind and control anxious thoughts, YV gives two different possibilities with an application of *cintā*. Contemplation upon the self (*ātma-cintā*) reverses the regular course of mental agitation (chap. 24.2, 4, 8). The second approach, *prāṇa-cintā* or the contemplation of the life force, specifically describes the yoga course of Bhuṣuṇḍa (chap. 24, 9-10).¹⁶

Clearly, this yoga ties self-realization with bodily sensation. Bhuṣuṇḍa's course of practice is related to the body, and he maintains his long life through the same yoga that grants him liberation. In

¹¹ *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* 3.35.

¹² For the history of *haṭhayoga*, see Hajari Prasad Dwivedi, *Nātha Sampradāya* (Allahabad: Lokabharati Publishers, 1966), 137-165.

¹³ For instance:

*padmāsane sthito yogī nāḍāvāreṇa pūritam |
māritam dhārayed yas tu sa mukto nātra samśayaḥ || Haṭhayogapradīpikā* 1.51.
padmāsane sthito yogī prāṇāpānavāhānataḥ |

pūrayet sa vikṛtaḥ syāt satyaṁ satyaṁ vadamy aham || Śivasamhitā 3.110.

prāṇāyāme mahān dharmo yogino mokṣadāyakaḥ | Vivekananda 114.

¹⁴ *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* 1.69.

¹⁵ *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* 3.15.

¹⁶ *Mrgendranātra* (Yogapāṭala 7 ab) and *Śvāyambhuvastūtrasaṅgraha* (20.32) describe reflexive thought with the term *cintā*. For discussion on yogic *cintā*, see Vasudeva *The Yoga of the Māhātmyajyotirantatra*, 428-429.

Bhuṣuṇḍa's perception, the body, comprised of nine gates, has as its companion the *puruṣaśakras*, the five *tanmātrās* as relatives, and is dwelling in the house of the ego-sense (chap. 24.15). The metaphors used in the text present the body as a house. Following Bhuṣuṇḍa's description, an individual's two ears represent two rooms on the upper floor, two eyes are compared with two windows, and the hair on the head as the thatch that covers the roof. The mouth in this metaphor is the main entrance to the house, two hands are identical to Bhuṣuṇḍa's two wings, and the upper and lower teeth are the garlands decorating the gateway. The sense-organs are compared to the porters at the gate that convey the message inside, as these give the self the awareness of smell, touch, sight, etc. The blood, fat, and flesh form the plaster of the abode, the veins and arteries metaphorically represent the strings to bind the wood in the house, and the big bones are like the posts that support the structure. The three nerves, *idā*, *piṅgalā*, and *susumnā*, are at the center and in two sides of this body compared to a house (chap. 24.16-20). The breath in the two channels of *idā* and *piṅgalā* spread throughout the body, being divided into a thousand threads through small fabrics comparable to the fibers of the stalks of lotus plants (chap. 24.37). The constant gaze upon these two channels is what Bhuṣuṇḍa credits for liberation, freeing him from all ties (chap. 25.38). Explicit in this metaphor of the body as the house is the awareness of 'abiding in the house', and this appears to be the response to the concept that one cannot achieve liberation while a *gṛhastha* or 'one abiding in the house' without renouncing the world.

In the narrative of Bhuṣuṇḍa, the *cakras* inside the body articulate the flow of *prāṇa* throughout the body and this *prāṇa* governs all bodily functions. According to this description, there are three sets of two *cakras*, meeting each other by facing up and down, endowed with soft lotus-petals (chap. 24.22). These petals, becoming saturated with the inflowing air, bloom with the movement of the breath. As the air moves in these *cakras*, its flow becomes stronger and affects the different *cakras* in multiple ways as it streams throughout the body. This very air abiding in the heart is called *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *samāna*, and so on, identifying their distinct functions. As the lunar radiance pervades the body, all the forces of *prāṇa* spread up and down in the threefold instrument of the heart (chap. 24.26). The forces of *prāṇa* perform the following actions: they go, and they retrieve, they carry away and they stroll, they rise up and fall (chap. 24.27). The very breath that moves the eyelids is called *prāṇa* for this specific function. Another aspect of

the power of *prāṇa* assumes the form of touch, another flows through the nose thereby activating the sense of smell, some digest food, and others utter speech. Just as an engineer moves an instrument, so also does the breath move the body (chap. 24.30). The two breaths flowing up and down are identified as the carrier of the great machine (*mahāyāntravāha*) that is the body, describing these two channels as the sun/fire and the moon (chap. 24.33). Bhuṣuṇḍa states that his days pass in the same way as does a person in deep sleep, since his breaths are equal in waking or deep sleep (chap. 24.36).

It is *prāṇa* that keeps the body alive. Found in two different forms as *prāṇa* and *apāna*, the life-force constantly flows inside the body and is therefore identified as the power of pulsation (chap. 25.3-4). While the term *prāṇāyāma* is often used to describe the process of the regulation of this flow, the text also uses the term in its literal meaning, just to describe the natural flow of *prāṇa* (chap. 25.5). The exhaling of *prāṇa* outside from the heart is called *recaka*, the meeting of breaths twelve inches outside the nostrils is called *pūraka*. When *apāna* enters body without any effort, this touch of filling is also called *pūraka* (chap. 25.7-8). When *apāna* subsides into *prāṇa* and for as long as it does not rise again in the heart, this state is called *kumbhaka* (chap. 25.9). Thus, *recaka* is located in the seat of the rise of *apāna*, below the position of twelve inches outside the nostrils, and outside (chap. 25.10).

It has been repeatedly iterated that the yoga of Bhuṣuṇḍa is the yoga of the flow of *prāṇa*. In this sense, yoga is union, its meaning derived from the root *√yuj*, that yokes *prāṇa* and *apāna*. Bhuṣuṇḍa gives a lengthy description of *prāṇāyāma*, the course of inhaling, exhaling, and holding the breath:

[1] Those with an established mind consider that to be *recaka*, wherein the *prāṇas* of those who have ended their effort automatically orient towards outside [the body, streaming] from the cave of the heart lotus. [2] When the limbs are touched by the down[wards-facing] *prāṇas* [having initiated] the sequence [of the movement of breath] outside [the body] to the distance of twelve inches, is called *pūraka*. [3] The effortless filling, the touch [of *prāṇas*] that enters from outside [the body] to the *apāna*, is also called *pūraka*.¹⁷ [4] Wherein, after the end

¹⁷ The commentary identifies the flow of *prāṇa* from heart up to the palate, the half of the exhalation as internal *recaka* and the remaining half, initiating from the palate to the extent of the external *recaka* and the remaining half, initiating from the palate to the extent of the external *pūraka*. See *Tāṭparyapīrākāśa* (TPP) on YV 6.1.25-6-7.

of *apāna*, as long as the *prāṇa* does not arise in the heart, that is experienced by the yogins as the state of *kumbhaka* [...] [5] Wise people realize that [this is] the *kumbhaka* of the *apāna* breath, where [the breath] is located outside [the body] to a distance of twelve inches in front of the nose, similar to the exalted pot [made] from [its material cause,] the soil. [6a] The people who know yoga realize that as the initial external *pūraka*, wherein the air facing outwards flows no further than the front of the nose. [6b] The people with settled mind consider that as the second external *pūraka*, in which the air flows the full distance of twelve inches, having exited from the front of the nose. [7] For the period after the *prāṇa* has dissolved outside and as long as *apāna* has not arisen, this completely balanced state is recognized as the external *kumbhaka*. [8] One should realize that as the external *recaka*, wherein [there is] an internalization [or facing towards the pulsation of *prāṇa*]¹⁸ without the rise of *apāna*. [This, if] being contemplated upon, bestows liberation. [6c] Having emerged [outside] at the end of twelve inches, [that which gains] strength [at the tip of the nose], is known as the other external *pūraka* of the *apāna* breath (chap. 25.6-19).¹⁹

¹⁸ TPP interprets *antarmukhatva* as: *talhā ca praspandapūrvaksane yad antarmukhatvaṃ praspandomukhatvaṃ tam ity arthah*. TPP on YV 6.1.25-17.

¹⁹ *bāhyomukhatvaṃ prāṇānāṃ yad hṛdambujakotarat* | *svarsenāśtayaṭhānāṃ taṃ dhīrā recakaṃ viduḥ* || 6 || *dvādaśāṅgulaparyantaṃ bāhyaṃ ākṛantaṃ adhih* | *prāṇānāṃ aṅgasamspāśo yāḥ sa pūraka ucyaḥ* || 7 || *bāhyāt parāpatay antar apāne yathavarjitāḥ* | *yo 'yaṃ prapūrāṇaḥ sparśo vidus taṃ api pūrakaṃ* || 8 || *apāne śtaṅgate prāṇo yāvan nābhyaṇḍito hṛdi* | *tīvāt sā kumbhakāvasthā yogibhir yāmbhityate* || 9 || *recakāḥ kumbhakaś caiva pūrakaś ca tridhā sthitāḥ* | *apānasyodagasthāne dvādaśāntād adhō bahiḥ* || 10 || *svabhiṇvāḥ sarvakālasāhāḥ samyag yathavivarjitāḥ* | *ye proktāḥ sphāramatibhis tāṃ cīrṇa tvan mahāmate* || 11 || *dvādaśāṅgulaparyantād bāhyād abhyuditiḥ prabho* | *yo vātas tasya tattraiva svabhiṇvāt pūrakādayāḥ* || 12 || *mṛdantarasthān nīṣpanaghatavad yā sthitiḥ bahiḥ* | *dvādaśāṅgulaparyante nāsāgrasamasammukhe* || 13 || *yoṃni nityaṃ apānasya taṃ viduḥ kumbhakaṃ buddhāḥ* | *bāhyomukhasya vāyor yā nāsikāgravādhir gatiḥ* || 14 || *taṃ bāhyapūrakaṃ tv ādyam vidur yogavidō janāḥ* | *nāsāgrād api nīṣṭayā dvādaśāntāvādhir gatiḥ* || 15 || *yā vāyos taṃ vidur dhīrā apānaṃ bāhyapūrakaṃ* | *bahir astāṅgate prāṇe yāvan nāpāna udgataḥ* || 16 || *tāvat pūrāṇaṃ samāvasthāṇ bahiḥsthaṇ kumbhakaṃ viduḥ* | *yat tad antarmukhatvaṃ syād apānasyodagayā vīnā* || 17 || *taṃ bāhyarecakaṃ vidyāc cīrṇyamanāṃ vīmuktidaṃ* | *dvādaśāntād yad utthāya rūpavīaratā purā* || 18 || *apānasya bahiḥsthaṇ taṃ aparāṇaṃ pūrakaṃ viduḥ* |

Bhuṣuṇḍa, as we can see, is meticulous about detailing the variants of breathing. The reduction of different aspects of *prāṇa* to eight resonates of Patanjalī's eightfold yoga. And, in the paradigm of Bhuṣuṇḍa, *prāṇyāma* alone does complete all other aspects of yoga. This detail also suggests that both the realization of the regular flow of *prāṇa* as well as the intentional control of breath is incorporated within the divisions of *prāṇyāma*. Fixing the mind upon the regular flow of breath is used as a technique to move the mind from its attention to the body's regular flow towards outside objects. The application of 'seeing' (*dṛṣṭi*) in the narrative of Bhuṣuṇḍa appears to refer to this specific gaze upon the regular flow of breath (chap. 25.27; 26.2, 8).

The discourse between Bhuṣuṇḍa and Vasiṣṭha demonstrates that the exegesis on *prāṇa* here is closer to *haṭha* and Tantric depictions, where the bipolarity of *prāṇa* and *apāna* parallel the two opposites described in terms of the sun and moon that nevertheless complement each other:

O Brahman! The rise of *prāṇa* is from the petal of the lotus located at the heart. This *prāṇa* dissolves at the end of the twelve inches outside [of the nostrils]. O great sage! The rise of *apāna* is from where the twelve inches end (*dvādaśānta*) outside. The setting [of this breath] is at the center of the lotus located in the heart. [The same foundation] where *prāṇa* reaches to the [distance of] twelve inches in the sky, *apāna* rises from the same void immediately after [this sequence]. The *prāṇa* that is facing [upwards] towards the external sky flows, as if the flames of fire [and] the *apāna* facing towards the void into the heart, flows downwards as if water. *Apāna* is the moon that nourishes the body from outside; *prāṇa* is the sun or the fire that cooks inside. This is the body. *Prāṇa*, the supreme sun, having heated the void in the heart every moment, heats up the sky in the front [part] of the mouth afterwards. *Apāna*, the moon, having soaked the front of the mouth, afterwards soaks the sky in the heart in a blink of an eyelid. One does not grieve again, having attained the seat [outside in the *dvādaśānta*] where the inner digit of the moon [identical to] *apāna* is swallowed by the sun, [identical to] *prāṇa*. A man does not get a birth again having attained the seat where the digits inside the sun, [identical to] *prāṇa* are swallowed by the moon [lit. cooling rays], [identical to] *apāna*. The very *prāṇa* transforms into the sun in the void outside and inside, and attains the nature of the soaking moon afterward. The very *prāṇa*, hav-

The numbering follows verse 20 that identifies only eight variants. The commentary thereon suggests that although there are ten variants of *prāṇa* discussed in this sequence, since there is the primacy of *kumbhaka*, these variants are not separately counted. *TPP* on YV 6.1.25.20.

ing abandoned the nature of the moon that soaks the body, obtains the nature of the sun, the drying state, in a moment. As long as the *prāṇa* has not attained the nature of the moon, having abandoned the nature of the sun, [the attributes of the self such as being devoid of the body and mind, being devoid of actions] are contemplated upon, [and having abided in this self nature that is] devoid of space and time, [a yogin] does not grieve.²⁰ Having realized the constant dissolution and the rise of the moon and sun in the heart, [which is] the foundation of the mind (*ātman*) itself, [and] the mind [therefore] does not rise again.²¹ One who sees the sun in the heart as having the nature of the rise and setting, endowed with the moon, endowed with rays, endowed with [the processes of] going out and coming in, one realizes [the truth].²² (*Yogavāsiṣṭha* 6. I. 25.29c-43b)

²⁰ This translation relies on the exposition given in *Tālparyaprakāśa* (*TPP*): “*tatra bahirdvādaśāṅgulaparyante praśraṇaḥ prāṇo yāvad arkatām auśryan parityujya can-dratāṇ śāṭhyam na gataḥ sā prāṇāpānayoḥ sandhyāvasthā* | *tasyāṇ dehād vhiḥ prāṇalayaḥ ātmāno nirdehatvāniṣkryatva-nirmanastvādayo vāstavaśāhāvāḥ san-bhāvayitum śakyatvād vicāryante* | *tatra bāhyakumbhake dehātī-deśapaticheḍābhā-vāc candrasūryātmanakapṛāṇāpānakṛiyāprayuktāyulhālāparic-cheḍābhānāc cdeśakāle svātmāni prāṭiṣṭhiteṇa yoginā na śocyata ity arthaḥ.*” *TPP* on YV 6.1.25.40.

²¹ This, according to *TPP*, indicates inner *kumbhaka*, where the flow of *prāṇa* and *apāna* are held within. *TPP* on YV, 6.1.25.41-42.

The *TPP* understands the term *ātman* as *manas*. *TPP* gives another interpretation of the confusing clause, *ātmāno niḥan ādhāran* as: “*athavā hṛdayasthāḥ svātmāna prāṇa-sūryaḥ sa evāpānātmakacandratayā udayasāta-mayātadrāśmibhūtiayānādhṛt tibhedādī ātmānā ivavartate na tadvyatiriktaṇ kāścid astīty upāśaman svātmadarśane hetur ity āha* |” *TPP* on 6.1.25. 42.

²² *prāṇasyābhyudayo brahman padmapatrād hṛdi sthitaḥ* || 29 ||

dvādaśāṅgulaparyante prāṇo ’stam yāty ayaṇ bahiḥ |
apānasyodayo bāhyād dvādaśāntān mahāmune || 30 ||

aśāṅgaur athambhojanādhye hṛdayasamsthite |
prāṇo yatra samyātī dvādaśānte nabhah-pade || 31 ||

padāt tasmād apāno ’yaṇ khād eti samanantarān |
bāhyākāśōmmukhaḥ prāṇo bahaty agniśikhā yathā || 32 ||

hṛdākāśōmmukho ’pāno nimne vāhati vārivat |
apānaś candramā deham āpyāyayati bāhyataḥ || 33 ||

prāṇaḥ sūryo ’gnir athavā pacaty antur itāṇ vapuḥ |
prāṇo hi hṛdayākāśāṇ tīparyitvā pratikṣaṇam || 34 ||

mukhāgregaganāṇ paścāt tīparyaty uttāno raviḥ |
apānendur mukhāgregaṇ tu plāvayitvā hṛdanbharam || 35 ||

paścād āpyāyayaty esa nimeṣasamanantarān |
apānaśaśīno ’ntasthā kalā prāṇavivasvatā || 36 ||

yatra grastā tad āśādyā padam bhūyo na śocyate |
prāṇāṅkasya tathāntasthā yatrāpānāsītāṇśūnā || 37 ||

grastā tatpadam āśādyā na bhūyo janmabhaḥ narah |
prāṇa evāṅkatāṇ yātī sabāhyābhyantare ’mbare || 38 ||

āpyāyanakārīṇ paścāt chāṣṭān adhiṭṭhātī |
prāṇa evendūtāṇ tyaktvā śarīrāpyātyakārīṇm || 39 ||

kṣaṇād āyātī sūryatvam samśoṣaṇakaram padam |

The yoga of Bhuśuṇḍa is entirely based on the recognition and regulation of *prāṇa* and *apāna*. In a regular flow of breath, when the *prāṇa* rests, *apāna* rises and when *apāna* rests, *prāṇa* rises. Filling the breath and practicing *kumbhaka* depends upon knowing this natural flow. Bhuśuṇḍa further elaborates upon his method of practice:

Having long followed the external *kumbhaka* [at the moment] when *prāṇa* has ceased and *apāna* has turned towards its rise, one does not grieve again. Having long followed the internal *kumbhaka* [at the moment] when *apāna* has been ceased and *prāṇa* [has] oriented towards the rise to a certain degree, one does not grieve again. Having practiced the empty [*śvachha*: lit. clear] *kumbhaka*, having followed the exhalation of *prāṇa* that is—at its furthest distance from *apāna*, one does not grieve again. Having practiced [*diṣṭvā*: lit. seen] the *pūraka* residing within the body [in the course of] *apāna*, where the *prāṇa* is filled and what is the foundation of *recaka*, one does not suffer again. Having followed the peaceful state where both *prāṇa* and *apāna* are dissolved, the self does not suffer again. Having contemplated upon space and time, whether inside or outside, devoid of [its] aspects in [the course of] *apāna* that is devouring *prāṇa*, one does not suffer again. Having observed space and time, whether inside or outside, in the *prāṇa* that is devouring *apāna*, the mind does not rise again. Observe those two, space and time, whether outside or inside, where *prāṇa* is devoured by *apāna* and *apāna* is devoured by *prāṇa*. [Yogins] realize that state as the external *kumbhaka* that has been established without any effort, when *prāṇa* is dissolved for a moment and *apāna* has not arisen. The inner *kumbhaka* that has been established effortlessly is the supreme state. (YV, 6.1.25.50c-59d)

Essentially, Bhuśuṇḍa's approach to *prāṇa* is to find its regular rhythm, to have every breath completely harmonized, and to have the mind merged into the flow of breath. The final step in this practice is to control the breath without any effort (*avyatnasiddha*) (chap. 25.59). The emphasis on retaining the breath and the specific mention of effortless breathing distinguishes it from the general *haṭhayoga* course of practicing *prāṇāyāma*.

Since life is viewed as the continuation of *prāṇa*, it is reasonable to infer that long life is linked to its regulation and mastery over it. The crucial problem that arises with the yoga of Bhuśuṇḍa is how the transcendental self and corporeality are interlinked, as it is otherwise difficult to relate the physical practice of *prāṇāyāma* with self-realization. The text addresses this problem. The self of the nature of awareness, as Bhuśuṇḍa identifies, is situated within *prāṇa* as fragrance resides within the flower, and this self is neither *prāṇa* nor *apāna*. As taste is situated within water, so is the self of the nature of awareness located within *apāna* and it is neither *prāṇa* nor *apāna*. The self is at the culmination of, and in the middle of, *prāṇa* and *apāna* (YV, 6.1.25.61-63). The self, in this depiction, is thus not transcendental to the body, but rather its living essence. The intermediate state between *prāṇa* and *apāna*, in this depiction, is where the self is revealed and the self is realized through abiding in this state. Retention of breath focused within the heart is identified as the *kumbhaka* of *prāṇa* and the one performed outside is the retention of *apāna* and with the practice of holding the breath, one resides next to consciousness itself (chap. 25.69-72).

Bhuśuṇḍa's description of *prāṇāyāma* strikingly parallels the detail found in *Mālīnīvijayottara* 17.2-10ab. According to this text, there are six variants of inhalation, having three variants based on the locus of nose, mouth, and upper palate to two different forms of inhalation, identified as neutral and the one performed after expulsion (*virēcya*).²³ The text also categorizes retention with five variants: following inhalation, following exhalation, two variants during the intermediate point, and the neutral one.²⁴ Along the same lines, there are six variants of exhalation that follows the same sequence as inhalation. Other terminology such as *dvādaśānta* is commonplace to both Bhuśuṇḍa's discourse and Tantric literature.

THE PERFECTIONS OF BHUŚUṆḌA

The impression Bhuśuṇḍa gives in the narrative is that his *jīvanmukti* is somehow embedded with his immortality: being in the body allows him to experience the glory of his self-realization. This places *siddhi* in

arkatāṇ samparityaya na yāvac candratāṇ gaṭhā || 40 ||
prāṇas tāvad vicāryante 'śeṣkāle na śocyate |

hṛti candrikayor jñātvā nityam astanmayodagam || 41 ||

ātmāno mīḥam ādātvaṇ na bhūyo jāyate munaḥ |

sodāyāntunyanā senduṇ saraśanīṇ saḡanāḡaman || 42 ||

hrdaye bhāskarāṇ devaṇ yath paśyati sa paśyati |

(Yogaśisṭha 6. 1. 25.29c-43b)

²³ Vasudeva, *The Yoga of the Mālīnīvijayottarānta*, 391.

²⁴ Vasudeva, *The Yoga of the Mālīnīvijayottarānta*, 393.

a positive light. Unlike Patanjali who considers *siddhi* as an obstacle for *samādhi* (*Yogasūtra* 3.37), Bhuṣuṇḍa's transcendence to time both mentally and corporeally does not pose any challenge. His *siddhis*, both the 'living' aspect and the 'liberation' aspect, are intertwined and are the direct consequence of the practice of *prāṇa*. Both *prāṇa* and *jīvanmukti* place Bhuṣuṇḍa 'in between': *prāṇa* is in between the body and the self and bridges both, *jīvanmukti* is in between corporeality and liberation that grants both. Bhuṣuṇḍa relates that he has neither the desire to live, nor to die and abandon the karmic body (20.21). His condition of being alive is just the way things are, and he is not inclined to change the way things are. The highest *siddhi* of Bhuṣuṇḍa is his self-realization that is described in both terms: one, he is abiding in the essential non-dual consciousness only, and next, he is free from emotions, the fetters of bondage. These two aspects of self-realization are highlighted throughout the entire narrative. Bhuṣuṇḍa knows and speaks about the unmanifest, and he is free from the thoughts of me and mine (chap. 15.33).

Crucial to Bhuṣuṇḍa's perfection is his awareness of time. Having aligned time with the flow of *prāṇa*, this awareness does not measure time in isolated moments, but in the form of uninterrupted *kalpa* (*YV* 20.24). He nevertheless knows with his intellect the sequence of space and time, although not tied to the awareness of day and night (*YV* 20.8, 25). Here, Bhuṣuṇḍa is making an effort to distinguish his time-perception from the usual perception of time: ordinarily, time is cognized in the form of day and night, and the time-awareness such as that of *kalpa* is given to us only intellectually and not directly. Bhuṣuṇḍa's perception of time is quite the opposite.

Bhuṣuṇḍa describes his techniques to sustain himself while the chain of dissolution of the fundamental elements begins at the end of each eon. When the dissolution of the world begins, he floats in the sky without any motion, abandoning his longtime abode, the Kalpa tree (21.15-16). When in the process of cataclysmic events, Bhuṣuṇḍa describes going through a series of *dhāraṇās*:

When the suns heat up, turning the mountains to rocks, I abide with an undisturbed mind, having focused my concentration upon water (*vāruṇī dhāraṇā*). When the wind of dissolution start blowing the kings of mountains turning them into rocks, I abide in the sky motionlessly, having fixed [my] concentration on the earth [lit. *pārvatī*: mountain]. When the earth including the mountains are dissolved into water, in

this huge surge of water I remain with a fixed mind, having concentrated upon air (*vāyavī dhāraṇā*). Having reached to the end of the cosmos, I abide in the deep sleep state [and stay in] the pure abode at the end of all the principles. When the Lotus-born again observes the act of creation, I enter the cosmos and stay there in the abode of the bird.²⁵ (*YV* 6.121.17-21)

Bhuṣuṇḍa is cryptic about his practice, although he briefly mentions the specific meditations that he performs to retain his body during cataclysmic events. These *dhāraṇās*, however, are commonplace in Tantric literature. A comprehensive description of these and additional *dhāraṇās* can be found in *Mālinīvijayottara*.²⁶

Bhuṣuṇḍa credits his contemplation upon *prāṇa* and *apāna* for his long life free from disease (chap. 26.11). When he describes these two flowing up and down his body, he declares that he maintains his indifference to heat and cold by gazing upon the breath (chap. 24.32). Bhuṣuṇḍa further claims that he does not have the anxiety of acquisitiveness, where "I have obtained this today" and "I will have to obtain it tomorrow." Since his mind has relinquished all movement and is devoid of grief and emotion, he lives free from disease. Bhuṣuṇḍa claims that he does not fear old age or death, nor does he get excited by the possibility of obtaining a kingship. There is no self or other in relations, and due to this equanimity, he lives a long life free from dis-

²⁵ *pratāpanti yadāṭṭiyāḥ śakalikṛtabhūdhārāḥ |*
vāruṇīṇ dhāraṇāṇ baddhvā tadā tiṣṭhāni dhīradhīḥ || 17 ||
yadā śakalitādrindrā vānti pralayavāyavaḥ |
pārvaṭīṇ dhāraṇāṇ baddhvā kṛhe tiṣṭhāny acalan tadā || 18 ||
jagaḍgalitamervāṭi yāty ekāraṇavātāṇ yadā |
vāyavīṇ dhāraṇāṇ baddhvā samplave 'caladhīḥ tadā || 19 ||
brhmāṇḍapāram āśāya tattvante vimala padē |
sūṣuptāvashṭayā tāvat tiṣṭhāny acalanūpayā || 20 ||
yāvat punaḥ kamalajāḥ sṛṣṭikarmāṇi tiṣṭhāt |
tatra pravīṣya brahmāṇḍaṇ tiṣṭhāni vhaḡālaye || 21 ||
YV 6.121.17-21

²⁶ For the concentration upon earth element, see *Mālinīvijayottara* 12.22-25. For *vāruṇi* concentration, see *Mālinīvijayottara* 13.2-4. For concentration upon fire element, see *Mālinīvijayottara* 13.21-24. For the concentration upon *vāyu*, see *Mālinīvijayottara* 13.34c-35d.

For the *dhāraṇās* on the elements with an application of the seed syllables, see *Kālaṇāna* 35-45; Dominic Goodall, "A first edition of the *Kālaṇāna*, the shortest of the non-eclectic recensions of the Kālotṭara," in Dominic Goodall and André Padoux, *Tantric Studies in Memory of Hélène Brunner* (Pondichery: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2007), 134-35.

ease. In his state of non-dual seeing, a pot is an awareness, a cloth is an awareness, the sky is an awareness, the forest is an awareness, a cart is an awareness, all is awareness [only] (chap. 26.38). What is meant is that, instead of objects arising in mind as external, they arise in the form of awareness itself.

The self-realization of Bhuṣuṇḍa places his subjective awareness in the witnessing consciousness (*sākṣin*). The depiction of Bhuṣuṇḍa in this narrative shows the nature of the individual self when it withdraws from the outside world and resides in consciousness itself that is all-witnessing. The metaphors found in the text further describe him as the witness of the world phenomena. Bhuṣuṇḍa is wise, due to his long life wherein he has witnessed the conditions of the rise and fall of ages (*yuga*) (chap. 15.30). He has been counting the cycle of eons (*kalpa*) and the repeated birth of the protective gods (*lokapālas*) (chap. 15.31).

In Chapter 22, the everlasting crow claims to have witnessed the world as topsy-turvy and not in any fixed order. He claims to have witnessed the world turned into dust, and the earth before the appearance of sun and moon. The cyclical nature of time is confirmed with the crow claiming that he remembers infinite numbers of Manus, one in every eon. But Bhuṣuṇḍa also claims to be the witness to different world orders. Sometimes he witnesses polyandry; he also remembers human progeny spreading without copulation; he sometimes witnesses creation occurring in a void, without earth or any foundation. Bhuṣuṇḍa also witnesses creation emanating from the sky and at other times from water or air or earth. He has also witnessed Viṣṇu emerging as Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu transforming into Rudra. Bhuṣuṇḍa claims that he has witnessed eight births of Vasīṣṭha; he has seen the earth sinking five times; he has witnessed the churning of the ocean twelve times, the subduing of Hiraṇyākṣa three times, the birth of Paraśurāma six times, one hundred repetitions the age of Kali, and one hundred rebirths of Lord Viṣṇu in the form of the Buddha. Vālmīki composed his *Rāmāyaṇa* twelve times over and Vyāsa composed the *Mahābhārata* seven times, Nṛsiṃha killed Hiraṇyakaśipu three times, and Kṛṣṇa was born sixteen times. The lengthy articulation of Bhuṣuṇḍa's recollection of previous creations gives a different picture of time: it is not linear, as there is a repetition of events; neither is it circular, as creation does not repeat in exactly the same order. Explicitly, there is no killing of Hiraṇyākṣa or Hiraṇyakaśipu in every eon. Vyāsa does not appear in every eon to compose *Mahābhārata* and neither does

Vālmīki for composing *Rāmāyaṇa*. Neither can time be conceived of as spiral, because there is no explicit progress from one point to the other, as shown with gods such as Brahmā and Viṣṇu appearing to be coming back, yet assuming the task of another god.

In this chaotic progression, randomness appears to be the only law. And in the eyes of Bhuṣuṇḍa, time does not make much sense, since he claims that eons pass for him in the same way as do days and nights. Compared to the gaze of timelessness, all that is confined within time is similar. The following reference explicitly describes the absurdity of sequence:

I remember the three worlds having an identical assemblage sequence and many [others] having different [ones] or half identical [assemblage] in the same way. (YV, 6.1.22.35)²⁷

Brāhmaṇ! In every *manvantara*, when the sequence of the world is reversed and the structure is altered and the wise people have passed away, I have different friends, different relatives, different and new servants, and different habitations. (YV, 6.1.22.37-38)²⁸

Bhuṣuṇḍa's continuity in the same body during different *kalpas* parallels the manifestation of the same Kalpa tree in every eon. Nevertheless, the location in which this tree grows keeps changing, as in different *kalpas*, it shifts from Mount Meru to other mountains such as Vindhya, Kaccha, Sahya, Dardura, Hima, or Malayācala. The concept of karma and rebirth, in this paradigm, is not restricted only to humans. The Kalpa tree is reborn in every eon in the same fashion, due to the karma of its previous life. Even after abandoning its body at the end of one *manvantara*, the tree retains its life with its new birth.

In this narrative, Bhuṣuṇḍa's awareness of time parallels his consciousness of the external world. Just as Bhuṣuṇḍa perceives time not in the form of isolated minutes but in the form of *kalpa*, he also claims that he is situated in consciousness itself that is not fragmented into concepts or divided in the form of subject and object. Bhuṣuṇḍa's

²⁷ *samāikasaṃnivēśāṇi bahūni viśamāni ca |
tathābhāsanamavṛpāni trajāganti smatāny aham || 35 ||*
(YV, 6.1.22.35)

²⁸ *pratīmanvantaram brahman viparyaste jagatkrame |
sanniveśe 'nyathājāte prajāte saṃśrute jame || 37 ||
manānyāny eva mītrāni anyā eva ca bandhāvah |
anya eva navā bhṛtyā anyā eva samāśrayāḥ || 38 ||*
YV, 6.1.22.37-38

transcendence to time grants him the 'seeing' that is free from distinctions. Bhuṣuṇḍa states that he has sequentially attained the stillness of his mind (*cittaviśrānti*) resulting in placing his awareness directed towards the stainless self (chap. 26.1). This equanimity of mind, free from emotion and the flow of thoughts, is identified as 'seeing' (*dṛṣṭi*). This singular *dṛṣṭi* is free from errors and is imperishable (chap. 24.1), and Bhuṣuṇḍa claims to be established in this *dṛṣṭi* (chap. 26.2). This 'seeing' of Bhuṣuṇḍa is not disturbed even when his seat, Mount Meru moves. This gaze or awareness of Bhuṣuṇḍa is identified as complete absorption (*susamādhī*) that is not interrupted even when he is walking or sitting, or is awake or in deep sleep (chap. 26.3). There is no past or future but only the present in this 'seeing' (chap. 26.8). The state of mind that is free from mental constructions including time-awareness is compared to *susupti*, as it does not grasp any external object (chap. 26.9).

YV addresses *jīvanmukti*, liberation while living. As Sjaie points out, "the *Mokṣopāya* belongs to the oldest texts that know of the concept of, and at the same time make deliberate use of, the technical term, *jīvanmukti*."²⁹ As the narrative of Bhuṣuṇḍa begins with a chapter giving a preface that uses the term '*jīvanmukta*', it becomes contextual to address this concept in light of the highest perfection of Bhuṣuṇḍa. Although yogic practice in general is not the central theme of YV, the narrative in this context is about yoga, the yoga of the *prāṇa* and *apāna*. This particular yoga is neither contemplation upon the empty nature of the objective world, nor is it about "gaining insight into the absolute non-existence (*atyantābhāva*) of the world by 'reflection' (*vicāra*) only,"³⁰ but simply the 'rise of the dissolution of mental imprints' (*vāsanāvilayaḍaya*) through the practice of *prāṇa*.³¹ The state of *jīvanmukti*, in light of this narrative, arises due to the cessation of *vāsanā* that results through the instrumentality of the 'cessation of the pulsation of *prāṇa*' (*prāṇaspaṇdanirodha*) (YV 6.1.13.2). Although the general course of contemplation as taught in YV is through questions such as "Who am I?" and "Whose is transmigration?" and although Vasiṣṭha acknowledges that yoga is hard to prac-

tice since it is accomplished through the perfection of contemplation, position, and so on (YV 6.1.13.10), Bhuṣuṇḍa does attain the state of *jīvanmukti*, with his practice of the cessation of the flow of breath. Therefore, it is difficult to reductively conclude that YV in general teaches liberation only through the practice of *jīāna* and not through the practice of yoga. Actually the text is explicit that "for some, yoga is hard to accomplish, and for others, the determination [is] through *jīāna*" (YV, chap. 13, 8).³²

Two modalities of liberation found in this discourse make us contemplate upon *samādhī*, a term used in different contexts. Patañjali describes in his *Yogasūtra* various types of *samādhī* with a specific distinction between *samprajñāta* and *asamprajñāta*. The *samādhis* attained through different methods, the *haṭha* means through which a yogin attains the mindless state and thus recognizes the way things are, and the *samādhī* attained through full awakening through discriminating knowledge following the path of *jīāna*, may not be the same experience. Buddhist literature demonstrates a similar contrast between two *nirodha* and *āsamjñi samāpatitis*.³³ In the case of Bhuṣuṇḍa, as in other *haṭha* depictions, there is a yogic integration (*samādhī*) that describes "a reversal of the flow of time, immortality and transcendence over the entire created universe."³⁴

Near the end of the discourse between the two sages, Bhuṣuṇḍa declares that he has obtained a completely serene mind through absorption in *prāṇa* (*prāṇasamādhī*) (chap. 26.1). He further describes that his well-focused absorption (*susamādhī*) into the self is not disturbed while walking or sitting, even while awake, dreaming, or in deep sleep (chap. 26.3). Even when the air stops moving or waters no longer flow, Bhuṣuṇḍa declares that he does not remember anything contrary to his absolute absorption (*susamādhāna*) (chap. 26.5). Therefore, before reaching to the conclusion that YV does not prescribe any physical practice of yoga or that it does not favor yogic

³² The text identifies the yoga of Bhuṣuṇḍa as *jīāna*yoga: Bhuṣuṇḍa obtained that which needs to be obtained with *jīāna* yoga (chap. 28.3). The knowledge that Bhuṣuṇḍa has is that of the flow of *prāṇa* and *apāna*.

³³ For discussion on two *samāpatitis*, see Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih lun* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 123-153.

³⁴ David Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 45.

²⁹ Walter Sjaie, "Liberation from Intentionality and Involvement: On the Concept of *Jīvanmukti* According to the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 28 (2000): 172.

³⁰ Ibid., 173.

³¹ The mind free from agitation is described in this text with the term of *upāśama* YV 6.1.70.36.

contemplation,³⁵ it becomes necessary to give a closer look to the narrative of Bhuṣuṇḍa.

In conclusion, the narrative of Bhuṣuṇḍa presents a form of *haṭha-yoga* known to the author of YV, and this exposition varies from the general tendency of the text to highlight the illusory nature of the world. The immortality of Bhuṣuṇḍa merges with his liberating wisdom, linking somatic experience to mental conditioning. Although corporeality is subordinated by the depiction of an immortal crow's lineage in a despised species, the approach of Bhuṣuṇḍa is world-affirming and the self-realization that results from the practice of *prāṇa* is not subordinate to *jñāna*, as Vasiṣṭha, the proponent of this method and also the main voice throughout the text, comes to learn from Bhuṣuṇḍa. The combination of Advaita and Tantric elements found in the subsequent *haṭhayoga* literature is consistent in the discourse of Bhuṣuṇḍa and the quest for *jīvanmukti* in the literal sense of combining the both permanent life and full awakening resonates of the integration of alchemy by the *haṭhayoga* masters. Liberation, in this depiction, is not an isolation of consciousness from afflictions but rather a perfect union of two opposites, depicted in the bipolar terms of the sun and moon. This narrative is an exemplary dialogue where two enlightened participants, while maintaining their positions, are willing to learn from and appreciate each other. The dialogue of Bhuṣuṇḍa and Vasiṣṭha also challenges the over-simplified comparison of the state of liberation to a form of solipsism. This is not a dialogue imagined by someone under illusion, as both characters in the narrative are enlightened. The narrative of Bhuṣuṇḍa, therefore, is one illustration that serves multiple purposes within the wider textual context, and while challenging some assumptions, Bhuṣuṇḍa's discourse brings *siddhis* to the forefront and makes them complementary to self-realization.

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³⁵ Walter Slaje, "Liberation from Intentionality and Involvement: On the Concept of Jīvanmukti According to the Yogavāsīṣṭha," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 28 (2000): 179.