

Songs of Transformation: Vernacular Josmanī Literature and the Yoga of Cosmic Awareness

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Introduction to the Josmanī Tradition

Josmanī, the Sant tradition found in northeastern Nepal and among the Nepali-speaking community in Assam, India has a documented history going back over two hundred years.¹ Although other Sant traditions of the Indian subcontinent have received voluminous attention, the Josmanī tradition has not been explored within the framework of contemporary scholarship. This article examines the private and public domains of Josmanīs, their Yoga practice, and their social life within the context of their worldview. The approach adopted here is comparative and historical with a focus on other contemporaneous Hindu traditions. Besides Josmanīs, several other Sant traditions flourished during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Nepal.² This study is therefore not exhaustive; it explores the role of the syncretic traditions prevalent in the northeastern region of the subcontinent.

There can be no disagreement about the identification of the Josmanī as a Sant tradition emerging from the same pan-Indian spirit that infused the Āḷvārs and Nāyaṅārs, Kabīr and Nānak, and the later Sants of northern India.³ Josmanīs identify themselves as Sants (see Sharma 1963: 239, 272, 283, 318–19, 346) and distinguish themselves from other vernacular traditions like the Nāth Jogīs.⁴ The common constituents of this tradition are the same as those of the medieval Sants of India. Like other Sants, Josmanīs are syncretistic, although the nature of syncretism differs in

each region of the subcontinent. In the case of the parallel movements in South India or Maharashtra, Sants blend the concepts of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava traditions. For Kabīr or Nānak, the focus is on the synthesis of Hindu and Muslim characteristics.⁵ In the context of Josmanīs, they blend the Śrī Vaiṣṇava Bhakti tradition with the Nāth Yoga tradition prevalent in northern India.⁶ The use of the vernacular language rather than Sanskrit, the focus on various forms of *rāgas* for singing devotional songs, the focus on *nirgun bhakti* or love for the formless God, and the presence of deities in images are aspects that Josmanīs share with other Sants. The devotional Vaiṣṇava elements expressed by Josmanīs in the language of divine union suggest the Bāuls of contemporaneous Bengal, geographically a hundred miles away.⁷ The distinctive features of their Yoga practice, the mystical expression of divine union through songs sung with the support of musical instruments such as the *ektār*, the openness to all classes of society in their spiritual quest, and the application of vernacular language are nuances shared by the Sahaja Siddhas and Nāth Yogins.⁸ Approaches to the dissolution of mind are identified as *amanaska* or *laya*⁹ and are constituents common to the Siddha tradition, Nāth Yogins, and the Sants, including Josmanīs.

This article investigates the private and public dimensions of Josmanī practice, viewed in light of other esoteric traditions of India. With a focus on the yogic practice of these Sants, it compares core elements of Josmanī practice to Nāth Yoga and Tantric traditions. And by reading the collective message of songs directed to the social realm, it compares the strategy of these Sants with other Sant traditions. A closer look reveals that the peripheral force exerted by the Sants on the wider culture unfolds as a self-criticism of the Hindu system and a revolt against the elitist, central Vedic system. Again, this change parallels the effects of other Sant traditions, where the focus is on peaceful reformation rather than violent change. This self-critical social transformation pioneered by the Sants is a result of their profound cosmological vision, in which the totality (or macrocosm) and the body of the Yogin (or microcosm) are interlinked with the yogic awakening embodying diversity. In making a case for the role of Yoga in personal and social transformation, the article focuses on the writings of Śaśidhara Dās (ca. 1747–1849) and Jñāna Dil Dās (1821–83), as their esoteric writings exemplify the genre of Josmanī literature. Furthermore, Śaśidhara demonstrates exemplary

knowledge of Yoga, while Jñāna Dil provides the link between Yoga practices in the private domain and social welfare.

Josmanīs maintain the uniqueness of different Sant traditions found in various parts of the subcontinent. Despite their efforts to synthesize various beliefs and practices and their identical social agenda, the singular nature of regional language and the particular socio-cultural environment in which these traditions arise render the varying traditions unique. It is neither the content nor message per se that differs among these regional schools; rather, their very presence opens the possibility of a new paradigm of blended spirituality. Uniquely, Josmanīs blend the Nāth Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava Bhakti traditions by incorporating their esoteric Yoga practice with devotional songs.¹⁰ Traces of their Yoga can be found in early Sahaja writings, while their Bhakti orientation is common to various *nirgun* devotional movements.

Sant traditions in general synthesize different streams of faith by blending and fusing similar instructions found in different traditions. In the context of Nepal with parallel Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva traditions present from its earliest history, the role of the Josmanīs with its focus on blending Nāth Yoga and Vaiṣṇava Bhakti is similar to that of the Maharastrian Sants. In some instances, the Josmanī tradition can be identified as a Vaiṣṇava tradition;¹¹ in others, their writings utilize the monistic Śaivite worldview, as found in their chant, “*jīva hai śiva, śiva hai jīva*”—A living being is Śiva, and Śiva is a living being (Sharma 1963: 271). Unlike the Śaiva Sants or Nāth Siddhas, Josmanīs can be identified by the *kañṭhī* beads made of *tulsī* wood worn around their necks (Sharma 1963: 501),¹² and unlike the Vaiṣṇavava Sants, they are recognized by their *dhunī* (fire-pit), *cimṭā* (fire-tong), *tumbī* (water-vessel made of gourd shell), and matted hair. The Kuṇḍalī Yoga practiced by Josmanīs comes from the Tantric and Haṭha yogic heritage, rather than a Vaiṣṇavite background.

Entering the Josmanī Cosmos

Religious traditions cannot always be distinguished by their beliefs alone. The name of the movement itself is often crucial in distinguishing the traditions. Maintaining a distinct identity remains significant for those who enter the Josmanī spiritual path. Unlike traditions that have

specific rituals at the core or certain scriptures to define a unique identity, Sant and Nāth traditions center around the importance of their preceptor—the Guru. To enter the Josmanī spiritual path requires a commitment by the student, and initiation grants the Josmanī identity to the disciple. Josmanīs have three levels of initiation. At the first level, called *śābdī* (listening to sound), the practitioner receives instruction of the Haṃsa *mantra*. The aspirant is not yet considered a Sant, and his social status among Josmanīs is equal to that of the householders. Nor is he authorized to initiate other people. The second level, called *guru-mukhī* (orientation towards the Guru), incorporates yogic positions and gestures (*mudrā*), the practice of *nāda* (sound), and sequential instruction in the rise of Kuṇḍalī.¹⁴ The practitioner is authorized to give the first level of initiation. The final initiation, called *guru-pañjā*, is “the seal of the Guru,” which includes five instruments: *bāñī* (the *mantra*),¹⁵ *jholī* (bag for alms), *tumbā* (bowl or water-vase made of gourd), *cimṭā* (fire-tong), and *tār* (one-string musical instrument). Initiated Sants can be recognized by their matted hair and by the fire maintained where they practice meditation. When asking for alms, they utter phrases such as “*pūrṇasat jāgo nām*” (Rise! The Name! The complete truth!).¹⁶ Practitioners consider themselves to be resting upon the feet of the Guru, following the path that is beyond action (*karma*), with their focus upon the void (*śūnya*). With the practice of Kuṇḍalī, Josmanīs endeavor to kindle the inner fire, called *brahmāgni*, whereupon one abandons all the external rituals.

These initiation rituals, with their ensuing practices and the extensive reverence found in Josmanī compositions, reveal the significant status of the Guru in this path, a factor shared with other Nirgun Sant traditions of India. Josmanīs stress that the Guru manifests in three distinct aspects: the physical being who initiates, the Guru who plays the role of uplifting life in the world and guiding the practitioner in his pursuit of liberation, and the esoteric state found at the moment of the rise of Kuṇḍalī.¹⁷ In external form, the Guru provides the initiation of the Haṃsa *mantra*, and at the esoteric level, the Guru is found in the highest state of awakening through the practice of *nāda* (sound).

The practice of sound plays a significant role in the Josmanī tradition. With the utterance of specific words—such as *ahaṃ* and *so’haṃ*—meshed with melodic *rāgas* accompanied by the sound of the *ektār*, the

practitioner turns his attention inwards to specific sounds arising and reverberating within the body. The practice is at once varied and far-reaching, with inner and external practices, instrumental and vocal manifestation, vocalizing specific words, or singing songs. It is also manifest in the social awareness articulated in Josmanī songs. Songs thus have the dual purpose of individual transformation achieved by realizing the self as Śiva and social transformation found by pursuing peace and justice and maintaining *dharma*.

In order to understand Josmanī Yoga and to compare it with other yogic traditions, three significant aspects require particular focus: Josmanī cosmology, Kuṇḍalī Yoga, and Nāda Yoga. In their cosmology, Josmanīs did not create an entirely new vision, but rather adopted nuances from the Nāth, Sahaja and other Tantric traditions. These traditions, in turn, presume several of the categories of the dualistic Sāṃkhya and non-dualistic Advaita Vedānta. Nevertheless, reading strands of thought in their own original context is often highly unlikely, as all the subsequent traditions appropriate early categories to their own context. Śaśidhara compares Brahmā and *māyā* to a tree and its shadow, explaining that Brahmā is pure consciousness while *māyā* is impermanent consciousness. In this analogy, Josmanī cosmogony has resonances of Advaita Vedānta. Śaśidhara proposes that, with the desire to be many, the three powers of volition (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and action (*kriyā*) evolve from Brahmā. Furthermore, he explains that Brahmā itself manifests in five forms: individual self (*jīva*), time (*kāla*), action (*karma*), self-essence (*svabhāva*), and impermanent consciousness (*māyā*). Like Brahmā, *māyā* assumes five forms: illusion (*māyā*), sky (*ākāśa*), void (*śūnya*), power (*śakti*), and the procreative factor (*prakṛti*).¹⁸ Śaśidhara's depiction of the rest of emanation closely resembles Sāṃkhya cosmogony. However, he finds it necessary to clarify the specific status of the mind, the intellect, and the individual self. He explains that mind (*man*) is composed of passion, aversion, delusion, and the three qualities of fear, grief and joy, while the intellect (*buddhi*) allows the mind to grasp pain and pleasure. The individual self (*jīva*) is explained as the one bound by *māyā* and is addressed as *ātmā* when freed from illusion. The self is considered to be higher than qualities (*guṇa*) and beyond words, out of the realms of beginning and end.¹⁹

In another instance, Dharma Dil Dās explains that a spark of light

flashes from the vision of God and from that *māyā* manifests. Intellect (*mahātattva*) emerges from part of *māyā* that parallels the rise of the three qualities, and subsequently the body.²⁰ Śāśidhara, describing his vision of cosmogony, explains that the entire world flows out of a drop of volition (*ikṣyā*),²¹ comparable to the self-effulgent *līṅga*, also addressed as the golden embryo, from which infinite worlds come into being once this cosmic egg splits into parts.²²

Obviously, Josmanī cosmology is a blend of Nāth Yoga with the additional overlay of Advaita Vedānta co-existing with elements of Sāṃkhya. However, Josmanī metaphysics cannot be solely aligned with any of these traditions, as the above description is clearly unique to Josmanīs. Their cosmological vision is distinctly different from Śrī Vaiṣṇava theology, although Josmanīs often identify themselves as belonging to this specific tradition. The Yoga practiced by Josmanīs needs to be understood in light of their cosmic vision, as this blending and merging of all available concepts that can be accommodated within the broader picture of their daily life and the practice of Yoga is crucial to their public life.

Mirroring their cosmology, the Josmanī understanding of the body grounds their esoteric practice of awakening through *nāda* (sound) and *bindu* (drop). With regard to this aspect, Josmanī Yoga aligns more closely to Tantric and Nāth yogic systems than to Pātañjalian Yoga, the devotional Śrī Vaiṣṇava tradition, or the Advaita school of Śāṅkara. According to Śāśidhara, the body that manifests on earth has water as its father, earth as mother, air as teacher, and fire as friend. The game of keeping beings on earth is played by the moon and the sun, who alternately saturate the world with ambrosia and desiccate it.²³ Josmanīs stress that the goal of their yogic practice is to recognize the identity of the self with Brahman. The body, following Josmanī cosmology, is the contracted form of the cosmos, containing within it all divinities, various worlds, and the supreme abode beyond time.²⁴ Along these lines, there is no other creator than the very drop (*bindu*) which, when consolidated, turns into the body.²⁵ Due to this nature, the body is Avadhā, the sacred site of pilgrimage.²⁶ Consequently, the purpose of yogic practice is not to reject the perfections (*siddhi*), but rather to achieve them.²⁷ Josmanīs recognize the spiritual aspect of the body by visualizing it as the contracted cosmos in the course of practicing Kuṇḍalī Yoga.

Kuṇḍalī Yoga

My ninth Guru is a caterpillar. The very patient one, [he] changes [his] body, having performed strong penance. He, changing his body, flies away transforming into a butterfly. Seeing this role, I got my awareness.
—Śaśidhara Dās²⁸

For the Josmanīs, Yoga is a path to achieving individual transformation, and they use the metaphor of a butterfly to describe this process. The transformation is found in the identification of *piṇḍa* (the body) with *aṇḍa* (the cosmos). The fundamental practice employed to achieve this is *ajapā*. Identified as *haṃsa*, it represents the breath flowing out and in with *ha* and *sa* sounds. In the course of meditation these two breaths represent the solar and lunar aspects, the two channels in the body, and ultimately, the drop (*bindu*) and the sound (*nāda*). Although inseparable, the repetition of *ha* and *sa* focuses the two distinct categories of Josmanī Yoga: the aspect of *bindu* through the rise of Kuṇḍalī, the serpentine power abiding in the body sleeping, coiled from the time without beginning; and the practice of *nāda*. Interlinked and found within the body, the rise of these two aspects grants perfections (*siddhi*) as well as liberation (*mokṣa*). These two approaches are considered to be a direct means to the dissolution (*laya*) of the individual self (*ātmā*) in the Brahmā, identical with Guru, Śiva or Hari. This makes the rise of Kuṇḍalī pivotal to the spiritual quest of the Josmanīs.

In the preliminary stage, the adept focuses on physical loci in the body to cultivate an internal balance between the sun and the moon, so that the Kuṇḍalī may move freely. The practitioner monitors the flow of two subsidiary channels, the *piṅgalā* to the right and the *īḍā* to the left. These flows successively possess the character of the sun and the moon, respectively, with their functions of drying and soaking. When the life force surges through the central channel, *suṣumnā*, the Yogin merges within the flow of bliss, liberated from both pain and pleasure.²⁹ Parallel to this discipline is the practice of five gestures (*mudrā*)—known as *khecarī*, *gocarī*, *agocarī*, *cācarī*, and *unmanī*—in which the initiate focuses attention on different sense organs. In *khecarī-mudrā* the mind is controlled in the tongue, and in *gocarī-mudrā* natural bliss is experienced in the nose. In *agocarī-mudrā* the adept focuses the mind in the eardrum,

and the *cācarī-mudrā* is practiced with eyes closed. The *unmanī-mudrā*, the final gesture, is to recognize Brahmā within the mind.³⁰ In another description, Śāśidhara explains that *unmanī* is the gesture of fixing the mind in the navel.³¹ Apparently, it is related to the sense of touch. The accomplishment of these gestures is described as the opening of the central channel and the rejuvenation of the body with the free flow of Kuṇḍalī.

In the initial stage of Kuṇḍalī practice, Josmanīs stress *ajapā* meditation, observing the regular flow of breath with the sound *ha* and *sa*. Considered an integral part of Kuṇḍalī practice, this meditation progresses to an attention on the life force, counting the breath and focusing on various centers within the body.³² In Josmanī practice this counting culminates with the direct experience of the supreme divinity, addressed as Śiva or Hari. When the practice culminates in the eyebrow *cakra* and the recitation of *ajapā* concludes, the adept reaches the sacred abode of Mānasa, the lake in Kailāśa where Śiva abides, or Prayāga, where Hari dwells.³³ These instructions also trace the inner pilgrimage of the Sants, where the body is the contracted form of the cosmos and the sacred sites located at various confluences are found in different centers of the inner channels within the body. The above description of Mānasa and Prayāga also refers to the initial stage of Kuṇḍalī in the Vaiṣṇavite center and the final culmination after the awakening of Kuṇḍalī at the shrine of Śiva. Once again, Josmanīs incorporate into their routine the core elements of Tantric Yoga that have been filtered through the Nāth system, including the practices of Kuṇḍalinī, *ajapā* meditation, and inner visualization.

The practice of Kuṇḍalī relates closely to internalized rituals, specifically the fire ritual performed mentally within different centers of the body. For Josmanī practitioners, the fire-pit (*dhunī*) has two forms. In external physical manifestation it is the fireplace near the Yogin, while the internal *dhunī* refers to the inner fire that one kindles by balancing two flows of breath identified as *prāṇa* and *apāna*.³⁴ It also represents the fire at the cremation ground, which, in the internalized ritual, represents the confluence of Gaṅgā and Jamunā (Yamunā).³⁵ This inner fireplace also serves as the fire-altar for oblation. The description of the altar with four constituents of the self comprising the four corners of the fire-pit, the sacrificial fire blazing at the center encircling the *yonī* of the deity Yoganidrā, and *nāda* and *bindu* atop the *yonī* has resonances of the

Tantric inner sacrifice (*antaryāga*).³⁶ The centrality of Yoganidrā in this description suggests the influence of the *Devī Māhātmya*, the popular text among Śākta practitioners in northern India.

As the abode of deities and the object of meditation, the body is the center of Josmanī Kuṇḍalī practice,³⁷ requiring preliminary preparation in which the nature of the body, mind and the self is closely observed.³⁸ As Śaśidhara sings: “I search [the Brahmā] within the body, and concentrate within the body; I sing and meditate within the body, and contemplate within the body.”³⁹ Rather than isolating the self from the body, Kuṇḍalī practice integrates it within the highest reality, addressed as the self, the divinity or the Guru. To recognize this embodiment is the highest goal of Yoga, culminating with innate bliss that liberates an individual from suffering. “[Let us] gradually merge this very body within the self and bring it from the house of suffering to the house of bliss.”⁴⁰

This process of integration through the rise of the coiled serpentine power sleeping at the base of the spinal cord requires a visualization of the Sanskrit letters, generally counted as 52 in Josmanī tradition. According to Śaśidhara, recognition of these letters grants knowledge of the body (*pinḍa*) and the cosmos (*aṇḍa*).⁴¹ The heart of the letters is *ahaṃ*, whether it is interpreted as the I-sense where concepts rise and collapse or as the acronym of the Sanskrit letters where *a* and *h* refer to both the first and last letters and the vowels and consonants. Josmanīs exploit this multivalence of *ahaṃ* and begin their Kuṇḍalī practice with its regular repetition. Śaśidhara instructs advanced initiates to practice *nāda* in an isolated place at the appropriate time, melodiously reciting *ahaṃ* and increasing the number of recitations.⁴²

The meditation upon *ahaṃ* incorporates the practice of *bindu* (drop) with visualization of the letters.⁴³ The esoteric body envisioned by the Yogin is the foundation of self-awareness and is considered as the abode of the letters. Although there are some variants, Josmanīs generally describe their microcosm in terms of six *cakras*.⁴⁴ These *cakras* are the expansion of these letters as well as the ground within which self-awareness arises parallel to the rise of the Kuṇḍalī. As mind is the single support for cognizing the alphabetical order, the mind itself is therefore considered to be the highest *mantra*.⁴⁵

Both Kaula Tantric and Nāth Yogic literature center around the concept that the rise of the serpentine power results in the flow of ambrosia that

nourishes the whole body.⁴⁶ Josmanīs utilize this depiction of the awakening of the serpentine power and apply it metaphorically in terms of the play of Holī, a festival of colors. Drawing upon the Vaiṣṇavite tradition of Kṛṣṇa and *gopīs* playing with colors, Abhaya Dil Dās internalizes Holī as the play of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* within the body of the practitioner. This play is depicted as closing all the openings of the body, finding the union of *puruṣa*, the self, with *prakṛti*, the twenty-five constituents of the body. This union, established with the play of color, manifests as love. In the same song, Abhaya Dil describes the practice of *nāda* in which the sound of ten different instruments parallels the play of Holī resulting in the highest bliss.⁴⁷ Although this description utilizes some Sāṃkhya terms such as *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, their soteriology is not identical to the Sāṃkhya one, as the liberation described here is not found with the isolation (*kaivalya*) of *puruṣa* from *prakṛti*, but rather in their union.⁴⁸ This description parallels the Śaivite notion of the union of Śiva with Śakti. Furthermore, the yogic absorption described here in terms of Holī results in the union of binaries, such as the body and the self or matter and consciousness. As the play of Holī is the play of colors, soaking what is colorless with color, this play endorses the union of the self with the world.

Although *cakra* meditation is shared by all Josmanī practitioners, no single specific model dominates. Jñāna Dil, in one description, locates Kṛṣṇa in the throat *cakra*, Śeṣa at the confluence of Gaṅgā and Jamunā, and *sat-guru* in the *satya* abode found in the cave of the bumblebee.⁴⁹ Josmanīs are also flexible in the number of *cakras* practiced: in some instances they say that the path of the practice of the sun with twelve digits and the moon with sixteen digits is difficult, and by focusing on the four digits in the base *cakra*, the benefit of other practice can nonetheless be obtained.⁵⁰

Following the Josmanī manuals, meditation on these inner centers occurs in the morning as part of the injunctions for the dawn. Details of this process of meditation are congruent with the common six-*cakra* instruction, albeit with some variations, such as the eight-petaled lotus inside the *anahada* (the vernacular for *anāhata*) and the *ājñā cakra* containing golden-colored ambrosia. Josmanīs generally refer to a smoky space above the eyebrows as the residence of fire.⁵¹ This fireplace is different from the center of fire meditated upon in the navel.⁵² As Josmanīs

build the fire—called *dhunī*—and meditate sitting beside it, the fiery place above the eyebrow is the substrate of the Guru. This fits with the general meditation of the third eye containing the fire, specifically found in descriptions of Śiva. In the account found in Josmanī literature there are two categories of fire: the first is located in the belly where it digests food (*jāṭharāgni*), and the second is the fire of Brahmā (*brahmāgni*). These two fires, when not properly maintained, can result in the imbalance of mind and body. The remedy for disharmony in *brahmāgni* is to peacefully practice breathing without sound. Physical balance is maintained by consuming soothing food and directing the breath through the lunar *īdā* channel, thereby controlling the solar *piṅgalā* channel.⁵³

Realization of the self is at the pinnacle of Josmanī Yoga practice, and their approach blends existing esoteric practices found in different traditions. The realization of the self, however, must be read in light of the Josmanī understanding of the self, which is not a mental state removed from the physicality of the body, but rather embedded within it. The physical symptoms of achievement that are manifested parallel the advancement in the yogic skills of the practitioner. Śaśidhara, in one instance, explains that when the body trembles and one starts feeling “whether I am here or not,” when brown smoke billows from the mouth and the nose and eyes darken, then one should know that the self is awakened.⁵⁴ These symptoms are not felt in a momentary flash; rather they recur day after day. The practitioner is reported to experience further, different symptoms, like inner light flooding the body and the light digesting all the pollutions (*mala*), leaving the *jīva* pure and free from bondage.⁵⁵ According to this description, the Yogin sometimes faints from the bliss of *laya* (dissolution) or perhaps he loudly utters the names of the deity. His body may begin throbbing, or the Yogin may sit silently with no sense of the body (*videha*) at all.⁵⁶ These symptoms of the waking of the self parallel the rise of Kuṇḍalī. When the Kuṇḍalī rises, according to Śaśidhara’s account, fingers pulsate, heat on the forehead increases and flashes like lightning appear.⁵⁷ Śaśidhara explains that one may hear various sounds, all of which culminate in the sound of a flute.⁵⁸ Following his description, when these symptoms occur, the gate of Brahmā opens and ambrosia flows from the palate.⁵⁹ Along the lines of Śaśidhara, various visions follow when the lock at the base of the body (*piṇḍa*) which keeps the self sleeping is opened.⁶⁰

The awakening of the self that parallels the rise of Kuṇḍalī is, as stressed above, physically felt. Furthermore, this realization, generally explained in terms of the identity of the lower self with the higher self, is not of the type where a drop merges into the ocean. This is rather the identity when the ocean empties within the drop: “When the ocean is captured into a drop, to whom shall I tell this and where.”⁶¹ This yogic approach therefore is not the union of the *piṇḍa* with *aṇḍa*, but rather the actualization of *aṇḍa* within *piṇḍa*. The world within flux and the one beyond change are both merely aspects of the self. The limitations of the body and the cosmos can be found, but the self that permeates both the body and the cosmos cannot be found. This realization of the self results with actualization of the entire world within the realm of the individual self.⁶² As both the realization of the aspect of *bindu* and the function of Kuṇḍalī along with techniques for its rise are at the center of Josmanī Yoga practice, so too is the practice of *nāda* or sound essential in corporeal and extra-corporeal aspects. The corporeal presence of these two visual and sonic constituents remains within the body, even in the state of liberation.

Nāda Yoga

Nāda, or sound, is the pivotal feature of Josmanī Yoga. In the form of instrumental sound articulated by the *ektār*, the sound of the voice singing *dohās* in specific *rāgas*, the chanted repetition of specific names or words such as *aḥaṃ*, or in the form of inner sound, *nāda* permeates all levels of Josmanī Yoga practice. Josmanīs are familiar with the numerous *rāgas* popular in northern India, and they utilize them as accompaniment to their songs.⁶³ Josmanīs maintain that these external sounds, though constantly maintained in practice, are only the means to awaken the inner *anahada* sound. Along the lines of Śāśidhara, the Yogin merges in ecstatic bliss when this inner *anahada* is heard.⁶⁴

As with the practice of Kuṇḍalī, the practitioner of *nāda* also meditates on the regular breathing sound of *haṃsa*. The focus of practice is *aḥaṃ*: as the adept articulates each of these three letters (*a-ha-m*), he rests in their reverberation. Compared to the sound of the bumblebee, *nāda* first awakens the fire in the belly (*jāṭhara*), removing diseases caused by imbalance between the three bodily humors.⁶⁵ Instructions for the

articulation of *ahaṃ* suggest that the practitioner should imitate the sound of a big bell. When hearing this sound, one should be in a solitary place, undisturbed by any other sound. As the purpose of *nāda* is to dissolve the mind in sound, the Yogin is instructed to fix his mind on this sound, not moving to any other object. The strength of this sound that stops mind from roaming culminates with the kindling of the fire of Brahmā.⁶⁶ Focus on the sound of the breath itself, *haṃsa*, pacifies the mind, as does chanting specific sounds such as *ahaṃ* or *oṃ*. As the Yogin controls his breath, he merges into the inner unstruck sound (*anahada*), considered to permeate the gross (or physical) and subtle (or psycho-psychical) bodies. The external sound identified as *japā*, *haṃsa* (the regular breath identified as *ajpā*) and *anahada*, all dissolve at this final state of yogic absorption. In this state of nothing but void, the Yogin, Śāśidhara says, remains holding the esoteric aspect (*bhedi*) of the sound that never collapses, even when the distinction between *piṇḍa* and *aṇḍa* is dissolved.⁶⁷

Parallel to the Tantric understanding, the inner unstruck sound, *anahada*, is described in Josmanī literature in nine different forms. The first rise of inner sound is considered to be *hata*, or struck. With the rise of this struck sound, the petals of all *cakras* start functioning and the sound permeates the entire body and the cosmos. This awakening corresponds to the awakening of sixty-four *yoginīs* within the body of the Yogin. The esoteric understanding of the acts of Kṛṣṇa is obvious in this description, wherein the rise of Kuṇḍalī and the awakening of *cakras* is explained in terms of the rise of *nāda* and the dance of sixteen hundred *gopinīs*.⁶⁸ While embodying the external application of *nāda*, Josmanī Yoga system also stresses the rise of inner sound. Following the natural beat of the *anahada* sound, the individual dissolves within the self. When the self and inner sound become one and identical, this is addressed as *oṃ*, the sacred sound.⁶⁹

In the practice of repeated articulation of syllables, whether of *ahaṃ*, *so'haṃ* or *oṃ*, the primary focus is on the final letter—*m*—as this is where all the syllables end. Due to this, the letter *m* is considered to be prominent among all the letters.⁷⁰ Josmanīs highlight this practice by saying that the individual who recognizes the letter *m* is capable of opening all the locks.⁷¹ Here again, this *m* does not simply signify the final sound that is articulated. It often refers to the individual self, the

jīva, which is the foundation of the external world. In Josmanī writings, whenever the letter *t* occurs, they are referring to the absolute self, *tat* (that), and the letter *m* used in these sequences refers to *tvam* (you) or the individual self. Thus, articulation of the sound *m* corresponds to the expression of individuated self, and merging of that sound (*m*) in the inner unstruck sound refers to the merging of the *jīva* with Brahmā. The focus upon the self as the goal of spiritual quest in both the yogic practices of *bindu* and *nāda* subordinates the devotional element widely found among the Sant traditions, including the Josmanīs.

Keeping *nāda* and *bindu* in the heart is considered to be the highest form of Yoga within this tradition. One transforms into Śiva, and the goddess Pārvatī serves him, as Josmanīs explain, by this practice of *nāda* and *bindu*.⁷² Jñāna Dil metaphorically compares the rise of the inner sound to thunder, the roaring of clouds in the sky. As this expanse of sky or the empty void is found within the heart, it is commonly addressed as a cave (*guphā*) where the sounds reverberate. The sound heard in this practice is described as resembling actual instruments such as a conch shell, bell, or flute. When this sound is heard, the Yogin is supposed to “bathe” or merge into the confluence of Gaṅgā and Jamunā found within his body, again metaphorical expression for the two channels. This rise of inner *nāda* allows one to merge into the central channel (*susumnā*), which grants the vision of the Guru through the rise of the Kuṇḍalī to the thousand-petaled lotus. This access to the higher lotus is expressed metaphorically by asking the Yogin to collect the lotus.⁷³ In these metaphoric expressions, water sometimes simply refers to channels inside the body, while at other times it refers to the fluid that rejuvenates the body. When *nāda* and *bindu* are said to first manifest and the “water” is held in reserve, Jñāna Dil is referring to this inner enlivening fluid the Yogins are supposed to achieve in order to reach the yogic state. In this context, the abode of the Guru is addressed as *alākṣa*, or beyond the gaze, and as *nirañjana*, or free from defilements.⁷⁴ These two words combined, pronounced in the vernacular as “*alakh nirañjan*,” is one of the phrases used when the Yogins ask for alms.

This practice of *nāda* has its own cycle of time, which is compared to the months of a year. Abhaya Dil attributes different characteristics to the ensuing rise of different months within the body. According to him, all fourteen cosmic planes shower into light when the month of Asāṛh (June–

July) occurs. In Śrāvaṇa (July–August), the body is drenched with inner rain, which is described as rain without clouds. Abhaya Dil asks the Yogins to drink the ambrosia of this rain. In Bhādom (August–September), lightning fractures the inner sky and the cave of the heart, the inner void, fills with light. In Asoj (September–October), the eight-petaled lotus blooms where the swan rests. In Kārttika (October–November), the Yogin performs his actions without being touched by the defilement of the world, like a lotus on water. In Maṅsīr (November–December), the Yogin experiences peace and conquers the five principles and the three qualities. In Pūsa (December–January), the unstruck sound manifests and mind rests there. In Māgha (January–February), the Yogin focuses on the eyebrow, the residue of action is incinerated, and one recognizes that which is *agam* or beyond reach. In Phāgun (February–March), the Yogin plays in different bodies. In Caitra (March–April), one integrates with the thousand-petaled lotus and is capable of entering into another body (*parakāya praveśa*); one sees light everywhere and *nāda* pervades the body. In Vaisāṣa (April–May), one engages in the higher *surtha*.⁷⁵

The practice of *nāda* essentially merges with the practice of Kuṇḍalī when *nāda* becomes internalized. Although several conscious contemplative methods are instructed in the practice of Kuṇḍalī and the approach of *nāda* is to dissolve rather than be aware of different *cakras*, both practices start with *ahaṃ* and culminate with the recognition of this *ahaṃ* as the highest self or the Guru. Like those encountered with the rise of Kuṇḍalī, similarly there are obstacles to the rise of inner *nāda*. Although these appear to be obstructions, they are in truth merely symptoms of the awakening of the self, as these symptoms diminish after the body is purified of defilement. Śāśidhara describes these symptoms as if the entire body is being cooked. Following his description, the Kuṇḍalī sometimes rises and comes roiling up to the throat. Sometimes the head hurts or one feels giddy. The Yogin may feel faint. White, brown, or multi-colored smoke may billow out of the mouth and nose. Sometimes a sweet taste fills the mouth. One may feel acute pleasure or as if the belly is burning. Different symptoms, such as dry mouth, growling belly or the appearance of nightmares, may occur at this time. These troubles, which arise on their own, also dissipate on their own. Śāśidhara teaches that these are not symptoms to be worried about. Instead, other diseases do not come once these symptoms of the obstacles of the Yoga occur. The

inner fire rises to recognize the *vikāras*, the imbalances, of the senses. Once the *vikāras* are removed, those symptoms will not recur, whereupon there remains only bliss.⁷⁶

This practice of *nāda* culminates with the “practice of the self” (*ātmāko abhyās*), and as the practice develops, one feels acute bliss. When bliss manifests, the mind dissolves into the self. The dissolution of mind parallels the rise of various sounds that resemble musical instruments such as a flute. In the midst of all these sounds, the Yogin hears one acutely delightful sound into which he concentrates his faculties and dissolves.⁷⁷ However, the rise of the fire of Brahmā may occur with or without these symptoms. Nor is there any specific sequence in which these symptoms appear, as different persons may have a different imbalance of physical humors, and these symptoms are to remove those physical imbalances located within the body.⁷⁸

A common constituent of the Sahaja genre is the stress on Kuṇḍalī and the Yoga of sound (*nāda*), and these themes are consistently present in Josmanī practice—in the hybrid or vernacular songs with esoteric themes that are sung by mendicants. Common to other contemporaneous North Indian traditions, Josmanī songs are thematically more closely related to the Bengali-speaking Bāuls as well as Bhojpuri-speaking Jogīs.⁷⁹ They share the same themes as other vernacular traditions. Overwhelmingly consistent are the metaphors that refer to the rise of Kuṇḍalī, including that of the sun and the moon, a serpent and a bird, and the two rivers Gaṅgā and Jamunā and their confluence. A door, womb, or cradle and a cowherd are among the most common images. The festival of Holī is used in the metaphoric sense of playing with the color of illusion (*māyā*) and being tainted or colored. Sants utilize the Vaiṣṇavite theme of the play of Kṛṣṇa to describe the soul’s course of bondage and awakening. The transformation stressed by these Sants and Siddhas does not remain confined to spiritual awakening only, but also addresses the social message of justice and harmony in a society. The non-dual cosmic vision of these Yogins aspires to the recognition of the oneness of humankind, fragmented into classes and divided due to illusion into multiple castes.

The Public Domain of Josmanīs

The above description suffices to outline the cosmology of the Josmanīs

and their yogic practice. The abundance of references to Kuṇḍalī practice and the practice of the rise of inner *nāda* aligns the Josmanīs to alternative currents within the Hindu tradition that reject class hierarchy, a focus on ritual, and a rigid adherence to one central scripture or one master. This tradition further proposes an alternative vision of fluid spirituality with the assimilation of differing perspectives and practices. Key elements that distinguish Sant traditions from those of Nāth Yogins are their societal aspects and their link to the Vaiṣṇavite tradition, and this is consistent with the Josmanī tradition too. As has been mentioned, naming plays a significant role in the identity of the traditions. *Nāth*, or “lord,” is the common designation for Śaivite Yogins, whereas *dās*, or “servant,” is common among the Sants.⁸⁰

The Josmanī tradition emerges as one independent tradition within the Hindu system, not in the process of establishing doctrinal absolutes, but in the effort to reject views (*mata*) that confine the truth. According to Śaśidhara, *mati* (intellect) and *mata* (view) are synonymous.⁸¹ In his understanding, it is the intellect that gives rise to different views and the truth cannot be captured in any one of them.⁸² He considers dogmatic views such as the statement that reality is of the character of *pūrṇa* (complete) or *śūnya* (emptiness) to be the products of *mata*, or opinion.⁸³ The truth, in his understanding, is that pure consciousness and bliss cannot be captured by concepts or confined within a particular view.⁸⁴

The Yoga practice that embodies the cosmos within the awakened vision of a Yogin does not tally with a disintegrative vision of duality and absolutism in any form. Josmanīs therefore find it necessary to reject adherence to any dogmatic views, although they are consciously establishing a distinct tradition with their own rituals and practices. Sant traditions paradoxically reject absolutism of all sorts, and while doing so, they propound their own absolutes. The integral approach of the spiritual quest found among the Sants parallels their social vision: the society in their paradigm is not where the periphery is controlled and defined by the gravity of the center, but rather where the center and periphery are mutually defined and controlled. As the peripheral is not considered dangerous and polluting but rather reviving and redefining, societal order is not flowing out from the center but is interdependent and changing. The absolute harmony of the body or the society is often disturbed. This harmony is maintained through self-controlling practices and austerities

that allow the “body” to release the elements that disrupt the balance out of the system.

With the blend and fusion of similar instructions found in different traditions, the Josmanī synthesis of different streams of faith represents an organic, internal renewal of Indian spiritual practices. Their synchronic worldview, in which they seek to demonstrate that religious differences are merely differences of name and not of substance, did not include Christianity. While the early Sant tradition appears to have absorbed spiritual heritage from both Hinduism and Islam, this is not the case with Christianity. In the Josmanī encounter with missionaries (Sharma 1963: 485, 497), they urged their followers to resist conversion, as chronicled in popular songs. Their explicit openness to spirituality is not an effort to find an alternative religion, nor is it an effort to reject their Hindu social identity. These aspects of social identity and social encounter are clear in the life and works of Jñāna Dil Dās. His social philosophy can be identified as a hermeneutics of correction, wherein social reform entails remaining within the system and deconstructing the absolutes from within.

The self-realization proposed by Josmanīs mirrors their vision of social transformation. The awareness that these Sants brought to a society struggling against superstition and suppression demonstrates the wider social application of Yoga, with language as an important tool in individual and social transformation. As found in the Josmanī Yoga practice, the aspirant links to the cosmos through *dhunī* or sound. Likewise, the individual connects himself through language to the society, and this speech must be “acceptable” in order to be understood and shared. The vernacular language of Josmanī Sants reflects their intention to reach the larger societal body.⁸⁵ Sanskrit was not a common tongue, and composition in Sanskrit would limit the scope of dialogue. The use of folklore and vernacular indicates their integrative vision of spirituality.

At a personal level, these Yogins embrace simplicity, refraining from the accumulation of wealth. Speaking of his own life, Jñāna Dil describes the forest as his abode and the wild plants as his food, with meditation his constant practice.⁸⁶ Josmanīs criticize intellectualization in the instruction of the self. According to Jñāna Dil, neither intellectual exercise nor external worship and rituals can grant liberation.⁸⁷ They stress that there is violence in the ritual offering of animals, which is still common today

in North Indian societies. Criticism of animal sacrifice is a common constituent among Vaiṣṇavite traditions.

Most significantly, the instruction that liberation cannot dawn in the absence of social justice is a principle the Josmanīs observe in their personal lives. Jñāna Dil declares that those who suppress the poor people (*garipmārā*), whether or not they perform rituals, cannot liberate.⁸⁸ Josmanīs criticize the *varṇa* system which, they felt, in addition to physical bondage, denies spiritual liberation to the poor and the dispossessed. As a consequence, they allow everyone into their tradition, with no reservation for a particular *varṇa* or gender. Separating humankind into various *jātis* and similar discriminatory actions is compared to a scaffold, as this does not allow the self to liberate. Jñāna Dil compares bound individuals to geese and liberated ones to swans.⁸⁹ He is also aware of the changed social structure where those who have been outcast can maintain *dharma* following the Josmanī path, while Brāhmaṇas fall from their primary duty.⁹⁰ Jñāna Dil considers Brāhmaṇas ignorant about their *dharma*, teaching that one cannot be liberated, even by knowing all four Vedas, if one engages in the violent act of killing or eating meat.⁹¹

The Josmanī criticism of social stratification on the basis of *jātis* serves to infuriate the Brāhmaṇas of that time, who “outcast” Jñāna Dil. The Sant expresses his reaction in songs, saying that his objective is not to criticize but only to wake them up.⁹² In another instance, Jñāna Dil warns individuals not to abuse the Vedas or the *tulsī* plant, which again clarifies that his mission is not to develop a counter-movement but rather to maintain *dharma* by finding social balance.⁹³ He instructs not to abuse “poor” Brahmanas, but rather enlist their support in the struggle against darkness.⁹⁴

Josmanī, like any other tradition, is a product of, and a slave to, its own history. Josmanīs embody the esoteric Yoga found in Tantric and Nāth traditions, and they incorporate the devotion and mystical songs common to Sant and Siddha traditions. This openness confers on them two responsibilities: at the personal level they endeavor to achieve self-realization and Kuṇḍalī awakening like Tantrics or Nāth Yogins. In the public sphere they embody all the strata of their society, striving for collective welfare, where the aspects of societal awareness are shared with the writings of Sants such as Kabīr or Nānak. The consistency of the *bhakti* element among the Sant traditions, in particular the Josmanī, distinguishes

them from Yogic and Tantric traditions in general. Josmanīs in particular exemplify the fusion of Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite traditions. Their singing of *dohā* songs accompanied by a one-string instrument, and their use of the vernacular, and their experiment with “folk” lyrics in singing are a few elements that bring Josmanī spirituality from elite circles to the public in general.

The Josmanī Sant tradition in Nepal, like other, similar movements in India, reshapes spirituality, bringing esoteric teachings to the public and challenging social injustice and subordination. Most importantly, their approach is not to establish a new religion. Like other Sants, Josmanīs also focus on social reform, which they consider integral to spiritual awakening. These movements do not tend to establish a separate identity; rather, it is an effort to confront the negative aspects by maintaining membership within the broader community. Just as their spiritual awakening is not a process of alienation, but rather the harmony of cosmic forces, so too is their social understanding. The role of a Sant as detailed in this study is to tie together otherwise untidy factors in society. Their Yoga practice combines personal spiritual awakening with social harmony and thus confronts the individuality that rejects a wider social harmony.

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Notes

1. The only primary source for this study is Janaklal Sharma’s *Josmanī Santa Paramparā ra Sāhitya* (1963), which provides select writings of the *sants* of this tradition. I am aware of other unedited writings of Josmanīs but have not been able to include them here. I have noticed the lack of a single standard for the transliteration of the vernacular and have therefore adopted the simplest transliteration: *ām* for the nasal with long *a*, *im* for the nasal with long *i*, and *ūm* for the nasal with long *u*.

2. A manuscript in the possession of Sat Brahma Dil Rāi lists thirty-six

names of Sant traditions in Nepal. Joshmanī appears as the twenty-fourth (see Sharma 1963: 525). Prominent among them are the Śaiva and Śākta Sants, the Vaiṣṇava Sants including those identified as Bindu Vaiṣṇava, Śrī Vaiṣṇava, Nāth, Kāpālīka, Kaula, the left-handed Tantric practitioners (Vāmamārgī), and the *sants* following Vajrayāna Tantric Buddhism. The history of the Sant traditions mentioned here can be established even independently of the list found in Sharma.

3. Dariyā (ca. 1634–1780) was a famous *sant* poet of Bihar. Josmanī writings can be classified into four categories: texts such as *Vairāgyāmvara*, verses that follow classical Indian metrical systems such as *anuṣṭup* meter, songs in traditional Indian *rāgas*, and *dohās*. A *dohā* is a rhyming couplet in which each line consists of half-lines made up of feet of 6+4+3 and 6+4+1 *mātrās* respectively (see McGregor 1993: 515). The Josmanī *dohā* compositions unmistakably demonstrate traces of early Siddha literature, and the writings of *nirgun sants* such as Kabīr and the later North Indian *sants* such as Dariyā. In this article I have identified as *dohā* only verses that are so identified by the editor of *Josmanī Santa Paramparā ra Sāhitya* (Sharma 1963).

For discussion of the central constituents of the Sant tradition, see Vaudeville (1987a). For the blending of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava beliefs and practices in the Sant tradition, see Vaudeville (1987b).

4. Josmanīs identify themselves as *sants* (see Sharma 1963: 239, 272, 283, 318–19, 346). Sharma, the editor of Josmanī texts, has identified this tradition as a Sant tradition too. The present study agrees with this identification.

5. Although it was most unlikely that a Hindu-Muslim conflict would occur in eighteenth-century Nepal, the influence of Indian *sant* writers that focus on Hindu-Muslim unity is visible in Josmanī writings (see Sharma 1963: 158–59).

6. For citations in which Josmanīs identify themselves as Śrī Vaiṣṇavites, see Sharma 1963: 436, 501–2. Their yogic system and the view of the cosmos, however, hardly resembles the orthodox Śrī Vaiṣṇava tradition. They wear a necklace of *tulsī* beads as a sign of their Vaiṣṇava orientation.

7. Central concepts of esoteric practice found in Josmanī tradition—such as the *cakra* system, the concept of the correlation between microcosm and macrocosm, or the songs written in “twilight” language—are

common to Sahaja Siddhas, Nāth Yogins, Bāuls, and Josmanī Sants. For the study of Bāuls, particularly their *cakra* system, see Das 1992: 388–432.

8. This includes the Bhojpuri-speaking *jogīs* and their songs. For details of these mendicants, see Henry (1988). This singing as a genre can also be compared to the narratives of King Bharthari and Gopī Cand (see Gold 1992).

9. For reference to *amanaska* and *layayoga* in Josmanī literature, see Sharma 1963: 221.

10. Nuances of both Vaiṣṇava Bhakti tradition and Śaiva Tantric Yoga can be found in the earliest writings known of this tradition, the song of Dhirje Dil Dās (date unknown), a *sant* some generations prior to Śaśidhara Dās. His *dhrupada*, “*hari bhajo bhāi*” (Brother! Chant the name of Hari), the instruction to meditate on the root of the void, and contemplation upon the unstruck (*anahada*) sound, demonstrate this cultural blending (see Sharma 1963: 149).

11. A Josmanī tradition is recognized as Śrī Vaiṣṇava or Śrī Viṣṇu-svāmī. See the letter of Śiva Kumār Rāi in Sharma (1963: 501–2).

12. Abhayānanda, section 39, verse 1 (Sharma 1963: 271).

13. See letter of Śiva Kumār Dās Rāi, dated July 22, 1938, in Sharma (1963: 501).

14. I have used the frequently found term Kuṇḍalī, instead of Kuṇḍalinī, although instances can be found of the term Kuṇḍalinī (see Sharma 1963: 264).

15. The *mantra* given at the initiation of *guru-pañjā* is: *oṃ anādi ādi satsaccidānanda pūrṇa akhaṇḍa akālamūrti nirbhaya yoga yogānta siddhi siddha josmaṇī kalāpūrṇa parasat sat sat*. Śaśidhara Dās mentions this in the section *Guru Pañjā* in his *Vairāgyāṃvara* (see Sharma 1963: 215).

16. The details of this initiation rely on the section *Guru Pañjā*, in Śaśidhara Dās’s *Vairāgyāṃvara* (Sharma 1963: 213–16).

17. This description relies on the section *Guru Śabda*, in Śaśidhara Dās’s *Saccidānanda Laharī* (Sharma 1963: 150–52).

18. Śaśidhara Dās, *Vairāgyāṃvara*, *Prathamopadeśa* (Sharma 1963: 201).

19. Śaśidhara Dās, *Vairāgyāṃvara*, *Prathamopadeśa* (Sharma 1963: 195).

20. *īśvaradr̥ṣṭise kīraṇi upaje so kiraṇise upaje māyā | māyākī amsame mähātattva upaje upaje tīna guṇakāyā* || (Dharma Dil Dās, *Rāga Vāṇī* section 1, verse 1, in Sharma 1963: 291).

21. Śāśidhara, *Saccidānanda Laharī, Jāla Bhedana Śabda*, verses 3–6 (Sharma 1963: 179).

22. Śāśidhara Dās, *Saccidānanda Laharī, Jāla Bhedana Śabda*, verse 8 (Sharma 1963: 180).

23. Śāśidhara Dās, *Saccidānanda Laharī, Saragunī Piṇḍa Śela Śabda*, verse 2 (Sharma 1963: 158).

24. Śāśidhara Dās, *Saccidānanda Laharī, Manolaya Śabda*, verse 22 (Sharma 1963: 168).

25. Śāśidhara Dās, *Saccidānanda Laharī, Jāla Bhedana Śabda*, verse 16 (Sharma 1963: 180).

26. *kāyā mere avadhu bhāī...* (Brother! My body is Avadha...) (Jñāna Dil Dās, *Rāga Vāṇī* section 50, verse 1, in Sharma 1963: 402).

27. Instances can be found in Śāśidhara Dās's writings of instructions for the rise of Kuṇḍalī and the different perfections that can be achieved. This can be further confirmed from the invocation of Jñāna Dil in order to achieve eight perfections (see Jñāna Dil Dās, *Udayalaharī*, verse 1, in Sharma 1963: 322).

28. *Guru Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verses 6–7 (Sharma 1963: 150–51).

29. Śāśidhara Dās, *Ajapa Gītā*, verses 5–8 (Sharma 1963: 219).

30. Śāśidhara Dās, *Vairāgyāṃvara*, chapter 1 (Sharma 1963: 195–210).

31. *tathonmanī nābhīsthāne...* (Śāśidhara Dās, *Ajapa Gītā*, verses 10–11, in Sharma 1963: 219).

32. Śāśidhara Dās, in the song *Rāg Nirgun*, gives the detail of 21,600 *ajapā* counting in six *cakras* (Sharma 1963: 242–43).

33. Prema Dil, *Rāga Vāṇī*, section 2, verse 1 (Sharma 1963: 249).

34. *prāṇa apāna sama kari māna nīsudīna dhunī jagānā* (Jñāna Dil Dās, *Rāga Vāṇī*, section 20, verse 1, in Sharma 1963: 382).

35. *prāṇa apāna sama kari rāṣo dhunī phire gaṅgā tīra* (Jñāna Dil Dās, *Rāga Vāṇī*, section 26, verse 4, in Sharma 1963: 387).

36. Śāśidhara Dās, *Vairāgyāṃvara, Prathamopadeśa* (Sharma 1963: 200). According to Śāśidhara, the four constituents of the self include lower and higher aspects: *jīva*, *ātmā*, *paramātmā*, and *jñāna*. The general

Tantric categorization identifies these as *ātmā*, *antarātmā*, *paramātmā*, and *jñānātmā*.

37. The terms that refer to the body in Josmanī songs are *piṇḍa* and *ghaṭa*, along with the more common words *deha* and *kāyā*.

38. *pahile tana manako ra tattvātmāko gatī bujhanu saṅkhyā garnu* (Śaśidhara Dās, *Vairāgyāṃvara*, in Sharma 1963: 195).

39. *Bhakti Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verse 7 (Sharma 1963: 153).

40. *Vinatī Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verse 14 (Sharma 1963: 154).

41. *kaudīsārī akṣara hai lāṣa karoḍa jāṃhāṃ se āye veda | amola artha jo bujhī samāvai pāvai aṇḍapiṇḍako bheda* || (Śaśidhara Dās, *Bhakti Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verse 1, in Sharma 1963: 153).

42. *Vairāgyāṃvara*, *Prathamopadeśa* (Sharma 1963: 196).

43. *akṣarabheda kahi jāu bhāī | bāṣvanna rūpa ṣela ṣelāī* || (Śaśidhara Dās, *Śabda Bhedana Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verses 1–2, in Sharma 1963: 187).

44. Instruction for the practice of the *cakras* may vary, for instance: *chaya hai chaye cakrī bhedī kahe ho sunye bhavana me lāgā* | (Dharaṇī Dās, *Rāga Vāṇī*, section 1, verse 6, in Sharma 1963: 313), or *nava hai nava cakrī bhedi sunne bhavaname lāgā* | (section 1, verse 9, in Sharma 1963: 313).

45. *svamana mantra hai bhāvanā kalapī sabda gāī | bhāvanā sai bhāvanā nikarai mana rahai bhulāī* || (Śaśidhara Dās, *Mantra Nirūpana Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verse 1, in Sharma 1963: 151). This description parallels “*cittam mantrah*” (Śīva Sūtra 2.1).

46. For discussion on Kuṇḍalinī and Nāth cosmology, see White (1996: 218–62).

47. Abhayānanda, *Rāga Phāgu Malhāra*, verse 35 (Sharma 1963: 269–70), see also verse 46 (274).

48. For the common metaphor found in Bāul tradition, see Das (1992: 412).

49. Jñāna Dil Dās. *Nirgun Bhajan*, section 50 (Sharma 1963: 402–3).

50. Śaśidhara Dās, *Manolaya Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verse 20 (Sharma 1963: 168).

51. *candra amrita vasahi hāṭaka varna laṣāī | dhumra asthāna mā rājita prabhā agani vase sava tāṃhīṃ* || (*Prātakāla Vidhi*, in Sharma

1963: 523).

52. *nābhidala kamalamaiṃ pavana virājye sūnye maiṃ hari bola oṃ kī* | (Jñāna Dil Dās, *Rāga Vāṇī* section 49, verse 2, in Sharma 1963: 402).

53. Śaśidhara Dās, *Manolaya Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verse 10 (Sharma 1963: 167).

54. Śaśidhara Dās, *Ātmā Jāgana Lakṣiṇa Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verses 1–3 (Sharma 1963: 172).

55. Śaśidhara Dās, *Ātmā Jāgana Lakṣiṇa Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verses 4–5 (Sharma 1963: 172).

56. Śaśidhara Dās, *Ajapa Gītā*, verse 21 (Sharma 1963: 221).

57. Śaśidhara Dās, *Ātmā Jāgana Lakṣiṇa Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verses 6–7 (Sharma 1963: 172).

58. Śaśidhara Dās, *Ātmā Jāgana Lakṣiṇa Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verse 8 (Sharma 1963: 172).

59. Śaśidhara Dās, *Ātmā Jāgana Lakṣiṇa Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verse 10 (Sharma 1963: 172).

60. Śaśidhara Dās, *Ātmā Jāgana Lakṣiṇa Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verses 13–14 (Sharma 1963: 173).

61. Śaśidhara Dās, *Hari Milana Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verse 6 (Sharma 1963: 175).

62. *aṇḍa piṇḍa ke leṣā līe* | (Śaśidhara Dās, *Jāla Bhedana Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verses 20–21, in Sharma 1963: 180).

63. Śaśidhara uses the *rāgas* identified as *Belaharā*, *Vāṇī*, and *Bhajan*; Nirvāṇānanda uses *Mālaśrī*; Abhaya Dil (Abhayānanda) uses *Bāhramās*, *Jājayantī Dhīmātritāl*, *Vehāg*, *Māla Gaurā*, *Vasanta*, *Vibhās*, *Lāvanī*, *Phāgu Malhār*, *Joḍā*, *Vasanta Hiṇḍol*, *Jata*, *Sindu Sahānā*, *Āratī*, *Ṭhumarī*, *Sindurā*, *Gaurī*, *Bhairavī*, *Paraj*, *Lāunī*, and *Vihāg Kedār*. Jñāna Dil utilized the folklore melodies *Jhyāure* and *Ṭunnā*, in addition to the above *rāgas*.

64. Abhayānanda, Song 3, *Rāga Vāhramāsa*, *Dhrupada* (Sharma 1963: 252).

65. Śaśidhara Dās, *Manolaya Śabda*, *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verse 5 (Sharma 1963: 167).

66. *Vairāgyāṃvara*, *Prathamopadeśa* (Sharma 1963: 196).

67. The frequency of the terminology of *piṇḍa* and *brahmāṇḍa* reminds one of the influence of Nāth *yogins* in Josmanī literature. For instance, see *jaba piṇḍa aṇḍa brahmāṇḍa nāsa hovai yogi rahai kyā tattva samāi*

(Śaśidhara Dās, *Oṃkāra Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verse 2, in Sharma 1963: 191).

68. For reference to the *yoginīs* and *gopinīs* in Josmanī literature, see: *sorasaye gopinī saba nācana lāge suranaramuni saba āī | causatṭhi yoginī jhām̐kana lāge tai mana kām̐haṃ jāī* || (Jñāna Dil Dās, *Rāga Vāṇī*, section 17, verse 1, in Sharma 1963: 380).

69. Śaśidhara Dās, *Oṃkāra Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verses 6–8 (Sharma 1963: 189).

70. *bāvanna maddhe makāra baḍā hai bhāī* | (Śaśidhara Dās, *Śabda Bhedana Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verse 6, in Sharma 1963: 187).

71. *jo makāra bujhai ananta tālā ṣoli jāī* | (Śaśidhara Dās, *Śabda Bhedana Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verse 11, in Sharma 1963: 188).

72. *nāda binda jāko hṛdaya dharai | tāko sevā devī pārvatī karai* || (Śaśidhara Dās, *Manolaya Śabda*, in *Saccidānanda Laharī*, verse 18, in Sharma 1963: 168).

73. Jñāna Dil Dās, *Rāga Vāṇī*, section 4, verses 10–11 (Sharma 1963: 371–72).

74. *āge āye nāda bindu pīche jamāye pānī | ghaṭa ghaṭa vyāpaka sataguru baiṭhe alaṣa nīranjana nīrvāṇī* || (Jñāna Dil Dās, *Rāga Vāṇī*, section 17, verse 1, in Sharma 1963: 380).

75. *Rāga Vāhramāsā*, section 3 (Sharma 1963: 252–54). This description does not mention the Jyeṣṭha (Jeṭh in colloquial) month, as only eleven months are explained in this process of yogic awakening.

76. *sabai dehī pākyā jasto lāgcha kahīle kuṇḍalī caḍhi bhak bhak gardai kaṇṭhasamma āuṃcha... | vikāra jāī sakyā pachī pherī testo huṃdaina* || *ānanda huncha...* | (Vairāgyāṃvara, in Sharma 1963: 196–97).

77. *jasva jasva advaya ātmāko abhyāsa huncha, tasva tasva atī ānanda prakāsa rahancha... | tehī sabda sunī sunī sabdaye abhyāsamā laye bhairahanu...* || (Vairāgyāṃvara, in Sharma 1963: 198).

78. *brahma agni jāgnāko kāran sabailāī sabai huṃdaina, aghī pachī nīm bhed kehī chaina* | (Vairāgyāṃvara, in Sharma 1963: 198).

79. For discussion of the Bhojpuri-speaking *jogīs*, see Henry 1988: 149–91.

80. Śaśidhara identifies himself as a “*dās*” (Sharma 1963: 154). The names of many Josmanī *sants* end with Dās, such as Dhaukal Dās, Śyām

Dil Dās, Acyut Dil Dās, Dharma Dil Dās, Sat Dil Dās, Kamal Dās, Mangal Dās, Akhad Dās, and so on.

81. The section is titled “Mati Nirūpana Śabda” (Sharma 1963: 160–63). The first line proclaims the determination of *mati*; however, after the second line the text discusses *mata*, or views.

82. *saba khela mata bica hai ek ātmā tattva tāṃhāṃ nāhi* | (Sharma 1963: 162).

83. For Sāṃkhya, see Sharma 1963: 161. For *pūrṇa* and *sūnya*, see Sharma 1963: 161.

84. *cidānanda akakh svarūp...* | (Sharma 1963: 162).

85. *kyā samskr̥ta kyā bhāṣā* | (Śaśidhara Dās, *Saragunī Piṇḍa Śela Śabda, Saccidānanda Laharī*, in Sharma 1963: 159).

86. *Udayalaharī*, verse 3 (Sharma 1963: 323).

87. *Udayalaharī*, verse 7 (Sharma 1963: 324).

88. *Udayalaharī*, verses 11–12 (Sharma 1963: 326–27).

89. *Mokṣa Maṇḍala, Nirgun Bhajan*, section 1, verse 4 (Sharma 1963: 245).

90. Jñāna Dil Dās. *Jhyāure Bhajan*, verse 8 (Sharma 1963: 345).

91. *Udayalaharī*, verse 51 (Sharma 1963: 344).

92. Jñāna Dil Dās, *Udayalaharī*, verse 55 (Sharma 1963: 346).

93. Jñāna Dil Dās, *Udayalaharī*, verse 58 (Sharma 1963: 347).

94. Jñāna Dil Dās, *Udayalaharī*, verse 70 (Sharma 1963: 353).

95. Within the Josmanī tradition, some *sants*, such as Aṣaḍ Dil Dās, were selling spirituality, charging money for initiation and discrediting the very foundation of freely accessible spiritual practice. Jñāna Dil taught that spiritual instruction is beyond price and not for trade. He further clarified that the jewel hides inside the teachings and is debased when traded in the forms of Guru and disciple. He does not find any sense in instructing others while one is oneself not aware.

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