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Cosmic Awareness and Yogic Absorption in the Nāth Literature¹

1. Introduction

1.1. Sitting by the fire called *dhunī* and smeared with ashes, practicing various forms of yoga, singing mystic songs, with their matted hair and ears split with rings, Nāth Siddhas are easy to recognize. These Śaivite ascetics are also known for their *pheri*, a melodious recitation at night, door-to-door, once or twice a year. Although becoming less common, *pheri* songs are for awakening in a literal and figurative sense, and for the general population, these chants bind the evil spirits and witches, weaving a net of spells that block them from access to the households. ‘Who are these yogins?’ and ‘What are their practices?’ are the questions that have attracted not only laymen but also modern-day scholars. Often criticized by other communities, these yogins retain nuances from the ancient Kāpālikas,² the teachings of the Sahaja Siddhas,³ and the Pāśupata and other Śaivite traditions.⁴

1.2. Considering Gorakhnāth as their founding master, Nāth Siddhas have their own philosophy and the yogic methods to achieve the goal, the *siddhi*, as they call it. The application of the term *siddhi* in the Nāth literature cannot be limited only to the attainment of supernormal powers on the pathway to *samādhi*, but also refers to the highest state, that of becoming Śiva.⁵ This highest realization for the Nāths is beyond the realm of conceptualization in terms of duality and non-duality.⁶ *Sid-*

¹ I am very grateful to Professors David White, Walter Slaje, and Rebecca Moore, and Ms. Mary Hicks for valuable suggestions and corrections.

² For the study on Kāpālikas, see LORENZEN 1991; UPADHAYA, 1983.

³ For studies on Sahaja Siddhas, see DAVIDSON 2002a / 2002b.

⁴ For discussion on Nāth Literature, see DWIVEDI 1966, pp. 106-113; WHITE 1996, (“Matsyendra and Gorakh: The Nāth Siddha Literature,” 132-141); KIEHNLE 1997. For the interaction of Tantric Siddha tradition and the tradition of the Nāth Yogins, see WHITE 2003 (“Chapter 6: The Consort of the Yoginī: South Asian Siddha Cults and Traditions,” 160-187). For the concept of the body in Tantric traditions, see FLOOD 2006.

⁵ *haṭhāj jyotirmaṃyo bhūtvā hy antareṇa śivo bhavet | ato 'yaṃ haṭhayogaḥ syāt siddhidah siddhasevitaḥ || Prāṇatoṣiṇī*, p. 835 (cited in DWIVEDI 1966, 138). The Patañjalian system distinguishes between the scope of *siddhis* and *samādhi* (*Yogasūtra* (YS) 3.37).

⁶ . . . *dvaitādvaitavivarjitaṃ padaṃ niścalam. . . Gorakṣasiddhāntasaṅgraha* in KAVIRAJ 1925, 16. This text cites *Avadhūtagīta* 1.36 in this context to confirm that the highest reality is

dhis, following these yogins, is the means for knowing the true nature of one's own self as Śiva. This specific approach allows us to confirm that the Nāth yoga is world-affirming and bodily lived. As has been mentioned, Nāth literature weaves together various other contemporaneous pan-Indian esoteric traditions. The objective of this essay is to identify the unique aspects that constitute Nāth yoga as a philosophical system with its own worldview and yogic method for the highest realization, with particular attention paid to their understanding of the body and the cosmos. In order to discover the nuances of this yoga system, the primary focus will be upon the literature ascribed to Gorakhnāth. The next objective of this essay is to examine what self-realization would mean within the setting of Nāth yoga, in light of their understanding of the self and its interconnectedness with body and the cosmos.⁷ These investigations facilitate an understanding of the Nāth tradition, particularly their interconnected concepts of *piṇḍa* and *brahmāṇḍa*, the concept that the world is the play of consciousness (*cidvilāsa*), and the concepts of *nāda* and *bindu* in light of the practice of Kuṇḍalī.⁸ A closer examination confirms that although Nāth yogins, Kaula Tantric, and other esoteric traditions share the same terminology, there are subtle differences in each application of the terms. The metaphors that play a vital role in maintaining both the esoteric and aesthetic aspects of Nāth tradition and literature build upon the practices of other traditions. By analyzing these constituents, the yoga system of the Nāth Siddhas can be clearly seen in light of other Yoga and Tantra traditions.

1.3. Although less frequently found even in their own community, many Nāth Siddhas are householders. As committed Śaivites, the narratives found within the Nāth tradition describe Gorakṣanātha (Gorakhnāth in the vernacular), the founding master, as a disciple of Matsyendranāth. Although it is difficult to confirm this relationship as historical, two aspects are relevant: Gorakṣanātha chronologically follows Matsyendra, generally considered to be the founder of the Tantric Kaula tradition, and second, Gorakṣanātha reformed the left-hand oriented Kaula system

devoid of the character of duality and non-duality.

⁷ For scholarly discussion upon divinizing the body, see WHITE 1996 ("Chapter 7: Corresponding Hierarchies: The Substance of the Alchemical Body," 184-217, and "Chapter 8: Homologous Structures of the Alchemical Body," 218-262); SMITH 2006, 374-390.

⁸ I have adopted the Nāth terminology for the serpentine power as Kuṇḍalī based on the frequency of the use of the term instead of Kuṇḍalinī, as found frequent in Tantric literature. This, however, is not the case that Nāths never use the term Kuṇḍalinī. For example, see GŚ 46.51; SSS 1.6.

and developed the Nāth system based on the shared Haṭha yoga foundation. The yoga of the Nāth Siddhas can be synthesized, in their term, as the yoga of the body (*piṇḍa*) and the cosmos (*brahmāṇḍa*).⁹ Their affirmation of the body as the cosmos in its true form, with dormant power sleeping in each and every individual, the awakening of which transforms an individual to Śiva, brings this concept closer to Tantric Kaula philosophy. Their alchemy of purification, consolidation, and the transformation of mercury as a means of achieving supernormal powers is found in both Tantric and Āyurvedic texts. *Haṭha* yoga, now found in various forms and popular as a way to a healthy life, is primarily found in the literature taught by these Siddhas. Although the scope of this essay is not to explore *haṭha* yoga, this nonetheless deals with the exalted part of this practice, analyzing the connections this yogic system has found between bodily perfection and spiritual perfection.

1.4. The yoga technique of the Nāths drastically differs from that found in Patañjali's yoga system. Despite the seeming similarities between the two systems, the differences are many: a six-fold yoga,¹⁰ instead of the eight limbs prescribed by Patañjali; a focus on the serpentine power considered to be abiding within the body in coiled form identified as *kuṇḍalī*; and the yogic techniques of absorption that utilize sound (*nāda*). Grounded on *haṭha* or 'sudden' techniques that rely on bodily positions and various forms of breath control exercise (*prāṇāyāma*), the Nāth yogic practice of inborn (*sahaja*) *samādhi* differs from the Patañjalian and various other yogic absorptions.¹¹ The concept of the body and the cosmos found in both traditions also differ from each other, so that these two yoga traditions cannot be reconciled as one. Furthermore, the body-affirming approaches of the Nāths and their concept of bodily purity in its less exaggerated form maintain these distinctions. The external practices, such as singing *nāda*, sitting by the *dhunī*, splitting ears and wearing *kuṇḍala* (earrings), or smearing ashes, rely upon the core tenets of this system, the recognition of Śiva as the supreme reality that the practitioner can embody through yogic practice, and the deeper realization of the interconnectedness of the body and the cosmos. The underlying philosophy of the world that explains the role required of an

⁹ For discussion on *Piṇḍabrahmāṇḍa*, see DWIVEDI 1966, 114-126.

¹⁰ Six-fold yoga found in Nāth literature is only a small part of the wider tradition of six-fold yoga system. Scholarly discussion on this can be found in VASUDEVA 2004, 367-436; GRÖNBOLD 1996, specifically 3-16 for six yogas in Hinduism; SFERRA 2000 ("Introduction," 11-65).

¹¹ For application of *sahaja-samādhi*, see Amaraughasāsana, in SHASTRI 1918, 9.

individual for his spiritual growth as understood by the Nāths maintains its distinctness from the Patañjalian and other yoga systems.

1.5. The literature of the Nāth Siddhas ranges from classical Sanskrit texts attributed to Gorakṣanātha to vernacular literature that includes mystical songs (DWIVEDI 1978). Many of the texts are difficult to ascribe to a particular author, and this anonymity has often perplexed scholars. To confine this study only to the philosophy and practice of Nāth yogins, this essay explores the essential writings ascribed to Gorakṣanātha, *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* (SSP),¹² *Gorakṣasataka* (GŚ), *Amanaskayoga* (AY), along with some other literature ascribed to him or to other Nāth Siddhas who have a clear connection to these texts.¹³ In order to establish a relationship between the Kaula and Haṭha traditions, comparisons will be made with Tantric literature and the texts of *haṭha* yoga. Again, in order to confine the scope of this essay, I will discuss only the correlation of the body and cosmos as the central point of their philosophy, and the fundamental concepts of *bindu* and *nāda* as found in their exalted philosophy and their practice.

1.6. As the texts being examined in this study are not always systematic and often fuse different techniques, it is particularly difficult to trace a unique model in all the writings of this tradition. Synthesizing the literature of the Nāth Siddhas and finding parallels with the aforementioned literature, this essay concludes with establishing the centrality of *samarasa* in their yoga techniques, with the application of both the *kuṇḍalī* practice and *nāda* for this yogic absorption. The Nāth yoga technique of *samarasa*, if compared with the specific terminology used in other yoga texts, such as *amanaska yoga*,¹⁴ *unmanī*, or *manonmanī*, all refer to the state of consciousness where mental functioning is stopped, with the notions such as subject and object dissolved. The focus on this yogic absorption, I argue, is the central deviation from the parallel yoga tradition of Patañjali, although the absorption, identified as *asamprajñāta* or the state of no-cognition, opens the space for the argument that the ultimate experience found in both techniques is the same. The yogic method applied in the Nāth tradition brings this system comparatively closer to

¹² The reference for the edition of SSP used in this article is MALLIK 1954. For discussion on the philosophy found in SSP, see BANERJEA 1962, 26-32.

¹³ For the effort to identify the texts specific to Gorakṣanātha, see DWIVEDI 1966, 106-113; WHITE 1996, 131, 139-141, 418.

¹⁴ For discussion on *amanaskayoga*, see VASUDEVA 2004, 384, 434, 436; WHITE 1996, 141, 249; WHITE 2003, 81; BIRCH 2006.

the Tantric Kaula system. For example, the concept of 'absorption into oneself' (*nijāveśa*) found in the Nāth literature closely parallels the concept of *samāveśa* found in Tantric literature.¹⁵ The mythical genealogy in which both the Kaula Tantric tradition and Nāth yoga system share a connection to Matsyendranāth, also supports a parallel reading of these traditions.

1.7. Analysis of the language used by the Nāth Siddhas further confirms the same conclusion, that these yogins are conceptually aligned with the Śaivite Tantric tradition and the Sahaja Buddhist Tantric tradition rather than the Patañjalian yoga system. Analysis of the doctrine of the play of consciousness (*cidvilāsa*), the body as the cosmos (*piṇḍa-brahmāṇḍa*), and the practice of *bindu* and *nāda* reveals the inner structure of Nāth literature, which in turn allows for a broader comparison among pan-Indian traditions.

2. The World as the Play of Consciousness (*cidvilāsa*)

2.1. Found primarily in SSP and scattered in other writings of Nāth Siddhas, two essential concepts that explain the Nāth philosophy of the body and the cosmos are:

1. *cidvilāsavāda* (the doctrine that the world is the play of consciousness), and
2. *piṇḍabrahmāṇḍavāda* (the doctrine that the body and the cosmos are identical).¹⁶

These two doctrines complement each other and not only explain the interrelationship of the body and the cosmos but also confirm the very body that is immediately felt as the entire cosmos, and support the concept of yogic awakening (*jāgaran*) as an experience of the expansion of one's self-experience. Both of these concepts are quite compatible with the Tantric philosophy, all of which are drastically different from the Advaita of Śaṅkara, although both the non-dualism of Śaṅkara and the yogic doctrine of the Nāth yogins confirm a single reality manifested in many forms.

2.2. Following the doctrine of *cidvilāsavāda*, pure consciousness is the

¹⁵ For application of *nijāveśa*, see SSS 5.11. Another central constituent of Tantric description of the awakened state, *sāmarasya*, can be compared to the Nāth understanding of *samarasikaraṇa*. See SSS 5.59.

¹⁶ For a detailed discussion of *piṇḍabrahmāṇḍa*, see DWIVEDI 1966, 114-126.

ultimate reality. Non-dual awareness-in-itself as the absolute truth is recognized in both Śaṅkara's Advaita and Tantric Advaita. The yogic traditions, both Patañjalian and the system of the Nāth Siddhas, acknowledge pure consciousness as the experience of highest yogic absorption. The fundamental distinction between the Tāntric and Nāth yoga traditions on one hand, and Śaṅkara's model of Advaita is that consciousness, according to the first set of schools, is vibrant, fluid, or spontaneous in the sense that it transforms into multiple forms and contracts into its solitary form. The concept of *pariṇāma* or transformation is closely compatible with the concept that the world is the play of consciousness (*cidvilāsa*). Following Śaṅkara's model, the world is the false projection (*vivarta*) of this highest reality, with consciousness having no modification. According to the doctrine of *cidvilāsa*, on the other hand, the world is the transformation of Brahman itself and is not false appearance, but rather the play or glory of the powers within Brahman. Here, *cit* or consciousness is equated with Brahman. However, unlike the Brahman understood in Advaita Vedānta, the Brahman here is endowed with infinite powers, and the cosmos is the play or expansion of its powers. The world, according to this model, is not a projection of illusion, but rather, the play of consciousness. *Vilāsa* here also refers to expansion, as the opposite term used is *saṅkoca* (retraction). According to this, there is nothing that is devoid of consciousness; however, for insentient entities, their consciousness is in its dormant form, sleeping with the possibility of ascending to its true nature. The approach of a yogin is to strive for recognizing this all-embracing consciousness as the foundation of the self and the cosmos.

2.3. The rise of the world, following this doctrine, is the manifestation of consciousness (*cidvilāsa*). Consciousness is endowed with infinite powers and these powers exist in two forms: *nirutthāna* or the state of sleeping or dormant, and *utthāna* or the state of awakening. Gorakṣa, in his SSP, interprets the powers (*śakti*) of Brahman or Śiva in five categories: personal (*nijā*), transcendental (*parā*), non-transcendental (*aparā*), subtle (*sūkṣmā*), and the coiled form (*kuṇḍalinī*).¹⁷ Among these powers,

¹⁷ SSP 1.5-7. This description comes closer to the Siddhānta Śaiva text *Ratnatrayaparīkṣā* (RTP) 154-275. Some of the terms found in this description, such as *sūkṣmā*, *parā* (RTP 155) are identical to Nāth terminology. The Śakti of Śiva found in RTP 167 can be compared to the *nijā śakti* of the Nāth literature. A striking difference between these two traditions is the position of Kuṇḍalinī or Kuṇḍalī, which, according to the description found in SSS 1.13 is manifest last in the sequence of fivefold Śaktis, whereas the RTP identifies Kuṇḍalinī with the supreme (*parā*) aspect of Śakti. (RTP 157).

the first or *nijā* (*śakti*) power, the power pertaining to the self, is the most innate self-effulgent power of Brahman. This power is also addressed as *mahāmāyā*, the material cause of the world, although the concept of *mahāmāyā* differs here from the concept of *māyā* found in the Śaṅkara's Advaita. At the level of contraction or when the very Śiva is strolling in the form of a bound mortal *jīva*, this power has only the property of will (*icchāmātra*). Brahman, also in this Nātha yoga doctrine, is of the character of *sat-cit-ānanda*, being-awareness-bliss, which parallels the schema of Advaita Vedānta. The world is sometimes explained in terms of the unfolding of bliss (*ānanda-vilāsa*), since awareness and bliss are describing the same absolute reality.

2.4. The concept of Brahman and of *māyā*, with the affirmation of monism, makes this yoga system different from the Patañjalian yoga. The philosophical ground where the Patañjalian yoga functions is the dualistic Sāṅkhya system, where the distinction between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* with the world as the transformation of *prakṛti* is taken for granted. Following Nāth yoga, however, although the world rises with *mahāmāyā* functioning in this expansion, it is not dualistic, as in essence, the world is merely the play of awareness.

2.5. The SSP describes the rise of the second power, *parā śakti* as:

tasyā unmukhamātreṇa parā śaktir utthitā | (SSP 1.6ab).

(the power [identified as] *parā* is arisen with only the soaring up of the power [identified as *nijā*] {*tasyā*}).

This power identified as *parā* is described in five terms: is-ness (*astitā*), of the character of not being an object of knowledge (*aprameyatā*), the character of being inseparable (*abhinnatā*), the property of having no end (*anantatā*), and the property of being unmanifest (*avyaktatā*) (SSP 1.9).

2.6. The SSP describes the rise of the third power, *aparā śakti* as:

tasyāḥ spandanamātreṇāparā śaktir utthitā || (SSP 1.6cd).

(the power [identified as] *aparā* is arisen with the mere pulsation of that [power]).

Again, this *aparā* (*śakti*) is described in five terms: the property of being manifest (*sphura(t)tā*), the property of have been manifest (*sphuṭatā*), the property of expansion (*sphāratā*), the property of have been cracked (*sphoṭatā*), and the property of having been expressed (*sphuri(ta)tā*) (SSP 1.10). These terms designate the states of the powers being manifest and the accomplished state of that manifestation.

2.7. In this picture, the rise of powers in the process of the manifestation of the world is sequential. After the rise of the two aforementioned powers, the fourth power identified as *sūkṣmā* comes into play:

tato 'hantārdhamātreṇa sūkṣmā śaktir utpannā (SSP 1.7ab).

(the power [identified as] *sūkṣmā* is arisen after that, only [with an instrument of] the half of *aham*).¹⁸

2.8. This subtle energy is interpreted in five terms like the previous forces: of the property of having no parts (*niraṃśatā*), continuity (*nirantarātā*), motionlessness (*niścalatā*), fixedness (*niścayatā*), and of the character devoid of mental construction (*nirvikalpatā*) (SSP 1.11).

2.9. The last power to manifest in this sequence is *kuṇḍalī*. Following SSP, this is of the character of sensation (*vedana*).¹⁹ This power is also explained in five terms: completeness (*pūrṇatā*), of the character of counter-image (*pratibimatā*), being endowed with excessive force (*prabalatā*), of the character of rapid movement (*proc-chalatā*), and of the character of inwardness (*pratyaṅmukhatā*). What is evident in this description is that *Kuṇḍalī* is the most external among the forces, the most physical, and of the property of sensation (*vedana*). The rise of the *Kuṇḍalī*, following this description, is merely the rise of the most external among the five forces. The yogic goal of liberation is achieved with the rise of all five powers.

2.10. These powers parallel the five powers of Lord Śiva as explained in Kashmiri Śaivite texts: the power of awareness itself (*cit*), the power of bliss (*ānanda*), the power of volition (*icchā*), the power of knowledge (*jñāna*), and the power of action (*kriyā*). The rise of these powers, according to the Trika system, is sequential, and the external expansion of these powers leads to the manifestation of the world, whereas the rise of these powers dormant in living beings leads to self-realization. The technical terms applied in describing these powers, the categorization of the powers as *Parā* and *Aparā*, and the concept of the serpentine power dormant within the body are just a few of the features that allow this yoga system to be compared with the Tantric Kaula system.

¹⁸ For discussion on the Trika Śaiva understanding of I-sense (*aham*), see FLOOD 2004, 147-154.

¹⁹ *tato vedanaśīlā kuṇḍaliniśaktir udgatā* | SSP 1.7cd.

3. The Body as the Cosmos

3.1. Following the second essential doctrine discussed in SSP, the body is identical with the cosmos; i.e., *piṇḍa* is *brahmāṇḍa*. In the first level of instruction, this yoga system teaches that the body mirrors the cosmos and a yogin visualizes accordingly. At the most exalted level, the yogin is considered to have achieved supernormal powers through the realization of this identity. This doctrine, that the body is identical with the cosmos, is the consequence of the first, that the world is the manifestation of consciousness. When there is no real difference between the first pulsating power and its external manifestation, there can be no difference between the external body, the cosmos in a collective sense, and the body at the individual level. The five aforementioned powers consequently manifest themselves within the body and the cosmos, living individually as well as at the cosmic level. The concept of the transformation of these five powers in cosmic and bodily forms parallels the transformation of five powers as described in the Tantras.²⁰

3.2. These five powers each with five aspects are collectively present in the collective mass or *Aṇḍa*.²¹ This primordial cosmic being is explained in five terms: the immanent-transcendent (*aparampara*), the supreme abode (*paramapada*), void (*śūnya*), free from defilements (*nirañjana*), and the supreme self (*paramātman*) (SSP 1.15). This *Aṇḍa* possesses in its first attribute (*aparampara*) the character of *sphurattāmātra* or the property of swelling or expanding only, which, as the cosmic principle, is the power or potency of expansion, or the power to manifest. Furthermore, this attribute, compiled of two terms *apara* and *para*, explains the *Aṇḍa* as a constellation of all *apara* or individual bodies, while having its own *para* or transcendent form. The second attribute, *paramapada*, characterizes this cosmic body as the supreme abode of the yogins in their realized state. This state, as manifest in the individual, has the character of conceptualization (*bhāvanāmātra*). The third attribute, *śūnya*, refers to the empty void as experienced in the yogic trance. Although this cosmic body is the collective being of all that is manifest, this is experienced by yogins as empty void. This emptiness is not to be understood as non-being, but rather, this is of the character of self-existence

²⁰ For discussion on pentads, see WHITE 1996, 206-210. Select examples from the Trika tradition are: *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya* 10, 11; *Spandanirṇaya* on *Spandakārikā* 1, 20; *Mahārthamañjarī*, verse 37 with *Parimala*; *Uddyota* in *Svacchandatantra* 1.3-4.

²¹ The general terms found to designate this collective body are: *parapiṇḍa*, *Hiraṇyagarbha*, and *samaṣṭipiṇḍa*.

alone (*svasattāmātra*). The next term, *nirañjana*, or free from defilements, describes the never-bound, infinitely free nature of this cosmic body. SSP explains this term as *svasākṣātkāramātra*, or of the character of being immediately experienced by the self alone, or of the mode of the self experiencing itself (SSP 1.15). The last of the attributes of *Aṇḍa* is *paramātmā*, the supreme self. These attributes explain the essential nature of *Aṇḍa* as sharing existence and awareness in its undefiled nature.

3.3. This cosmic body is further explained in five terms: supreme bliss (*paramā nanda*), awakening (*prabodha*), the rise of awareness (*cidudaya*), light (*prakāśa*), and the essence of 'I am that' (*sohambhāva*) (SSP 1.22). The first term, supreme bliss, refers to the bliss experienced by yogins while visualizing the cosmic body and is explained in terms such as *spanda* or pulsation. This bliss interpreted in terms of *spanda* further elucidates the expansion of the cosmic body in plurality as the manifestation of the nature of bliss in manifoldness. This pulsating nature of power is another aspect that brings this yogic system closer to the Tantric doctrine. The second term, *prabodha*, refers to constantly awakening nature of this cosmic body. This is interpreted in terms of 'rise' (*udaya*) or 'blossoming' or 'bulging' (*vikāsa*), and at the level of contraction, describes the awakened character of consciousness as the rise of the I-sense. The third attribute, *cidudaya*, explains the rising nature of the cosmic force, sleeping contracted in its dormant form. This awakening of awareness is explained in terms such as *sadbhāva* or the essence of being, as this cosmic presence is the immediate experience of being that permeates all. The term 'light' refers to the self-aware character of this cosmic being which is recognized as 'resting' (*viśrānti*). This can be interpreted as 'I-ness', which is the resting of the self-aware consciousness on itself.²² The last term applied to interpret this *Aṇḍa*, the essence of 'I am that', further explains 'I-ness' in its pure form that collectively permeates all individual I-ness and the bodies that are the foundation of limited I-ness. Along these lines, the rise of this cosmic I-ness is due to the rise of the powers, categorized in five sections, each having numerous characteristics. This state is explained in terms such as the potency of experiencing the entire world (*viśvānubhava-sāmarthyā*).

3.4. In the sequence when the world arises, this supreme mass (*para piṇḍa*) unfolds in the sequence of sky, air, fire, water, and earth, allowing

²² *prakāśasyātmaviśrāntir ahambhāvo hi kīrtitaḥ* || APS 22cd.

physical extension of the powers endowed with consciousness. The rise of various divinities parallels the rise of the cosmos comprised of these vital principles.²³ A yogin endeavors to unite the individual properties such as mind, intellect, and I-sense, with the cosmic forces emanating in the creative process of specific principles. This process of union is called *samarasa-karaṇa* or mingling the fluids. In yogic absorption, a yogin experiences that the cosmic forces and the individual forces are one and the same. This is the awareness of bliss in recognizing oneness in the pulsating and manifold cosmos.

3.5. The last in sequence of the cosmic manifestation to arise prior to individuality is *prakṛti-piṇḍa*, or the mass of the procreative force. All of the individual bodies (*vyāṣṭi-piṇḍa*) evolve from this mass of the procreative force.²⁴ The gendered bodies share the same properties of this *prakṛti-piṇḍa*.

3.6. The individual body is comprised of seven categories:

1. *bhūta-piṇḍa*. This body is constituted of the principles of sky, air, fire, water, and earth. The properties found in these principles correlate with the characteristics of the body.
2. *antaḥ-karaṇa*. The inner senses constitute another category within the body. The understanding of the 'inner sense' in the Nāth literature is somewhat different from that found in Sāṅkhya and other traditions. Following the description found in SSP, the five constituents of the inner sense are the mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*), I-sense (*ahankāra*), conscious organ (*citta*), and consciousness (*caitanya*).²⁵ Although the first three are commonly found in other literature and the understanding here does not differ from the Sāṅkhya understanding, two terms, *citta* and *caitanya* need further explanation. *Citta* is explained as comprised of the properties such as disposition (*mati*), endurance (*dhṛti*), memory (*smṛti*), abandonment (*tyāga*), and ac-

²³ This extension of the cosmic body in iconic form refers to eight divinities: Śiva, Bhairava, Śrīkaṇṭha, Sadāśiva, Īśvara, Rudra, Viṣṇu, and Brahmā (SSP 1.36). This hierarchy contains two additional deities between Śiva and Sadāśiva, while the three Purāṇic divinities of emergence, sustenance, and contraction are also incorporated within the system. The worlds are experienced within these eight aforementioned images. The worlds abiding in these eight images are the worlds pertaining to: insentient (*jaḍa*), life force (*prāṇa*), mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*), law (*dharmā*), aesthetic taste (*rasa*), and bliss (*ānanda*).

²⁴ *tattadbrahmaṇaḥ sakāśād avalokanena naranārūrūpaḥ prakṛtipiṇḍaḥ samutpannas tac ca pañcapañcātmakaṃ śarīram iti* | (SSP 1.37). Although I have cited this passage following MALLIK'S edition, I prefer the version that reads *tato brahmaṇaḥ ...*

²⁵ SSP 1.43.

ceptance (*svīkāra*). *Caitanya* is explained in five terms as well: reflection (*vimarśa*), self-conduct (*śīlana*), endurance (*dhairya*), meditation (*cintana*), and dispassion (*niḥsprhatva*).²⁶

3. *kula-pañcaka*. By the constellation of five (*kula-pañcaka*), three qualities such as *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*, and the living being (*jīva*), and time (*kāla*) are understood (SSP 1.49).
4. *vyakti-pañcaka*. The group of the self-manifest, constituted of five characteristics, includes volition (*icchā*), action (*kriyā*), limiting factor (*māyā*), *prakṛti*, and speech (*vāk*).
5. The five instruments of direct perception, action (*karma*), desire (*kāma*), fire (*agni*), sun (*sūrya*), and moon (*candra*) are manifest in the process of knowing through the senses.
6. *nādī-saṁsthāna* or the system of nerves. Founded upon three principal *nādīs*, *iḍā*, *piṅgalā*, and *suṣumnā*, the body consists of seventy-two thousand nerves.
7. *vāyu-saṁsthāna*. Ten different life forces are distributed in different parts of the body.

3.7. This physiology demonstrates distinct thinking within the Nāth literature where, although some parallels can be drawn from the Sāṅkhya and Tantric literature, it nonetheless is unique and complete in its own. Yogic realization, following this system, is through the reflection upon the body (*piṇḍa-vicāra*). In the process of this reflection, a distinct esoteric physiology is explained, according to which the body is comprised of nine *cakras*, sixteen bases (*ādhāra*), three centers of fixation (*lakṣa*), and five voids.²⁷

3.8. This depiction of the body poses another challenge: on one hand, this yoga endorses 'body' at the center of the yogic practice, while on the other hand, the body, as visualized or examined in this system, does not exactly correspond to the actual physical body. Without the knowledge of the 'yogic body', progress is not possible. However, the knowledge of the body, when received by the practitioner, is also a projection of the cosmos, a layer on top of the corporeal body. Recognition of the body in this system is therefore not the recognition of the corporeal body but rather the realization of the bodily interface, a layer that overarches the

²⁶ SSP 1.43-48.

²⁷ *navacakram kalādhāram trilakṣam vyomapañcakam | samyag etan na jānāti sa yogī nāmadhāraḥ* || SSP 2.31. Instead of nine *cakras*, the common *cakra* system found in Tantric and Nāth literature is that of six *cakras*. The commonly found esoteric physiology of six *cakras* in GŚ 13 parallels *Netratantra* 7.1-2.

corporeal body and merges both the subjective and objective aspects of the body. The knowledge of this yogic body, according to the Nāth yoga, allows a yogin to have knowledge of all sentient and insentient entities.²⁸ A yogin with the knowledge of this body, as explained in the Nāth literature, possesses infinite powers and can assume many forms.²⁹

3.9. This view of the body as the miniature form of the cosmos is yet another aspect that begs for a comparative outlook. The connection of microcosm, the body, and macrocosm, the cosmos, has very ancient precedent in India.³⁰ The interconnections span many traditions: the Vedic idea of Puruṣa, the Upaniṣadic concept of Virāj, Hiraṇyagarbha, and Īśvara with the parallel drawn between the three states of the individual self identified as *viśva*, *taijasa*, *prājñā*, the concept of Lord Kṛṣṇa as a yogin and his projection of the *viśvarūpa* (cosmic form), and the Tantric visualization of the cosmos within the body in the process of ritual installation (*nyāsa*). What changes from one tradition to another is the way the macrocosm is visualized within the body and the experience of omnipresence that is reinforced through the yogic practice. Again, when comparing the Nāth literature and Patañjalian yoga, the concept of the body as the miniature cosmos is more closely aligned to the Tantric literature.

3.10. Following the *Yogasūtra* (YS), the visualization of the sun, moon, or polar star grants the perfection of knowledge concerning the cosmos, stars, and the movement of a particular star, while specific visualization within the corporeal centers grants different perfections.³¹ The different meditative foci of being attentive to all objects and being one pointed are considered to be opposite properties of mind (*citta*) (YS 3.11). On these grounds, it can be argued that Patañjalian yoga does not focus on the cosmic vision, neither does it consider cosmic vision to be characteristic of absorption (*samādhi*).

²⁸ *piṇḍamadhya carācarau yo jānāti sa yogī piṇḍasaṁvittir bhavati* | SSP 3.1.

²⁹ *acintyaśaktimān yogī nānārūpāṇi dhārayet | saṁharec ca punas tāni svecchayā vijitendriyaḥ* || *Yogabīja* 55. in *Gorakṣasiddhāntasaṅgraha* p. 67.

³⁰ For discussion, see WHITE 1996, 15-47.

³¹ The only indication that the sun, moon, and polar star discussed in YS can refer to corporeal centers is Vyāsa's usage of the term *sūryadvāra* (the gate of the sun) in his commentary on YS 3.26. This, however, cannot conclusively indicate the original intent of the author of the *Sūtras*.

3.11. On the contrary, both Tantric philosophy and ritual reinforce the concept that the body is the miniature cosmos. The Trika Śaiva concept of *pūrṇāhantā* (complete I-awareness), and the concept of *viśvamayatā* (awareness of the totality as the self) specifically promoted by Abhinavagupta and Kṣemarāja, have bearing upon the subsequent Tantric development that sees the body as the cosmos in its microcosmic form. *Virūpākṣapañcāśikā* (VP) is one of the subsequent texts closely aligned with the concept of *piṇḍabrahmāṇḍa* discussed above. In it, the body is identified as *piṇḍa* (VP 1.2; 2.15). The entire world from void to earth is the body of the conscious self; just as the body is an object of perception, so is the world (VP 1.2). The constellations of worlds are located within the body and appear as if outside due to illusion (VP 4.1). The concept of *viśvadeha* (the cosmos as the body), found in VP 1.4, reinforces the same concept.

3.12. The Trika philosophical concept of immanence (*viśvamayatā*) parallels early Tantric ritual visualizations and purification rituals that describe the identity of the body and the cosmos. The ritual purification of *bhuvanas* prescribed in chapter five of the *Mālinīvijayottaratantra* (MVT), and the ritual installation within the body found in chapter 6 exemplify such ritual that paved the path to the cosmic vision of the yogins.³² The subsequent development that most Tantric texts recorded rituals and visualizations confirms this idea. Examples can be given from *Bhairavayāmala*, in which the body is comprised of nine *vyūhas*,³³ and from *Kulārṇavatantra*, which describes the ritual installation (*nyāsa*) of various worlds within the body.³⁴

3.13. Although this discussion shows the similarities between the Nāth and the Tantric concepts of the identity of the body with the cosmos, it is not appropriate to declare these concepts as identical. Significant differences constitute the Nāth yogic vision of *prakṛtipiṇḍa* and *vyāṣṭipīṇḍa* and the sevenfold analysis of the individual body. Again, what this comparison confirms is that the Nāth yoga system is comparatively closer to the Tantric tradition; however, it has its own unique categories that warrant its distinct position in the history of Indian thought.

³² This can be found also in *Svacchandatantra* with different number of *bhuvanas* (*Svacchandatantra*, Chapters 4 and 10).

³³ This is found in citation in the Lakṣmīdhara's commentary on *Saundaryalaharī* 34. It is also discussed in KAVIRAJ 1972, 43-45.

³⁴ *Kulārṇavatantra*, Chapter 4.

4. The Yoga of 'Sound' and 'Drop'

4.1. The yoga of the Nāths is the awakening to the expanded reality, wherein the body of the yogin permeates the cosmos and the being of the yogin identifies with the highest reality known as Śiva. Through the practice of *samarasa* (in which the yogin's individuality sequentially merges with the highest reality), the yogin is the cosmos in corporeal form. One of the constituents that distinguish this yogic realization from others is their description of this yoga as *amanaska* (that which is devoid of mind). This is not simply 'no-mind': something is actively present and is revealed when there is no mental activity. The suffix *-ka* used after the term *amanas* refers to the reality that is endowed with 'mindlessness'. This rejection of the mind functions as a rejection of language. And the language describing the body of the yogin as the cosmos becomes merely a figurative expression in order to suggest the yogic experience, for which common language falls short.

4.2. How do Nāth yogins solve the paradox that without language, teaching reality is not possible, as it requires the active presence of mind, and in language the heightened reality cannot be expressed? Their yogic realization is not merely an intellectual achievement, it is finding one's active presence in the cosmic state. The language used as a tool to both direct the progress for this awakening and to describe the yogic experience, therefore, cannot have a single application: that which leads to the truth also opens itself up and reveals the truth in its deeper core meaning. At the initial level, this works as language revealing what is external, while in the absolute sense, it transforms into the inner reality that cannot be deciphered in terms of intellectually cognized external objective phenomena.

4.3. The practice of *haṃsa* exemplifies this phenomenon. Nāth yoga features a primary focus on this yogic exercise of breathing. While the practice of *haṃsa* connects Nāth yoga practice with the Tantric yogic system, this aspect also distinguishes Nāth tradition from the Patañjalian yoga system.³⁵ This *haṃsa*, literally a 'goose', and figuratively a yogin

³⁵ Many Tantric texts can be cited to show the practice of *haṃsa*. The most common one, *Vijñānabhairava* (see, for instance, verses 24-27, 67, 68, 154-156) is historically one of the early Tantric texts to endorse this practice. For the practice of *haṃsa* in the Nāth literature, see GŚ 22, 42, 43, and 47. The Cakra system is yet another category to relate Nāth yoga with the Tantric yoga system and distinguish it from Patañjalian yoga tradition. GŚ 22 explains the rise of *prāṇa* in the *svādhiṣṭhāna cakra* in the navel.

who is able to discriminate between what is real and what is not and not be stained while living in a world tainted by limitation, is not a term to refer to any of these: this is simply a breathing exercise. What happens to the meaning revealed by language? The terminal meaning describes the yogic attributes, the yogin is recognized in his society as Haṃsa or Paramahaṃsa; however, this 'haṃsa', for the yogin, is his practice of breathing.

4.4. This *haṃsa* is considered to be the Gayatrī mantra.³⁶ Now, the natural breathing that sustains life turns into mystical chanting, a yogic practice. What is natural is brought into intentional practice. Just as a 'layered' body subordinates the corporeal body, the layered breathing with imposed meaning as the mantra of Kuṇḍalinī subordinates the natural breathing. On one hand, breathing in itself is not yoga, on the other hand, yoga is breathing. The value imposed upon breathing, with numbered repetitions layered with visualization of various *cakras*, is what constitutes this as a yoga. The two sounds found in the word *haṃsa* correspond to the two binary aspects of male and female, or solar and lunar, further demonstrating the primacy of superimposed meaning that allows identification of this word with a yogic practice. What is significant is the corporeality of the term: understanding its terminal meaning is not the point of this yogic practice. Language becomes a physical function, and what is suggested and the act of suggesting become one. When the yogin actually becomes Haṃsa, a yogic state referring to a realized yogin, he experiences *amanaska* or that which is beyond mind. The yogic experience is found in the mindless state when there is no breathing. The mantra or the language ceases in front of the reality, giving up its essence to the subject who finds his identity with the referent of the word. Ironically, in order to become a Haṃsa, he has to be able to stop the process of regular breathing to free himself from the regular course of *haṃsa*.

4.5. This internalization of language, the corporeality of signs, and the actual yogic awakening as the abandonment of language or the incineration of the suggestibility of language is what distinctively identifies Nāth yoga. Application of terms as both literal and suggestive, and their reference to external objects as well as inner physical phenomena can be further demonstrated in the use of *nāda* and *bindu*, terms found in both Nāth and Tantric literature and absent in the Patañjalian system.

³⁶ GŚ 44-46; *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* 47-50; *Goraksavacanasaṅgraha* 48-51 in BANERJEA 1962, 336.

5. Bindu and Nāda

5.1. The importance of *bindu* and *nāda*,³⁷ in the Nāth yoga system, brings it closer to Tantric tradition. However, *bindu* and *nāda*, at both the cosmic and epistemic levels, differ in a subtle sense from the way these terms have been applied in the Tantras, particularly the Kaula Tantra system. Before entering into differences between the Nāth and Tantric application of these terms, they need to be analyzed in their etymological sense. The term *bindu* can be derived from two different verbal roots: *bind*, which means 'to split', and *bidi* which means 'to know'.³⁸ long with the suffix and according to the first verbal root, the term refers to the separate drop; following the second root, it identifies an autonomous entity in knowing: something that is conscious. The second term, *nāda*, is derived from the verbal root *ṇada*, which means 'to make an unmanifest sound'. *Nāda*, along these lines, refers to the sound that is not heard. In the Tantric and Nāth literature, both of these terms, *bindu* and *nāda*, have various meanings, referring to its external or physical aspect, and the inner modes. In the external sense, *bindu*, or drop, is both the offering to the deities in the *maṇḍala* as well as the seminal drop that gives rise to the body. As a body comes into being through the seminal *bindu*, so is the body of the *maṇḍala*, the cosmic body, vivified with the offering made in the *maṇḍala*. *Nāda*, on the other hand, refers in its external aspect to the horn generally carried by Nāth yogins, tied with their sacred thread.

5.2. The corporeal aspect of the drop is explained in the Nāth literature along the lines that the drop (*bindu*) that causes the body has two aspects, the white drop symbolizing semen and the red drop, blood. These two principles are considered as the aspects of Śiva and Śakti. The red drop also symbolizes the sun while the white drop symbolizes the moon.³⁹ In the esoteric body, the two aspects further represent the two channels of *īḍā* and *piṅgalā*. At the physical level, yogins endeavor to capture the seminal drop within the body through the practice of various *prāṇic* exercises. The practice of *bindu*, in this sense, is the practice of holding the seminal drop within the body. The physical presence of the drop (*bindu*) in the body is described as having the form of a ball located below the

³⁷ For discussion on *bindu*, see WHITE 2003, 241-247; SILBURN 1988, 29-33; VATSYAYANA 1992, 1-24.

³⁸ Yāska derives this from the verbal root *bhid*, which means 'to split'.

³⁹ GVS 36-39 in BANERJEA 1962, 335.

svādhiṣṭhāna cakra. This *bindu* is also considered to be the center upon which a yogic adept focuses in order to enter into the body of the disciple he is initiating into this yoga. The physical drop becomes a means of yogic entry to another realm. Although this identification of *bindu* with *śukra* (GŚ 76) is not unique to Nāth literature and is also found in Tantric texts, the esoteric discussion of three *bindus* and particularly the discussion of *visarga* which often accompanies the discussion of *bindu* found in Trika literature and in the writings of Abhinavagupta, is absent from Nāth writings.⁴⁰

5.3. The Abhinavaguptian concept of *bindu* is not simply corporeal, but also epistemic and cosmic. For him, *bindu* is the light (*prakāśa*) devoid of distinction.⁴¹ Tantras conceive of *bindu* in three categories, and this concept is also found in the chronologically later Upaniṣadic literature.⁴² There are three *bindus*, the drop of fire, sun, and moon found in the base, heart, and eyebrow. Visualization of the *bindu* incorporates the meditation of aspects of fire, sun, and moon within the body. Tantras describing the process of *bindu* and *nāda* do not always follow the same sequence in explaining their precedence. According to *Svacchandatantra* (ST), *bindu* manifests of the *nāda*.⁴³ The drop is the manifestation of the power of action (*kriyāśakti*) endowed with *cit*, consciousness. The manifestation of *bindu* in the form of the objective world is therefore the manifestation of consciousness. The subtle visualization of *bindu* is atop the power of volition (*icchā-śakti*).⁴⁴

5.4. The ST describes this drop as having ten different forms where each of three aspects of fire, sun, and moon interpenetrate and form nine drops visualized in white, red, yellow, black, green, reddish-brown, blue, multi-colored, crystal color, and clear with distinct color (ST 12.154). The collective *bindu* is considered as the tenth, which is compared with the light of the moon, or a flash of lightning (ST 12.155-156). This specific visualization of *bindu* occurs in the Sadāśiva stage. Visualization

⁴⁰ For example, the awakening through the rise of *bindu* in Abhinavaguptian literature is identified as an 'entry into the cave' (*gahvarāveśa*), where *bindu* finds its true identity as the commingled body of light (*prakāśa*) and reflection (*vimarśa*). Abhinavagupta follows the text *Gahvaraśāstra* when describing *binduvedha*. See TĀ 29.244-45.

⁴¹ *avibhāgaḥ prakāśo yaḥ sa binduḥ paramo hi naḥ* || TĀ 3.111cd.

⁴² For threefold *bindu*, see TĀ 3.112134 and the *Viveka* commentary of Jayaratha thereon. Similar discussion is found in *Dhyānabindāpaniṣad* 26-27.

⁴³ *nādād binduḥ samutpannaḥ sūryakoṭisamaprabhaḥ*, ST 11.9ab.

⁴⁴ See *Uddyota* commentary on ST 11.9-10.

of the drop varies according to different levels of spiritual awakening. Following ST, Sadāśiva is considered to be below the veil of the drop, while the drop visualized at the Īśvara level is comprised of four distinct *kalās*.⁴⁵

5.5. Following Abhinavagupta and Jayaratha, *bindu* is spontaneous in the act of knowing.⁴⁶ This autonomy is inherent even when the true nature of the living being (*jīva*) as Śiva is not recognized. When awareness in the highest form of *bindu* arises, the cosmic body that the yogin realizes is experienced as the commingled form of Śiva and Śakti (TĀ 3.111). As there are different subjective stages corresponding to the bodies of the cosmic images, *bindu*, or the consolidated form of knowing, is found in various grades as well. Along these lines, *bindu* is the contracted state of Śiva.⁴⁷

5.6. Abhinavaguptian analysis identifies the drop (*bindu*), and emission (*visarga*) as the contracting and expanding modes of awareness, or the essential nature of the self. The play (*vilāsa*) of *cit* underlies these two aspects. It is explicit that this connection of *bindu* and *visarga* has a Kaulic implication, where *bindu* or semen is necessarily linked with its emission (*visarga*). However, the role of *visarga* is explicitly reversed in the Haṭha yoga practice described in Nāth literature. Tantras explain *bindu* and *visarga* as two phonemic states, in which the *bindu* that evolves through *nāda* which is considered to be the lower *bindu*, is said to cause the rise of the letters. The *bindu* that is above the causation of *nāda* is addressed as *mahābindu*, and the *bindu* that gives rise to all the letters is considered to be the lower *bindu*.⁴⁸ As all mantras are essentially comprised of the letters, so are the letters of the *bindu*, and the recognition of this *bindu* is also the recognition of the source of all mantras. The cosmic image that is endowed with procreative force and is instrumental in the rise of the world below *māyā* is considered to be comprised of *bindu*. Along these lines, not only the *piṇḍa* in its limited form but also

⁴⁵ ST 12.157; 11.10-11, and the *Uddyota* commentary thereon. See also ST 10.1214 and the *Uddyota* commentary thereon.

⁴⁶ TĀ 3.111, and *binduḥ vedayitā paraḥ prakāśaḥ*. . . *Viveka*, TĀ 3.112-13.

⁴⁷ For the Siddhānta Śaiva theology with ample reference to *bindu* and *nāda*, see *Aṣṭaprakaraṇa*.

⁴⁸ RTP 22, and the commentary of Aghoraśiva thereon.

the cosmic image (*sākāra piṇḍa*) that causes the *piṇḍa*, possess the body which is the constellation of the *bindu*.⁴⁹

5.7. As has been discussed, the *bindu* has different functions, some at the cosmic level, others in the individual body, and also the process of the rise of letters (*mātrkā*). Considering these various functions, *bindu* is invoked as the word principle (*śabdatattva*). Significantly, this drop (*bindu*), which is often identified as the binary opposite of sound (*nāda*), is addressed with terms like ‘unstruck sound’ (*anāhata*), which connect both terms at their inner form. As this drop is essentially a means to reveal something that is devoid of objects, it is also addressed as void (*śūnya*).⁵⁰ This explains that the binaries function at the external level, and their inner reality is one. These words refer to the experience which is expressed in other words as the experience of nothingness or void.

5.8. The stimulation or movement in this *bindu* gives rise to the world, and when the *bindu* is motionless, the world contracts. This unfolding, enfolding nature of *bindu* is commonly found in both Tantric and Nāth literature. Due to the generative nature of *bindu* and *nāda*, these are identified with Śiva and Śakti.⁵¹ The presence of this primordial couple is found in the world through the presence of *bindu* and *nāda*, and the realization of Brahma, or the Śiva principle as the essential nature of the self, also occurs through the medium of *bindu* and *nāda*.

5.9. Although frequently addressed together with *bindu*, *nāda* warrants separate analysis, as these two terms often refer to two distinct processes at the cosmic (*aṇḍa*) and individual (*piṇḍa*) levels. Like *bindu*, *nāda* is recognized in various forms, particularly in the process of the yogic practice and in the culmination of yogic absorption. Before addressing the philosophical understanding of *nāda* and comparing it in different Tantric texts, it is contextual to show how *nāda* is practiced in the Nāth tradition. A brief description of *nāda* practice found in GVS follows:

Settled in a relaxed position and one-pointed, a yogin should listen to the sound situated inside [his body] in his right ear, making (*sandhāya*) the gesture [called] *Śāmbhavī*. In whatever location the mind first becomes engaged in sound, [it] becomes fixed there and

⁴⁹ RTP 57-59, and the commentary of Aghoraśiva thereon.

⁵⁰ RTP 70, 71.

⁵¹ Aghoraśiva, *vṛtti* in *Tattvapraśāsa* 27.

dissolves into that [sound]. The practitioner of silence (*muni*) should fix his mind on the sound that he hears when both ears are have been covered with both hands until he reaches the fixed state. In the first practice, a loud sound is heard in various forms; when the practice grows, a subtler and subtler [sound] is heard. In the beginning [the sounds like that] of the ocean, cloud, kettle-drum (*bherī*), and that emerging from a water-fall, in the middle [sounds] arising of drum, conch shell, bell, and a large drum (*kāhala*), and at the end, the sounds of a tinkling ornament (*kinḍī*), flute, lute, and bumblebee: in this way various types of sounds moving inside the body are heard. Even when the loud sound such as that of cloud or of kettle-drum (*bherī*) is heard, [the yogin] should contemplate upon the subtler-than-subtle sound. The sound that is found of the unstruck word (*śabda*), the object of knowledge is inside [that] sound and mind is inside the object of knowledge. The mind gets dissolved there. That is the supreme abode of Śambhu. Whatever is heard in the form of the sound (*nāda*), that is Śakti. That which is formless at the end of all the principles (*tattvānta*) is the supreme Lord.⁵²

5.10. These verses demonstrate the Nāth understanding of *nāda* as a means of yogic practice, with various forms of sound being heard during the course of practice which culminates with the dissolution of the mind in the dissolution of sound. The parallels drawn from musical instruments and natural sounds such as that of the ocean or a cloud provide guidance to the sounds that change from loud to subtle along the path to the inner, unstruck sound (*anāhata*). This equation of *nāda* with Śakti agrees with

⁵² *muktāsane sthito yogī mudrāṃ sandhāya śāmbhavīm | śṛṇuyād dakṣiṇe karṇe nādam antaḥstham ekadhīḥ | yatra kutrāpi vā nāde lagati prathamam manaḥ | tatraiva susthirībhūya tena sārḍham vilīyate | karṇau pidhāya hastābhyām yaṃ śṛṇoti dhvaniṃ muniḥ | tatra cittam sthīrikuryāt yāvat sthīrapadam vrajet | śrūyate prathamābhyāse nādo nānāvidho mahān | tato 'bhyāse vardhamāne śrūyate sūkṣmasūkṣmakam | ādau jaladhi-jīmūta-bherī-jharjharasambhavāḥ | madhye mardalaśāṅkhotthā ghaṇṭākāhalajās tathā | ante tu kinḍī-vaṃśa-vīṇā-bhramara-niḥsvanāḥ | iti nānāvidhā nādā śrūyante dehamadhyagāḥ | mahatī śrūyamāne 'pi meghabheryādike dhvanau | tatra sūkṣmāt sūkṣmatarami nādam eva parāmṛset | anāhatasya śabdasya dhvanir ya upalabhyate | dhvaner antargatam jñeyam jñeyasyāntargatam manaḥ | manas tatra layam yāti tac chambhoḥ paramam padam | yatkiñcin nādarūpeṇa śrūyate śaktir eva sā | yas tattvānto nirākārah sa eva paramēśvaraḥ | GVS 141-149. It needs to be kept in mind that GVS is a relatively later text and not necessarily written by the first Gorakṣanātha. This description can be found in *Hathayogapradīpikā* 4.85-86, which scholars believe to be an earlier text than GVS. Except for reading texts generally attributed to Gorakṣanātha, I have not strictly followed the historical order and I do not want to enter into the murky land of dating Gorakṣanātha or determining some texts as authentic and others not. In the absence of any concrete evidence, the speculation found in scholars' texts, including DWIVEDI 1966, is flimsy.*

the detail where *nāda* and *bindu* are compared with Śakti and Śiva.

5.11. On the basis of yogic awakening, this sound is analyzed in four stages: the stage of the beginning (*ārambha*), of holding inside (*ghaṭa*), of specific selection (*paricaya*), and the stage of accomplishment (*niṣpatti*). These states of yogic awakening are affiliated with four physical centers considered to be opened by distinct sounds.⁵³ The yogic awakening described in these states is compared either with sounds coming from different musical instruments or is described in terms of experiencing the supreme void (*mahāsūnya*).⁵⁴

5.12. Entering into the inner sound is often taught along with the practice of articulation of *Om*. More important than counting a specific number of repetitions or reflecting upon its meaning, *Om* is articulated in order to hear the rise of *nāda* and experience its transformation in various forms and its culmination in the inner sound. Hearing the sound of *Om* or listening to the natural sound of regular respiration is supposed to connect the articulated sound with the inner sound that can be heard with concentration. In this description, *dhvani* and *nāda* often refer to both the external and inner sounds. The inner sound transcends all categories, dissolving the mind, lifting the awareness of the yogin to the state of Śiva (*Nādakārikā* 1).

5.13. *Nāda* is described as the sound that reveals the meaning. In this sense, *nāda* is interchangeable with the Word Principle (*Śabda Brahma*). The recognition of meaning does not occur at the same moment as the articulation of the word, which vanishes after it is spoken. What then gives rise to the meaning is the *nāda* — the exalted form of the sound heard audibly, transformed into the specific form of the inner sound, giving rise to specific awareness (*Yogapradīpikā* 11). This inner sound therefore bridges the sounds heard outside and the inner sound which is awareness itself. What is explicit is the penetrating nature of this sound that is articulated audibly and through inner senses, reaches the awareness of the listener. The articulation of words or expression of language is categorized as occurring in the process of reflection (*vimarśa*), awareness (*bindu*), sound (*nāda*), expression (*sphoṭa*), and word (*śabda*).⁵⁵

⁵³ The *Brahma-granthi*, *Viṣṇu-granthi*, *Rudra-granthi*, or the 'knots' identified with various deities who have the distinct roles of creation, sustenance, dissolution, play the same role: identifying the corporeal body with the cosmic body.

⁵⁴ *Yogapradīpikā* 4.70-76.

⁵⁵ *Śrīpādukodaya*, cited in MM, p. 86.

Although these terms are sometimes used alternatively, here they express a sequence where inner awareness manifests in the form of sound, giving rise to the external body of awareness in the form of language.

5.14. *Nāda* is divided into two: the higher *nāda* that gives rise of the lower *nāda*, and the lower *nāda* that abides in each individual, giving rise to consciousness. The higher sound that collectively embodies all the lower sounds found in different individuals is addressed with multiple terms that designate distinct roles this *nāda* plays revealing various functions and attributes.⁵⁶ This *nāda* is also the ground where mantras evolve (MM 24).

5.15. When *bindu* and *nāda* are interpreted with this depth of meaning which incorporates the aspects of both cause and effect, the world is merely an expression of *bindu* and *nāda*. As the two primordial principles that give rise to the world, Śiva and Śakti, *bindu* embodies the cosmic body and as *haṃsa*, or two sounds corresponding to *bindu* and *nāda*, these two refer to the individual body (*pinḍa*).⁵⁷ In the form of articulated sound, *nāda* is categorized into ten forms.⁵⁸

5.16. This elaborate practice of *nāda* typically demonstrates two tendencies: external instrumental sound that is practiced with the use of a musical instrument, or is heard, such as the sound of the waves in the ocean or the clouds, and the inner sound that is heard in different centers of the body during the meditation, the sound that is commonly heard when

⁵⁶ Some of the terms used describing the attributes are: *sumāṅgalā*, *mālinī*, *mahāmāyā*, *samanā*, *anāhatabindu*, *aghoṣā*, *vāk*, *brahma*, *kuṇḍalinī*, and *vidyā*, MM 16, 17.

⁵⁷ *Goraṅgasamhitā* 16.220-224.

⁵⁸ TĀ 5.97 deals *nāda* by the synonymy term *rāva*, quoting *Brahmayāmala Tantra*. Jayaratha quotes some stanzas in the commentary of TĀ 5.100 (possibly from the very *Brahmayāmala*) which also deals it as *rāva*. The description found in GVS and that found in the *Brahmayāmala Tantra* agree in categorizing *nāda* in various forms. According to *Brahmayāmala* description, *rāva* is tenfold, addressed in terms of *ciṅṭī*, *cincīṅṭī*, *cīravākī*, *śaṅkha śabda*, the sound of *tantrī* (*tantrī-ghoṣa*), the sound of the flute (*vaṃśa rava*), the metallic sound of brass or copper (*kāṃṣya-rāva*), the sound of a cloud (thunderclap), the sound of a raging fire (*dāvanirghoṣa*) and the sound of *duṇḍubhi*. As the categorization of *nāda* varies in different texts, one commonly found categorization is of nine *nādas*, where the eight sounds are addressed as *ghoṣa*, *rāva*, *svana*, *śabda*, *sphoṭa*, *dhvani*, *jhāṅkāra*, and *dhvaṅkrta* and the ninth is the all-penetrating sound with no distinct name. For discussion on categorization on *nāda* in the classical texts, see *Nādakārikā* by Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṅṭha with the commentary of Aghoraśivācārya: ST 11.5-9 with the *Uddyota* commentary by Kṣemarāja; *Saṅketapaddhati*, cited on the *Dīpikā* commentary on *Yoginīhrdaya* 2.63. For secondary literature on *nāda*, see PADOUX 1990, 96-105, 214-215, 276-277.

ears are closed. In both these external and inner modes of sound, there is a tendency of going towards what is subtle. When a particular level is reached, however, both modes are dropped. The approach is explicit: to enter into the inner and inarticulate sound by means of the external sound, and finally to allow the mind do dissolve into emptiness. This approach is addressed as *amanaska yoga*.

5.17. Although the description varies as to which specific sound is the highest, a method for listening to the inner sound as a means of absorption is common to all the practices. Different terms used to express the sound, such as *dhvani* (MVT 12.12) or *śabda* (ST 11.6,7), refer to the same inner sound. The articulation of the first sound in the process of the unfolding of the cosmogony is subsequent to the touch (*sparśa*) of Śiva and Śakti. This *sparśa* also expresses the inner experience of touch a yogin feels where mind is absorbed and the sound dissolved. This dissolution of sound is measured in extremely subtle increments, the most subtle stage being *unmanā*, the state that transcends mind. *Svacchanda Tantra* explains the higher stages of the practice of sound with the terms *vyāpinī*, *samanā*, and *unmanā*, where the void that is experienced and is the stage of volition governed by volition itself is *samanā*, *vyāpinī* as the state where transcendent void is experienced and the aspect of knowledge is governed by will, and *śakti* as the state where action is governed by will. This *śakti* is the power that gives awareness of meaning and it is where the first *nāda* evolves (*Uddyota*, ST 11.5).

5.18. A common categorization of sound found in Tantric literature is fourfold: struck (*hata*), unstruck (*anāhata*), both struck and unstruck (*anāhata-hata*), and beyond struck and unstruck (*anāhata-hatottīrṇa*). The first level of the sound is the physical, articulated in the throat or palate, comparable to the *vaikharī* level of speech. The second, accordingly, is compared with *madhyamā* level of speech and is considered as the origin of the articulated sound. As this is not the sound coming through physical limbs, this is addressed as *anāhata*. The third one is identified as the sound that is heard when the eardrums are closed. This is the unstruck sound, as there is not an external physical instrumentality other than the inner flow of the life-force (*prāṇa*) in the channels inside the body. *Uttīrṇa* is the sound that resides in the supreme void and is heard when mental conception ceases. Due to its nature of not being grasped by the mind, it is also addressed as *asparśa* (untouched).

5.19. What is noteworthy in this discussion is that the application of *nāda* in Haṭha yoga texts is explicit: they identify the *nāda* practice of listening to the inner corporeal sound; Nāth yogins are often found using one or the other musical instrument, including a trumpet, explicitly connecting the cosmic understanding of *nāda* with its physical application in the course of yogic practice. The Tantric description of *nāda*, although parallel in many respects, is not identical in its application. Singing songs in different *rāgas*, for example, is not an integral part of Tantric *nāda* practice, as is the case with Nāth yogins. Often found practice of *dhūn*, melodious sound, among the Nāth yogins, is essential to sing the vernacular songs, *dohās*, which keeps this esoteric system alive among the non-elites. The physical articulation of sound in this yogic tradition illuminates the hierarchy of *hata* or 'struck', and *anāhata*, the 'sound occurring without effort'.

6. The Language of the Siddhas

6.1. Two aspects of the Nāth yoga literature, their cosmogony and metaphysics, and their yoga of the recognition of the self in its cosmic form, utilize an abundance of metaphors. Borrowing directly from the earlier Siddha tradition and Tantric literature, Nāth writings are rich in the use of suggested meaning (*dhvani*). Because yogic or esoteric experience often defies language, the application of metaphors and indirect expression in order to describe yogic awakening can be a tool to understand the deep structure of the cognitive processes discussed in Nāth literature. The fundamental aspects, the awakening of Kuṇḍalī, the recognition of the body as identical to the cosmos, and the realization of the world as the play of consciousness are all expressed through select metaphors. Some typical examples are:

1. The play of consciousness (*cidvilāsa*): The term 'play', whether interpreted as a sport or 'acting', derives from common-sense experience to describe the cosmic process.
2. *piṇḍa* and *aṇḍa*: The terms 'mass' and 'egg' here refer to the body and the cosmos. The term *piṇḍa* does not literally mean 'the body', nor does 'egg' mean the cosmos.
3. *saṅkoca* and *vikāsa*: The manifestation of the world and its retraction to the original nature of pure consciousness is explained here in terms of the blooming and folding of lotus. Some Tantras compare this with the process of contracting and unfolding process of the female genitalia. The application of these terms

in order to describe the cosmic process depends upon metaphoric understanding.

4. *vedha*: Piercing, is used in this description to describe subtle yogic awareness when certain centers within the body are addressed as pierced. In the case of piercing the Nāth yogin's ears for wearing a set of big earrings, this term is literal. However, there is no actual piercing inside the body that gives rise to the notion of cosmic awareness. The sensation a yogin feels in certain *prāṇic* functioning is described as 'piercing', comparing the experience of being pierced by a needle.⁵⁹
5. *prabodha*: 'Awakening' describes yogic experience and compares with the waking state of consciousness.
6. *tamarasa*: 'Mingling the fluid' describes the yogic experience when two cosmic forces are experienced as mingled together. The experience of the highest reality in some 'fluid' nature is metaphoric.
7. The terms such as *niṣpatti* for attainment of the yogic awareness, literally applied to describe an extraction of juice from the soma plant or removing husk from the grains of rice, or *uttīrṇa* for describing the level of *nāda* that is outside ordinary experience and transcendent to instrumental sound, literally 'floated' above in water, are further examples of metaphoric expression for the yogic experience.
8. Terms such as *hamsa*, literally 'goose', applied either to describe a yogic process of breathing, or to identify the yogin practicing the specific course of yoga, are further separated from their literal application.

6.2. Unique to the Nāth tradition is the practice of Haṭha yoga and alchemy as tools for actualizing the body as the microcosm that reflects the entire cosmos. This belief is deeply rooted in their expression of the rise of Kuṇḍalī, breathing exercises, and the dissolution of mind. The language used in the alchemical process of purifying mercury or the transmutation of base metals into gold parallels that utilized for the process of yogic awakening. Noteworthy terms include *vedha* (penetration), here referring to transmutation of base metals into gold, and the initiation called *vedha-dīkṣā* for the practice of Kuṇḍalī. The *svedana* (sweating) of mercury parallels the sudden rise of Kuṇḍalī with the resulting

⁵⁹ For the *Vedhamayī* initiation and the concept of *vedha* in Indian alchemy, see WHITE 1996, 312-322.

heat and sweat in the body of practitioner. The *bodhana* (awakening) of mercury parallels the yogic awakening through the rise of Kuṇḍalī. Terms such as *mūrcchana* or *māraṇa*, used in the alchemical process of the purification of mercury, parallel those that describe the Haṭha yogic approach to control mind. The term *bindu* has a wider yogic implication in the Nāth literature and refers to both mercury and the seminal drop in the body.⁶⁰ As the available texts on Indian alchemy predate those on *Haṭhayoga*, it can be argued that the yogic tradition has utilized the alchemical language, with the literal being alchemical discussion and the metaphorical found in yogic application. However, on the contrary, all these terms, such as *svedana* (sweating), *mūrcchana* (fainting or swooning), *māraṇa* (killing), and *bodhana* (awakening) are possible only by a conscious being, in this case the body, mind, and Kuṇḍalī of the yogin. Even the term *bindu* that refers to the drop of mercury appears to be metaphoric, as the first application to seminal drop is closer to its verbal root \sqrt{bid} = to know. Piercing *cakras* with the rise of Kuṇḍalī is more literally related to the term *vedha* than is the purification process of mercury.

6.3. Nāth literature possesses many descriptions of yogic practice with the rise of the serpentine power dormant within the body addressed as Kuṇḍalī. The select constituents of the Nāth yoga system discussed in this paper, the concept of the identity of *piṇḍa* and *brahmāṇḍa*, and the concept of the yoga of *bindu* and *nāda*, both are linked to the practice of Kuṇḍalī. Techniques such as *amanaska*, *haṭha*, *samarasa* and so on, all describe Kuṇḍalī yoga. Different metaphors discussed in this paper serve as markers to the gradual or sudden awakening of Kuṇḍalī, with some terms referring to the process and the others, to its result.⁶¹

6.4. With this exploration into a few specific terms that describe the yogic process and the highest state, it is quite clear that the metaphors applied in the Nāth yoga literature relate to bodily emotions and their transformation in the yogic process, physically-felt heat, and sound as instruments for the physical transformation that corresponds with the esoteric experience.

⁶⁰ This issue is addressed in detail in WHITE 1996 ("Chapter 9: The Dynamics of Transformation in Siddha Alchemy" 263-302).

⁶¹ For discussion, see SILBURN 1988.

6.5. Now the question is, what is the significance of the application of language in this description? The drop or *bindu* is actually referring to the light (*prakāśa*) that is identical with reflection (*vimarśa*), which, in essence, is awareness itself. The *nāda* or sound is referring to something soundless. Both are collectively identifying a yogic state beyond mind (*amanaska*). It is as if the categorization of drop and sound, at their inner and external levels, offer their essence in the process of revealing, in actually granting experience in the flash of which a yogin recognizes the meaning.

6.6. What is significant in the application of both drop (*bindu*) and sound (*nāda*) as two instruments of yogic absorption is their corporeality. Instead of intellectual realization, this is something physically felt. The seminal drop is physically felt in its emission. A yogin, by holding it within the body and not allowing emission, can feel its active presence in the body. The yogic meditation to hold semen within the body makes the yogin conscious of its actual presence. The sound, along the same lines, is felt within the body before it can no longer be heard. The application of language, in this yogic process, becomes a means where language drops its external meaning, stops referring external objects and returns back to its inner meaning, along with its 'felt' and 'corporeal' reality, before being consumed in the void of mindlessness.

6.7. This corporeality of language in the inner yogic meaning transforms the yogic recognition of limited bodily awareness to the cosmic awareness. In other words, it is the language that allows the yogin to not only express but also experience his cosmic presence, his totality, or his expansion. As the absence of sound is identified as a different level of sound, or as the drop is interpreted in both its cosmic and corporeal forms, so does language express the reality present, in an actual absence of language. When the language and that which is being expressed become one, that One reveals itself, becomes its own language and experience.

6.8. The general categorization and esoteric meaning are both derived figuratively, and the primary meaning of words refers to external objects. Both fall short in the case of all the terms analyzed in this context: the yogic meaning that refers to breathing practice is not the etymological meaning of the term *haṃsa*. The real meaning merely mimics regular breathing. When this practice unites the practitioner with the breath, he achieves the identity of *Haṃsa*, now in a figurative sense. The next set of two terms, *bindu* and *nāda*, poses a different situation. The primary me-

aning derived from the verbal root is lost in common use when the term *bindu* refers to a drop and *nāda* to commonly heard sound. The subjective experience and the unmanifest sound are not figuratively found: the esoteric becomes the primary meaning and experience, somehow lost and regained through this practice. What is metaphoric is the external world, the objective or phenomenal reality. What is real is not metaphoric, and the essential experience encapsulated in these terms distilled through yogic practice is not derived through secondary meaning. The term *amanaska*, or the state beyond mind, is recognized and conceptualized by the mind. As mind gazes at its end, so does language, speaking that which cannot be spoken.

7. Conclusion

7.1. The first conclusion to draw from the above description of Nāth yoga is its intimate relationship with Tantric tradition, although multiple Tantric systems coexist, even within the Śaiva Tantras. The Śaiva and Bhairava Āgamas focus their teachings differently, and indeed, each and every Āgama demonstrates a different practice. This variety complicates the task of comparing Tantric and Nāth yogas. Nonetheless, it may not be an overstatement to say that Nāth yoga stands as a unique Tantric system. The overlap found in the Nāth and Tantric systems can be compared to the distinctions found among various Āgamas, or at least the Śaiva and Bhairava Āgamas. The comparison of select terms common to Kaula Tantric and Nāth traditions, nevertheless, suffices to distinguish between these traditions. These parallels and differences support the practice of distinguishing between other Indian traditions where the conceptual differences are subtle.

7.2. The central theological components, the world as the play of consciousness, the focus on the visualization of the body as the cosmos, and the focus on the yoga of *nāda* and *bindu* are a few constituents that make this yoga system distinctly different from Patañjalian yoga. The positive attitude towards *Siddhis* or supernormal 'perfections' is yet another differentiating element.

7.3. The practice of Kuṇḍalī and the *cakras* makes this yoga distinct from the Patañjalian system and allows comparison with Tantric yoga. The concept of the body as the seminal form of the cosmos

with all cosmic forces dormant within the body relates to the concept of Kuṇḍalī, the cosmic force found within the body of each and every individual.

7.4. There are nevertheless multiple shared factors visible within the yogic traditions of India: they all instruct that specific mental training and visualization, chanting, or other physical practices culminate in an esoteric experience which is identified as a higher realization. In light of this awakening to the higher reality, the ordinary experience of the commonsense world becomes subordinate. Therefore, the approach here is not to claim that there is no interconnectedness among the broader yogic systems, but only to compare some tenets that relate the specific yoga system of the Nāth yogins to Tantric yoga.

7.5. A brief investigation into the language of the Nāth Siddhas reveals the deep relationship of this tradition to the Tantric Śaivite and Sahaja Siddha traditions. If vernacular Nāth literature is explored through this lens, the plethora of metaphors for expressing cosmic union, recognition of the inborn nature of divinity and of the body as the cosmos, and spiritual awakening parallels those found in the songs of the Sahaja Siddha tradition. The language of Nāth literature also manifests the phenomenon in which different traditions in medieval India merge rather freely. The establishment and fluidity of sects and cults render them more vibrant than previously conceived.

Abbreviations

APŚ	Ajaḍapramāṭṛsiddhi
AY	Amanaskayoga
GŚ	Gorakṣaśataka
GSS	Gorakṣasiddhāntasaṅgraha
GVS	Gorakṣavacanasaṅgraha
MM	Mahārthamañjarī
MVT	Mālinīvijayottaratantra
RTP	Ratnatrayaparīkṣā
SSP	Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati
SSS	Siddhasiddhāntasaṅgraha
ST	Svacchandatantra
TĀ	Tantrāloka
VP	Virūpākṣapañcāśikā

YS Yogasūtra

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BEATE SCHMERMBECK

Persische zarathustrische monāḡāt: Edition, Übersetzung, Tradition und Analyse (Göttinger Orientforschungen, Iranica, Neue Folge 3). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008. 350 S., 68,00 EUR, ISSN 0340-6334, ISBN 978-3-447-05780-6.

Dieses Buch ist eine Abhandlung über die auf Persisch verfassten zarathustrischen Gebetslieder, in denen die individuelle Kontaktaufnahme des Betenden mit Gott und der Ausdruck seiner persönlichen Gefühle gegenüber Gott akzentuiert werden. Da sie nicht dem klassischen Schriftkorpus dieser Religion angehören, wurden sie bis heute in der Forschung vernachlässigt. Erstmals wird eine Sammlung von 23 dieser Gebete im letzten Kapitel (V) dieser Arbeit textkritisch ediert und ins Deutsche übersetzt (S. 166-343). Ausschlaggebend für die Auswahl der Gebete durch die Autorin war das emische Verständnis der Zarathustrier von einem Text – d. h. die Bezeichnung als *monāḡāt* „Gebet“ (S. 155). Die Gebete sind nach ihrer sprachlichen und dichterischen Form – in Versform, *maṣnawī* (M. 1-15), *ḡazal* (M. 16-18), *qeṭ'e* (M. 19) und *robā'ī* (M. 20), oder in rhythmischer Reimprosa (M. 21-23) – chronologisch zusammengestellt. Das älteste in dieser Arbeit vorgestellte Stück geht auf Dastūr Zartošt Bahram Paždū (13. Jh.) zurück, der als erster diese Tradition in den zarathustrischen Kontext rückte (S. 36). Das der Edition zugrunde liegende Material besteht vornehmlich aus Gebetsstücken verschiedener Ausgaben des Xorde Avesta sowie aus mündlich tradierten Liedern (M. 15, 21, 22), die die Verfasserin bei zwei Feldforschungen im Iran aufgenommen hat. Die persischen Originaltexte werden in persisch-arabischer Schrift auf einer Seite abgedruckt. Die deutsche Übersetzung befindet sich jeweils daneben.

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