Yoga Powers

Extraordinary Capacities Attained Through Meditation and Concentration

Edited by

A. Jacobsen

BRILL

Yoga Powers

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Cover illustration: Meditating *sādhu* at the Māgh Melā in Prayag/Allahabad, February 2008. Photo: Knut A. Jacobsen

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A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The standard systems of transliterating Sanskrit and other South Asian languages have been followed. The standard systems allow for some variety in words chosen to be transliterated and words Anglicized. I have not used diacritics for modern place names, some persons from contemporary and recent history well known in the English language, and names of modern languages (Hindi and not Hindī, Marathi and not Marāṭhī).

Knut A. Jacobsen

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A	*Aṅguttara-nikāya*
AuSū	*Aupapātika Sūtra*
ĀvNir	*Āvaśyaka Niryukti*
BhG	*Bhagavadgītā*
BhSū	*Bhagavatī Sūtra*
D	*Dīgha-nikāya*
Dh	*Dhavalā*
DhA	*Dhammapada Commentary*
Dhp	*Dhammapada*
HP	*Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*
M	*Majjhima-nikāya*
MBh	*Mahābhārata*
MMVR	*Mahāmāyurīvidyārājñī*
NAK	*National Archives of Kathmandu*
NGMPP	*Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project*
PSā	*Pravacanasāroddhāra*
PSāVṛ	*Pravacanasāroddhāra* with Siddhasenasūri's commentary
Psm	*Paṭisambhidāmagga*
PYŚ	*Pātañjala Yogaśāstra*
RV	*Rājavārtika*
S	*Saṃyutta-nikāya*
SK	*Sāṃkhyakārikā*
ṢkhĀ	*Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama*
SS	*Sarvārthasiddhi*
ThgA	*Theragāthā*
TP	*Trilokaprajñapti*
TPP	*Tātparyaprakāśa*
TS	*Tattvārtha Sūtra*
TSUm	*Tattvārtha Sūtra* with commentary by Umāsvāti
TṢŚC	*Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacaritra*
UpāSu	*Upāsakadaśāḥ Sūtra*
VB	*Vyāsabhāṣya*
ViVṛ	*Viśeṣāvaśyakabhāṣya Vṛtti* of Maladhārī Hemacandra
Vkn	*Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*
Vmm	*Vimuttimagga*
Vsm	*Visuddhimagga*
YS	*Yogasūtra*
YŚ	*Yogaśāstra* (=*Pātañjala Yogaśāstra*)

YŚH	*Yogaśāstra* of Hemacandra
YŚVṛ	*Yogaśāstra* with Hemacandra's autocommentary
YV	*Yogavāsiṣṭha*

INTRODUCTION

YOGA POWERS AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Knut A. Jacobsen

This book is about a neglected topic in the research on yoga and South Asian meditation traditions: the yoga powers, the extraordinary capacities that, according to many South Asian religious traditions, are gained by the yoga practice of meditation and concentration. Yoga powers are forms of extraordinary knowledge, such as awareness of previous rebirths, knowing the minds of others, seeing distant and hidden things, and remarkable abilities such as the power to become invisible, enter others' bodies, fly through the air, and to become disembodied for a period of time, which are traditionally thought to be attained as yogins progress in their practice. This is not a minor issue in the textual traditions of yoga. A large part of the *Yogaśāstra* (YŚ), that is, the combined *Yogasūtra* (YS) and the *Vyāsabhāṣya* (*VB*) (also called *Yogabhāṣya*), the foundation text of the Yoga system of religious thought (the Yoga *darśana* or Pātañjala Yoga), is devoted to the yoga powers and one of its four chapters is named after the powers (the third chapter, the *Vibhūtipāda*).

This book started as a panel at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Chicago in November 2008.[1] The purpose of the panel was to compare the yoga powers in different South Asian traditions of yoga and meditation, to investigate the role of the powers in the origin of yoga, their position in the development of different yoga traditions and their influence on the religious traditions in South

[1] The contributions of the panelists (Bradley S. Clough, David V. Fiordalis, Knut A. Jacobsen, Lloyd W. Pflueger, David Gordon White) have been included in the book. Several other authors were invited to contribute chapters to the book to expand on Pātañjala Yoga (Christopher Key Chapple, Stuart Ray Sarbacker) and to cover some of the areas that were not dealt with by the panel such as the yoga powers in the *Mahābhārata* (Angelika Malinar), in Chinese Buddhist texts (Ryan Richard Overbey), in Jainism (Kristi L. Wiley), in Haṭha yoga traditions (James Mallinson, Sthaneshwar Timalsina), in Tantric Śaiva traditions (Somadeva Vasudeva), in hagiographies (Patton Burchett, Antonio Rigopoulos) and in some contemporary movements and traditions (Ramdas Lamb, Jeffrey J. Kripal).

Asia. Was yoga originally a method to attain supernormal powers or were the powers added to traditions that attempted to attain salvific liberation (*mokṣa*) by means of meditation and knowledge? To what degree were conceptions of the divine in South Asia influenced by the idea of yoga powers? And to what degree were yoga powers shaped by conceptions of divinity? How were conceptions of the divine shaped by the idea of yoga powers? What is the religious meaning of the powers? How do the yoga powers differ in the various traditions and what are the similarities? Also, how are the yoga powers to be distinguished from other traditions of superhuman powers? When are powers yoga powers and when are they tantric powers?

Terminology

To attempt to answer some of these questions, attention needs to be paid at the outset to the terminological variety for the yoga powers in the textual traditions. Several Sanskrit terms are used for the yoga powers. In the *Yogasūtra* a number of different Sanskrit words are used for the powers attained by yoga practice: *jñāna* ('knowledge' and 'extraordinary knowledge'), *aiśvarya* ('mastery'), *siddhi* ('accomplishment', 'attainment'), and *vibhūti* (used only as the title of the third chapter; 'pervading', 'omni-presencing'; for this translation, see the chapter by David Gordon White in this volume). *Jñāna* is the word most commonly used for yoga powers in the *Yogasūtra,*[2] and *vibhūti* is used in the title of the chapter that deals with the powers. *Siddhi* (in plural *siddhayaḥ*) is used to refer to yoga powers in the *Yogasūtra* 4.1.[3] In the *Mahābhārata, bala* ('power', 'might') is perhaps the word used most often as a designation for yoga powers. In *haṭhayoga* works a term used frequently is *guṇa*. Somadeva Vasudeva, in his chapter in this book, notes that in some Tantric Śaiva textual traditions yoga powers are called *guṇāṣṭaka*, and in these texts the word *siddhi* does not denote yoga powers per se. In the Indian Buddhist texts the common term for the yoga powers is *iddhi* (Pāli) (and its Buddhist Sanskrit equivalent *ṛddhi* ['accomplishment']), and *abhiññā* ('higher knowl-

[2] Gerald James Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, eds., *Yoga: India's Philosophy of Meditation* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 2008), 124; and chapters in this book by Stuart Roy Sarbacker, Chris Chapple, and Lloyd Pflueger.

[3] The word *siddhi* is also used in a non-technical sense in *Yogasūtra* 2.43, 2.45, and 3.37 (*kāyendrasiddhir*, 'perfection of the body and sense-organs', *samādhisiddhi*, 'perfection of concentration', and *siddhayaḥ* 'perfections' [of the senses]).

edge', *abhijñā* in Sanskrit). In Mahāyāna Buddhism *iddhi/ṛddhi* is often replaced by *adhiṣṭhāna* and *vikurvaṇa*. In Jainism, the word *ṛddhi* is most common in Digambara texts, the word *labdhi* in Śvetāmbara texts, and the word *siddhi* is not commonly utilized (see the chapter by Kristi Wiley).

Many expressions are used for yoga powers, but it is the word *siddhi* more than any of the others that has become most well known in the English language as the term for superhuman powers, and *siddhi* is also most often used in academic books on yoga as a general term or synonym for the yoga powers. One reason for that might be the central role the words *siddhi,* and *siddha*, especially in the Śaiva and Tantra religious traditions in South Asia (see chapters by Ryan Richard Overbey, Somadeva Vasudeva, and James Mallinson in this book). In these traditions the *siddhi*s are sometimes considered goals of religious practice and the *siddha* is the perfected master. In the Buddhist texts, the use of the word '*siddhi*' to signify the powers shows influence from the Śaiva traditions. Overbey demonstrates that the appearance of the word *siddhi* to denote superhuman powers in Chinese Buddhist texts is a function of the popularity of this term in the Śaiva texts. He reveals that *ṛddhi*s were treated as different from *siddhi*s in the Buddhist traditions, and that *siddhi*s did not exist as a discrete category of Buddhist practice before the tantric revolution in the seventh or eighth centuries. Also, he asks: "Are they both instances of a general South Asian 'religious substratum,' or did one tradition borrow from the other? If this was a case of borrowing, does the difference in name take on a new significance?" (p. 140). Mallinson illustrates a similar development in the texts of *haṭhayoga* of the concept of *siddhi* entering the *haṭhayoga* texts due to influence from Śaiva traditions. Vasudeva notes that when Śaiva religious activities are classified teleologically into those that lead to salvific liberation and those that lead to enjoyment (*bhoga*, *bhukti*), the latter goal is often synonymous with *siddhi*. There is a great variety in the terms used for yoga powers and this terminology should be studied systematically and comparatively, and hopefully the essays in this book can provide a starting point for such a study.

In the English language, many different terms are used to translate the words for the extraordinary capacities gained by yoga practice. The authors of the essays in this book have chosen different translations, such as 'superhuman power', 'supernatural power', 'supernatural ability', 'extraordinary power', and 'superpower'. The translation

'superhuman powers', indicates that the powers are capacities to accomplish acts and attain knowledge beyond the ability of most people. Other translations that emphasize the same are 'extraordinary capacity', 'extraordinary mental and physical abilities', and 'extraordinary knowledge'. The powers are also called 'miraculous' or 'magical powers' and these terms, and the translation 'supernatural', emphasize their transcendent nature. In yoga the powers are perhaps not strictly considered miracles since there is no interference with the laws of nature by an outside power, which is often the definition of miracles. From the yoga point of view they are not disruptions of the laws of nature, but show mastery over nature, in that they are part of how nature works. To make an analytical distinction between magic and miracle, therefore, does not work well when analyzing yoga powers from the standpoint of the yoga traditions. Patton Burchett argues in his chapter of this book that the distinction is part of the Abrahamic traditions and that it was probably the Sufis who introduced the dichotomies of miracles and magic and miracle worker and magician to India. David Fiordalis points out in his chapter that by the thirteenth century medieval Christian theologians had begun to distinguish between 'miracles' (*miracula*) and 'marvels' (*mirabilia*). Marvels were thought to have natural causes that were not understood, while miracles were events produced by God's supernatural force. Fiordalis notes that this led to an ever increasing awareness where wonder could be replaced by knowledge.

The South Asian religious traditions know many methods to achieve powers other than yoga. Hence, superhuman powers are not unique to yoga. *Yogasūtra* 4.1 states that the powers (in this *sūtra* called *siddhi*s) can be attained not only by yogic concentration (*samādhi*), but can also be accomplished through the use of herbs (*oṣadhi*), sacred syllables (*mantra*), ascetic practices (*tapas*), and they can also be inborn abilities, that is, attained through birth (*janman*) (*janmauṣadhi-mantra-tapaḥ-samādhi-jāḥ siddhayaḥ)*. Belief in attainment of superhuman powers by means of herbs, mantras, *tapas*, and birth is documented in the history of religions of South Asia in literature on mythology, rituals, and asceticism as the powers relate to gods, goddesses, divinities, and central dimensions of religious life.[4]

[4] For introductions to the topic, see Teun Goudriaan, *Māyā Divine and Human: A study of magic and its religious foundation in Sanskrit texts, with particular attention to a fragment of Viṣṇu's Māyā preserved in Bali* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976); David Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval*

The origin of the powers can probably not be identified with a single South Asian tradition because they have most likely been part of several of the early religious traditions and practices. The idea that the powers can be attained by yogic concentration (*samādhi*) links the powers to the yoga traditions.

Conceptual Contexts

Divinity

The yoga powers belong as much to the religion of *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇa*s as to the philosophical systems. Yoga powers have been interpreted as signs of divinity and a transformation of human beings from the human state to a divine state, and the followers of a guru who is said to possess yoga powers consider these powers to be undoubtedly divine. There seems in general to be a close relationship between yoga powers and conceptions of divinity in South Asian religious traditions. Yoga powers are not limited to traditions of yoga and meditation but are at the core of the religious imagination in South Asia. Yogins become god-like and some may be worshipped as divine gurus when they attain powers. Yogins are supposed to renounce the powers, but the gods are nevertheless perceived as supreme yogins with all the power that implies. Śiva is the Great Yogin, *Mahāyogin* and Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa are Masters of Yoga, *Yogeśvara*. A whole chapter (chapter 10) of the *Bhagavadgītā* is devoted to Kṛṣṇa's powers (*vibhūti*s). Several of the powers of yoga are similar to powers ascribed to gods. *Yogasūtra* 3.49 and the *Vyāsabhāṣya* commentary on this *sūtra* describe a stage when the yogin is omniscient and omnipotent and at this point the yogin himself becomes like the supreme god, Īśvara. The world creator is explained in the *Yogaśāstra* as a previously perfected yogin (*pūrvasiddha*) (*Vyāsabhāṣya* on *Yogasūtra* 3.45). That there are limitations to the yoga powers, in that the powers cannot be used to change the fundamental order of the world, is explained to be because the powers cannot go against a previously perfected yogin's will. This yogin is Īśvara. The Īśvara of this creation was previously a yogin who was perfect in powers and became merged in *prakṛti* (*prakṛtilaya*) because he had attained complete knowledge of *prakṛti* but not the

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India (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Harvey P. Alper, ed., *Understanding Mantras* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

realization of the *puruṣa*.[5] Therefore, he did not attain *kaivalya*, and having become identified with *prakṛti*, the material cause of creation, he became an omniscient and omnipotent Īśvara of this creation.

Yoga powers became a successful way to explain the divine. The ideas of yoga and yogin were important for how the new gods of Hinduism (in contrast to Vedic religion) and their powers were perceived, and the ideas of yogin gods (*Yogeśvara*, *Mahāyogin*) influenced the perception of yoga and yogins. The concept of yoga power, argues Malinar in her chapter in this book, helped distinguish a new type of highest, singular god from other gods (and from yogins as well). The understanding of the highest God as a powerful yogin in control of *prakṛti* and present in the world with his powers became standard in many Hindu religious traditions. Yoga powers explained how it was possible for God to intervene in the realm of action without there being any karmic repercussions for him. God could be free and liberated and at the same time intervene in the world. The yogins, according to the Sāṃkhya cosmology, gained access to and united with the cosmological categories (*tattva*s), and this is the basis of the yoga powers ascribed to them. In many Hindu texts such as the *Bhagavadgītā*, these powers are considered only in relation to the *yoga aiśvara*, the yoga of supremacy, ascribed to the god Kṛṣṇa, and not to human yogins. Yoga powers allow the gods to create apparitional bodies, that is, bodies that appear and disappear on earth and, at the same time, the god can remain the ever unseen, immovable, highest self, although some part of him is connected with *prakṛti*, the cosmic cause of all creation in some invisible state of being (see the chapter by Malinar). Perhaps the centrality of the yoga powers in the *Yogaśāstra* is due to the new theistic traditions that arose in the centuries around the Common Era, exemplified by the *vibhūti* chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*, the Purāṇic traditions and the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The important stories of the Buddha's display of superhuman powers perhaps did not enter into the textual traditions until the early or middle centuries of the Common Era (see the chapter by Fiordalis in this book), namely, around the same time as the *vibhūti* chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Vibhūtipāda* of the *Yogasūtra*. The display of the yoga of supremacy ascribed to Kṛṣṇa is part of his salvific activity,

[5] See also *Sāṃkhyasūtra* 3.55–56 and the commentaries. For the *prakṛtilaya* see Knut A. Jacobsen, *Prakṛti in Sāṃkhya-Yoga: Material Principle, Religious Experience, Ethical Implications* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 273–320.

and Fiordalis suggests that displays of the buddhas' and bodhisattvas' superhuman powers may also be seen as an integral part of their liberating activity.

Salvific Liberation

Even if superhuman powers were also thought to be attainable by non-yogic means, the *Yogasūtra* does not elaborate on these methods. The subject of the *Yogasūtra* is yoga and its main focus is the concentration called *samādhi* and the salvific goal of *kaivalya* attained ultimately by *samādhi*. The aim of this yoga is not attainment of superhuman powers; instead, the acquisition of these powers is seen as an inevitable and unavoidable part of the salvific process of the yogin, and a topic that yogins need to be schooled in as the powers are encountered in their yoga practice. The ultimate goal of the yoga of *Yogasūtra* is *mokṣa* and not superhuman powers. The powers become available as the yogin masters the advanced stages of the practice. In yoga the powers are part of a salvific process, part of a reality the yogin experiences as he or she approaches the salvific goal. In addition, according to textual traditions of Buddhist meditation, meditation is the primary means to attain the powers, and in Buddhist texts as well powers attained by meditation are contrasted with powers caused by mantras and amulets. In the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* we find a very similar list of superhuman powers (*ṛddhi*s) as those mentioned in the *Yogasūtra* 4.1, which are also said to be brought about by meditation, birth, incantations, drugs, or actions.[6] The powers gained by mantras and amulets, called *vidyā*, are considered worthy of less respect than those gained by meditation. Some Buddhist traditions distinguished between transmundane powers (*abhijñā*s) attainable only by Buddhists and mundane powers attainable also by non-Buddhists. Some of the extraordinary knowledge (*jñāna*) in yoga is part of the salvific process that is unique to the Sāṃkhya and Yoga systems, such as the knowledge of the presence of *puruṣa* (YS 3.35) and the knowledge of the distinction between *sattva* and *puruṣa* (YS 3.52). There seems, therefore, to be a close relationship between yoga powers and salvific liberation.

Great yogins are traditionally characterized by attainment of yoga powers and a large part of the *Yogasūtra* is devoted to this topic, but

[6] See *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* 7.53: *avyākṛtaṃ bhāvanājaṃ trividhaṃ tūpapattijam / ṛddhir mantrauṣadhābhyāṃ ca karmajā ceti pañcadhā.*

both the *Yogasūtra* and the traditional commentaries on the text deny that attaining such powers is the goal of yoga, and instead describe their function as an indication that certain yoga practices have been perfected. Yoga powers are an essential part of the folklore of yogis and sages in South Asia and many other categories of sacred persons. The powers are often understood by devotees to provide proof about divinity, asceticism, and knowledge. These powers were attained by many founding figures of religious traditions, they are generally accepted as signs of divinity, and they are central to the descriptions of the progress towards the yogic goal. However, in both the yoga and Buddhist traditions, the texts include warnings that these powers are in fact hindrances that can distract from the ultimate salvific goal. *Yogasūtra* 3.37 states that they can be obstructive when the yogin is in *samādhi*, but valuable in ordinary life (*te samādhau upasargā vyutthāne siddhayaḥ*). The *Mahābhārata*, although describing yogis and yoga powers in a favorable way, nevertheless also states that the "Yogin who is set on practicing mastery (*aiśvarya-pravṛtta*) with a view to worldly results, goes to everlasting hell (*niraya*)."[7] The caveat against superhuman powers is also strong in Buddhist traditions, and the Buddha warned against them several times. According to the Buddhist monastic rules (*vinaya*), claiming to have superhuman powers that one did not possess (or presumably was not able to display) was one of the four *pārājika*s, the four most serious crimes punishable by expulsion from the monastic order, which shows that the powers were considered problematic. The seriousness of the punishment is perhaps because such bragging would be detrimental to the monastic institution as it could lead to the Buddhist monks being considered bogus ascetics.[8] However, the omnipresence of these powers in the

[7] E. Washburn Hopkins, "Yoga-technique in the Great Epic," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 22 (1901): 333–379. Quote on page 344. The Sanskrit reads:

Athaiśvaryapravṛttaḥ sañjāpakas tatra rajyate,
sa eva nirayas tasya nāsau tasmāt pramucyate (*Mahābhārata* 12.190.7)

[8] An ancient tradition of asceticism in India, which might be older than yoga, was the tradition of *tapas*, the goal of which was superhuman powers. Powers attained by these ascetics had similarities to those later described as attained by yogins. In a religious environment in which superhuman powers were the norm, all traditions had to claim these powers because denying them would weaken one's position, Johannes Bronkhorst has argued. He further argues that ascetics associated with traditions of yoga could not be expected to deny the powers that the ascetics associated with *tapas* claimed to possess or acquire because "this would obviously weaken his position in the eyes of all outsiders", and one would rather "expect to find

texts on yoga and Buddhist meditation suggests that these powers are more central to the teaching than the warnings should suggest. Although these statements present critiques of yogins using the yoga powers for personal gains or lying about possessing yoga powers, the realities of the powers are not questioned. Undoubtedly, in some traditions in South Asia the goal of the ascetic practices has been the attainment of these powers,[9] and certainly the images of yogins in India (and worldwide) have been shaped by the superhuman powers yogins are said to possess.[10] Power and purity are often understood as opposites in South Asian religious traditions but they are frequently intertwined in the religious practice, as well as in yoga and meditation. There are two sides to yoga, appropriation of power and appropriation of knowledge, and there can be a conflict between them, as power has to be given up to realize knowledge. Power has, nevertheless, been important and the different yoga traditions have tried to deal with this in different ways. The yogin gains the ability to break free from matter and attain salvation as well as power over the world by means of his yoga powers.[11] Yoga leads not only to control of oneself, but also to control of the world. The yogin becomes the master of the world, god-like, but according to yoga traditions, the goal of *nirvāṇa*, *mokṣa* or *kaivalya* also transcends that attainment. The yogin passes through

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passages where the non-Vedic ascetic is counseled against the use of these powers". Johannes Bronkhorst, *The Two Sources of Indian Asceticism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998), 90.

[9] Teun Goudriaan writes that in Vedic religion sacrifices to the gods and asceticism were seen as two ways to power and success: "The ascetic by his mortifications obtains the mastery of supernatural faculties. His goal may be definitely to escape the world's plights and sorrow but he might also be motivated by the desire after other things like the execution of power over other beings, or the winning over of a beloved (as Pārvatī did when she desired to win Śiva) or the obtaining of a husband (as Draupadī did, Mbh 1,157.6ff). In fact, in Ancient Indian literature this second motivation of the performance is extremely frequent. A standard pattern is that the gods, out of their celestial dwellings, observe somebody on earth who is engaged in rigorous asceticism. Without further deliberation they assume that this person does not strive after release but that he tries to coerce them, for instance by compelling them to grant him a boon of enormous size (as Bali did). The ascetic's coercive activity can even result in driving the gods away from their positions and occupying them himself (as Hiraṇyakaśipu did, Viṣṇupurāṇa 1.17.2ff)." Goudriaan, *Māyā Divine and Human*, 80–81.

[10] For an entertaining discussion, see David Gordon White, *Sinister Yogis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

[11] Stuart Ray Sarbacker calls these two sides the cessative and the numinous in yoga. See Stuart Ray Sarbacker, *Samādhi: The Numinous and Cessative in Indo-Tibetan Yoga* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

stages in which he possesses powers associated with divinity and then he also rises above those states. According to the Buddha's instruction, his teaching transcends the gods and even the gods need to be reborn as humans to realize the truth of *nirvāṇa*. Divinity according to these traditions of meditation is a lower stage, as are the powers, compared to the ultimate goal that can be attained in meditation.

We can distinguish in the South Asian traditions two attitudes to the superhuman powers, their unintentional (*akalpitā*) and their intentional (*kalpitā*) attainment, that is, traditions which accept the powers as an inevitable outcome of meditation and yoga, and traditions that actively and intentionally seek the powers. Yoga traditions most often belong to the first of these whereas the second often characterizes the tantric traditions. The first might be called the *mumukṣu* attitude, the second the *bubhukṣu* attitude. The tantric tradition created a different synthesis of powers and purity than in the yoga tradition because perhaps of the strong presence of traditions of magic and sorcery in the tantric synthesis.[12] Many of the chapters document that the powers were thought of as an inevitable part of the salvific process. They are thought to be realized, even unintentionally, as the yogin progresses towards the salvific goal. A basic presupposition seems to be the principle that to have knowledge of something is to also have control over it. Knowing therefore gives powers over the objects known. Knowing something is to gain mastery over it, and knowledge is the means to attain salvific liberation.[13] But since knowledge is part of the salfivic process, this mastery signifies the process of becoming free from the world, that is, the person transcends the limitations of ordinary people and becomes divine. Yoga powers contain this element of freedom and the powers can thus be seen as not opposed to *mokṣa* but as part of the attainment of *mokṣa*. That they need to be abandoned in the end does not change this. In the process, yogins are thought to change themselves from ordinary persons to divine beings, and the powers are a sign and proof of this transcendence.

In some traditions the yoga powers are understood to demonstrate that reality is inconceivable as a magical illusion. David Fiordalis notes in his chapter that Buddhist texts that positively portray the display of the superhuman powers by the Buddha connect the display of yoga

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[12] David Gordon White, "Tantra," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, vol. 3, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

[13] See Franklin Edgerton, "The Upaniṣads: What do They Seek and Why?," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 49, no. 2 (1929): 97–121.

powers to the liberating knowledge of the Buddhist truth. According to some textual traditions, the displays of the Buddha at Śrāvastī and Sāṅkāśya are understood as acts that all buddhas must perform before they enter *nirvāṇa*. The display of superhuman powers is an integrated part of the liberating activity of the buddhas. It is not, therefore, that one attempts to attain the powers as a stage on the way to *nirvāṇa*, but the powers are attained automatically as one progresses towards *nirvāṇa*. In Mahāyāna the doctrine of magical illusion becomes important for interpreting the powers. Here, Buddha's powers are connected to his realization that everything is an illusion, and, writes Fiordalis, "the miraculous display violates common expectations or fundamental rules regarding the nature of reality" (p. 120). According to the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, the buddhas and bodhisattvas liberate themselves and others not only through their knowledge but also through their demonstration of their superhuman powers to show that the reality is inconceivable, like a magical illusion. In the vision of Bhuśuṇḍa, described in the chapter by Sthaneshwar Timalsina, the powers gained by absorption in *prāṇa* (*prāṇasamādhi*) allows him to see the absurdity of time and sequence in a chaotic progression in which randomness seems to be the only law.

In theological texts such as the *Bhagavadgītā*, the display of powers is of primary importance and the revelation of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa himself to Arjuna is presented as a display of yoga powers (*vibhūti*s). The natural response of Arjuna to the display of Kṛṣṇa's powers is submission and devotion (*bhakti*). The display of powers is also an important issue in the Buddhist tradition. In Buddhism, their display can be seen as a valuable means for generating faith (*prasāda*). The Buddhist texts try to distinguish between display of powers by Buddhist saints and 'magic tricks' claimed by rival ascetics, teachers, and followers. The emphasis on display in Buddhist texts also means that there are examples in Buddhist texts of skepticism against displaying them. The skepticism is based on the idea that non-Buddhists also attain these powers, and that they are not in themselves expressions of Buddhism. The Buddhist display of powers, however, is connected to the liberating knowledge of the Buddhist teaching and the liberating activity of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. One important function of superhuman powers has probably been to demonstrate the superiority of one's guru or one's own tradition of meditation and yoga. Display of powers thus is part of the competition between traditions.

Rational Explicability

In the early academic study of yoga traditions, several researchers had expectations that investigations of the yoga powers would combine with progress in psychological research on several topics, especially hypnosis, a popular theme in the early twentieth century, and expand our knowledge about human capacities in significant ways.[14] The rational approach to yoga powers in the yoga traditions themselves perhaps influenced the approach of the research. "India," wrote the French Indologist, Jean Filliozat, "is the country par excellence for the study of the limits of human powers, as much on the physiological level as on the psychological."[15] India has evolved "highly developed techniques of body and mind that aim at attaining powers and superhuman psychic states."[16] "For long considered mysterious or purely quackish, these techniques have hardly begun to be studied scientifically," Filliozat noted and optimistically hoped "that an accurate study of the conditions they bring about will enable us one day to establish the laws for the production of such phenomena."[17]

Charles Rockwell Lanman, having high hopes for the science of hypnotism, which enjoyed some prestige at the time of his writing, asked in a response to Wood's well-known translation of the *Tattvavaiśāradī*, published in 1917: "Would it not be worth while for some who is conversant not only with the Hindu books, but also with the results of modern investigations in 'abnormal psychology,' to try to separate those of these powers which have some basis in scientifically established fact from those which have none?"[18] E. Washburn Hopkins was convinced about the reality of hypnotism and he explained the famous theophany of the *Bhagavadgītā*, Kṛṣṇa causing a vision of himself to appear to Arjuna by means of yoga (*yogam āṣṭāya yuk-*

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[14] See Charles Rockwell Lanman, "Hindu Ascetics and Their Powers," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 48 (1917): 133–151; Charles Rockwell Lanman, "The Hindu Yoga-System," *Harvard Theological Union* 11, 4 (1918): 355–375; and E. Washburn Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India: Character and Origin of the Mahabharata* (1901, Indian Edition Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993).

[15] Jean Filliozat, *Religion, Philosophy, Yoga: A Selection of Articles by Jean Filliozat,* translated from French by Maurice Shukla (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991), 341.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Lanman, "Hindu Ascetics and their Powers," 134.

tātma), as a case of hypnotism.[19] Filliozat, Lanman, and Hopkins were among the foremost Indologists of their time. Many people in Europe and North America have been eager to believe in the mythology of Indian yogis. Even the invention of the photograph served for some to confirm the truth of the magical feats of the yogi sitting or lying in the air. In an article on yoga powers, Filliozat published a number of photographs of a person floating in the air, which for him served as final proof of the yogin's ability to fly.[20] The photos are obviously of a juggler and how the trick is performed has been explained or 'exposed' by several authors.[21] Also, Western magicians performed the same trick, but in the West it was explained that the person hanging in the air was "suspended by the mystical properties of ether."[22] This enthusiasm in psychological research was brought to an end when the research in this type of psychical phenomena disappeared from the universities.[23] That also meant the end of most of the enthusiasm for research on the rationality of superhuman powers.

When yoga are removed from the realm of religion, very little of the powers are left as is exemplified in the modern global health yoga.[24] The general trend of secularization has not favored yoga powers, and

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[19] E. Washburn Hopkins, "Yoga-technique In the Great Epic," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 22 (1901): 333-379. See page 377.

[20] Jean Filliozat, "The Limits of Human Powers in India," in Filliozat, *Religion, Philosophy, Yoga*, 341–64.

[21] Peter Lamont, *The Rise of the Indian Rope Trick: How a Spectacular Hoax Became History* (London: Abacus. 2004), Lee Siegel, *Net of Magic: Wonders and Deceptions in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[22] Lamont, *The Rise of the Indian Rope Trick,* 33.

[23] According to Jeffrey Kripal this was because the academic field of psychology was taken over by behaviorism. Jeffrey Kripal, "The Rise of the Imaginal: Psychical Research on the Horizon of Theory (Again)," *Religious Studies Review* 33, no. 3 (2007): 179–191.

[24] Yoga powers seem, in modern health yoga, to have been reduced to benefits for physical and mental well-being, that is, the health benefits of yoga that can be scientifically measured. Gerald James Larson writes: "Increased lung capacity, smoothness of breathing, stable hearth rate, increased cardiovascular efficiency, improved blood flow, muscular dexterity, reduction of stress, greater capacity for relaxation, and sharpened mental awareness, and so forth, are just some of the important benefits that come from prolonged meditation and training in Yoga. These sorts of benefits, in my judgment, are much more relevant for taking seriously the importance of Yoga than the paranormal benefits highlighted in some of the popular literature on Yoga." Gerald James Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, eds., *Yoga: India's Philosophy of Meditation* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008), 132.

many scholars have been uncomfortable with the yoga powers.[25] The academic discipline of Religious Studies has also, as was noted recently by Jeffrey Kripal, not been very interested in this type of phenomena. Instead, he contends, yoga powers and similar kinds of phenomena generally cause discomfiture.[26] Fear of psychical phenomena, Kripal thinks, is grounded in fear of "losing our world and all the remarkable gains of modernity and science."[27] He maintains that we "are afraid of falling back into the superstitions and ignorances of the premodern world …"[28] Treatment of yoga powers, therefore, is often avoided. Another reason is that yoga powers were associated with fraud and trickery. The easy acceptance in the West of the hoax, first presented by an American newspaper, of the magician throwing a rope up in the air and then climbing it and disappearing, is a case in point.[29] The kind of embarrassment noted in contemporary culture was also already found in the ancient South Asian discussions of yoga powers. This could as well be grounded in the association of superhuman powers with fraud and trickery.

The promoters of the study of Indian philosophy often saw it as their job to emphasize the rational in Indian traditions against a Eurocentrism that saw rationality and philosophy mainly as an exclusively Western phenomenon. The yoga powers were seen as irrational elements and they were played down as unimportant and opposed to the pursuit of knowledge. Maurice Bloomfield commented: "Philosophy, in dealing with such matters at all, enters into partnership with fairy-tale: it sanctions, promotes, and legalizes, so to speak, every fancy, however misty and however extravagant."[30] Others who worked on Indian philosophy felt ashamed, it seems, of the presence of the yoga powers in the philosophical texts. Max Muller wrote that the powers are "superstitions which have little claim on the attention of the philosopher, however interesting they appear to the pathologist."[31] Surendranath Dasgupta, in his *Yoga as Philosophy and Religion*,

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[25] See Yohanan Grinshpon, *Silence Unheard: Deathly Otherness in Pātañjala-yoga* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 32–35.

[26] Kripal, "The Rise of the Imaginal."

[27] Ibid., p. 181.

[28] Ibid., p. 181.

[29] See Lamont, *The Rise of the Indian Rope Trick*.

[30] Maurice Bloomfield, "On the Art of Entering Another's Body: A Hindu Fiction Motif," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 56 (1917): 2.

[31] Max Muller, *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy* (London: Longmans Green, 1899), 351.

devoted 15 lines and a table to the powers.[32] For V. P. Kane, the teaching of the yoga powers was an embarrassment and he wrote that "(F)rom the fact that with most yogins the *siddhi*s are an important part of the yoga doctrines and the fact that, out of 195 *sūtra*s of the *Yogasūtra*, 35 (3.16–50) are devoted to the descriptions of the *siddhi*s, the present author is constrained to say that the *siddhi*s are an integral part of yoga."[33] Feuerstein comments that Kane's views reflect a scholarly consensus that the yoga powers are discordant with Patañjali's rational approach.[34]

However, many chapters in this book agree that some of the major textual traditions themselves give rational analyses of the powers, and they analyze rational discourses of the yoga powers in order to give a better understanding of the dialectical relationship between the yoga powers, traditions of rational analysis, and concepts of divinity and salvific liberation. The yoga powers are part of several systems of religious thought in South Asia and these systems attempted to provide the powers with a rational foundation. The traditions assumed that the powers could be explained rationally, neither considered unreal nor denied as irrational. The Pātañjala Yoga system attempted to provide a systematic and rational analysis of meditation and, consequently, in this system we encounter a view that a rational understanding of the yoga powers was possible. The yoga system attempted to give an analysis of the complete meditation process leading to salvific liberation. The analysis included the powers, how they are attained, how they work, and the part they play in the salvific process. Many superhuman powers probably preceded the Buddhist and the Yoga systematizations (and perhaps some originated in other traditions than those that believe they can be attained by meditation and concentration), but in these traditions the powers were given a rational explanation. It seems that the powers of yogins have become an integral part of some yoga traditions, not in spite of Sāṃkhya philosophy, but because of it. In her chapter in this book, Angelika Malinar argues that the Sāṃkhya understanding of the world in terms of *prakṛti* and its manifestations made a rational understanding of the yoga powers possible. The powers became understood as a gradual

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[32] Noted by Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga* (Rochester: Inner Traditions International, 1996), 101.

[33] P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute 1962), 1451–1452; quoted in Grinshpon, *Silence Unheard*, 32-33

[34] Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 101.

mastering of the Sāṃkhya categories (*tattva*s). Yoga powers are not remnants of 'archaic magical thinking' or are a 'dubious by-product of a primarily spiritual practice', as some have argued,[35] but an integral part of yoga, Malinar argues. The evidence, not only in the epic but also in the commentarial traditions of the *Yogasūtra* and the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, points to this. David Gordon White shows that the yoga powers were important in the Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika's rational analysis of perception. Brad Clough in his chapter shows that the yoga powers as explained in the Theravāda Buddhist Path manuals made them rational and quite conceivable in terms of the Buddhist teaching. Christopher Key Chapple and Lloyd W. Pflueger demonstrate in their chapters that a logical interpretation of the powers of the *Yogasūtra* is quite possible.

Structure of the Book

The Early Traditions of Yoga Powers

Two chapters in this book deal with early traditions of yoga powers. *Mahābhārata* is perhaps the earliest text to describe what yogis do. In her chapter, Angelika Malinar analyzes the conceptual framework used to explain the acquisition of yoga powers in the *Mahābhārata* and argues that the concept of *prakṛti* fostered a philosophical treatment of yogic powers. The concept, she argues, allows the yogic pathway to be treated as a gradual conquest of the creative powers of *prakṛti* which are manifest in the Yogin's own physical and mental apparatus. Yoga powers are an integral part of yoga. The story of the yogin Vyāsa's son Śuka is significant as a source of early yoga. In the description, his concentration on the chosen object "is preceded by certain postures which he assumes according to a fixed sequence while sitting at the lonely place" (p. 38), which are references to his yoga practice. His most important power is flying through the air. The story also teaches that there is only one legitimate occasion for employing the powers and that is as a means for gaining liberation. But in the next chapter of the *Mahābhārata*, analyzed by Malinar, yoga powers

[35] See the chapter by Malinar in this book and Gerhard Oberhammer, *Strukturen yogischer Meditation: Untersuchungen zur Spiritualität des Yoga* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1977).

are presented as a goal in their own right (12.289). The yogin becomes an *īśvara*, a powerful master, with the ability to multiply himself like a creator god and to gain liberation. In *Mahābhārata* 12.228, acquisition of yoga powers is depicted within Sāṃkhya philosophy as a gradual mastery of the cosmos. The *Bhagavadgītā* chapters of the *Mahābhārata* are particularly important for the study of yoga powers. In *Bhagavadgītā*, the yogin who has conquered the creation, that is, has become identical with the cause of creation, becomes free from karma by replacing his agency with the agency of *brahman*/*prakṛti*, Malinar argues. The divinity of Kṛṣṇa is explained by drawing on the concepts of yoga, and yoga powers are an intrinsic element of the theology of 'cosmological monotheism' of the *Bhagavadgītā*.

David Gordon White also tries to identify the earliest descriptions of persons practicing yoga in South Asia. He argues that these are found in the *Mahābhārata* books 12 and 13. He discusses two themes, the 'self-magnification' of the yogin and yogic perception. White notes that the most salient area of overlap between the earliest narratives of humans or gods practicing yoga and yoga as described in classical texts is the term *vibhūti*, which he translates as 'omni-presencing'. *Vibhūti* is the name of a chapter of *Yogasūtra* and the name of the yoga that Kṛṣṇa practices when he displays his universal form to Arjuna. It is Kṛṣṇa's ability to embody himself simultaneously in many bodies that makes him a master of yoga, contends White. This 'omni-presencing' of Kṛṣṇa resembles the practice of human yogis, as depicted in the *Mahābhārata*. White then tries to identify who these yogis were. He argues that they are portrayed as practicing yogis when they enter into other people's bodies (and he states none of them are described as sitting in fixed postures meditating) and that by entering into every being the yogi ultimately "become(s) the one in the many" (p. 68). The second theme, yogic perception as a valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) and as a type of perception that is able to see deeply into things as they truly are, is predicated on the presupposition that yogis are able to "move between, inhabit, even create multiple bodies" (p. 74), White argues.

Yoga Powers and Buddhism

Yoga powers were a central part of early Buddhism and these powers were perhaps one reason for the success of Buddhism. The powers

which are so central in Mahāyāna Buddhism were not opposed to early Buddhism, but were perhaps even a response to the importance of yoga powers in early Buddhism. Mahāyāna tried perhaps to surpass other schools of Buddhism and to represent itself as possessing even more powerful extraordinary abilities. Yoga powers in Buddhism are attained primarily by meditation, but also other methods are known such as the use of amulets and mantras. Three chapters of this book deal with powers in Buddhism. The first chapter, by Bradley S. Clough, analyzes yoga powers ("extraordinary abilities directly gained from meditation practice") in the Pāli path manuals of Theravāda Buddhism. These abilities are called *abhiññā*s and include physical powers such as multiplication of bodies, disappearing, walking on water, passing through solid objects, flying, the ability to hear sounds from far-off places, knowledge of others' thoughts, recollections of past lives, and the ability to see very distant objects. Added to these was *āsava-kkhāya-ñāṇa*, 'knowledge of the destruction of the defilements', which Clough states was probably added to maintain that the highest attainable knowledge is one that directly conduces to liberation, *nibbāṇa*. The addition of the *āsava-kkhāya-ñāṇa* shows a tension between superhuman powers and liberation. Clough's chapter analyzes the explanations given for these powers in the meditation manuals. The manuals emphasize the production of phenomena outside of the mind by means of the mind and they contain instructions on how they are actually to be attained. The association between knowledge and stages of meditation confirms that one basis for the superhuman powers in South Asia is the idea that knowing something is to gain mastery over it. Clough also argues that the increasing emphasis on *vipassanā-bhāvanā* over *samatha-bhāvanā* has led to an underestimation of the importance of the *jhāna*s and *abhiññā*s in early Theravāda Buddhism.

David V. Fiordalis emphasizes the close connection between yoga powers and the doctrines and asks what doctrinal arguments do the yoga powers help illustrate or establish and what doctrines are put forward to explain the powers. Some texts acknowledge that the display of powers is a means for generating faith (*prasāda*) while other texts criticize such displays. However, a large number of events displaying superhuman powers are found in Buddhist texts. Fiordalis states that mainstream and Mahāyāna Buddhist miracle stories grew alongside one another and mutually influenced each other. A main question, according to Fiordalis, is whether the mundane yoga powers (the first

five *abhiññā*s, see pp. 106-107) can also be attained through meditation by non-Buddhists. The *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* acknowledges this distinction between the five mundane and the sixth transmundane powers and supports that the five mundane can be attained by non-Buddhists. The powers are displayed with a purpose—the liberating knowledge of the *dharma*. In the text under discussion, the Buddha and Vimalakīrti use their powers in the same way as a magician is thought to work creating a magical illusion. The metaphor of magical illusion, reasons Fiordalis, is one of the means used to connect the conventional perspective and ultimate truth.

Ryan Richard Overbey analyzes one of the terms for superhuman powers, *siddhi*, and its appearance in the sources of East Asian Buddhism. In Indian Buddhist literature, the word *siddhi*, in the sense of 'superhuman power', is not used before the rise of Tantric Buddhist literature in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. Overbey argues that there is no evidence of the presence of the term *siddhi* in Chinese Buddhist texts before the eighth century, in spite of several researchers using the word *siddhi* when dealing with these texts. One mistake, Overbey argues, is to use the word *siddhi* as a general term for attainments. A more common error is to conflate the term *siddhi* with the term *ṛddhi* (Pāli: *iddhi*). Overbey states that such conflation makes it difficult to understand why Buddhist Tantric texts began referring to *siddhis* and not *ṛddhi*s from the seventh century. Finally, he analyzes mistakes caused by the misreading of the Chinese texts. In the second half of the chapter, Overbey investigates the actual appearance of the word *siddhi* in the Buddhist texts, and this investigation leads him to conclude that *siddhi* did not exist as a discrete category in Buddhist practice before the emergence of the tantric traditions. The frequent use of the word *siddhi* from this date, Overbey suggests, is because the Buddhist texts imported to China from this date were "thoroughly infused with Śaiva language, rituals, and tropes" (p. 141). Great care needs to be taken when comparing Asian religious traditions and Overbey's article opens up interesting avenues for research.

Yoga Powers and Jainism

In Jainism, *tīrthaṅkara*s, Jain mendicants, and elders are accredited with superhuman powers such as traveling through the air, mind reading, curing diseases by touch, transforming food, turning oneself

into an animal, and so on. According to the Jain traditions, extraordinary powers can be attained in many ways such as by means of spells (*vidyā*) and mantras, but also by the action of austerity. Kristi Wiley focuses in her chapter on extraordinary powers attained by austerity. She analyzes types of powers, and how and by whom they are attained. The emphasis on *karma* in Jainism means that the manner in which they are attained has two aspects, the action such as austerity and the karmic consequences that are the efficient causes for transforming the soul itself. The terms used for extraordinary abilities in Śvetāmbara and Digambara differ. In Śvetāmbara the term used is *labdhi*, in Digambara *ṛddhi*. Why this is so, Wiley does not explain, but it is an intriguing fact that needs to be further researched. A characteristic feature of Jain discussions of powers is the importance of food. Fasting (*tapas*) is frequently mentioned as a means to attain different powers, and the powers mentioned include the power to transform food that is placed in the hand of a *muni* into milk, ghee, honey or the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*). The ability to fly is attained in association with fasting. Wiley argues that the Digambara text *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama* sets the pattern of lists found in later Digambara texts. In this text, abilities associated with the intellect have the highest spiritual status among the powers, while healing powers and the ability to transform food have the lowest. Śvetāmbara shows a similar pattern. In Jainism, *karma* is also discussed in discourses of the powers. Interestingly, *karma* is mentioned in the context of powers of the intellect and sensory perception, but not in connection with powers of healing. Wiley suggests that this is perhaps because healing was considered an esoteric aspect of the teaching.

Yoga Powers and Classical Yoga

The term Classical Yoga refers to the *Yogasūtra* and the *Vyāsabhāṣya* and the philosophical commentary tradition on these texts. This philosophical tradition is one of several interpretations of Sāṃkhya philosophy. Yoga and Buddhist terms are mostly absent in Sāṃkhya literature, but Buddhist terms are a marked feature of the *Yogasūtra* and *Vyāsabhāṣya*. Gerald Larson has argued that Yoga philosophy, as it is systematized in the *Yogasūtra*, is a Sāṃkhya response to the challenges from Buddhism.[36] Classical Yoga, Larson states, can be under-

[36] Gerald James Larson, "Classical Yoga as Neo-Sāṃkhya: A Chapter in the His-

stood as Neo-Sāṃkhya, as a revision of Sāṃkhya by Vindhyavāsin. Vindhyavāsin merged the old Sāṃkhya philosophy focused on the *vyakta-avyakta-jña-vijñānāt* and the reflective discrimination of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* with the old Buddhist philosophy, which Larson characterizes as *nirodha-samādhi*. Vārṣagaṇya, who lived in the first or second century CE made a systematic account of the older Sāṃkhya teaching of the Ṣaṣṭitantra. Īśvarakṛṣṇa summarized the views of the followers of Vārṣagaṇya in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*. This old Sāṃkhya became criticized by the Buddhist Vasubandhu, and this critique, suggests Larson, "becomes the occasion for the compilation of a systematic Yoga that reflects the philosophical issues being debated in this new intellectual milieu."[37] Yoga philosophy is a school of Sāṃkhya that blended a number of preexisting yoga traditions and Buddhist meditation traditions with Sāṃkhya philosophy. It is worth noticing that even though the yoga powers can be understood and explained by means of Sāṃkhya religious thought, the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* has a different view of the *siddhi*s. The eight *siddhi*s of Sāṃkhya are not superhuman powers but quite mundane activities. The eight *siddhi*s (*siddhayo 'ṣṭau*), according to *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 51, are proper reasoning, oral instruction, study, removal of the three kinds of suffering, friendly discussion, and generosity. According to the commentaries on *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 48, the traditional eight *siddhi*s are relegated to the category of delusion (*moha*) (see the chapter by Lloyd Pflueger in this volume). One of the differences between Sāṃkhya and Yoga *darśana*s is, therefore, the view of yoga powers. The *Yogasūtra* is a text of Sāṃkhya philosophy and had to give rational Sāṃkhya explanations of the traditions of yoga meditation which included yoga powers. Without including them, the *Yogasūtra* would not have explained yoga.

Three chapters in this book cover yoga powers in Classical Yoga. They attempt to understand the place and meaning of yoga powers in the practice of yoga that is based on the *Yogasūtra*. Stuart Ray Sarbacker in his chapter emphasizes that in the teleology of yoga the 'removal' paradigm exists in a dynamic tension with "a deliberate cultivation of powers and capacities that are characteristic of a deity"

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tory of Indian Philosophy," *Asiatische Studien* 53, no. 3 (1999): 723-732; Larson and Bhattacharya, eds., *Yoga: India's Philosophy of Meditation*.

[37] Larson and Bhattacharya, eds., *Yoga: India's Philosophy of Meditation*, 41.

(p. 199). The main part of his chapter deals with possible interpretations of the powers of the *Yogasūtra* and the philosophical commentary tradition of this text. He discusses a number of possible approaches to make sense of the powers in an academic frame that is not bound to the doctrinal coherence of the philosophical approach of the *Yogasūtra* commentary tradition. Approaches discussed include the symbolic approach, the idea that they were introduced because they were part of the oral tradition of asceticism at the time, and the demythologization of the powers in order to understand them as transfigurations of human abilities. Other approaches involve understanding yoga power as a hook to entice potential adherents, advertisements to attract the disempowered, a promise of power to the powerless or as symbolic expressions of the desire for political and economic power. Display of yoga powers are also well known as a part of magicians' shows and in India there has been a blending of different kinds of 'wonder-workers', but the powers can also be interpreted as akin to fantasies uncovered by a therapist or as purely mental phenomena occurring in the imagination which can be construed as indicators of spiritual progress. The powers represent the ability of awareness to penetrate the depths of consciousness. From the social point of view, the powers might be related to the establishment and maintenance of authority. The guru's ability of mind reading and being present in several bodies, or even being omniscient, establishes authority and social control of the community. Finally, Sarbacker claims that one approach to understanding yoga powers is by using the category of the numinous. Yoga powers, argues Sarbacker, blur the distinction between the human and the divine since yogins and yoginīs become transformed into deities and are as much objects of fear as objects of awe.

Christopher Key Chapple analyzes the use of the word *siddhi* in the *Yogasūtra* and focuses on the principle of *pariṇāma* in his interpretation. *Pariṇāma* is a theory of causality which explains change as something latent that becomes manifest. Chapple interprets the superhuman powers to mean that through sheer will one can shape the world in an intentional manner: "Knowing that interaction with the world stems from one's mental constructs, one can willfully and knowingly direct one's attention to gain specific results" (p. 226). One can "enter into a variety of imaginal worlds and transform them into realities" (p. 227). Chapple builds his analysis on *pariṇāma* as a fivefold transformation, but nevertheless manages to give common sense interpre-

tations of many of the yoga powers. Chapple also provides a complete translation of chapter three of the *Yogasūtra*, the *Vibhūtipāda*.

The last chapter on the *Yogasūtra*, written by Lloyd W. Pflueger, starts by asking: "Is yoga about power or peace?" He concludes that "purity in yoga is *power*." Power, explains Pflueger, proceeds from renunciation, not indulgence, and renunciation means holding on to that which is pure and letting go of that which is not. Pflueger's chapter is a creative interpretation using some basic metaphors associated with yoga practice. According to Pflueger, mastering the superhuman powers allows the yogin 'to inhale' the universe, while the ultimate form of *samādhi*, *asamprajñāta samādhi*, allows the yogin "to *exhale* and let go of himself and the whole of creation he has identified with" (p. 259).

Yoga Powers, Śaiva Tantric Traditions and Haṭhayoga

The popularization of the term *siddhi* seems to be due to influence from Śaiva Tantra traditions. In the Śaiva Tantra texts a variety of powers are described and Somadeva Vasudeva argues in his chapter that many of the Śaiva powers can be traced back to the earliest surviving stratum of tantric Śaivism, the archaic *Niśvāsa*-corpus, originating circa 450–550 AD. The powers are classified here into a tripartite scheme of minor, middle, and superior powers and there is a distinction between tantric powers and yoga powers. In the Śaiva Tantric texts the yoga powers are often called *guṇa*s (*guṇāṣṭaka*) and are distinguished from the tantric *siddhi*s (compare also the discussions in Mallinson's chapter on *haṭhayoga* texts and Overbey's chapter on Chinese Buddhist texts). The method for attainment of *siddhi*s is also different. In addition, the motivating factors for the powers sought by Tāntrikas are often quite mundane. The main method to attain the *siddhi*s is by mantra repetitions (*japa*), and ever higher powers are won by increasing the number of repetitions. *Siddhi*s can also be asked for as favors when the *sādhaka* has succeeded in summoning a deity. According to some texts, the lower powers such as sowing enmity, magical murder, dispelling, rendering ministers and nobles servile, and winning the friendship of all people, are attained after repeating the mantra twenty thousand times. The middle powers of subjugation of all beings, terrorizing, favoring (*nigrahānugraha*), and easily accomplishing whatever one wishes are attained after thirty thousand repetitions. The higher powers are the eight yogic powers and union

with Śiva (*śivayojya*), which are synonymous with liberation and are achieved after forty thousand repetitions. In some *phalaśruti* listings we find an explicit acknowledgment that *siddhi*s are meant for fun or entertainment (*krīḍā*). Finally, Vasudeva analyzes the views of Abhinavagupta on the powers. Abhinavagupta privileges salvific knowledge and he reduces the powers to mere miracles meant to generate faith in the salvific efficacy of Śaiva initiation. A realized yogin cannot desire *siddhi*s. Vasudeva also investigates the post-human identities implied in the tantric powers and yogic perception which led to the distinction of two different types of yogins; the first has not yet overcome the differentiation between self and other and the second type perceives everything as himself and realizes that the differentiation into self and other is his own fabrication.

Two chapters deal with yoga powers in *haṭhayoga*. Sthaneshwar Timalsina's chapter investigates yoga powers in the story of Bhuśuṇḍa in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*. Bhuśuṇḍa practiced the yoga of *prāṇāyāma*, breathing exercises, and the goal for his yoga was immortality. Liberation, therefore, is affirmation of his corporality. According to the story of Bhuśuṇḍa, *haṭhayogin*s strive for immortality through the regulation of *prāṇa* by balancing the two channels identified with the sun and the moon. *Prāṇa* refers here to the supreme reality as it sustains life and is found within the body. Yoga powers are placed in a positive light in this text and are not obstacles to *mokṣa* but are the 'living' aspect of liberation, and the highest yoga power is Bhuśuṇḍa's self-realization. Through his practice of *prāṇāyāma*, Bhuśuṇḍa's awareness of time becomes completely transformed. He attains a transcendence of time, a mind free from the mental construction of time, and a 'seeing' of the universe that is free from distinctions. In this state he witnesses the word as topsy-turvy and not in any fixed order. Here, time is neither linear nor circular, but a chaotic randomness. 'Living' liberation together with its power are here attained through the dissolution of the mental imprints (*vāsanā*).

James Mallinson's chapter investigates the issue of supernormal powers in two *haṭhayoga* texts, the *Amṛtasiddhi* (the oldest text of *haṭhayoga* dating most likely from the twelfth century CE) and the *Śivasaṃhitā* (one of the younger texts, dating from the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries). One of the texts, *Amṛtasiddhi*, exemplifies the attitude toward the *siddhi*s of the *mumukṣu*, the seeker of liberation, and the *bubukṣu*, the seeker of superhuman powers. Yoga in *Amṛtasiddhi* means mastering the breath which leads to access to the nectar

of immortality in the head by which the yogin can live as long as he wants. Implicit in the *haṭhayoga* understanding is the distinction between intentional (*kalpitā*) and unintentional (*akalpitā*) *siddhi*s. The *siddhi*s arise spontaneously in the second of the four stages (*avasthā*s) of *haṭhayoga* practice and are said to be obstacles to *mahāsiddhi* but signs on the path to *mokṣa*. The yogi should not delight in them nor show them to others. The attitude is quite similar to that of the *Yogasūtra*. However, in the *Yogasūtra* detailed instructions of how the supernormal powers are attained are given. It is interesting that intentional *siddhi*s of this sort are not taught in the mainstream *haṭhayoga* texts, Mallinson writes. He comments on the terminology of yoga powers where *siddhi* is used most often to mean success while the eight yoga powers, described in *Yogasūtra* 3.45, are called *guṇa*s or *aiśvarya*s. In contrast to the *Amṛtasiddhi*, the concept of *siddhi* takes center stage in the *Śivasaṃhitā*. Mallinson argues that the importance of *siddhi*s in *Śivasaṃhitā* is due to influences from the Kaula teachers. Interestingly, the famous *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* and early *haṭhayoga* texts such as *Amṛtasiddhi,* are less concerned with the yoga powers than the *Yogasūtra* and Kaula influenced *haṭhayoga* works such as *Śivasaṃhitā*.

Yoga Powers in Sufi and Bhakti Hagiographies

Two chapters cover yoga powers in Sufi and *bhakti* hagiographies. Patton Burchett's chapter deals with a critique of yoga powers. Yogis, especially Nāthyogis and Tāntrikas, were often constructed as the opponents of Sufis and *bhakta*s. The Yoga powers of the yogin were understood to come from his yoga practice and therefore inferior to the powers of the Sufis and *bhakta*s, whose powers come from God. The power of God and devotion to God are perceived as superior to yoga powers. Yoga powers serve only the individual while the power of God serves all. Burchett argues that the Sufis introduced the dichotomies of miracle and magic and miracle worker and magician to India and that these dichotomies are at the center of the narratives of display of yoga powers in the Sufi and *bhakti* traditions. These dichotomies were part of the Abrahamic traditions shared by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and Burchett argues that the category of 'miracle' (as the work of an all-powerful God) had no exact counterpart in the Indian sources prior to the thirteenth century. In the hagiographies, competition takes the form of displays of powers. These kinds

of competitions are already found in the *Mahābhārata* and point to important functions of yoga powers. Displays of powers are meant to prove the superiority of the truth of the person displaying the powers. In the narratives of yogis and *bhakta*s, miracles are valuable, yoga powers are not. Miracles reveal God's powers, whereas yoga powers reveal only the powers of the individual yogi. Display of magical powers are also futile since they are carried out to attain human goals and not for the love of God. Burchett concludes that "it was in significant part through the influence of Sufism that Indian devotional practices and attitudes—those viewing the divine as the sole source of power—increasingly took on the tenor of the 'religious', while tantric and yogic-ascetic modes of practice—those viewing the human being as the primary source of power—increasingly came to be represented as something akin to the 'magical' with all that term's typical negative connotations" (p. 376).

Antonio Rigopoulos analyzes the understanding of yoga powers in the life and tradition of Sāī Bābā of Śirḍī (d. 1918). Sāī Bābā belonged to the Maharashtrian Sufi tradition which accommodated Sufism and Hindu devotionalism. He advocated an integrative spirituality beyond the orthodoxy of institutionalized religions. However, soon after his death a complete 'Hinduization' of him and his tradition was accomplished and Sāī Bābā's shrine became a Hindu temple. But even during his lifetime his Sufi background was downplayed or not recognized by the majority of his Hindu devotees. The huge expansion of Sāī Bābā's fame started around the 1970s. Śirḍī Sāī Bābā's renown was largely due to his powers. In this fascinating chapter, Rigopoulos analyzes the descriptions of Śirḍī Sāī Bābā as a yogin and incidents which are referred to as yoga practice in the hagiographies written by the Hindu devotees. The aim of the hagiographies is to depict him as an exceptional yogin. He is understood to have attained all the yoga powers and Rigopoulos studies the descriptions of him entering into *nirvikalpa samādhi* without pulse or breath for three days, performance of *khaṇḍayoga* (the separation of hands, legs, and so on from the trunk), levitation, and so forth. Like the previous chapter, it raises important questions about Hindu and Sufi interpretations of yoga powers and the mutual influences of the two traditions. Rigopoulos shows how Hindu devotees interpreted Sufi practices as yoga practices. The Hindu devotees understood that Sāī Bābā of Śirḍī did not come from any yoga lineage and assumed yoga came to him through the grace of his guru.

Yoga Powers in Contemporary Sampradāyas *and Institutions*

Two essays analyze the issue of yoga powers in contemporary traditions. Ramdas Lamb discusses yoga powers in the Rāmānandī *sampradāya* and notes that Hindu ascetic orders have recognized the value of having these powers but also warn about the dangers. Although the powers themselves can become problematic, he argues that the most dangerous aspect of the powers is that the desire to acquire them can become an addiction. Anything that leads to attachment to the body and the material world is counterproductive to the goal of freedom. Most *vairāgī* initiates are taught to renounce both the yoga powers and the quest for them, but Lamb also notes that for those Rāmānandīs who delve more deeply into their *sādhanā,* yoga powers become prevalent. The sources for the powers and the intention of using the powers become important for the Rāmānandīs. They are encouraged to strive for minor powers such as freedom from hunger, freedom from the effects of the weather, the ability to control heart beat, metabolism and blood pressure, knowledge of past and future, the ability to read minds and karmic status of others, the ability to cure most illnesses, and the ability to speak to and control the actions of wild animals. The most important of these for the renunciants are those that control bodily needs. The Rāmānandīs distinguish between different sources for the yoga powers. One source is the internal, which is grounded in the idea that the yoga powers are always present in the body and need only to be awakened. Yoga is fundamental for this awakening. Visualization of *cakra*s and use of *mudrā*s, *bandha*s, and *prāṇāyāma* are important methods. Other means to attain powers are prayers, mantras, and rituals. Powers attained and used for negative purposes are usually hidden. In the teaching of the Rāmānandīs, however, there is no yoga power more powerful than the selfless love of the divine.

Knut A. Jacobsen's chapter deals with a contemporary Sāṃkhya-Yoga institution based in Jharkhand in India, the Kāpil Maṭh, founded by the Sāṃkhya-yogin Hariharānanda Āraṇya (1869–1947). Jacobsen analyzes the views on superhuman powers held by Āraṇya and his interpretations of the individual powers. Āraṇya was a practical yogin and his views on yoga powers are based on his own practice of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, which makes his perspective particularly valuable. His views on yoga powers are characterized by ambivalence. He disliked the exaggerated focus on the powers among many *sādhu*s, yogins, and lay people he encountered. He has some favorable views

and detailed reports about his own experiences of the powers, but is nevertheless known to have been very critical of anyone showing interest in them. Āraṇya wrote a number of books in Sanskrit and Bengali, also commentaries on the *Yogasūtra*, and as part of giving rational explanations of yoga, he also had to explain the yoga powers. Several patterns characterize his explanations of the powers. He explains them by mostly referring to the Sāṃkhya theory of the *tattva*s and the yoga theory of *samādhi*, but has also in a few instances referred to the world of magicians, common sense arguments, and modern science.

Yoga Powers beyond South Asia

In yoga, yoga powers are associated with *samādhi*. Modern yoga as a popular global movement has promoted primarily *āsana*s and *prāṇāyāma,* and the effects of meditation that can be measured by science. Yoga powers, therefore, have not been emphasized. Nevertheless, yoga powers have spread to the West as part of New Age spirituality and in the last chapter of this book Jeffrey J. Kripal deals with this topic, contributing to the modern 'history of superpowers' by analyzing yoga powers in the American-Asian metaphysical fusion of the human potential movement. Here, Kripal argues, the powers represent neither the misplaced fantasies of some 'primitive' thinking nor miraculous acts of divine agents but signs of a panentheistic cosmos and 'the future of the body.' Kripal explores how this is argued by a selection of human potential authors, psychical researchers, parapsychologists, and practicing psychists with Asian religious ideas and practices who all relate to yoga and tantra. In these persons, the theories of biological evolution and modern physics are merged with theories of superhuman powers of yoga and tantra. *Siddhi*s are prevalent in the writings of the authors analyzed in this chapter. Kripal concludes that yoga powers have not been left behind in the modern world, but have mutated and evolved. The standard evolutionary view does not recognize superhuman powers, but the movement that Kripal identifies as the evolutionary mysticism of the human potential movement accepts them. This evolutionary mysticism regards them as signs of a probable human future. Evolutionary biology and modern physics have changed the understanding of the yoga powers in the religious traditions and Kripal argues that the powers are now expressed and interpreted in scientific terms.

Conclusion

Yoga powers are probably often viewed as a magical residue of a religious past, as superstition, and also perhaps as signs of backwardness and fraud. The superhuman powers do not have obvious links to any contemporary rational pursuits or academic knowledge tradition. In the modern global success of yoga, the teaching of yogic powers is more or less absent, and this is probably a new development in yoga.[38] In other traditions of yoga, yoga powers are seen as signs of success in yoga and proof of having reached advanced stages of practice. Some years ago, a Bengali friend who had for some years been a lay devotee in a contemporary yoga tradition in North India had decided that he was going to leave the movement. The explanation he gave was that the gurus of this yoga lineage were against the display of yoga powers. The reason for this, he said, was not because they did not favor them, but because they simply did not possess any yoga powers. This lack of powers proved, in his view, that they also had no spiritual attainment. The devotee told me that he had joined another movement whose leader, according to what he himself had witnessed, would not hesitate to display yoga powers such as floating in the air and mind reading. In other words, according to him, it was lack of yoga powers that was associated with fraud and not anyone's claim to possess them. His action probably reflected the traditional attitude to the yoga powers.

Superhuman powers constitute a large topic in the history of South Asian religions. This book focuses on the South Asian traditions of yoga powers, but the book is not an exhaustive treatment of those powers. However, I hope the book will lead to further interest and research.

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[38] There is significant literature on the creation of modern postural yoga. The most important are by Mark Singleton, *Yoga Body: The Origin of Modern Posture Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Joseph S. Alter, *Yoga in Modern India: The Body Between Science and Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Norman Sjoman, *The Yoga Tradition of the Mysore Palace*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1999); and Elisabeth de Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga: Patanjali and Western Esotericism* (London: Continuum 2004).

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CHAPTER ONE

YOGA POWERS IN THE *MAHĀBHĀRATA*

Angelika Malinar

Flying through the air, entering another's body, being in control of the elements of nature—in the *Mahābhārata* (*MBh*) such extraordinary activities are frequently regarded as 'yogic powers' which indicate successful yoga practice. In the epic these powers are variously called *bala* (power, strength), *aiśvarya* (lordship, sovereignty), *vibhūti* (power, manifestation of power), *vīrya* (might), *prabhāva* (force) and, not infrequently, *yoga*.[1] These powers are actually ascribed to different epic characters, such as sages, heroes, ascetics, yogins or gods and treated by the epic's composers as 'common knowledge' on the part of the audience. Yet, the epic also includes texts that deal with the interpretation of these powers in connection with expositions of yoga as a doctrine of liberation. In this regard the epic is an important source in tracing the development of the conceptual framework used to explain the acquisition of such powers in post-epic philosophical and theological treatises such as the *Yogasūtra* with Bhāṣya (4th-5th c. CE) and the *Pāśupatasūtra* with the commentary of Kauṇḍinya (5th c. CE). One of the concepts that seems to have fostered a philosophical treatment of yogic powers is the concept of *prakṛti*, the single cosmic cause of creation, launched by teachers of what came to be known as the philosophical school of Sāṃkhya. This concept allows the yogic path-

[1] The word *siddhi* (achievement, perfection), which in many modern texts and studies is the preferred term for these powers, seems not to be used in this sense in the epic texts discussed here. The one possible exception could be 12.320.1, when Śuka is said to have turned to his 'perfection' or 'achievement', yet for specific powers other words are used. As the word *siddhi* refers in the epic to all kinds of achievements and perfections, a clear terminological usage in the sense of 'yoga power' can only occasionally be detected. However, a group of beings called *siddha*s is regularly listed together with other semi-divine or heavenly beings as residents of some higher cosmic realm. At *MBh* 2.8.26 they are said to have yogic bodies (*yogaśarīrin*). Some passages refer to those perfected in yoga (*yogasiddha*) without explicitly mentioning any specific powers, but obviously referring to very high levels of accomplishment which probably include yoga powers (1.60.26; 3.160.22; 9.44.8; 9.48.20; in 12.278 the sage Uśanas is called *yogasiddha*).

way to be treated as a gradual conquest of the creative powers of *prakṛti*, which are manifest in the yogin's own physical and cognitive apparatus, as well as in the different cosmological levels which constitute the created world. Here I shall demonstrate that the acceptance of yoga powers not only in the epic, but also in later texts, does not indicate the persistence of certain remnants of 'archaic magical thinking' or the dubious by-product of a primarily spiritual practice, as some scholars have noted.[2] Rather, yogic powers are explained by drawing on the Sāṃkhya notion of *prakṛti*, of the single cosmic cause of all creation, of 'original nature' as a self-active power, which came to be included not only in yoga texts, but also in many theological traditions. This will be put into more concrete terms here with regard to the narrative depiction of yogic powers in the story of Śuka. Other texts ascribe the acquisition of yogic powers a central role within a more doctrinal exposition of yoga as a liberating practice. This is the case in chapters 12.289 and 12.228, which deal with yogic powers with and without drawing on Sāṃkhya terminology. I shall then turn to the *Bhagavadgītā* (*BhG*), which not only includes an explanation of why powerful yogins do not produce new *karman*, but also offers another important contemporary conceptualization of yogic powers, the concept of God as the highest yogin, as the 'Mighty Lord of Yoga' (*mahāyogeśvara*).

Śuka's Yogic Might (MBh 12.309-320)

While the narrative structure and meaning of the story of Śuka, the son of the epic composer Vyāsa, have been studied by quite a few scholars,[3] the description of his yogic powers has received less atten-

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[2] For instance, Gerhard Oberhammer, *Strukturen yogischer Meditation: Untersuchungen zur Spiritualität des Yoga* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1977), 197ff.; also Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Unsterblichkeit und Freiheit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985), 94ff, who regards the 'magic elements of Yoga' as 'living fossils' of archaic time.

[3] See V.M. Bedekar, "The Story of Śuka in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas," *Purāṇa* 7 (1965): 87-127; Wendy Doniger, "Echoes of the Mahābhārata: Why is a Parrot the Narrator of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the Devībhāgavata Purāṇa?" in *Purāṇa Perennis: Reciprocity and Transformation in Hindu and Jaina Texts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 31-58; C. Mackenzie Brown, "Modes of Perfected Living in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas: The Different Faces of Śuka the Renouncer," in *Living Liberation in Hindu Thought*, edited by Andrew. O. Fort and Patricia Y. Mumme (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 157-83.

tion. While different sources of these powers are mentioned in the course of the narrative (such as boon, in-born capacity), their actual use is strictly embedded in contexts that deal with either a state close to liberation or with the process of actually gaining liberation. This matches the overall theme of the story, Śuka's quest for liberation, that is, for reaching the place of non-return. The story begins with an account of Śuka's miraculous birth, which is brought about by the ascetic efforts (*tapas*) of Vyāsa, which are eventually rewarded by the god Śiva. Vyāsa does not just want offspring, but a "son who consists of the power of fire, earth, water, wind and space".[4] When Rudra-Śiva grants this request, it is declared that the son will be as 'pure' (*śuddha*) as the five elements and that he will gain unique fame as he possesses fiery energy (*tejas*) that encompasses the three worlds (12.310.28-29).[5] Soon Śuka is born from the sticks his father used to kindle the sacrificial fire when a drop of his semen fell on them.[6] The miraculous birth is corroborated by Śuka's 'fiery' radiance and his being born a mighty yogin (*mahāyogin*; 12.311.9). This is especially true with regard to his mastery of the elements: not only does he emerge unharmed from the fire of the kindling sticks he is born from, but he is also capable of flying through the air, demonstrating his mastery of space. His father seems to take these in-born yogic powers of his son for granted.

When Śuka expresses his desire to learn more about liberation, Vyāsa tells him to visit King Janaka in Mithilā for instruction and admonishes him as follows: "Travel along as human beings do. Being free from pride, you should not travel by means of your yogic force, by flying through the air."[7] This statement is part of an admonishment not to indulge in one's capacities and in whatever pleasures one might encounter on the way. Śuka is to present himself to Janaka as a well-

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[4] *agner bhūmer apāṃ vāyor antarikṣasya cābhibho / vīryeṇa saṃmitaḥ putro mama bhūyād iti sma ha* //12.310.14/.

[5] The significance of Śuka's initimate connection to the elements and of his in-born supernatural powers is again pointed out at the very end of the story, when Vyāsa, lamenting the loss of his son, is reminded by Śiva that he asked for a son whose might (*vīrya*) resembles that of the five elements. In accordance with other epic passages, the five elements are regarded as creative powers. This corresponds to a view of the elements in epic Sāṃkhya as being *prakṛti*s, active and productive entities; see, for instance, *BhG* 7.5ff; *MBh* 3.202.

[6] As in many other stories about ascetics seduced to procreation, Vyāsa is aroused by an Apsara (divine dancer); in this case this is welcome because it results in the birth of the desired son.

[7] *mānuṣeṇa tvaṃ pathā gacchety avismitaḥ / na prabhāveṇa gantavyam antarikṣacareṇa vai* //12.312.8/. In *YS* 3.41 this yogic power is called *ākāśagamana*.

mannered Brahmin and a humble pupil seeking instruction. This indicates that the possession of extraordinary powers is not enough to qualify as a 'true' yogin and that these powers must not be used for indulging in pleasure and pride. Rather, refraining from their employment is here seen as a sign of yogic and ascetic qualification, a point which is made again at 12.312.12, when it is stressed that Śuka went to Mithilā on foot, even though he could have travelled through the air.

All this sets the stage for an elaborate depiction of Śuka's yogic power at the very end of the story, which also places the use of such power in its appropriate, that is, salvific context. After Śuka returns from Janaka and before he eventually turns to realize his ultimate goal, he spends some time with his father practising Vedic recitation[8] and is lectured by Nārada on the misery of life (12.316-318.45). This lecture brings about the decision to search for the highest goal, the place of non-return, where his self (or he himself) will find rest.[9] Śuka is convinced that only yoga will allow him to reach this place:

> Nothing but yoga makes it possible to reach the highest goal, since obstruction through (ritual) activities is not suitable for a liberated man. Therefore I shall give up this house, which is the body, by practising yoga. In becoming the wind, I will behold the sun with its rays of fire.[10]

It is not *brahman*, a god, or the highest self that is identified as the place of liberation from *karman* and as the place of non-return, but the sun (319.54-57). This notion recalls an older idea presented in Vedic texts like *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (10.5.2.3-4) or *Muṇḍaka-*

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[8] In this connection, Vyāsa teaches Śuka the different types of wind circulating in the world that allow the different cosmic realms to be reached. In the course of this dialogue, Vyāsa praises his son for asking about the wind as being that element through which 'everything is set in motion' (*vāyor sarvaṃ viceṣṭitam*; 12.315.23). He tells Śuka that he possesses 'divine sight' (*divya cakṣus*; 12.315.28), and he is established in *sattva* as he got rid of *rajas* and *tamas* (ibid.). He asks his son to see himself by himself as he would look in a mirror and to study the Veda. On the one hand, this speech alludes to Sāṃkhya-Yoga terminology and indicates that Śuka is well advanced on a path which is identified as yogic, but on the other hand, Vyāsa recommends not seeking liberation, but contemplating the Veda. This advice suits Vyāsa's desire to keep his son with him. Yet, the instruction about the courses of the wind provides an additional context for the depiction of Śuka as the 'mighty Lord of Yoga' after he became identical with the wind (*vāyubhūta*; 12.318.53). Using or being the wind is seen as the means of travelling through space (not levitation).

[9] *tatra yāsyāmi yatrātmā śamaṃ me 'dhigamiṣyati* // 12.318.51/

[10] *na tu yogam ṛte śakhyā prāptuṃ sā paramā gatiḥ / avabandho hi muktasya karmabhir nopapadyate* //12.318.52/ *tasmād yogaṃ samāsthāya tyaktvā gṛhakalevaram / vāyubhūtaḥ pravekṣyāmi tejorāśiṃ divākaram* /12.318.53/

Upaniṣad (1.2.10-11), in which the sun is regarded as the 'gate of immortality', the highest realm, which marks the beginning and end of time (*Maitri-Upaniṣad* 6.15). Reaching the sun means gaining that immortality which awaits he who has left his body and everything 'under the sun' behind.[11] The sun is thus the destination of Śuka's final, north-bound yogic tour through the cosmos which takes him up to the highest Himalayan regions, where gods, accomplished sages and demigods reside. When taking leave from them he gives them a demonstration of the 'might of yoga' (*yogavīrya*): "I see all the creatures in these worlds—there is no doubt about it. All the gods, together with the sages, should see the yogic might which is mine." (12.318.59) First of all he takes leave of his father and proceeds to a mountain-top. There he begins practising yoga, which culminates in his becoming a 'mighty lord among yogins' (*mahāyogīśvara*; 12.319.6), a status which is demonstrated by using the powers to gain liberation. When Śuka sets out to leave the world, the appropriate moment for the demonstration of yoga powers has come. Now they serve their purpose in providing the strength and mastery over the elements that are deemed necessary in order to leave the world and the body behind. This process is described in 12.319.2-7:

> The great ascetic brought himself in the proper position as taught in the manuals, starting from the feet and gradually proceeding to the other limbs as he knew the proper sequence of practice. Then this wise man turned his face eastwards towards the sun, which had just risen. Like a man exercising in self-discipline, he sat down and put his hands and feet together. There were no swarms of birds, no sound, no sight, when Vyāsa's son, who was full of insight, set out to practice yoga. Then Śuka saw himself being free from all attachments, and when he beheld the sun he broke out in laughter. He continued practising yoga in order to reach the path to liberation, and when he became a mighty lord among yogins he went up to the sky. Thereupon he revolved around the divine sage Nārada and displayed his yoga power to this excellent sage.[12]

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[11] The story of Śuka is not the only passage in the epic in which this idea is dealt with; see, for instance, *MBh* 12.332.13-14; see also David Gordon White, *Sinister Yogis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 126-141; for an analysis of older Vedic sources, see J. Hertel, *Die Himmelstore im Veda und im Awesta* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1924).

[12] *dhārayām āsa cātmānaṃ yathāśāstraṃ mahāmuniḥ / pādātprabhṛtigātreṣu krameṇa kramayogavit* //12.319.2/ *tataḥ sa prāṅmukho vidvān āditye na cirodite / pāṇipādaṃ samādhāya vinītavad upāviśat* //12.319.3/ *na tatra pakṣisaṃghāto na śabdo nāpi darśanam / yatra vaiyāsakir dhīrmān yoktuṃ samupacakrame* //12.319.4/

Śuka is here depicted as practising yoga as prescribed in the textbooks he had previously studied (cf.12.212.4). The actual concentration on the chosen object, the sun, is preceded by certain postures which he assumes according to a fixed sequence (*krama*) while sitting at a lonely place. Only then does he turn himself eastwards and sits in a position which is said to resemble that of a person disciplining himself, that is, with hands and feet put together. The comparison of Śuka with someone practicing self-discipline indicates that he is not exercising, but preparing to use a detachment and mastery he has already achieved. This is corroborated in the next stanza, where Śuka is said to laugh when he beholds the sun, which indicates his being happy with his yogic success. This is even more striking as he was previously surrounded by utter silence and emptiness. Laughing is here not a sign of pride, but of the recognition that he has left all bondage behind and therefore is able to envision the sun, the desired goal. He then continues his yoga practice in order to advance on the path to liberation, which ends in the sun. This continued practice results in his becoming a *mahāyogīśvara*, a 'mighty lord among yogins', a title which is put into more concrete terms in the rest of the narrative.

The word *īśvara*, which is used here for the yogin who has such power, can be taken as a designation for yogins who have reached this level of practice. This is corroborated in other passages in the epic, when control over oneself and the elements of nature is depicted as a characteristic feature of *īśvara*s, be they humane or divine (see below). It should also be noted that the word used here for yogic power is *yoga*, the passage being one of several instances of the use of *yoga* in the sense of 'extraordinary yoga power'.[13] Twice this power is referred to as *prabhāva* (12.312.8; 320.36). The first thing Śuka, the yogic

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sa dadarśa tadātmānaṃ sarvasaṅgaviniḥsṛtam / prajahāsa tato hāsaṃ śukaḥ saṃprekṣya bhāskaram //12.319.5/ *sa punar yogam āsthāya mokṣamārgopalabdhaye / mahāyogīśvaro bhūtvā so 'tyakrāmad vihāyasam* //12.319.6/ *tataḥ pradakṣiṇaṃ kṛtvā devarṣiṃ nāradaṃ tadā / nivedayām āsa tadā svaṃ yogaṃ paramarṣaye* //12.319.7/

[13] Apart from the references included in this article, see also, for instance, the story of the killing of the demon Dhundhu in *MBh* 3.192, when Viṣṇu-Hari promises the sage Uttaṅka that a "supernatural power (*yoga*) will appear, through which you, when using it (*yukta*), will accomplish a great deed for the gods and the three worlds as well" (3.192.25). This *yoga* is then referred to as *yogabala* (3.192.27). Duryodhana claims to possess *yoga* in *MBh* 5.60, which is exemplified in his ability to solidify water; see Angelika Malinar, "Duryodhana's Truths: Kingship and Divinity in Mahābhārata 5.60," in *Battles, Bards, Brahmans. Papers from the Epic Section of the 13th World Sanskrit Conference, Edinburgh, 2006*, edited by John Brockington

īśvara, does is to pay homage to his teacher Nārada by performing a *pradakṣiṇa* circumambulation in the air. This practical demonstration of his being identical with and therefore in control of the wind is continued in the rest of the chapter. Śuka, continuing his use of yoga, enters space and moves on to Mount Kailāsa (12.319.9-10). Śuka leaves the mountaintop and passes on into the sky, where he moves around and eventually reaches ever higher levels and realms of the cosmos. By now he is swiftly flying through the air, 'with his body turned down and his face upwards' (12.319.16), and is praised by the inhabitants of the different mountain regions. In the further course of his moving through the cosmos, he abandons not only *tamas* and *rajas* in their different forms, but also *sattva* and thus the whole realm of the three *guṇa*s, the powers of *prakṛti* taught in Sāṃkhya, which pervade everything in the world. As a consequence, Śuka reaches and establishes himself in the realm, which is eternal, free from the *guṇa*s (*nirguṇa*), devoid of characteristics (*aliṅga*)[14] and is called *brahman* (12.320.2-3). This passage corroborates the use of the term *brahman* in the sense of *prakṛti*, which is well attested in the epic (*BhG* 14.3; see also below). Within the context of yoga, this realm is the basis for setting out for final liberation, as well as the realm of full creative potential. It is the place in which all activities vanish, and conversely, by means of which all activity is possible. In the story of Śuka, this realm is depicted as the point of departure for his final deed, gaining liberation by 'breaking through' the highest mountain range, which is depicted as the final border separating him from the place of non-return.[15] At this point some of the attributes that go along with taking hold of *brahman* / *prakṛti* and being identical with the cause of all beings are ascribed to Śuka (12.320.23). He is omnipresent (*sarvagata*), faces all directions (*sarvatomukha*) and is the All (*sarvātman*). Then, for the last time, he displays his yogic power while already being invisible: "Though invisible, Śuka displayed his yogic force. Thereupon

(Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, forthcoming). Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna to behold his *yoga* in BhG 11 (see below).

[14] The specification *aliṅga* is ascribed to *prakṛti* in *SK* 10, while *liṅga* is the characteristic feature of the manifest world.

[15] Before entering this realm he uses for the last time the potential of his being firmly established in *brahman* by taking care of his father who had followed his son in order to hold him back on earth. Śuka answers the searching calls of his father with the exclamation *bhoḥ* and this turns the story into a legend about the origin of echo, which also reflects that the word *śuka* means parrot, see Doniger "Echoes of the Mahābhārata."

he abandoned the *guṇa*s completely, such as sound and the rest, and went to the highest abode."[16]

While it must be kept in mind that the topic of yogic powers in this story also functions as a narrative device, the narrative offers an interpretation of their role and appropriate use. The story suggests that there is only one legitimate and necessary occasion for employing and displaying the powers of yoga, that is, as a means of actually gaining liberation. These powers should only be used when a yogin who is in full control of himself and of the powers of creation sets out to leave the world forever. The first time the yogic powers are used is also the last time. The quality of a yogin's conquest of these powers can be most convincingly demonstrated when the 'conquered' realms are given up and made the basis for reaching the highest realm. The realm which promises the peace and the end of transmigration that Śuka longs for is the sun. In order to reach it, he has to establish himself firmly in *brahman*, the realm of cosmic creativity. This entails that he has become omnipresent and thus capable of commanding the powers of creation. In the story, this capacity of control is exemplified by Śuka becoming the wind and being able to move through space (*ākāśa*). Though in this text the term *prakṛti* is not used, the use of the terms *brahman* and *guṇa* or attributes like *aliṅga* suggests that the author is drawing on some cosmological framework that resembles Sāṃkhya, yet without implementing Sāṃkhya concepts of liberation and knowledge. A more doctrinal, but again not necessarily Sāṃkhyistic treatment of yogic powers is given in the texts dealt with in the next section.

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[16] *antarhitaḥ prabhāvaṃ tu darśayitvā śukas tadā / guṇān saṃtyajya śabdādīn padam adhyagamat param* //12.320.26/ The word *guṇa* is obviously being used here in the sense of 'qualities of the elements'. This use of the word *guṇa* reflects a form of epic Sāṃkhya, in which the place of the *tattva*s (elements of being), which in the SK are called *tanmātra*s (subtle elements), is taken by qualities ascribed to the great elements (*mahābhūta*). In Sāṃkhya texts of the epic, the five elements are regularly regarded as *prakṛti*s and thus as active (cf. *BhG* 7.5) and not as *vikāra*, mere products of *prakṛti*, as in later Sāṃkhya texts; see Angelika Malinar, "Completeness Through Limitation: On the Classifcation of Tattvas in Sāṃkhya Philosophy," *Berliner Indologische Studien* 16-18 (2003): 304-21). This also explains why the fact that Śuka is made up of the elements is apparently the reason for his in-born yogic powers over them (see also above).

Power of Yoga (yogabala) in MBh 12.289

In chapter 12.289, the 'power of yoga' (*yogabala*) is presented not only as a result of yoga, but also as a goal in its own right.[17] The acquisition of power is regarded as a characteristic feature of Yoga, one that distinguishes it from Sāṃkhya philosophy. Chapters 12.289-290 deal with the differences between Yoga and Sāṃkhya, which are both presented as philosophical or metaphysical doctrines (*mata*; 12.189.6-8) leading to the highest goal and thus as a 'corpus of knowledge conducive for gaining liberation' (*mokṣadarśana*, as Sāṃkhya is called at 12.289.5). Although there are many similarities between the two in terms of moral conduct and practices of purification, 'their doctrinal framework is not the same' (*darśanaṃ na samaṃ tayoḥ*; 12.289.9). This difference is highlighted from the very beginning. While followers of Sāṃkhya have recourse to transmitted knowledge (the doctrines of the teachers; *śāstraviniścayāḥ* 12.289.7), yogins prove their doctrine by taking perception as evidence (*pratyakṣahetu*; ibid.). The statement that yogins make their point by drawing on perception (*pratyakṣa*) as a means of proof firstly seems to imply that the truth and efficacy of the yoga doctrine is demonstrated through the extraordinary powers which yogins acquire in the course of their practice and which can be perceived by others. Secondly, this can also be taken to refer to the importance of the perceptions that yogins themselves make, such as viewing the residents of the different cosmic realms, what is called in other texts 'yogic perception' (*yogapratyakṣa*).[18] Whereas followers of Sāṃkhya seek to gain insight into the single cause (of the cosmos) and become detached from sense-objects, yogins work on and use their

[17] *Yogabala* can either be translated 'power of a yogin' (*yoga* is the word for yogin used frequently in this epic) or 'power of yoga'. It seems that, in the majority of occurrences in this chapter, the latter translation is appropriate (cf. 12.289.23, 24). *Yogabala* is also mentioned at *BhG* 8.10 to indicate a yogin's strength to endure the onslaught of death. At 12.274.31 Śiva, called the 'Lord of all Lords of Yoga' (*sarvayogeśvareśvara*), uses his *yogabala* in order to destroy the sacrifice of Dakṣa. At 6.16.5 the bard Saṃjaya refers to the 'divine eye' (*divya cakṣus*), which was given to him by Vyāsa in order to witness all events during the battle, as his *yogabala*. According to 9.43, Śiva's son Skanda-Kārttikeya is born equipped with 'great yoga power' (*mahāyogabalānvita*; 9.43.16, 33). In accordance with 12.228, the word is often used when yogins enter another's body (cf. 13.40-41; 15.33). It seems that *bala*, not *aiśvarya* or *vibhūti*, is the word used most frequently in the epic as a designation for 'yoga power'.

[18] See the essays in Eli Franco, ed., *Yogic Perception, Meditation and Altered States of Consciousness* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009).

senses in order to gain control over them and their objects and becoming a powerful being. This point is made in 12.289.3: "'How can one who is not a powerful lord (*anīśvara*) gain liberation?'—in this way, O destroyer of enemies, yogins declare their pre-eminence with reasons."[19] According to this translation of the compound *anīśvara*,[20] yogins are requested to become *īśvara*s, 'lords', 'powerful masters', in order to gain liberation. This interpretation connects this statement not only with the characterization of Śuka as 'the mighty lord among yogins' (12.319.6; see above), but also with the dominant theme of the chapter, the 'power of yoga'.

A more detailed presentation of the yogin as a powerful lord starts with the praise of *bala*, the strength and power a yogin must have in order to cut the nets the 'weak' (*abala*, *balahīna*) are caught in, like wild animals, fish or birds, Yogins, who are equipped with power (*balānvitāḥ*), cut off the ties that are produced by greed (*lobhajāni bandhnāni*; 12.289.14). While the weak yogin is carried away by the sense objects, "the yogin who has gained the power of yoga arrays himself against the sense-objects which are many, like an elephant withstanding a torrent."[21] The 'power of yoga' (*yogabala*) and the yogin's reaching the position of an *īśvara* are depicted as the capacity to enter different bodies:

> Yogins, who are in full control and equipped with the power of yoga (*yogabala*), O Pārtha, enter into Prajāpatis, seers, gods and elements

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[19] *anīśvaraḥ kathaṃ mucyed iti evaṃ śatrukarśana / vadanti kāraṇair śraiṣṭhyaṃ yogāḥ samyaṅmanīṣiṇaḥ* //12.289.3/.

[20] See Angelika Malinar, *Rājavidyā: Das königliche Wissen um Herrschaft und Verzicht. Studien zur Bhagavadgītā* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), 283f.; Angelika Malinar, *The Bhagavadgītā: doctrines and contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 160; and James L. Fitzgerald, "The Sāṃkhya-Yoga 'Manifesto' at MBh 289-290," in *Battles, Bards, Brahmans. Papers from the Epic Section of the 13th World Sanskrit Conference, Edinburgh, 2006*, edited by John Brockington (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, forthcoming). The alternative translation, 'one who has no lord', has been suggested by Paul Deussen and Otto Strauss, *Vier philosophische Texte aus dem Mahābhārata* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1906), 592 and by Franklin Edgerton, *The Beginnings of Indian Philosophy* [Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965], 291) ("How can one who does not have a lord, that is a god above him, gain salvation?") However, the chapter does not emphasize any theistic orientation on the side of the yogin. Yet it should not be ruled out that yogins may direct their practice towards a god, since theistic yoga by no means precludes the acquisition of yogic powers (see Minoru Hara, "Pāśupata and Yoga: Pāśupata-Sūtra 2.12 and Yogasūtra 3.37," *Asiatische Studien* 53 (1999): 593-608.

[21] *tad eva ca yathā sroto viṣṭambhayati vāraṇaḥ / tadvad yogabalaṃ labdhvā vyūhate viṣayān bahūn* //12.289.23/

> being (their) masters (*īśvara*). Neither Yama nor fierce Antaka, nor Mṛtyu[22] of terrible might, rules over a yogin of immeasurable energy (*tejas*). When a yogin has gained this power, he multiplies himself into thousands, O bull of the Bhāratas, and wanders in all these (forms of himself) on earth. In one moment he will turn to the realms of objects, next he will practice fierce asceticism, then again he will draw all this together like the sun its rays. This is because a yogin who abides in yogic power is the master of bondage; he also has appropriate control over his liberation (from bondage)—there is no doubt about it.[23]

This passage equates the acquisition of yogic power with reaching a position in which a yogin may either turn to the realms of objects as he pleases or turn away from them forever. He is at the same time master of all the ties that make up the 'net' of the world, and he is in control of his own liberation. The yogin who is equipped with the 'power of yoga' is in control of all objects and is therefore, for instance, in a position to multiply himself, like a creator god, and move around on earth in different shapes and disguises. This god-like position is emphasized at the very end of the chapter, when the yogin is equated with the creator god Nārāyaṇa, the paradigm of commanding creative power, as he is capable of creating the whole cosmos (12.289.62).

After a brief digression into the 'subtle powers' (*sūkṣma bala*), which a yogin gains through mental fixation (*dhāraṇā*; 12.289.37)—which is called the 'highest yoga' (*uttama yoga*; 12.289.41) and culminates in 'seeing the self in himself'[24]—the topic of *yogabala* is continued with information about the diet (*āhāra*) and the moral conduct a yogin needs to follow in order to gain yoga power (12.289.42-52). If a yogin manages to live on grains of corn, water mixed with milk and barley and is able to overcome all kinds of emotions, he will gain this power. Furthermore, he will be able to remain in those fixations of the

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[22] Yama, Antaka and Mṛtyu are the gods of death.

[23] *viśānti cāvaśāḥ pārtha yogā yogabalānvitāḥ / prajāpatīn ṛṣīn devān mahābhūtāni ceśvarāḥ* //12.289.24/ *na yamo nāntakaḥ kruddho na mṛtyur bhīmavikramaḥ / īśate nṛpate sarve yogasyāmitatejasaḥ* //12.289.25/ *ātmanāṃ ca sahasrāṇi bahūni bharatarṣabha / yogaḥ kuryād balaṃ prāpya taiś ca sarvair mahīṃ caret* //12.289.26/ *prāpnuyād viṣayāṃś caiva punaś cograṃ tapaś caret / saṃkṣipec ca punaḥ pārtha sūryas tejoguṇān iva* //12.289.27/ *balasthasya hi yogasya bandhaneśasya pārthiva / vimokṣaprabhaviṣṇutvam upapannam asaṃśayam* //12.289.28/

[24] This passage interrupts the discourse on yoga power and could well be considered a later addition that intents to subordinate the 'best yoga'(*para yoga*; 289.57) of the powerful yogin under a 'highest yoga' that implies a vision of oneself or the Self. In any case, the passage points to a close connection between practices of 'fixation' and yoga powers as can also be seen in 12.228 (see below).

mind (*dhāraṇā*) which allow him to use these powers and eventually gain liberation. Again, liberation is not defined here as envisioning an immortal self or reaching a transcendent entity, but as being liberated from 'death and birth, pain and pleasure' (12.289.56). Accordingly, the chapter does not end by emphasizing the yogin's insight, but the agency that accrues to him as a liberated being and is called the 'best' or 'final' yoga (*para yoga*; 12.289.57). This refers to the miraculous, paradoxical situation that the yogin is active and inactive at the same time, that he is liberated from physical existence, yet assumes all kinds of bodies. The yogin who is great (*mahān*) and whose self is mighty (*mahātman*) alternately assumes the forms of the different gods and powers, yet he remains in his yoga posture. In this regard he resembles the creator god: "While overpowering all mortal yogins, he whose self is mighty acts like the god Nārāyaṇa."[25] In this chapter, the emphasis is on an idea of yoga which does not depict the acquisition of yogic powers as an obstacle to liberation, but as an integral dimension of the state of liberation: Yoga is a state of power which implies being free from death, birth, pain and pleasure. Therefore, the yogin, 'the mighty self', acts like the god Nārāyaṇa. The equation of the position of a creator-god with the empowerment of a yogin points to a development that results in defining divinity in terms of yoga, which finds a paradigmatic formulation in the *BhG* (see below). In this chapter, yoga is deliberately presented without any terminological alignment with Sāṃkhya classifications and enumerations. One reason for this is that the topic of chapters 289-290 is the difference between yoga and Sāṃkhya. While it resembles in this regard the story of Śuka, it differs from the presentation of yoga powers in 12.228 and in the *BhG*.

[25] *yogān sa sarvān abhibhūya martyān nārāyaṇātmā kurute mahātmā* // 12.289.62 / The 'mortal yogins' (*yogān martyān*), are apparently yogins who gain this power either through other means or do not use it as part of their quest for liberation. This is also indicated in the story of Śuka, when Vyāsa is shown to be in command of certain yoga powers (12.320.20) and is called a *mahāyogin* but cannot follow his son, who has become a *mahāyogīśvara*, a master amongst the great yogins, that is, a more powerful yogin. One reason for this is that Vyāsa's power is flawed and thus weakened through his attachment to the world (this point has been made by Doniger, "Echoes of the Mahābhārata".

Yogic Empowerment (yogaiśvarya) in MBh 12.228

Chapter 12.228 depicts the acquisition of yoga power within the conceptual framework of Sāṃkhya philosophy as a gradual mastery of the constituents of the cosmos, which ends in a position of empowerment and control over the unmanifest cause of creation (*avyakta*). The word used for this state is *aiśvarya*, which suggests its terminological use as attested in later systematized presentations in commentaries on *YS* and *SK* (for instance on *SK* 45). Furthermore, the occurrence of the compound *yogaiśvarya* at 12.228.37 points to an (incipient?) acceptance of the word *aiśvarya* as a technical term for yogic power. Otherwise, in the epic it is primarily used for divine and royal power and sovereignty and seems to have been adopted by yoga teachers.[26] In the epic the ascription of *aiśvarya* to yogins indicates a connection between yoga (as both a pathway of liberation as well as an instrument to gain extraordinary powers) and epic discourses on other wielders of power, such as gods and kings. This is also an important context for the treatment of yogic and divine power in the *BhG* (see below).

The practice of yoga described in 12.228 consists in a series of 'fixations' (*dhāraṇā*) of the mind (*manas*), which is based on complete control of the senses, and of 'speech' (*vāc*) in particular. This method is compared with driving a radiant, divine chariot (i.e. the yogin´s body) that shines in the world of Brahmā (12.228.11).[27] In the course of the 'chariot drive', the yogin gradually gains power (*aiśvarya*; 228.14, 15) over the five elements, ego-consciousness, the faculty of

[26] The only other passage in the epic referring to *aiśvarya* in the sense of the 'power of yoga' is 3.20.76. Here, the Vedic gods are said to support the creatures through the power of yoga because they, like ascetics, are without any partiality or attachment and thus demonstrate yogic-ascetic qualities. This passage corroborates the idea that yoga is used in the epic as an important element of new definitions of divinity and theology, replacing and subordinating older ideas of divine power. For a critical view of the idea that gods are powerful beings because they are 'free from love and hate'. see *MBh* 5.60 and Malinar, *The Bhagavadgītā: Doctrines and Contexts*, 42-52; and Malinar "Duryodhana's Truths." Twice the compound *aiśvaryayoga* is used in the epic. At 12.329.28 it is said that Indra became 'small like an atom' by using yogic power; at 12.337.24 Nārāyaṇa helps Brahmā, who is unable to perform the task of creation, by sending him a faculty of discrimination, full of creative power, which exists in a state of yogic empowerment (*aiśvaryayogasthāṃ buddhiṃ śaktimatīm*).

[27] This recalls the well-known comparison between the body and a chariot, for instance in *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* 3.3-6. On yoga and chariot see also White, *Sinister Yogins*, 59ff.

discrimination (*buddhi*) and the unmanifest (*avyakta*). All these belong to the hierarchy of *tattva*s (constituents of being) as taught in Sāṃkhya, *avyakta* being the word used for the realm of creative power (*prakṛti*) before creation actually begins. Upon reaching this state of the 'unmanifest', the yogin, being liberated from his body, beholds his former body (*dehād vimuktasya pūrvarūpaṃ bhavaty uta*; 12.228.17). Next he sees in himself different subtle forms of the elements (water, fire, wind) upon which he reaches a state of yogic empowerment (*aiśvarya*) described as follows:

> Possessing power over what belongs to the earth, he is capable of creation as he pleases. Like the creator god Prajāpati, the unperturbed (yogin) produces creatures only with his thumbs and fingers or with his hands and feet. […]. For he whose ego-consciousness had been conquered also has the five (elements) under his control. Upon conquering the faculty of discrimination, he gains in himself control over the six,[28] for a flawless, comprehensive radiance accrues to him. Thereupon his manifest self reaches the unmanifest, from which, when flowing forth, the world comes into being, which is called the 'manifest'.[29]

This statement explicitly connects the acquisition of yogic power with holding power over the cause of creation, the *avyakta prakṛti* taught in Sāṃkhya.[30] This position can only be reached when the yogin gets rid of his former body and exists in a subtle form (*sūkṣma*). Yet, in order to gain liberation, he needs to leave this state of power behind. This point in made at the very end of the chapter: "He who has overcome the power of yoga and moves on is liberated" (*yogaiśvaryam atikrānto yo 'tikrāmati mucyate*; 12.228.37cd). While it is emphasized that yogic powers are an indispensable and unavoidable element of yoga as a pathway to liberation, it is also pointed out that this power has to be given up in order to be ultimately liberated. This contrasts with the depiction of yogic powers as instruments actually to gain liberation in the story of Śuka and of the agency of a powerful yogin in

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[28] The context suggests that the 'six' are the five senses and the ego-consciousness.

[29] *jātasya pārthivaiśvarye sṛṣṭir iṣṭā vidhīyate* //12.228.21cd/ *prajāpatir ivākṣobhyaḥ śarīrāt sṛjati prajāḥ / aṅgulyaṅguṣṭamātreṇa hastapādena vā tathā* //12.228.22/ […] *ahaṃkārasya vijiteḥ pañcaite syur vaśānugāḥ / ṣaṇṇām ātmani buddhau ca jitāyāṃ prabhavaty uta* //12.228.25 / *nirdoṣā pratibhā hy enaṃ kṛtsnā samabhivartate / tathaiva vyaktam ātmānam avyaktaṃ pratipadyate* // 12.228.26/ *yato niḥsarate loko bhavati vyaktasaṃjñakaḥ* // 12.228.27ab/.

[30] This concept is explained in the brief discourse on Sāṃkhya inserted at 12.228.27-36.

12.289. The view that yogic powers need to be overcome in order to gain liberation is close to the assessment given in commentaries on the *YS* and *SK*. The more critical attitude in these texts is implied in the interpretation of yoga powers as a sign of having reached the realms created by *prakṛti* and eventually unmanifest *prakṛti* itself. This interpretation lends support to the idea that one needs to get away from any contact with *prakṛti* and with the yogic powers that accrue there. From a Sāṃkhya perspective, the view that these powers help gain liberation or that yogins may happily enjoy a god-like agency are mere delusions. This suggests that the view of yoga powers as obstacles rather than instruments on the path to liberation is connected with the Sāṃkhya interpretation of acquiring these powers as a consequence of reaching the realm of *prakṛti*. Dwelling and indulging in this realm is thus regarded as an aberration of yogins who are endowed with *aiśvarya*.[31] Another remarkable feature of all the texts discussed so far is that ideas of liberation are nowhere connected with notions of *karman* or an immortal self tied to a body through *karman*. Apparently these notions do not play any role and therefore provide no explanation for why the yogin's use of his powers does not result in karmic repercussions or for what happens to *karman* in a state of yogic empowerment. All these issues are treated extensively in later commentarial literature. However, in the *BhG karman* is an important aspect of the treatment of yogic achievements.

'Conquest of Creation' in Bhagavadgītā 5

Although *BhG* 5 does not explicitly deal with the powers gained by yogins, it offers an explanation for how they are acquired and how a yogin gains 'victory over the created world' (5.19).[32] Moreover, the

[31] Apparently, some yogins regarded this stage as the place of liberation. This is not only corroborated in the 12.289, but also in the concept of *prakṛtilaya* (absorption in the cause of creation) discussed in *YS* and its commentaries and the *SK* (see Knut A. Jacobsen *Prakṛti in Sāṃkhya-Yoga: Material Principle, Religious Experience, Ethical Implication [*New York: Peter Lang, 1999]). In Sāṃkhya texts, this idea is viewed with much more scepticism than in yoga texts, which suggests that it was a concept developed originally in yoga; see Angelika Malinar, "Something Like Liberation: *Prakṛtilaya* (Absorption in the Cause/s of Creation) in Yoga and Sāṃkhya," in *Release from Life—Release in Life: Indian Perspectives on Individual Liberation*, edited by A. Bigger et al. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), 129-156.

[32] For a comprehensive analysis of the interpretation of yoga in the *BhG*, see Angelika Malinar, "Yoga and Yogin in the Bhagavadgītā," in *Proceedings of the Fifth*

text offers an interpretation of perhaps the most important and miraculous aspect of yoga powers when connected to notions of *karman*: their use does not have any karmic repercussions for the yogin. In 12.289 this possibility is implicitly denied because the powerful yogin is said to be actually liberated from 'birth and death' (see above). In *BhG* 5 the extraordinary situation that a yogin may act without producing any new *karman* is explained by drawing on the conceptual framework of Sāṃkhya philosophy. It is argued that any karmic consequences of action are avoided by a yogin who has conquered creation because he becomes identical with the cause of creation, meaning that his physical, mental, personal self is identified with the cosmic principles that all living beings consist of. As a consequence, he sees 'the same' in everything and realizes that not 'he', but only the *guṇa*s, the creative powers of *prakṛti*, are active. At *BhG* 5.8-9 it is described how and what the yogin is doing in this state. First of all, he is doing something as he thinks:

> "I do nothing at all," this is what the accomplished one, the knower of reality, should think when he sees, hears, feels, smells, eats, walks, dreams, breathes, talks, excretes, grasps, opens his eyes and shuts them because he keeps in mind that "the senses are occupied with the sense-objects."[33]

The yogin is no longer acting, since he does not appropriate activities by deeming himself the agent.[34] He knows that 'activity' is nothing more than the senses doing their business. Consequently, it is not the yogin who acts, but only natural activity, the powers of *prakṛti/brahman* (*guṇa*) working on themselves. This point in made in 5.10: "Having cast all activities on *brahman* and given up attachment, he acts but is not defiled by demerit, like a lotus petal is not [defiled] by water."[35] When he has reached *brahman* the yogin sees the same in everything, and this is regarded as the yogin's conquest of creation:

Dubrovnik Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas, August 2008, edited by M. Jezic and P. Koskikallio (Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Science, forthcoming).

[33] *naiva kiṃcit karomīti yukto manyeta tattvavit / paśyañ śṛṇvan spṛśañ jighrann aśnan gacchan svpañ śvasan* // 5.8/ *pralapan visṛjan gṛhṇann unmiṣan nimiṣann api / indriyāṇīndriyārtheṣu vartanta iti dhārayan* // 5.9/

[34] In reaching this stage, the yogin is described as *sarvabhūtātmanbhūtātman*, 'whose elemental self has become identical with the elemental self of all (beings)'; see the detailed discussion of this idea in Malinar, *The Bhagavadgītā: Doctrines and Contexts*, 111-116.

[35] *brahmaṇy ādhāya karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā karoti yaḥ / lipyate na sa pāpena padmapatram iva ambhasā* //5.10

"Here on earth alone creation is conquered by those whose mind abides in sameness, since *brahman*, which is the same, is free from flaws. Therefore they remain in *brahman*."[36]

The yogin has reached a state in which he is connected to the cosmic cause of all agency, which in *BhG* 5 is called *brahman*, the word being used here in the sense of *prakṛti* or *avyakta*.[37] Accordingly, a yogin avoids karmic consequences by replacing his agency with the agency of *brahman* / *prakṛti*, the cosmic cause of all actions.[38] This serves to explain why a yogin can indeed be *brahman* while staying alive and continuing to be active before reaching liberation. Moreover, it establishes the referential framework for understanding why it is possible to act without karmic consequences, which is also true when a yogin is said to wield yogic powers. The yogin does not produce *karman*, because he acts like the cosmic cause of all actions (*brahman* / *prakṛti*), whose products only turn into karmic baggage if they are appropriated by an egoistic agent. It is nowhere said that the yogin is already liberated from birth and death. Rather, it seems that the yogin may still succumb to his desires and again appropriate the objects—a situation which would turn him into a 'fallen' yogin.[39] The acquisition of yogic power is thus based on persistent self-control, which means gaining control over one's own physical and cognitve apparatus. This explanation is clearly based on the concept of *prakṛti* as 'active nature', as the cosmic source and material basis of all activities. While a yogin gains control over his active self, he also gains access to the powers of the cause(s) of creation contained in each faculty and is connected to their creative potential. Therefore, yogic self-control is accompanied by empowerment, as well as by gaining access to and uniting with the cosmological powers. This is the basis of the extraordinary powers ascribed to successful yogins which allow them to fly or take on different bodies. In the *BhG* these powers are explicitly discussed only in relation to the *yoga aiśvara*, the yoga of supremacy, ascribed to the god Kṛṣṇa (see below). In the present context, the liberation aspect of

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[36] *ihaiva tair jitaḥ sargo yeṣāṃ sāṃye sthitaṃ manaḥ / nirdoṣaṃ hi samaṃ brahma tasmād brahmaṇi te sthitāḥ* //*BhG* 5.19/

[37] See also above in the story of Śuka.

[38] See in detail Malinar *The Bhagavadgītā: Doctrines and Contexts*, 108-120.

[39] The topic of the 'fallen yogin' (*yogabhraṣṭa*) is dealt with in *BhG* 6.41. Although there is no explicit mention of yogic powers, the issue is the stability of successful yoga practice. It should be noted that the other group who is regarded in the epic as being in danger of downfall are the kings, who may find themselves '*aiśvarya-bhraṣṭa*', fallen from power (cf. 3.1.2; 3.29.20; 3.101.14 etc.).

this process of empowerment and control is highlighted when it is declared that a yogin who has reached the highest stage in the cosmic hierarchy of powers is 'free from *karman*'. This has two consequences. First, since the *yogin* is still alive, activities continue. However, because these are identical with *brahman*, they are now 'cosmic', not karmic. Secondly, if he remains in this detached equation or union with cosmic activity, he will be liberated at the moment of death. The stage of 'being *brahman*' is thus an interface or a stage of transition: although the yogin is ready for liberation at any moment, until then he remains united with the source of all cosmic activity and is therefore a very powerful being. This is the reason why he is called in the story of Śuka and in 12.289 *īśvara* (see above). This conceptual framework explains why a yogin using his power does not necessarily 'fall back' into the realm of *karman*. Correspondingly, the realm of *brahman* also has two aspects, on the one hand being depicted as the full potential of creation, and on the other hand as that stage when all beings are the same because they have not yet been individualised as manifest beings. Another aspect of this state is that individual *karman* either no longer exists or does not yet exist. As I shall demonstrate in the next section, all this creates the conceptual framework for Kṛṣṇa's position as the liberated yet 'mighty lord of all beings' (*sarvalokamaheśvara*), who also takes bodies without being exposed to karmic repercussions.

Kṛṣṇa's Yoga of Cosmic Sovereignty (yoga aiśvara) and His Manifestations of Power (vibhūtis)

Although the BhG has rarely been seen as a text in which yogic powers are considered important,[40] it is indeed an important source for their study, as the divinity of Kṛṣṇa is explained by drawing on concepts of yoga. This allows yoga doctrines to be mediated with the new teachings of *bhakti* (devotion and loyalty to the highest god), as well as helps distinguish the 'cosmic sovereignty' of the Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa from the extraordinary powers which have traditionally been accorded to the Vedic gods. Yoga is an intrinsic element of the new theology, the 'cosmological monotheism'[41] taught in the *BhG*, because it offers

[40] For instance, Eliade, *Yoga: Unsterblichkeit und Freiheit*, 162, who deems these powers irrelevant in the *BhG*. For further depictions of 'yogi gods' see White, *Sinister Yogis*. 167-197.

[41] On the structure of this monotheism, see Malinar, *The Bhagavadgītā: Doctrines and Contexts*, 237ff.

an explanation for the paradoxical structure of the god's ways of being. Yogic powers allow the creation of apparitional bodies, that is, bodies that appear and disappear on earth without any karmic repercussions. At the same time, the god can remain the ever unseen, immovable, highest self, although some part of him is connected with the unique and singular *prakṛti*, the cosmic cause of all creation in some invisible state of being. This state of connectedness (*yoga*, *saṃyoga*) is the precondition for the god to act as the mighty lord of yoga and for the manifestation of the encompassing power he wields when he is controlling *prakṛti*.

This is amply testified in chapters 4 and 9-11, in which the god is depicted as the master of yoga who activates the powers of *prakṛti* and protects both the cosmic order (*dharma*) and his devotees. He supervises and uses *prakṛti* when being born in apparitional bodies (*BhG* 4.5-6). In *BhG* 9 and 10 the form of yoga accorded to the god is called *yoga aiśvara*, the 'yoga of sovereignty'. which refers to his paradoxical way of being, as described in 9.4-5:

> In my unmanifest form (*avyaktamūrti*), I have spread out this whole world; in me exist all beings—but I do not exist in them. Yet again, the creatures do not exist in me, behold my yoga of sovereignty (*yoga aiśvara*): while sustaining the creatures and giving them being, my self does not exist in them.[42]

Kṛṣṇa's supreme yoga allows for the distinction between an unmanifest form of the god that supports all beings, the manifestations of his yoga power (*vibhūti*, *tanu*), and Kṛṣṇa's 'self'. This distinction is the basis of the theological doctrine of the god's simultaneous presence in and distance from the world. This *yoga aiśvara*, connection and exertion of power from a position of cosmic sovereignty implies a transcendent, liberated state of being. It is not Kṛṣṇa himself who appears as or in the world, but only his 'unmanifest form', his creative potential, while his identity as the self remains hidden. In one of his forms, he 'spreads out' the universe, but he himself is not co-extensive with creation. Therefore it is stated that the creatures do exist in him, yet do not exist in him, nor does he ever exist in them (see also *BhG* 7.12). This cosmic sovereignty is revealed when the god appears in his form as the cosmic sovereign (*rūpa aiśvara*), the topic of *BhG* 11, when

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[42] *mayā tatam idaṃ sarvaṃ jagad avyaktamūrtinā / matsthāni sarvabhūtāni na cāḥaṃ teṣv avasthitaḥ* //9.4/ *na ca masthāni bhūtāni paśya me yogam aiśvaram / bhūtabhṛn na bhūtastho mamātmā bhūtabhāvanaḥ* //9.5/

Kṛṣṇa assumes different forms, for instance as 'the All' (*viśvarūpa*) or 'time' (*kāla*) etc.[43]

Between the discourse on Kṛṣṇa's yoga in *BhG* 9 and the visualization of his cosmic sovereignty in *BhG* 11, another chapter deals with a further aspect of the god's yogic power.[44] His complete command over the cosmos implies that he is present in different elements of the cosmos, an indication of the comprehensiveness and ubiquity of his power, his *vibhūti*. This allows the god's presence through partial 'manifestations of this power', for instance, in certain sages, heroes etc. These individual manifestations of the god's comprehensive power are also called *vibhūti*. The distinction between a singular, encompassing power and its accessibility in manifold manifestations is expressed by using the term *vibhūti* in the singular and plural respectively.[45]

While *BhG* 10 continues the theme of *yoga aiśvara*, it highlights a different aspect of Kṛṣṇa's yoga by explaining the ubiquity of the god's power (*vibhūti*) through an enumeration of individual 'power manifestations' in the different realms of the cosmos, such as elements, social groups, gods, sages, animals and abstract principles. In order to establish his supremacy as the 'mighty lord of the world' (*lokamaheśvara*; 10.3), it has to be asserted in the face of other wielders of power. This explains why all kinds of power positions are now turned into primary 'seats' and aspects of the god's power. In *BhG* 10 knowledge of these power manifestations is presented as an important aspect of a devotional relationship to the god, as is made explicit in Arjuna's following request: "Leaving nothing out, will you please tell me those power manifestations of yourself (*ātmavibhūti*) by means of which you pervade the world and abide. How may I know you, the yogin, when I constantly think of you? In what various modes of being shall I think of you, my lord?"[46] The purpose of knowing the god's manifestations of power is that they help one think of or meditate on

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[43] See Malinar, *The Bhagavadgītā: Doctrines and Contexts,* 163ff.

[44] For a text-historical consideration of this chapter, see Malinar, *Rājavidyā,* 394-441.

[45] The term is connected to the powers of yoga in other texts too, for example, the *YS*, whose third chapter, which deals with the supernatural capacities acquired in yoga, is called '*vibhūti-pāda*'. However, the term is not used in the *sūtra* text, in which *siddhi* and *aiśvarya* are the preferred terms.

[46] *vaktum arhasy aśeṣeṇa divyā hy ātmavibhūtayaḥ / yābhir vibhūtibhir lokān imāṃs tvaṃ vyāpya tiṣṭhasi* // 10.16 / *kathaṃ vidyām ahaṃ yogiṃs tvāṃ sadā paricintayan / keṣu keṣu ca bhāveṣu cintyo 'si bhagavan mayā* // 10.17/

the yogic god. The manifest forms of the lord are like signposts on the way to his higher, unmanifest state of being. The god differs from the yogins as they are depicted in 12.289 and 12.228 in that he indeed pervades the whole world in partial manifestations of power. He does not assume the body of a Prajāpati (as described in 12.289; see above); rather, each Prajāpati is a *vibhūti*, a manifestation of the power of Kṛṣṇa. As a consequence, a yogin assuming the body of a Prajāpati would gain its power, but the yogin would not be regarded as its ultimate source. This is why the god who assumes a body is explicitly distinguished from the yogin who does so (cf. *MBh* 6.62.21). It is not Kṛṣṇa himself who appears here in the world, for he remains the liberated 'self'. Another aspect of Kṛṣṇa's yogic ubiquity is that the god helps his devotees obtain their spiritual goals, as is pointed out in *BhG* 10.7: "He who truly understands this encompassing power and my yoga is armed with an unshakable yoga—there is no doubt about it."[47]

All the different aspects of Kṛṣṇa's yoga and his connection with doctrines of yoga converge in the epithet *yogeśvara* (11.4, 11.9; 18.75, 18.78). This epithet allows for different interpretations, which highlight one or another aspect of Kṛṣṇa's relationship with yoga themes in the *BhG* and elsewhere in the epic and are worth considering:

(1) 'Lord of yoga'. This is the standard translation, which can be understood as referring to the god as the teacher and preceptor, as well as the goal of a yoga pathway, who himself embodies the mastery of yoga as total control over the powers and cause of creation, as well as its liberating dimensions.

(2) 'Lord of yogins'. The word *yoga* is used once in the *BhG* (5.4) and in many other instances in the epic also in the sense of yogin. In this sense *yogeśvara* is used side by side with *yogīśvara*, 'Lord of yogins' elsewhere in the epic and is applied not only to Kṛṣṇa, but also, for instance, to Nārāyaṇa and Śiva.[48] This translation emphasizes Kṛṣṇa's position as the teacher and goal of yogins, but would, in the context of the *BhG*, narrow the scope of addressees when compared to the universalistic claims of *bhakti*.

(3) 'Lord of *yoga*s (yoga powers and devices)'. This translation refers to the meaning of *yoga* as an extraordinary capacity or power,

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[47] *etāṃ vibhūtiṃ yogaṃ ca mama yo vetti tattvataḥ / so 'vikampena yogena yujyate nātra saṃśayaḥ* //10.7/

[48] For instance, Kṛṣṇa is called *yogīśa* at 6.61.43; Śiva at 12.338.11; see also 5.155.14, 6.63.21, praising Keśava as *yogānām īśvara*, and 9.45.87, praising Keśava as *yogīnām īśvara*.

which allows the god to rule not only over all the different aspects of the cosmos, but also over a variety of *yoga*s, that is, yogic powers and the different specific instruments and devices that the mastery of yoga permits (see also note 13). This translation not only matches the context of the *BhG*, it is also corroborated by other epic passages in which gods and other powerful beings are depicted as using *yoga* or *yoga*s in order to accomplish certain tasks or as bestowing a *yoga* on their allies or friends (as Kṛṣṇa does with *buddhiyoga* in *BhG* 10.8).

The red thread that runs through Chapters 9 to 11 is thus Kṛṣṇa's cosmic sovereignty, his being the only *īśvara*, the 'mighty ruler' (*maheśvara*), who excels all other 'masters' in being responsible for and fond of the world as a whole, as well as of the embodied selves. One reason for this is that the god is not completely identical with the powers he unites within himself.[49] The concept of yoga power helps distinguish this new type of highest, singular god from other gods (and from yogins as well). Furthermore, yoga permits an explanation for a type of creative agency that is not subject to *karman* and, as a corollary, does not imply the presence of a self that is ready for embodiment, an agency that has liberation as the point of departure. Therefore, the god's appearances are 'just nature', which here means mere apparitions without any karmic past or future. What is *prakṛti* for the creatures—that is, their physical existence, in which they are entangled—is mere 'apparition' (*māyā*) for god Kṛṣṇa.[50] The divinity of Kṛṣṇa is intrinsically connected to his own yoga, that is, to his being the wielder of extraordinary powers due to his control over the source of all activities (*prakṛti*; *brahman*), who at the same time remains the inactive, highest self. No longer is 'divinity' the referential framework for discussing extraordinary powers: rather, yoga has become the idiom for defining divinity and for launching the idea of the one and only 'Highest', who is connected to all beings because of his extraordi-

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[49] This congruence is a characteristic of the Vedic gods, as Jan Gonda, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985), 35, points out (emphasis in the original): "a divine being *is* a power-substance, *has* it, and *is to realize* it." In his study of the '*īśvara* idea', Gonda (132ff) shows that it developed in Vedic texts in contradistinction to the divinity of the Vedic gods (*deva*), who "were no 'lords' (*īśvara*) […] but powerful beings, regarded as possessing supernormal faculties and as controlling a department of nature or activity in the human sphere."

[50] This paradox is also the topic of the description of Kṛṣṇa's 'divine birth' in *BhG* 4.5ff., which is brought about when he uses *prakṛti* in order to appear in the world as an apparition of himself (*ātmamāyayā*); see Malinar, *The Bhagavadgītā: Doctrines and Contexts*, 94ff.

nary yogic might. The idea of god as the highest self and a powerful yogin is one of the central doctrines of the new theology, the 'cosmological monotheism' launched in the *BhG*.[51] Yoga permits the paradoxical character of the god's divinity to be addressed, his being absent and present at the same time, his being manifest on earth and yet remaining transcendent and indifferent. This paradox is made comprehensible by drawing on yoga as the referential framework of meaning which offers an explanation for this 'miracle' through the notion of the powers of *prakṛti* being controlled and used.

Another aspect which distinguishes Kṛṣṇa, the cosmic yogin, from other powerful yogins is his purposeful, *dharma*-oriented use of his power for the welfare of the world. Neither in the story of Śuka nor in chapters 12.289 or 12.228 discussed above is any worldly or dharmic purpose for using yoga powers propagated. In addition, these activities neither threaten nor contradict the god´s transcendent form of being as forever liberated and 'unborn'. Although his power over *prakṛti* is similar to that of the yogin, he does not activate *prakṛti* for his own pleasure (at least not according to the *BhG*).[52] Rather, either Kṛṣṇa activates *prakṛti* for the sake of creation, or else he has it produce bodies for himself in order to appear on earth, whether to protect the cosmic order or to please a devotee with a *darśana* (a vision). With regard to the purpose of his sovereignty, the god more resembles a king than a yogin. However, he differs from a human king in that he has the whole of creation and of *prakṛti* at his disposal, while a king is dependent on a multitude of (creative) powers (called in the *Arthaśāstra* 6.1.1 *prakṛti*s), like his territory, fortress or councillors. While the king is consecrated by assembling the different powers of the cosmos, assembles and unites in his body a variety of gods (cf. *Manusmṛti* 5.7) and is himself one of the *prakṛti*s of his kingdom, Kṛṣṇa as the cosmic sovereign commands them all in that he encompasses these powers as a creator, yet transcends them in a still higher 'state of being'. He is thus indeed the mighty *īśvara*, the lord of lords, with kings being his *vibhūti*s at best. The characterization of the highest God as a powerful yogin in control of the *prakṛti* and being present in the world with particles of his power has become standard in many

[51] See Malinar, *The Bhagavadgītā: Doctrines and Contexts*, 148ff; 237ff.

[52] However, the notion of god's appearances as 'play' (*krīḍā*; *līlā*) is prominent in other texts and traditions.

Hindu religious traditions, yet the *BhG* offers one of its most influential and perhaps oldest formulations.[53]

Conclusion

The epic includes texts dealing with yogic powers without having recourse to any doctrine of *karman* or the liberation of an immortal self, but rather presents them as part and parcel of a pathway to liberation from birth and death. Though Śuka was born with yogic might (*vīrya*, *prabhāva*), he was allowed to display it only once and for ever when he set out to leave the world in order to reach the sun, the realm of non-return. This was described as his becoming a 'powerful lord among yogins'. In contrast to this, in 12.289, the power of yoga (*yoga-bala*), of being a powerful lord (*īśvara*), was presented as a goal in its own right and as a characteristic feature of yoga which distinguishes it from Sāṃkhya. Accordingly, the exposition of yogic achievement ends in 12.289 with the yogin being able to act like the god Nārāyaṇa. Chapter 12.228 differs from both the story of Śuka and chapter 12.289 in that it describes the acquisition of yoga power by drawing on Sāṃkhya terminology and thus testifies to a changing view of these powers based on the development of a concept of the 'cosmic cause of all agency', of 'nature as a creative force', called in the epic *prakṛti* or *brahman*. Yogic powers can now be explained as resulting from gradually gaining access to powers of the cosmic cause and the cosmological realms they constitute. This allows the yogin to control and use these powers and, for instance, assume different bodies. Yet, as is explained in 12.228, in order to be liberated the yogin needs to overcome his powers. The epic is thus an important source not only of different interpretations of yoga power, but also in studying the development of concepts which are then treated more systematically in philosophical expositions of Yoga and Sāṃkhya. The emergence of the idea of *prakṛti* as a single common cause allows yogic powers to be dealt with within the cosmological and physiological-cognitive framework of Sāṃkhya philosophy.[54] On the basis of the concept of *prakṛti*, the powers of the yoga are acquired by yogins who have conquered creation (*jītair sargo*; *BhG* 5.19). This depiction corresponds to the

[53] For instance, enumerations of divine *vibhūti*s become standard in the Purāṇas; see S.P. Gupta, "Vibhūtis of Viṣṇu as Mentioned in the Epics and the Purāṇas," *Purāṇa* 20 (1978): 131-135.

[54] See *YS* 3.44 and 3.48 on *pradhānajaya* and *bhūtajaya* respectively.

characterization of gods as the overlords of the elements of nature and as being able to use it to perform those tasks on earth which require a body. This characterization is in several epic texts connected to their being depicted as mighty lords of yoga (*yogeśvara*). Such conceptualizations of yogic as well as divine powers might also have contributed to a wide range of yogic powers being subsumed under general terms which tend to classify them as a type of mightiness and sovereignty, and not as a category of obstacles as later rejections would suggest. Two of these terms are used in the epic:

(1) *aiśvarya*, a term used in the *SK* as the designation for a form of *buddhi* (faculty of insight and judgement) that is especially ascribed to yogins and in the commentaries in the *YS* is used as the term for a group of eight powers. In the *BhG* it is used as an adjective characterizing Kṛṣṇa's yoga of sovereignty (*yoga aiśvara*) together with the manifestation of this sovereignty (*rūpa aiśvara*). According to *MBh* 12.228.37 it is the state of empowerment of the yogin who is about to gain liberation.

(2) *vibhūti*, a term which gives its name to a whole chapter in the *YS* dealing with the different achievements brought about by the practice of *saṃyama* (meditative absorption). The use of this term in the *BhG* demonstrates the dialectic relationship between *vibhūti* used in the singular as a general capacity of power and its use in the plural to designate different manifestations of this power.

Already in the epic, both terms help to distinguish the extraordinary powers that result from control over the powers of the source of creation which can be gained by practising yoga from other powers which can either be gained through practices such as *tapas* asceticism or are regarded as the natural capacity of a certain class of beings (as is the case with demons or the Vedic gods). This demonstrates that the epic includes different interpretations of yoga powers, only one of these implying their rejection as being obstacles on a spiritual path to liberation, as is the case in the commentarial traditions of both the *YS* and the *SK*. According to Oberhammer, the importance of yogic powers in early expositions of yoga points to an 'archaic stage in the understanding of existence' which was superseded and 'humanized' by Buddhism and Sāṃkhya philosophy.[55] The evidence, not only in the epic but also in the commentarial traditions of the *YS* and *SK*,

[55] Gerhard Oberhammer, *Strukturen yogischer Meditation: Untersuchungen zur Spiritualität des Yoga* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1977), 223.

points in a different direction. It seems that the powers of yogin have become an integral part of many yoga traditions, not in spite of Sāṃkhya philosophy, but because of it. The interpretation of yoga powers based on the conceptual framework of Sāṃkhya has a double effect. First, in defining yoga powers as resulting from the 'conquest' of the powers of *prakṛti*, the position of empowerment (*aiśvarya*) becomes an accepted element of Sāṃkhya philosophy. Secondly, this very connection between *aiśvarya* and the realms of *prakṛti* is the basis for declaring these powers to be obstacles to liberation because one needs to turn away from this realm.

Although it is true that the powers of yoga have to be given up when a yogin strives for final liberation, since he has then to leave the realm of *prakṛti* for good, in order to do this it was necessary to conquer it; therefore the *bala*s or *aiśvarya* are an inevitable result of a successful yoga practice, regardless of whether they are used or not. Conversely, divinity comes to be connected with yogic powers and with yoga as a state of agency without karmic repercussions. The theology of the *BhG* demonstrates the advantages of defining divinity and cosmic sovereignty by drawing on concepts of yoga. They serve to explain the paradox of a god who is active and inactive at the same time, who is born and yet unborn, who has an encompassing cosmic form that includes a multitude of bodies and yet is totally devoid of any corporeality. Moreover, when held against concepts of *karman*, yoga power accounts for an agency and intervention in the realm of action that has no karmic repercussions for the agent. Although a yogin should not indulge in displaying these powers, he must be capable of them if he claims to be a successful practitioner. His being free from bondage, from birth and death, as 12.289.56 would have it, is proved in his capacity to be active (*BhG* 5) and even productive (12.228, 12.289) without 'doing' anything. Yoga as a pathway to liberation thus seems necessarily to include empowerment as a state of yogic practice. According to some epic texts, it is a state that is instrumental not obtrusive for gaining liberation. Therefore it seems significant that, in several instances in the epic, the word used for yogic powers and devices is simply *yoga*.[56] All this may help explain why the powers of yoga are regarded as an integral part of yoga not only by the compos-

[56] This is accordance with the general ambiguity of the meaning of *yoga* as an instrument and method on the one hand, and as a state of yogic achievement on the other. For a study of this ambiguity in the *BhG*, see Malinar (forthcoming b).

ers of the epic, but also by those handing down the tradition and treating it philosophically, even though they might take sides with those who regard yogic empowerment as an impediment to reaching still higher levels of existence.

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CHAPTER TWO

HOW BIG CAN YOGIS GET? HOW MUCH CAN YOGIS SEE?

David Gordon White

I begin with an uncontroversial observation: historians of yoga philosophy have generally viewed the *siddhis* or *vibhūti*s of the *Yogasūtra*'s third *pāda* to be marginal to mainstream yoga. In this paper, I will challenge this assumption on basis of core texts of Yoga and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy, as well as a selection of Jain and Buddhist sources.[1]

How Big Can Yogis Get?

The most salient area of overlap—between the earliest narrative traditions of humans or gods practicing yoga (as opposed to *tapas*, *dhyāna*, or other presumed 'synonyms' for yoga) and yoga as described in two foundational works of so-called 'classical yoga'—falls under the heading of *vibhūti*, a term I will translate here as 'omni-presencing'.[2] *Vibhūti* is the title given to the third book of the *Yogasūtra*, which, devoted to the supernatural powers of yogis (including the power to enter into other people's bodies), has historically been the least studied portion of that text, in spite of the fact that it comprises over one fourth of the entire work. In the *Bhagavadgītā*, *vibhūti-yoga* is the term employed to describe the yoga that the god Kṛṣṇa practices (as opposed to the yoga that he preaches) when he reveals his universal form (*viśvarūpa*), thereby showing that his supreme person (*puruṣottama*) is simultaneously the one in the many (individual *puruṣa*s or *ātman*s), and the many in the one.

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[1] Much of the content of this chapter has appeared in David Gordon White, *Sinister Yogis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), and is reproduced here with permission from the University of Chicago Press.

[2] From the Latin omni + praes-ens, 'being in the forefront in every [being]'.

In the *Bhagavadgītā*, it is precisely when Arjuna calls Kṛṣṇa a Master of Yoga (*yogeśvara*) and asks him to show him his 'yoga of omni-presencing' (*vibhūti yoga*) that Kṛṣṇa offers him a vision of his self-magnifying self (*mahān ātmā*),[3] which is not only a body that is as great as the universe (*viśva-rūpa*), but also a body that contains—and is present in or as—every creature in the universe. As he begins his display, Kṛṣṇa intones: 'behold my hundreds and thousands of bodies (*rūpāṇi*) … behold the entire universe with standing and moving creatures centered here in this body of mine … behold my yoga of mastery (*yogam aiśvaram*)!'[4] The *Bhagavadgītā*'s terminology here is at variance with that used in the preceding chapter, in which Kṛṣṇa had prepared Arjuna to view his universal form. However, this need not concern us particularly: *aiśvaram*, an abstract form of the noun *īśvara* ('master'), is an alternate form of *aiśvaryam*, which is the term used as a synonym for *siddhi* in the *Mahābhārata*'s twelfth book as well as in early Pāśupata sources. As such, it is also a synonym of *vibhūti*. In the *Bhagavadgītā*'s chapter ten, there are no fewer than eight occurrences of *vibhūti* in this, the sole chapter in which the word appears. "He who truly knows my *vibhūti-yoga* is himself yoked to unshakable yoga," says Kṛṣṇa.[5] Later in the chapter, Arjuna queries him:

> "You can fully tell me of the divine omni-presencings of yourself (*ātma-vibhūtayaḥ*), by means of which you permeate and dwell in these worlds … How am I to know you, who are a yogi? … In which modes of being? Tell me more about your *vibhūti-yoga*!"[6] [To which Kṛṣṇa replies]: "I will relate to you my divine omni-presencings … I am the self (*ātmā*) that dwells in all beings." [Then, after naming dozens upon dozens of beings and abstractions, ranging from gods to crocodiles to the game of dice, he concludes]: "There is no end to my divine omni-presencings. Each and every being that instantiates power, sovereignty or strength … is arisen from a particle of my radiant light."[7]

The display that follows, of the 'yoga of mastery' of the great Master of Yoga (*mahāyogeśvara*), is a veritable light show. Arjuna's reaction highlights the god's manifestation as the supreme self-magnifying self:

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[3] *Mahant* is a participial form related to the term *mahima* ('magnitude') and the cognate of the Latin *magnus* and the Greek *mega*).

[4] *Bhagavadgītā* 11.5-8. Cf. Angelika Malinar, *The Bhagavadgītā. Doctrines and Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 146-48, 156-63.

[5] *Bhagavadgītā* 10.7.

[6] *Bhagavadgītā* 10.16,18.

[7] *Bhagavadgītā* 10.19,40-41.

"All of the space that extends between heaven and earth, all horizons are filled by you alone … you who are brushing the sky."[8] Through his display, Kṛṣṇa shows his imperishable self to be comprised of hundreds and thousands of bodies, with countless eyes and mouths and qualities. Clearly, it is Kṛṣṇa's power to simultaneously embody himself in multiple bodies that makes him a Master of Yoga here.[9] Thirty chapters after the conclusion of the *Bhagavadgītā*, a verse from the *Mahābhārata* says as much: "People who are of an ignorant, deluded nature confuse Vāsudeva with a yogi who, being a self-magnified self (*mahān ātmā*), has entered into a human body."[10]

In other words, the *Mahābhārata* is saying that Kṛṣṇa's omni-presencing resembles the practices of human yogis. Which human yogis are these? In fact, the earliest narratives in the entire Hindu (and, I believe Buddhist and Jain) canon to describe the behaviors of people called yogis are found in the epic's twelfth and thirteenth books. In these, figures called yogis or practitioners of yoga (Sulabhā, Vidura, Vipula, Kāvya Uśanas, and Bharadvāja) are portrayed as practicing yoga, precisely, when they enter into the bodies of other creatures. As with Kṛṣṇa's yoga in the *Bhagavadgītā*, none of them are described as sitting in fixed postures, regulating their breaths, or meditating.

Mahābhārata 12.289 provides a textual window onto the theory behind this, the earliest documented *practice* of yoga by yogis:

> Yogis who are without restraints [and] endowed with the power of yoga (*yogabalānvitāḥ*) are [so many] masters (*īśvarāḥ*), who enter into [the bodies of] the Prajāpatis, the sages, the gods, and the great beings. Yama, the raging Terminator (Antaka), and death of terrible prowess: none of these masters (*īśate*) the yogi who is possessed of immeasurable splendor … A yogi can lay hold of several thousand selves, and having obtained [their] power, he can walk the earth with all of them.[11]

This same chapter ends with a tightly-constructed coda in *triṣṭubh* meter, which portrays the yogi as the one in the many, in the same way as Kṛṣṇa when he practiced his yoga of omni-presencing:

> When his self-magnifying self (*mahān ātmā*) and the magni-ficent (*mahān*) [universe] have fused into one another, a yogi may enter [into] women, men and the assemblies of Gandharvas, the quarters of

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[8] *Bhagavadgītā* 11.20ab, 24a.

[9] *Bhagavadgītā* 11.13.

[10] *Mahābhārata* 6.62.20, quoted in Malinar, *The Bhagavadgītā. Doctrines and Contexts*, 151, n. 148. I have slightly altered her translation.

[11] *Mahābhārata* 12.289.24-26.

> the sky, the hosts of Yakṣas, the mountains and the serpents, and the clouds together with the forests and all the rivers, and the terrible oceans and all the mountain peaks, and the ancestors and serpents and all the divinities, [and] verily the immaculate overlord of men together with the stars, and the greatly massive firmness [i.e. the earth element], and the whole [circle of] splendor [i.e. the fire element], and [the goddess] Siddhi, the spouse of Varuṇa [i.e. the water element], and supreme Nature [together with] pristine pure being, massive passion and evil darkness (*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*), and the six high-minded sons of Brahmā and the six-faced one (Karttikeya) and Dharma and Bhava and the boon-granting Viṣṇu, Brahmā the master and … indeed That, the magni-ficent highest *brahman*. He is liberated shortly thereafter … Surpassing all mortal yogis, [the yogi] whose body is the magni-ficent [universe] and whose self is Nārāyaṇa, acts.[12]

In spite of the fact that this coda ends by identifying the yogi with Nārāyaṇa, I would argue that it is the human yogi, as opposed to the divine yogi, who is the model here. Additional evidence for this may be adduced from other *Mahābhārata* narratives, in which the gods who appear before Kunti in human form do so by putting on *yoga-murti*s, 'yogic images' of themselves. This is what the sun god does after doubling himself through yoga (*yogāt kṛtvā dvidhātmānam*) in order to simultaneously shine in the sky and appear before the Kuntī in a human guise. Following this, he enters (*āviveśa*) her as his 'yogic self' (*yogātmā*) and 'touches her in her navel,' thereby impregnating her with the future hero Karṇa.[13]

A number of Jain sources, beginning with the fifth-century *Praśamarati Prakaraṇa* of Umāsvāti,[14] describe the same dynamic, of a yogi's practice culminating in his becoming coextensive with the universe, in this case after the fashion of the Jain *lokapuruṣa*, the 'Universal Man'. Umāsvāti's text was the subject of commentaries by both the eighth-century Haribhadra and the twelfth-century Hemacandra, the latter of which is reproduced here:

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[12] *Mahābhārata* 12.289.58-61, 62b.

[13] *Mahābhārata* 3.290.9a, 3.291.23ab. Cf. *Mahābhārata* 1.114.2-3, in which Dharma puts on a yogic image of himself to father Yudhiṣṭhira on Draupadī. I am grateful to Kendall Busse for alerting me to this and other epic passages that discuss the *yoga-mūrti*s of the gods: Kendall Busse. "*Mūrtis, Vigrahas,* and Sacred Abodes: Observations on the Bodies of the Gods in Epic India" (M.A. thesis, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2007).

[14] *Praśamarati Prakaraṇa* 274-275. I am grateful to Vesna Wallace for this reference.

> A yogi who has acquired infinite knowledge and perception and whose longevity remains less than forty-eight minutes should instantaneously perform the third [kind of pure] meditation (*dhyānam*) … During the [first] three instants [of this process], the yogi [expands the spatial units of the self (*jīvapradeśa*) outside the gross body. In the first instant, the mass of spatial units of the self reaches the end of the inhabited universe, entering the upper and lower regions in the form of] a column (*daṇḍa*), [which is equal in thickness to his own body. During the second instant, the self reaches the end of the inhabited universe, sideways, in an east-west direction, like] a door (*kapāṭa*). [In the third instant, the self reaches the same by moving sideways in a south-north direction, like] a churning-stick (*manthānaka*). During the fourth moment, the yogi fills up the entire [inhabited] universe [by stretching the self in the form of a churning-stick into the remaining gaps]. Within [the course] of four moments after that, the meditator … retrieves [his self] from this act of occupying the [inhabited] universe through the reverse path.[15]

Similar data may be adduced from the Buddhist literary record, which is replete with accounts of Buddhas and bodhisattvas who replicate their bodies, albeit without specific reference to the practice of yoga. Very often, the term used for such a constructed body is *nirmāṇakāya*. Tradition has it that while he was staying in Śrāvastī, the Buddha performed the 'miracle of double appearances' before an assembled multitude, a display in which flames and water issued from every part of his body, shooting up as far as Brahmā's heaven and out to the edges of the universe, illuminating the entire cosmos. Thereupon, according to the *Prātihāryasūtra* ('Discourse on the Miracle'), the Buddha, seated on a lotus throne, replicated his own body in every direction until he had filled the whole sky with Buddhas, up to the heavens.[16]

More impressive still are descriptions, found in several circa second-century Mahāyāna works, of the Buddha's luminous cosmic displays. In the *Aśokāvadāna*, the future great emperor Aśoka is identified as having lived, in the time of the historical Buddha, in the body of a certain Jaya, the son of a distinguished family living in Rājagṛha. When the Buddha entered Rājagṛha, "young Jaya offered a handful of dirt into the his begging bowl, making a vow to become a king as he

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[15] *Yogaśāstra* 11.49, 51-52, with the author's *Svopajñavṛtti* auto-commentary inserted in [brackets], translated in *Yogaśāstra,* ed. and tr. Olle Quarnström, *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra, A Twelfth Century Handbook on Śvetāmbara Jainism* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 183-84.

[16] John S. Strong, *The Buddha. A Short Biography* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2001), 107-9.

did so." The Buddha accepted the dirt, and "the seed of merit that was to ripen into Aśoka's kingship was planted."

> The Blessed One then displayed his smile. Now, whenever Blessed Buddhas smile, it is usual for rays (*arcis*) of blue, yellow, red, white, scarlet, crystal, and silver-colored light to issue forth from their mouths, some shooting upwards and others going downwards. The rays that travel downwards enter into the various hells … Becoming warm they penetrate the cold hells, and becoming cool, they enter the hot ones … Then in order to engender their faith, the Blessed One emits for these hell-beings a constructed image (*nirmitam*) of himself that causes them to think … And contemplating that constructed image they become serene and full of faith, and casting off the karma yet to be suffered in the hells, they are reborn among the gods or men, where they become vessels of truth. The rays that travel upwards go to the realms of the various gods[17] … After roaming throughout the Great Trichilocosm, all of the rays then reenter the Buddha's body. If a Buddha wants to reveal a past action they vanish into him from behind; if he wants to predict a future action they disappear into him from the front. If he wants to predict a rebirth in hell they vanish into the sole of his foot … if he wants to predict the kingship of a *balacakravartin* (a powerful world sovereign) they vanish into his left palm … if he wants to predict the enlightenment of a disciple they vanish into his mouth; if he wants to predict the enlightenment of a *pratyekabuddha* they vanish into his *ūrṇā* [whorl of hair between the eyebrows]; if he wants to predict the unsurpassed complete enlightenment of a Buddha they vanish into his *uṣṇīṣa* [cranial protuberance]. In the case at hand, the rays circumambulated the Blessed One three times and vanished into his left palm … [and the Blessed One said] "because of that meritorious deed … that boy will become a king named Aśoka … He will be a *cakravartin* who rules over the four continents, and he will distribute my body relics far and wide …"[18]

Here, the Buddha's display is triggered by a child whose gift has ensured his future birth as a universal sovereign, such that he will later spread the Buddha's 'teaching body,' his *dharmakāya*, throughout the world in an imperial mode. Another account of such a universal manifestation of the Buddha's body is found in Sudhana's vision of the

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[17] The names of many of these realms, which are found in many Buddhist *abhidhamma* works, are identical to those found in Vedavyāsa's *Yogabhāṣya* on *Yogasūtra* 3.26.

[18] John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka. A Study and Translation of the* Aśokāvadāna (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 199-203. The passage translated by Strong is from pp. 30-34 of Mukhopadhyaya's annotated 1963 edition. I have emended his translation of the clause *nirmitam visarjayati*. A similar description is found in the introduction to the Mahāyāna *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*.

cosmos, as recounted in the second-century CE *Gāṇḍavyūhasūtra*. This work is expressive of the Avataṃsaka doctrine of the total interpenetration of Buddha-hood and the world of existence, and the utter 'fullness' of all *dharma*s, wherein each and every element of reality holographically contains the entire cosmos within itself.[19] Here, unlike the future emperor Aśoka, the witness to this cosmic display is the son of a guild-master whose vision of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra places him on the path to becoming a bodhisattva himself.

> Then Sudhana, the son of the guild-master, reflecting upon the body of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra, saw in every single pore of that body untold quadrillions of Buddha fields being entirely filled up with Buddhas. And in every single one of those quadrillions of Buddha fields he saw Tathāgatas surrounded by countless assemblies of bodhisattvas. And he saw that all those quadrillions of fields had various bases, various forms, various arrangements, various surrounding mountains, various clouds covering the sky, various Buddhas arising, [and] various proclamations of the Dharma. And just as he was all this in every single pore, so too he saw it in all the pores without exception, in all the major and minor physical marks, in all the major and minor limbs of Samantabhadra's body. In every single one he saw quadrillions of fields, from which issued clouds of Buddha bodies, equal to the number of atoms in all Buddha fields, pervading all of the world systems in the ten directions, bringing beings to the maturity of unsurpassed complete enlightenment. Then Sudhana, the son of the guild-master, guided by the words and instructions of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra, entered into all the world systems within the body of Samantabhadra and brought beings there to maturity … In a moment of thought, he entered more Buddha fields … in a single pore of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra than the whole series of fields he had entered from the time of his arousing the thought of enlightenment to the time of his audience with Samantabhadra. And as it was for one pore, so it was for all pores. Proceeding, in each moment of thought, through world systems as numerous as the atoms in countless Buddha fields, he still did not arrive at the end … And gradually he came to equal the bodhisattva Samantabhadra …[20]

Here, these displays of the Buddha and the *bodhisattva* Samantabhadra rival those of the epic Śiva, who is termed a *yogeśvara* (in *Mahābhārata* 3.80.126-27) precisely when he generates ten million replicas of himself; of the *yogeśvara* (or *yogayogeśvara*) Kṛṣṇa when he does the same

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[19] John S. Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism. Sources and Interpretations*, 2d ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. 2002), 159.

[20] Ibid. 160-61.

in the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*; as well as of other epic deities who create *yoga-mūrti*s of themselves to simultaneously dwell in heaven and appear before deserving humans. And, in fact, the Buddhist Tantras use the term *yogeśvara* to denote the Buddha himself, whereas the Jain Haribhadra and Hemacandra refer to the *jīna*s as *yogināth*as.[21]

So, in answer to the first question posed in my title—how big can yogis get?—the answer is, as great as the universe-in-its-multiplicity, when a yogi has entered into every being, mobile and immobile, through his yogic practice, to thereby become the one in the many. In the light of this, it may be worthwhile to ask whether images of yogis containing representations of landforms and other features of the cosmic egg (mountains, bodies of humans, gods and animals, etc.) are intended to portray the yogic body as a microcosm or rather as a macrocosm. The *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati*, a twelfth- to sixteenth-century work attributed to Gorakhnāth, which contains in its third chapter the most comprehensive and detailed description of the yogi's body to be found in the entire yogic canon, answers this question in its opening verse: "He who cognizes the mobile and the immobile [universe as existing] inside of his body becomes a yogi possessed of comprehensive knowledge of his body." There is no mention of a universe in miniature here: rather, the self of the yogi is self-magnifying (*mahān ātmā*).

How Much Can Yogis See?

The various Indian philosophical schools admit between one and six sources of knowledge or valid cognition (*pramāṇa*s), with *pratyakṣa* ('perception'[22]) being the sole *pramāṇa* upon which all agree.[23] The Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools, which are the earliest among these, set

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[21] Olle Quarnström, *Yogaśāstra*, 133.

[22] See Matilal's distinction between the etymological ('sensory experience') and the conventional ('perception') meaning of the term. Matilal favors the latter. Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika*. A History of Indian Literature, col. 6, fasc. 2 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), 226.

[23] Richard King, *Indian philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1999), 150. Several definitions of *pratyakṣa* are presented in Jean-Marie Verpoorten, "La verbalité et la perception selon la Mīmāṃsa et le Nyāya," in *Catégories de langue et categories de pensée en Inde et en Occident*, ed. François Chenet (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), 92-93, n. 6.

the agenda for all that follow. The principal sources for these two schools are their respective root texts, the circa second- to first-century BCE *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* attributed to Kaṇāda, and the first- to second-century CE *Nyāyasūtra* attributed to Gautama;[24] as well as the 450-550 CE *Padārthadharmasaṃgraha* of Praśastapāda, the principal commentary on the former work; and a number of its sub-commentaries.[25]

The *pramāṇa*s that will concern us here are the first and fourth, as listed in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika sources. These are *pratyakṣa* on the one hand, and *ārṣa*—the valid cognition or verbal evidence of the *ṛṣi*s, the vedic seers—on the other.[26] As the etymology of the former term indicates, the paradigm for all sensual perception is visual or ocular: *pratyakṣa* is that which is present before (*prati*) the eye[s] (*akṣa*).[27] However, the eyes of exceptional beings, conjoined with their inerrancy in interpreting their perceptions, render theirs the supreme, and most authentic source of valid cognition. This was the case with the Vedic seers, the authority of whose verbal evidence—the inerrant word (or mantras) of the Veda itself—grounded the entire Vaiśeṣika philosophical system, just as it did for the Mīmāṃsakas.[28] In a similar vein, the *Nyāyasūtra* postulates that true knowledge is achieved through a special practice of pure concentration (*samādhi*),[29] or through the practice of yoga[30] with all other valid cognitions being inferior.[31] As such, the unsupported support for all valid cognition is, in India's two most ancient philosophical systems, the pan-optical

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[24] Matilal, *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika*, 54, 78.

[25] Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Perception, An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), xiv; Karl Potter, ed., *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies. Indian Metaphysics and Epistemology: The Tradition of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika up to Gaṅgeśa* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 282.

[26] Four *pramāṇa*s (perception, inference, comparison, and verbal testimony) are listed in *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.3. The root *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* does not list its four *pramāṇa*s (perception, inference, recollection, and cognition of the Vedic seers) together, although it treats them separately. They are listed together as the fourfold *vidyā* in *Padārthadharmasaṃgraha* 98: *vidyāpi caturvidhā pratyakṣa-laiṅgika-smṛty-āṛṣa-lakṣaṇā* (in *Padārthadharmasaṅgraha*, ed., Durgadhara Jha, *Praśastapādabhāṣyam [Padārthadharmasaṅgraha] of Praśastapādācārya with the Commentary Nyāyakandalī by Śrīdhara Bhaṭṭa along with Hindi Translation*, Ganganathajha-Granthamala, vol. 1 (Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, 1997), 441. The *Yogasūtra* s (1.7) admits three *pramāṇa*s: perception, inference, and scriptural testimony (*āgama*).

[27] *Mahābhārata* 12.187.12; *Yogasūtra* 2.17-18.

[28] *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* 1.1.3.

[29] *Nyāyasūtra* 4.2.38: [*tattvabuddhiḥ*] *samādhiviśeṣābhyāsāt*.

[30] *Nyāyasūtra* 4.2.42,46.

[31] For a discussion, see Potter, *Indian Metaphysics and Epistemology: The Tradition of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika up to Gaṅgeśa*, 32.

visions of practitioners of yoga, the vedic seers, or the perfected beings (*siddha*s). This is termed 'yogi (or yogic) perception' (*yogi-pratyakṣa*), a source of valid cognition admitted by Praśastapāda as well as several Buddhist philosophers, beginning with Dignāga (ca. 480-540 CE).[32]

The importance of true or accurate perception as the basis for valid cognition cannot be overestimated here. When the *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* introduces the term 'yoga,' it does so precisely to identify this practice as the prime means for enabling the mind to apprehend the self without the distorting interference of the senses. When the mind apprehends the self directly, i.e., when it truly 'knows' in the Upaniṣadic sense of the term, then the embodied soul ceases to identify with the world of suffering it otherwise experiences while still receiving sensory data. Once this link is broken, the soul no longer experiences pain, a condition that is tantamount to liberation.[33]

A common denominator of Mīmāṃsaka, Sāṃkhya, Vedānta, and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theories of perception is that the sense organs are *prāpyakāri*; that is, that they receive sensory data, i.e., perceive, when they come into direct contact with their objects.[34] For the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, this means that whereas the bodily support of the visual sense faculty is the eyeball or the pupil of the eye, visual perception in fact occurs when the organ of perception, emitted from the pupil in the form of a ray of light (*tejas*), comes into direct contact, even con-forms, with its object, from a distance.[35] Whence the *Nyāyasūtra*'s terse formulation: "Perception is the consequence of contact between a ray and an object."[36]

The definitive Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika account of yogi perception dates from Praśastapāda's commentary on three aphorisms from the *Vaiśe-*

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[32] Buddhist (as well as several Hindu) treatments of *yogipratyakṣa* are surveyed in Eli Franco and Dagmar Einar, eds., *Yogic Perception, Meditation and Altered States of Consciousness* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichishen Akademi der Wissenschaften, 2009), 55-317. Dignāga terms this *yogijñāna*: Jeson Woo, "Dharmakīrti and his Commentators on Yogipratyakṣa," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 31 (2003): 439.

[33] *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* 5.2.16, with the commentary of Śaṅkaramiśra (in Sinha 1974: 182). Cf. Potter 1977: 32.

[34] King 1999: 148. The term is used and discussed, for example, by Bhāsarvajña in his *Nyāyasāra* and *Nyāyabhūṣaṇam* auto-commentary (in Yogindrananda 1968: 94). According to Rosu (1978: 201), citing *Ṛg Veda* 6.9.5-6 and 10.119.6, the *prāpyakāri* theory of perception has its origin in the Vedas. Cf. Gonda 1969: 19-20 for other citations from the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas.

[35] Jadunath Sinha, *Indian Psychology*, 3. vols. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), vol. 1, p. 21.

[36] *Nyāyasūtra* 3.1.35: *raśmyarthasannikarṣaviśeṣāt grahaṇam*.

ṣikasūtra. Those aphorisms close a long discussion, begun at *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* 8.1.2, which argues that because they are not substances, the self and mind are imperceptible through the senses. How then, can the self and mind (one's own or those of others) be perceived? Kaṇāda answers this question by stating that the "perception of the self [results] from a special conjunction, within the self, between self and mind," expanding on this theme by referring to perception "into other substances" by two types of persons: "those whose consciousness (*antaḥkaraṇa*) is not composed (*samāhita*)" and "those whose composition is complete."[37] In other words, unlike normal perception, which is the result of a fourfold contact (*catuṣṭaya-sannikarṣa*)—between the self, the mind, a sense organ (in the form of a ray), and an object[38]—the perception of imperceptibles occurs through a 'special' (*viśeṣa*) and direct conjunction (*saṃyoga*) between a mind and its object.

In his commentary on these aphorisms, Praśastapāda explains what it is that makes this contact special, and by way of interpreting the two types of persons alluded to in the *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* aphorism, he introduces the concept of an enhanced level of perception on the part of yogis, realized through yoga-generated practice (*yogaja-dharma*), by means of which one gains a perception of the true forms (*svarūpa*) of their own selves as well as a pan-optical vision of the selves of others, the quarters of space, time, atoms, wind, and mind.

What is it in normal perception that comes to be rectified or enhanced by this practice? The greatest wealth of commentarial speculation on yogi perception by Hindu philosophers[39] is found in two tenth-century sub-commentaries on the *Padārthadharmasaṃgraha*—the 991 CE *Nyāyakandalī* of Śrīdhara and the mid-tenth-century *Vyomavatī* of Vyomaśiva[40] In his *Nyāyakandalī*, Śrīdhara provides the

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[37] *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* 9.1.11-13. Here, I have translated constructions in *sam-ā-dhā* as literally as possible, preferring 'com-pose' and its resulting verbal forms to the more descriptive 'concentrate' or 'meditate'.

[38] *Padārthadharmasaṃgraha* 99, glossed in *Nyāyakandalī* 166 as: *ātmano manasā saṃyogo manasa indriyeṇa indriyasyārthena* (*Nyāyakandalī*, ed. J. S. Jetly, and Vasant G. Parikh, *Nyāyakandalī, being a commentary on Praśastapādabhāṣya, with three sub-commentaries*. Gaekwad's Oriental Series, no. 174. [Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1991], 436-437).

[39] On the rich tradition of Buddhist philosophical inquiry into *yogipratyakṣa*, see Jeson Woo, "Dharmakīrti and his Commentators on Yogipratyakṣa," and Jeson Woo, "Kamalaśīla on *Yogipratyakṣa*," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 48 (2005): 111-121.

[40] Two Kashmirian commentaries on the *Nyāyasūtra* also provide lengthy discussions of yogi perception: the mid-tenth-century *Nyāyasāra* of Bhāsarvajña (together

conceptual bridge between normal perception, yogi perception, and the power of entering into a foreign body, which was in fact the forte of yogis in epic and medieval narratives.

> [The perception] 'of those who are different than ourselves' means 'yogi perception' (*yogi-pratyakṣam*) … It is of two sorts: conscious (*samprajñāta*) … and unconscious (*asamprajñāta*) … [41] The latter, which is proper to those desiring liberation (*mumukṣūṇām*), becomes fully ripened in one's final birth … But the former [type of] yoga … illuminates (*uddyotayati*) the object whose essence [the yogi] is desirous of knowing … The innate (*svabhāvikam*) true form of the self is beheld by yogis … When, however, out of a desire to know them, he directs his continuous train of thought toward another [person's] self [or] the quarters of space, time, etc., then he augments [his] disciplined practice to an inconceivable degree … and by virtue of that power (*balāt*) his consciousness (*antaḥkaraṇa*), exiting from his body, is yoked to … other selves, etc.[42]

From here, it is but a short step to the *siddhi* of *parakāyapraveśa*, the power of entering a foreign body, which is the prime modus operandi of yogis as described in the earliest narrative accounts of yogis that we have, as found in the *Mahābhārata*. I close with an excerpt from two such epic narratives. In the first, Sulabhā is a *bhikṣukī* who enters into the body of King Janaka in order to school him in the nature of reality:

> That connoisseur of yoga entered (*praviveśa*) into the king, having conjoined (*saṃyojya*) [his] being with [her] being, [his] consciousness with [her] consciousness, [his] eyes with [her] eyes, and [his] rays (*raśmīn*) with [her] rays (*raśmibhiḥ*). With the bonds of yoga did she bind him …[43]

In the course of his inner dialogue with her, Janaka refers to Sulabhā as one who has 'entered into my heart' (*praviṣṭhā hṛdayaṃ mama*), while she refers to his body as an 'empty citadel' (*purāgāram*) inside of

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with an auto-commentary, the *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa*); and the late ninth-century *Nyāyamañjarī* of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa. These authors' dates and locations are discussed in Matilal, *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika,* 68-69, 92-94.

[41] The *Nyāyasāra*, Bhāsarvajña's tenth-century commentary on the *Nyāyasūtra*, generates the same division between types of yogic perception, preferring the terms *yuktāvasthā* ('yoked condition') and *ayuktāvastha* ('unyoked condition'): *Nyāyasāra*, ed., Swami Yogindrananda, *Śrīmadācāryabhāsarvajñapraṇītasya nyāyasārasya svopajñaṃ vyākhyānaṃ Nyāyabhūṣaṇam* (Benares: Saddarshan Prakashan Pratisthanam, 1968), 170.

[42] *Nyāyakandalī* 172 (in *Nyāyakandalī*, ed. J. S. Jetly, and Vasant G. Parikh, 455-457).

[43] *Mahābhārata* 12.308.16b-17b.

which she has passed the night.[44] One finds similar language in another epic account of an ascetic engaged in the practice of yoga. This is the story of Vipula, a young hermit who protects his guru's wife Ruci from the advances of the lascivious god Indra during his guru's absence. Prior to Indra's arrival at the hermitage, Vipula's guru Devaśarma forewarns his young charge of Indra's cunning ability to create or take on a variety of bodies for himself, a power already attested in the ṚV:[45]

> Hereupon, Vipula in fact entered Ruci there through yoga, [in order] to protect his preceptor's wife from the multi-formed offerer of one hundred sacrifices [Indra].[46] With [his] two eyes [engaged] in her two eyes, having conjoined [her] rays with his rays, Vipula entered into [her] body like wind into the sky. [With his] mouth precisely in [the place of her] mouth, and [his] sexual organ in [the place of her] sexual organ, he remained motionless [inside of her]. The hermit was gone like a shadow.[47]

Shortly thereafter, when Indra comes to the hermitage, he finds the lovely Ruci seated beside the now inanimate bodily envelope of Vipula, which looks like "a body in a painting." But of course, Vipula is inside of Ruci, whose wanton feminine instinct, when she sees the enchanting beauty of Indra, compels her to offer him her favors. But when she attempts to rise and invite him to her, Vipula,

> … that great ascetic (*mahātejā*) and descendent of Bhṛgu, observing the bodily expressions of his preceptor's wife, held her down with his yoga … and he bound all of her sense organs with the bonds of yoga (*yoga-bandhanaiḥ*) … [such that] she was immobilized by his power of yoga (*yoga-bala-mohitā*).[48]

Like *parakāyapraveśa*, yogi perception of another self occurs when one's own self, mind, or consciousness is yoked, via a ray of perception, to another being's self inside that other being's body. Here, we are also reminded of the *Aśokāvadāna*'s description of the Buddha's cosmic display, in which rays emitted from his mouth are the conduits by means of which he penetrates into every level of the universe. This understanding of the rays of perception opens the way to a variety of

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[44] *Mahābhārata* 12.308.58,189.

[45] *Mahābhārata* 13.40.23,28-38. Cf. *Ṛg Veda* 6.47.18.

[46] This verse is an insertion following *Mahābhārata* 13.40.55, found in only four Devanagari manuscripts.

[47] *Mahābhārata* 13.40.56-57.

[48] *Mahābhārata* 13.41.11ab, 12b.

ritual techniques that become commonplace in medieval Hindu religious practice, most especially 1) tantric initiation, through which the guru perpetuates the lineage 'from another body into another body' (*paramparā*);[49] 2) *prāṇa-pratiṣṭhā*, the enlivening of a worship image through the 'installation of breath,' a practice that can also involve the locking of the practitioner's eyes into those of the image;[50] and 3) *darśana* the mutual 'beholding' of deity and devotee, in which a channel, created, between the eyes of the worship image (*mūrti*) and those of the devotee, effects immediate contact between the transcendent self of the deity and the inner self of the devotee.

In sum, the philosophical axiom that yogis have a special type of perception that enables them to see deep into things as they truly are is predicated on the presupposition, common to virtually *all* of the Indian philosophical schools, that yogis are able to move between, inhabit, even create multiple bodies. As with his power of expansion, this logical extension of yogi perception also becomes a means by which the human yogi is empowered to embody the universe, as the one in the many—even if such comes at the expense of the many. These were not marginal doctrines or theories; they belonged to the late epic and post-epic mainstream of Hinduism as well as mainstream Jain and Buddhist traditions. It is only modernist reconstructions of the history of yogic theory and practice that have marginalized them.

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[49] *Svacchandatantra* 5.84-85.

[50] *Lakṣmītantra* 49.111-128 (in Sanjukta Gupta, tr. *Lakṣmī Tantra. A Pāñcarātra Text*. Leiden: Brill, 1972: 331-34). Cf. Frederick M. Smith, *The Self Possessed. Deity and Spirit Possession in South Asian Literature and Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006). 388-89; 411, n. 66.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE CULTIVATION OF YOGIC POWERS IN THE PĀLI PATH MANUALS OF THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM

Bradley S. Clough

In some of the earliest texts we have, which Theravādin Buddhists hold to be sacredly authoritative 'buddha-word' (*buddha-vācana*), namely the Pāli Nikāyas and Vinaya, we find five yogic powers which are repeatedly asserted to be abilities that are realized by those practitioners advanced in meditation—specific, adepts who have attained the fourth *jhāna* or level of concentrated and calm meditative absorption. These are called the *abhiññā*s or 'higher knowledges' and they are: 1) *iddhi-vidhā-ñāṇa*, 'knowledge of the varieties of supernormal power,' these being mostly extraordinary physical powers, such as multiplication of bodies, disappearing, walking on water, passing through solid objects, and flying; 2) *dibba-sota-dhātu*, 'divine ear element,' which is the ability to hear sounds from places afar, even as distant as divine realms; 3) *cetopariyañāṇa* or *paracittañāṇa*, 'knowledge or comprehending mind' or 'knowledge of others' thoughts'; 4) *pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa*, 'knowledge of recollecting past lives'; and 5) *dibba-cakkhu* or *cutūpapatañāṇa*, 'divine eye' or 'knowledge of passing away and rebirth,' which involves both the ability to see things very far away (like 'divine ear,' as distant as divine realms) and to witness those beings who are of unwholesome conduct passing into bad destinies, and those of wholesome conduct passing into good destinies. To this list of five, we often find a sixth *abhiññā* added, that of *āsava-kkhāya-ñāṇa*, 'knowledge of the destruction of the defilements.' This was probably added to maintain that the highest of knowledges attainable by a practitioner is one that directly conduces to liberation, this knowledge being tantamount to the realization *of nibbāna.* Indeed, Buddhist tradition in general and Theravāda Buddhism in particular would come to make a distinction, regarding the first five *abhiññā*s as 'mundane' (*lokiya*), as opposed to the added sixth *abhiññā*, which is said to be 'supermundane' (*lokuttara*). Because, however, the first five *abhiññā*s involve not only certain kinds of gno-

sis but also what could be called 'yogic powers' (my definition of which would be "extraordinary abilities directly gained from meditation practice")—as contrasted with the sixth *abhiññā*, which is purely gnostic and not said to involve any extraordinary powers of perception or control over the physical world—my focus, for the purposes of this volume, will be on them. Furthermore, my focus on the first five higher knowledges as yogic powers will not concentrate on the earliest extant materials referred to above, as I have discussed the treatment of the *abhiññā*s in these texts elsewhere.[1] Rather, we will explore the expositions on these powers in a more fully formed Theravāda tradition, as shown specifically in its manuals on the path (*magga*), which still represent relatively early formative phases of this school of Buddhism. These texts are: 1) the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (*Psm*) or 'Path of Discrimination,' (authorship is uncertain, although Theravāda tradition assigns the work to Sāriputta) which probably dates to roughly the second century BCE.;[2] 2) the *Vimuttimagga* (*Vmm*) or 'Path of Liberation' of Upatissa Thera,[3] which was probably composed around the first century CE.;[4] and most importantly, the *Visuddhimagga* (*Vsm*) or 'Path of Purification' of Buddhaghosa, which was written in the fifth century CE.[5] I will rely mostly on this last text, which provides a very detailed treatment of the higher knowledges that ranges over two chapters in its section on *samādhi*, clearly indicating the importance of the *abhiññā*s in this most thorough of treatments of Theravāda soteriology. What makes these texts especially worthy of discussion is that they are the sole early Theravāda texts that contain something like actual instructions on how to obtain these yogic powers. Examination of these works will not only shed light on Theravāda Buddhism, but on South Asian yogic traditions as a whole, for in the wider religious

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[1] Bradley S. Clough, "The Higher Knowledges in the the Pāli Nikāyas and Vinaya," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, forthcoming.

[2] A.K. Warder, "Introduction," in *The Path of Discrimination*, trans. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2002), xxxv.

[3] All references to this text in this article are to the translation of this text from Chinese: N.R.M. Ehara, Soma Thera, and Kheminda Thera, *The Path of Freedom* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1977).

[4] This date is assigned by K.R. Norman in his *Pāli Literature* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), 113. All that is known for certain about this text's date is that it was composed prior to the fifth century CE, because: a) the only extant version of it, a Chinese translation, dates to 505 CE; and b) Buddhaghosa, who lived in the 5th century, makes clear references to it.

[5] Textual evidence has lead to almost unanimous scholarly consensus that Buddhaghosa lived in the fifth century CE.

contexts of the region, instructions on how to obtain yogic powers are not often found in the works of any of the religions' texts (with some 'Tantric' literature being an important and notable exception here), as the conferring of such knowledge has usually been an esoteric matter between an accomplished teachers and initiated and advanced disciples. Theravādin meditation masters also undoubtedly have passed on such instruction orally over the course of history, but these texts provide us with a fairly rare glimpse into an aspect of yogic powers that has been little investigated and understood. Furthermore, these path manuals' discussions of the *abhiññā*s reveal more to us about general Buddhist and particular Theravādin convictions about the leading role that cultivation of the mind plays in practice,[6] the great opportunities that meditation provides for mental and physical transformation (in the cases investigated here, meditation as it pertains to *samatha-bhāvanā* ['cultivation of tranquility] and its attendant *jhāna* states), the exceptionally powerful abilities attributed to one who has well cultivated the mind, and the centrality assigned to intention or resolve in the area of action or praxis.

Iddhi-vidhā-ñāṇa

The *Vsm* defines *iddhi* in terms of production (*nipphatti*), obtainment (*patilābha*), and effectiveness of means (*upāya-kosalla*), the last phrase indicating a conviction that production of certain desired results could be obtained by means of the *iddhi* powers.[7] The *Vsm*'s discussion of *iddhi* is thus primarily concerned with generating success and efficacy in the meditative process of *samatha-bhāvanā*, but Buddhaghosa also uses the term to refer to other kinds of *iddhi*, in the sense of 'attainment' or 'success.' Overall, ten kinds of *iddhi* are discussed in the path texts, but only three pertain to the *abhiññā* known as 'knowledge of the varieties of *iddhi*,' with our texts significantly only giving specific instructions about how to cultivate these three. The *Psm* lists them as: 1) *adhiṭṭhāna iddhi*: success by resolve. It is asserted that by mental resolution, one actually can produce phenomena outside of

[6] One is reminded of the phrase found in both of the *Dhammapada*'s (hereafter *Dhp)* first two verses: "[All] states are preceded by mind, for them mind is foremost, [and] from mind they are made" (*manopubbaṅgama dhammā/manoseṭṭhā manomayā*).

[7] *Vsm* 12.22.

one's body. This includes all the standard *iddhi*s mentioned above (which are taken from stock Nikāyan passages on the *iddhi*s); 2) *vikubbanā iddhi*: success by transformation. This is the abandoning or alteration of one's normal form; and 3) *manomaya iddhi*: success by creating out of one's own body another body that is 'mind-made' and possesses all faculties except the life or sexual faculty.[8]

Already we find here an emphasis on the power of mental resolve (in the case of *adhiṭṭhāna iddhi*), extraordinary transformative ability associated with a meditatively cultivated mind (in the case of *vikubbanā iddhi*), and things becoming manifest by means of mind (as in the case of *manomaya iddhi; like Dhp* 1: 1-2, things are 'made of mind').

In general, the path leading to the attainment of *iddhi* and the other *abhiññā*s involves five steps. The first step is developing the four *jhāna*s. The first three *jhāna*s are regarded as necessary accessory planes, since in them one becomes "light, malleable, and wieldy in body after steeping oneself in blissful perception and light perception due to pervasion of bliss."[9] Here again we see an emphasis on bodily transformation through mediation as well as a usefulness assigned to bliss that is typically associated with Vajrayāna Buddhism and deemed antithetical to Theravāda Buddhism. But the importance of bliss is undeniable here in this Theravāda context. Returning to the *Vsm*, it repeats the long-held conviction that the fourth *jhāna* is the natural plane for obtaining the five *abhiññā*s. The second step is cultivation of the four *iddhi-pāda*s, the 'bases for success,' which are: 1) concentration (*samādhi*) due to will (*chanda*); 2) concentration due to energy (*viriya*); 3) concentration due to mind (*citta*); and 4) concentration due to investigation (*vīmaṃsā*). Two things are noteworthy here. First, as we see here again and will see throughout our examination, intention, resolve, or will occupies a central place in developing an *abhiññā*. Second, there is an association with mental activity (*citta* or 'thought' and *vīmaṃsā* or 'investigation') with development of *samādhi* or 'meditative concentration' that contradicts the usual understanding that *samādhi* involves cessation of mental activity and thus stands in stark contrast to *vipassanā-bhāvanā* or 'insight meditation,' which is said to be distinct from *samādhi*-based meditation in its investigation of thoughts and other personal processes. Returning to

[8] *Psm* 12.4.
[9] *Psm* 2.205.

the *Vsm*'s instructions on cultivation of *iddhi*, the third step is called the 'eight steps,' which appears to be nothing more than a reworking of the *iddhi-pāda* formula.[10] The fourth step is the 'sixteen roots,' which are the sixteen unwholesome states of mind by which a mind must remain unperturbed (*āneñja*).[11] The fifth step is called 'resolving with knowledge'.[12] What this entails is that once the previous four meditative conditions have been accomplished, any *iddhi* or other *abhiññā* can be gained simply by determining to acquire it in one's mind.

In addition to these five steps, the *Vsm* includes instructions for another required exercise that gives one a good sense of the exceedingly high level of mastery believed to be involved in cultivating the *abhiññās*. This exercise is comprised of perfecting the attaining of the *jhānas* via each of the ten *kasiṇas* in fourteen different ways (literally 'fields for cultivation,' the *kasiṇas* are physical objects used as meditative devices to attain the *jhāna*s, such as colored discs and containers of an element such as earth or water). These fourteen ways include attaining each of the *jhāna*s via each of the *kasiṇa*s one-thousand times in forward and reverse order. Here, one would attain the first *jhāna* up through the fourth formless attainment (*arūpāyatana*)[13], and descend in reverse order, doing this again and again, with the ability to skip over both *jhāna*s and *kasiṇa*s (e.g. going from the first *jhāna* gained by concentrating on the earth *kasiṇa*, directly to the third *jhāna* by concentrating on the fire *kasiṇa*, and then directly to the 'boundless space attainment' by conjuring up and then removing the blue *kasiṇa* and just focusing on the empty space that remains).[14] The *Vsm* states that only one person in a thousand can arouse the meditative signs necessary for such achievement. Among those rare few, only one in a thousand can extend any of the signs and reach absorption (*appanā*) in *jhāna*. Among those very few who can do that,

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[10] *Vsm* 12.54.

[11] *Vsm* 12.55.

[12] *Vsm* 12.59.

[13] In Theravāda mediation theory, the first four levels of meditative absorption, all in the 'realm of form' (*rūpa-dhātu*) are called *jhāna*s, but the next and final four levels of meditative absorption, all in the 'formless realm' (*arūpa-dhātu*) are called *āyatana*s ('spheres' or 'attainments'). Namely, they are: 1) 'sphere of boundless space' (*ākāsānañcāyatana*); 2) 'sphere of boundless consciousness' (*viññāṇañcāyatana*); 3) 'sphere of nothingness' (*ākiñcaññāyatana*); and 4) 'sphere of neither perception nor non-perception' (*nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana*).

[14] *Vsm* 12.3-5.

only one in a thousand can control the mind in the fourteen ways. And, among those extremely rare few, only one in a thousand can transform oneself by the five *abhiññā*s. Only *buddha*s, *pacceka-buddha*s, and chief disciples (*aggasāvaka*s), due to the power of their past meditative endeavors and great will, can achieve the *abhiññā*s simply by attaining *arahant*-hood. Here again, we find an importance assigned to *samatha-bhāvanā* that is usually thought to be the province of *vipassanā-bhāvanā*, with the *arahant* being very notably defined in this context as one who can master the *kasiṇa*s up to the fourth *jhāna*, without preliminary training in the fourteen ways. This is quite distinct from usual definitions, which refer mostly or solely to an adept's gnostic achievements (such as 'knowledge of the destruction of the defilements') gained from mindfulness (*sati*) or insight meditation.[15]

The *Psm* and *Vmm* provide the basic instructions for developing the basis for the *abhiññā*s in general and the first kind of *iddhi*, 'success by resolve' (*adhiṭṭhāna iddhi*) in the fourth *jhāna*. This is done by first developing the aforementioned *iddhi-pāda*s of concentration (*samādhi*) due to will, energy, mind, and investigation (*chanda*, *viriya*, *citta*, and *vīmaṁsā*), accompanied by what is called 'volitional activity of endeavor' (*padhāna-cetanā-sankhāra*).[16] Again, it seems that once a very advanced degree of concentration has been reached, in order to realize a supernormal power, it appears that it is simply a matter of mentally willing that power to arise. Although the mind can slacken, fall back, and become agitated at times, these problems can be removed by producing the purity, equanimity, and one-pointedness of mind that is characteristic of the fourth *jhāna*. Eventually, repeated practice of the *iddhi-pāda*s leads to a strength of resolve and also, quite notably, a supple (*mudu*) and malleable (*kammanīya*) mind, which are said to be necessary to develop the *iddhi*s and other *abhiññā*s. The references here to suppleness and malleability of course speak to Buddhist convictions about the mind's remarkable transformability and power. Next, the adept mounts, converts, and steadies his mind to accord with the body, and vice-versa, in order to permeate the body with the bliss (*sukhatā*) and lightness (*lahutā*) required to develop *iddhi* and the other *abhiññā*s. With the mind and body thus prepared, one enters the fourth *jhāna* via any of the *kasiṇa*s. Emerging from the

[15] *Vsm* 12.8.

[16] *Psm* 2. 209-210; *Vmm* Chapter 9, p. 217.

fourth *jhāna*, one is said to actually *know* space, earth, or whatever the meditative object is, and thus can resolve to obtain any of the *iddhi*s or *abhiññā*s through that knowledge.[17] Once again, we find here the power of resolve in a meditatively cultivated mind being reinforced, as well as an important association being made between gnosis and cultivation of the *jhāna* states. This also is clearly a case that demonstrates a conviction that one finds throughout South Asian yogic literature, and that is that to know something is to gain actual mastery over that thing, in this case including the actual ability to create that thing.

The three texts all include special instructions for developing the second and third kinds of *iddhi*, those resulting from physical transformation (*vikubbanā*) of some kind and the use of the mind-made body (*manomayakāya*). For the former (the second kind of *iddhi*), one again abides in the fourth *jhāna* and practices the four *iddhipāda*s until bliss and lightness of body and suppleness and malleability of mind are reached. One then resolves to fill the body with mind. Discarding the form, one enters the fourth *jhāna* again, and emerges, resolving, "May I take the form of such and such."[18] Thus, the *iddhi* of transformation only differs from the *iddhi* of resolve in its discarding of form. For attaining the mind-made body (the third kind of *iddhi*), one follows the same process, except that, in this case, one resolves, "I will change this hollow body of mine." Then one resolves, "let there be another body inside it." Then one draws that other body out, "like a rod from its sheath, a sword from its scabbard, a snake from its skin."[19] By this means, one can, as one wishes, create visible forms which are, as stated above, complete with all the faculties, except for the life or procreative faculty.[20] These forms will do whatever the possessor of *iddhi* (*iddhivat*) does—sit, walk, talk, and so forth.[21]

Here again we find much evidence of the tremendous power assigned to mental resolve or intention. It seems that just as the intention behind an action (*kamma*) has the great power to produce future fruits (*phala*) or results (*vipāka*), the resolve applied in the fourth *jhāna*, once a certain high degree of mastery over mind and matter

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[17] *Vsm* 12.6.

[18] *Vsm* 12.138; *Vmm* Chapter 9, p. 217; *Psm* 2.210.

[19] *Psm* 2.210; *Vsm* 12.139. This analogy originally comes from *Dīgha-nikāya* (hereafter *D*) i.77.

[20] *Psm* 2.210-211.

[21] *Psm* 2.210-211; *Vmm* Chapter 9, p. 218.

has been achieved, has the power to effect great mental and physical transformation.

The *Vsm* goes on to treat, in individual fashion, each of the eight *iddhi*s mentioned in the Nikāyas' *locus classicus* on the *abhiññā*s, the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*. First is the ability to multiply ("Having become one, he becomes many…"[22]). Taking the number of forms that one wishes to produce as the object of concentration, one enters the fourth *jhāna*, emerges, and resolves, "Let me become a hundred," for example. The *Vsm* adds that not only can the forms do what the *iddhivat* does, but each form can do different things, by merely resolving, for example, "Let so many *bhikkhu*s appear young, let so many *bhikkhu*s appear teaching Dhamma…", etc., while attaining *jhāna* and emerging after each resolution. To become one again, the practitioner once again attains *jhāna*, emerges, and resolves, "Let me become one." Or, one can set a predetermined time beforehand, at which multiple bodies will integrate into one (…"having been many, he becomes one"[23]).[24]

The second *iddhi* is "becoming visible or invisible at will ('He appears and disappears…'[25])." Here, in order to cause invisibility, one turns light into darkness, hides what is revealed, or makes something leave the visual field. To make something visible, the opposite is done. This is accomplished by resolving, "Let that which is light become dark," or vice-versa. The power of making things visible is said to display both the *iddhi* and the *iddhivat*, whereas the power of making things invisible only displays the *iddhi*.[26]

The third *iddhi* is the ability to pass through solid obstacles ("He goes unhindered through walls, ramparts, and mountains, as if through space…"[27]). To accomplish this, one attains the fourth *jhāna* via the space *kasiṇa*, emerges and resolves with respect to the obstacle, 'Let there be space,' whereupon the obstacle becomes hollow, if one wishes to rise up through it, or cleft, if one wants to penetrate it. Here Buddhaghosa cites the objection of an elder named Culla Abhaya, who had insisted that any *kasiṇa* would do, since "one does not have to use an elephant *kasiṇa* to create an elephant." His fellow monks disagree, noting that the *Psm* (2.208) says to use the space *kasiṇa* only.

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[22] D i.78.
[23] D i.78.
[24] *Vsm* 12.68.
[25] D i.78.
[26] *Psm* 2.207; *Vs* 12.69.
[27] D i.78.

Buddhaghosa also mentions that the resolution, 'let there be space,' covers all obstacles to be encountered, unless the obstacle has been created by another *iddhivat*, in which case it must be avoided.[28]

Likewise, the fourth *iddhi*, the ability to dive "…in and out of the ground as if on water,"[29] is accomplished by attaining *jhāna* via the water *kasiṇa* and resolving that the earth become water in a certain place. This place will then become water (or any other liquid) for the *iddhivat* only, who can also determine whether or not the liquid makes him wet or not.[30]

Similarly, for the fifth *iddhi* of walking "'…on water without sinking, as if it were earth,"[31] one attains *jhāna* via the earth *kasiṇa* and resolves that the water become earth, or any other solid substance he desires. Again, the water becomes earth only for the *iddhivat*.[32]

For the sixth *iddhi* ("…seated cross-legged, he travels across the sky like a winged bird"[33]), a slightly different method is employed, for here one uses again the aforementioned 'mind-made body.' The *Vsm* instructs that one attain *jhāna* either by the air *kasiṇa*, which enables one to rise like a tuft of cotton, or by a method called 'movement of mind,' which has the same effect.[34] Based on the *Psm* as it very often is, the *Vsm* prescribes the earth *kasiṇa* for this 'movement of mind' method, by which one travels through the sky as if seated on a piece of ground. The *Vsm* also says that divine eye is necessary for this power, so that one can spot a secluded place to land, out of sight of the multitudes.[35] In the *Vmm*, a question is raised concerning whether or not one falls to earth if the *jhāna* is lost. The reply is that one does not fall, but instead returns to the meditative seat.[36] This raises the important question of whether mere ideation or mental projection of the body (as the phrase 'movement of mind' might suggest) is implied here. This may be the case, but one must recall, that the 'mind-made body' is said to have special qualities of extreme lightness (see the previous references to bodily lightness [*lahutā*] in the *jhāna*s and to the body rising like a tuft of cotton), and so it could remain aloft as long as the

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[28] *Vsm* 12.90.
[29] D i.78.
[30] *Vsm* 12.92-94.
[31] D i.78.
[32] *Vsm* 12.95-96.
[33] D i.78.
[34] *Vmm* 9.216.
[35] *Vsm* 12.100.
[36] *Vmm* 9.216.

iddhivat willed it to do so. Furthermore, one must also bear in mind that the mind in Buddhism is the sixth sense, and as such, it is not different from other senses. Therefore, such 'ideations' are no less 'real' than other sensory experiences.[37]

The seventh *iddhi* is the ability to touch and feel "…the sun and moon".[38] This is done, once again, by the procedure of entering *jhāna* and making a resolution, in this case "Let it be within reach." Then, just as one normally touches objects within reach, so one possessing mental mastery can do the same with these celestial bodies.[39]

The eighth power is wielding "bodily mastery as far as the *Brahmā* realms."[40] This feat is quite conceivable in terms of Buddhist cosmological beliefs, which maintain that the divine *Brahmā* worlds are on equivalent levels with the *jhāna* states in the realm of form. This power also requires use of the *abhiññā*s of divine eye and divine ear, which are said to allow one to see the forms and hear the sounds of any of the *Brahmā* worlds, and furthermore the *abhiññā* of reading others' minds is necessary in order to understand deities in these spheres. If the *iddhivat* wants to travel to such a world in a visible form, he resolves to convert his mind to accord with his body. If he wants to travel invisibly, he resolves to convert his body to accord with his mind (this, once again, would be the 'mind-made body'). In either case, he arrives at cognition of bliss and lightness (*sukha-* and *lahusaññā*). Then, one can travel to a *Brahmā* world by resolving by the earth *kasiṇa* if one wants to walk, by the air *kasiṇa* if one wishes to fly, or by the resolution 'Let it be near'.[41] With regard to this power, the question arises again concerning whether the *iddhivat* or a purely mental image of a body is the one to go, and there seem to be differing positions here. Clearly this question was of considerable concern to the tradition. Buddhaghosa says "He does as he pleases," which seems to leave the issue unresolved, but he also points out that the *Psm* says that it is the actual creator of the body, not a merely created body, that goes.[42] But one account from the *Milindapañha s*eems to imply that one travels via a mental creation. Here, King Milinda expresses doubt

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[37] Rune Johansson, *The Psychology of Nirvana* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969), 48.

[38] D i.78.

[39] *Vsm* 12.103.

[40] D i.78.

[41] *Vsm* 12.19.

[42] Buddhaghosa, at *Vsm* 12.119, seems to be referring to *Psm* 2.209.

that *bhikkhus* can travel as far as a *Brahmā* world. Nāgasena replies by asking the monarch to recall his birthplace and upon hearing the reply, remarks, "O King, you have gone to Alexandria very quickly!"[43] However, another *Milindapañha* passage suggests the opposite. Here, Nāgasena says that just as a normal person resolves to jump and the body becomes buoyant, in the same way an *iddhivat*, focuses the body in the mind and travels through the air.[44]

Again we might note here yet another example of the conviction about the ability of mental resolution to create extraordinary power, if one has achieved the bodily bliss and lightness and the mental suppleness and malleability of the fourth *jhāna*.

Dibbasotadhātu

According to the *Vsm*, one begins to obtain the *abhiññā* of 'divine ear element' by first adverting attention to gross sound-signs within the range of normal hearing, and then successively adverting attention to more and more subtle sound signs in each of the ten directions. By doing this, the normal mind (*pakati-citta*) identifies with the *bhavaṅga* or 'life-condition,' which is the mental factor that allows for personal continuity, according to Theravāda philosophy.[45] In this state, one resolves, 'divine ear element will now arise.' Taking any sound as its object, another yogic power called 'mind-door adverting' (*mano-dvāra-ajjanam*) arises. In simple terms, this means giving concentrated mental attention to a given sound. After that has ceased, five thought-moments (*javanāḥ*) arise in succession. The first four—preliminary work (*parikamma*), access ([to *jhāna*] *upacāra*), adaptation (*anuloma*) and adoption (*gotrabhū*, literally 'family member')—are of the desire realm, while the fifth is the mind of absorption (*appanācitta*) in the fourth *jhāna*, which is of the realm of form.[46] During this last

[43] *Milindapañha* 3.16.

[44] *Milindapañha* 4.2.

[45] This concept is not found in the earliest strata of the *tipiṭaka* or 'three baskets' [i.e. 'collections'] of the so-called 'Pāli Canon'—the Nikāyas, Vinaya, and Abhidhamma. It seems to appear first in the *Milindapañha* (1st century CE), and is developed further in the *Vsm* and other commentarial literature (5th century CE and beyond), as well as in later Abhidhamma digests such as the *Abhidhammasaṃgaha* (12th century CE).

[46] The thought-moments are a series within the process of mental purification that are free from interference from distractions stemming from the activity of the five sense organs other than mind. In *vipassanā* meditation, the first four make up

thought-moment, the desired phenomena of sound are effected. The combination of the arising of this knowledge with the mind of absorption, which is completely fixed on the sound object, produces divine ear element.

The rather technical and complex process just described can be rather hard to follow, but the basic idea seems to be that the sound-object upon which one is concentrating becomes increasingly evident as the mental ascent is made up to the fourth *jhāna*. The *Vsm* states that once one has gained this *abhiññā*, any sound that comes into the range covered by object as perceived in *jhāna* can be heard without reentering the fourth *jhāna*. If one wishes, one can extend this knowledge as far as a single entire world-sphere (presumably one divine realm above the one that is on the same level as the fourth *jhāna*, which would be the 'sphere of boundless space'), and one can identify and distinguish each particular sound within that range.[47]

Cetopariyañāṇa (Knowledge of the Nature of Mind) or *Paracittañāṇa* (Knowledge of Others' Thoughts)

Here again we see importance placed on combining certain *abhiññā*s to obtain a yogic power. According to the *Vsm*, one must first attain divine eye, as preliminary work (*parikamma*), in order to gain this higher knowledge. The one should enter the fourth *jhāna* by the light *kasiṇa*. Increasing the light, one should radiate the light so as to penetrate (*pariyesitabba*) another's state of mind by observing, with divine eye, the color of blood present in the physical heart (*hadayarūpa*). The blood is said to be red when the mind is accompanied by joy (*sukha*); it is black with grief (*dukkha*) and also with ignorance (*avijjā*); it is yellow with lust (*rāga*); and it is clear with equanimity (*upekkhā*). By constant repetition of this preliminary practice, one can come to know with one's own mind the faculties of all kinds of minds within the three realms, without further observation of the heart's matter (*vinā pi hadayarūpadassana*).

As described by Buddhaghosa, this *abhiññā* is hierarchical. For instance a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*) can only know the mind of an ordinary person (*puthujjana*), but not that of a once-returner

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the process of attaining stream-entry, culminating in knowledge of the (stream enterer's) path and knowledge of the fruit of that path. In *samatha* meditation, the first four culminate in the 'mind of absorption' (in the *jhāna*s) mentioned here.

[47] *Vsm* 13.1-7.

(*sakadāgāmin*), and so on.[48] Only a Buddha's knowledge of others' minds is limitless.[49]

Pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa (Knowledge of Recollecting Past Lives)

Although primarily interested with techniques of cultivation, Buddhaghosa was also concerned with the theoretical issues of meditation practice. These issues are dealt with in considerably greater depth in sections of the *Vsm* other than the ones being discussed here. However, in this section on memory of past lives, he delves into some topics that one usually finds elsewhere, most especially in the Abhidhamma material.

The *Vsm* says that six types of people recollect past lives,[50] to varying degrees, based on their degree of insight into the nature of mind and body (*nāma-rūpa*, 'name and form') and their components (*khandha*),[51] which is a very important criterion for Buddhists, in determining the extent of one's knowledge. Non-Buddhist sectarians (*titthiya*) can recall only the succession of components, not the means of death and rebirth-linking (*paṭisandhi*),[52] and thus can remember back (a mere!) forty eons at the most, and cannot descend upon any particular point in the past as they so choose. But ordinary (Buddhist) disciples (*pakati-sāvaka*) can and the eighty great disciples (*mahāsāvaka*s) of the past could remember both the succession of aggregates and the means of death and rebirth-linking, and could recall up to 100,000 eons of past lives and two incalculable eons plus 100,000 eons, respectively. Buddhists remember past lives neither by tracing the

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[48] With respect to stages of spiritual progress, Theravāda has a hierarchy of types of practitioners, ranging from the 'non-trainee' (*asekha*) or 'ignoble person' (*anariya-puggala*), who is an ordinary person (*puthujjana*) yet to engage in any practice, to the four levels of advanced 'trainee' (*sekha*) or 'noble person,' which indicate how close one is to *nibbāna*, depending on what liberating insights one has attained and what attachments one has given up. They are: 1) the 'stream-enterer' (*sotāpanna*), destined for *nibbāna* within seven lifetimes; 2) the 'once-returner' (*sakadāgāmi*), destined for *nibbāna* within one rebirth; 3) the 'non-returner' (*anāgāmi*), destined for *nibbāna* in this lifetime or during the next rebirth in a divine realm; and 4) the 'worthy one' (*arahant*), one who has attained *nibbāna*. With respect to knowing another's mind, what is being said here is that one can only possibly know the mind of one on an equal or lower level of this hierarchy.

[49] *Vsm* 13.8-12.

[50] *Vsm 13.15.*

[51] *Vsm* 12.21.

[52] Paṭisandhi is a component of the aforementioned *bhavaṅga*.

succession of components or the death and rebirth-linking processes, and thus can recall their own past lives, as well as those of others, to an unlimited degree by descending into any past point of time that they choose.[53]

The beginner starts by successively recalling each of his bodily, mental, and verbal acts for an entire day. While these acts are evident enough to the normal mind (*pakati-citta*), they are even more evident to what is called the 'preliminary work mind' (*parikamma-citta*) that arises for one immersed in the fourth *jhāna*, for whom these events are illuminated as if a lamp light had been shed on them. By attaining the fourth *jhāna*, emerging, and adverting (*āvajjita*) the mind, one can tap progressively into the one's entire present life, eventually concentrating upon key moments in the whole process of past lives, such as that of one's own rebirth-link (*paṭisandhi*) in this existence, and the state of one's mental and bodily components at the moment of death in the immediately previous life.[54] This ability to direct the mind to whatever particular moment one seeks to recall provides even further testimony to the great power of mind as it is understood in Theravāda Buddhism, especially the mind's power to bring about great insight while immersed or immediately after being immersed in the fourth *jhāna*.

Nevertheless, a distinction is still made between *samatha*- and *vipassanā-bhāvanā*: Whereas a meditator (Buddhaghosa explicitly says a 'monk') with *paññā* is able to recall these crucial events in one attempt, those of less insight should enter *jhāna* and advert the mind again and again in order to clear the mind, like a person who, by resharpening his axe, gets closer and closer to chopping down the tree.[55] Once memory of these key moments is achieved, the process described previously, of the successive arising of 'mind-door adverting' and the five thought-moments, occurs, culminating in the arising of absorption consciousness, which produces awareness of past lives.[56] And not only is one said to be able to remember one's long chain of rebirths, but can also recall eons of cosmological contraction and expansion, described in some detail by Buddhaghosa.[57]

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[53] *Vsm* 13.16-18.
[54] *Vsm* 13.22-24.
[55] *Vsm* 13.26.
[56] *Vsm* 13.27.
[57] *Vsm* 13.28-66.

Dibba-cakkhu-cutupapātañāṇa (Divine Eyes/Knowledge of Passing Away and Rebirth)

This section of the *Vsm* on this *abhiññā* also begins with a theoretical discussion, which says that this higher knowledge is called 'divine' because 1) it is possessed by the gods (who obtain it due to past good *kamma*; 2) because it achieved by the power of divine abiding (*dibba-vihārāvasena*); 3) it has divine abiding as its support; and 4) it greatly illuminates with discerning light (*ālokapariggahena mahāggahena*).[58] Because it discerns the arising and passing away of beings, it is called 'pure,' in that it is the cause of purification of view (*diṭṭhivisuddhi-hetu*). Those who only see passing away but not rebirth assume the annihilationist (wrong) view (*ucchedadiṭṭhi*), and those who only see passing away but not rebirth succumb to the (wrong) view that only new being appears (*navasattapātubhāvadiṭṭhi*), which presumably is synonymous with the (wrong) view of eternalism (*sassatadiṭṭhi*). Only children of Buddha see both, and that vision is the cause for purification of view, which is the crucial 'middle way' understanding that all things both arise and pass away.[59] In discussing divine eye in this way, Buddhaghosa sheds light on a central soteriological role played by divine eye that is not so explicitly laid out in earlier Theravāda works. And again, we see that an insight that Buddhism deems crucial to ultimate liberation being gained through an *abhiññā* realized while practicing *samatha-bhāvanā*. The knowledge that "whatever is subject to arising is subject to passing away" is the insight that gives one what is called the 'dharma eye,' which is the mark of one who has attained stream-entry.

Divine eye is said to 'surpass the human,' both in the sense that it goes beyond the human physical eye (*mānusakam maṃsacakkhum*)—meaning it can see further distances in this world—and that it can see objects beyond the range of human access—meaning that it can see divine realms.[60]

Divine eye is manifested in certain beings simply because of excellent past *kamma*, but most must begin by attaining the level of access to the first *jhāna* (*upacārajjhānagocara*) via either the fire, white, or light *kasiṇa*, the latter being preferable because divine eye is said to be

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[58] Here *dibba* seems to have been taken in its most literal sense, of 'shining' or 'illuminating.'

[59] *Vsm* 13.74.

[60] *Vsm* 13.75.

produced by the development and utilization of the perception of light (*āloka-saññā*).[61] The level of actual *absorption* (*appanā*) in the first *jhāna* (the next stage after the level of 'access-concentration [*upacāra-samādhi*], which is immediately prior to the first *jhāna*) should not be entered here, for two reasons. The first is that in absorption, the *kasiṇa* is the object, instead of the external objects or beings that one wishes to perceive. Second, absorption is the support for the basic *jhāna*, but not for the preliminary work that needs to be done, which is extending the light *kasiṇa* in order to see external things. One can see as far as the light can be extended, and since access-concentration is of short duration, it is preferable because the adept will need to enter this level of *jhāna* again and again, each time emerging and pervading the directions with light. Through entering into access-concentration repeatedly with this *kasiṇa*, eventually one is able to extend light to any predetermined limit desired.[62] Once this is achieved, the same process ensues: the 'mind-door' is adverted and the five thought-moments arise next, culminating in the attainment of absorption consciousness in the fourth *jhāna*, which combines with the use of light to produce this higher form of knowledge.[63] When one is able to see—as if with the eye of flesh—objects inside of one's own belly, under the ground, behind obstacles, and in divine world spheres, divine eye can be said to have arisen.[64] Here the *Vsm* warns advanced adepts or 'noble persons' (*ariya-puggala*) not to be frightened by the sight of those demons who live underground, or else they will risk losing absorption in *jhāna*![65]

Divine eye has two accessory forms of knowledge (*paribhaṇḍañāṇa*), knowledge of beings faring according to their deeds (*yathākammūpagañāṇa*) and knowledge of the future (*anāgataṃsañāṇa*).[66] To receive the former, on extends light either upwards or downwards to see beings undergoing pleasure in higher destinies or suffering in lower destinies. Then one thinks in this way: "After doing what deeds do these beings undergo suffering (or pleasure)?". Then the knowledge arises, "It was after doing this."[67] Knowledge of the future is

[61] Here again we see *dibba* being understood in two senses, as both 'illuminating' and 'divine.'
[62] *Vsm* 13.95-96.
[63] *Vsm* 13.101.
[64] *Vsm* 13.99.
[65] *Vsm* 13.100.
[66] *Vsm* 13.103.
[67] *Vsm* 13.79.

gained in similar fashion, although Buddhaghosa (probably drawing from *Ps* 19.36) says that only Buddhas fully know the future, for only they can take all the possible conditions into account.[68]

Conclusions

Our examination of Theravāda path manuals' discussions of the *abhiññā*s has given us insight into several dimensions of this tradition's thought and practice. First, despite the very long-held beliefs, usually evidenced in narrative accounts, of the power of advanced adepts to display extraordinary powers, it is extremely rare within the enormous literatures of various forms of Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism (not to mention major non-Indic-based religions) to find some explicit details about how spiritual masters were thought to actually manifest such supernormal abilities. Even in traditions of Tantra that supposedly emphasize and celebrate such powers more than other Indic traditions, it is quite unusual to find much in the way of actual instructions on the accomplishment of supermundane acts. For example, a recent translation of the Tibetan master Dzong-ka-ba's treatment of *Yoga Tantra* from his famous text, *The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra*, tantalizingly subtitled by the translators as *Pathways to Magical Feats*, only ten of the translated text's fifty pages contain anything approaching actual instructions, and given that fourteen different kinds of powers are discussed in these pages, the exposition of the visualizations and *mantras* involved are fairly cursory.[69]

Of equal importance is what these instructions tell us about Theravāda Buddhism's views on the nature and power of mind. Most important in this respect is crediting *samatha-bhāvanā* practice with the yielding of a suppleness and malleability of mind that enables one to perform extraordinary psychic and physical feats. Furthermore, the path works analyzed here provide greater confirmation that a central part of what could be called the 'common Indic yogic heritage' is the conviction that to know something is gain control over it. Apparently cultivation of the *jhāna*s are believed to confer knowledge and control over the meditative object used to gain these states of meditative absorption such that, for example, concentration on the *kasiṇa* of

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[68] *Vsm* 13.80, 125.24

[69] H.H. the Dalai Lama, Dzong-ka-ba, and Jeffrey Hopkins, *Yoga Tantra: Paths to Magical Feats* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2005).

light eventuates in mastery of light, or concentration on the *kasiṇa* of earth allows one to create supporting grounds of equal solidity. In addition, it appears that as one mentally ascends through the levels of *jhāna* that are associated with different sphere in 'realm of form' (*rūpāyatana*), mind gains control over matter, such that one can, for example, create bodies with one's mind (*manomaya-kāya*).

This does not mean, however, that the physical is always seen as something to be transcended, as is often thought to be a belief of Theravāda Buddhism. Besides the utility of a mind-made body, we find a great value placed in these works on permeating the body with bliss and lightness, as a necessary part of cultivating the *abhiññā*s. The emphasis on *sukha* or bliss in Theravāda may be surprising to many students of Buddhism, as this tradition is usually, for understandable reasons, seen as placing a premium on equanimity (*upekkhā*) on all pleasant and painful sensations. The emphasis on bliss is usually seen—again, for understandable reasons—as a unique hallmark of Vajrayāna forms of Buddhism. At a minimum it is interesting to see bliss highlighted in a certain Theravādin context here. We also see in these texts how the physical was seen as indicative of psychic states. This comes out, for example, in technique associated with the *abhiññā* of 'reading others' minds,' in which a person's disposition was discerned by ascertaining the color of his or her blood.

Lastly, our findings here should caution us against what Bernard Fauré has called the 'teleological fallacy' in Buddhist studies, by which he means the tendency to read later developments onto earlier ones, or to interpret the past in terms of the present.[70] With respect to Theravāda Buddhist yoga or meditation, history has seen an ever-increasing emphasis on *vipassanā-bhāvanā* over *samatha-bhāvanā* over time, to the point where many leading Theravāda mediation masters and teachers emphasize the former greatly over the latter, not infrequently to the point of excluding cultivation of the latter. This, I think, has too often led scholars to underestimate the importance of the *jhāna*s and *abhiññā*s in early Theravāda. Theravāda is often inaccurately seen as always asserting that *only vipassanā* practice engendered insights of soteriological importance. While *samatha* practice has almost surely been seen by most as secondary and preparatory to *vipassanā*, in its production of the degree of calm and concentration

[70] Bernard Fauré, *Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 113.

deemed necessary to practice the higher form that delivered insights leading to complete liberation (*vimutti*; *vimokkha*), we would do well to recall that from the earliest known stages of the tradition, the crucial attainment of the fourth *jhāna* not only was characterized by great *samādhi* or concentration, but also by the nirvāṇic qualities of equanimity (*upekkhā*) and mindfulness (*sati*) itself. This is affirmed by the discussions of the *abhiññā*s in the Theravāda path manuals where, as we have seen, it is affirmed that the mind immersed in *jhāna* gains such crucial Buddhist insights as seeing beings fare according to their *kamma*s or actions and recalling how one's own past *kamma*s have affected subsequent conditions that arose in their wanderings in *saṃsāra*.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE WONDROUS DISPLAY OF SUPERHUMAN POWER IN THE *VIMALAKĪRTINIRDEŚA*: MIRACLE OR MARVEL?

David V. Fiordalis

When looking for a scripture filled with wondrous displays of superhuman power, it is difficult to find a better example in Mahāyāna Buddhist literature than the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*.[1] Wonders appear throughout the work, adding color, drama, and even a bit of humor to a work that also possesses sophisticated dialectical argumentation characteristic of the Mahāyāna school of Buddhist philosophy known as Madhyamaka. Nor are wonders superfluous to the main doctrinal themes and plotline of the *sūtra*. As Edward Hamlin says, "the success of a doctrinal argument hinges on the success of a poetics, and vice versa."[2] The literary dimensions of the work, especially its wonder-working episodes, combine with its dialectical arguments to support a specific set of doctrinal positions.[3] But what doctrinal arguments do

[1] Scholars have previously recognized the significance of wondrous displays of superhuman power in this *sūtra*. See Luis Oscar Gómez, "Selected Verses from the Gaṇḍavyūha: Text, Critical Apparatus and Translation" (Ph.D. Dissertation: Yale University, 1967); Étienne Lamotte, trans., *L'enseignment de Vimalakirti* (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste de l'Université Catholique de Louvain, 1987 [1962]); Robert Thurman, *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti: A Mahāyāna Scripture* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976); Edward Hamlin, "Magical *Upāya* in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 11, no. 1 (1988): 89-121; and Christine Kontler, "Note sur le prodige comme manifestation de l'inconceivable dans le *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*," *Bulletin d'Études Indienne* 6 (1988): 329-341.

[2] Hamlin, "Magical *Upāya* in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*," 89.

[3] More specifically, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* has been seen as combining elements of the two general strains of Mahāyāna Buddhist literature and philosophy. Robert Thurman, for instance, calls the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* an example of the "effective complementarity of the supposedly 'positive approach' of the *Avataṃsaka* and the 'negative approach' of the *Prajñāpāramitā*." See Thurman, *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti*, p. 9. Luis Gómez gives an alternate view that the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* is similar to other Mahāyāna *sūtra*s, such as the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and the *Śuraṃgamasamādhi*, in that "the proliferation of powers and transformations seems to contradict or, at least, eclipse the doctrines expounded in the sūtra." See Gómez, *Selected Verses from the Gaṇḍavyūha*, xci.

the wonders help to illustrate or establish, and what doctrines are put forward to explain the wonders? This chapter will seek to illuminate the connection between wonders and doctrine in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* by drawing on the broader Indian Buddhist discourse on the miraculous. In particular, it will argue that the *sūtra* collapses the distinction between miracles and marvels, posing a challenge to the cross-cultural interpretation of wonders in Indian Buddhist literature.

The specific technical terminology and narrative imagery used to connect the doctrines and wonders in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* needs to be clarified and set within the context of the broader Buddhist discourse on wonders (miracles, marvels) and superhuman powers.[4] The primary hermeneutical devise that Hamlin uses to connect the wonders and dialectical arguments is *upāya* or *upāyakauśalya*, 'skill in means'.[5] Although *upāyakauśalya* is an important concept in the scripture, the distinction that Hamlin draws between two 'modes' of 'skill in means', the 'verbal-homiletic' and the 'spectacular', does not explicitly appear. Nor am I aware of a Buddhist text that classifies *upāya* in this way.[6] Still, the distinction is useful, and by coining the terms 'magical *upāya*' and 'upāyic magic', Hamlin suggests that *upāya* dovetails with the concept of 'magical illusion' (*māyā*) to illustrate the wondrous nature of inconceivable liberation and other Buddhist doctrines. In addition, the *sūtra* evokes a broad Buddhist discourse surrounding various Buddhist terms for 'superhuman knowledge and power' (*ṛddhi*, *adhiṣṭhāna*, *vikurvaṇa*, *abhijñā*, *anubhāva,* and so on), and on the Buddhist concept of the 'miracle' (*prātihārya*, *āścaryādbhutadharma*), classifications of which do explicitly combine 'spectacular' displays of superhuman power and 'verbal' teaching of the Dharma.

Miracles and Marvels in Comparative Perspective

Although used interchangeably in texts of the early Middle Ages, by the thirteenth century medieval Christian theologians had begun dis-

[4] This task has been made easier by the discovery and publication in 2004 of the first complete Sanskrit manuscript of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* by scholars at Taishō University in Japan. See Study Group on Buddhist Literature 2004 and 2006.

[5] Hamlin, 'Magical *Upāya* in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*, p. 101.

[6] For book length analyses of the concept of *upāya*, see Michael Pye, *Skilfull Means: A Concept in Mahayana Buddhism*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2003) and John W. Schroeder, *Skillful Means: The Heart of Buddhist Compassion* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001).

tinguishing between 'miracles' (*miracula*) and 'marvels' (*mirabilia*).[7] The distinction was drawn primarily in ontological terms. Although both were thought to induce wonder, marvels were defined as having natural causes that we simply fail to understand, whereas miracles were 'unusual and difficult' events, "produced by God's power alone on things that have a natural tendency to the opposite effect."[8] Magic and witchcraft were also considered to have natural causes and therefore classified as marvels, whereas miracles were defined as being caused by the supernatural force of God.[9] "While preserving the possibility of objective verification of miracles as *contra naturam*," Carolyn Walker Bynum concludes, "such definitions led to an ever-increasing sense that seemingly extraordinary events could be explained (that is, rationalized) as ruled by laws of nature."[10] Thus, wonder was increasingly seen in late medieval Europe as leading to and being replaceable by knowledge, though wonders were still thought to pose a challenge and even a threat to human reason.

When we consider the case of classical South Asian religions, Indian Buddhism shares with other South Asian religious traditions the assumption that it is possible to acquire diverse superhuman powers through a variety of means, including the practice of meditation and use of magical charms, mantras, spells, and amulets. At the same time, different Buddhists at different times seem to have held differing views on the efficacy and propriety of displaying superhuman powers. The value of displaying them as a means of generating faith (*prasāda*) is acknowledged or demonstrated in sources from the *Avadānaśataka* to the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, while other texts downplay the efficacy of such displays and even criticize them.[11] In doing so, such texts often attempt to distinguish Buddhism from other contemporaneous religious traditions by contrasting the 'miracles' performed by its own

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[7] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 49.

[8] Thomas Aquinas, *On the Power of God*, 3 vols. (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1933) vol. 2, 162-164. Quoted in Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, 41.

[9] Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, p. 91, 108-109. See also Robert Bartlett, *The Natural and the Supernatural in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), and Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[10] Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, 41.

[11] For a more detailed discussion, see my article, "Miracles in Indian Buddhist Narrative and Doctrine," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 33 (2011).

saints, the Buddha foremost among them, with whatever 'marvels' or 'magic tricks' were claimed on behalf of rival ascetics, religious teachers and their followers. This contrast can also be found reflected in the terms for the powers themselves, with the notion of 'superhuman power' redefined in ways that could emphasize uniquely Buddhist attainments over those more generally achievable.

The best known example of the skepticism in South Asian Buddhist literature regarding the display of superhuman powers is found in the *Kevaṭṭa-sutta*.[12] In that Pāli scripture, a lay disciple named Kevaṭṭa encourages the Buddha to direct his monks to display their superhuman powers. The Buddha responds by asking Kevaṭṭa to imagine a conversation between two people, one of whom has faith in Buddhism and another that does not. The faithful person witnesses a wondrous display of superhuman power, and tells the faithless person about it. The faithless person responds by noting that such displays are also caused by a particular charm or amulet. Thus, the faithless person explains away the wonder, his skepticism apparently rooted in his recognition that not all wonders are equally wonderful.

The *Kevaṭṭa-sutta* appears to rely upon an ontological distinction between different types of wonders similar to what one finds in medieval Christian discourse. Rather than arguing that the Buddha and his followers have superhuman powers acquired through true meditative mastery, however, the scripture makes a general critique of wonders. It claims that there are three types of wonder, wondrous displays of superhuman power, telepathic ability, and teaching the Dharma, and that the real 'miracle' occurs when the Buddha and his monks teach the Dharma. Thus, Luis Gómez may be accurate in characterizing the *Kevaṭṭa-sutta* as 'rationalistic' in at least two senses.[13] First, teaching the Dharma is valued over displays of superhuman power and telepathy, and second, the wondrous is embedded in a scholastic ratiocination on the various types of wonder and the different sources of

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[12] *D* i.211ff. Pāli texts are cited using the standard abbreviations of the Pali Text Society. For an English translation, see Maurice Walshe, trans. *The Long Discourses of the Buddha* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995). The other passage most commonly cited in this context is the monastic rule prohibiting monks from displaying their superhuman powers in front of laypeople, which occurs at *V* ii.112ff. For a fuller discussion, see Fiordalis 2011.

[13] Luis Oscar. Gómez, "The Bodhisattva as Wonder-worker," in *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems*, edited by Lewis Lancaster, 221-262 (Berkeley: University of California, 1977), 221.

superhuman power, which effectively reduces wonder to knowledge. Nevertheless, the argument made in this *sutta* relies upon a broader Buddhist discourse whereby the attainments of the Buddha, either his superhuman powers or in this case his liberating knowledge, are contrasted to the lesser skills and limitations of his rivals.

It would be misleading simply to contrast the apparent devaluation of the wondrous in the *Kevaṭṭa-sutta* with its apparent valuation in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, as though these texts represent the general attitude towards wonders in mainstream and Mahāyāna Buddhist literature, respectively. A wealth of miracle stories may be found in the mainstream, non-Mahāyāna, Buddhist literature of South Asia, which some still refer to as Hīnayāna, Theravāda or Śrāvakayāna Buddhism.[14] Some of the most significant mainstream Indian Buddhist miracles are those said to be performed by the Buddha at Śrāvastī, the site of the so-called 'Great Miracle' (*mahāprātihārya*), and Sāṅkāśya, where the Buddha descended from the heavens on a jeweled staircase.[15] These miracles bear certain similarities of content and narrative form to some in Mahāyāna literature.

One ought not to assume that miracles in Mahāyāna *sūtra*s necessarily postdate those found in mainstream literature. It may be more accurate to say that mainstream and Mahāyāna Buddhist miracle stories (and non-Buddhist stories, as well) grew alongside one another and mutually influenced one other over the centuries. This stands to reason if scholars are correct that narrative versions of the miracles at

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[14] By the same token, one can also find skepticism about superhuman powers and their display in Mahāyāna literature, most specifically in the Chan/Zen tradition in East Asia. For a discussion of some of these criticisms, see Gómez, "The Bodhisattva as Wonder-worker," and Carl Bielefeldt, "Disarming the Superpowers: The *abhijñā* in Eisai and Dōgen." In *Dōgen zenji kenkyū ronshū*, edited by Daihonzan Eiheiji Daionki Kyoku, 1018-1046 (Fukui-ken: Eiheiji, 2002).

[15] These stories are found in numerous literary sources in Sanskrit and Pāli, as well as in many sources preserved in Chinese translation. Perhaps the best known versions of these stories are found in the *Dhammapada* commentary (*DhA* iii.199-230) and the *Divyāvadāna* (Cowell and Neil 1970, pp. 143-166. English translations of these versions are available in Eugene W. Burlinghame, trans. *Buddhist Legends: translated from the original Pali text of the Dhammapada commentary*. 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921) and Andy Rotman, *Divine Stories: Part I* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2008). These miracles are also depicted in Buddhist art (on bas-reliefs at Bharhut and Sanchi) as early as the 1st century BCE. For discussions in English of the art historical record, see Ju-hyung Rhi, *Gandharan Images of the 'Sravasti Miracle': An Iconographic Reassessment*. Ph.D. Dissertation: University of California Berkeley, 1991 and Robert L. Brown, "The Śrāvastī Miracles in the Art of India and Dvaravati," *Archives of Asian Art* 37 (1984): 79-95.

Śrāvastī and Sāṅkāśya, for instance, did not enter into textual collections until the early to middle centuries of the Common Era,[16] and if it is also true that Mahāyāna *sūtra*s were composed at a roughly contemporaneous period of time.[17] The 'Great Miracle' in the *Divyāvadāna* features a multiplication miracle in which the sky becomes filled with 'an array of buddhas' (*buddha-avataṃsaka*), using language and imagery that bear some similarities to miracles in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, where multiplication miracles are quite common.[18] In the descent from the heavens at Sāṅkāśya in the *Dhammapada* commentary, the Buddha appears at the pinnacle of the universe and causes its entire expanse to appear before all witnesses, a miracle that bears some similarities with 'wondrous visions' (*vidarśana*, *saṃdarśana*) of universes in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*.[19]

Thus, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* falls within a tradition of Buddhist miracle stories featuring wondrous displays of superhuman powers. Yet, a preeminent virtue of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* is its artful combination of doctrinal argument and miracles or marvels, a combination that becomes noteworthy when seen in light of the broader tension between displays of superhuman power and teaching the Dharma, as well as between superhuman power and liberating knowledge as dual constituents of Buddhist awakening.

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[16] See Peter Skilling, "*Dharma, Dhāranī, Abhidharma, Avadāna*: What was Taught in Trayastriṃśa?" *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University* 11 (2008): 37-60, p. 42, and John Strong, "Miracles, Mango Trees, and Ladders from Heaven: Reflections on the Tale of Prince Kāla at Śrāvastī and the Buddha's Descent from Trayastriṃśa," unpublished presentation in Kyoto, Japan. February 26, 2009, pp. 2-3, n. 4.

[17] The earliest extant Chinese translation of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* was made by Zhi Qian in 222-229. Also attributed to Zhi Qian are the shorter *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* in 8,000 lines, and an early translation of the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*. See Lamotte, trans. *L'enseignment de Vimalakirti*, p. 3; Jan Nattier, *A Guide to the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Translations* (Tokyo: International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, 2008), 136-145.

[18] E. B., Cowell, and Robert A. Neil, eds. *The Divyāvadāna: A Collection of Early Buddhist Legends* (Amsterdam: Philo and Oriental Presses, 1970 [1866]), 162.

[19] As the Buddha stands on the summit of Mt. Meru, surveying many thousands of worlds, "gods looked upon men, and men looked upon gods; in all the assembly, thirty-six leagues in circumference, all that saw the glory (Pāli: *sirī*; Sanskrit: *śrī*) of the Buddha wished [to achieve] the state of a Buddha." (*DhA* iii.225.)

Indian Buddhist Discourse on Superhuman Powers

The previous section alluded to the fact that the Buddhist notion of superhuman power becomes a site for scholastic classification and redefinition, a process that effectively distinguishes between various levels of holiness and spiritual attainment. Probably the most common term for 'superhuman power' in Indian Buddhist literature is *iddhi* in Pāli; its Buddhist Sanskrit equivalent is *ṛddhi*, not *siddhi*, although the latter is one of the commonly used terms for such powers in Tantric and non-Buddhist literature. Grammatically speaking, *iddhi/ṛddhi* is an abstract noun derived from a verb root, √*ṛdh*, which means to flourish, prosper and succeed. Thus, *ṛddhi* means an attainment or accomplishment. In theory, these attainments or powers may be achieved through the practice of meditation. As Vasubandhu tells us in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, "*ṛddhi* stands for meditation (*samādhi*)." Using an etymological argument, he goes on to explain that these powers are called *ṛddhi*, because meditation is the means by which one 'achieves' (*ṛdhyati*) or 'wins' (*samṛdhyati*) *ṛddhi*.[20]

Through a series of semantic equivalencies and extensions, which may be traced partly through various scholastic classifications of the different types of *ṛddhi/iddhi*, *adhiṣṭhāna* and *vikurvaṇa* come to replace *ṛddhi* as the terms most commonly used in Mahāyāna Buddhist literature to designate the superhuman powers of buddhas and bodhisattvas. *Adhiṣṭhāna* suggests power and control in both the temporal and the supernatural sense,[21] while *vikurvaṇa* refers primarily to the transformation and magical creation of material objects. These words come to be used generically to refer to the range of different powers on display in Mahāyāna scriptures like the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*.[22]

In the Pāli Canon, the standardized list of superhuman powers includes the power to multiply the body or produce replicas, fly, pass

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[20] Swāmī Dwārikādās Śāstrī, ed., *The Abhidharmakośa & Bhāṣya of Ācārya Vasubandhu with Sphūtārtha Commentary of Ācārya Yaśomitra* (Varanasi: Bauddha Bharati, 1998), p. 870; La Vallée Poussin, trans. *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*. 6 vols (Paris: Paul Guethner, 1923-1931), vol. 5, p. 112.

[21] For a discussion of the concept of *adhiṣṭhāna*, see Douglas Osto. *Power, Wealth, and Women in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008) 48ff.

[22] Luis Gómez once suggested to me that this shift in terminology may be a subtle attempt to distinguish the superhuman powers of buddhas and bodhisattvas from those of disciples, but the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* uses them all more or less interchangeably.

through walls, sink into the ground, walk on water, appear and disappear, travel to the heavenly realms, and touch the sun and moon.[23] To this list, the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* adds the power to shoot water and fire from the body and the ability to cause earthquakes.[24] In later Pāli scholastic literature, such as the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* and *Visuddhimagga*, these powers fall under the general category of superhuman powers of 'control' (*adhiṭṭhāna, adhiṣṭhāna*). They are also connected to powers of transformation (*vikubbana, vikurvaṇa*) and creating 'mind-made bodies' (*mano-maya-kāya*).[25] The *Abhidharmakośa* classifies superhuman powers into powers of 'motion' (*gamana*) and 'creation' (*nirmāṇa*), while the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* divides them into 'powers of transformation' (*pāriṇāmikī ṛddhi*) and 'powers of creation' (*nairmāṇikī ṛddhi*).[26] With the superhuman power of creation, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* tells us, "one accomplishes, with a thought of creation (*nirmāṇacitta*), the construction of whatever one desires." The text defines 'a created thing' as "in brief, something without a material cause" (*samāstaḥ nirvastukaṃ nirmāṇaṃ*).[27] In these later scholastic texts, one can see expansion in the list of powers, reflecting their diversity in narrative literature, and an effort to bring this diversity under basic principles of organization.[28] One may also recognize

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[23] *D* i.77, 212; *D* ii.87, 213; *D* iii.112, 281; *M* i.34; *S* ii.121; *S* v.264, 303; *A* i.170, 255; *A* v.199, etc.

[24] Kondō 1936, p. 56ff. These additions show the influence of the Buddha's miracles, for the Buddha famously performed miracles in which his body flamed like fire and produced streams of water. Earthquakes also commonly accompany the Buddha's miracles, such as his birth, awakening, death, and so on.

[25] Arnold Taylor, ed. *Paṭisambhidāmagga*. 2 vols. (London: Pali Text Society, 1905-07), vol. 2, pp. 205ff; Henry Clarke Warren, and Dharmananda Kosambi, eds., *Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosâcariya* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 314ff; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, trans. *Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification*. 2nd ed. (Onalaska, WA: Pariyatti, 1999 [1975]), p. 369ff.

[26] Śāstri ,*The Abhidharmakośa & Bhāṣya of Ācārya Vasubandhu*, p.869; La Vallée Poussin, *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, vol. 5, pp. 112-113; Nalinaksha Dutt, ed. *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1978), p. 40ff.

[27] Dutt, *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, 44.

[28] For example, the list of powers of transformation in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* includes the following: "Shaking [the earth], flaming, pervading [a room or space], displaying (*vidarśana*) [marvelous sights], altering the form (*anyathībhāvakaraṇa*) [of things], going and coming (*gamana-āgamana*), reducing and enlarging (*saṃkṣepa-prathana*) [the size of objects], [causing] the body to enter into all forms (*sarva-rūpa-kāya-praveśana*), approaching in a form that is similar (*sabhāgatā-upasaṃkrānti*) [to those before whom one appears], appearing and disappearing, effecting mastery (*vaśitva-karaṇa*) [over beings], dominating the superhuman pow-

an apparent rise in the significance of magical transformation and creation.

These various superhuman powers are also subsumed within broader classifications of spiritual attainments, particularly the so-called 'super-knowledges' (*abhiññā*, *abhijñā*). The list of *abhijñās* brings together the 'various superhuman powers', along with telepathic power and clairaudience, under a single typology with the list of three 'knowledges' (*vijjā*, *vidyā*), which some sources claim the Buddha realized during his awakening.[29] The three knowledges are the memory of previous lives, the knowledge of the arising and passing away of living beings, also called the divine eye, and the knowledge that the defilements leading to future rebirth have been destroyed. Some scholars have suggested that the *abhijñās* constitute an alternative system for classifying spiritual attainments not easily incorporated into the standard path system or attributes of the Buddha.[30] Yet, there are Buddhist texts that describe the Buddha's awakening in terms of acquisition of the *abhijñās*.[31]

Although meditation is perhaps the primary method by which ascetics acquire such powers, it is not the only way acknowledged in Buddhist discussions. Powers acquired by meditation are contrasted with those caused by magical charms and amulets, called *vijjā/vidyā*. We saw this opposition utilized in the *Kevaṭṭa-sutta*, and Pāli scholastic manuals include such powers in their classifications of *iddhi*.[32] As we have seen, superhuman powers caused by magic are generally less worthy of respect than those acquired through meditation. Yet, this is only one of a number of strategies that Buddhist texts use to contrast

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ers of others (*pararddhi-abhibhavana*), conferring eloquence, conferring memory, conferring happiness, and giving off radiance." See Dutt *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, p. 40ff.

[29] *M* i.22.

[30] See Étienne Lamotte, *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse*, 5 vols. (Louvain: Bureaux du Muséon, 1944-1980), vol. 4, p. 1815.

[31] See, for instance, the *Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra*, an independently circulating text bearing strong similarities with the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*. See Ernst Waldschmidt, ed., *Das Catuṣpariṣatsūtra: Text in Sanskrit und Tibetisch, Verglichen mit dem Pāli nebst einer Übersetzung der Chinesischen Entsprechung im Vinaya der Mūlasarvāstivādins.* Teil III: Textbearbeitung: Vorgang 22-28. Abhandlungen Der Deutschen Akademie Der Wissenschaften Zu Berlin. Klasse für Sprachen, Literatur und Kunst. Jahrgang 1960 Nr. 1. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962), and Ria Kloppenborg, trans., *The Sūtra on the Foundation of the Buddhist Order* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973). See also Lamotte, *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse*, vol. 4, p. 1824.

[32] Arnold Taylor, ed., *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, 2 vols. (London: Pali Text Society, 1905-07), vol. 2, pp. 205, 213; Warren and Kosambi, *Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosâcariya*, p. 322.

Buddhist attainments with those more generally achievable. Often, a contrast is made by drawing ontological distinctions among different types of superhuman powers.

For instance, the Pāli commentary on the *Theragāthā* tells a story about a monk named Pilindavaccha.[33] Before the Buddha's awakening, Pilindavaccha was an ascetic in possession of a 'Lesser Gandhāra Charm' (*cūḷagandhāravijjā*), granting him the power to fly and read others' minds. After the Buddha achieves awakening, however, Pilindavaccha finds that his powers no longer work. He goes to the Buddha, believing him to possess a 'Greater Gandhāra Charm' (*mahāgandhāravijjā*) that will restore his power. After becoming a monk under the Buddha's dispensation, Pilindavaccha achieves the status of an *arhat*. Thus, the story plays upon the dual sense of *vidyā* as magic and knowledge, suggesting that the Buddha's presence neutralizes lesser magic while his teaching leads to liberation. At the same time, the story provides evidence of the Buddhist belief that non-Buddhist ascetics could also achieve some level of superhuman power.

We can understand something similar in the important contrast between 'noble' and 'ignoble' superhuman powers found in the *Sampasādanīya-sutta* of the Pāli *Dīgha-nikāya*.[34] There, the standardized canonical list of superhuman powers (multiplication, flight, etc.) is called 'ignoble' or 'common', literally 'un-Aryan' (*an-ariya*), because as the text explains, such powers are not free of "defilements" (Pāli: *āsava,* Sanskrit: *āśrava*) and "attachments" (*upadhi*). These un-Aryan superhuman powers are contrasted with 'noble' or Aryan (*ariya*) superhuman power, which refers to the equanimity achieved by becoming detached from seeing things as inherently attractive or repulsive.[35] By redefining the concept of 'superhuman power' in this

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[33] *ThgA* i.53-55. This story is briefly recounted and discussed in John Strong, "When Magical Flight Fails: A Study of Some Indian Legends About the Buddha and his Disciples." Unpublished presentation at the University of Michigan. March 28, 2008.

[34] *D* iii.99ff.

[35] Here is part of the description of 'noble superhuman power' in the *Sampasādanīya-sutta*: "Now, if a monk wishes, 'May I abide perceiving as attractive what is repulsive,' he dwells there perceiving [it] as attractive. If a monk wishes, 'May I abide perceiving as repulsive what is attractive,' he dwells there perceiving [it] as repulsive….If a monk wishes, 'May I abide attentive and aware in equanimity having gotten rid of conceptions of what is repulsive, attractive or both,' he so abides in equanimity attentive and aware." (*D* iii.113) This description is quoted verbatim in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, as well as the Mahāyāna treatise known as the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*. See Taylor, *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, vol. 2, p. 211, and Lamotte, *Le traité*

way, the scripture not only emphasizes a particularly Buddhist attainment over one more generally achievable. The *Visuddhimagga* comments that Aryan superhuman power is called noble, because it is possessed only by the noble ones, a class traditionally comprised by the Buddha and his 'noble disciples' (*ariya-sāvaka*) in contrast to 'ordinary people' (*puthujjana, pṛthagjana*).[36] It also suggests that 'superhuman powers' ordinarily conceived are achievable by non-Buddhists.

In these examples, one can discern a tension between superhuman power and liberating knowledge that is most clearly apparent in the standard classification of the six *abhijñās*, which include both superhuman powers and knowledge that the defilements leading to future rebirth have been destroyed. According to Buddhist path manuals, such as the *Śrāvakabhūmi* and the *Visuddhimagga*, the first five *abhijñās*, including the various superhuman powers, are classified as fruits of the 'mundane path' (*lokiyamagga*, *laukikamārga*), while the sixth *abhijñā*, the knowledge that the defilements have been destroyed, results from following the 'transmundane path' (*lokuttaramagga*, *lokottaramārga*).[37] In brief, the transmundane path consists in perceiving 'as they really are' (*yathābhūtaṃ*) the four noble truths, namely suffering (*duḥkha*), its origin (*samudaya*), its cessation (*nirodha*) and the path (*mārga*) to its cessation.[38] Thus, acquiring the sixth *abhijñā* is deemed to be tantamount to cessation and liberation

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de la grande vertu de sagesse, vol. 4, pp. 1819. In the latter, 'noble superhuman power' forms a third category of superhuman power alongside powers of motion and powers of creation. It is described as 'sovereignty over the six objects of the senses', which the Mahāyāna treatise claims is possessed in full only by the Buddha.

[36] Warren and Kosambi, *Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosâcariya*, p. 321; Ñāṇamoli, *Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification,* 1999, 377. For the distinction between *ārya* and *pṛthagjana*, which does not quite parallel that between 'Buddhist' and 'non-Buddhist', see Peter Masefield, *Divine Revelation in Pali Buddhism (*Colombo: Sri Lanka Institute of Traditional Studies; London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), pp. 1-36. Technically speaking, the class of noble ones is comprised of those disciples who have achieved the four highest levels of the path, namely that of 'stream-enterer' (*sotāpanna*), 'once-returner' (*sakadāgāmin*), 'non-returner' (*anāgāmin*) and *arhat*.

[37] Florin Deleanu, *The Chapter on the Mundane Path (Laukikamārga) in the Śrāvakabhūmi: A Trilingual Edition (Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese), Annotated Translation, and Introductory Study*. 2 vols. (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2006), pp. 31-34; Warren and Kosambi, *Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosâcariya*, p. 314; Ñāṇamoli, *Visuddhimagga,* 1999: 369

[38] Karunesha Shukla, ed. *Śrāvakabhūmi of Ācārya Asaṅga* (Patna, K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1973), p. 36, 470ff. See also the synopsis in Deleanu, *The Chapter on the Mundane Path*, pp. 31-34.

from rebirth, whereas the five mundane *abhijñā*s are conditioned and theoretically available to all those (Buddhist and non-Buddhist) who achieve certain heights of meditative concentration.[39]

References in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* to the sets of five and six *abhijñā*s make it clear that it knows the distinction between the mundane and the transmundane *abhijñā*s. For instance, in his discussion with Aniruddha, the disciple sometimes considered to be foremost in possessing the divine eye, Vimalakīrti challenges him to explain the nature of his attainment. "Is the divine eye constructed or is it unconstructed," asks Vimalakīrti. "If it is constructed, then it is has the same nature as the five *abhijñā*s possessed by non-Buddhists (literally, 'outsiders', *bāhya*, a term synonymous with *pṛthagjana*). If it is unconstructed, then it is not possible to see with it. How then do you see, Elder?"[40] This Madhyamaka-style argument relies on the assumption that the five *abhijñā*s, including the divine eye, are mundane, constructed, and that they can be attained by non-Buddhists.

In contrast, Vimalakīrti claims that buddhas possess a divine eye with which they can see all the lands of the buddhas without leaving their state of meditative concentration or being affected by duality. A similar point is made later when Vimalakīrti asserts that the sphere of the bodhisattvas is the six *abhijñā*s, but without the destruction of the defilements.[41] Finally, towards the end of the scripture, Vimalakīrti again says that the bodhisattva does not abide in the unconstructed

[39] Not all Buddhists seem to have agreed that the five mundane *abhijñās* are achievable by non-Buddhists. According to Vasumitra's doxography of early Buddhist schools, the Sarvāstivādins and Vātsiputriyas held that non-Buddhist ascetics could acquire them, while the Mahīśāsakas, Dharmaguptakas and Haimavatas held that non-Buddhists could only achieve superhuman powers of flight and so on by means of magical charms and spells. See André Bareau, *Les Sectes Bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule*. Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, vol. 38 (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1955), pp. 116, 183, 263. The *Śrāvakabhūmi* also holds that the five mundane *abhijñā*s are fruits of following the mundane path, but also includes an intriguing passage that contrasts Aryan and un-Aryan 'superhuman powers' in the following manner: "The distinction between noble and ignoble superhuman powers is this: whatever thing is transformed by means of noble superhuman powers, whatever magical creation is magically created, it becomes so in reality and not otherwise. And everything can perform its function. With ignoble superhuman powers, [the transformed or created thing] does not become so in reality, but rather it is said to be like the mere appearances of the magician." In this passage, magic (or marvel) and miracle are clearly distinguished in ontological terms. See Karunesha Shukla, ed., *Śrāvakabhūmi of Ācārya Asaṅga* (Patna, K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1973.) p. 468; Deleanu, *The Chapter on the Mundane Path*, pp. 352, 465.

[40] Study Group of Buddhist Literature 2006, p. 29. Abbreviated *Vkn* below.

[41] *Vkn*, p. 54.

(i.e., *nirvāṇa*) so that s/he may exercise the five *abhijñā*s. Nor does the bodhisattva destroy the connection to the constructed (i.e., *saṃsāra*) so that s/he may achieve the six *abhijñās* (or perhaps the sixth *abhijñā*), which constitute(s) the *jñāna* (that is, either the knowledge or the knowledge and power) of the buddhas.[42] From these examples, it is clear that the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* recognizes the doctrinal distinction between the five mundane *abhijñā*s, which it suggests are achievable by non-Buddhists, and the sixth transmundane *abhijñā*, which is unique to buddhas (and bodhisattvas or 'buddhas to be'). Yet, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* also suggests that buddhas and bodhisattvas can keep one foot in the mundane realm and another in the transmundane realm, combining their enlightening activity with liberating insight out of great compassion and love for other sentient beings.[43]

The distinction between the mundane and the transmundane is germane to our comparative, hermeneutical question about how Indian Buddhism conceptualizes wondrous displays of superhuman powers. Are they marvels or miracles? Some scholars have seen in the distinction between the mundane and the transmundane something roughly comparable to the Western dichotomy between the natural and the supernatural.[44] Consequently, superhuman powers would not

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[42] *Vkn*, p. 107.

[43] In this regard, the treatment of the *abhijñā*s in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* shares some features with their discussion in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*, which suggests that bodhisattvas cultivate superhuman powers and forego the sixth *abhijñā* so that they do not fall into *nirvāṇa* before achieving complete, unexcelled and perfect buddhahood. See Lamotte, *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse*, vol. 4, pp. 1817-1818, 1822-1824.

[44] See T. W. Rhys Davids, trans. *Dialogues of the Buddha*. 3 vols. (London: Pali Text Society, 1899), Vol. 1, p. 272; Lamotte, *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse*, vol. 4, p. 1814. A different way of conceptualizing natural law in Buddhist literature is provided by the concept of *dharmatā*, a term that suggests an order and regularity of all things, even wonders. Take, for instance, the narrative description of the Buddha's smile in the *Avadānaśataka*. *Dharmatā* here explains certain regularities regarding the rays of the light that radiate from the Buddha's mouth when he smiles. See David V. Fiordalis, "Miracles and Superhuman Powers in South Asian Buddhist Literature" (PhD Dissertation. University of Michigan, 2008), pp. 22ff. Andy Rotman points out more instances of the use of the term in the *Divyāvadāna*. For instance, *dharmatā* is used to describe the consistent cause and effect relationship that exists between seeing a miracle, or what one takes to be a miracle, and the arising of faith (*prasāda*), and the natural regularity with which reliquaries for the Buddha are built and venerated. See Rotman, *Divine Stories*, pp. 72, 97, 104. There does not seem to be any distinction here between the natural and the supernatural. Rather, all things behave in a manner that is consistent with Buddhist teachings, which perfectly reflect reality 'as it is' (*yathābhūtam*).

be 'supernatural' insofar as they are achievable by special, though mundane methods of meditation and their sphere of application remains in the mundane realm. Superhuman powers may then be contrasted with liberating knowledge, the sixth *abhijñā*. This transmundane knowledge is transmitted by the Buddha when he teaches the Dharma, which the *Kevaṭṭa-sutta* suggests is the 'true miracle'.[45]

On the other hand, Buddhist miracle stories that positively portray wondrous displays of superhuman power suggest that such displays are not made without reason. Instead, they suggest a consistency of sacred purpose connecting wondrous displays of superhuman power to the liberating knowledge of the Dharma. For instance, the miracles of the Buddha at Śrāvastī and Sāṅkāśya are described as acts that all buddhas must perform (*avaśya-karaṇīya*) in their lifetime before entering *nirvāṇa*.[46] Displays of superhuman power may thus be seen as an integral part of the liberating activity of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Such sacred purpose often seems to be behind the wondrous displays of superhuman power in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, where such displays also illustrate specific points of doctrine. At the same time, the distinction between the mundane and transmundane *abhijñās* remains operative, and the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* seems to rely upon the doctrine of magical illusion to explain how the buddhas and bodhisattvas can liberate themselves and others by means of their superhuman powers.

Magical Illusion

Magical illusion (*māyā*) and magical creation (*nirmāṇa*) are key concepts in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* and in Mahāyāna literature, more generally. Many of the wonders of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* turn out to be instances of magical creation or transformation. In this respect, it is similar to other Mahāyāna *sūtra*s, such as the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and the *Bhadramāyākāravyākaraṇa*. The latter explicitly calls the Buddha a magician (*māyākāra*, *sgyu ma mkhan* in Tibetan), contrasting his 'true magic' with the 'mere illusions' of the magician Bhadra, whom

[45] Both the *Abhidharmakośa* and the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* affirm the parallelism between the *abhijñās* and the three 'wonders' (*prātihārya*). See Śāstri, *The Abhidharmakośa & Bhāṣya of Ācārya Vasubandhu*, p. 868-869; Dutt, *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, p. 54.

[46] See Strong, "Miracles, Mango Trees, and Ladders from Heaven," and Fiordalis, "Miracles in Indian Buddhist Narrative and Doctrine".

he converts with a multiplication miracle.[47] According to the *Bhadramāyākāravyākaraṇa*, the Buddha's complete magic is rooted in his realization that everything is an illusion. Although the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* nowhere explicitly calls the Buddha or Vimalakīrti a 'magician' (*māyāvin, māyākāra*, or *vidyādhara*), it implies that the Buddha and Vimalakīrti and other featured characters in the *sūtra*, like the goddess who resides in Vimalakīrti's house, can manipulate reality with their superhuman powers in just the same way as a magician manipulates magical illusions.

The term *māyā* or magical illusion first makes its appearance in Indian Buddhist literature as one of a number of stock metaphors used to describe the insubstantiality of conditioned things. In the *Khanda-samyutta* of the *Samyutta-nikāya*, for instance, each of the five aggregates making up the person is described using one of a number of metaphors that emphasize insubstantiality.[48] Form is compared to a ball of foam (*phenapiṇḍa*), feelings to a bubble (*budbuda*), conceptions to a mirage (*marīci*), latent tendencies to the trunk of a banana tree (*kadalī*), and consciousness to a magical illusion (*māyā*). These and several other metaphors combine to make up an expanded list of ten that becomes standardized in Mahāyāna literature, including the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*.[49] All phenomena (*dharma*) are said to be like a mirage (*marīci*), the moon reflected in water (*udakacandra*), space (*ākāśa*), an echo (*pratiśrutkā*), a city of celestial beings (*gandharvanagara*), a dream (*svapna*), a shadow (*chāyā*), a reflection in the mirror (*pratibimba*), a magical illusion (*māyā*), and a magical creation (*nirmāṇa*).

One may also find support for the idea that reality is (like) an illusion in the well-known work of Madhyamaka philosophy, Nāgārjuna's

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[47] Konstanty Régamey, *The Bhadramāyākāravyākaraṇa: Introduction, Tibetan Text, Translation and Notes* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990 [1938]), p. 62. Ernst Leumann, *Das nordarische (sakische) Lehrgedicht des Buddhismus.* Ablandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, Vol. 20. (Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1966 [1933-1936]) contains an edition and German translation of Khotanese fragments of the same *sūtra*s. The Chinese version contained in the Ratnakūṭa collection is translated in Garma C. C. Chang, ed., *A Treasury of Mahāyāna Sūtras: Selections from the Mahāratnakuṭa Sūtra* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press), 1983.

[48] *S* iii.140.

[49] See Lamotte, *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse*, vol. 1, p. 358; Gómez, *Selected Verses from the Gaṇḍavyūha*, p. 231; *Vkn*, pp. 17-18.

Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā. Speaking about action and its effects in chapter seventeen, Nāgārjuna concludes with the following simile:

> Just as the Teacher (i.e., the Buddha) uses his superhuman powers (*ṛddhi-sampadā*) to conjure a magically created person (*nirmita*) and this conjured person (*nirmita*) conjures another conjured thing (*nirmita*),
>
> In the same way, the agent [of an action] is like the conjured person and his action is like the other conjured thing.
>
> Defilements, actions, bodies, agents, and effects are all like a city of celestial beings (*gandharva-nagara*), a mirage (*marīci*) and a dream (*svapna*).[50]

These verses come on the heels of an argument that action, agent and result are all 'empty of inherent existence' (*niḥsvabhāva*). While Nāgārjuna does not come out and say explicitly that all dependently arisen phenomena are illusory, actions, defilements, and so forth are all compared to the magical illusion of an illusory power, an illusion produced by an illusion produced by the Buddha's superhuman powers. The metaphor of the magical illusion is linked to the doctrine of the non-arising of all phenomena, that is, their emptiness of intrinsic existence. This is, as it were, the ultimate truth. Thus, the metaphor of the magical illusion becomes one of the bridges used to connect the conventional perspective and ultimate truth.

As do other Mahāyāna *sūtra*s, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* uses the metaphor of the magical illusion to describe the insubstantial nature of conditioned phenomena, but it seems to take the metaphor further, although perhaps not as explicitly as the *Bhadramāyākāravyākaraṇa* does. Although more obliquely and with a subtler sense of the dialectic between the conventional and ultimate perspectives, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* also suggests that conventional reality is an illusion, using the concept to forge the connection between doctrinal argument and miraculous demonstration. Take, for instance, the miracle that concludes the first chapter of the *sūtra*.[51] The Buddha tells his audience that the purity (*pariśuddha*) of the 'Buddha's field' (*buddhakṣetra*), that is, his universe or sphere of influence, is equivalent to the purity of his mind. After hearing this, Śāriputra, the disciple who features

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[50] J.W. De Jong, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikāḥ* (Madras: Adyar Library and Research Center, 1977), p. 24.

[51] *Vkn*, p. 12ff.

throughout the *sūtra* as the voice of conventional understanding, wonders why this universe appears so impure. After assuring Śāriputra that the impurities he perceives are the result of his own limitations, the Buddha touches his toe to the ground, whereby the entire universe is transformed into precious jewels. "This is how my buddha-field always appears," the Buddha tells Śāriputra, "but the *Tathāgata* (i.e., the Buddha) makes it appear afflicted by various faults in order to bring lesser beings (*hīnasattva*) to spiritual maturity."[52]

The difference between seeing a pure buddha-field and an impure one is similar to that between understanding an illusion and being deceived by one. This similarity, while not stated outright, is implied by the way the chapter concludes. After the Buddha withdraws the miraculous vision,

> Eighty-four thousand living beings, 'who aspired to the excellent qualities of the Buddha' (*udārabuddhadharmādhimukta*), understood that all phenomena have the characteristic of being involved in 'illusion' (*viṭhapana*) and gave rise to the thought for unexcelled, perfect and complete awakening.[53]

In this way, the chapter concludes by drawing connections between the wondrous demonstration of the Buddha's power to manipulate reality as if it were an illusion, understanding the illusory, constructed nature of all phenomena, and the aspiration of the bodhisattva to become a buddha.

On several more occasions, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* suggests that reality is like an illusion. At one point in a conversation with Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Vimalakīrti explains that teaching the Dharma according to reality is like an 'illusory person' (*māyā-puruṣa*) teaching the Dharma to another 'illusory person'.[54] Later, the disciple Subhūti recounts an exchange with Vimalakīrti where the latter exhorts the former not to be troubled by his words, since "all phenomena are characterized by magical illusion and magical creation (*nirmita-māyā-svabhāva*)."[55] In these instances, the doctrine of magical illusion is closely connected to emptiness and insubstantiality. Yet, the metaphor of the magical illusion is also coupled with the doctrine of transcendence in the sense that superhuman power (to produce magical

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[52] *Vkn*, p. 13.

[53] *Vkn*, p. 14. For discussion and references for the term *viṭhapana*, see Lamotte, *L'enseignment de Vimalakirti*, pp. 124-125.

[54] *Vkn*, p. 22.

[55] *Vkn*, p. 26.

emanations, etc.) and absolute transcendence are dual constituents of the Buddha.

Take, for instance, the case of Vimalakīrti's illness, a central plotline in the scripture. Is the illness real or is it just an illusion? "With his skill in means" (*upāyakauśalyena*), the *sūtra* explains, Vimalakīrti "causes himself to appear sick" (*glānam ātmānam upadarśayati*).[56] By using the verb, 'to appear', the *sūtra* suggests that Vimalakīrti's appearance in the city of Vaiśalī is also a magical illusion. This puts a different twist on Vimalakīrti's question to Subhūti: 'Would you be afraid of a magical emanation of the Buddha?' One subtext of the notion of appearance is the fact that Vimalakīrti (or perhaps ultimately the Buddha) produces magical bodies so that he can appear in 'impure' buddha-fields like ours. Another is the skill in means with which bodhisattvas and buddhas practice the path and save living beings without abiding in *nirvāṇa*.

In the scripture, Vimalakīrti manifests himself as sick in order to teach other living beings about the insubstantial and impermanent nature of their own bodies, elaborating poetically upon a list of metaphors like the ones we have seen above. "Friends, the body is like a ball of foam, unable to bear any pressure," Vimalakīrti says. "The body like a mechanical object (*yantrabhūta*), held together with bones and tendons. The body is like a magical illusion consisting of the inverted views."[57] As Vimalakīrti elaborates, he continues to draw upon the rich series of metaphors for describing the impermanence and insubstantiality of conventional reality. Vimalakīrti then proceeds to contrast the insubstantial, selfless, impermanent body with the body of the Buddha, which is a body of Dharma (*dharmakāya*).

A similar contrast arises later in the *sūtra* in the brief story about a prior meeting between Ānanda and Vimalakīrti. Once upon a time the Buddha was experiencing some physical ailment and asked Ānanda to fetch him some milk. Ānanda had just arrived at the house of a Brahmin when Vimalakīrti appeared and asked what he was doing. Ānanda replied that he was retrieving some milk for the Buddha, because he was experiencing some physical ailment. "Don't say such a thing," responded Vimalakīrti,

> The body of the Tathāgata is hard as a diamond, because he has eliminated all the bad latent tendencies and possesses all the mighty qual-

[56] *Vkn*, p. 17.
[57] *Vkn*, p. 17.

> ities of good. How could illness or discomfort affect him? Be silent and go. Do not belittle the Blessed One. Do not speak in this way to others. Do not let mighty gods and bodhisattvas visiting from other buddha-fields hear you….Go, Reverend Ānanda, go. Do not bring shame on us. Do not let other rival teachers, ascetics, or naked renunciants hear you. Do not let them think, 'This teacher cannot even cure his own illnesses. How will he cure the illnesses of others?' Reverend Ānanda, the Tathāgatas have bodies of Dharma, not material bodies. The Tathāgatas have bodies that are transcendent (*lokottara*), because they have gone beyond all mundane qualities (*lokadharma*). The bodies of the Tathāgatas experience no physical ailment, because they are freed of all defilements (*sarvāsravavinivṛtaḥ*).[58]

Hearing this statement by Vimalakīrti, Ānanda wondered whether he misheard the Buddha, but just then he heard a voice from the sky: "Ānanda! It is as the householder says. However, the Blessed One has arisen in the time of the five corruptions (*kaṣāya*) in order to train beings by acting poor, lowly and destitute. Therefore, go and fetch the milk, Ānanda, and do not be ashamed."[59] Thus, while clearly opposing the transcendent and the mundane, the passage does not clearly indicate whether the Buddha was or merely acted ill.

Vimalakīrti also makes his sickness a metaphor for his Bodhisattva vow. Mañjuśrī politely inquires about his illness by asking, "From where has your illness arisen, Householder? How long will your illness last? When will it subside?" To this Vimalakīrti replies:

> Mañjuśrī, my illness will last as long as ignorance and thirst for existence last. When all beings become free of illness, then my illness will be eased. What is the reason for this? For, Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva is in *saṃsāra* for the sake of living beings, and sickness is attached to *saṃsāra*….You ask me, Mañjuśrī, from where my illness has arisen. The illness of the Bodhisattvas arises from great compassion.[60]

In this way, Vimalakīrti turns Mañjuśrī's seemingly innocuous question into a more profound teaching about the bodhisattva path. Again, however, Vimalakīrti's answer does little to resolve the tension

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[58] *Vkn*, p. 33-34.

[59] *Vkn*, p. 34. The Sanskrit here seems to follow the Tibetan, whereas Lamotte suggests that the Chinese translations may have possessed a variant reading whereby the negative qualities are applied to the living beings, not to the Buddha. For discussion and references to the five corruptions, see Lamotte, *L'enseignment de Vimalakirti,* 188.

[60] *Vkn*, p. 46-47.

between reality and illusion that the metaphor of magical illusion seems to bridge.

If Vimalakīrti and Śākyamuni possess bodies of Dharma like other buddhas and other advanced bodhisattvas, how is it possible for them simultaneously to manifest themselves in 'impure' buddha-fields? One answer appears to be found in the doctrine of the three bodies, which also utilizes the metaphor of magical creation (*nirmāṇa*). When the bodhisattvas from the 'pure' buddha land, Sarvagandhasugandha, hear Vimalakīrti's description of how Śākyamuni teaches the Dharma in the 'impure' buddha-field by stressing the distinction between right view and wrong view, they exclaim, "It is amazing (*āścaryaṃ*) how the Buddha Śākyamuni holds back his 'greatness' (*buddhamāhātmya*) in order to discipline the poor, unrefined, and unruly beings there."[61] While the passage does not specifically mention the Buddha's magical body, it seems to cast the Buddha as a magician who paradoxically uses his superhuman power to conceal his superhuman powers for the sake of teaching people at the level of their understanding.

Elsewhere in the text, a goddess who lives in Vimalakīrti's house teaches Śāriputra the ultimate truth by relying specifically on the metaphor of the magically created body. Ever expressing the conventional perspective, Śāriputra innocuously asks the goddess where she will be reborn when she dies. The goddess responds, "I will be reborn where a magical emanation (*nirmita*) of the Tathāgatas is reborn." Sāriputra interjects, "but the magical emanation of the Tathāgatas is not born and does not die." "In the same way," the goddess replies, "all phenomena are not born and do not die."[62] The answer makes sense in terms of conventional truth, whereby it is true that magically created bodies are not subject to birth and death in the same way as real bodies are. However, the idea of the magically created emanations of the Buddha is extended to all phenomena in a way that stresses their ultimate emptiness.

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[61] *Vkn*, p. 97. The text uses the term *pratisaṃhṛtya* (*prati* + *saṃ* + √*hṛ*) in the sense of 'holding back'. One wonders if this word might have been chosen for poetic purposes in place of *saṃvṛti* (*saṃ* + √*vṛ*), which has the sense of concealment, hiding. The latter is also a common term for the conventional truth. In any case, the text uses *prati-sam-*√*hṛ* earlier in the *sūtra* to describe how the Buddha 'withdraws' (*pratisaṃharati*) his superhuman power (*ṛddhi*) to conclude the miraculous vision.

[62] *Vkn*, p. 74.

In a later passage that closely parallels this one, Śāriputra asks Vimalakīrti from what universe he was reborn into this one. Vimalakīrti's response echoes that of the goddess:

> [Vimalakīrti asked,] "Reverend Śāriputra, were one to ask a magically created man or woman, 'From where have you died and been reborn,' what would they answer?"
> [Reverend Śāriputra] responded, "Noble sir, they would say that a magically created person does not die and is not born."
> [Vimalakīrti] said, "Reverend Śāriputra, hasn't the Tathāgata taught that all phenomena have the essential nature of a magical creation?"
> Reverend Śāriputra] replied, "Indeed he has, Noble Sir."[63]

Vimalakīrti uses the metaphor of the magical illusion to establish that things ultimately do not arise and are not destroyed, but by claiming that things have the essence of a magical creation, it seems that he affirms the conventional nature of reality in some respect. Indeed, the Buddha then goes on to tell Śāriputra that Vimalakīrti left the Abhirati universe of the Buddha Akṣobhya. Thus, the metaphor of the magical illusion seems to bridge the divide that is set up between the mundane world and the transcendent body of Dharma, and between the conventional and the ultimate truths.

As the chapter of the goddess begins, Mañjuśrī and Vimalakīrti discuss the question of how a Bodhisattva who views all living beings as a wise man views the moon in the water, as magician views a magical creation, and so forth, can simultaneously feel great love and great compassion for them. The miracles of the goddess seem to illustrate Vimalakīrti's response that great love can only arise from understanding emptiness. The goddess appears in the room, and showers the Bodhisattvas and disciples with flowers. The flowers fall from the bodies of the Bodhisattvas, but stick to the bodies of the disciples. 'With their wondrous displays of superhuman powers' (*ṛddhiprātihāryaiḥ*), the disciples try to shake them off, but cannot do so.

The goddess then asks Śāriputra, "Noble Śāriputra, why do you shake off the flowers?" Again, Śāriputra provides the foil of conventional truth. He exclaims, "Goddess, these flowers are not proper (*akalpika*); therefore I am trying to shake them off." The implication is that flowers are not appropriate for monks to wear, but the passage plays on the meaning of the word improper, *akalpika*. The goddess

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[63] *Vkn*, p. 110-111.

responds that the flowers are proper (*kalpika*), a term that is closely related to *vikalpa*, which means 'mental construction'. She continues:

> The Elder Śāriputra discriminates (*kalpayati*) and conceptualizes (*vikalpayati*)….Those who do not discriminate or conceptualize, they are proper (*kalpika*). Look, Śāriputra, the flowers do not stick to these great beings, because they have destroyed all discrimination and conceptualization.[64]

Flowers here represent human passion, desire, love, and attachment. Thus, the goddess's marvelous display illustrates Vimalakīrti's argument that one can only generate great love and great compassion when one does not discriminate or conceptualize.

Later, the goddess illustrates a similar point by using the example of the magical illusion. Śāriputra asks why she does not simply change out of her female form. She responds by asking him: "If a magician created a woman with his magic and you were to ask her why she did not change out of her female form, what would she say?" The goddess then "engages her superhuman powers of control" (*adhiṣṭhānam adhitiṣṭhati*) to transform herself into Śāriputra and Śāriputra into her own female form. She prompts him to change himself out of his new female form, and he cannot. He exclaims, "I don't know what to change!"

The goddess concludes,

> If you, Śāriputra, could change out of your female form, then all women could change out of their female form. Just as the Elder [Śāriputra] is not a woman, but only appears as one, in the same way, all women in the form of women are not women, but appear in the form of women. With reference to this, the Blessed One said, "All phenomena are neither male nor female."[65]

It is unclear precisely what views of gender and sexuality the chapter advocates in this passage. Śāriputra first seems to make a sexist remark, implying that the female state is somehow less desirable than the male. The goddess responds by changing him into a woman, a state from which he is unable to transform himself. What does she mean by drawing the comparison between Śāriputra, magically transformed into a woman, and all women? Do all women somehow wish to become men, but cannot? What are the ontological implications of claiming that all women are not women, but only appear as women?

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[64] *Vkn*, p. 69.
[65] *Vkn*, p. 73.

The final, untraced quote from the Buddha seems to say that ultimately one should not discriminate between male and female gender. Yet, only when the goddess releases her miraculous control does Śāriputra return to being himself. While the goddess uses her superhuman powers to control Śāriputra, the miraculous demonstration emphasizes that all things have the nature of a magical illusion, and that removing discrimination ultimately gives one power over reality. The image one gets of the powerful woman exerting control over a man is thereby sublimated beneath the doctrine of magical illusion. Still, the metaphor suggests that magical illusions have a certain type of reality, governed by real, if conventional rules. These examples of the wondrous demonstration of magical creation and transformation demonstrate the flexibility of the metaphor of magical illusion. It can convey the insubstantiality and the substantive appearance of reality, an ontological status between the real and the unreal. Buddhas and bodhisattvas combine their application of superhuman powers with their transcendence of the mundane realm through their wondrous display of magical creation and transformation. Another concept that combines wondrous power and liberating knowledge is 'inconceivable liberation' (*acintya-vimokṣa*).

Inconceivable Liberation

The *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* is also called 'an instruction on inconceivable liberation', signifying the importance of this concept to the *sūtra* as a whole.[66] Vimalakīrti's 'skill in means' is described as inconceivable, and his superhuman powers result from his 'inconceivable liberation' (*acintya-vimokṣa*). This is illustrated with a miracle. As in the contrast between ordinary bodies and the body of Dharma, the chapter on inconceivable liberation begins with Vimalakīrti contrasting conventional reality with the Dharma. In the process, he stresses the transcendent nature of the Dharma, which is not an object (*aviṣaya*), being free from all conceptualization, verbalization, defilement, and so on.[67]

Vimalakīrti's lecture on Dharma is prompted by Śāriputra, whose mind is yet again focused on the mundane when he wonders where all the gathered bodhisattvas and disciples are going to sit. Earlier in the story, Vimalakīrti had used his power to make his house appear

[66] *Vkn*, pp. 117, 125.
[67] *Vkn*, p. 56ff.

empty. Now, he uses his superhuman powers to bring thirty-two thousand thrones, each one standing thousands of meters high, from a distant world-system called Merudhvajā. Vimalakīrti places these thrones in his house without shrinking them in size or expanding the house to fit them. Given the sharpness with which Vimalakīrti criticizes Śāriputra for thinking about a chair, one might wonder why he then brings them in such miraculous fashion. On one level, it seems that Vimalakīrti is merely impressing Śāriputra and the other members of the audience. However, the miracle of the chairs is only the first in a sequence of miracles, each of which seems intended to exemplify the inconceivable nature of liberation by confounding one's expectations about the possible and impossible.

For instance, the bodhisattva who abides in the inconceivable liberation is described as having the ability to take Mt. Sumeru, the highest and biggest of mountains, and put it inside a mustard seed, without the former becoming smaller or the latter becoming larger. The bodhisattva who abides in the inconceivable liberation can pour all of the waters of the oceans into one pore of his own skin without the water-dwelling creatures knowing it or becoming injured in any way. The bodhisattva who abides in the inconceivable liberation can pick up a universe of many thousands of worlds, spin it on his finger like a potter's wheel, throw it like a discus beyond countless other world-systems, catch it and put it back where it was without anyone knowing. The bodhisattva who abides in the inconceivable liberation can make a week seem like an eon, or make an eon seem like the passing of a week.[68]

The sequence of miracles continues, but these examples are enough for us to gain a sense for how they demonstrate inconceivability. In each case, the miraculous display violates common expectations or fundamental rules regarding the nature of reality. The same paradigm appears in the last of the miracles of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, when Vimalakīrti displays the Abhirati universe in front of the Buddha and a great multitude. Without getting up from his chair, Vimalakīrti picks up the Abhirati universe and all it contains, and like a potter at his wheel, reduces it in size, carries it to our universe, and displays it before the Buddha and his audience.[69] These miracles violate basic conceptions of dimensionality, space, and time in order to illustrate

[68] *Vkn*, pp. 58-61.
[69] *Vkn*, p. 112ff.

the point that the nature of reality is ultimately inconceivable, like a magical illusion. In this way, the notion of inconceivability pushes back against any attempt to reduce the wondrous to knowledge, reducing the tension between liberating knowledge and superhuman power contained in Buddhist classifications of spiritual attainment.

Conclusion

In Buddhist miracle tales featuring wonder-working contests, the distinction between miracle and magical illusions or mere trickery seems relatively straightforward. The Buddha and his disciples possess superhuman powers that far exceed those possessed by the non-Buddhist ascetics, whose powers may derive from their asceticism or merely through their possession of magical spells and amulets. In some cases, like the story of Sirigutta and Garahadinna told in the *Dhammapada* commentary, which bears some strong similarities to the *Bhadramāyākāravyākaraṇa*, or the story of the Śrāvastī miracles in the *Divyāvadāna*, the Buddha's rivals do not even seem to possess superhuman powers.[70] In other cases, however, 'mundane' superhuman powers are contrasted with the 'transmundane' knowledge of the Buddha, who performs the 'true miracle' by teaching the Dharma leading to liberation. In these various ways, one can discern a contrast between marvel and miracle in the Indian Buddhist discourse on the miraculous.

In Mahāyāna Buddhist literature, the concern for establishing the bodhisattva ethos of wisdom and compassion over what Mahāyāna texts call the 'lesser aspiration' of the disciples leads to an emphasis on the cultivation of superhuman powers. As the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* clearly states, buddhas and bodhisattvas have two reasons for cultivating superhuman powers. They do so, first of all, "in order to convert living beings with a wondrous display and introduce them to the Dharma," and secondly "in order to assist living beings in manifold

[70] DhA i.434ff. This similarity of plotline has been studied by Ernst Leumann and Constanty Régamey. See Leumann, *Das nordarische (sakische) Lehrgedicht des Buddhismus*. and Régamey, *The Bhadramāyākāravyākaraṇa*. In the case of the Śrāvastī miracle in the *Dīvyāvadāna*, Māra tricks the rival ascetics into believing that they possess superhuman powers. See E. B. Cowell and Robert A. Neil, eds., *The Divyāvadāna: A Collection of Early Buddhist Legends* (Amsterdam: Philo and Oriental Presses, 1970 [1866]), p. 144ff.

ways."[71] This suggests that wondrous displays of superhuman power serve a 'religious' purpose, another reason to consider them miracles. Yet, Mahāyāna literature also liberally employs the tropes of the magician and magical illusion to describe buddhas and bodhisattvas and their liberating behavior. For instance, the *Bhadramāyākāravyākaraṇa*, which features the theme of the wonder-working contest between the Buddha and a non-Buddhist magician, explicitly calls the Buddha a magician, while the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* features characters (the Buddha, Vimalakīrti, the goddess) who produce wondrous displays to illustrate doctrinal points about emptiness, magical illusion, and inconceivable liberation. These Mahāyāna *sūtra*s seem to make a point of demonstrating that buddhas and bodhisattvas liberate themselves and others not only through their understanding, but through their demonstration of the fact that reality is inconceivable, like a magical illusion.[72]

If another of the key conceptual distinctions to be drawn between marvels (or magic) and miracles is the ontological difference between 'natural' and 'supernatural' causes, then the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, with its emphasis on the doctrines of magical illusion and inconceivable liberation, can be interpreted as collapsing this distinction. For buddhas and bodhisattvas would seem to inhabit an ontological position somewhere between the mundane and the transmundane. This poses a problem for us as we seek to interpret and translate the plethora of Buddhist technical terms for superhuman power that one finds in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* and throughout Indian Mahāyāna literature. Are they best described as miraculous powers, magical powers, supernatural powers, or superhuman powers? However one chooses to describe them, the concepts of magical illusion and inconceivable liberation in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* work to resolve a tension between superhu-

[71] Dutt, *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, p. 46.

[72] The treatment of the metaphors of magical illusion and magician in Indian Mahāyāna *śāstra* literature needs more analysis. On the 'earlier' side, the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* contains a few references. See, for instance, chapter thirteen, verse 28, where the wisdom of the bodhisattva is likened to that a magician, who understands the true nature of his illusions. See also chapter eleven, verse 27ff, for a discussion of the metaphor of the magical illusion. See Lévi 1907-1911, pp. 61ff, 89. On the 'later' side, one may mention the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, verses five and following, where the meaning and significance of the metaphor of the magical illusion is elaborated in the context of the two truths. See P.L. Vaidya, ed., *Bodhicaryāvatāra of Śāntideva with the commentary Pañjikā of Prajñākaramati*. Buddhist Sanskrit Texts N. 12. (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, 1960), p. 101ff.

man powers and knowledge of reality found in the broader Indian Buddhist discourse on the wondrous. By doing so, the *sūtra* suggests that marvelous displays of magical illusion and transformation work together with doctrinal arguments to fulfill the miraculous activity of the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

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CHAPTER FIVE

ON THE APPEARANCE OF *SIDDHI*S IN CHINESE BUDDHIST TEXTS

Ryan Richard Overbey

Chinese Buddhist translation activities began in the second century CE in the Eastern Hàn 東漢 state and continued for well over a millennium. While many texts have been irretrievably lost to the ravages of political change, war, and persecution, enough remain to give scholars some precious details of Buddhism's long history in East Asia and beyond. This corpus also provides evidence for the study of South Asian religious history, since Chinese translations often preserve texts which would otherwise be lost in the mists of Indian time. Even when Indian counterparts exist, the dateable Chinese translations often represent earlier stages of development, giving scholars valuable insight into the evolution of particular texts and traditions.[1]

Were a South Asianist to survey works on East Asian Buddhism to learn more about the development of the notion of *siddhi*, she would doubtless emerge disappointed and confused. There are no studies devoted to the emergence of this term in Chinese sources, and the few scholars that do discuss *siddhi*s define the term quite differently. In this short chapter, I hope to shed some light on the emergence of the *siddhi* in Chinese Buddhist texts, and to address some common missteps in scholarship on this concept.

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[1] The *Mahāmāyūrīvidyārājñī* corpus provides an excellent example of the utility of Chinese translations for understanding the growth of Indian texts. The six extant translations date from around the fourth century up through the eighth, and many differ radically from the extant Sanskrit MSS. For a good overview of the *Mahāmāyūrī* and its sources, see Henrik H. Sørensen, "The Spell of the Great, Golden Peacock Queen: the Origin, Practices, and Lore of an Early Esoteric Buddhist Tradition in China," *Pacific World*, 3rd ser., no. 8 (Fall 2006). Some key episodes of the *Mahāmāyūrī* involving the cure of snakebite draw from a very deep well of Buddhist precedent, on which see Lambert Schmithausen, *Maitrī and Magic: Aspects of the Buddhist Attitude Toward the Dangerous in Nature* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997).

The word *siddhi* derives from the verbal root √*sidh* ('to accomplish'), and serves as a general term for 'success' or 'achievement'. In this sense, the word is often used to represent a religious goal.[2] In the *Pātañjala Yogaśāstra* as well as in Hindu and Buddhist Tantric traditions, *siddhi* can have a narrower semantic range, referring to particular sets of extraordinary powers gained through religious practices, incantations, drugs, or other means.[3]

Siddhi in this narrower sense does not occur in Indian Buddhist literature before the rise of the Tantric Buddhist texts of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. *Siddhi*s are found in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa,*[4] the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*,[5] and other similarly late texts, but when earlier Buddhist texts occasionally use the word *siddhi*, they do so only with the broader meaning.[6]

Given these facts, it would be a significant discovery indeed if one could find an example of *siddhi*s in the narrow sense in Chinese Buddhist texts before the eighth century. Such an example would be our earliest evidence for the development or appropriation of this concept in the Buddhist context. Several scholars have implied the existence of *siddhi*s in early Chinese Buddhism, and some have even named particular texts and passages which they claim provide evidence for the presence of *siddhi*s before the eighth century. I believe all these claims are mistaken. The most common mistakes fall into three categories.

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[2] See, for just one small example, *Bhagavadgītā* 12.10/*Mahābhārata* 6.34.10: *abhyāse 'py asamartho 'si matkarmaparamo bhava / madartham api karmāṇi kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi*. "If you are incapable of rigorous practice, you should be devoted to acting for me. By performing actions on my behalf, you will attain success (*siddhi*)."

[3] See YŚ 4.1: *janmauṣadhi-mantra-tapaḥ-samādhijāḥ siddhayaḥ* "*Siddhi*s come from birth, from drugs, from incantations, from ascetic practices, or from meditative concentration." In this paper I refer to the Madras edition, but scholars should note the recent work of Philipp André Maas, whose critical edition of the first chapter is a welcome addition to scholarship on the *Yogaśāstra*. See *Samādhipāda: das erste Kapitel des Pātañjalayogaśāstra zum ersten Mal kritisch ediert* (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2006).

[4] This text probably dates to sometime in the early Pāla dynasty, possibly around the eighth century. See Matsunaga Yūkei, "On the Date of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa,*" in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein*, ed. Michel Strickmann. Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques 22 (1985).

[5] *Sarvardurgatipariśodhana Tantra: Elimination of All Evil Destinies*, ed. Tadeusz Skorupski (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983).

[6] See, for example, the *Mahāvastu Avadāna* 3.115.2, which glosses the name Siddhārtha with the expression *sarvasiddhisaṃprāpta*, "by whom all accomplishments are attained."

Mistake 1: Using *Siddhi* as a Generic Term for Ritual Attainments

In an influential article on the development of Buddhist tantrism in China, Chou Yi-liang highlighted the *Dà jìyì shēnzhòu jīng* 大吉義神呪經, translated by Tányào 曇曜 in the fifth century, as an example of an early Chinese Buddhist text featuring *siddhi*s. According to Chou, in this text "[t]here are siddhis to win a war, to stop a storm, to obtain rain, to conceal one's form, or to secure a wish-jewel."[7]

It would be exciting indeed to find *siddhi*s in this text, but there are none. The text does command the practitioner to burn incense before various statues of deities (*tiān* 天, **deva*) and dragons (*lóng* 龍, **nāga*) and to recite incantations in order to obtain rain or to acquire a wish-fulfilling gem (*rúyì bǎozhū* 如意寶珠, **cintāmaṇi*).[8] However, nowhere does the text actually use the word *siddhi* to refer to the accomplishments of the ritual.

Even if one concedes that many early Chinese Buddhist texts contain descriptions of ritual accomplishments that share many features with what later Buddhist texts would call *siddhi*s, one is still left to wonder how and why the term *siddhi* would be used in some instances and not in others. To call the ritual rewards in Tányào's translation *siddhi*s on the basis of simple resemblance is to cut off prematurely a potentially rewarding avenue of research.[9]

Mistake 2: Conflating *Siddhi* with *Ṛddhi*

In Charles Orzech's fine work on Amoghavajra and the *Scripture for Humane Kings*, there is an interesting section entitled "*Siddhi* and Salvation." In this section, Orzech makes a startling claim that "[t]he lists of *abhijñā*s and of *siddhi*s appear to have been formalized quite early in Buddhist history and are taken up in Nikāya Buddhist and

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[7] Chou Yi-liang, "Tantrism in China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 8, no. 3-4 (March 1945): 243.

[8] T1335.21.579b1–c11.

[9] Chou's mistake has been unfortunately repeated. See, for instance, Stephen Hodge's introduction to his translation of the *Mahāvairocanasūtra*, where he claims that T1335 "also teaches various attainments (*siddhi*) to stop storms, to make rain, to become invisible, and so forth." See Hodge, *The Mahā-vairocana-abhisaṃbodhi Tantra with Buddhaguhya's Commentary* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 8.

Mahāyāna texts alike."[10] This assertion is made possible by Orzech's claim that the word *siddhi* is synonymous with the word *ṛddhi*. Orzech does not argue this point, but simply asserts that the two concepts are equivalent.

The Sanskrit word *ṛddhi* (Pāli: *iddhi*), from the root √*ṛdh*, refers to growth, prosperity or success. In this final meaning the word has a long pedigree in Buddhist scripture and doctrine. The various enumerations of *ṛddhi* often form one item in lists of the superknowledges (*abhijñā*/*abhiññā*). From very early on we find various lists of *ṛddhis* which deal with the manipulation of matter, telekinesis, telepathy, mind control, and so on.[11]

It is not immediately clear why supernormal powers associated with special types of knowledge would be semantically equivalent with *siddhi*s as understood by the later Tantric traditions. However, arguments for the equivalence of these terms have a long and august pedigree. The claim for equivalence was made by Mircea Eliade, whose work on yoga influenced and inspired an entire generation of scholars.[12]

In an article comparing the systems of Buddhism and Yoga, Louis de La Vallée Poussin pointed out a close similarity in the lists of causes of *siddhi* and of *abhijñā* in the *Yogaśāstra* and in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*.[13] YŚ 4.1 claims that *siddhi*s come from birth, from drugs, from incantations, from ascetic practices, and from meditative concentration.[14] In the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* we find a very similar list of *ṛddhis*, which are brought about by meditation, birth, incantations, drugs, or actions.[15]

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[10] Charles Orzech, *Politics and Transcendent Wisdom: the* Scripture for Humane Kings *in the Creation of Chinese Buddhism* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 51.

[11] Many scholars have discussed the *abhijñā*s and *ṛddhi*s in great detail. See, for example, Louis de La Vallée Poussin, "Le Bouddha et les Abhijñā," *Le Muséon* 44 (1931): 335–342. More recently, see David Fiordalis' excellent Ph.D. dissertation, "Miracles and Superhuman Powers in South Asian Buddhist Literature," University of Michigan, 2008.

[12] See Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 177, which claims that the Sanskrit word *siddhi* is equivalent to the Pāli word *iddhi*.

[13] Louis de La Vallée Poussin, "Le Bouddhisme et le Yoga de Patañjali," *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques* 5 (1936–1937), 241–242.

[14] See above, note 3.

[15] See *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* 7.53: *avyākṛtaṃ bhāvanājaṃ trividhaṃ tūpapattijam / ṛddhirmantrauṣadhābhyāṃ ca karmajā ceti pañcadhā.*

La Vallée Poussin did not claim that this made *siddhi* equivalent to *ṛddhi*, but other scholars did. Sigurd Lindquist argued for the equivalence of Buddhist *ṛddhi* and yogic *siddhi* on precisely these grounds.[16] Lindquist was also making a broader comparative argument throughout his essay, attempting to define yogic *siddhi* and Buddhist *abhijñā* as subjective mental states—illusions or hallucinations brought on by a kind of hypnosis in a mind systematically trained to focus on various stimuli.[17] Lindquist wanted both Buddhism and yoga to speak the *lingua franca* of psychology, and in so doing he had to work in broad comparative strokes.

Lindquist's work remains fascinating for its attempts to take the descriptions of supernormal powers seriously as psychological phenomena.[18] But as we have already seen, the comparative impulse can foreclose interesting avenues of research. Even if we acknowledge that the *siddhi*s of the *Yogaśāstra* and the *ṛddhi*s of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* are caused by the same phenomena, should we then conclude the terms are synonymous? Even if, for the sake of argument, we concede that they may be considered synonymous, we still are confronted with the question of how and why Buddhist texts began referring to *siddhi*s (and not *ṛddhi*s) in esoteric texts of the seventh century and beyond.

Even worse, a too-casual conflation of *siddhi* and *ṛddhi* can actually mislead scholars and their readers, giving the false impression that Buddhist esoteric discussions of *siddhi*s were simply drawing from a continuous and unbroken tradition of *siddhi*s leading back to the earliest texts of the tradition, or that *siddhi* was somehow a general term widespread throughout the history of the Buddhist religion.[19] This has the effect of homogenizing and flattening what is in reality a more dynamic and interesting picture.

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[16] Sigurd Lindquist, *Siddhi und Abhiññā: eine Studie über die klassischen Wunder des Yoga* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift, 1935), 25.

[17] Ibid., 70.

[18] In this respect Lindquist reminds me of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, whose work attempted to save aboriginal cultures from charges of stupidity by relativizing and psychologizing their religious truth claims. See Lévy-Bruhl, *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1910).

[19] Orzech says "*Siddhi* … is the general term for soteriological accomplishment as well as for the attainment of 'lesser' ends." See *Politics and Transcendent Wisdom*, 50.

Mistake 3: Misreadings of the Chinese

The Sanskrit word *siddhi* is often translated into Chinese as *chéngjiù* 成就, 'accomplish, attain, succeed', or it is transliterated as *xīdì* 悉地. The word *chéngjiù* occurs with great frequency throughout the extant corpus of Chinese Buddhist texts, and it most commonly carries *siddhi's* broad meaning of 'accomplishment'.

Occasionally, when the word *chéngjiù* is found in a Chinese text in a context where ritual attainments are described, it is very tempting to guess that the notion of *siddhi* in its narrower meaning is being used. Determining how precisely we should read the word *chéngjiù* in a specific case is no easy task, and occasionally scholars can make mistakes that have broader implications for the history of Buddhist thought and ritual.

In an illuminating and useful article on the tradition of the *Mahāmāyūrīvidyārājñī* in China, Henrik Sørensen notes that the *Scripture on the Spell of the Great Golden Peahen Queen*, translated sometime in the late fourth or early fifth century, contains an extensive list of *ṛṣi*s who are said to wield special powers:

> The text reads that they "Always practice ascetic practices on mountains and in forests, such as the *siddhi* for the ending of suffering, *siddhi* of recollection, and the *siddhi* of the mantric arts." The text goes on to explain that possessing and holding the names of these *mahārṣi*s listed in the text enables the practitioner to attain supernatural powers, i.e. *siddhi*s (Ch. *chengjiu* 成就), such as the power to manifest responsive transformations (Ch. *ganbian*, 感變), attain the five supernatural powers (Skt. *pañcābhijñā*), and fly through the air at will.[20]

Sørensen goes on to claim that this passage "may be one of the earliest references in Chinese to the type of yogic mastery of supramundane powers connected with the use of spells … that we encounter with greater and greater frequency in the later esoteric Buddhist literature."[21]

If Sørensen is correct, then we can locate the first appearance of the narrower meaning of *siddhi* in the Buddhist context to a fifth-century Chinese translation. This would be a tremendously significant finding for the history of esoteric Buddhism. Unfortunately, I do not think that the text of T986 gives us the evidence we need to make this assertion.

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[20] Henrik H. Sørensen, "The Spell of the Great, Golden Peacock Queen," 95.
[21] Ibid.

How can we know that Sørensen made a mistake? Here is the Chinese passage, followed by my mechanistically literal rendering, followed by Sørensen's polished translation:[22]

> 終吉成就，志念成就，呪術成就，常修苦行，住止山林 …
> Literal**:** End-fortune-success, recollection-success, spell-arts-success, always cultivate ascetic practices, reside mountains-forests…
> Sørensen**:** Always practice ascetic practices on mountains and in forests, such as the *siddhi* for the ending of suffering[23], *siddhi* of recollection, and the *siddhi* of the mantric arts…

Sørensen has taken these twenty Chinese characters and rendered them into a comprehensible translation, interpreting the Chinese word as *chéngjiù* 成就 as *siddhi*. This leads the reader to believe that the text here claims that the *ṛṣi*s have mastered certain powers that fall into particular fixed categories (the '*siddhi* of recollection', for instance).

I would argue that the problem with this translation is that it is *too nice*—it reads the Chinese as good Chinese, rather than as that strange hybrid language in which so many Buddhist translations were composed.[24] And in an effort to make the passage make sense, Sørensen has misread *chéngjiù* in its broad sense as *chéngjiù* in the narrower sense.

This line of interpretation is further bolstered when we compare the Chinese translation to the Sanskrit text. We are extremely fortunate to have a Sanskrit text for the *Mahāmāyūrīvidyārājñī*, and this text is very useful for understanding the peculiar syntax and vocabulary of the work's numerous Chinese translations.[25]

Here is the Sanskrit text of the complete passage from Takubo's edition of the *Mahāmāyūrī*, followed by the Chinese translation in T986:[26]

siddhānāṃ	siddha-vratānāṃ	siddha-vidyānāṃ
終吉成就	志念成就	呪術成就

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[22] The relevant passage may be found at T986.19.478b1–2.

[23] The Chinese reads jí 吉, fortune, which Sørensen seems to have reads as kǔ 苦, 'suffering'.

[24] For an extreme example of the problems associated with 'Buddhist Hybrid Chinese', see Stefano Zacchetti, "Dharmagupta's Unfinished Translation of the *Diamond-Cleaver (Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra),*" *T'oung Pao* 82.1–3 (1996).

[25] See *Ārya-Mahā-Māyūrī Vidyā-Rājñī*, ed. Takubo Shuyō 田久保周誉. (Tōkyō: Sankibō Busshorin 山喜房佛書林, 1972).

[26] Ibid., 52–53.

dīpta-tapasāṃ nadī-parvata-vāsināṃ
常修苦行 住止山林
śāpâyudhānāṃ ugra-tejasāṃ
勢力自在 感變速疾
ṛddhimatāṃ paṃcâbhijñānāṃ vaihāyasa-gāmināṃ
五通如意 遊步虛空
teṣāṃ nāmāni kīrttayiṣyāmi
吾今說其名號

The surviving Sanskrit text could be translated as "I shall sing the names of those who are accomplished (*siddha*), by whom the vows are accomplished, by whom the spells are accomplished, by whom the fires of asceticism have been lit, who dwell among the rivers and mountains, whose weapons are imprecations, whose energy is formidable, who possess the powers (*ṛddhi*) and the five supernormal knowledges (*abhijñā*),[27] who fly through the sky." And a glance at the Chinese with reference to the Sanskrit shows how the Chinese steps mechanically through the Sanskrit, word by word and compound by compound. When we read T986, we are not really reading beautiful Chinese. We are instead reading 'translation-ese'.

Were one to translate the translation-ese rather than the Chinese, one would get something very close to the Sanskrit, but with some small differences:

> Now I will utter the names of those who have accomplished the ultimate fortune, who have accomplished the observance of vows, who have accomplished the spell arts, who always practice ascetic practices, who dwell in mountains and forests, who have potency and sovereignty, whose transformations are formidable, who have the five supernormal knowledges and the powers of accomplishing their wishes, who fly through the sky.

The reader should notice immediately that nowhere in the Sanskrit do we find the word *siddhi*; instead we find *siddha*, a past passive participle meaning 'accomplished, achieved'. It would be hasty, then, to claim that the MMVR lists various categories of *siddhi*s, such as the *siddhi* of recollection or the *siddhi* of the mantric arts. Rather, it praises the *ṛṣi*s, lauding them for being accomplished in vows and spells. Nor does the text promise, as Sørensen claims, that the practitioner will attain the power of flight or the five superknowledges through recita-

[27] I am reading this word, *pañcābhijñānāṃ*, as a genitive plural of the compound *pañcābhijña*, literally, 'whose supernormal knowledges are five in number' (*pañca abhijñāḥ yasya saḥ*), the sense being "possessing all five supernormal knowledges."

tion of these names; it simply enumerates the power of flight as one of the long list of powers which the *ṛṣi*s possess (and for which they are being praised). This is a subtle distinction, but an extremely important one. We do not yet see in the *Mahāmāyūrī* a newly emerging concept of *siddhi* as a discrete religious category.

This short exercise has doubtless tested the patience of the reader, so it is perhaps worthwhile to summarize. Because the word *siddhi*—along with *siddha*, *sidhyate*, or any other words deriving from the root √*sidh*—can be translated with the Chinese word *chéngjiù* 成就, an anachronistic reading of *siddhi* into a Chinese Buddhist text is an all-too-easy possibility. In order to read the word *chéngjiù* as *siddhi*, a more compelling case must be made.

Thanks to the hard work of the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA), scholars now have access to electronic texts of the Taishō canon.[28] This allows scholars to search a huge corpus of texts very quickly, and can allow one to venture answers to difficult questions.

As for the question of when the notion of *siddhi* first appeared in Chinese texts, even with the development of full-text electronic search, this remains quite difficult to answer. A search of the entire canon for the word *chéngjiù* yields nearly 77,000 results, and evaluating whether or not this result is equivalent to the narrower meaning of the word *siddhi* or simply to its general meaning requires a detailed analysis of each case.

For the purposes of this chapter, I have analyzed the nearly 10,000 occurrences of *chéngjiù* in the works collected in volumes 18–21 of the Taishō canon. These volumes contain esoteric works imported by Śubhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi, and Amoghavajra in the seventh and eighth centuries, as well as many earlier 'prototantric' texts.[29] I have also surveyed the nearly 3,000 occurrences of the word *xīdì* across the entire canon.[30] Though this search cannot be called exhaustive, I have come away confident that the earliest occurrences of the term *siddhi*

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[28] http://cbeta.org

[29] On the difficulties associated with the term 'prototantric', see Robert Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the* Treasure-Store Treatise (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 263–278.

[30] The survey of the term *xīdì* in the canon did not yield new insights. Most occurrences of *xīdì* in the Taishō represent transliterations of the syllables *siddhi* as uttered in a *dhāraṇī* or *vidyā*. They have the semantic force of 'Abracadabra — SUCCESS!—Amen', much in the same way we see words like *daha*, 'BURN!' used in spells. Moreover, most occurrences of *xīdì* fall into the same date range or later than the relevant occurrences of *chéngjiù*.

in its narrow meaning are not found before the eighth century in this corpus of Chinese Buddhist texts.

While many earlier texts do contain the word *chéngjiù*, they use this word in its general meaning. The word is most commonly used verbally in the sense of 'attain', as in this passage from the *Mahāmeghasūtra* translated by Narendrayaśas:[31]

> 汝大龍王，此呪名為「施一切樂陀羅尼句」，諸佛所持。汝等常須受持讀誦，吉事成就，得入法門，獲安隱樂。
> O Great Nāga Kings, this spell, called the "*dhāraṇī*-words which grants bliss to all beings," is upheld by the Buddhas. You too should always remember and uphold and recite it, and you will *attain* auspicious karma, you will enter into the *dharma* gates, and you will obtain tranquility and bliss.

Almost all instances of this word occur verbally. A few instances occur nominally, and present more intriguing possibilities. For example, in the *Amoghapāśa Dhāraṇī* translated by Jñānagupta in 587 we find:[32]

> 然後，凡所作者，皆得成就。
> Then, as for whatever he does, he shall attain *success*.

The possibility to accomplish whatever one wants to accomplish seems a bit closer to the notion of *siddhi* in its narrower sense. For the *Amoghapāśadhāraṇī* we also have an extant Sanskrit manuscript, and on this passage the manuscript reads: *yad icchati tat karoty eva sādhaka iti*, "The *sādhaka* is a person who accomplishes whatever he desires."[33] This passage presents us with a mere hint of what we might consider *siddhi*, but the evidence is not conclusive enough to pass firm judgment upon it.

The unambiguous examples of *siddhi*s in Chinese Buddhist literature do not emerge until the eighth century. In the *Amoghapāśakalparāja*, a large text translated in the first decade of the eighth century by Bodhiruci, we find many passages which describe *siddhi*s in ways that leave nothing to guesswork. In this text, *siddhi*s are

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[31] T991.19.496a21–23.

[32] T1093.20.402a24.

[33] See "The Amoghapāśahṛdaya-dhāraṇī: the early Sanskrit manuscript of the Reiunji critically edited and translated," ed. R. O. Meisezahl, *Monumenta Nipponica* 17.1/4 (1962): 327.

divided into categories, such as the Highest,[34] the Great,[35]and the Mundane and Supermundane.[36] The text switches between *chéngjiù* and *xīdì*, making clear that the two terms are very often interchangeable.[37] The text even prescribes specific ritual worship of relics in small shrines for attaining *siddhi*s:[38]

> [Vajrapāṇi] said to the Buddhha, "World-Honored One, what do we mean by 'attaining the highest *siddhi*?' How does one use these *siddhi*s to attain accomplishments (*siddhi*)?' Then the Tathāgata said to Vajrapāṇi Vajrasattva Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, "If there is a *bhikṣu, bhikṣūṇi, upāsaka,* or *upāsikā* who has in some small way in a previous life planted the good root of true *bodhicitta*, even if it is as small as a mustard seed, that person will attain the most exalted *siddhi*, just like a person who has authentic *bodhicitta*. In accordance with his means he should fashion a gold or copper *śarīra-caitya*, and in the *caitya* he should place a *Buddha-śarīra*. With constant effort he should daily use perfumed water and ritually pour water over the *śarīra-caitya*, and place it on an altar, and set down this scripture, and use various flowers and incense to perform *pūjā*, and receive, uphold, recite, cause to hear, and cause to practice without ceasing, and then he will attain the *dharma* of the highest *siddhi*."

Some twenty years after this, Śubhakarasiṃha translated the *Susiddhikarasūtra* into Chinese. This text, which would come to be regarded as a fundamental scripture for Japanese esoteric Tendai, is filled with lists of *siddhi*s of various levels. The text features highest, middling, and lower *siddhi*s, and subdivides each of these levels with further distinctions. Here is a list of the highest:[39]

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[34] 令諸有情思惟讀誦受持斯法，皆得最上成就，一切功德勝法。 "This will cause sentient beings to contemplate, recite, and retain his *dharma*, and he will attain the highest *siddhi*, all the qualities, and the wondrous *dharmas*" (T1092.20.234a29-b2).

[35] 證三相者名大成就。 "Realizing the Three Marks is called 'Great *Siddhi*'" (T1092.20.263a17).

[36] 或復占察內外一切吉相，修習於法，則得成就。此大契經真言出世世間成就之法 "If one uses divination for all the internal or external signs of luck, and one practices in the *dharma*, then one attains *siddhi*. This is the rite of the supermundane and mundane *siddhi* of the *mantras* in the Great Sūtrānta" (T1092.20.264b1–3).

[37] For example, one passage refers to "attaining the supermundane *siddhi*," (成就世間悉地之法; T1092.20.265a28–29), which makes it much more likely that the above passage on attaining the supermundane *chéngjiù* also refers to *siddhi*.

[38] See T1092.20.359b14–24.

[39] T893a.18.614a25–b1. The translation is from Rolf W. Giebel, *Two Esoteric Sutras*, BDK English Tripitaka 29-II, 30-II (Berkeley: Numata Center for Translation and Research, 2001), 191.

> …[becoming] a *vidyādhara* seer, ascending into the sky, accomplishing the five [supernatural] faculties, having many kinds [of forms], or achieving the extinction of defilements (*āśravakṣaya*, i.e., nirvāṇa) or [becoming] a *pratyekabuddha*, or realizing the stages of a bodhisattva, or comprehending all things, or eloquence and much learning, or accomplishing [the raising of] a *vetāla*-corpse, or accomplishing [the rite of] a female *yakṣa*, or obtaining a *cintāmaṇi* (wish-fulfilling gem), or obtaining inexhaustible hidden treasure—if they comprise deeds such as the above, they are the highest among the higher accomplishments.

The above passage is especially important for contemplating the distinctions between the *siddhi*s and the *ṛddhi*s in the Buddhist esoteric traditions. For the *Susiddhikarasūtra*, the attainment of the five *abhijñā*s is simply one element in a long list of the higher *siddhi*s. Since the *ṛddhi*s are a subset of the five *abhijñā*s, and the five *abhijñā*s are a subset of the *siddhi*s, we can claim with even more confidence that a simple identification of *ṛddhi* and *siddhi* will miss some very important distinctions. We see in the *Susiddhikarasūtra* an effort to collect together a wide range of ritual and religious accomplishments and to fit them into an ordered hierarchy of *siddhi*s. This allows the text to place the classical five *abhijñā*s in the same category as the necromantic magic of *vetāla*-raising, a juxtaposition that never occurred in earlier Buddhist texts.

Translated around the same time as the *Susiddhikarasūtra*, the *Subāhuparipṛcchā* contains a similarly ranked list of *siddhi*s:[40]

> Next, Subāhu, as for the methods of *siddhi*s belonging to people who contemplate and recite, in general there are eight types. What are the eight? They are: (1) the method of achieving *mantra*s; (2) the method of producing mercury; (3) the method of achieving long life; (4) the method of revealing hidden treasure; (5) the method of entering into the Asura palace; (6) the method of producing gold via combination [of elements]; (7) the method of producing gold from the earth; (8) the method of producing priceless gems. These are the eight methods, and they are divided into three categories. (A) The method of achieving *mantra*s, the method of entering into the Asura palace, and the method of attaining long life are called the methods of the highest *siddhi*. (B) The method of producing priceless gems, the method of producing gold from earth, and the method of revealing hidden treasures are called middling. (C) The method of producing gold via combination and the method of producing mercury are called the lowest methods. If there

[40] T895a.18.732b7–20.

> is a being who is disciplined and wise, who delights in the *dharma*, that sort of person will delight in the highest *siddhi*s. If there is a being who greatly desires wealth, that sort of person will delight in the middling *siddhi*s. If there is a being who, because he is greatly deluded, sells things for profit, that sort of person will attain the lowest *siddhi*s.

This list of *siddhi*s shares much in common with the examples already provided, for it divides the *siddhi*s into various categories and reserves the highest category for pious Buddhists. But the *siddhi*s of the *Subāhuparipṛcchā* are at the same time more explicitly alchemical and materialistic in their focus, resembling quite closely the sorts of *siddhi*s we find in many South Asian tantric communities.[41]

The above examples have shown that in the first quarter of the eighth century, we find a sudden explosion of Chinese translations referring to ranked lists of *siddhi*, which refer not just to general accomplishments but to specific powers attained through specific ritual acts. The sudden appearance of the *siddhi* in China seems to track closely with its abrupt arrival in Indian texts as well. The cumulative weight of this evidence leads me to conclude that *siddhi*s did not exist as a discrete category of Buddhist practice before the tantric revolution of the seventh and eighth centuries.

Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter I have shown that much of our previous scholarship on the *siddhi*s in Buddhism has not properly addressed the question of precisely when and precisely how *siddhi*s first emerged. Some scholars defined *siddhi* too broadly, using the word as a general term for ritual attainments. This is a fine strategy for doing conceptual or comparative work, but it runs the risk of anachronism. Some scholars defined *siddhi* to be synonymous with *ṛddhi*. This can lead to interesting comparative insights, but it also runs the risk of anachronism, of flattening the fragmented and noisy history of Buddhist ideas into a too-tidy package of convenient continuities. For both these strategies the question of when and how Buddhists began using the word *siddhi* in a narrower sense gets swept under the rug. Finally, I brought into high relief the special difficulties associated with this question in the

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[41] For a whirlwind tour through South Asian alchemical traditions, see David Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Chinese Buddhist context. Since the Chinese translation for *siddhi* is an extremely common word, and because Chinese Buddhist translations are so often written in an obscure and difficult-to-decipher 'translation-ese', it becomes quite hard to know whether a given passage provides an example of *siddhi*s in particular or of a religious attainment in general.

This may all seem like so much philological nitpicking, but I believe the results of this modest inquiry are important to consider as scholars move forward with their various genealogies and histories of esoteric religion in South and East Asia. By paying close attention to the words people actually used to describe their religious practices, scholars can detect unexpected changes in the scenery, and can ask more interesting questions.

We need not dispute, for example, the fact that the Buddhist tradition incorporated all sorts of telekinetic and telepathic powers under the rubric of *ṛddhi* from a very early time. Nor should we dispute the very interesting shared etiology of Buddhist *ṛddhi* and Patañjali's *siddhi*. Rather than simply conflating the two terms on these grounds, it may be more fruitful to ask *whether*, and if so, *how* yogic *siddhi*s and Buddhist *ṛddhi*s relate one to the other. Are they both instances of a general South Asian 'religious substratum', or did one tradition borrow from the other?[42] If this was a case of borrowing, does the difference in name take on a new significance?

None of these questions foreclose further research into the comparative or phenomenological investigation of religion. I think it is important and worthwhile to recognize that between the third and seventh centuries, many Buddhist texts proliferated which urged the performance of spells and other ritual actions, and which promised specific rewards in return. Thinking comparatively, and in broad strokes, about these sorts of powers is a most useful exercise. Many of these powers would overlap conceptually with the sorts of things that would be called, from the eighth century onward, *siddhi*s.

However, the dusty details of philological inquiry remain vital if we are to understand more clearly why, starting at the beginning of the

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[42] On the philosophical and methodological implications of this question, see the stimulating essay by David Seyfort Ruegg, *The Symbiosis of Buddhism with Brahmanism/Hinduism in South Asia and of Buddhism with "Local Cults" in Tibet and the Himalayan Region*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse. Sitzungsberichte 774. Beiträge zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens 58 (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008).

eighth century, there emerged certain lists of Buddhist powers under the rubric of *siddhi*.[43] Alexis Sanderson's recent work suggests an obvious answer: the Buddhist esoteric texts imported into China in the early years of the eighth century were thoroughly infused with Śaiva language, rituals, and tropes.[44]

If scholars can find no instances of *siddhi* in Chinese texts prior to the esoteric imports of the early eighth century, we may consider this compelling evidence that the very notion of *siddhi* is an innovation peculiar to this corpus. Rather than conflating *siddhi*s with *ṛddhis* and treating all supernormal powers as the same sort of practice, we should pay close attention to these moments of importation and appropriation. In this context, the passage translated above on the highest *siddhi*s in the *Susiddhikarasūtra* becomes more significant. By including specifically Buddhist attainments like the five *abhijñā*s and the destruction of the cankers in the list of the ultimate *siddhi*s, we can perhaps see an attempt by the author of the *Susiddhikarasūtra* to open up new possibilities for a specifically Buddhist form of *siddhi* practice. We could be witnessing not an instance of religious continuity, but rather a vivid example of fragmentation and re-appropriation. But we can only conduct this sort of inquiry if we read the texts very closely, and resist the impulse to lump together like with like. Words matter, and in the study of South Asian religious traditions through the dark mirror of East Asian texts, words are our most valuable asset.

In this chapter, I have shown three examples of eighth-century Chinese Buddhist texts which use the term *siddhi* in a new way. I hope this has been a provocative stimulant to further inquiry. I would be quite happy if, through the careful examination of all seventy-seven thousand instances of the word *chéngjiù* in the Taishō canon, another scholar finds a striking instance of *siddhi*s in Chinese Buddhism which

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[43] I cannot help but agree with Alexis Sanderson here, who so beautifully wrote, "the training of the textual critic is nothing less than the intimate study of the civilization that produced and understood the documents he confronts. Nor can that study proceed without textual criticism, since that is the art of reading the documents which are its richest and most numerous witnesses." See "History through Textual Criticism in the Study of Śaivism, the Pañcaratra and the Buddhist Yoginītantras," in *Les sources et le temps*, ed. François Grimal (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry / École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 2001), 2.

[44] See Alexis Sanderson, "The Śaiva Age—the Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period," in *Tantora no keisei to tenkai* タントラの形成と展開, ed. Einoo Shingo 永ノ尾信悟 (Tōkyō: Sankibo Busshorin 山喜房佛書林, 2009), 124ff.

significantly predates the *Amoghapāśakalparāja, Susiddhikara*, or *Subāhuparipṛcchā*. At the same time, I hope this small chapter has provided food for thought for scholars who want to think more conceptually and comparatively about supernormal powers in Buddhist doctrinal and ritual history. I hope I have shown that *siddhi*s are no mere stand-ins for any ritual accomplishment, but rather represent a very specific mode of Buddhist discourse and practice. This should stimulate us all to think what, if anything, *siddhi*s in Buddhism share with *ṛddhi*s, with *siddhi*s in Yogic or Śaiva traditions, and with our own notions of the magical and the mysterious.

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CHAPTER SIX

SUPERNATURAL POWERS AND THEIR ATTAINMENT IN JAINISM

Kristi L. Wiley

In narratives of the Jains, there are accounts of individuals who have acquired a number of extraordinary, supernatural, miraculous, or magical powers (*ṛddhi*s/*siddhi*s), or extraordinary capacities or attainments (*labdhi*s).[1] For example, according to the *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacaritra* (*TṢŚC*) of Hemacandra (d. 1172), which contains the life-stories of sixty-three illustrious men in our current cycle of time, mind-reading knowledge (*manaḥ-paryaya*) became manifest in Mahāvīra, the twenty-fourth and final Tīrthaṅkara in our cycle of time, while he was observing a two-day fast following his renunciation.[2] His chief mendicant disciple (*gaṇadhara*), Indrabhūti Gautama, went to Mount Aṣṭāpada in a moment by the power of traveling through the air with the speed of the wind. Although corpulent, he ascended the mountain to worship the Tīrthaṅkaras and instantly became invisible, astounding the ascetics staying there, who were eager to become

[1] *Labdhi* is the word used most often in Śvetāmbara sources and *ṛddhi* in Digambara texts. Thus, I have used these two words when referring to these powers in the respective sectarian traditions. The term *siddhi* is seldom used, except by Hemacandra. *Ṛddhi* means wealth and is also used in a material sense, as well as a wealth or abundance of powers. *Labdhi* is used in a number of other technical terms in Jainism. For example, the attainments that are a prelude to the soul's acquiring a proper view of reality are *kṣayopaśama-labdhi*, *deśanā-labdhi*, and *prāyogya-labdhi*. See Padmanabh S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 142-44. Also, the soul's capacity to know sense-objects (*labdhi-indriya*). See Nagin J. Shah, trans., *Jaina Philosophy and Religion* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998), 65-66. For other uses of *labdhi* in technical terms, see L. C. Jain, *The Labdhisāra of Nemicandra Siddhānta Cakravartī* (Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh: Rani Durgavati University, 1994), p. 50.

[2] Helen M. Johnson, trans., *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacaritra* (*TṢŚC*) or *The Lives of Sixty-Three Illustrious Persons* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1931-1962), vol. 6, p. 39. See also vol. 5, p. 393, where it says that mind reading arises at the initiation of all Arhats.

his disciples. He produced food to break the fasts of his newly initiated mendicant followers by the power of the 'unfailing kitchen'.[3]

Jain mendicants are also said to have certain of these powers. Vajranābha, a mendicant who was subsequently reborn as Ṛṣabha, the first Tīrthaṅkara in our current cycle of time, and his fellow mendicants acquired a number of miraculous powers, such as the ability to cure diseases by touch, to transform food in various ways, to take on any form at will, to walk on water, to fly through the sky, to enter the earth without obstruction, to become invisible, as well as extraordinary sensory and intellectual capacities. However, "they did not make use of their powers at all; for people seeking *mokṣa* are indifferent to things close at hand."[4] In the *Aupapātika Sūtra* (*AuSū*), the first book in the subsidiary canon (*upāṅga*), there are accounts of the attainment of *labdhi*s by mendicants in Mahāvīra's lineage and also by brahmanical renunciants (*parivrājaka*s) who were devotees of Mahāvīra.[5] The *Upāsakadaśāḥ Sūtra* (*UpāSu*) contains the story of the pious householder Ānanda, who attained clairvoyant knowledge (*avadhi-jñāna*) and thereby could 'see' great distances.[6] As Paul Dundas has noted, "interest in gaining magic powers can be traced back in Jainism to the canonical scripture, the *Bhagavatī Sūtra* (*BhSū*), which describes how the ability to fly can result from a particular power of fasting."[7]

Elders (*sthavira*) in Mahāvīra's mendicant lineage are also accredited with having extraordinary mental and physical abilities. For example, Sthūlabhadra turned himself into a lion in order to impress his sisters, who had become Jain nuns and were coming to pay their respects to him. His preceptor, Bhadrabāhu, was so upset with Sthū-

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[3] Johnson, *TṢŚC*, vol. 6, pp. 241-45. On the biography of Gautama, see Paul Dundas, "Becoming Gautama: Mantra and History in Śvetāmbara Jainism," in *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Cultures in Indian History*, edited by John E. Cort (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 43-44.

[4] *TṢŚC* 1.845-880 and Johnson, vol. 1, pp. 75-80.

[5] *Aupapātika Sūtra*, *Āgama Suttāṇi* (with *ṭīkā*), ed. Muni Dīparatnasāgara (Ahmedabad: Āgama Śruta Prakāśan, 2000), vol. 8, *sūtra* 15 (pp. 96-97). For an English translation of the mendicants in Mahāvīra's lineage, see *Sacitra Aupapātika Sūtra* [*Illustrated Aupapatik Sutra*], eds. Amar Muni, Srichand Suras 'Saras,' English trans., Surendra Bothara (Delhi: Padma Prakāśan, 2003), *sūtra* 24 (pp. 58-65). For a translation of the story of the *parivrājaka* Ambaḍa, see p. 260. For a discussion of it, see p. 154.

[6] *Upāsakadaśāḥ Sūtra* (*Uvāsaga-dasāo*), ed., trans., and annotated by Dr. Chaganlal Shastri (Beawar, Rajasthan: Śrī Āgam Prakaśan Samiti, 1980), pp. 74. The story of Ānanda is the first of ten lectures. The portion of the story that relates to *avadhi-jñāna* is at 1.12-1.15. See also P. S. Jaini, *Jaina Path*, 233-40.

[7] Dundas, "Becoming Gautama," 40-41.

labhadra for frightening his sisters that he forbade him from teaching certain portions of the Pūrvas to others, and so knowledge of the fourteen Pūrvas came to an end one hundred seventy years after the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra.[8] Vajra, the last elder with knowledge of all ten Pūrvas, is also famous for his supernatural abilities. He was given spells (*vidyā*s) by some 'Yawning gods' who had been his friends in his past life because they were pleased with his conduct. He carefully inspected the food he was being offered, and after determining that it was produced by these gods, he left without accepting the food in accordance with rules of mendicant conduct. "Then those gods, delighted with Vajra, gave him the spell called 'Assuming Transformations', (*vaikriya labdhi*) as if in recompense for the illusion they had produced." Later, these gods assumed the guise of traders and offered him boiled sweets, but knowing that they were gods, he rejected it. "The gods were very pleased with Vajra, their former friend, and gave him the spell for flying through the air (*ākāśagāmi*)."[9] He uses one of these powers attained through *vidyā*s later when he arrived at Pāṭaliputra. "On entering the city, Vajra had used his magic powers to diminish his natural appearance, lest it agitate the citizens. Vajra knew what the citizens were thinking and saying through his excellent powers of perception."[10] The story does not mention that Vajra ever used the spell for flying given to him by the gods. Instead, it says:

> One day, holy Vajra, who had possessed from birth the power of remembering what he had once heard, extracted from the Great Knowledge section of the Behaviour Rules a spell to enable him to fly through the air, because he wished to benefit the holy congregation. Reverend Vajra said: "With this spell I have the power of flying from Rose-apple Tree Island (Jambūdvīpa) to the furthest island inhabited by human beings (Mānuṣottara).[11] I must retain this spell, and not give

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[8] R. C. C. Fynes, trans., *The Lives of the Jain Elders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), canto 9, esp. verses 76-113.

[9] Fynes, *Lives of Jain Elders*, canto 12, verses 137-160, esp. 157 and 160. According to Fynes (p. 273, note on verse 225), Jṛmbhaka gods are a type of Interstitial god who are the servants of Kubera, the god of wealth.

[10] Fynes, *Lives of Jain Elders*, canto 12, verses 284-285.

[11] The middle or terrestrial world (*madhya-loka*) is comprised of a series of concentric island-continents with the island on which we live, Jambūdvīpa, located in the center. On the third continent, Puṣkaradvīpa, there is a range of mountains called Mānuṣottara ('furthest limit of human habitation') that runs around the middle of it that defines the farthest limit of human habitation in the universe. Outside

> it to anyone else, for in the future other will be lacking in accomplishments and strength of character."[12]

He went to the northern region and discovered that the congregation was suffering from a famine. The monks implored him:

> "Remove us by some means from this ocean of distress. It is not sinful to use magic for the benefit of the congregation." So reverend Vajra used his powerful magic spell to create an extensive carpet[13]… Then, on holy Vajra's instructions, the entire congregation stepped onto the wide carpet… Through the power of the reverend monk Vajra's magic spell, the carpet flew up into the sky, as if it were being wafted up by the wind… At length he landed in a big city called Purī.[14]

In these stories of the elders are supernatural abilities attained from two sources: the *labdhi* of extraordinary mental retention, which is an attainment associated with the level of purity of his soul because he was born with it, and spells (*vidyā*s). Here, we see the association between *labdhi*s and *vidyā*s since Vajra attained the *vidyā* of flying through a *labdhi*, namely, his ability to remember them in textual sources through his extraordinary power of memory. There is considerable overlap here and indeed, the ability to attain *vidyās* is classified as one of the *labdhi*s. The dangers associated with the attainment of *vidyā*s by people whose conduct might not be in accordance with a requisite level of restraint and thus might misuse them is also an important part of this narrative. It is tempting to speculate here that if the Pūrvas did exist, perhaps the portion that Bhadrabāhu forbade Sthūlabhadra to teach was about *vidyā*s. Although *vidyā*s mentioned in the context of *labdhi* will be discussed, a detailed examination of them and the goddesses associated with them is beyond the scope of this article.

Likewise, the attainment of supernatural powers by *mantra*s will not be explored in any detail, except to compare supernatural powers in specific *mantra*s, such as the *sūrimantra* (*SūM*) with lists of powers in others sources. This subject has been discussed by Paul Dundas in his study of the *sūrimantra*, which is transmitted to *ācārya*s in the

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this ring of mountains, there are only animals. See Jaini, *Jaina Path*, 29-30, 127 and *TS* 3.7-3.16 (= SS 3.37).

[12] Fynes, *Lives of Jain Elders*, canto 12, verses 307-310.

[13] Fynes translates *paṭa* as 'carpet', although some sort of woven cloth for sitting on may be the intent here.

[14] Fynes, *Lives of Jain Elders*, canto 12, verses 311-334. For further details, see the section "Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras on Powers of Movement through the Air" (p. 176 below).

Śvetāmbara image-worshiping (*mūrtipūjaka*) mendicant lineages (*gacchas*) as part of the initiation ceremony. The homage portion of the *Vidyāpīṭha* section of the *sūrimantra* pays homage to the Jinas and to those with various types of supernatural powers, which, according to Dundas, "in its most extended form numbers fifty, although the maximum referred to in any published version of the *mantra* seems to be only forty."[15] He discusses the acquisition of supernatural powers through *mantras*. "The invocations of the *sūrimantra* merge with these varieties of advanced spiritual attainments," such as the ability to fly, curative properties of bodily wastes, and the 'unfailing kitchen'. Thus, these invocations provided "a meditative focus for the gaining of magic and spiritual power, for each of these *labdhi* is envisaged as having twenty *vidyā*, or magic spells personified as deities, associated with it. Siṃhatilaka describes the practical effects brought about by meditation on the possessors of these *labdhi*. So, contemplation of the first, the omniscient Jinas, dispels cholera (*visūcikā*), while intoning the words of the second homage to the clairvoyant Jinas (*ohijiṇa*) cures fever."[16] He further observes that "the first section of the *sūrimantra* is, as its content would suggest, strongly associated with gaining magic powers. According to Rājaśekhara, after properly performing the various necessary rituals associated with it, the adept masters eight attainments or spells (*siddhi*, *vidyā*), which can benefit either himself or another.[17] Further meditation on the twelve *labdhi* words of this section, in the contemplative form of articles of bodily decoration, can subsequently lead to kingship or mastery (*prabhutva*) and wealth… However, the real purpose of the *sūrimantra* for Rājaśekhara is not in question: 'after recitation of the fifth section one hundred thousand times, the *sūri* becomes (*bhavati*) Gautama visibly (*pratyakṣa*), his pupils gain supernormal attainments (*labdhi*) and his lay followers wealth and family'."[18]

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[15] Dundas, "Becoming Gautama," 40.

[16] Dundas, "Becoming Gautama," 41.

[17] Dundas, "Becoming Gautama," 43 and 51, note 52. These are "bringing out wisdom or learning, curing illness, removing poison, freeing from captivity, creating prosperity, rendering fruitless another's magic spell, destroying faults, and quieting the inauspicious."

[18] Dundas, "Becoming Gautama," 43.

Instead, the focus of this article will be on the attainment of *ṛddhi*/*labdhi* through one's own actions. Śvetāmbara sources include selected canonical texts and their commentaries, including the *Āvaśyaka Niryukti* (ca. 200 CE), the *Viśeṣāvaśyakabhāṣya* of Jinabhadra Gaṇi (600 CE),[19] as well as later textual sources, the *Yogaśāstra* of Hemacandra (*YŚH*) (d. 1172) and the *Pravacanasāroddhāra* (*PSā*) of Nemicandra (eleventh century) and a commentary (1185 CE) by Siddhasenasūri (*PSāVṛ*). Digambara sources include the *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama* (*ṢkhĀ*) (ca. 156 CE) and its commentary written by Vīrasena (816 CE) entitled *Dhavalā* (*Dh*) as well as the *Trilokaprajñapti* (*TP*) (ca. 500 CE). The *Tattvārtha Sūtra* (*TS*) (ca. 400 CE?), which is accepted by both sectarian traditions, and its commentaries, namely Śvetāmbara commentaries by Umāsvāti (*TSUm*) and Siddhasenagaṇi (ca. 760) and Digambara commentaries, Pūjyapāda's *Sarvārthasiddhi* (*SS*) (ca. fifth century CE) and Akalaṅka's *Rājavārtika* (*RV*) (eighth century CE), also contain information on these powers.[20] Based on these sources, the attainment of supernatural powers will be investigated from three perspectives: 1) how they may be attained, 2) the types of powers that may be attained, and 3) who may attain them. Lists of the various powers in Śvetāmbara and Digambara sources follow the sections on how they may be attained. Powers of movement through the air are discussed in a separate section following these lists. The manner in which powers may be attained has two aspects: the action itself, such as practicing austerities,[21] and the karmic consequences of that action, which are the efficient causes (*nimitta-kāraṇa*) for a transformation of the soul itself. Jain karma theory is a specialized area of study that can be intimidating to some because of its complexity and a myriad of technical terms. Although it is not the main

[19] The *Viśeṣāvaśyakabhāṣya* is a commentary on the *Āvaśyaka Niryukti*, which is a commentary on the *Āvaśyaka Sūtra*, one of the four basic scriptures (*mūlasūtra*s) in the subsidiary limb (*upāṅga*) of the Śvetāmbara canon. For these sources, I used portions quoted in Ācārya Mahāprajña, ed., *Cyclopaedia of Jain Canonical Texts*, part 1 (Ladnun: Jain Vishva Bharati Institute, 1996) under the term *labdhi*.

[20] There is considerable debate regarding the sectarian identity of Umāsvāti as well as the dating of this work, with estimates ranging from the second to the fifth centuries CE. Digambaras attribute this work to a monk named Umāsvāmī and maintain that the *sūtra* and commentary were written by different individuals. The dating of the *sūtra* and commentaries follows Dalsukh Malvania and Jayendra Soni, eds., *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 10, pt. 1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007). There are several authors named Siddhasena. Dhaky (p. 462) identifies him as the third Siddhasena, also known as Gandhahasti (ca. 690-770 CE).

[21] *Tapas* is translated as 'austerities' throughout.

focus of this paper, I have included information on the karmic processes involved whenever this subject was mentioned by the commentators. Because some readers are familiar with a number of these terms and some may choose to focus on other aspects of these powers, I have not always translated technical terms in the body of the article. Instead, at the end of the chapter, I have included a section on *karma* in which various technical terms are explained.

Some of the powers discussed here are not unique to Jainism, but are, as Olle Qvarnström has noted, "a pan-Indian phenomenon absent only in the Sarvāstivāda and Mīmāṃsaka schools."[22] In Jainism the terms *labdhi* and *ṛddhi* are understood in a broad sense, with certain attainments that are unique to Jainism. Some may be acquired individually and others are obtained as a set in conjunction with attaining a special status, such as becoming a Jina or a Cakravartin, or when one attains omniscience (*kevala-jñāna*). Thus, although the terms supernatural, miraculous, or magical powers are sometimes appropriate, in order to encompass the range of attainments, these terms are best understood in a more general sense, as a capacity that is beyond the ability of most people.

Śvetāmbaras on the Attainment of *Labdhi*s

The story of Vajranābha mentioned above contains the most extensive list of *labdhi*s in *Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacaritra*, and here it states that these attainments arose "by the power of *yoga*."[23] It is not surprising that Hemacandra attributes their acquisition to *yoga*, for in the opening of his *Yogaśāstra*, he associates *yoga* with the attainment of miraculous powers.

> Moreover, the splendour of this "Yogic Dance" [transforms] the [seven] magic powers, phlegm, excrement, secretion, "touch" and "every [part of the body]" into remedies and [develops also] miraculous powers [such as] the acquisition of an undivided sense-organ (*saṃbhinnaśrotṛ labdhi*). The fortune of the blossoming flowers of the [fabulous] wishing tree of *yoga* consists of [supernatural attainments (*labdhi*), such as] walking in the air (*cāraṇa*), the ability to curse and favour (*āśīviṣa*),

[22] Olle Qvarnström, trans., *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra* (YŚH), Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 60 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 20.

[23] *TṢŚC* 1.845 and Johnson, vol. 1, p. 75.

extraordinary perception (*avadhi*) and mind-reading (*manaḥ-paryaya*).[24]

In his commentary on this verse, Hemacandra does not elaborate on the term *yoga*, but in his translation of this text, Olle Qvarnström notes that "in accordance with classical Yoga philosophy, Hemacandra states that *yoga*, here equivalent to the 'three jewels' (*YŚH* I.15-18), is the cause of liberation (*mokṣa*) as well as of miraculous powers (*siddhi*/*aiśvarya*/*labdhi*)."[25] Nevertheless, Hemacandra's autocommentary (*YŚVṛ*) is informative for several reasons. He discusses the attainment of these powers in the context of the story of Sanatkumāra, a universal emperor (Cakravartin) who renounced the household life. He was afflicted by seven diseases, which included a skin disease that caused itching (*kacchū*), consumption (*śoṣa*), fever (*jvara*), and asthma (*śvāsa*), for seven hundred years.[26] He undertook austerities that are difficult to endure, and although all supernatural powers were acquired by the greatness of his austerities, being indifferent to his body, he did not cure his own diseases. Two gods came to him and offered to cure him. He told them that he would accept their offer if they could cure spiritual diseases (*bhāva-roga*) in the form of anger (*krodha*), pride (*māna*), deceit (*māyā*) and greed (*lobha*), which produce endless pain in thousands of births. But if they had come to cure bodily diseases (*dravya-roga*), he told them to look at him, and he lifted his finger, which was oozing from a scab. Having smeared it with a drop of his phlegm (*kapha*), it quickly became golden, like copper with mercury. They praised him, saying that although he was accomplished in magical powers (*siddha-labdhi*), he endured the pain of diseases and practiced austerities. Here, Hemacandra associates the attainment of supernatural powers with austerities (*tapas*), but he provides no further details regarding what these austerities entailed,

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[24] *YŚH* I.8-9 as translated by Qvarnström, p. 20. (*kaphavipruṇmalāmarśasarvauṣ adhimaharddhayaḥ / sambhinnaśrotolabdhiś ca yaugaṃ tāṇḍavaḍambaram//*). Although Hemacandra lists five, in a note Qvarnström inserts the word seven and references the Sanatkumāra story mentioned below.

[25] Qvarnström, *YŚH*, p. 20, note 2.

[26] The story of Sanatkumāra in *TṢŚC* is similar to the version in the commentary. In *TṢŚC* (Johnson, vol. 3, p. 194), it says, "Magic powers were acquired by him enduring all the trials hard to endure, indifferent to any expedient for relief. The seven magic powers, namely: phlegm (*kapha*), *vipruṣ*, dried perspiration (*jalla*), impurity (*mala*), excrement (*viṣṭā*), touch (*āmṛśa*), and also 'everything' (*sarva*), are called remedies." Johnson provides a note on the difficulty of translating *vipruṣ*, *jalla,* and *mala* here. Cf. Śvetāmbara list, nos. 1-5 (pp. 159-160).

although fasting and restrictions on food are the external austerities that are practiced by Jains today.[27] Enduring the pain of diseases is one of the twenty-two afflictions (*parīṣaha*s) that mendicants should endure with equanimity.[28] Sanatkumāra's refusal to cure his own diseases, even though he demonstrated that he had the power to do so, is in accordance with the commentary on this *sūtra*. "He may even possess extraordinary powers to cure acquired by his austerities. Still he does not utilize these powers to get himself cured, as he has no attachment towards the body."[29] In his commentary, Hemacandra defines the five *ṛddhi*s that cure diseases listed at *YŚH* 1.8 and discusses a number of other supernatural powers. For some he mentions the *karma*s whose destruction-cum-suppression (*kṣayopaśama*) is associated with the attainment these powers.

Qvarnström also mentions that apart from Hemacandra's commentary, the most extensive list of supernatural powers is found in Nemicandra's *Pravacanasāroddhāra*.[30] After listing twenty-eight *labdhi*s, Nemicandra states that "the soul acquires these *labdhi*s by particular transformations (*pariṇāma*) and by the power of specific austerities."[31] Although Siddhasenasūri defines these *labdhi*s in his commentary, he does not spell out the nature of the austerities undertaken to attain them nor does he give any details regarding karmic processes associated with their attainment. He merely states, "from the power of extraordinary austerities (*asādhāraṇa-tapas*) and from the power of auspicious, more auspicious, and most auspicious transformations (*śubha*, *śubhatara*, *śubhatama pariṇāma*) of the soul, there are various types of attainments (*labdhi*s) or special powers (*ṛddhi*s)."[32]

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[27] YŚVṛ 1.8.48.49, *TS* 9.19, as translated by Nathmal Tatia, trans., *Tattvārtha Sūtra: That Which Is* (London: Harper Collins, 1994), 232, lists six external austerities, four of which are associated with food: fasting, decreasing the amount of food consumed, restricting the varieties of food consumed, and giving up stimulating food. In earlier times, two additional external austerities were permitted for ascetics: meditating and practicing austerities in a solitary place, and mortification of the body by assuming various positions or by residing under a tree or in the open where the ascetic is subject to heat and cold. *TS* 9.20 lists the six internal austerities: penances for the transgression of vows (*prāyaścitta*), reverence for the teachings and teachers (*vinaya*), service to senior and sick ascetics (*vaiyāvṛttya*), study of the scriptures (*svādhyāya*), renunciation of attachment and passions (*vyutsarga*), and meditation (*dhyāna*).

[28] *TS* 9.22.

[29] *TS* 9.22, as translated by S. A. Jain, *Reality: English Translation of Śrimat Pūjyapāda's Sarvārthasiddhi* (Madras: Jwalamalini Trust, 1960; reprint, 1992), 255.

[30] Qvarnström, *YŚH*, p. 21, note 1.

[31] *PSā*, 270 *dvāra*, 1492-1495 (p. 409).

[32] *PSāVṛ*, vol. 64, p. 430.

The list found in the *Pravacanasāroddhāra*, as Paul Dundas has observed, bears a striking similarity to a shorter list in the *Aupapātika Sūtra* (*AuSū*).[33] In the description of supernatural powers attained by mendicants in Mahāvīra's lineage, no details are given regarding the variety of *karma* associated with the acquisition of a specific *labdhi* nor does Abhayadevasūri comment on this.[34] In the Hindi comments on this text, it states that "these *labdhi*s are manifested in the form of a power (*śakti*) in the soul when there is disassociation (*nirjarā*) of a specific type of *karma* by means of undertaking specific types of austerities."[35] The editors also observe that the *labdhi*s are effective only when the ascetic wishes and resolves to use them for the benefit of others, and they quote from the *Āvaśyaka Cūrṇi* "a *śramaṇa* (mendicant) endowed with *āmarṣauṣadhi* can cure a person or himself by his touch only when he resolves, 'I wish to cure him'. As long as he does not resolve thus, this power does not become effective as a cure." They also note, "however, in many scriptures there are mentions of instances where the smell or touch of excreta of some accomplished ascetics naturally cure many diseases."[36] However, in the account of the attainment of supernatural powers by a brahmanical renunciant (*parivrājaka*) named Ambaḍa,[37] there is mention of certain *karma*s. Ambaḍa, along with his followers, retained their traditional non-Jain ascetic garb but paid homage to Mahāvīra and followed the conduct of Jain mendicants, undertaking the fast until death (*sallekhanā*) when food and water could not be obtained in the proper manner. Prior to this, Ambaḍa had undertaken severe bodily austerities, sitting on the scorching earth under the hot sun, and observing a series of two-day fasts, which caused auspicious transformations (*śubha pariṇāma*) of the soul with a purity that is associated with excellent determination (*adhyavasāya*) and auspicious *leśyā*s.[38] At that time there was the *kṣayopaśama* of *karma*s that obstruct the attainments (*labdhi*) of power (*vīrya*), the power of transformation of the body (*vaikriya*), and clairvoyance (*avadhi-jñāna*).

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[33] Dundas, "Becoming Gautama," 41.

[34] AuSū 15 (p. 96) = Bothara, *AuSū* 24, pp. 56-64.

[35] Bothara, *AuSū*, p. 63 (comments in Hindi).

[36] Bothara, *AuSū*, p. 64 (English translation).

[37] For a translation of the story of Ambaḍa and his seven hundred followers, see Bothara, *AuSū* 82-100 (pp. 249-68). *Labdhi*s are mentioned at AuSū 92 (pp. 250-60).

[38] *Leśyā* is a karmic stain. It is a particular color that a soul takes on that is indicative of its level of spiritual purity.

The *Tattvārtha Sūtra* also states that the transformational body (*vaikriya-śarīra*) may be created by *labdhi*, which Pūjyapāda defines as the attainment of supernatural powers by special austerities by humans and animals, and it arises naturally for those whose body formation occurs spontaneously upon descent (*aupapātika*), namely hell-beings and heavenly beings. Likewise, the fiery body (*taijasa-śarīra*) that is used to emit hot rays (*tejo-leśyā*) to burn one's enemies is formed by someone who has attained this power.[39] The translocational body (*āhāraka-śarīra*) is also created by a mendicant who knows the fourteen Pūrvas and who has attained this *labdhi*. However, the most extensive treatment of supernatural powers in Śvetāmbara commentaries is in the context of *TS* 10.7, which discusses various aspects of liberated souls (*siddha*s). In his commentary, Umāsvāti lists some thirty-six *labdhi*s and states that they may be attained by practicing either of the first two stages of pure or white meditation (*śukla dhyāna*). In discussing the path of purification of the soul, he states that "the soul gradually rids itself of the types of mournful and wrathful meditation and acquires the power of analytical meditation (*dharma dhyāna*). It reaches the first two stages of white meditation [sometimes] leading to the acquisition of supernatural powers." Although the commentary does not discuss who may attain the *labdhi*s mentioned here, it is apparent that *śukla dhyāna* alone is not the cause of their attainment, because if this were the case, then all liberated souls (*siddha*s) would have attained them. However, in this same *sūtra*, in which liberated souls are examined from different perspectives, with respect to knowledge, prior to attaining *kevala-jñāna*, a soul may have two, three, or four varieties of knowledge in combination, and with respect to relative numerical strength (*alpabahutva*), more attain three types of knowledge (*mati*, *śruta*, and *avadhi*) than four types (additionally, mind reading, *manaḥ-paryaya*).[40]

The *Āvaśyaka Niryukti* and the *Viśeṣāvaśyakabhāṣya* do not give any specifics regarding *karma* and the acquisition of *labdhi*s, but state that they arise from destruction (*kṣaya*) and destruction-cum-suppression (*kṣayopaśama*) of *karma*. They list seventeen *labdhi*s, and the *Viśeṣāvaśyakabhāṣya* mentions that some think there are twenty, and

[39] *TS* 2.47-48 = *SS* 2.46). For a discussion on different views regarding the fiery body, see Tatia, *TS*, pp. 59-60.

[40] Tatia (*TS*, p. 260) adds that this is because "mind reading is possible only for those ascetics who undertake very difficult austerities."

these are listed in a commentary.[41] However, Maladhārī Hemacandrasūri's twelfth-century commentary is of special interest because it contains a list of who may acquire various *labdhi*s, which is similar to that found in the *Pravacanasāroddhāra*.

In his commentary on the *Sthānāṅga Sūtra*, which lists five types of persons who are endowed with *ṛddhi*s, Arhats, Cakravartins, Baladevas, Vāsudevas, and purified ascetics (*bhāvitātmā anagāra*), Abhayadevasūri defines *ṛddhi* as something that is abundant or plentiful (*pracurā*), or praiseworthy, commendable, or auspicious (*praśastā*), and someone who is endowed with *ṛddhi*s is one who is pre-eminent or has superhuman qualities (*atiśāya*s). After listing twenty-eight attainments, and briefly defining two of them, he quotes from an unidentified source: "*labdhi*s are transformations of the soul (*jīva*). There are many varieties that are produced from the rise (*udaya*), destruction (*kṣaya*), destruction-cum-suppression (*kṣayopaśama*), and suppression (*upaśama*) [of *karma*]."[42]

Digambaras on the Attainment of *Ṛddhis*

A series benedictory verses (*maṅgala-sūtra*s) paying homage to the spiritual victors (Jinas) and to the spiritual victors who have attained various supernatural powers (*ṛddhi*s) is found at the beginning of the *Vargaṇā-khaṇḍa*, the fourth *khaṇḍa* of the *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama* "Scripture in Six Parts," the earliest extant Digambara text.[43] Vīrasena discusses

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[41] As quoted in Mahāprajña, *Cyclopaedia of Jain Canonical Texts*, pp. 547 and 550.

[42] *Sthānāṅga Sūtra* 5.2, *sūtra* 439-440. Abhayadevasūri defines *saṃbhinnasrotṛ* as the capacity of hearing all words simultaneously and *āśīviṣa* as the capacity to bless and curse. See 6 and 11 in the Śvetāmbara list (pp. 160, 161 below).

[43] It is traditionally thought that knowledge contained in the Jain scriptures (Āgamas) is beginningless and uncreated, like the universe itself. After attaining omniscience (*kevala-jñāna*, each Tīrthaṅkara communicates these eternal truths to his head disciples (*gaṇadhara*s), who interpret his teachings and systematize them into the fourteen Pūrvas and the twelve Aṅgas. In the course of time, knowledge of the Pūrvas was gradually lost. According to Digambara tradition, Ācārya Dharasena, who knew two Pūrvas, was living alone near Valabhī and while seated in meditation realized that the teachings of Mahāvīra would soon be lost. He sent someone to the South to find two Digambara mendicants and he taught what he knew to these munis, whom he named Puṣpadanta and Bhūtabali. They returned to the South, and Puṣpadanta died after completing one book (*khaṇḍa*). Bhūtabali wrote the remainder of what they had learned in five more *khaṇḍa*s. It is said that this work was completed 683 years after the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra (156 CE).

the forty-one *ṛddhi*s mentioned in these verses and quotes two verses that are of interest. One states that there are seven main types of *ṛddhi*s: *buddhi* (power of intellect/knowledge), *tapas* (power of austerity), *vikriyā* (power to change bodily form), *auṣadhī* (power of healing), *rasa* (power to transform ordinary food into delicious food), *bala* (physical power), and *akṣīṇa* (power to make food and dwellings inexhaustible) (p. 58).[44] This list provides the structure for their ordering in subsequent sources, including the *Sarvārthasiddhi* and the *Gommaṭasāra* of Nemicandra,[45] and 'seven great supernatural powers' are also mentioned in inscriptions.[46] In the *Trilokaprajñapti* and the *Rājavartika* (3.36), the ordering remains the same but there are eight main *ṛddhi*s, with *kriyā*, a sub-category of *vikriyā* in the list of seven, taken as an independent category. The other verse quoted by Vīrasena states that the *gaṇadhara*s possess these seven *ṛddhi*s, a pleasant voice, and so forth, likewise clairvoyance (*avadhi-jñāna*), and mind reading (*manaḥ-paryaya*).[47] Vīrasena asserts that the benedictory verses found here are not a component part of the *Vargaṇā-khaṇḍa* because they were not composed (*anibaddha*) by the author, Bhūtabali, who was a disciple of Dharasena. Instead, he attributes them to the *gaṇadhara* Indrabhūti Gautama, who is also mentioned in the context of the Śvetāmbara *sūrimantra*.[48] The *ṛddhi*s mentioned in this *maṅgala-sūtra* comprise the earliest Digambara source for their study.

In the introduction to this volume, the editors have stated that "the same *sūtra*s are also found included in the *Yoniprābhṛta*, a work of Mantra Vidyā traditionally attributed to Dharasena, the teacher of Puṣpadanta and Bhūtabali."[49] They give no additional information

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[44] *ṢkhĀ*, vol. 9, p. 58.

[45] *SS* 3.36 and J. L. Jaini, trans. *Gommaṭsāra Jīva-Kāṇḍa* of Nemicandra. The Sacred Books of the Jainas, vol. 5. (Lucknow: The Central Jaina Publishing House, 1927. Reprint: New Delhi: Today & Tomorrow's Printers & Publishers, 1990), verse 445.

[46] E.g., "In that ocean (arose) the groups of excellent jewels, the mighty and illustrious munis, Gautama and others, endowed with the seven great supernatural powers." *Epigraphia Carnatika*, vol. 2 (Mysore: Institute of Kannada Studies, University of Mysore, second revised ed., 1973), inscription 71 (64), p. 377.

[47] *ṢkhĀ*, vol. 9, p. 128.

[48] *ṢkhĀ*, vol. 9, p. 103; see also English Introduction (not numbered).

[49] On Prābhṛtas (Pkt. Pāhuḍas) and their association with the Pūrvas, see Hiralal Rasikdas Kapadia, *A History of the Canonical Literature of the Jainas* (Surat, 1941), pp. 91-95 and M. B. Jhavery, *Comparative and Critical Study of Mantraśāstra* (Ahmedabad, 1944), 155-56. Kapadia states that "in the introduction (p. 6) to *Nirvāṇakalikā*, it is said: 'Dharasena composed the *Yoni-prabhrita* about 135 AD (p. 94)'." He cites sources (p. 93) claiming that one who knows this text can generate animate objects. He also mentions a narrative in *Prabhāvakacaritra* (*Pādalipta-*

regarding their source, but they may have been referring to a manuscript of this name at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, from which Jhavery, in his *Comparative Study of Mantrasāstra* has reproduced the *Gaṇadharavalaya Mantra*, which opens with the same *sūtra*s and contains a similar list of *ṛddhi*s. As appropriate, it concludes with an homage to all the *ṛddhi*s and to the circle of the blessed *gaṇadhara*s, while the verses in the *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama* conclude with an homage to liberated souls (*siddha*s) and to the enlightened sages (*buddha-ṛṣi*s) or lineage of mendicant leaders (*ācārya paramparā*). Although the similarity between the two is indeed striking, Kapadia questions whether this is a manuscript of the same work as that attributed to Dharasena because it says that it was composed by Panhapravaṇa Muni.[50]

The association between the *gaṇadhara*s and *ṛddhi*s is also found in the *Trilokaprajñapti*, where a list of the *ṛddhi*s immediately follows the names of chief *gaṇadhara*s of the twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras of our current descending cycle of time (*avasarpiṇī*). Here it states that all the *gaṇadhara*s are endowed with eight [main] *ṛddhi*s. In Digambara sources the *Trilokaprajñapti* and the *Dhavalā* commentary contain the most detailed discussions regarding their acquisition. In both of these texts, the efficient cause (*nimitta-kāraṇa*) most often mentioned is austerities (*tapas*), and on occasion this is specifically defined as fasting (*upavāsa*). As would be expected in a commentary on a text that discusses the intricacies of Jain *karma* theory, the *Dhavalā* contains information about *karma*s associated with the attainment of some of the *ṛddhi*s, and there is mention of them in the *Trilokaprajñapti* as well. The *Cāritrasāra* of Cāmuṇḍarāya (tenth century) appears to be derived from the *Trilokaprajñapti* and contains no additional information on the attainment of *ṛddhi*s.

Digambara sources also associate the attainment of supernatural powers with meditation. Śubhacandra, the author of the *Jñānārṇava*, (ca. late eighth or early ninth century), discusses various aspects of righteous meditation (*dharma dhyāna*), including the proper places

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prabandha, v. 115-127) about Rudradevasūri teaching the *Yoniprābhṛta* to his pupil and a fisherman overheard the portion dealing with the generation of fish. When the *ācārya* came to know that the fisherman was using this power, he dissuaded him from using it (p. 93). The *Prabhāvakacaritra* is a Śvetāmbara text by Prabhācandra, revised by Pradyumnasūri (1277 CE), which is considered to be a continuation of Hemacandra's *Pariśiṣṭaparvan*. It contains the life-stories of twenty-two Jain *ācārya*s.

[50] Kapadia, *History of the Canonical Literature*, 94.

and times for meditation and various postures (*āsana*s). According to Tatia, he admits the necessity of the various processes of breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*) and the development of the power of concentration, and the withdrawal (*pratyāhāra*) of the sense organs and the mind from external objects. "Such process is held to be more useful than the regulation of breath, which sometimes leads to unnecessary pain and uneasiness. Moreover the processes of breath-control lead to the acquisition of various supernatural powers which are detrimental to the spiritual well-being."[51] Thus, there is an agreement that supernatural powers may be attained during meditation, but Śubhacandra would understand this to take place in any type of meditation where the practitioner is engaged in breath control, not just in *śukla dhyāna*.

*Labdhi*s in the Śvetāmbara *Pravacanasāroddhāra (PSā)*

Below is a list of the 28 *labdhi*s in the PSā and the additional 10 in the commentary. This list was chosen as the standard of comparison because it includes most of the *labdhi*s mentioned in earlier sources and is frequently referenced by editors of other texts. *Labdhis* also found in the *Aupapātika Sūtra* (*AuSū*), the *Āvaśyaka Niryukti* (*ĀvNir*) (17), and the *Viśeṣāvaśyakabhāṣya Vṛtti* of Maladhārī Hemacandra (*ViVṛ*) (20) are so indicated. Information regarding the variety of *karma* associated with the attainment of a given *labdhi* { } is from Hemacandra's commentary on *YŚH*. In all cases, he states that it is attained from the strong (*prakṛṣṭa*) *kṣayopaśama* of the *karma* that hinders the energy quality of the soul (*vīrya-antarāya karma*) along with a specific variety of obscuring (*āvaraṇa*) *karma*.

1. *āmarṣauṣadhi*. *Āmarṣa* means touch. From the touch of the hand, foot, etc., of a person endowed with this type of attainment, disease of another or of oneself is cured. Hemacandra adds that water and wind that has touched this person's body cure diseases. (*AuSū*) (*ĀvNir*) (*ViVṛ*)

2. *vipruḍauṣadhi*. *Vipruḍa* means component parts, namely, the component parts of urine or excrement. By the power of this attainment,

[51] Tatia, *Studies in Jaina Philosophy* (Varanasi: Jaina Cultural Research Society, 1951), 286-87. There is a misprint in his citation, which should read xxvii.6.

the component parts of these become pleasant smelling and cure disease of others and oneself.[52] (*ĀvNir*) (*ViVṛ*)

3-4. *khelauṣadhi* and *jallauṣadhi*. *Khela* means phlegm or mucus (*śleṣma*) and *jalla* means impurities (*mala*) originating from the ears, mouth, nose, eyes, tongue, and the body. By this attainment these impurities become pleasant smelling and cure all diseases.[53] (*AuSū*) (*ĀvNir*) (*ViVṛ*)

5. *sarvauṣadhi*. *Sarva* means all, in the sense of the component parts of all bodily substances collected together, such as excrement, urine, hair, nails, and so forth. By this attainment they are transformed into medicines and become pleasant smelling. (*AuSū*) (*ĀvNir*) (*ViVṛ*)

6. *saṃbhinnaśrotṛ*. This attainment can be understood in three senses. It means the ability to hear with all parts of the body. Or it means that sense-objects that are grasped by the five sense organs are grasped by only one sense organ, namely the ear, in other words, the ear has the capacity to hear and to function as the other four sense-organs. A third interpretation is that the ear has the power to hear separately and distinctly the various sounds produced simultaneously by a variety musical instruments (e.g., conch, kettle drum) in the army of a Cakravartin up to a distance of twelve *yojana*s. (*AuSū*) (*ĀvNir*) (*ViVṛ*)

7. *avadhi-jñāna*. Visual knowledge of physical sense-objects by the power of the soul only, without the assistance of the sense organ of sight (clairvoyant knowledge). In the story of Ānanda in the *Upāsakadaśāḥ* he had taken the vows of a lay follower (*aṇuvrata*s), regularly practiced severe forms of fasting, and was undertaking the fast ending in death (*sallekhanā*). Because of auspicious mental effort (*śubha-adhyavasāya*), auspicious transformation (*śubha-pariṇāma*), mental coloration (*leśyā*) that was clear (*viśuddha*) this arose in him from the *kṣayopaśama* of *avadhi-jñānāvaraṇa karma*. In his notes to the Hindi translation, Dr. Chaganlal Shastri adds that this karmic

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[52] This agrees with Hemacandra's gloss at *YŚH* 1.8 of *vipruṣ* with *uccāra* and *purīṣa* ('excrement'). However Johnson (*TṢŚC*, vol. 3, p. 194, note 257) also mentions that "Leumann in his Āvaśyaka-Erzählungen takes it to be 'drops of water which fall from one's mouth when speaking.' He quotes from his commentary, '*prasravaṇādi bindavaḥ*'."

[53] In the list found in Sanatkumāra's story in *TṢŚC* (Johnson, vol. 3, p. 194) both *jalla* and *mala* are mentioned, and Johnson observes that it is difficult to understand how they are different, given the definition in *PSā* and *YŚH* 1.8. She believes *jalla* may refer to dried perspiration when a distinction must be made.

transformation was caused by austerities (*tapas*), vows (*vratas*), and restraint (*pratyākhyāna*).[54] Both humans and five-sensed rational animals are capable of attaining this power. Heavenly beings and hell-beings also have this power but, like the transformational body, it is acquired at birth without any effort and thus for them is not a *labdhi*. (*ĀvNir*)

(8 and 9 are two levels of mind reading [*manaḥ-paryaya*]. They are acquired only by human beings.)[55]

8. *ṛjumati*. Simple or straight mind reading. By means of this power, one knows the general modes (*paryāya*/*bhāva*) of the mind of others. For example, if a person is thinking about an object, such as a pot, and is wondering about its physical characteristics, what it is made of or its color, one can ascertain these thoughts. Its extent is related to the strength of *kṣayopaśama* of *manaḥ-paryaya-jñānāvaraṇa karma* and may be lost if *kṣayopaśama* ceases. (*AuSū*) (*ĀvNir*) (*ViVṛ*)

9. *vipulamati*. Complex mind reading. Direct knowledge of the various modes of the mind associated with beliefs about a given subject-matter. For example, the ability to ascertain the thoughts of a person who is thinking about a pot and the city of Pāṭalipūtra, and who thinks about a pot that was made there today that is being stored inside a house. [Unlike clairvoyant knowledge, which can extend to the limits of the occupied universe (*lokākāśa*)] it extends as far as the regions where humans live, the two and one-half continents [in the center of the universe]. Once attained, it is never lost, and is enlarged to omniscience. Thus, it arises only in a person who will attain liberation in that life. (*AuSū*) (*ĀvNir*) (*ViVṛ*)

10. *cāraṇa*. The ability of going to and returning from locations that are beyond the power of [ordinary] human beings. See Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras on Powers of Movement through the Air (p. 176).

11. *āśīviṣa*. The power of fearsome poison in a fang. By means of undertaking certain activities, such as severe forms of austerities, one

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[54] *UpāSū* 1.12-1.15. and Shastri's note, p. 74. For different levels of *avadhi*, see 1-3 in the Digambara list (p. 167) and Kristi L. Wiley, "Extrasensory Perception and Knowledge in Jainism," in *Essays in Jaina Philosophy and Religion*, edited by Piotr Balcerowicz and Marek Mejor (Warsaw: Warsaw Indological Studies, vol. 2, 2002. Reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2003), 92-97.

[55] For further details, including a discussion about the *guṇasthāna*s in which *manaḥ-paryaya* may be attained, see Wiley, "Extrasensory Perception," 97-106.

is capable of undertaking activities like those of beings with poisonous fangs, such as snakes, scorpions, and *nāga*s. Or one has the power to destroy others by cursing. Humans and five-sensed rational animals can attain this through actions (*karma*). (*ĀvNir*) In some beings, the power to poison is innate. This power is also understood to be both the power to curse and to bless.[56]

12. *kevalin*. The acquisition of the special abilities that are associated with the attainment of omniscience. (*ĀvNir*) {*kevala-jñāna*}

13. *gaṇadhara*. The attainment of the special abilities that are associated with becoming a chief disciple of a Tīrthaṅkara, the compilers of the twelve Aṅgas.

14. *pūrvadhara*. The first sermons that are given to the *gaṇadhara*s, which are the basis of the of the twelve Aṅgas, are called the Pūrvas. The *gaṇadhara*s arrange them in the form of *sūtra*s. A person who has acquired this attainment knows the *sūtra*s of all fourteen Pūrvas or ten of the fourteen Pūrvas. (*ĀvNir*) {*śrutāvaraṇa*}

15. Arhat. The attainment of special abilities associated with a person who attains omniscience, forms the fourfold Jain community of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen, and teaches others the path to salvation.[57] (*ĀvNir*) (*ViVṛ*)

16. Cakravartin. The attainment of powers associated with becoming universal emperor, one of the categories of illustrious men (*śalākā-puruṣa*s).[58] (*ĀvNir*) (*ViVṛ*)

17. Baladeva. The attainment of powers associated with becoming a Baladeva, one of the categories of illustrious men (*śalākāpuruṣa*s). They are half-Cakravartins, with half the status and power of a

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[56] See also number 23.

[57] Although not stated here, it is caused by *tīrthaṅkara nāma karma*. The powers here are the thirty-four *atiśaya*s, listed, with some variation, in Śvetāmbara and Digambara sources. For a translation of one of the Śvetāmbara lists, see Charlotte Krauss, ed., *Ancient Jaina Hymns*. Scindian Oriental Series, no. 2 (Ujjain: Scindia Oriental Institute, 1953), 20-22. For a translation of all thirty-four *atiśaya*s, see pp. 20-23. Digambara lists contain two *atiśaya*s of interest here: *ākāśagamana* and supremacy over *vidyā*s. See Jinendra Varṇī, *Jainendra Siddhānta Kośa* (Delhi: Bhāratīya Jñānapīṭha, 1998), vol. 1, p. 137.

[58] On *śalākāpuruṣa*s, see John E. Cort, "An Overview of the Jaina Purāṇas," in *Purāṇa Perennis: Reciprocity and Transformation in Hindu and Jaina Texts*, edited by Wendy Doniger (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 195-202, 206.

Cakravartin, and are the older half-brothers of the Vāsudevas, with the same father and different mothers. In our location of the universe, nine are born each progressive and regressive half-cycle of time. (*ĀvNir*) (*ViVṛ*)

18. Vāsudeva. The attainment of powers associated with becoming a Vāsudeva, or *nārāyaṇa*, one of the categories of illustrious men (*śalākāpuruṣa*s). They are the younger brothers of the Baladevas. (*ĀvNir*) (*ViVṛ*)

19. *kṣīra-madhu-sarpirāśrava*. This has two meanings. 1) The words of a speaker become attractive or sweet, like the taste of milk (*kṣīra*), honey (*madhu*), or ghee (*sarpi*), as in the speech of the elder (*sthavira*) Vajrasvāmī. In the way that milk and ghee in concentrated form makes the body well nourished and the mind satisfied, the words of such a person make the body and soul of the hearer joyful. The attainment of other types of speech, including words with the taste of the nectar of immortality (*amṛtāśravī*) and sugarcane (*ikṣurasāśravī*), is to be understood here. 2) Alms that have been collected in a begging bowl that are devoid of taste become flavorful and nutritious. (*AuSū*) (*ViVṛ*)

20. *koṣṭha-buddhi*. This means to safeguard something well for a very long time, like grain stored in a granary (*koṣṭha*). A person with this power can remember in this manner the meaning of sacred texts that are heard or read. (*AuSū*) (*ViVṛ*) {*jñānāvaraṇa*}

21. *padānusārī-buddhi*. Having heard just one word or phrase, the knowledge of other words arises. (*AuSū*) (*ViVṛ*) {*jñānāvaraṇa*}

22. *bīja-buddhi*. Having heard one subject (*artha*) a person can expand this into knowledge of the meanings of many unspoken things, like a seed (*bīja*) [that has the capacity to produce many sprouts]. Because the *gaṇadhara*s have this attainment they are able to compose the entire twelve Aṅgas with an infinite number (*ananta*) of subjects having heard just one main subject from the mouth of a Tīrthaṅkara in the form of a three word expression. (*AuSū*) (*ViVṛ*) {*jñānāvaraṇa*}

23. *tejo-leśyā*. Becoming angry, a person has the power to project particles of hot matter from the fiery body and with it incinerate a person or an object that one dislikes. Umāsvāti (*TSUm* 2.47) says that this is

associated with the power to curse (*śāpa*) or bless (*anugraha*). Blessing would refer to *śīta-leśyā*.[59]

24. *āhāraka*. For the purpose of removal of doubt, those who know the fourteen Pūrvas make a translocational body the size of one hand suitable for going to another region [i.e., the Videhas, where Tīrthaṅkaras are preaching in order to remove doubts about the teachings]. Umāsvāti (*TSUm* 2.47) states that this body exists for up to forty-eight minutes (*antarmuhūrta*).

25. *śīta-leśyā*. By this attainment, a person is able to project particles of cool matter onto a person who is being burned by *tejo-leśyā* and save him from being incinerated.

26. *vaikriya* (*vaikurvikadeha*). The power of transforming one's body according to will. For animals and humans this is an attainment. Heavenly beings and hell-beings have transformable bodies from birth. Umāsvāti states a being with such a body, being one, can become many and then become one again, can become minute and then huge, and can change from being visible to invisible. He can walk on the earth and then through the air, can be resistant and then non-resistant, and can create all sorts of forms simultaneously. It is by means of the transformable body that adepts create illusory objects. (*AuSū*) (*ViVṛ*)

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[59] A well-known story of the use of these two *leśyā*s is found in BhSū, *śataka* 15, in association with Makkhali Gosāla. When Gosāla insulted a non-Jain mendicant (*bāla-tapasya*) named Vesiyāyana, he became enraged and released his *tejo-leśyā*, which he had acquired by ascetic practices. Mahāvīra neutralized the effects with his *śīta-leśyā*. Mahāvīra then explained to Gosāla what had happened and at Gosāla's request described the six-month penance in order to attain this power, which he performed: "seated facing the sun in the vicinity of a lake, with his hands raised above his head, eating only one handful of beans every three days." Later, Gosāla parted ways with Mahāvīra and declared himself the leader of the Ājīvikas, and some time after Mahāvīra had attained omniscience, the two met again. Gosāla was angered at Mahāvīra's characterization of him and used his *tejo-leśyā* to incinerate two of Mahāvīra's disciples and then turned his powers on Mahāvīra, who was able to save himself from death but became ill as a result of this. For details regarding this story, see A. L. Basham, *History and Doctrine of the Ājīvikas* (London: Luzac, 1951; reprint Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), 34-66, esp. 49-50, 60. See also Jozef Deleu, *Viyāhapannatti* (*Bhagavaī*): *The Fifth Aṅga of the Jaina Canon* (Brugge: De Tempel, Tempelhof, 1970; reprint Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996), 214-20. This account is at odds with the notion that the surroundings of a Tīrthaṅkara are peaceful. Therefore it is classified by Śvetāmbara as an extraordinary event (*āścarya*). See P. S. Jaini, *Jaina Path*, pp. 19-25. In Digambara texts, there is no mention of Makkhali Gosāla's association with Mahāvīra in this contest.

The following are associated with powers of the transformational body (*vaikriya-śarīra*). They are listed only in the *PSā* commentary. 1) *aṇutva*/*aṇimā*: the power of making one's body small, equal to the size of an atom, and entering into a lotus stalk, one experiences enjoyment, like that of a universal emperor (Cakravartin). 2) *mahattva*/*mahimā*: making one's body large, equal to the size of Mount Meru. 3) *laghutva/laghimā*: making one's body light in weight, like the wind. 4) *gurutva/garimā*: making one's body heavy, like a thunderbolt. 5) *prāpti*: the ability to stretch the limbs of the body to a place that one desires while remaining seated on the earth. 6) *prākāmya*: the ability to move through solid earth as if it were water and the ability of walking on water as if it were dry land. 7) *īśitva*: power over the three worlds. 8) *vaśitva*: the ability to overpower or control other living beings. 9) *apratighātitva*: the ability to come and go without resistance, having entered a solid object, such as a mountain. 10) *antardhāna*: the ability to attain the state of invisibility. 11) *kāmarūpitva*. The ability to take on simultaneously various forms at will.[60]

27. *akṣīṇa-mahānasī*. With a small amount of food placed in the bowl [of a mendicant] hundred of thousands of mendicants are satisfied; nevertheless, the bowl remains full. It becomes empty only when consumed by the mendicant having this attainment. Hemacandra associates this with the *gaṇadhara* Gautama. (*AuSū*) (*ViVṛ*) {*antarāya karma*}[61]

28. *pulāka*. By the power of this attainment, a mendicant is able to battle single-handed the army of a Cakravartin for the protection of the mendicant community (*saṅgha*) and its teachings. The reference here is to the first among the five classes of mendicants at *TS* 9.48 (= *SS* 9.46). *Pulāka* means grain that is empty or blighted, devoid of pith. According to Siddhasenagaṇi's commentary, this type of monk

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[60] I have included corresponding terms found in *TP*. Cf. with the standard list of eight *siddhi*s mentioned in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* (III.45), and commentaries: *aṇimā*, *laghimā*, *mahimā*, *prāpti*, *prākāmya*, *vaśitva* (mastery, ability to control elements and other beings), *īśitṛtva* (ability to control outward appearance, disappearance, and rearrangement of elements), and *yatra-kāmāvasāyitva* (ability to manipulate elements according to desire). See Edwin F. Bryant, trans., *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* (New York: North Point Press, 2009), 383-85, and James Naughton Woods, trans., *The Yoga-System of Patañjali* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 17, 1914. Reprint Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988), 278-80.

[61] Although not mentioned in the commentary, the sub-variety might be *dāna-antarāya*, whose operation hinders dispensing of alms.

is like an empty pod of grain because although renunciants (*nirgranthas*), they live by means of supernatural powers attained by austerities and learning (*śruta*).

Additional *labdhi*s at *TS* 10.7 Umāsvāti's commentary (numbered in order of their listing there). 19) (no term defined) on account of a certain level of purity of *mati-jñāna*, the sense organs of touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing perceive sense-objects even though they exceed the normal distance for sight, etc. 26) *abhilaṣita-prāpti*: the power to obtain desired objects. 27) *aniṣṭa-aprāpti*: the power not to obtain undesired objects. 30) *vāditva*: the power of proficiency in debate and defeating one's opponents. 31) *sarvarutajñāna*: the ability to comprehend all utterances (*ruta*) of foreigners (*mlecchas*), wild and domesticated animals, birds, and so forth. 33) *vidyādharatva*: proficiency in procuring spells and knowledge of occult sciences (*vidyā*s). (*ViVṛ*)

Additional *labdhi*s in *YŚH*: *mano-vāk-kāya bala* (strength of mind, speech, body). Mind and speech are associated with *vīrya-antarāya* and *jñānāvaraṇa karma*s, and body is associated with *vīrya-antarāya*. Hemacandra mentions that a person with extraordinary bodily strength can remain standing motionless like a statue for a year and that Bāhubali had this power.

Additional *labdhi*s in *AuSū*: 1) *paṭa-buddhi*: intellect that can hold within it a great quantity of teachings, like a cloth that contains within it many fibers. 2) *vidyādhara*: the ability to become a *vidyādhara*, or one who has attained certain types of spells (*vidyā*s), *prajñapti*, and so forth.[62] 3) In his commentary, Abhayadevasūri provides two Sanskrit words as the equivalent of the Prakrit *āgāsātivāin*. The first, *ākāśātipātin*, means one who has the ability of traversing the sky through the power of the spell for going in the sky (*ākāśagāmi vidyā*) or by the power of smearing something on one's feet; or, the power of causing desired and undesired objects, such as showers of gold [dust], and so forth, to fall from the sky. The second, *ākāśādivādin*, means one who has the ability of being a competent speaker regarding proof of the existence of objects, even those that are invisible, such as space, and so forth.

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[62] *Prajñapti* is the second of sixteen *mahāvidyā*s and *vidyādevī*s in both sectarian traditions. See U. P. Shah, "Iconography of the Sixteen Jaina Mahāvidyās," in *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art* 50, 1947, pp. 125-27. See also John E. Cort, "Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions" in *Numen* 34, no. 2 (1987): 235-255.

Ṛddhis in the Digambara *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama*

The list in *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama* was chosen as the standard of comparison because it is the earliest known list in Digambara sources, and later lists follow it closely, both in the *ṛddhi*s mentioned and in the ordering of their main categories. Because the first *sūtra* pays homage to the Jinas, add one for the corresponding *sūtra* numbers. Unless otherwise indicated, the acquisition involves the strong (*utkṛṣṭa*) *kṣayopaśama* of the *karma*s mentioned in brackets. Additional information as well as other *ṛddhi*s found in *TP* has been noted. The *TP* appears to be the source for *RV* and the *Cāritrasāra* of Cāmuṇḍarāya (tenth century) as they both contain the *ṛddhi*s mentioned below that are not found in *ṢkhĀ* and *Dh*. The *Cāritrasāra* adds no additional information and thus is not discussed.

1. *avadhi-jñāna*. This and the following three terms relate to different degrees of clairvoyant knowledge. This is the power of direct (*pratyakṣa*) visual knowledge, and because it is partial or incomplete, it is also called *deśa-avadhi*. It is of two types. It is acquired automatically at birth (*bhava-pratyaya*) without any effort or external efficient cause by heavenly beings and hell-beings and by Tīrthaṅkaras. It can be acquired through merit (*guṇa-pratyaya*) by human beings and five-sensed rational animals. It may arise in someone with a false view of reality (*mithyātva*), in which case it is called *vibhaṅga-avadhi* because it has false qualities. Here, however, homage is being paid to those with a proper view of reality (*samyaktva*) and thus with correct clairvoyant knowledge. {*avadhi-darśana* and *avadhi-jñāna-āvaraṇa karma*s}

2, 3. *parama avadhi-jñāna* and *sarva avadhi-jñāna*. Supreme or high clairvoyant knowledge and complete or highest clairvoyant knowledge. These arise only in those munis who are restrained and who will attain omniscience (*kevala-jñāna*) in that life, in other words, not in those who could stray from proper conduct or could fall into the state of a false view of reality (*mithyātva*). They arise from stronger degrees *kṣayopaśama* of the above-mentioned *karma*s.[63]

4. *ananta avadhi-jñāna*. This is the equivalent of omniscient knowledge (*kevala-jñāna*), direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) by which all sub-

[63] For further details on *avadhi-jñāna*, see *TS* 1.21-1.29 and Wiley, "Extrasensory Perception."

stances in all their modes are known. *TP* contains only *avadhi-jñāna* and *kevala-jñāna*.

5. *koṣṭha-buddhi*. A person who is endowed with exceptional retention grasps with his own intellect from the instruction of his teacher and from texts of various types seeds (*bīja*) in the form of words. He keeps them in a granary (*koṣṭha*) in the form of his intellect without mixing them together. (*TP*) He has the ability to retain what he has learned for a minimum of countable years to a maximum of uncountable years. {*dhāraṇāvaraṇa karma*} (*Dh*)

6. *bīja-buddhi*. A great sage who obtains from among the various words in the instruction of his *guru* a word consisting of only one syllable in the form of a seed that is indicatory (of the entire instruction) and reflecting upon it grasps the entire lecture has seed-intellect. {*noindriyāvaraṇa*, *śrutajñānāvaraṇa* and *vīryāntarāya karma*s} (*Dh*)

7. *padānusāri*. A person whose intellect is attendant (*anusārī*) on the word (*pada*). From the lectures of *guru*s during or at the conclusion of the teaching, he grasps one essential word or phrase and from it knows the text that precedes, follows, or both precedes and follows it. (*TP*) {*īhāvaraṇa karma*} (*Dh*)

8. *saṃbhinnaśrotṛ*. A person who has this power can hear the sounds (*śabda*) of human beings or animals located outside of the farthest region where one can [normally] hear with the ear. It has broken through the bounds (*saṃbhinna*) of [normal] hearing (*śrotṛ*). It varies in degree according to the strength *kṣayopaśama* of *śrutajñānāvaraṇa karma*. In an attempt to differentiate this term from *dūraśravaṇa* as given below, *TP* defines this as hearing utterances in the form of words or sounds of many kinds of humans and animals who are at a distance of countable *yojana*s in the ten direction outside the maximum distance of normal hearing and giving a reply. It adds from the *kṣayopaśama* of *śrotrendriyāvaraṇa*, *śrutajñānāvaraṇa*, and *vīryāntarāya karma*s and the rise (*udaya*) of *aṅgopāṅga nāma karma*.

TP adds: 1) *dūrasparśa*: the power of touching from afar. The feeling of one of the eight kinds of touch that arises from an object that is located at a distance of countable *yojana*s outside the maximum location for [normally] experiencing such sense-objects. It is caused by the maximum *kṣayopaśama* of *sparśanendriyāvaraṇa*, *śrutajñānāvaraṇa*, and *vīryāntarāya karma*s and from the rise of *aṅgopāṅga nāma*

*karma*s. 2) *dūrāsvāda*: tasting from afar (substitute *jihvendriyāvaraṇa karma*). 3) *dūraghrāṇa*: smelling many kinds of scents from afar (substitute *ghrāṇendriyāvaraṇa karma*). 4) *dūraśravaṇa*: hearing the words/sounds of humans or animals who are outside the maximum range for [normally] hearing such sounds (substitute *śrotrendriyāvaraṇa karma*). 5) *dūradarśana*: seeing objects from afar (substitute *cakṣurindriyāvaraṇa karma*). (*TP* 996-1006)

9. *ṛjumati*. See 8 in the Śvetāmbara list.

10. *vipulāvadhi*. See 9 in the Śvetāmbara list.

11. *daśapūrvī*. Having studied the ten Pūrvas, he comes to the gods (*devatā*s) and asks for knowledge of the 500 great spells (*vidyā*s), *rohinī* and so forth, and the 700 less powerful *vidyā*s.[64] He does not desire the *vidyā*s because this great sage has conquered his senses. He is famous in the world as a *vidyādhara śramaṇa* and is called *abhinnadaśapūrvī*.

12. *caturdaśapūrvī*. A great sage, a teacher of the entire Āgama, known by the designation *śrutakevalin*, has an intellect with the special power of knowing the fourteen Pūrvas in their entirety.

13. *aṣṭāṅga-mahānimitta*. There are eight types of auspicious (*kuśala*) supernatural powers of prognostication. 1) by signs in the heavens (*nabha*): seeing the rising and setting of the sun, moon, planets, and so forth, one knows unhappy or happy things in the three times (past, present, future). 2) by signs of the earth (*bhauma*): thinking about the qualities of the earth, such as its denseness, hollowness, smoothness, roughness; having seen the increase or decrease of minerals, such as copper, iron, gold, and silver, one knows whether there will be victory or defeat. 3) by limbs (*aṅga*): observing the appearance, touch, and the three types of humors (phlegm, wind, and bile) of the upper and lower body and limbs of humans and animals, and the seven secretions (*dhātu*s) chyle, blood, flesh, fat, bone, marrow, and semen, one knows happiness or sadness in the past, present, and future, such as death, and so forth. 4) by sound/voice (*svara*): hearing various sounds/words of animals and humans, one ascertains happiness or sadness in the past, present, and future. 5) by marks (*vyañjana*): seeing a mole on the

[64] *Rohinī* is the first of the sixteen *mahāvidyā*s and *vidyādevī*s in both sectarian traditions. See U. P. Shah, "Jaina Mahāvidyās," 122-24. See also Cort, "Medieval Jaina Goddess Traditions."

head, face, throat, etc., or hair on the upper lip, one knows happiness, etc., in the past, present, or future. 6) by bodily marks: seeing marks such as the lotus or thunderbolt on the palms of hands and feet, one knows happiness, etc., in the past, present, or future.[65] 7) by indicatory marks (*cihna*): seeing marks on palaces, in towns or in the countryside, such as clothing that is torn or weapons that are broken, by means of (that were caused by) *deva*s, *dānava*s, *rākṣasa*s, humans, or animals, one knows various types of auspicious and inauspicious things, such as death, arising in the past, present, or future. 8) by dreams (*svapna*): seeing auspicious dreams, such as a dream in which the sun or moon enters one's own lotus-face, or seeing inauspicious dreams, such as going to a foreign country, riding on a donkey or camel, or the rubbing of ghee and oil, that appeared while a person was sleeping without disturbances from the three humours; and predicting happiness or sorrow in the past, present or future based on these dreams. It is of two types. If it is based on signs alone, such as only seeing an elephant or a lion, then it is called *cihna-svapna*, but if it is associated with all aspects, then it is called *māla-svapna*.

14. *vikriya*. The power to change or transform the body in various ways. It is attained by ascetics from special types of austerities (*tapas*). The *TP* has the same eleven as those in the *PSā* commentary; *Dh* has eight (not *garimā*, *īśitva*, *apratighāta*, and *antardhāna*.[66] However, 7) *īśatva*: one has power over all humans/all the worlds and *vaśitva*: a multitude of living beings falls under a person's power/influence. (*TP*) Or, the power of feeding (*bhojana*) all living beings, likewise, villages, cities, and small villages. (*Dh*) Or, the power to change oneself, according to desire, into the form of a human being, an elephant, lion, a horse, and so forth. (*Dh*) 11. *kāmarūpitva*: one is able to create many

[65] Special marks, such as the conch, hook, and lotus, that are found on the bodies of Tīrthaṅkaras and on those of other special individuals, such as Cakravartins, Baladevas, and Vāsudevas are indicative of *ṛddhi*s. According to *Dh* 5.5.101 (vol. 13, p. 365) they are caused by *śubha nāma karma*.

[66] A story reminiscent of the Vāmana *avatāra* of Viṣṇu is found in the Digambara *Harivaṃśa Purāṇa*, chapter 20. A minister named Bali obtained a boon from King Padma that he could rule Hastināpura for a week and began harassing the Jain mendicants staying there. The muni Viṣṇu Kumāra, who was the younger brother of the king, assumed the form of a brahmin and went to where Bali was preparing for a sacrifice. Bali told him that he could ask for anything that he wanted, and Viṣṇu Kumāra said he would like land equal to three steps. He then made his body so large that his first step was on Sumeru Mountain and his second on the Mānuṣottara mountain range, which marks the farthest limit of human occupation.

different forms/objects simultaneously or take on a multitude of forms (not necessarily forms that are normally found, such as the body of a lion, etc.).

15. *vidyādhara*. The power to acquire various spells (*vidyā*). They may be acquired in three ways: from the mother's side of the family (*jāti-vidyā*), from the father's side of the family (*kula-vidyā*), or by performing a two or three day fast (*tapas-vidyā*).

16. *cāraṇa*. See Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras on Powers of Movement through the Air (p. 176).

17. *prajñāśramaṇa*. A power of the intellect associated with wisdom regarding the proper conduct of a *śramaṇa*. *Prajñā* is defined as the power of the soul associated with knowledge that is not dependent on the instruction of *guru*s. (*Dh*) He knows all the sacred knowledge associated with the most subtle of subjects in the fourteen Pūrvas just by studying them without [the assistance of] a great sage, and there is an appearance [of conduct] associated with restraint. According to *Dh*, this type of wisdom arises on account of emaciation from a six-month fast. It may arise spontaneously, from memory of restraint of conduct in past lives (*autpattikī*), and it may come about from the *kṣayopaśama* of *karma*s that arise naturally (*pāriṇāmikī*) in accordance with one's own specific state of birth (*jāti*). It may arise from restraint associated with knowledge of the twelve Aṅgas (*vainayikī*), and it may become manifest without instruction, being obtained from a specific type of austerity (*karmajā*). {*śrutajñānāvaraṇa* and *vīryāntarāya karma*s} (*Dh*)

TP adds: 1) *pratyekabuddhitva*: a power of the intellect that arises without instruction of *guru*s, from the suppression (*upaśama*) of *karma*s, in which there is spiritual progress, especially in attaining a proper view of reality (*samyaktva*) and in performing austerities. (*TP* 1031) 2) *vāditva*: a power of the intellect by which one is especially adept at searching out the faults in points of view (*vādi*) of one's opponents, such as those in the lineage of the Buddha, and so forth. (*TP* 1032)

18. *ākāśagāmitva*. See Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras on Powers of Movement through the Air (p. 176).

19. *āśīviṣa*. A *sādhu* whose words have the power of being the efficient cause (*nimitta-kāraṇa*) of an action. For example 'die' and 'roam

about for obtaining alms' are the efficient causes of dying and searching for alms, respectively.

20. *dṛṣṭiviṣa*. A great sage whose heart is filled with enmity looks at a living being and it dies as if bitten by a poisonous snake has this type of power. (*TP*) *Dh* adds that there is an opposite power (*dṛṣṭi-amṛta*) to bring about auspicious changes in this manner, and here homage is paid to the one with this auspicious power.

21. *ugra-tapas*. The power to endure severe forms of fasting. There are two kinds. 1) *ugra-ugra*: Having begun with the fast at the time of initiation, increasing the fasts, adding an additional day, one by one. This pattern of increased fasting continues until one has fasted to death. (*TP*) There is one day of fasting, one day of eating (*pāraṇa*); two days fasting, one day of eating; three days of fasting, one day eating; four days of fasting, one day of eating; for a total of fourteen days in which there are ten days of fasting and four days of eating. (*Dh*) 2) *avasthita-ugra tapas*. A one-day fast is undertaken at the time of initiation, and then the fast is broken. Then one undertakes a two day fast, then a three day fast, then a four day fast, then a five day fast, and so forth, and one continues to increase the length of fasts while maintaining clear consciousness. These fasts are possible due to strongest *kṣayopaśama* of *vīryāntarāya karma*. (*TP*) The difference between these two fasts is that the latter has a limit of six months. A muni who has a life-span that can be reduced (*sopakrama-āyu*) must undertake this type of fast, not the other, and although he suffers afflictions, he remains in good health. A muni who has a life-span that cannot be reduced (*nirupakrama-āyu*) does not experience afflictions. This power is associated with *kṣayopaśama* of *vīryāntarāya karma*, which is attained from the power of austerities, and the rise (*udaya*) of *asātā-vedanīya karma* that is of mild intensity. (*Dh*)

22. *dīpta-tapas*. By means of many types of fasts of the strongest of sages in mind, speech, and body, there is an increase in the visibility of the rays of the body, equal to that of the sun. (*TP*) Having undertaken various fasts, a one day fast, a two day fast, etc., there is a progressive increase in the lustre of the body, which is like the increase in the lustre of the moon each day during the bright half of the month. An increase in the lustre of the body is not possible without an increase in the strength of the body. This increase is not caused by food because there is an absence of a cause for this. Also, such a person does not eat

in order to pacify suffering associated with hunger because there is a absence of this type of suffering. (*Dh*)

23. *tapta-tapas*. Food of four types[67] that has been eaten by the sage is reduced to its elements without its being transforming into urine and excrement (also, semen, *Dh*), like water that evaporates in a heated iron vessel. It arises from *dhyāna* (meditation, concentration).

24. *mahā-tapas*. A muni with four types of *samyak-jñāna* (*mati*, *śruta*, *avadhi*, and *manaḥ-paryaya*) who performs all the great fasts. (*TP*) Munis who perform the half-month fast, month-long fast, and the year-long fast. It is called this because at the conclusion of the year-long fast, *kevala-jñāna* may arise, but this is not always the case. (*RV*) Vīrasena has a totally different explanation. This term applies to a muni who is endowed with eight types of change of form, of becoming minute, etc.; eight ways of walking (*cāraṇa*), on water, etc.; the two types of *akṣina*; *sarvauṣadhi*; the ability to transform alms placed in his hand into the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*); strength (*bala*) greater than all of the *indra*s combined; *tapta-tapas*; all the *vidyā*s; and on account of *mati- śruta- avadhi-* and *manaḥ-paryaya-jñāna* is capable of perceiving the three worlds. (*Dh*)

25. *ghora-tapas*. The capacity for munis to accomplish austerities that are difficult to bear, having been afflicted excessively by fever and sharp pain. (*TP*) Munis who endure calamities (*upasarga*s) that are difficult to bear, staying at the foot of a tree or under the sky, in places that are very hot, cold, or windy, in fearful cremation grounds, in mountain caves that are filled with cruel wild animals, such as lions, tigers, snakes, and hyenas. (*Dh* and *RV*)

26. *ghora-parākrama-tapas*. Munis who have this power are capable of destroying the three worlds, are capable of causing the raining down of sharp objects, stones, fire, mountains, smoke, and meteors, and so forth, and are also endowed with the power of drying up all of the water of the ocean all at once. (*TP*) Upon seeing a muni endowed with this power [malevolent beings], such as *bhūta*s, *preta*s, *vetāla*s, *rākṣasa*s, and *śākinī*s, are afraid. (*RV*)

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[67] According to Johnson (*TṢŚC*, vol. 5, p. 299, note 294), these are solid food (*aśana*), drink (*pāna*), fruit (*khādya*), and betel, ginger, etc. (*svādhya*), usually taken after a meal.

27. *ghora-guṇa*. (only in *ṢkhĀ*). Ghora means fierce (*raudra*) and this is a quality (*guṇa*). It is included here in addition to the 84 *lākh*s of *guṇa*s that a muni can have because *ghoratva* exists, in the sense that this power can arise if one should desire to do some sort of fierce deed (as mentioned in 26 above). This is not found in any other list that I am aware of and seems to be included here to honor the near omnipotent power-potential that a muni can attain through the destruction of *vīryāntarāya karma* rather than his application of it.

28. *aghora-brahmacārī*. As a result of this power, there is no danger of thieves, strife, or fighting, and so forth, in the area of munis. Or, having done the maximum *kṣayopaśama* of the deluding karma that causes the destruction of proper conduct (*cāritra-mohanīya karma*), one does not have bad (sexual?) dreams. (*TP*) The meaning of *brahma* is conduct in accordance the five *vrata*s, the five *samiti*s, and the three *gupti*s.[68] *Aghora* means peace (*śānti*). A muni is peaceful and he causes the attainment of comfort for others. Such a person is endowed with the power of pacification of things such as fear, disease, drought, hostility, strife, and warfare. (*Dh*)

29. *āmarṣauṣadhi*. By the touch of the hand or foot of a sage, likewise from merely coming near to him, a being who is ill becomes without illness.

30. *khelauṣadhi*. The power of phlegm, saliva, discharge from the nose, and so forth, to cure diseases.

31. *jallauṣadhi*. Jalla means impurities on the surface of the body and by this power, which is acquired from austerities, they cure diseases.

32. *viṣṭhauṣadhi*. Munis with this power can cure diseases with urine, excrement, and semen.

33. *sarvauṣadhi*. The power by which diseases are cured by the touch of a muni who has undertaken austerities that are difficult to perform, or by water or wind that has been in contact with his hair, nails, and so

[68] The five great vows of restraint (*mahāvrata*s) that are taken during initiation into mendicancy are non-harming (*ahiṃsā*), truthfulness (*satya*), taking only what is given (*asteya*), celibacy (*brahmacarya*), and non-possession (*aparigraha*) (*TS* 7.1). The five *samiti*s are rules of conduct for a mendicant that entail extreme care in performing daily activities of walking, speaking, accepting alms, picking things up and putting them down, and performing excretory functions (*TS* 9.5). The three *gupti*s are curbing activities of the body, speech, and mind (*TS* 9.4).

forth. (*TP*) By this power, all of the impurities of the body, both inside the body and on the surface of the body, including the seven secretions (*dhātu*s) chyle, blood, flesh, fat, bone, marrow, and semen, become medicinal. (*Dh*)

TP adds: 1) *vacananirviṣa*: merely by the speech of a muni, food of various types endowed with poison or a bitter taste becomes devoid these things. Or, a being who has many types of diseases is quickly cured. (*TP* 1085) 2) *dṛṣṭinirviṣa*: merely by seeing a muni, a being who has been poisoned or is ill is cured. (*TP* 1086)

34. *mano-bala*. The power of thinking, for an *antarmuhūrta* (up to forty-eight minutes), about everything that was heard without becoming mentally exhausted. (*RV*, *Dh*) *TP* adds that it arises from the maximum *kṣayopaśama* of *śrutajñānāvaraṇa* and *vīryāntarāya karma*s.

35. *vacana-bala*. The power to speak or to recite from texts for an *antarmuhūrta* in a strong voice without becoming tired. (*RV*, *Dh*) *TP* adds that it arises from the maximum *kṣayopaśama* of *jihvendriyāvaraṇa*, *noindriyāvaraṇa*, *śrutajñānāvaraṇa*, and *vīryāntarāya karma*s.

36. *kāya-bala*. The power to stand in *kāyotsarga* for a month or even four months without any effort. A muni who has this power is capable of lifting up the three worlds on the tip of his little finger and placing them elsewhere. (*RV*, *Dh*) *TP* adds that it is brought about by the maximum *kṣayopaśama* of *vīryāntarāya karma*.

37, 38, 39. *kṣīraśrāvī*, *madhuśrāvī, sarpiśrāvī*. Ordinary (plain) food that is placed in the hand of a muni immediately is transformed into milk, ghee, and is endowed with the taste of honey, respectively. (*Dh*, *TP*) Or, merely by hearing the speech of munis, the suffering of humans and animals is pacified. (*TP*)

40. *amṛtaśrāvī*. Ordinary food that is placed in the hand of a muni is instantly transformed into the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*).

41. *akṣīṇa-mahānasa*. Just one substance from among the assortment of leftover food in the middle of a *thāli* (a plate from which food that is fed to a muni is taken) after the muni has eaten is not diminished, although it was eaten by the entire army of a Cakravartin on this day. (*TP*) Vīrasena understands this to include *akṣīṇa-mahālaya*: in the area of the extent of four bowlengths (the measure of the forearm and

extended hand) countless humans and animals attain places of residence (*sthāna*). The definition is the same in all three texts, although the buildings that are created and those who reside in them are different.

Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras on Powers of Movement through the Air

Without a doubt, the subject of traveling through the air by supernatural means was of interest as seen by the details provided in discussions of this attainment in narratives, in Śvetāmbara canonical texts, and in commentaries of both sectarian traditions. In comparing accounts in Śvetāmbara canonical texts and their commentaries and in *TṢŚC* on the one hand with the explanations provided in Digambara texts and by Hemacandra in his commentary to *YŚH* on the other, a pattern emerges that is indicative of the aspects of this travel that are of interest.

In Śvetāmbara canonical texts, there are two types of *cāraṇa*: *jaṅghā-cāraṇa*, flying through the air using one's legs (*jaṅghā*) and *vidyā-cāraṇa*, flying by means of spells, and these are also described in Hemacandra's story of Vajranābha in *TṢŚC*. Here most of the other *labdhi*s are described in a sentence or two. However, the detailed description of travel through the air takes up half of a page:

> They had the art of flying with their legs (*jaṅghā-cāraṇa*) by which they were able to reach Rucakadvīpa in one jump. Returning from Rucakadvīpa, with one jump they were able to reach Nandīśvara, and with a second the place from which they had started. When going up in the air, with one jump (*utpāta*), they could go to the garden Paṇḍaka on Meru's peak. Then turning, they were able to go to Nandana with one jump and with a second to the place of the first jump. By the art of flying by knowledge (*vidyā-cāraṇa*) with one jump, they were able to reach Mānuṣottara and with another Nandiśvaradvīpa. With one jump they were able to arrive at the ground of the first jump. They were able to come and go up in the air in the same way as in the Middle World.[69]

[69] Johnson, *TṢŚC*, vol. 1, p. 79. For descriptions of these locations in *TṢŚC*, see Johnson, vol. 1, pp. 391-92, 395-97. Nandana is a grove on Mt. Meru. The movements on Mt. Meru appear to be from the base to the top of Meru (a distance of 99,000 *yojana*s); then from the top of Meru to Nanda (which is a terrace 500 *yojana*s from Bhadraśāla, a grove at the base of Meru), and then back to the base (pp. 385-86).

The origins of this account appear to be the story in the *Bhagavatī Sūtra* mentioned by Dundas. According to the *BhSū*, *jaṅghā-cāraṇa* is attained in association with a series of three-day fasts, and a person can, in one jump, reach Rucakadvīpa, or Nandīśvara, or the summit of Mt. Meru, and return in two jumps. *Vidyā-cāraṇa* is attained in association with a two-day fast. [70] Abhayadeva comments on *vidyā* that it arises automatically, on its own, and scriptural knowledge (*śruta*) of *vidyā*s in the *Pūrvagata* is the efficient cause of this. It is also associated with observing proper mendicant conduct in collecting alms. He states the speed of travel and destinations are the same as *jaṅghā-cāraṇa*.[71] If a monk uses either of them and dies before performing *pratikramaṇa*, his spiritual progress attained by living in accordance with the *mahāvrata*s will be compromised. The description in the commentary to *AuSū* regarding these two modes of travel is similar to that in *BhSū*.

In Hemacandra's narrative, it is unclear how Indrabhūti Gautama acquired the *labdhi* of flying like the wind (*vāyuvat-cāraṇa-labdhi*), which he employed to go to Mount Aṣṭāpada in a moment, because no further details are given here. [72] However, as we have seen, in his narrative of the elder Vajra, flying was attained from spells (*vidyā*s). In the first instance, it was given to him by 'Yawning gods' who had been his friends in his past life. [73] In the second, he acquired this spell by himself, through his extraordinary powers of memory, and with that spell he had the power to fly from Rose-apple Tree Island (Jambūdvīpa) to the furthest location inhabited by humans (Mānuṣottara). [74]

What is described in all of these accounts is the speed and the distance traveled in one or two jumps, either sideways (e.g., from their location on Jambūdvīpa to Rucakadvīpa) or upwards (e.g., to the summit of Mt. Meru).

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[70] Johnson (*TṢŚC*, vol. 1, p. 79, note 114) gives a description of these: *jaṅghā-cāraṇa*: "He goes to Rucakavaradvīpa or to the top of Meru in one jump, but he requires two for the return in both cases because his power diminishes from negligence arising from zeal for practicing his art, with the resultant decrease in time devoted to penance by which he acquired the art." *vidyā-cāraṇa*: "He goes to Mānuṣottara in one jump and arrives at Nandīśvara with the second, worships the shrines, and returns in one jump. It takes two jumps to reach the top of Meru, and only one to return. This is because learning becomes stronger with practice."

[71] *BhSū* 20.9 (pp. 304-5). See also Deleu, *Viyāhapannatti*, 258.

[72] *TṢŚC* 10.9.184.

[73] See p. 147 above.

[74] See pp. 147-148 above.

In his commentary on the *TS*, Umāsvāti understands *jaṅghā-cāraṇa* as moving through the sky with the aid of, or supported by, flames of fire, smoke, dew, frost, rain-clouds, spider webs, rays of light, the wind, and so forth. He does not mention jumping, nor does he describe the places that can be reached through the force of one or two jumps. Instead, he uses the verb *upādā* in the sense of 'to use, employ, *or* take as help'. His second method is *viyadgati-cāraṇa*: moving through the sky (*viyat*), flying upward and downward, like a bird. He does not mention *vidyā-cāraṇa*, most likely because he is commenting on the attainment of *labdhi*s through *śukla-dhyāna*.

Digambaras also understand that there are two main types of flying, but they are *cāraṇa* and *ākāśagāmitva*, and they have different understandings of *jaṅghā-cāraṇa*. In the *RV*, Akalaṅka understands *cāraṇa* and *ākāśagāmitva* as two types of *kriyā*. He defines *ākāśa-gāmitva* as going in the sky while seated in a meditational posture, standing upright, or having assumed a similar position. It means going in the sky without walking (lifting or lowering one's feet). He lists nine types of *cāraṇa*: 1) *jaṅghā-cāraṇa*: going in the sky/atmosphere four fingers (one hand-width) above the earth. 2) *śreṇi-cāraṇa*: going in the sky as far as the lines of residences (*śreṇi*) of the *vidyādhara*s.[75] 3) *agni-śikhā-cāraṇa*: going upward on flames of fire. 4) *jala-cāraṇa*: going on water without touching it. 5-9) *patra- phala-puṣpa- bīja- tantu-cāraṇa*: going on leaves, fruit, flowers, seeds, and webs without touching them. In the *TP*, Yati Vṛṣabha also understands *ākāśagāmitva* and *cāraṇa* as two types of *kriyā* and defines *ākāśa-gāmitva* in the same way as Akalaṅka. He says that there are many types of *cāraṇa* and lists twelve of them: *jala*, *jaṅghā*, *phala*, *puṣpa*, *patra*, *agni-śikhā*, *dhūma*, *megha*, [*jala*]*dhārā*, *makaḍī-tantu*, *jyotiś*, and *māruta*. As in *RV*, he defines *jaṅghā-cāraṇa* as going four fingers

[75] '*vidyādhara-śreṇi-paryanta-ākāśa-gamanam*.' The word *anuśreṇi* at *TS* 2.27 (= *SS* 2.26) describes the motion of the soul after death when it is in transit to its next place of birth. Pūjyapāda defines *śreṇi* as "beginning from the center of the universe, a row of space-points of the atmosphere (*ākāśa-pradeśa*) that form an uninterrupted series upwards, downwards, and sideways," and *anu* as 'in succession.' Souls travel along these straight lines (i.e., not in a curved manner) as does matter. This could be translated as 'going in the sky in a straight line as far as *vidyādhara*s,' but this is problematic given the word order in the compound. Instead, Akalaṅka may be referring to rows (*śreṇi*) of cities where *vidyādhara*s are said to live, as described in his commentary on *TS* 3.10. Because these rows of cities are in more than one location in the universe (e.g., Bharatakṣetra and Videhakṣetra on Jambūdvīpa, and *TP* also describes locations on Puṣkaradvīpa), I am unsure of the distance of travel. See Jinendra Varṇī, *Jainendra Siddhānta Kośa*, vol. 3, p. 544, *vidyādhara*, entry 4.

above the earth, adding that it is done without bending the knees. He mentions that travel by means of clouds (*megha*) and rain clouds (*jala-dhārā*) are without harming water-bodied beings, and when using flowers, etc., as support, this is done without harming the souls embodied therein. He understands *makaḍī-tantu* as moving one's feet quickly, being very light, as if moving on spider web. He concludes with comments about traveling through the sky using rays from vehicles (*vimāna*s) of *jyotiṣka-deva*s as support and moving by means of a line of space-points of the wind (*māruta-cāraṇa*).

In the *ṢkhĀ*, a distinction is made between *cāraṇa* and *ākāśagāmitva* by paying homage in separate *sūtra*s to those who have attained these *ṛddhi*s. In his commentary, Vīrasena defines *ākāśagāmitva* as the ability to travel by means of the space-points (*pradeśa*s) of the sky according to desire as far as the Mānuṣottara mountain range. He states this is similar to *cāraṇa* because both are methods of going through the sky. However, he defines *cāraṇa* as moral conduct, restraint (*saṃyama*), or refraining from evil (*pāpa*) actions. It arises from specific types of austerities, and one who is so restrained goes auspiciously, not harming living beings (*jīva*s) situated in the sky. Vīrasena says that there are eight varieties of *cāraṇa*: *jala*, *jaṅghā*, *tantu*, *phala*, *puṣpa*, *bīja*, *ākāśa*, and *śreṇi*, and that although these objects are used as a support for travel, they are not harmed (literally, there is no removal of their happiness). He defines *jaṅghā-cāraṇa* as going hundreds of *yojana*s without harming earth-bodied beings on the earth and that *tantu*, *phala*, *puṣpa*, *bīja*, and *jala* are to be understood in this same manner. He interprets *śreṇi-cāraṇa* as being endowed with the power of rising up and moving above smoke, fire, mountains, trees, and so forth.[76] He distinguishes *cāraṇa* from *prākāmya ṛddhi*, which he defines as the power of entering with the body solid earth, mountains, or the ocean, or inside of buildings, emphasizing again that those who travel by *cāraṇa ṛddhi* do not harm other living beings. Thus, in both the *TP* and *Dh*, there is no mention of force of jumping or the distance traveled, except for defining the limit of travel as

[76] Here, too, the translation is difficult. I believe he is using *śreṇi* as a vertical measurement of space occupied by the things mentioned. This would mean a series of vertical lines of space-points that extend upwards for different distances that define the upper surface of smoke, clouds, and trees, and that he travels above the highest of them. Vīrasena uses the term 'aggregate of threads or filaments' (*tantu*), which I have interpreted as this series of vertical lines.

Mānuṣottara. Here, the emphasis is on methods of travel that do not harm souls living in the substances that the munis use as support.

In his translation of the *Yogaśāstra*, Olle Qvarnström notes that in his commentary Hemacandra mentions a variety of *cāraṇa*s, and refers the reader to *AuSū* and *BhSū*. These references are appropriate for the first part of the lengthy passage, for Hemacandra says that there are two types of *cāraṇa*: *jaṅghā-caraṇa*, flying through the air using one's legs (*jaṅghā*) and *vidyā-cāraṇa*, flying by means of spells, and his description closely follows *BhSū*. Following this, he adds, "but in another (*anye*) there are many types of *cāraṇa*, for example, *ākāśagāmi*," and the wording that follows is identical to that of Akalaṅka. He then says, "in some others," and lists fourteen items as means of support for traveling through the sky. Although Umāsvāti mentions using various substances as support in his definition of *jaṅghā-cāraṇa*, the definition for this term in Hemacandra's commentary matches that in *RV* and *TP*, not that of Umāsvāti. The detailed description that follows, some fifteen lines in length, does not match any of the above-mentioned Digambara sources. However, the point being made here for each of the items that he describes is the same as that in the Digambara texts, namely, that the various substances used as support when flying through the sky are not harmed thereby. Thus, Hemacandra was aware of concepts regarding travel through the air, especially the aspect of *ahiṃsā*, as found in Digambara sources, and devoted more attention to them in his commentary than he did for the explanations found in Śvetāmbara canonical commentaries. However, he did not incorporate these concepts into his narratives, as seen by the description of flying in *TṢŚC*.

Attainments and Gender, Spiritual Status, and the Cycle of Time

Gender and Spiritual Status

The Śvetāmbara *Pravacanasāroddhāra* concludes the chapter on *labdhi*s by listing the attainments that cannot be acquired by women and by those souls that lack the capacity for liberation (*abhavya*s).[77] A sim-

[77] For details on this concept, see Padmanabh S. Jaini, "*Bhavya* and *Abhavya*: A Jaina Doctrine of 'Predestination'," in *Collected Papers on Jaina Studies* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000).

ilar list is found in the *Viśeṣāvaśyakabhāṣya Vṛtti* of Maladhārī Hemacandra (*ViVṛ*). According to these sources, men with the capacity for liberation (*bhavya*) can attain all *labdhi*s. Women with the capacity for liberation cannot attain the following ten listed in the *PSā*: 1) Arhat, although Mallī, the nineteenth Tīrthaṅkara, who was a woman according to Śvetāmbaras, attained this but this is considered to be an extraordinary event (*āścarya*); 2) Cakravartin; 3) Baladeva; 4) Vāsudeva; 5) *saṃbhinnaśrotṛ*; 6) *cāraṇa*; 7) *pūrvadhara*; 8) *gaṇadhara*; 9) *pulāka*; 10) *āhāraka.* Men without the capacity for liberation (*abhavya*) cannot attain the above ten and also not 11) *kevalin*;[78] 12) *ṛjumati* (*ViVṛ*) ; and 13) *vipulamati*. Women without the capacity for liberation cannot attain the above thirteen and also not 14) *madhu-ghṛta-sarpirāśrava* or *madhu-kṣīrāśrava*.

Although 8, 9, and 10 are not found in the list of *labdhi*s in the *ViVṛ*, its author must have been aware of them because he states "only *bhavya*s (presumably, men) have *gaṇadhara, pulāka*, and *āhāraka labdhi*s." Thus, there is agreement in these two sources about the powers that cannot be attained by these respective groups. In addition to a distinction regarding gender, by including *abhavya*s in this list, it is clear which *labdhi*s can be attained by a person with a false view of reality (*mithyātva*) because this is the only state possible for a soul that can never attain liberation.

What is significant in these Śvetāmbara accounts is that by listing the two forms of mind reading (*manaḥ-paryaya*), namely *ṛjumati* and *vipulamati*, as twelve and thirteen, this indicates that they are excluded in the case of *abhavya*s, but this is not gender specific because there is an additional attainment that only *abhavya* women do not have. This would indicate that *bhavya* women can attain *manaḥ-paryaya*. This ordering is supported by a reference to an identical list of ten *labdhi*s not attained by women in the *Yuktiprabodha* of the Śvetāmbara Upādhyāya Meghavijaya (ca. 1653-1704). According to Padmanabh Jaini's translation of the *strī-mokṣa* portion of this text, the Digambara opponent states, "Even in your own tradition women are not allowed to attain certain supernatural powers (*labdhi*s). As is said in the *Labdhistotra*: 'Women, who are capable of attaining *mokṣa*, may still not gain those ten *labdhi*s.'" Meghavijaya then states, "By the words 'ten *labdhi*s' in this verse we should understand the attainments given in the following verse: *saṃbhinna* [*śrotṛ*], a Cakravartin, a Jina, a

[78] Not in *ViVṛ*, probably because this is understood in the definition of *abhavya*.

Nārāyaṇa [= Vāsudeva], a Baladeva, the power of moving in the sky, studying the Pūrvas, being a *gaṇadhara*, a *pulāka*, and an *āhāraka*."[79]

There are conditions that restrict the attainment of mind reading, namely, that a person has attained one or more of the other supernatural powers and is in either the sixth or seventh *guṇasthāna*. Of course, this would exclude *abhavya*s because they can never attain a proper view of reality (*samyaktva* = fourth *guṇasthāna*) and thus remain forever in the first *guṇasthāna*, in which one has false view of reality (*mithyātva*). And for Digambaras, this would exclude women because, as is well known, they maintain that a woman cannot take the full mendicant vows of non-possession (*aparigraha*) since they cannot renounce all clothing. Thus, a Digambara nun is technically in an advanced level of the fifth *guṇasthāna*, not the sixth *guṇasthāna* of a muni. Of course, Digambaras would not agree with other aspects of this listing regarding women because, for the same reason, it is impossible for them to eliminate all of the destructive (*ghātiyā*) *karma*s, thereby attaining the state of an omniscient *kevalin* and subsequently *mokṣa* while their soul is embodied in a female-gendered body. However, for Śvetāmbaras there is nothing in these conditions that would preclude women from attaining this *labdhi*.

What is curious about this is the fact that mind reading and the attainment of a transformational body have been denied for women in the *Strīnirvāṇaprakaraṇa*, a text of an extinct sect called Yāpanīya, whose rules of mendicant conduct followed the Digambaras but whose teachings followed the Śvetāmbaras, including the subject of *mokṣa* for women. In response to the Digambara's claim that women do not attain *nirvāṇa* because they lack supernatural powers (*labdhi*s) such as that of skill in debate and so on and because they lack the direct awareness of the thought forms of others (*manaḥ-paryaya-jñāna*) the Yāpanīyas state: "There is no nonattainment of *siddhi* [i.e., *mokṣa*] even in cases where there is nonattainment of such supernatural powers as skill in debate or transformation of the body and so forth … or [if one does not have] direct mental perception [which are all points agreed upon by both sides]." In his autocommentary, Ācārya Śākaṭāyana (ca. 814-867) explains that "'transformation of the body' is

[79] Padmanabh S. Jaini, trans., *Gender and Salvation: Jaina Debates on the Spiritual Liberation of Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 169. Jaini omitted the first term from his translation. See *Yuktiprabodha* of Meghavijaya (with *Svopajñavṛtti*), edited by Muni Ānandasāgara (Ratlam: Ṛṣabhadevajī Keṣarīmalajī Śvetāmbar Saṃsthā, 1928), p. 86.

the power that enables one to assume the form of Indra and other [gods]; it is also known as the supernatural power to transform oneself. The words 'and so forth' include such supernatural powers as walking in the air; women do not have these powers." After defining mind reading, he states "[Direct mental perception] is possible only to a monk who has taken the total vows of a mendicant… Women do not possess it. Thus, even though women are incapable of these powers that are produced through excellence in knowledge, conduct, and austerities, this does not mean that they are incapable of *mokṣa*. *Mokṣa* is not dependent on these alone."[80] From these sources, it appears that there was a difference of opinion regarding women and mind reading between this Yāpanīya author and some Śvetāmbara *ācārya*s. Also, these Śvetāmbara lists agree with the Yāpanīya's claim that women are incapable of traveling through the air (*cāraṇa*), but none of them mention the transformational body (*vaikriya-śarīra*). If this was to be denied, one would have expected a mention of it since they specifically deny the attainment of the translocational body (*āhāraka-śarīra*) for *bhavya* women.

Cycle of Time

In discussing who can attain these powers, the cycle of time needs to be considered because some of these *labdhi*s cannot be acquired by anyone living at this time in our location of the universe. It is thought that in certain parts of the occupied universe, including the area where we live (Bharata-kṣetra), time is cyclical and living conditions gradually improve and decline. Like Tīrthaṅkaras, other illustrious people (e.g., Cakravartins, Baladevas, Vāsudevas) are born only at certain periods in these cycles. In the regressive half of the cycle (*avasarpiṇī*), they are born at the end of the third and during the fourth period. We are currently in the unhappy (*duṣamā*) or fifth period of the *avasarpiṇī*, which began less than three years after the death of Mahāvīra, and people currently do not have the requisite willpower (*vīrya*) to refrain from harmful conduct and attain the requisite purity of the soul associated with the attainment of certain *labdhi*s. The last person who attained the status of a *kevalin* was Ācārya Jambū, who attained *mokṣa* sixty-four years after the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra. Because the soul is unable to ascend the ladders of purification (*śreṇi*) culmi-

[80] P. S. Jaini, *Gender and Salvation*, 53-54.

nating in either the suppression or destruction of harmful (*ghātiyā*) *karma*s, it is not possible to acquire *labdhi*s by engaging in white meditation (*śukla dhyāna*).[81] According to Śvetāmbaras, the last person who knew all fourteen Pūrvas was Bhadrabāhu and Vajra was the last to know the ten Pūrvas. Digambaras also believe that knowledge of much of the Pūrvas has been lost. According to Śvetambaras, after the time of Jambū, it is impossible to attain simple and complex mind reading (*manaḥ-paryaya jñāna*), the highest level of clairvoyance (*paramāvadhi jñāna*), the status of a monk who protects the community (*pulāka*), or form the translocational body (*āhāraka labdhi*).

Observations on Attainments

In looking over the lists in Śvetāmbara and Digambara sources, certain patterns emerge. The ordering of the list in the *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama*, which appears to have set the pattern for lists found in subsequent Digambara texts, is in approximate order of spiritual status because this is a *maṅgala-sūtra*. Here, those who have *ṛddhi*s associated with intellect are mentioned first while those with healing powers and powers of transformation of foods, etc., are mentioned last. Although the ordering of powers in the Śvetāmbara *sūrimantra* is not identical with the Digambara lists, it does place the three *avadhi*s first, followed by *bīja-* and *koṣṭha-buddhi*, *padanusāri*, and *saṃbhinnaśrotṛ*. The lists in the Śvetāmbara canonical texts and commentaries and in the *Triṣaṣṭi-śalākāpuruṣacaritra* are in the context of narratives, and here the powers of healing are emphasized. As mentioned earlier, Digambara sources have a fixed order for the seven or eight main *ṛddhi*s, while Śvetāmbara sources do not follow this pattern. In looking at these lists, it would be reasonable to assume that one of the main categories, *tapas*, is not found in Śvetāmbara sources. However, this is not the case, for *ugra-tapas* and *dīpta-tapas* are found in some versions of the *sūrimantra*.[82] Given the emphasis on fasting in Jainism, the acquisition of these powers is important to mendicants, but it may be the case that lay people are motivated to become followers of munis who demonstrate powers that are of direct benefit to them, such as curing diseases and providing unlimited quantities of food. Thus, one needs to consider the context in which these powers are mentioned and rec-

[81] *TS* 9.39 = *SS* 9.37; also *TS* 9.40 = *SS* 9.37, where it is said only those who know the Pūrvas can perform this meditation.

[82] *SūM*, p. 3, line 7.

ognize that these lists may be selective, as may have been the case with Umāsvāti's omission of flying by the power of spells (*vidyā-cāraṇa*) in his commentary on *śukla dhyāna*.

Another pattern that emerges is the categories of *labdhi*s for which *karma*s are discussed. In both Śvetāmbara and Digambara sources, *karma*s are mentioned in the context of powers of the intellect, of extraordinary visual perception, and of mind reading (*avadhi-jñāna* and *manaḥ-paryaya*). The cause for their attainment is the *kṣayopaśama* of the *āvaraṇa karma*s that obstruct one of these capacities in the soul. *Antarāya karmas* are associated with the power of the 'unfailing kitchen' (*akṣīṇa-mahānasī*) and with the energy or power (*vīrya*) of the body, speech, and mind. These are logical assumptions on the part of anyone with a working knowledge of Jain karma theory. There would have been no need to comment on the formation of the transformational (*vaikriya*) body or the translocational (*āhāraka*) body because it is known that they are formed and maintained by the operation of *vaikriya-śarīra-nāma karma* and *āhāraka-śarīra-nāma karma*, respectively. With the attainment of these *labdhi*s, these *karma*s are bound with the soul and become operative, or, if they had been previously bound, they are forced to come to fruition and produce their effects.

What is lacking, however, is any explanation regarding karmic processes associated with the powers of healing. While one might expect that not all of the commentators were well-versed in this technical aspect of Jainism, even Vīrasena, who without a doubt understood the intricacies of Jain karma theory and was commenting on a text dealing with *karma*, is silent on this subject. From the descriptions, some of these powers appear to be associated with the ability to manipulate or transform gross physical matter. For example, healing by bodily impurities could be understood as the transformation (*pariṇāma*) of these substances, causing them to lose modes (*paryaya* or *bhāva*) that are characteristic of matter that is polluting and take on modes that are characteristic of matter that is healing. The change of smell is explicitly mentioned, and this entails the transformation of the smell quality of matter (*gandha*) from a mode that is unpleasant to a mode that is pleasant. This transformation of gross physical matter would be similar to the transformation of karmic matter through the *karaṇa*s, or processes of energy. Here, through a *karaṇa* called *saṃkramaṇa* the energy quality of the soul transforms previously bound inauspicious varieties of karmic matter (*aśubha-prakṛti*s) into

corresponding auspicious varieties (*śubha-prakṛti*s) that are binding. And the soul is capable of increasing and decreasing the intensity of the effects of specific varieties of karmic matter. If this is the case with certain types of healing, then the power to transform gross matter would be associated with *kṣayopaśama* of *vīrya-antarāya karma*, which obstructs the energy quality of the soul. However, the *karaṇa*s are described as powers that bring about changes in previously bound karmic matter, not in grosser forms of matter. The reasons for this silence are impossible to determine but are curious, given the level of detail regarding the workings of *karma* found in the *Dhavalā*. In this regard, there is a similarity with *mantra*s. Paul Dundas has mentioned, "there is in fact no unitary view expressed concerning the manner in which the *sūrimantra* effects its results."[83] Given the restrictions on who could have knowledge of the Pūrvas, which are purported to have contained information on a number of these *labdhi*s and *vidyā*s, and the warnings that these powers can be detrimental to spiritual progress, it is reasonable to assume that ācāryas were selective regarding the teaching of this material and were hesitant to commit details regarding these powers to writing. As with *mantra*s, the attainment of these powers is one of the more esoteric aspects of Jainism.

Notes on Karma

Bondage of the soul (*jīva*) in the cycle of death and rebirth (*saṃsāra*) is the result of a series of mechanical processes, including the attraction (*āsrava*) and bondage (*bandha*) of *karma*. In Jainism, *karma* is not a mental trace or impression but an extremely subtle form of matter. Actions of the body, speech, and mind cause vibrations of the soul (*yoga*), which attract karmic matter to the soul. It remains bound with the soul for a specific period of time whenever actions are motivated by passions (*kaṣāya*s). It then comes to fruition and rises (*udaya*), producing its effects, and then is disassociated from the soul (*nirjarā*). Liberation is attained by preventing the influx of new *karma* and by removing all previously bound *karma* from the soul.

There are eight main varieties (*prakṛti*s) of karmic matter and numerous sub-varieties, each of which produces a specific effect. Some varieties affect qualities (*guṇa*s) of the soul and others determine the

[83] Dundas, "Becoming Gautama," 44.

soul's destiny in the next life, causing rebirth and embodiment as a human, heavenly being (*deva*), hell-being (*nāraki*), animal, or a form of vegetable life. Of the eight main varieties, the most significant are the *mohaṇīya karma*s, which cause delusion (*moha*) regarding the nature of reality (*samyak-darśana*). They also generate passions (*kaṣāya*s) and prevent one from observing proper conduct (*samyak-cāritra*). Another aspect of *karma* is the intensity of its effect (*anubhāga*). It is the degree of intensity of the *mohaṇīya karma*s that determines the level of spiritual purity of the soul (*guṇasthāna*). Thus, although not explicitly mentioned, reducing the effects of the *mohanīya karma*s are an underlying factor in the attainment of *labdhi*s.

Reducing the influx of new karmic matter involves restraint in conduct, especially refraining from harming other living beings (*ahiṃsā*) and limiting one's acquisitions (*aparigraha*). In addition to this, one needs to reduce the effects of karmic matter that has been previously bound with the soul. This is accomplished by processes of energy (*karaṇa*s), which influence or alter the unrelenting rise of *karma*. There are three processes of energy mentioned in association with the attainment of *labdhi*s: destruction-cum-suppression (*kṣayopaśama*), destruction (*kṣaya*), and suppression (*upaśama*).

Inherent in souls are qualities that are unique to it and thus distinguish it from all other substances. These include sentientness or awareness in the form of perception (*darśana*) and knowledge (*jñāna*) as well as energy (*vīrya*). If unobstructed by *karma*, these qualities would be infinite. But prior to attaining omniscience, the perception and knowledge qualities are obscured by the *āvaraṇa karma*s and the energy quality by *antarāya karma*s. However, they are not totally obscured, for all embodied souls, even the most rudimentary life-forms, have the requisite energy to continuously perform one of these processes, *kṣayopaśama*, or 'destruction-cum-suppression'. This process has been described as "some portion of *karma* is destroyed and some is held in abeyance" or "some portion of karmic matter is held up, and some portion is exhausted by fruition, while some is in rise."[84] The energy quality of the soul can be stimulated to produce this same effect in greater degrees of intensity through various ascetic practices. It is this process of energy that is most frequently mentioned in the

[84] T. G. Kalghatgi, *Karma and Rebirth* (Ahmedabad: L. D. Institute of Indology, 1972), 72 and Tatia, *Studies in Jaina Philosophy*, 258. See also P. S. Jaini, *Jaina Path*, 142.

acquisition of *labdhi*s. Thus, the commentators associate a very strong or a maximum degree of *kṣayopaśama* of a specific variety of karmic matter with the attainment of a specific *labdhi*. Also associated with ascetic practices is the destruction (*kṣaya*) of karmic matter. This process of energy forces *karma*s to come to fruition prematurely (*udīrana*), producing their effects in a short period of time in lesser degree of intensity, sometimes at a level that is virtually imperceptible. The other term that is mentioned is suppression (*upaśama*). Here, karmic matter is not destroyed but suppressed from rising and producing its effects for a short period of time. It is by the suppression of *mohanīya karma*s that a proper view of reality (*samyak-darśana*) is first attained and it is by the destruction of *mohanīya* and other harmful *karma*s that omniscience (*kevala-jñāna*) and liberation (*mokṣa*) is attained, in which the soul experiences infinite consciousness, energy, and bliss.

It is through these processes of energy that perception or undifferentiated cognition (*darśana*), ascertaining the general nature of an object, and knowledge (*jñāna*), or ascertaining the specifics about an object, are increased in scope by reducing the intensity of the karmic matter that obscures them. Most of the *karma*s mentioned in association with the *labdhi*s are those that affect *darśana* and *jñāna* and the energy quality of soul (*vīrya*). Since most commentators understand that *darśana* and *jñāna* operate sequentially, only *jñāna* will be discussed.

mati-jñāna is empirical knowledge acquired through the sense organs (*indriya*s) and the mind (*manas*), which is classified as a quasi-sense organ (*anindriya* or *no-indriya*). This knowledge can arise from the senses alone, the mind alone, or both acting together. *Mati-jñānāvaraṇa karma* partially obscures this quality in the soul. A specific sub-variety of *mati-jñāna* obscure knowledge transmitted from one of the sense organs. A five-sensed rational being acquires knowledge via all of these senses but a one-sensed being acquires knowledge only through the sense of touch.

cakṣurindriyāvaraṇa karma obscures visual knowledge transmitted via the eyes

ghrāṇendriyāvaraṇa karma obscures knowledge of scents transmitted via the nose

jihvendriyāvaraṇa karma obscures knowledge of taste transmitted via the tongue

noindriyāvaraṇa karma obscures knowledge transmitted via the mind (*manas*)

sparśanendriyāvaraṇa karma obscures knowledge of palpability transmitted via touch

śrotendriyāvaraṇa karma obscures knowledge of sounds transmitted via the ears

This type of knowledge develops through four stages:

1. *avagraha* (inarticulate sensation, sometimes translated as perception, although this can be confused with *darśana*), "the mere sensing of objects, the grasping of their generic character."[85]

2. *īhā* (speculation or specific inquiry), "the curiosity to know the whole from the part, to identify the features. It includes a process of elimination, identifying what the object does not have and what it is not." *Īhāvaraṇa karma* affects the capacity for this type of discrimination.

3. *avāya* (perceptual judgment or articulate comprehension), "definitive identification of the object, understanding both what it is and what it is not."

4. *dhāraṇā* (retention or imprint) is associated with "retention of the identification of the object, creating an impression in the mind which is experienced as memory." *Dhāraṇāvaraṇa karma* affects the capacity for long-term memory.

śruta-jñāna is knowledge acquired by interpreting signs (words, writing, gestures) and "it arises in the wake of empirical knowledge." It also refers to scriptural knowledge, or knowledge of all of the sacred literature. *Śrutajñānāvaraṇa karma* restricts the acquisition of this type of knowledge.

Mati-jñāna and *śruta-jñāna* are acquired or indirect knowledge (*parokṣa*) because they are obtained via the senses. This includes scriptural knowledge, which is "authentic because it derives from the pure

[85] Tatia, *TS*, p. 16. (quotes here and following are from comments on *TS* 1.15)

and perfect knowledge of the Jina (omniscient teacher) who revealed it." The remaining three varieties of knowledge are innate or direct (*pratyakṣa*) because "they exist independent of the senses, mind, and words."[86]

avadhi-jñāna (clairvoyant knowledge) is of two types. It is inborn for heavenly beings (*deva*s) and hell-beings (*nārakis*) because they are born with the requisite *kṣayopaśama* of *avadhi-jñāna-āvaraṇa karma*. This is compared to the inborn capacity of birds to fly or fish to swim. In some humans and five-sensed animals, it is acquired after birth, and its extent depends on the degree of *kṣayopaśama*.[87]

manaḥ-paryaya-jñāna is knowledge of the thoughts of others and is either simple (*ṛjumati*) or complex (*vipulamati*). "Mind reading knows the thinking expressed by the modes of the material clusters which constitute the mind which are beyond the reach of clairvoyance." It arises through the *kṣayopaśama* of *manaḥ-paryaya-āvaraṇa karma* and its extent depends on the degree of *kṣayopaśama*.[88]

kevala-jñāna is omniscience, or infinite knowledge that is "perfect, pure, independent of the senses, and all-encompassing. It extends to all substances in all their modes, including the past, present and future." Unlike the other types of knowledge, until omniscience is attained through *kṣaya* of all *kevala-jñānāvaraṇa karma*, it remains totally obscured. In other words, there are no degrees or levels of omniscient knowledge as there are with the other four types.[89]

There are five sub-varieties of *antarāya karma*s that obstruct or hinder the energy (*vīrya*) quality of the soul. The one mentioned here is *vīrya-antarāya*, which hinders physical energy or power, mental powers and concentration, as well as willpower. Thus, the *kṣayopaśama* of this *karma* is associated with mental concentration and physical stamina to undertake various forms of austerities, such as fasting.

There are a number of different *nāma karma*s that cause the formation of different types of bodies. In this case, the *labdhi*s are attained through the rise (*udaya*) of these *karma*s. Unlike the *karma*s discussed above, they do not affect the soul but operate in conjunction with various types of matter.

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[86] Tatia, *TS* 1.11-1.12.
[87] Tatia, *TS* 1.21-1.22.
[88] Tatia, *TS* 1.24-1.25.
[89] Tatia, *TS* 1.30.

vaikriya-śarīra nāma karma forms a transformational body from a type of fine matter that is capable of changing form and dimension. This type of body is formed at birth by heavenly beings and hell-beings and certain one-sensed life forms. Humans have a gross physical body formed by *audārika-śarīra nāma karma*, and they may attain a transformational body as a *labdhi*.

āhāraka-śarīra nāma karma forms a translocational body. It is bound by a mendicant in the seventh *guṇasthāna*, but it is operative in the sixth, when there is still doubt or a wavering in faith. By means of this body a mendicant can travel to a location in the universe where a Tīrthaṅkara is preaching to clarify doubts about scriptural teachings.

*aṅgopāṅga nāma karma*s form the different parts of the body. There are three sub-varieties that correspond with the three types of bodies mentioned above. There are other *karma*s not mentioned here that cause matter to bind together to form these bodies and that form the various organs.

vedanīya karmas cause the feelings of pleasure and pain. The rise of *asātā-vedanīya karma* causes pain, and its intensity depends on the strength of its rise. Pleasure is caused by *sātā-vedanīya karma*.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

POWER AND MEANING IN THE *YOGASŪTRA* OF PATAÑJALI

Stuart Ray Sarbacker

Introduction

The history of the range of ideas and practices that fall under the category of 'yoga' encompasses a wide spectrum, spanning over two millennia and traversing the globe. Yoga has become a touchstone for our contemporary cosmopolitan and globalized civilization, a symbol of cultural universality in the multicultural social reality we live in. Contemporary representations of yoga have intriguing genealogical relationships with their historical precursors, demonstrating continuity and discontinuity, and the tension between conservative tradition and innovative adaptation. Broadly speaking, contemporary forms of yoga reflect many of the dynamics of modernity itself, and suggest ways in which living traditions manage to remain coherent in the face of rapid change. This in turn provides insights into how yoga has historically been adapted to fit different worldviews and modes of religious expression through practice. In this essay, we will introduce the concept of 'yoga' as it is formulated in the tradition of Pātañjala yoga or 'classical' yoga, as codified in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* (3-5c CE), in order to demonstrate how the practice of yoga can be understood as a means of obtaining occult power and other 'worldly' goods as much as it serves spiritual purposes. In particular, we will examine the nature of the eight-limbed yoga (*aṣṭāṅgayoga*) and the relationship between the goals of liberation (*kaivalya*) and of worldly power or accomplishment (*vibhūti*, *siddhi*) that result from its practice. We will examine key passages from the *Yogasūtra* (*YS*) in order to develop a nuanced understanding of how yoga powers are conceptualized by Patañjali, with reference to the interpretations of these passages in the discourse (*śāstra*) on yoga found in commentarial literature. Having established a foundational understanding of the nature and meaning of the powers within the *yogaśāstra*, we will then turn to a range of theories of

interpretation that converge with and diverge from traditional accounts and interpretations, with the goal of illuminating a broad range of options. What will ultimately be argued is that an approach that acknowledges and integrates a plurality of possible interpretations of such powers is by far the most satisfactory option for understanding the role, meaning, and purpose of these powers. It will be shown how this multifaceted approach is eminently useful for understanding the range of yoga powers represented in the *Yogasūtra* and for gaining perspective on modern and contemporary yoga practices and the representations of power that are found within them.

What is Yoga?

'Yoga' is a term derived from the Sanskrit root √*yuj*, which means 'to yoke'. By extension, this 'yoking', and thus 'yoga', refers in a primary sense to the 'yoking' of mental and physical faculties in the ascetic traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. The term 'yoga' also is given a more technical meaning by some of the Indian commentators, specifically the notion of yoga as a form of, or identical to, a meditative form of concentration.[1] The broader sense of yoga is, for our purposes, more satisfactory, in that it is an inclusive definition that is consistent with a wider spectrum of native definitions and a broader range of historical and literary data. Many of the earliest references to yoga in the Indian literature postulate a generic interpretation that suggests that yoga is a type of spiritual 'discipline', often tied to the 'yoking' of the senses or other mental or physical capacities.[2] Yoga is also referred to as 'union'—i.e. yoking as unifying—in various contexts, referring in this respect to the goal of union with a deity, supreme self, or being.[3] One of the most formative paradigms that expresses the nature of yoga is the conception of the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* or 'eight limbed yoga' system that is articulated in the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali, a text

[1] Gerald James Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, *Yoga: India's Philosophy of Meditation*, Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies Volume XII (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008), 28-29.

[2] See, for example, *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 4.11.

[3] The concept of 'yoking' as rooted in Indian literature has been explored at length by David Gordon White in his *Sinister Yogis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), especially 83-166. Multiple definitions of yoga are also examined in Somadeva Vasudeva, *Yoga of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra* (Pondicherry: Institut Francais de Pondicherry, 2004), 235ff.

that is a key part of the Hindu philosophical tradition. The *aṣṭāṅgayoga* system articulates a vision of yoga as a set of disciplines of behavior, body, and mind, in which a practitioner gains progressive control and mastery over their psychophysical makeup. The mastery of the human organism in the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* system begins with behavioral control—formally referred to as *yama* and *niyama*, 'restraint' and 'observance'. The category of *yama* prescribes ethical norms, namely *ahiṃsā* (non-harm), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacarya* (sexual restraint), and *aparigraha* (non-greed). The category of *niyama* includes the prescriptions of *śauca* (cleanliness), *saṃtoṣa* (contentment), *tapas* (asceticism), *svādhyāya* (recitation), and *īśvarapraṇidhāna* (dedication to the 'Lord' or 'Master' of yoga). The succeeding limbs deal particularly with the physical and psychic dimensions of embodiment. The limbs of *āsana* (posture) and *prāṇāyāma* (breath control) work with the body and its energies; they culminate in *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal), which is a drawing in or an introversion of the senses away from their objects. These first five limbs are referred to as the 'outer limbs' (*bahiraṅga*), as opposed to the following three, which are the 'inner limbs' (*antaraṅga*), namely *dhāraṇā* (fixation), *dhyāna* (meditation), and *samādhi* (contemplation). Though not all yoga systems embrace the *aṣṭāṅga* sequence as their central mode of operation, virtually all systems of yoga utilize terminology and the conceptual frameworks that are cognate with the practices represented in the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* system. One of the dominant paradigms in medieval *haṭhayoga* traditions, which are the foundation for many of the modern systems of yoga, is that the utilization of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* in forceful (*haṭha* means 'force') ways can rapidly bring about the arrest of mental fluctuations (or of mind itself), and thus *samādhi*, whereby the ultimate nature of selfhood is revealed and spiritual liberation is achieved.[4] Likewise, the control of *prāṇa* through the discipline of *prāṇāyāma* and other techniques is understood to result in the attainment of various *siddhi* powers, or magical accomplishments.

Another key aspect of yoga that is not explicit in the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* formulation is the locus of meaning and teleology of such practices. It is this aspect that provides insight into how yoga might be seen as a 'religious' enterprise. With respect to *aṣṭāṅgayoga*, as it is articulated in the *Yogasūtra*, yoga is understood as a practice that is instrumental

[4] See, for example *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*, 2.73-77; 4.1-33

in achieving liberation (*kaivalya*) from embodied existence and the misery of continual rebirth. Likewise, in the *Dhammapada*, a formative work of Buddhist literature, in which the historical Buddha, Gotama, articulates his vision of the religious life, yoga is seen as an instrument or method that is necessary in pursuing the peace of *nibbāna*.[5] In the context of key formulations of *haṭhayoga*, yoga is portrayed as a vehicle for liberation in the form of the dissolution of the mind into the inmost self, and the realization of unity with the foundation of all being, *brahman*. The locus of meaning and teleology of yoga has undoubtedly shifted significantly in the modern and contemporary eras—yoga in its 'modern' forms of practice has a unique set of concerns and values. One of the key expressions is that of yoga as a 'healing' practice—one that can facilitate the removal of disease and the appropriation of health, or, alternately, the removal of stress and the health benefits of the reduction of stress. Yoga as a means to achieve 'peace' in a nonsectarian and mundane fashion is part of the picture as well.[6] There is an analogy to be drawn with respect to these teleologies, though clearly on a scale of emphasis—the framework of the Indian renouncer traditions is a significantly more pessimistic one, for example—with the ideal of 'removal' of the causes of pain or suffering being key.

It is important to keep in mind that the locus of meaning and the teleology of yoga exists in a dynamic tension between the 'removal' paradigm mentioned above and a more affirmative paradigm, in which control over natural forces take precedence over the transcendence of them.[7] This second paradigm is of yoga as a means to power, especially with respect to the sort of 'magical' perfections characterized by the Sanskrit terms *siddhi* (lit. 'accomplishment' or 'perfection') and *vibhūti* (lit. 'power' or 'manifestation'). This second paradigm is often viewed from within orthodox contemplative traditions as subordinate to the first and potentially as a distraction from or an impediment to the removal of worldly affliction. This is a position that is clearly articulated in the *YS* and its commentarial literature. This

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[5] Stuart Sarbacker, "The Numinous and Cessative in Modern Yoga," in *Yoga in the Modern World: Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Jean Byrne and Mark Singleton (New York: Routledge, 2008), 161-183.

[6] See, for example, Mark Singleton, "Salvation through Relaxation: Proprioceptive Therapy and its Relationship to Yoga," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 20, no. 3 (2005): 289-304.

[7] Sarbacker, ibid., 166-77.

teleology can be termed as *numinous*, meaning that it is a deliberate cultivation of powers and capacities that are characteristic of a deity. Through this process, the *yogin* or *yoginī* becomes radically 'other'—which is an affirmation of the salience of the comparative category of the numinous and a modification of it, as the human has become radically other. This transformation is represented in the symbolism of Indian asceticism, such as the association between the practice of yoga and the theriomorphic figure of the *nāga*, or mythic serpent. The qualities and capacities characteristic of the numinous extend beyond the identification of the practitioner with a deity to the relationship between a practitioner and the world (and its residents) as well. The capacities and the relationships that they engender provide a useful angle for at least one key horizon of meaning with respect to yoga powers. The emphasis at this point should be on this fact: disciplining the mind and body through *tapas* (asceticism) and yoga has been understood in Hindu (and more broadly, Indic) philosophical and narrative literature to result in the attainment of a range of supernormal powers of action and knowledge. The meaning and purpose of these powers is a subject that is ripe for exploration, and doing so will help bring clarity to the study of yoga theory and practice in its historical contexts and in its contemporary permutations.

Yoga Powers in the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali

The *locus classicus* for the articulation of the Hindu perspective on yoga and the reputed powers that emerge from its practice is the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali. The root-text (*sūtrapāṭha*) in concert with its principal commentary, the *Vyāsa Bhāṣya*, if not with its larger commentarial literature as well, can be referred to as the *yogaśāstra* or *yogānuśāsana*.[8] This text and commentarial tradition is highly useful in theorizing with respect to the nature and meaning of these powers. The term *sūtra* refers to a 'thread', the terse but fundamental nature of an exposition—like the thread that makes up a necklace or rosary (*mālā*) that is 'ornamented' by commentary, or the individual threads

[8] This is used here as a more generic expansion of the rubric of the "Pātañjala Yogaśāstra" (*PYŚ*), which is discussed in Philipp Maas, "'Descent With Modification': The Opening of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*," in *Śāstrārambha: Inquiries into the Preamble in Sanskrit*, ed. Walter Slaje (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008), 97-119. The use of *yogānuśāsana* as a technical term occurs in *Śivapurāṇa*, 7.2.37.26.

that compose a larger cord or fabric. Patañjali, the author or compiler of the *sūtrapāṭha*, is identified in Indian tradition as the author of key treatises on grammar, medicine, and yoga, and also as an *avatāra* of the Hindu deity *Ananta* or *Ādiśeṣa*, a primordial mythic serpent that is strongly associated with the two principal male Hindu gods, Viṣṇu and Śiva.[9] The text of the *YS* has 195 verses, 196 in some variations, and is broken down into four sections or 'feet' (*pāda*): *samādhipāda*, *sādhanapāda*, *vibhūtipāda*, and *kaivalyapāda*, which can be translated as 'the section on contemplation', 'the section on practice', 'the section on power', and 'the section on liberation'. The yoga system articulated in Patañjali's work and its commentaries is referred to as the *yoga darśana*, the 'yoga viewpoint', as *rājayoga* ('the royal yoga'), and in European and American scholarship as 'Classical Yoga'. Dated in the neighborhood of between the 3rd to 5th centuries CE, it is roughly contemporaneous with the rise of a major Hindu empire in India (the Gupta empire), and coextensive with a period of resurgence of Hindu thought and culture during that era.[10] The *YS*, and by extension, the *yogaśāstra*, critiques and integrates Buddhist and Jaina practices and theories into an overarching Hindu metaphysical and philosophical framework, synthesizing if not syncretizing 'heterodox' (i.e. non-Hindu) viewpoints with elements constitutive of Hindu orthodoxy. It undoubtedly served as an organizational framework for integrating a diverse range of ascetic and yogic techniques of disparate origins under a cohesive rubric drawn from the Sāṃkhya philosophical tradition.

The *YS* and the *yogaśāstra* tradition of yoga has been extremely influential in defining yoga over the course of its history in the two millennia of the common era, being a theoretical and practical touchstone for many of the later branches of yoga. The vast and generation-spanning commentarial literature and the prevalence of the *yogaśāstra* paradigm (especially *aṣṭāṅgayoga*) in the Purāṇa and Yoga Upaniṣad literature are key examples of its broad influence as a systematic presentation of yoga in theory and in practice.[11] One particularly influen-

[9] Larson, *Yoga: India's Philosophy of Meditation*, 54-67.

[10] For a discussion of the 'classical synthesis' of this era in yoga, see Geoffrey Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra: Indic Religions to the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 193-228.

[11] Though recent scholarship has called into question the centrality of the *yoga darśana* in premodern contexts, there is ample evidence that it has played a definitive role historically with respect to yoga. The Pātañjala-*yoga* or *aṣṭāṅgayoga* rubric has been of interest to critical figures in Indian philosophical and religious thought—

tial aspect of the *yogaśāstra* tradition, as was mentioned above, has been the conception of an eight-limbed yoga (*aṣṭāṅgayoga*), which represents components of the practice of yoga as a series of steps that bring order to yogic discipline. The practice as thus represented moves from the social sphere towards a progressively subtler inner and personal sphere. It begins with moral prescriptions, moves to observances such as cleanliness and self-discipline, to the taking up of posture and breath control, and lastly into introversion and the cultivation of concentration and ultimately contemplative absorption. The power of the deep meditative or contemplative focusing of the mind (*samādhi*) as exemplified in yogic 'mastery' (*saṃyama*) is understood to be the basis for obtaining liberation or 'separation' (*kaivalya*) and for developing supernormal powers and abilities (*siddhi* or *vibhūti*). With respect to the obtaining of *siddhi* or spiritual 'accomplishment' or 'perfection', Patañjali notes in YS 4.1, *janmoṣadhimantratapaḥsamādhijāḥ siddhayāḥ*, that *samādhi* is one of a number of possible sources or methods to obtain *siddhi*, including birth (*janma*), herbs or potions (*auṣadhi*), incantations (*mantra*), and ascetic discipline or 'heat' (*tapas*). Yoga is understood to be a tool for obtaining both spiritual liberation and supernatural powers, though the latter may be acquired through other methods and as the result of activity (*karma*) of previous lives.[12] It is important to note that the obtaining of spiritual accomplishments is understood within the domain of yoga to come from various sources—and it is safe to assume that for Patañjali this represented both a theoretical observation and a practical one. He was likely aware that various means were postulated with respect to

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including Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Abhinavagupta, among others. Likewise the work of Bhojarāja, concretely represented in his commentary *Rājamārtaṇḍa*, demonstrates the influence of the Patañjali-polyglot archetype and its historical significance. This may well be the reason why Pātañjala yoga is referred to as *rājayoga* or the 'yoga of kings'. One articulation of this can be found in G.P. Bhatt, ed., *The Forceful Yoga: Being the Translation of Haṭhayoga-Pradīpikā, Gheraṇḍa-Saṃhitā, and Śiva Saṃhitā* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004), viii-ix. There was considerable interest in the *Yogasūtra* among Muslim polyglots as well, indicating its import as an interface with a non-Indian (and non-European) culture. See Carl Ernst, "Accounts of Yogis in Arabic and Persian Historical and Travel Texts," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 33 (2008): 409-426; "Situating Sufism and Yoga," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 15:1 (2005): 15-43.

[12] According to Āraṇya, *tapas* works by ripening the seeds of *karma* from a former life. See Hariharānanda Āraṇya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali: Combining His Yoga Aphorisms with Vyāsa's Commentary in Sanskrit and a Translation with Annotations Including Many Suggestions for the Practice of Yoga* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 346-47.

the obtaining of *siddhi*, both in terms of literary representations of such powers and in terms of living traditions in which they were actively sought out.[13] Though it is clear that the development of *siddhi* and *vibhūti* is understood to be a potential impediment to yoga, according to Patañjali, it is also clear that it was well understood that such powers existed, and that they were pursued through various spiritual disciplines, and that they were part of the 'context' of the practice of yoga at the time of the composition of this text.

It might be argued that the primacy of *yama* and *niyama* within the yoga system applies in important ways to the beginning *and* end of the yogic path. In other words, *yama* and *niyama* serve to prepare the *sādhaka* or aspirant for spiritual discipline by cultivating moral and spiritual attitudes that provide a conducive lifestyle for practice, while at the same time framing yogic practice in such a way that the power obtained from it is not misdirected towards unprofitable goals. It is also interesting to point out that *yama* and *niyama* themselves confer a variety of *siddhi* powers or *siddhi*-like powers: *ahiṃsā*, an aura of peace; *satya*, fruitful speech, *asteya*, wealth; *brahmacarya*, virility; *aparigraha*, insight into life; *śauca*, one-pointedness and control of the senses; *saṃtoṣa*, perfect happiness; *tapas*, perfection of body and senses; *svādhyāya*, communion with deities; and *īśvarapraṇidhāna*, perfect *samādhi*. Likewise, the mastery of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* lead to an unassailable state and luminous and focused awareness respectively, perhaps foreshadowing the range of *siddhi* powers in *haṭhayoga* traditions of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*. Likewise, the mastery of *pratyāhāra* is described as being the 'highest control' of the senses, and is the doorway to the 'inner limbs' (*antaraṅga*) of *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi*, which together are the basis for yogic 'mastery' (*saṃyama*), the source of the *siddhi* and *vibhūti* powers of yoga.

The overarching drive of the *yogaśāstra* tradition is upon liberation (*kaivalya*, literally 'isolation' or 'separation'), as opposed to the obtaining of *siddhi* or *vibhūti*, though it is possible that the emphasis is upon the process of *nivṛtti* (introversion), and not on what happens after liberation. Verse 1.15 of the *YS* reads *dṛṣṭānuśravikaviṣayavitṛṣṇasya*

[13] This is explored in the *bhāṣya* at 4.1, as well as in the *Yogavārttika* and *Yogasūtrabhāṣyavivaraṇa* commentaries on that verse. Dasgupta theorizes that this indicates the prior existence of *Rasāyana* traditions and, by extension, the ideas and practices that come to constitute the core of Nātha-yoga traditions. See Shashibhusan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults* (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1985 [1946]), 193-94.

vaśīkārasaṃjñā vairāgyam, "detachment is the realization of mastery of craving for seen and heard of conditions." This verse is a recognition that 'spiritual goods' exist—'heard of conditions', i.e. conditions known through world of mouth, literature, or scripture—and that they are to be treated with detachment in a manner akin to more 'worldly' objects. Like corresponding moralizing doctrines found in Jaina and Buddhist sources, obtaining heavenly states or powers is seen as inferior to the higher-order spiritual good of liberation. In *YS* 3.51, *sthānyupanimantraṇe saṅgasamayākaraṇaṃ punar aniṣṭaprasaṇgāt*, "upon the entreaties of the established ones (the gods), there should not be attachment and pride (or 'smiling'), due to the promise of contact with the undesirable again," the danger of succumbing to the temptations of divine power, etc., is outlined. The commentary of Vyāsa vividly details the heavenly objects and powers that serve to tempt an aspiring practitioner: a heavenly palace; a heavenly chariot; a beautiful heavenly consort (*apsaras*); the nectar of immortality; visions of spiritual beings such as *maharṣi* and *siddha*; divine sight and hearing; and an indestructible body.[14] Obtaining powers and objects is an implication of yogic discipline, and these objects are even more attractive than their mundane counterparts. *YS* 3.51 points to what 'happens' when yogic discipline comes to fruition—as the power of the practitioner reaches its zenith, all of the 'goods' of the spiritual world appear and threaten to disrupt the process of liberation. The temptations of the world are thus not limited to the 'earthly' temptations of sex, power, and wealth; rather, the earthly temptations pale in comparison to those of a spiritual nature.[15]

As was mentioned above, in *YS* 4.1, Patañjali states that supernormal powers can come from five principal sources: birth (*janma*), herbs (*auṣadhi*, also 'potions'), incantation (*mantra*), ascetic discipline (*tapas*), and contemplation (*samādhi*). The focus in the *YS* is upon the practice of *samādhi* as a liberating technique and as a source for supernormal powers of action and perception (*siddhi* or *vibhūti*). According to Larson, the powers or *vibhūti* can be placed in two categories, following their presentation in the third *pāda* of the *YS*.[16] The first is 'knowledges', including knowledge of the past and future, sounds of all beings, previous births, others' minds, the time and manner of

[14] Āraṇya, ibid., 333-35.
[15] Sarbacker, ibid., 166-79.
[16] Larson, *Yoga*, 125-32.

one's own death, objects near and far, the structure of the cosmos, and the structure of the body.[17] The second is of 'powers', including invisibility, strength, possession of others, disembodiment, perfection of the body, and higher forms of sensation.[18] The presentation of *vibhūti* by Patañjali also includes the 'classical' list of eight *siddhi* powers, Vyāsa's formulation being: smallness (*aṇimā*), lightness (*laghimā*), greatness (*mahimā*), obtaining (*prāpti*), willfulness (*prākāmya*), pervasion (*vaśitva*), lordship (*īśitṛtva*), and the suppression of desire (*kāmāvasāyitva*). Towards the latter end of *kaivalyapāda*, the powers culminate in at least 'virtual' omniscience and omnipotence, the unlimited abilities of knowledge and action. White insightfully refers to *vibhūti* as 'omnipresencing', and has described the manner in which the powers of yoga represent a cosmicization of the practitioner in terms of the limits of embodiment and the homologization of the *yogin* or *yoginī* with the cosmos.[19] These powers are ultimately to be viewed with dispassion in order to secure *kaivalya*. The attainment of the state of complete *vibhūti* and its abandonment is the subject of YS 3.49-50, the verses which precede the earlier statement about the entreaties of the gods; the practitioner obtains *kaivalya* through developing detachment or dispassion (*vairāgya*) with respect to the attainment of what Vyāsa, the commentator, refers to as the 'sorrowless accomplishment' (*viśokā-siddhi*). Likewise, verse 3.37, *te samādhāv-upasargā vyutthāne siddhayaḥ*, typically translated as "the*y* [the supersensory powers] are perfections of manifestation and obstacles for *samādhi*," suggesting that supernormal powers are in line with a worldly orientation and obstruct meditative contemplation.

Despite the fact that that Patañjali appears to view the *siddhi* and *vibhūti* powers as potential impediments to liberation, and views dispassion (*vairāgya*) with respect to them as essential for securing liberation, it would be a gross overstatement and quite premature to state that they are not important or valued in the yoga system. The sheer emphasis on *vibhūti*, and the dedication of one-third of the text to the discussion of them, points to their great import in Patañjali's representation of yoga. As was mentioned previously, it is likely that Patañjali was aware of 'power-cults' that were dedicated to the acquisition of *siddhi* through asceticism (*tapas*), as exemplified in the Epic

[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] White, *Sinister Yogis*, 39-41.

and Purāṇa literature, and other sources such as herbs or potions (*auṣadhi*) as exemplified by the Rasāyana-cult.[20] One key doctrinal interpretation is that the development of the *siddhi* and *vibhūti* powers was understood to be a by-product of higher levels of concentration, and therefore indicative of differing levels of attainment, important 'signposts' in the process of yogic development. As is the case in the broader literature, those powers are ambiguous from a moral standpoint—they simply 'are' or 'happen' as the result of praxis. Though not necessarily indicative of moral perfection or spiritual liberation, they do indicate that something has been 'accomplished' or 'perfected'—thus the language of *siddhi*. One key context in which this interpretation is validated is in the Purāṇa literature, where elaborate passages describe the arising of *upasarga*, yogic powers that demonstrate a high level of yogic attainment, but also appear as 'lesser' attainments than the *summum bonum* of liberation.[21] It may also be possible that admonishments against the use of such powers were for those who were striving towards *kaivalya*, and that the 'rules' for the liberated differ from the unliberated.[22] This might be argued in concert with a discussion in the final section of the *YS*, *Kaivalyapāda*, where Patañjali outlines the manner in which a 'constructed mind' (*nirmāṇacitta*) is created by liberated beings (yoga practitioners and *īśvara*, the 'lord of yoga'). This is further validated by the Purāṇa passages dealing with *aṣṭāṅgayoga*, where there is pointed discussion about the exercise of powers by liberated or virtually-liberated practitioners, who function as deity-like figures that are able to assist others in their spiritual development.[23] In sum, there is ample evidence that the *siddhi* and *vibhūti* powers are not simply an afterthought for the Pātañjala yoga tradition as is often argued; rather it is clear that these powers are connected to the core philosophy in ways that are of great significance in the systematic articulation of yoga theory and practice.

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[20] Dasgupta, ibid.

[21] See, for example, *Śivapurāṇa* 7.2.37-39, *Liṅgapurāṇa* 1.8-9. These could perhaps be interpreted either as 'signs' or as 'obstacles'. The notion of the *upasarga* as an ominous sign, such as of impending death, might be connected to Grinshpon's ideas regarding yoga and near-death experience, which will be discussed below.

[22] Perhaps the differences reflecting the pairs of *pravṛtti/nivṛtii* and *vyutthāna/nirodha*. Both the *Śivapurāṇa* and *Liṅgapurāṇa* passages above (n. 21) seem to indicate the idea of an 'option' of *jīvanmukti* versus immediate *kaivalya*.

[23] See *Liṅgapurāṇa*, I.9.

Power and Meaning

In addition to the ways in which these 'yoga powers' are framed and understood with respect to the history, literature, and theory of yoga, we might also ask what sorts of interpretive approaches might be utilized in making sense of these powers in a broader, academic frame that is not bound to the doctrinal coherence or limited to the data of the philosophical text that is our object of study. Should we bracket truth claims or truth concerns to examine these powers phenomenologically? Or, should we embrace a critical, or even skeptical, approach when encountering descriptions and narratives of supernormal powers? One way to address these issues and problems is to examine the various approaches within academic studies that draw upon the *yogaśāstra* literature and aim to explain and interpret the meaning of such powers. What emerges from examining these various perspectives is a sense of the spectrum of interpretive possibilities with respect to the nature and role of such powers within yoga. What will be argued is that this spectrum of theories, with some augmentation, can be fruitfully drawn together as a set of complementary, as opposed to mutually exclusive, ways of understanding the nature of yoga powers. The representation of such powers in Indian literature provides a diverse set of perspectives upon their nature, meaning, and purpose. Likewise, it is sensible that different, and not necessarily mutually exclusive, contemporary scholarly interpretations are possible as well.

In Eliade's landmark work on yoga, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, for example, Eliade draws a range of yoga powers into comparison with those found in Shamanism, most notably the notions of magical sight and of magical travel or flight.[24] The comparative-phenomenological paradigm, in this case, points to the parallels between the practices of 'religious specialists' that have a mastery over spirits or the elements. However, the concept of holding to *epoché* or a neutral attitude towards the truth of yoga powers is belied in a passage where Eliade refers to 'real' yogic powers of control of the 'neuro-vegetative system', and the cardiovascular system, as opposed to his previous discussion of claims of levitation, and so forth.[25] He does go on to say that the other type of yoga powers are, in fact, 'real', but that they are

[24] Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (Princeton: Bollingen, 1990 [1969]), 334-341.

[25] Ibid., 232.

real in a different sense than the reality of the physiologically-based powers. Eliade is distinguishing, on some level, between 'mythic' and 'concrete' powers. It might be argued that this appears to demonstrate that the operating principle within Eliade's phenomenology is that the yoga powers are to be understood in a symbolic fashion. The assumption that such powers are inherently (and only) symbolic in nature might be said to be at odds with the 'inner' perspective of tradition, and perhaps at odds with the phenomenological method itself. Nevertheless, this demonstrates one of the key issues at stake in trying to understand such reputed powers—are they in fact 'mythic' in nature, having symbolic meaning, but not literally real? One way that this perspective is supported is to point to the influence of 'literary' traditions upon the yoga philosophy. With respect to the *YS*, is it possible, for example, that the compiler of this philosophical treatise felt compelled to bring in and discuss yogic powers that were a part of oral tradition at the time of its composition? Smith has recently discussed this issue with respect to the role of possession (*āveśa*) within the yoga literature, and agrees to a great degree with Eliade that the dominance of possession (and power) narratives in Indian literature, both experiential and narrative, likely played a significant role in the composition of theories of yoga powers in the philosophical literature.[26] On the other hand, these powers are taken quite seriously in the philosophical literature of yoga and in the Abhidharma and didactic literature of Buddhism. One way to mediate these viewpoints is to interpret the theorizing about powers in the philosophical literature as a sort of 'natural theology', one that explains how such powers can be naturalized under the terms of a philosophical paradigm—whether that be Sāṃkhya or Buddhist Abhidharma theory, or some combination—as well as explaining the methods for obtaining the powers themselves. This issue, in particular, ties into the question of whether the *YS* and the *yogaśāstra* more broadly were principally practice or theory-driven in their formulation. The recent interpretive works of Ian Whicher and Gerald Larson exemplify how arguments can be made in both directions in that respect.[27]

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[26] Frederick Smith, *The Self Possessed: Deity and Spirit Possession in South Asian Literature and Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 204-311.

[27] Representative positions can be found in Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Gerald James Larson, *Yoga: India's Philosophy of Meditation*.

We can draw out another issue from Eliade's analysis as well: the question of whether or not some powers may in fact be based on empirically verifiable data versus other powers which are not empirically verifiable (or based upon empirical data). In Eliade's example, it is the control of physiology and of the cardiovascular system that has been set up as being 'real' versus the explicitly spiritual powers. In other words, Eliade seems to be assuming that there are physical implications of the practice of yoga, but the spiritual dimension is symbolic and psychic in nature. He does indicate that the mythic powers are in fact 'real', but it is in a different sense than the physiologically based powers. This is not the only possible approach to take with this data, so to speak, i.e. the implicit skepticism of the modern, scientific worldview that Eliade is invoking. One possibility would be to argue that the sorts of physiological effects that Eliade is talking about are the concrete manifestations of the symbolic content of the powers. In this case, for example, yogic levitation or flight might be manifested by lightness or ease in the body, a graceful moving through space rendered by the energetic effects of *prāṇāyāma*. Or, perhaps the ability to 'read minds' is a power rendered through a focused ability to read the verbal and non-verbal cues of another person, in such a way that there is an intuition of that person's mental state. Magical battles or competitions between ascetic figures might be viewed as symbolic accounts of the battle of wills or for hearts among rival sectarian traditions.[28] This approach might be said to be coherent with respect to the idea that experiential or literary narratives are a driving force in the representation of yoga powers—perhaps these stories have drawn upon factual narratives, bringing them to life through the apotheosis of the experiences and actions of their protagonists. This is effectively an argument to 'demythologize' the powers, an argument for understanding the powers as the transfiguration of human capacities and abilities. As such the dichotomy between the real and physiological and mythic and spiritual folds into understanding that one is an expression of the other, but transfigured in its representative force. The difference is that the symbolic quality of the powers is not simply in reference to the world of symbols—as abstractly signifying a spiritual quality, which it may do—but also as a reflection of a lived

[28] On magical 'battles' and sectarian rivalries, see Phyllis Granoff, "Scholars and Wonder-Workers: Some Remarks on the Role of the Supernatural in Philosophical Contests in Vedānta Hagiographies," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105, no. 3 (1985): 459–67.

experience, an embodied reality. The yogic powers may stand phenomenologically as symbols for the radical transformation of the human person through yoga and also as concrete representations of that transformation of the embodiment of the practitioner. Thus yoga powers are, in this analysis, not necessarily either literally true or entirely symbolic in nature. Rather, they exist in relationship to each other, as counterparts, with multiple levels of meaning possible within that spectrum. Another way to express it would be that there are other options of 'naturalizing' these powers other than through the simple dichotomy of physiology versus metaphysics.

There are other possible analyses of the issue of true versus false or real versus mythic powers. One would be the argument that the yoga powers are a 'hook' to entice potential adherents, and that the powers of yoga as a sort of cynical 'marketing' scheme.[29] In this analysis, yoga powers are the ultimate advertisement—the promise of worldly power that is found in the discourses on yoga serves to attract the disempowered, whether it is in terms of political, economic, or other referents. Yoga offers the promise of power to the powerless—through a mode of living that is, in principle, available to all. Masson's psychoanalytic argument regarding yoga powers is consistent with this analysis, but focuses upon the psychological level. Masson's argues that yoga powers are an expression of infantile powerlessness and that the quest for the ultimate powers of yoga is directly related to repressed childhood experiences of powerlessness.[30] Following Masson, the appeal of the powers of yoga—the attraction that they represent in drawing in adherents—is an appeal to the deep-seated psychological insecurities latent in the unconscious mind. The quest for yoga powers, then, is an expression of infantile desires—certainly an unflattering assessment of the driving motivations of yoga practice. But this also excludes the relationship between material, economic, and other forms of deprivation that might fuel the desire for the types of power that yoga represents. The recent work of Pintch and White, for example, has explored in great detail the relationship between ascetic organizations, yoga,

[29] Modern permutations of this might include purported health benefits or 'cures' offered by yoga, the power of yogic flight (see, for example the TM 'sidhi' program), or particular types of body shaping or sculpting said to be unobtainable through other physical disciplines.

[30] Jeffrey Masson, *The Oceanic Feeling: The Origins of Religious Sentiment in Ancient India* (Boston: D. Reidel, 1980), 125-141.

and obtaining political power and wealth.[31] Similarly, Max Weber had noted in his work on Indian traditions that there was at his time of study a close association between social class and the magical 'profession' of yoga.[32] To what extent might the yoga powers be symbolic expressions for the desire for economic and political power and influence that the disempowered desired over their communities?[33] Adding to the complexity is the fact that there is evidence in Indian literature of the 'staging' of yoga powers, where elaborate ruses served to provide ascetic practitioners with a reputation of possessing magical power and knowledge. Olivelle has demonstrated how the *Arthaśāstra* provides instruction on using rumors, spying, and other means of disinformation to create the illusion that a spy-ascetic possesses magical powers. White has discussed on a number of occasions the use of slight-of-hand and other illusionist practices among contemporary yogis as a dimension of the 'wonder-worker' persona.[34] Yoga powers might be viewed in this respect as mimetic, or as a form of mimesis—which can imply trickery or deception, or, alternately the notion that 'truth' is a product of the ability to emulate or simulate an archetypal role.[35] The demonstration of yoga powers as a mimetic act offers a range of possibilities with respect to the motivation of the person demonstrating such powers, and the reception of the audience that may or may not be naïve with respect to the literal 'reality' of such acts.

The psychological paradigm of interpretation is salient in that it arguably is at parity with the ways in which contemplative practices of yoga are rooted in an Indian psychology or philosophy of mind. Gerald Larson, for example, has argued that the powers represented in the *vibhūtipāda* section of the *YS* can be understood fruitfully as akin to fantasies that are uncovered by a therapist in the process of psycho-

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[31] See William Pintch, *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empires* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); David White, *Sinister Yogis*.

[32] Max Weber, *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*, trans. and ed. Hans Gerth and Don Martindale (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2000 [1958]), 163-65.

[33] It is tempting to interpret the 'heard of' spiritual goods as archetypes for the goods of material existence, sublimated and transfigured into divine goods, thus linking the spiritual accomplishments to a process of wish-fulfillment and offering support for Masson's position in *The Oceanic Feeling*.

[34] Discussed, for example, in *Sinister Yogis*, ix-xv.

[35] Michael Taussig, "Viscerality, Faith, and Skepticism: Another Theory of Magic," in *In Near Ruins: Cultural Theory at the End of the* Century, ed. Nicholas Dirks (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 221-54.

analysis. In other words, the *siddhi* and *vibhūti* powers in the third section of the *YS* can be understood to be signposts of spiritual progress, which would presumably be understood as such by an established teacher. This would seem to suggest that yoga powers are principally a mental phenomenon, occurring within the imaginative sphere of the mind, as opposed to in external or physical reality. The idea that the powers are indicators of spiritual progress is an idea that finds considerable support in Indian religious literature. As mentioned earlier, one excellent example is the conception of the *upasarga*, which is typically interpreted to mean 'impediment' to *samādhi* but also relates the idea of a 'sign'. In the Purāṇa literature, the arising of *upasarga* is a subject of considerable interest in discussions of yoga, as these 'powers' are understood as signs of the attainment of successive levels of absorption in *samādhi*. This seems consistent with Larson's theory that the manifestation of yoga powers represents a set of benchmarks for understanding one's relative position of spiritual attainment. It should be pointed out that a point of distinction between Larson's theory and Purāṇic accounts is the issue of whether these powers are to be understood as 'fantasy' or reality (or some intermediate state). As mentioned earlier, accounts in the Purāṇa literature seem to suggest that these powers are, in fact, manifested in the world, most explicitly in the state of *jīvanmukti*. This would seem to be at odds with Larson's account. On the other hand, other accounts in the Purāṇa literature seem to suggest that the gods do not truly exist separate from the self, lending towards the understanding of metaphysical phenomena as being an illusory projection of one's own consciousness.[36] The warnings against the 'indulgence' in powers would seem consistent with the view that if meditative accomplishment yields the power to create an 'inner world' in which one can possess every object conceivable and desirable, what is to stop a practitioner from devoting all of his or her efforts to creating experiences of sexual pleasure and celestial power and enjoyment?[37] Obeyesekere has argued that *samādhi* is fundamentally about mastering the 'hypnomantic states' of deep unconscious realms of the psyche where the symbolism that undergirds our worldview is at work.[38] Following this,

[36] See, for example, *Śivapurāṇa*, 7.2.39.29.

[37] A view that has been articulated in a nuanced way by Bryan Rennie (in personal conversation).

[38] Gananath Obeyesekere, *Medusa's Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 180-81. Obeye-

it might be argued that the manifestation of the yoga powers and the symbolism of the attainment of the spiritual 'goods' of a culture represents the penetration of awareness into the depths of consciousness and the mastery over the fundamental archetypal forces that drive egoic identity. Grinshpon has articulated an interpretation that is related in important ways to these theories, one in which the arising of the yoga powers is understood as being analogous to near-death experiences, brought upon, presumably, by the breaking down of ordinary awareness and the integrity of the egoic self. This too lends to a coherent conception that the arising of yoga powers is a symptom of yogic processes, which can be understood in psychological terms as a response to the breaking down of the phenomenal self, in a manner analogous to the death process.[39]

These psychological theories hinge on the ideal of the 'inner world' that is self-contained, and does not necessarily have a direct relationship to a tangible, outer expression of such powers or capabilities. One principle that can be drawn from the idea of an outer expression of yoga powers is the idea of the demonstration of mastery and authority. For, if spiritual accomplishments exist only in the mind of the practitioner, how can mastery be demonstrated to others? Following the analysis of Lewis with respect to possession ritualism, it is quite possible that the emphasis upon yoga powers may be related to the degree to which individual charisma and power is necessary to establish authority. In other words, the demonstration of yoga powers is necessary in an environment with less institutional organization and institutionalized authority. This would be characteristic of ascetic communities, and can be connected in important ways to larger social and economic disruptions in a community or society. In consonance with this, it makes sense that among the various yoga powers that are described in the Indian literature, some of the most prominent involve mastery over other people and over the world. In the first case, the concepts of mind reading and the possession of others' bodies are particularly prominent motifs, which have been explored recently in the works of Smith and White discussed previously. One way to analyze

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sekere also argues that *samādhi* can be understood as a means for regulation of the 'pleasure principle'. See Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Work of Culture: Symbolic Transformation in Psychoanalysis and Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 52-68.

[39] Yohanan Grinshpon, *Silence Unheard: Deathly Otherness in Pātañjala-Yoga* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

such powers is to view them as the expression of charismatic authority through the cultivation of mental and emotive states that have a 'contagious' nature, which draw others into the psychological processes of the practitioner. This might, as discussed above, involve an ability to negotiate unconscious cues (giving and receiving them) of a verbal or non-verbal nature (such as facial gestures, persuasive speech, and outer trappings of authority such as dress, etc.). As an alternative or as a further expression of this dimension, we might consider the ways in which mind reading and possession are symbolic of the ways in which *guru* figures extend the field of their psychic influence outward through a community. One way to explain this would be through the language of the psychoanalytic process of transference, in which the disciple or devotee draws the *guru* into their own psychological makeup, placing that person into a position of intimacy and authority with respect to their inner life. This is further extended by the ways in which the acceptance of the authority of the *guru* is transformed into ways of thinking and acting, and the ways in which the *guru* figure becomes the driving force within the everyday life of the devotee. As White has stated, one interpretation of yoga would be as the 'yoking' of teacher and disciple, a 'yoking' which has great transformative possibility but also represents openness to another's influence that bears a degree of danger as well.[40] In all of these cases, a comparison might be drawn with regards to the principle of 'possession' between the power of the *guru* and the power of the charismatic evangelist—the level of success in their abilities being a function of their ability to either positively or negatively command submission to their will or the will of (a) god. By extension, as the center of the social nexus, and the 'center' of authority within community, information flows towards the preceptor, creating a sort of virtual omniscience with respect to the sociodynamics and collective history of a community, further reifying the image of the *guru* as an omniscient being. This is undoubtedly part of the reason why the *Arthaśāstra* recommends using a spy in the guise of the highly reputed ascetic as a means of gathering information.[41] Lastly, it might be pointed out that yoga has an interesting relationship to kingship—both in the sense that the *guru* might be looked at as

[40] White, *Sinister Yogis*, 122-66.

[41] Patrick Olivelle, "King and Ascetic: State Control of Asceticism in the Arthaśāstra," in *Festschrift Ludo Rocher*, eds., Richard W. Lariviere and Richard Salomon, *Adyar Library Bulletin* 50 (1987): 39-59.

a sort of 'ruler' of his or her domain, and in the sense that yoga has historically been of interest to Indian kings.

The social aspect may also be connected to the 'cosmicization' process that is characteristic of both yoga and tantra. To the degree to which the will of the ascetic practitioner is extended through and embodied in others, it could be said that the body of the ascetic becomes the body of the community that the subordinates participate in. In other words, the mind and body of the practitioner of yoga becomes the symbolic mind and body of those who are devoted to them, a sort of archetype or icon that represents simultaneously the individual and the community. We might look at the power of the *yogin* or *yoginī* through the lens of the neo-Durkheimian vision of religion in which the individual is a part or an instrument for a larger reality that is the tangible identity of the deity or spiritually enlightened being.[42] A cognate theoretical approach would be to view the physical and spiritual transformations of yoga powers through the dynamics of Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* and the contrasting forces of *doxa* and *hexis*, which fits well with the instantiation of worldview (*doxa*) and body culture (*hexis*) of the guru or spiritual preceptor as communal reality (*habitus*) that is shared. Psychic powers, in this interpretation, would represent the mastery of, or recovery of, the previously unconscious *doxa* and *hexis*, both of which in turn are reflected out into the world through communal experience. Whether we are examining a transformation of the *yogin* or *yoginī* into the archetype of collective expressions or the notion that the mind and body of the ascetic are paradigmatic for the community, the idea of participation of the communal within the spiritual life is a coherent interpretation of the yoga powers. It might also be asked whether the yogic process of introversion of *aṣṭāṅgayoga* might be conceived in terms of the progression from the mastery of *hexis* towards the mastery of the *doxa* through moving from control of the body in the environment, to mastery of breath and posture, to the progression of meditative contemplations that get to the roots of our cultural constructions that are woven into the very fabric of personality. Though this might be conceived of in purely symbolic terms, again it might be theorized that to know and to master the individual *hexis* and *doxa* is to master them

[42] A viewpoint articulated recently in Louise Child, *Tantric Buddhism and Altered States of Consciousness: Durkheim, Emotional Energy, and Visions of the Consort* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2007).

within the social sphere as well; that mastering the inner worlds of body and mind are a means for mastering, simultaneously, the external world or at least one's relationship with it. If the very act of knowing, as has been argued by Johnson and Lakoff, is rooted in the experience the body, it might be argued that the world as we know it is reflected within our own physical structure and the conceptual structures that arise out of experience.[43] This relates back to the Indian context, in which innumerable examples exist of what is often referred to as the micro-macrocosmic relationship in which yogic or tantric mastery is coextensive with the mastery of the external world. The transformation of the inner world leads to a reorientation to the outer world, a shift in relationship that yields, in principle, power, control, and authority. Even if one views *hexis* and *doxa* as simply cultural 'filters' for the experience and action of the body and mind, it could be argued that they function in a reality-making way to such a degree that their transformation would profoundly effect the experience of the world of the ascetic and those that share the ascetic's worldview. If viewed as being integral to the mind and body themselves, they could be said to exist in synchronicity with the larger cosmos and its moment-to-moment transformations, a window to the cosmos within the structures of embodied existence.

Power, Meaning, and the Numinous

Lastly, one approach to understand the development of yoga powers in a coherent way is through the use of the category of the numinous, particularly as a phenomenological or anthropological as opposed to theological category. This use of the numinous implies that the human can become divine or the 'other', a proposition that is at odds with theological formulations that presuppose a solid boundary between the human and the divine. The numinous is thus, in this theory, a characteristic or set of characteristics, as opposed to an essence that is distinct in some way. Likewise, one might say that what is numinous can also be considered as being sacred, but again with the sense that being sacred is a quality or characteristic of something, as opposed to being some sort of transcendent essence that is ahistorical in nature. The numinous is useful as a category for bringing together the various

[43] See, for example, the discussion of spirituality and embodiment in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 551-568.

trajectories of interpretation of yoga powers. As discussed earlier, it is clear that throughout the history of Indian ascetic traditions, which are systematized in the form of the physical and contemplative disciplines of yoga, it has been understood that disciplining the body and mind leads to the attainment of occult powers, which are at best morally ambivalent. Yoga is understood to bring about the deification of the practitioner, who obtains powers of knowledge and action that are characteristic of a deity. Pflueger has argued that one might look at the list of the yoga powers in *vibhūtipāda* as a sort of devotional text to the powers of the realized yoga practitioner or of Īśvara, the 'Lord' or 'Master' of yoga.[44] Just as deities exert power over the cosmos, most notably through the control of the elements and through their control of subordinates, so too the mastery of yoga powers is the source of power over the elements and over other people. Practitioners of yoga may also conform in outward appearance to the persona of a particular deity as well—a phenomenon that is exemplified in the various Kāpālika Śaiva traditions, in which one mimics the physical appearance of the deity. Śiva is viewed as the possessor of the range of yoga powers and abilities that the yogic or tantric adherents are understood to obtain through their efforts.

The manifestation of powers that are characteristic of the numinous provides insights into a number of different dimensions of yoga and yoga powers. If the numinous is characterized by factors such as awe, majesty, and terror, as per the original articulation of this theory, we have quite a range of connections to make with yoga powers. Yoga powers, to the degree to which they appear to break the laws of physical and psychic life, have the function of inspiring awe and wonder in the observer. They represent boundary crossing, an act that blurs the distinction between the human and the divine, the ordinary and extraordinary. Whether of an extraordinary nature (such as mind-reading or flight) or of a less dramatic nature (extreme flexibility or a charismatic personality), the point is that something special is at stake that creates a compelling response from an audience. The observer is jarred by the experience of the 'edges' of the *habitus*, much in the way that it might be argued that the *yogin* or *yoginī* gains a certain knowledge or awareness out of encountering their own physical and mental

[44] Lloyd Pflueger, "Person, Purity, and Power in the *Yogasūtra*," in *Theory and Practice of Yoga: Essays in Honour of Gerald James Larson*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 29-59.

limits in the course of practice.[45] Likewise, to the degree to which such mastery represents a control over elemental forces, it might be said to confer charisma to the practitioner—a tacit demonstration of authority, proof that the practitioner has control or knowledge over the world that is extraordinary. To the extent to which the observer experiences awe or wonder at such control, there is a compelling emotive force that predisposes them to recognize the authority of that individual over the particular dimension of embodiment or mind. When we consider multiple observers, the process shifts towards the possessor of yoga powers being an archetype for the minds and bodies of disciples, who view the *guru* as a mirror reflection of their own spiritual ideal—physical or psychic—and who 'participate' surreptitiously in the possession and expression of power. This can be said to parallel the way that the actor, musician, politician, or ruler serve as abstract representatives of the collective values and aspirations of a community, and how their charisma 'binds' people together. These various roles are at parity with respect to their sociodynamics, and it is common to see alliances forged between prominent *guru* figures or spiritual preceptors, political figures, and celebrities. Clearly the virtuosity required of all of these vocations and the manner in which the virtuoso's persona becomes part of the supporter, admirer, or adherent's personality plays an important role in the process. This follows, as per Durkheim, the universalizing nature of the divine, in which the collective values of a community are embodied in divine forces, here represented by the numinous power of the practitioner of yoga. It is no surprise that yogic mastery is often represented through the symbolism of worldly kingship, which is exemplified, for example, by the representation of the Buddha as the *cakravartin*, literally the 'wheel-turner', a universal emperor. Lastly, as White has discussed at great length, the figure of the *yogī* (and I would add, the *yoginī*) might be said to be as much an object of fear as an object of awe; the ambivalence that is characteristic of the category of the numinous is well-represented in the ability of the practitioner of yoga to curse as well as bless, and in the portrayal of the *yogī* as sorcerer in many literary contexts. Awe, terror and royal mastery are all attributes that apply in concrete ways to the persona of the *yogin* or *yoginī*, specifically with

[45] Benjamin Smith, "Adjusting the Quotidian: Ashtanga Yoga as Everyday Practice," paper presented at Cultural Studies Association of Australasia (CSAA) Conference, Murdoch University, December 2004.

respect to the manner in which the yoga powers demonstrate their numinous character.[46] Whether literal or symbolic, actual or mimetic, the demonstration of yoga powers and the representation of such powers in literature encapsulate how the practice of yoga is a vehicle for the transfiguration of the human practitioner into a being of supernormal power and knowledge and a paradigm for a particular type of communal existence.

Conclusion

The *Yogasūtra* provides a template for the practice of yoga that has been one of the most influential in the Indian philosophical literature. The *yogaśāstra* tradition of the YS and its commentaries expands upon this foundation, incorporating over time the shifting philosophical conversations in medieval and modern Hindu tradition. Its influence extends into the Purāṇa literature, the late Upaniṣad literature, *haṭhayoga* texts, and into the tantric traditions of Kashmir. It has become a touchstone for orthodoxy within modern yoga traditions, quite notably in transnational traditions rooted in Indian sectarian traditions. The great import placed upon the yoga powers (*siddhi*, *vibhūti*) within Patañjali's text testifies to their significance even within priestly (*brāhmaṇa*) traditions that situated yoga within an emergent orthodoxy in the early centuries of the Common Era. As Larson has demonstrated, the *vibhūtipāda* section of the YS provides a broad perspective on the range of powers of knowledge and of action that are said to arise out of yogic mastery (*saṃyama*). Though these powers are clearly of great significance in the process of spiritual development, they are secondary to the attainment of *kaivalya*, or liberation, within Patañjali's system. Nevertheless, they may well be seen to serve as indicators of meditative success and accomplishment, signposts on the way to *kaivalya*, or even powers that can be utilized effectively after *kaivalya* as part of an effort to aid others on the spiritual path. It would be difficult to argue that Patañjali does not take these powers seriously or that they are of only of minor significance in the larger work; however, it is clear that the powers themselves are to be abandoned, or released so that the seeds of the defilement (*doṣa*) of

[46] The concept of transference also relates this dynamic between extremes of positivity and negativity, linked to parent-child relationships, which might well be likened to the emotive force of both political and religious sentiments.

mind can be destroyed. This abandoning of yoga power occurs at the summit of yogic mastery, when omniscience and omnipotence are at hand. Perhaps in the articulation of a great spiritual irony, the attainment of supreme power is said to call for the expression of complete dispassion (*vairāgya*), so that liberation can be achieved.

What has been sketched out here is a series of interpretive possibilities with respect to understanding the meaning of these powers within the *yogaśāstra* tradition and from multiple scholarly viewpoints. The view from within the *yogaśāstra* is a coherent one, in which yoga powers illustrate the range of worldly and otherworldly accomplishments that are rooted within Indian religious literature, most notably the literature of Hindu and Buddhist asceticism. Yoga powers are framed by Sāṃkhya philosophy, which articulates a logic to yogic mastery that is akin to a natural theology, in that the yoga powers are not a disruption of nature, but instead a logical expression of ascetic mastery of it. It is also evident that yoga powers, *siddhi* and *vibhūti*, are seen to be signposts for the attainment of successive levels of yogic concentration or absorption (*samādhi*). Academic interpretations range from viewing powers as dichotomously either physiological and thus 'real' and tangible, versus being principally symbolic, mental, and 'real' in a limited sense. Or, the 'mythic' nature of the powers might be interpreted as a way of encapsulating a tangible accomplishment in a symbolic fashion, negotiating concrete and symbolic worlds. These interpretive approaches are on the threshold of another range of possibilities—that yoga powers are a 'hook' to attract adherents, that yoga powers are mimetic in nature, and, following Masson, they appeal to the wounded ego of the psychologically powerless. Following this psychological interpretive approach, it was discussed how Larson, Obeyesekere, and Grinshpon present interpretations of *vibhūtipāda* that represent a penetration of or breaking down of psychological structures—for Larson the 'fantasies' of the ego, for Obeyesekere the 'hypnomantic' states, and for Grinshpon, the phenomenal ego. Extending out of the psychological, it was argued that the language of yoga powers also lends towards deeper connections with the way in which such attainments are symbolic of the authority of a *yogī* or *yoginī* over other people and community.

The last point presented was that the concept of the numinous in yoga—that the discipline of mind and body leads, in principle, to the transformation of the practitioner into a deity—brings many of these

conceptions together, whether or not the powers themselves are viewed as actual, mimetic, or some combination thereof. The conception that that the *yogī* or *yoginī* becomes a deity points to the idea of crossing boundaries, negotiating the limits of psycho-physical life and creating the experience of awe and wonder, and perhaps fear, in an observer. This process was discussed in terms of the sociological paradigm in which a deity represents the embodiment of the values of the collective; through the lens of charisma, in which the mastery of the powers of the elements testifies to an occult or spiritual knowledge and authority; and through the conception of *habitus*, in which the breaking down of the practitioners *doxa* (worldview) and *hexis* (body mechanics) reflects outward as transcendence. All of these elements have great potential as comparisons to the manner in which yoga and tantric traditions embrace conceptions of micro-macrocosmic identity. Clearly, the systems of yoga and tantra afford a much more optimistic vision of whether these structures can be mastered or overcome. Like the concepts and practices of yoga, which have been transformed over time by the 'tradition texts' and worldviews that have shifted around it, the powers of yoga have shifted in nature and purpose over time.[47] However, the logic of their expression remains consistent in important ways, and the tension between yoga as a means to power and virtuosity on one hand and the drive towards spiritual and ethical liberation on the other is as tangible and relevant today as it has been throughout the history of these traditions.

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[47] One key example of this would be the ways in which virtuosity in the performance of yoga *āsana* has become a site for the demonstration of power and mastery in modern yoga traditions. See Sarbacker, ibid., 173-77.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

SIDDHIS IN THE *YOGASŪTRA*

Christopher Key Chapple

The discussion of powers in the *Yogasūtra*, coded in the author's characteristic aphoristic style, gives a sense of the paranormal as an important part of the yoga tradition while still asserting the foundationally theological or spiritual intent of yoga practice. This chapter will examine various references to perfections and powers as articulated by Patañjali, highlighting their importance, their difficulties, and the ultimate emphasis placed in the *Yogasūtra* on their transcendence.

Two words are used to describe these practices. The term *vibhūti*, though it does not appear in the text itself but solely as a section title, derives from the verb root *bhū*, 'be', prefixed with the intensifier *vi* meaning 'manifestation of might, great power, superhuman power.'[1] The term *siddhi* initially appears in the second *pāda* where it refers first to the perfection of the body and the senses (*YS* 2.42), and then in regard to the perfection of *samādhi*, which stems from acts of devotion (*īśvarapraṇidhāna*, 2.45). The third *pāda* states that perfection of the senses can actually inhibit skill in *samādhi* (3.37) and the fourth *pāda* lists four paths to attain perfection: innate ability, drugs, recitation of mantra, austerity (*tapas*), and *samādhi* (4.1).

The key to achieving special powers lies in the application of *saṃyama*, the combination of the final three techniques of the eightfold yoga: concentration (*dhāraṇā*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and *samādhi*. In each of the instances that denote entry into one of the powers, one employs the technique of *saṃyama*. First one decides upon an object of concentration. Following the application of *saṃyama* on the object, one gains the power.

Due to festering karmas, one's engagement with the world, sullied by past conditioning, expresses itself in a predictably difficult manner. As one becomes manifest to the world and the world becomes manifest to one's sullied self, the process of engagement takes on a tone of

[1] Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995 [1899]), 978.

negativity. The five afflictions of ignorance, egoism, attraction, repulsion, and clinging to life color each experience, each encounter. However, although one may be caught within the morass of these karmic influences, Patañjali also states that one can master and control the process of worldly engagement, transforming it into creative endeavor through the application of yogic principles and practices. The purpose of yoga is to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past: *heyaṃ duḥkhaṃ anāgataṃ* (*YS* 2.16). The ethical disciplines and observances (*yama* and *niyama*) hold the key to self-purification, allowing one to countermand the habits generated by the afflictions. The greatest accomplishment of yoga is to move beyond the fetters of past afflicted karma and dwell in place free of afflicted action: *tataḥ kleśa-karma-nivṛttiḥ* (*YS* 4.30).

For this process of purification to take place, the yoga aspirant must gain control and exert power over the tendency to slip back into afflicted behaviors. Various practices give rise to this control: developing a regular practice (*abhyāsa*) coupled with nonattachment (*vairāgya*), mastering the breath, applying various forms of mental discipline (*samāpatti*, *savitarka*, *nirvitarka*, *savicāra*, *nirvicāra*, *sabīja*, *nirbīja samādhi*), behaving correctly in accord with friendliness, compassion, joy, and equanimity, and so forth. One could list over four dozen ways in which Patañjali encourages the practice of yoga. Each of these techniques brings forth a sense of mastery, a power that enables one to lessen attachment and move closer to freedom.

In order to fully understand the context that gives rise to these powers that promote and guide one toward liberation, we must first examine a key term: *pariṇāma*. Often translated as transformation, this meaning of the word implies a philosophy of causality. Everything in the world arises from a cause. By tracing an experience back to a point of origin, one can understand its purpose. By seeing how things arise due to past conditionings, one can gain incentive to change those conditionings to influence future experiences. Through *pariṇāma*, the latent becomes manifest, the impulse becomes flesh. The *Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad* lays out some of the basic premises of this view, stating that "With intelligence (*prajñā*) having mounted on speech, with speech one attains all names… on the eye, with the eye one obtains all forms… on the two hands, with the two hands one obtains all works… on the body, with the body one obtains pleasure and pain" and so forth.[2]

[2] *Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad* 3.6 in Robert Ernest Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), 325.

In later Buddhist Yogācāra and Hindu traditions, particularly in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, the influence of the mind upon our experience of the world is referred to as mind-only (*cittamātra*, *vijñānamātra*).[3] The *Ātmapurāṇa*, a thirteenth century text written by Śaṅkarānanda, states "In the phenomenal world, generation and cessation, which are common to all who possess a body, are established merely by knowledge, not due to any other reason."[4] Ideation governs perception of reality. The contemporary philosophical school known as phenomenology asserts, that our truth is governed by the structures, sensory and mental, through which we perceive the world. As noted by Brentano and Husserl, intentionality shapes experience.[5] According to yoga, the structures underlying perception are malleable and can be reformed and directed away from lethargy and passion (*tamas* and *rajas*) toward the illuminative (*sattva*). In the *Yogasūtra*, the altering of the world begins with altering the mind. The starting point is *pariṇāma*, the fivefold process of transformation.

The first *pariṇāma* signals mastery of the mind, in which one is able to withdraw from the outward manifest world. This state of restraint of the mind (*citta nirodha*) signals the start of yoga. The second *pariṇāma* then follows, with the dissolution of objectivity. This experience is referred to as *samādhi*, the culminating phase of yoga. The third *pariṇāma*, which is closely related to the second, entails one-pointedness of the mind. The fourth *pariṇāma* refers to three operations: stability, definition, and specific qualities within the realm of the elements and the senses. The fifth *pariṇāma* deals with time: past, present, and future. There appears to be a progression from subtle to gross in Patañjali's discussion of *pariṇāma.* The process begins in the quieting of the mind and a state of absorption, the most rarefied of yogic states. The text next introduces the operations of the mind in its one-pointed state as a form of *pariṇāma*. From this, one moves downward into the realm of specific thoughts. At the fourth stage of *pariṇāma*, physical objects appear as contact is established with the mind

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[3] See chapter three, "Primacy of the Mind According to the Upaniṣads, the Yoga and Laṇkāvatāra Sūtras, and the Yogavāsiṣṭha," in Christopher Chapple, *Karma and Creativity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986) , 33-53.

[4] Sthaneshwar Timalsina, *Seeing and Appearance* (Aachen, Germany: Shaker Verlag, 2006), 48.

[5] Charles Siewert, "Consciousness and Intentionality," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zulta, Fall 2008 edition (http://plato.stanford.edu).

and the senses and with the great elements (*mahābhūta*) of earth, water, fire, air, and space. At the fifth and final *pariṇāma*, these experiences unfold in time, described as past, present, and future. In cascade-like fashion, this string of verses (*YS* 3.9-16) starts with a state of what might be called the bliss of the non-dual. Following this one engages the world with the mind and then through the senses and the objects of sense. Finally, the continuum of time completes the world-generating process.

Once the nature of *pariṇāma* has been established, Patañjali links its process to an array of special abilities. As we look at the progression of the *pariṇāma*s, we can discern a pattern that begins within the realm of elevated thought in the form of *samādhi*, and then moves into the realm of more mundane thought, signaled by the state referred to as one-pointedness of the mind (*citta*) before entering the realm of the elements and the senses and time itself. Rapture leads to thought which leads to manifestation in physical space and time. This progression follows the cosmic metaphysics set forth in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*. According to this philosophy, the point of origin begins with the stirring of the mind. Particular karmic patterns (*saṃskāra*s or *vāsanā*s) establish ways of being (*bhāva*s) within the thought continuum. The thoughts thus generated direct the mind and thinking to project out the senses (*prapañca*) to establish a connection with objects chosen due to pre-determined karmic predilections. This process was described in great detail in the Abhidharma literature as well as in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* and in various Upaniṣads, generally to explain the source of human suffering (*duḥkha*). Attachments due to the afflictions (*kleśa*s) predispose human beings to binding behaviors. The processes of meditation and ethical reflection and action help cleanse the karmic pool and improve one's disposition.[6]

Insight into this process of world creation, alongside with being an incentive to engage in a program of self-improvement, can also become an exercise in the enhancement of self-power. Through the will, one can shape the world in an intentional manner. Knowing that interaction with the world stems from one's mental constructs, one can willfully and knowingly direct one's attention to gain specific results. By beginning with a point of clarity (*samādhi pariṇāma*) one

[6] Christopher Chapple, *Karma and Creativity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 72-79.

can enter into a variety of imaginal worlds and transform them into realities.

The first of these accomplishments, as explained by Patañjali, leads to an understanding of past, present, and future. By knowing how past impressions (*saṃskāra*s or *vāsanā*s) influence future occurrences, Patañjali asserts that one can have knowledge of the past and the future. This practice can have both psychological and physical applications. If one's family background favors a cheerful outlook one will be predisposed to be cheerful. If a person desires to be energetic and fit, and takes the initiative to adapt a lifestyle conducive to good health, then benefits will accrue. By understanding patterns and conditionings, one gains the key to future accomplishment according to one's desire.

Having established the connection between thought, intention, will, and consequent results in the physical and time-bound world, Patañjali then lists a number of specific examples. The first, appropriate to polyglot India, says that by understanding the structures of language, one can more easily excel in language acquisition. From the beginnings of Indian philosophy, the grammarians articulated the central relationship between words and things as the literal defining point for shaping reality. As Thomas Berry has noted,[7] from the time of Pāṇini forward, India grasped the powers of words more than any other civilization. By knowing root words and the ways in which they transform into arrays of related and derived meanings, one can easily shift from one language structure to another. Thought shapes words. Words shape reality.

Two passages from the *Yogasūtra* allude to knowledge of past lives. The first hint can be found in 2.39, the description of non-possession (*aparigraha*). By giving up all things, one comes to understand the origin of all that could possibly be possessed. This process of first relinquishing a physical object and then grappling with the desire to possess that object leads one to the inner process of facing and understanding the root desires linked to the *kliṣṭa karma*s that predispose the mind to follow the mundane path of acting on one's impulses to establish oneself in the world through the ownership of things. By backing away from things and learning the pathways of impulse, one can spontaneously discover a story that would account for a particular

[7] Thomas Berry, *Religions of India: Hinduism, Yoga, Buddhism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 10.

behavior. Sometimes this story is obviously due to the influence of a parent or a teacher; other times the story seems to arise from a shrouded past. According to *Yogasūtra* 3.18, by performing *saṃyama* on past conditioning (*saṃskāra*) one can discern backwards beyond influences of this life to the experiences gained in prior lives (*pūrva jāti*).

In a similar way, Patañjali seeks to explain the power of clairvoyance. By reading physical cues and watching the patterns of the thought process of another, one can predict, sometimes with great accuracy, what another person is thinking about, even if it cannot be confirmed with external proof. The description of this very cerebral power is followed with a somewhat puzzling account of how one can be rendered invisible: "From *saṃyama* on the form of the body, there arises the suspension of the power of what is to be grasped and the disjunction of light and the eye, resulting in concealment" (YS 3.21). One might speculate that by restraining or concealing one's usual movements, one can assume the gait or manner of a different person and perhaps be ignored as someone else walks by. Good actors are able to completely dissolve into their character. Similarly, by taking on, as it were, a different persona through the process of changing one's mental demeanor, one can easily be overlooked or rendered invisible to even friends or family members.

Prognosis of death has long concerned the yogis of India. Patañjali states that by performing *saṃyama* on whether karma is 'moving or not moving' (*sopakrama*, *nirupakrama*) one can determine the time of death. Nearly a thousand years after Patañjali, the Jaina court philosopher and yoga expert Hemacandra set forth in his *Yogaśāstra* more than 150 verses (5.70-224) dedicated to explaining how to predict death. At times this ability is described with eerie certainty: "If the breath blows in a single artery for five days, beginning from the first day of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa (November-December), it portends death in eighteen years" (*Yogaśāstra* 5.79).[8] In other verses, the observation of the breath seems like an ordinary tool used by a physician to determine the strength of a patient.

The next set of accomplishments links back to the description of the Brahma Vihāra in the first section of the *Yogasūtra.* In verse 1.33,

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[8] Olle Quarnström, translator, *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra: A Twelfth Century Handbook on Śvetāmbara Jainism* (Cambridge, MA: Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University, 2002), 112-135.

Patañjali urges the practitioner of yoga to be friendly toward the happy, compassionate toward those who suffer, take joy in those who possess goodness, and practice forbearance and equanimity toward those who lack virtue. By directing one's focus to these, one is able to gain power over one's response to all these four varieties of people. As with previous powers, this requires discernment. First, one must determine the personality type. Does the person in question fall into the category of exuding joy or suffering (*sukha*, *duḥkha*)? If the former is the case, then one can extend an offer of friendship. If the latter, then one needs to engage in the helping mode. Does the person fall into the category of goodness or viciousness (*puṇya*, *apuṇya*)? We are given permission to rejoice in the goodness of others, and warned not to get involved with those who model only bad behavior. By coaching the practitioner of yoga to first engage in personality assessment before taking any action, Patañjali is again underscoring the importance of mindfulness to the intention of others as well as to our own intentions.

Quite often the point is made that Patañjali gives little emphasis to the physical practice of yoga that becomes more fully explained in the Haṭhayoga texts several centuries later. In the description of postures or *āsana* in the second section, Patañjali states that they bring steadiness and ease, relaxation of effort, and prepare one for states of unity (*samāpatti*), a synonym for *samādhi* (*YS* 2.46-47). He does not, however, describe any particular postures. We know from the later literature that many if not most of the named yoga postures entail the imitation of animals. By associating *saṃyama* on power with capturing the power of an elephant, Patañjali perhaps indicates that a relationship exists between setting one's intention on an animal and cultivating its qualities within one's own being. Vyāsa's commentary suggests that by concentrating on the strength of Garuḍa, one gathers the power of Garuḍa, the eagle who carries Lord Viṣṇu.[9] In the practice of yoga postures, one gains the flexibility of the snake, the regal stature of a lion, and so forth.[10]

In another group of *sūtra*s, Patañjali indicates that through introspection one can uncover knowledge of things that are "subtle, con-

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[9] Bangali Baba, *Yogasūtra of Patañjali with the Commentary of Vyāsa* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), 81.

[10] See "Imitation of Animals in Yoga Tradition: Taming the Sacred Wild through Āsana Practice," in Christopher Key Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous: Patañjali's Spiritual Path to Freedom* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 49-59.

cealed, and distant" (*YS* 3.25). In terms of the distant, he lists three heavenly bodies: the sun, the moon, and the north star, indicating that through the sun one knows the world, through observing the moon, one can understand the constellations, and by watching the north star, one can comprehend how they circulate through the sky (*YS* 3.26-28). Though this knowledge may seem somewhat uninteresting or perhaps obvious, knowledge of the movements of the sun, moon, and stars can help one integrate the microphase aspect of reality with the cosmos, establishing a connection between, in the words of Mircea Eliade, that which is below and that which rises above.[11]

The next set of *sūtra*s (3.29-34) probes into what Patañjali refers to as the *cakra*s, the vortexes of energy within the body that play a significant role in later schools of Tantra. The progression through these five centers follow an interesting pattern. A reader familiar with the later lists of *cakra*s will soon notice that the foundational two centers associated with the root system (*mūla cakra*) and with sexuality (*svadhiṣṭhāna/liṅga/yoni*) are not mentioned by Patañjali. Rather, he begins with the navel center (*nabhi cakra*), noting that concentration on this *cakra* yields knowledge of the ordering of the body. From the navel, Patañjali skips over the heart (more on this later) and rises to the throat (*kaṇṭha kūpa*) through which one masters hunger and thirst. The next *cakra* remains somewhat shrouded in mystery. Referred to as the 'tortoise tube' (*kūrma nāḍī*) it evokes images of the capacity to draw oneself inward like a tortoise. It also indicates the continuing rich use of animal imagery, not unlike the above reference to the strength of an elephant. The placement of this center, though not specified in the text nor in Vyāsa's commentary, might correspond to the point in the middle of the forehead (*ajña cakra*). Patañjali claims that concentration on this area leads to spiritual stability. The highest center, described as the light in the head (*mūrdha jyoti*), brings one into a vision of the perfected ones (*siddhadarśana*). This could correspond with the lotus with a thousand petals (*sahasra*). It leads one into a state of intuition (*prātibha*). Finally, one returns to and settles into the heart (*hṛdaya*) wherein one can truly understand the operations of the mind (*cittasaṃvid*). One implication of this ascent from the belly to the throat and then the upper regions of the head before the return to the heart may be to accentuate the need to cul-

[11] Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 115, 116, 225, 235.

tivate human-heartedness. In a somewhat similar manner, the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* system of *bhāva*s starts with power, ascends to a dispassionate state, and then rises to transcendent, liberating knowledge, before settling into the performance of sanctified action (*dharma*).

Before moving on to a description of more powers, the author reminds the reader that the highest attainment does not lie within the mastery of these skills, but in the discernment between that which changes and the never-changing yet omnipresent pure witness consciousness. To pursue any other endeavor serves as an impediment. At the end of the chapter, Patañjali emphatically restates this point.

In one of the more mysterious accounts of the powers, Patañjali describes being able to inhabit the body of another person through giving up attachment to one's own body, carefully observing the body of another, and then occupying that body with one's mind. This accomplishment is described in other texts such as the *Mahābhārata*. Frederick Smith has published a major study of such possession occurrences.[12] Hemacandra's *Yogaśāstra* (vv. 264-273) describes a process through which one can enter the bodies first of dead birds, eventually moving on to occupy the bodies of black bees, deer, men, horses, elephants (all dead), and stone images. It advises against entering the bodies of living beings 'out of fear of sin,' presuming that such 'body snatching' would violate the Jaina precept of non-violence.[13]

The next cascade of *sūtra*s begins with rising up from dirt and mud, the primary elements, into a radiance, evoking fire, the next element. As one's concentration turns even more upward toward space, one develops divine hearing and the capacity to move through space:

> From mastery of the up-breath,
> there is nonattachment amongst water, mud, thorns, and more,
> and a rising above.
> From mastery of the equalized breath, there is radiance.
> From *saṃyama* on the connection between the ear and space
> there arises the divine ear.
> From *saṃyama* on the connection between the body and space,
> and from unity with the lightness of cotton,
> there is movement through space (*YS* 3.39-42).

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[12] Frederick M. Smith, *The Self Possessed: Deity and Spirit Possession in South Asian Literature and Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

[13] Quarnström, *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra,* 141-142. Quarnström quotes another passage cited by Hemacandra that described entering another living person, occupying the heart, and dwelling in the life of that person for a half day.

In *Yogasūtra* 3.43, Patañjali suggests that all these accomplishments lead ultimately to a state of illumination and freedom and that through this process of rising above, "the covering of light is destroyed." Through reflection upon the process described in the *pariṇāma* passages wherein subtle determines the gross and mind controls matter, it is said that one gains mastery over the elements (*YS* 3.44). With this, one achieves perfection of the body, which becomes beautiful and strong. Next, by reflection on the relationship between ego and form, one gains mastery over the senses, resulting in "swiftness of the mind organ" and a mastery over the subtle potentialities within the unmanifest state of *prakṛti*, the creative principle. At this stage, the individual develops the liberating capacity to discern "the difference between purity (*sattva*) and pure consciousness (*puruṣa*)." This highest power brings about an ongoing "knowledge born of discernment" that resists any attempts to be lured back into undesirable circumstances. Through this ultimate spiritual power, one attains the state of solitary blessedness (*kaivalya*), the final goal of yoga (*YS* 3.49-55).

To recount this description of powers, they begin with a focused mind adept at the skills of concentration, meditation, and *samādhi*, known collectively as *saṃyama.* This *saṃyama* allows one to see how the world proceeds from the mind. The world unfolds through the senses and into the elements, into the mix of a present influenced by a past and moving toward the future. Understanding the mechanics of this *pariṇāma*, one gains knowledge of past births, clairvoyance, and an ability to remain unrecognized by others. One can predict death and manifest at will qualities such as loving kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. One can take on the powers of animals, as well as commune with the sun, the moon, and the north star. One understands the flow of energy through five *cakra*s beginning with the solar plexus, rising through the throat and up into the head before settling into the heart. One can enter the bodies of other living beings. One masters the elements by utilizing the breath to rise above earth and water. One becomes luminous through concentration on fire. One ultimately acquires the divine ear and the ability to move through space. By mastery over the elements and the senses and ultimately the mind itself, one ascends to a self-mastery that produces an ongoing state of discernment (*viveka*), described as the gateway to liberation.

This sequence of unfolding powers emphasizes the self-power aspect of yoga. However, in the *Yogasūtra*, as distinct from the tradition of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, we also find a deeply theistic strand, as

indicated in the various references to the Lord or Īśvara. The following segment from the first section of the text describes Īśvara, links Īśvara to the invocation of the syllable 'oṃ', and states that through the recitation of this syllable, one becomes established in a connection with the inward consciousness, presumably resulting in a state of yoga *samādhi*.

> Dedication to Īśvara:
> Īśvara is a distinct soul
> untouched by afflictions or actions
> or fruitions or their residue.
> There one finds the seed of unsurpassed omniscience.
> Īśvara is not limited by time.
> Īśvara is the teacher of all who have gone before.
> The expression of Īśvara is the syllable 'om.'
> Repetition of 'om' cultivates highest purpose.
> By this, obstacles do not arise
> and one's consciousness turns inward.
> *Yogasūtra* 1.23-29.

Though Patañjali does not use the term perfection (*siddhi*) explicitly in this section of the text, when he returns to the discussion of Īśvara in the next section, he describes the practice of dedication to Īśvara as the gateway to perfection (*samādhi siddhi*). The discussion of this dedication (*praṇidhāna*) appears in two passages. The first, at the very beginning of the second section, completes the three fold kriyā yoga, following austerity and study of the self (*YS* 2.1). The second description elaborates upon the practice of kriyā yoga in the context of Patañjali's description of the five ethic observances (*niyama: śauca, santoṣa, tapaḥ, svādhyāya, īśvara-praṇidhāna*):

> From austerity (*tapas*) arises the destruction of impurity
> and the perfection of the body and the senses.
> From study of the Self, arises union with the desired deity.
> Perfection in *samādhi* arises from dedication to Īśvara.
> *Yogasūtra* 2.43-45.

Here, Patañjali juxtaposes two types of perfection. The first perfection, accomplished through austerity, results in the perfection of the body. In a certain sense, all the perfections listed above, such as clairvoyance, knowledge of heavenly bodies and the *cakra* system, and the ability to enter other bodies and roam through space, may be placed under the category of perfection of the body. Patañjali also warns that these abilities may prove to be distractions to the true goal of yoga,

variously described in the text as quieting of the mind (*cittavṛttinirodha*) and various states of *samādhi*, as well as blessed solitude (*kaivalya*) and the power of consciousness (*citiśakti*). However, the second *siddhi*, brought about by dedication to Īśvara, does not serve as a distraction. Its carefully defined theology guarantees that the error of misidentification cannot occur, as this special soul (*puruṣa*) never enters into the conventional realm of thought or action. The *Yogasūtra* emphasizes that Īśvara cannot partake in the process of creation and hence cannot be claimed to 'be' anything, nor can anyone claim to be Īśvara. The discipline of discernment allows no one to own Īśvara.

The term *siddhi* is last mentioned at the very beginning of the fourth section of the text, the *Kaivalyapāda*. It discusses the three modalities for perfection that we have discussed and adds two additional perfections. It acknowledges that perfection comes about through the recitation of mantra, the practice of *japa* mentioned earlier (*YS* 1.28). It also states, referring back *Yogasūtra* 2.43, that austerity (*tapas*) brings perfection, though this refers to perfection of the body and the senses. The third pathway to perfection, *samādhi*, has been explained as the pathway to a host of perfections, including clairvoyance and the others described in *Yogasūtra* 3.16-48. Two other perfections are mentioned: the perfection that comes genetically (*janman*) and the perfection that comes through the use of drugs (*oṣadhi*) (*YS* 4.1). These forms only minimally require the exertion of human effort and inject a dose of humility and realism into the text. Some people are born with innate skills, physical, mental, attitudinal, or spiritual. Substances exist that can provide feelings of grandeur. However, as noted in Gauḍapāda's commentary on the first two verses of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, cures due to drugs are not permanent. Only spiritual knowledge and practice can lead to freedom.

What, then, we might ask, is the role or purpose of the perfections in the *Yogasūtra*? We have seen two approaches. The first approach results in bodily perfection and an ability to become manifest in the world in desired ways. This sort of perfection would result in beauty, power, and, if desired, uncanny intelligence. Patañjali clearly warns that this form of perfection is a distraction and even potentially dangerous. He states "These are impediments to *samādhi*, while in worldly production they are perfections" (*YS* 3.37). The second approach moves one appropriately from karmic afflictions with the realm of lethargy and passion (*tamas* and *rajas*) toward illumination (*sattva*), as stated earlier. He also urges one to rise above even illumination to

attain freedom. This process requires discernment not only into the power of the mind in creating desired realities, but discernment about the nature of ultimate or highest freedom. With somewhat uncharacteristically passionate rhetoric, Patañjali argues at the end of the third section of the *Yogasūtra* that one take up this aspect of yoga, which he clearly deems superior:

> Only from discerning the difference between *sattva* and *puruṣa*
> can one gain sovereignty over all states of being and total knowledge.
> Going beyond even this,
> by destroying this last seed of ignorance,
> one enters *kaivalya.*
> One cannot be flattered into attachment or pride,
> because one knows their consequences.
> By applying concentration, meditation, and *samādhi* on each moment,
> one understands all that will follow.
> One possesses knowledge born of discernment.
> This discernment allows one to make the choice,
> opting for the soul consciousness that remains untouched
> rather than pursuing birth, status, and place.
> This knowledge is said to be liberating
> at all times and in all circumstances,
> with no residue remaining.
> In the sameness of purity between one's *sattva*
> and the purity of Īśvara, arises *kaivalya.*
> *Yogasūtra* 3.49-55.

This parallels the close of the fourth section, where the final verses of the *Yogasūtra* proclaim:

> For the one who remains reflective,
> applying discriminative discernment,
> there is no interest in become entangled.
> There is only the dharma cloud of *samādhi.*
> All afflicted action ceases.
> This eternal knowledge
> dispels all impure covering.
> Little remains to be known.
> The purpose of the *guṇa*s has been fulfilled.
> There is no more need for *pariṇāma.*
> The cascade of action comes to an end.
> *Pariṇāma* ceases.
> The *guṇa*s return to their mother,
> having served their purpose
> by performing for *puruṣa.*
> Steadfast in one's own true form,

one enters *kaivalya*,
the power of the highest awareness.
Yogasūtra 4.29-34.

Discernment brings freedom.

Patañjali outlines a philosophy of will through his assertion of the efficacy of karma, as illustrated in his teachings on emergence and transformation (*pariṇāma*). Patañjali also sets forth a theology of transcendence, urging his readers to set themselves on a course of discernment that can lead to deliverance from all compulsion to remain ensnared in the actions prompted by afflicted karma. Lower forms of power bring strength, beauty, and intuition. The highest form of power brings deliverance into a state of blessed solitude. In order for Patañjali's system to adhere, he must recognize the efficacy of both paths of power. In order for freedom to be possible, human agency must be acknowledged. By affirming the mind-constructed nature of experience and warning of its potential pitfalls, Patañjali simultaneously affirms the possibility of freedom, encouraging his readers to follow the path toward purification.

Appendix

Yogasūtra, translation of the third section, *Vibhūtipāda*

1. Concentration of the mind is its binding to a place.
2. There, the extension of one's intention is meditation.
3. When the purpose alone shines forth, as if empty of own form, that indeed is *samādhi.*
4. The unity of these three is *saṃyama.*
5. From mastery of that, the splendor of wisdom.
6. Its application occurs in various stages.
7. These three inner limbs are distinct from the prior ones.
8. These indeed are outer limbs in regard to the seedless.
9. In regard to the two *saṃskāra*s of emergence and restraint, when that of appearance or emergence is overpowered, there follows a moment of restraint in the mind; this is the *pariṇāma* of restraint.
10. From the *saṃskāra* of this, there is a calm flow.
11. When there is the destruction of all objectivity and the arising of one-pointedness, the mind has the *pariṇāma* of *samādhi.*
12. Hence again, when there is equality between arising and quieted intentions, there is the *pariṇāma* of one-pointedness of the mind.

13. By this are similarly explained the *pariṇāma*s of state, characteristic, and *dharma* among the elements and the senses.
14. The *dharma*-holder corresponds to the *dharma*, whether past, present, or future.
15. The cause of difference between *pariṇāma*s is the difference in the succession.
16. From *saṃyama* on the threefold *pariṇāma*s there is knowledge of past and future.
17. From the overlapping here and there of word, purposes, and intentions, there is confusion. From *saṃyama* on the distinctions of them, there is knowledge of the way of utterance of all beings.
18. From effecting perception of *saṃskāra*, there arises knowledge of previous births.
19. Similarly, from perception of another's intention, there is knowledge of another mind.
20. But this not with support because there is no condition of it in the elements.
21. From *saṃyama* on the form of the body, there arises the suspension of the power of what is to be grasped and the disjunction of light and the eye, resulting in concealment.
22. Karma is either in motion or not in motion. From *saṃyama* on this, or from natural phenomenon boding misfortune, there is knowledge of death.
23. By *saṃyama* on friendliness and so forth, corresponding powers.
24. By *saṃyama* on powers, the powers arise like those of an elephant, and so forth.
25. Due to casting of light on a sense activity, there is knowledge of the subtle, concealed, and distant.
26. From *saṃyama* on the sun arises knowledge of the world.
27. On the moon, knowledge of the ordering of the stars.
28. On the polar star, knowledge of their movement.
29. On the navel *cakra*, knowledge of the ordering of the body.
30. On the hollow of the throat, cessation of the hunger and thirst.
31. On the tortoise *nāḍī*, stability.
32. On the light in the head, vision of perfected ones.
33. Or from intuition, everything.
34. On the heart, understanding of the mind.
35. When there is no distinction of intention between the pure *puruṣa* and the perfect *sattva*, there is experience for the purpose of the other *puruṣa*; from *saṃyama* on the purpose being for the self, there is knowledge of *puruṣa*.

36. Hence are born intuitive hearing, touching, seeing, tasting, and smelling.
37. These are impediments to *samādhi*. In emergence or world production, these are perfections.
38. From the relaxation of the cause of bondage and from the perception of a manifestation, there is an entering of mind into another embodiment.
39. From mastery of the up-breath, there is nonattachment among water, mud, and thorns, etc., and a rising above.
40. From mastery of the *samāna*, there is radiance.
41. From *saṃyama* on the connection between the ear and space, there arises the divine ear.
42. From *saṃyama* on the connection between the body and space, and from unity with lightness of cotton, there is movement through space.
43. An outer, genuine fluctuation results in freedom from the body; hence the covering of light is destroyed.
44. From *saṃyama* on the significance and connection of the subtle and the own from of the gross, there is mastery over the elements.
45. Hence arises the appearance of minuteness and so forth, perfection of the body, and unassailability of its *dharma*.
46. Perfection of the body is beauty of its form, strength, and adamantine stability.
47. From *saṃyama* on the grasping, own form, I-am-ness, their connection, and their significance, there is mastery over the sense organs.
48. Hence, there is swiftness of the mind-power, a state of being beyond the senses, and mastery over the *pradhāna*.
49. Only from the discernment of the difference between *sattva* and *puruṣa*, there is sovereignty over all states of being and knowledge of all.
50. Due to release from even this, in the destruction of the seed of this impediment, arises *kaivalya*.
51. There is no cause for attachment and pride upon the invitation of those well established, because of repeated association with the undesirable.
52. From *saṃyama* on the moment and its succession, there is knowledge born of discrimination.
53. Hence, there is the ascertainment of two things that are similar, due to their not being limited or made separate by differences of birth, designation, and place.
54. The knowledge born of discrimination is said to be liberating, inclusive of all conditions and all times, and non-successive.
55. In the sameness of purity between *sattva* and *puruṣa*, there is *kaivalya*.

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CHAPTER NINE

HOLDING ON AND LETTING GO: THE IN AND OUT OF POWERS IN CLASSICAL YOGA

Lloyd W. Pflueger

Introduction: Experimenting with Power

Is yoga about power or peace? The term 'yoga' certainly conjures up images of peace and renunciation in the popular mind. Ultimately this may be justified, yet India's most ancient orthodox viewpoints Sāṃkhya and Yoga *darśana*s (henceforth referred to as a single complementary system, Classical *Sāṃkhya-Yoga*), in fact have a lot to say about power and powers. However much the idea of *power* in contemporary thought seems tainted, suspect, and the usual focus of the work of deconstruction, in *Sāṃkhya-Yoga* philosophy, power, powers, superpowers, and success are closely related to purity and peace. In this essay I hope to unpack this relationship in some detail. What is the relationship between power and purity in Classical *Sāṃkhya-Yoga*? What is power? Where does it come from? What is purity? What is success?

Let's begin with an experiment. While Sāṃkhya philosophy is largely theoretical, Patañjali's yoga philosophy is largely experimental and empirical. I hope along the way to engage the patient reader in some simple practical observations to make my points more clearly:

Please sit up straight. Close the eyes. And take a long deep breath in through the nostrils. Hold the breath in. Just observe: How does it feel?

Notice a little surge of energy? How long can you hold it—both the breath and the feeling of energy?

Experiment a little, the book will wait.

Now let's focus on the exhalation—take the breath in as before, notice the energy, hold a little and then let it go rather slowly through the mouth with a quiet hissing 'huuuuh' sound. What's happening in the body? Feel the relaxation?

One more time, now that you know what you are doing. I want you to notice something special, something subtle, something very common: As we breath in, notice the subtle feeling of *power, new energy*. Hold that a while. And as we breathe out again notice the relaxation and after the relaxation, before the next breath, notice the peace. It comes without asking. These two experiences which accompany every complete breath, though very simple, are very easily overlooked, since our breath is usually automatic and unobserved.

Even one conscious breath or two can bring us into balance. The *Yogasūtra* (*YS*) states that *samādhi,* that highly sought after salvific state of *meditative balance and absorption*[1] can be brought by control of the breath:

> 1.34 *Pracchardana-vidhāraṇābhyāṃ vā prāṇasya.*
> 1.34 Or by exhaling and restraining the breath.[2]

In *YS* Book Two, this breath control is listed as one of the eight limbs of yoga and credited with immense power, the power to remove 'that which obscures illumination'. As Patañjali notes:

> 2.52 *tataḥ kṣīyate prakāśāvaraṇam.*
> 2.52 From this, that which obscures illumination is destroyed.

> 2.50 *bāhyābhyantara-sthambha-vṛttir deśa-kāla-saṃkhyābhiḥ paridṛṣṭo dīrgha-sūkṣmaḥ.*
> 2.50 [This *prāṇāyāma*, having] external, internal, and [completely] arrested states classified by location, time, and number [becomes] long and subtle.

Since illumination is the ultimate goal of yoga, that's big power.

Patañjali goes on in the next chapter to link the mind's capacity for meditation with this practice of breath control, holding and releasing the breath.

> 2.53 *dhāraṇāsu ca yogyatā manasaḥ.*
> 2.53 Also the capacity of the mind for holding on [comes from this].

I hope you remember this small breathing experiment. I will remind you from time to time to recall it and take another conscious breath. In a nutshell, I believe, it holds a key to understanding power, purity,

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[1] The Sanskrit term here is *citta-prasāda*. *YS* 1.33 promises tranquil clarity of mind from meditating on frendliness, compassion, happiness, and indifference and in *YS* 1.44 offers breath control as another way to gain this state.

[2] Unless otherwise stated the Sanskrit translations are my own.

and attainments in Classical *Sāṃkhya-Yoga*. Holding on to this key we can relax. Even if this key drops to the ground the door will open.

If the world were open and clear, if everything were just as it seems, we would not need a key. Indian philosophy, in the form of the *six darśanas*[3] presents what it sees as the keys to liberation. The point is not *speculation*, but *salvation*, to open a door *out of* suffering. It takes both *knowledge* and *power* to open this door. *Success (siddhi*) in such philosophy is ultimately only this, the attainment of liberation from suffering. All other successes, attainments, powers, or perfections, are to just gain this. In this regard the dualistic philosophies of Sāṃkhya and Yoga work together: Classical Sāṃkhya is the intellectual key to understanding the underpinnings of existence, the twenty-five principles (*tattva*s)[4] and the misunderstood binary structures that seem to confine consciousness in erroneous notions of who we are and what is going on. Classical Yoga is more a philosophy of the practices, the key spiritual disciplines which are understood to give aspirants direct experience of their true identity, releasing them from an insidious and enduring misapprehension of reality. Like a rocket overcoming gravity, the aspirant to freedom must make use of extraordinary power and extraordinary powers to make this victory possible. While the ultimate power is *knowledge*, the experience of a pristinely clear intellect (*buddhi*) distinguishing true identity, pure consciousness, Patañjali also makes it clear that a host of lesser powers and attainments known as *vibhūti*s or *siddhi*s, (seen throughout the *YS* but particularly in Chapter 3 *Vibhūtipāda*) also arise as important steps along the path of liberation. I will attempt to place these powers in relation

[3] Orthodox Indian philosophy traditionally consists of six viewpoints, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Karma Mīmāṃsā, and Vedānta, of which the oldest are the pair of *Sāṃkhya-Yoga*.

[4] The twenty five *tattva*s of Sāṃkhya are binary *puruṣa* (pure consciousness) and *prakṛti* (primordial matter, composed of the three threads, *sattva, rajas,* and *tamas*). P*rakṛti*, unlike static eternal *puruṣa*, goes on to evolve and generate more condensed principles, *buddhi* (intellect), then *ahaṃkāra* (ego sense), and from that *manas* (lower mind), the five sense capacities, *buddīndriyas* (hearing, touching, seeing, tasting, smelling), the five action capacities, *karmendriyas* (speech, prehension, locomotion, excretion, and procreation), the five subtle elements, *tanmātras*) (sound, touch, form, taste, smell), and the five gross elements, *mahābhūtas* (space, air, fire, water, earth) which combine to make the world of gross objects we know in the world. While most of us suffer because our consciousness is mistakenly identified with the body and its thought process, *Sāṃkhya-Yoga* would have us realize the separate nature of pure consciousness, our true, unchanging identity, from all the changing forms of *prakṛti*.

to the binary system of salvation as a whole, and in relation to the complementary concepts of purity (*śuddhi, sattva*) and impurity *(aśuddhi, rajas, tamas)*, to powerlessness and power *(aiśvarya, anaiśvarya)*; and ultimately in relation to the binary principles which generate and explain them in Yoga, which I am conceptualizing as *holding on* and *letting go*.

Supernormal Powers

These much vaunted *siddhi*s, the powers and perfections of the *yogin* who is approaching liberation are invested with more *sūtra*s and more continuous attention than any other single topic in the *YS*. Strangely the traditional commentaries have very little to say about them and modern scholars have until recent times generally sought to diminish their importance or warn about their dangers. Although I have previously written about this,[5] it might be useful here to reiterate a few points. For example, among modern scholars: Radhakrishnan tends to see the *siddhi*s as irrelevant low magical additions to an otherwise lofty philosophy,[6] Dasgupta likewise associates them with a popular misunderstanding of yoga and finds them merely useful for strengthening faith.[7] More recently Oberhammer also gives them little importance for Patañjali.[8] On the other hand, scholars such as Eliade, Kane, and Pensa have gone some distance in acknowledging the important role of the *siddhi*s in *Sāṃkhya-Yoga.*[9] For example Pensa asserts that:

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[5] Lloyd Pflueger, "Person, Purity, and Power in the Yogasūtra," in *Theory and Practice of Yoga: Essays in Honour of Gerald James Larson*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 29-59.

[6] Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, 2 vols. *(*London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1956), 366-68

[7] Surendranath Dasgupta *Yoga Philosophy* in *Relation to Other Systems of Indian Thought* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1930), 1.

[8] Gerhard Oberhammer, "Meditation und Mystik im Yoga des Patañjali," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens und Archiv für Indische Philosophie* 9 (1965): 98-118, 102.

[9] Pandurang Vaman Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 5 vols. (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1930-1962), 1451-2; Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, translated from the French by W. R. Trask, Bollingen Series LVI (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 85-90, 177-80; Jakob Wilhelm Hauer, *Der Yoga*, *Ein Indischer Weg zum Selbst* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1958), 324 ff.

> … the 'power' element, implicit or explicit as it may be, is intrinsic to the very structure of Yoga, in close correlation with the concepts of purification and knowledge …. Each implies and is implicit in the other: progress in one means progress in the others, nor could any progress be thinkable outside this organic interaction …. As to the 'powers' or 'perfections' (*vibhūtis*, *siddhis*), they are no other—as we feel has been made sufficiently clear by the textual analysis—than specializations of this power, which, in correct Yoga practice, are used for the same purpose, i.e. purification (*sattvaśuddhi*) and knowledge (*sarvajñāna*, *purusajñāna*) …. In consequence, neither power nor 'the powers', if we want to make this distinction, can be in any way separated from Yoga's essentially organic and unitary structure; considering them as spurious elements or magical residues has no textual basis.[10]

Naturally Western academic appraisal of supernormal powers is always under the influence of its Enlightenment origins. When non-Western philosophy and religion are either suspect or overly romanticized, it takes some time to understand the place of those elements of yoga philosophy which contrast most sharply with cultural expectations. Despite the Enlightenment prejudice against 'magic and superstition' and the discouraging silence of the indigenous and modern commentaries, I suspect the *YS*, that tangled ancient web of arcane aphorisms, is still, even today, read and contemplated, in the wide world outside of academia (and to some degree now within it), largely because of the long list of miraculous abilities the humble *yogin* is said to command. Its high time academics face the texts as they are and bring the *siddhi*s, however much they offend enlightenment sensibilities, into sharper and clearer focus. What's so obviously important to Patañjali, should be important to the Patañjali scholar. We need not believe in supernormal powers to acknowledge their place in Classical *Sāṃkhya-Yoga*.

The *attainments* attributed to the successful *yogin* are quite extensive. They range from powers now common in Hollywood superhero films, *the ability to fly (3.42), telekinesis, invulnerability (3.44), telepathy (3.19), precognition (3.16), knowledge of past lives (3.18), invisibility (3.21), super hearing (3.41), x-ray vision (3.25,3.36), psychic entry into another's body (3.38), communication with animals (3.17),* and *super strength* (3.24) to *mastery of physical attraction* (2.40), *hunger and thirst* (3.30), and *contentment (2.42)*, all the way *to actual com-*

[10] C. Pensa, "On the Purification Concept in Indian Tradition, with Special Regard to Yoga," *East and West* 19 (1969): 194-228; 215-216.

munion with god (2.44), and ultimately to *omnipotence* and *omniscience (3.49).*

Traditionally there are eight major '*siddhis*' famously referred to in the *Yogasūtra* (*YS*) 3.45 and explicitly listed in Vyāsa's Commentary, *Vyāsabhāṣya* (*VB*):

> 3.44 *sthūla-svarūpa-sūkṣmānvayārthavattva-saṃyamād bhūta-jayaḥ.*
> 3.44 By convergence on [their] grossness, essential nature, subtlety, inherence, and purposefulness there is conquest of the elements (*bhūta*s).
> 3.45 *tato 'ṇimādi-prādurbhāvaḥ kāya-saṃpat-tad-dharmānabhighātaś ca*
> 3.45 From this arises [the supernormal powers of] miniaturization etc. and [there is] perfection of the body and invulnerability to the properties (*dharma*s) of these [earlier mentioned elements].

Vyāsa on *YS* 3.45 details the celebrated list:

> Of these:
> (1) *miniaturization* (*aṇiman*) [means] one becomes minute;
> (2) *levitation* (*laghiman*) [means] one becomes light:
> (3) *magnification* (*mahiman*) [means] one becomes huge;
> (4) *extension* (*prāpti)* [means] one touches the moon with one's fingertips themselves;
> (5) *irresistible desire* (*prākāmya*) [means] the lack of opposition to one's wishes—one dives into the earth and emerges as [if] in water;
> (6) *mastery* (*vaśitva*) means one masters the elements and material things, but is not mastered by others.
> (7) *command* (*īśitva*) [means] to govern manifestation, disappearance, and disposition [of the elements etc.];
> (8) *wish realization* (*yatrakāmā-vasāyitva*) [means] making whatever is desired real—as one desires, so the gross elements and their natures (*prakrti*s) arrange themselves. Although one is able, one does not radically reverse the nature of things. Why not? Due to the intention of Another One, previously perfected, who has [already] realized his desires with respect to the elements as they are. These are the eight powers (*aiśvaryāṇi*). The perfection of the body will be described [later]).
> [As to the phrase:] … *and invulnerability to the properties of these [elements]*—[it means] the earth [element] does not obstruct the activity of the yogin's body etc. with its solidity; he [even] enters rock; water adhesive as it is, does not wet [him]; nor does fire, hot as it is, burn [him], nor does the wind, forceful as it is, move him. Even in space, which is by nature transparent, he remains concealed, invisible even to [other] Perfected Ones.

Whether eight or thirty-eight[11] (closer to the total number mentioned in *YS*) what exactly is meant by the term *siddhi* or *vibhūti*? Where do such powers come from? How are they attained? Is there an underlying principle? How is it that these impressive abilities fit into the *spiritual*[12] goals of *Sāṃkhya-Yoga*?[13] Big questions.
(Let's take another breath).

Signs of Success (Siddhi)

Who wants *siddhi,* success? Only everyone. *Success* is not only the characteristic *desideratum* of today's Western middle class, but also Patañjali's humble yogins are focused on success and on signs of success.[14] The chief term in Sanskrit is *siddhi*. As often the case in Sanskrit, it has a wide range of meanings. The term *siddhi*,[15] is used in Sanskrit literature with a wide range of positive connotations. We may trace it back to the verb root √*sidh* (weak form of √*sādh*), *to hit a mark, attain one's aim or object, to have success; to be proven, demonstrated, healed, set right or well cooked* among others.[16] As a noun it carries a very

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[11] Aside from the famous list of eight, the actual number of powers or successful outcomes from yoga practice noted by Patañjali will depend on how exactly one defines a 'power'. The number is easily around forty.

[12] For *spiritual* here I mean that which applies to the ultimate goal of *kaivalya*, or spiritual liberation by isolating *prakṛti* (and especially *buddhi, the individualized intellect*) from *puruṣa*, pure consciousness.

[13] *Sāṃkhyakārikā* (*SK*) 51 lists the eight powers, *siddhi*s, as "The eight attainments are *inference, oral instruction, study, the threefold removal of suffering, elevating companionship,* and *generosity*. The previous three hinder the attainments." These are mostly cognitive and mundane compared to the traditional list of supernormal attainments, also eight in number referred to in *YS* 3.44-45.

These traditional *siddhi*s are relegated to the category of *moha,* delusion in *SK* 48 according to commentaries. See Larson, p. 56 in Gerald James Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, eds. *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*. Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, vol. IV (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). This could indicate a rivalry or point of friction between the generally complementary systems of the more intellectual path of the SK and the practically grounded *YS*.

[14] The substantial interest in yoga today in the U.S.A. where some twenty million are said to be practicing some kind of yoga (usually a form of *haṭhayoga*) is probably not unrelated to concerns for removing the blockages to material 'success' or the perceived negative byproducts of economic success in the form of concomitant stress and strain.

[15] The term is used in *YS* 4.1, although the term *vibhūti* is used in the title of the third chapter of the *YS*, where the long litany of powers is described.

[16] Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, New Edition, Reprint (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979 [1899]), p. 1215.1.

positive semantic range from *attainment, achievement, success* to *coming into force, demonstration, proof*, all the way to *maturity, perfection, and complete sanctification*, not just *supernormal power*. The synonymous term used to title the third chapter of the *YS* in which most of the supernormal powers are listed is *vibhūti*, (from *vi*+ √*bhū*) a term which also trails religious glories, connoting *all-pervasive might*, *abundance*, *expansion*, the *epiphany of divine power*. The clear implication of the title is that this chapter's featured glorification, (even *theosis*) of the yogin is the sign of his imminent final liberation, *kaivalya,* the title of the last chapter.

How does the *yogin* attain these powers? The short answer, is given in *YS* 1.12, is also the main formula for bringing the cessation of the operations of the mind, the very goal of yoga and the underlying principle of the yogic path: practice and detachment (*abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*). Also it is the key to the supernormal powers as well: simply put, *holding on* and *letting go*:

> 1.12 *Abhyāsa-vairāgyābhyāṃ tan-nirodhaḥ*
> 1.12 The quiescence of these [waves of the mind] is by practice (*abhyāsa*) and detachment (*vairāgya*).

Yogic *abhyāsa* or *practice* is briefly defined as the undertaking to hold on to the stability of mental quiescence (*tatra sthitau yatna).*[17] This is no small effort since the *YS* goes on to note that it must be "practiced assiduously in the proper way without interruption over a long period of time" to be firmly established.[18] The aspirant to perfection in yoga must *hold on* like a pit bull.

Vairāgya (detachment) is defined in terms of the mastery of the *yogin* who has been able to mentally *let go* of all thirst, not just for objects perceived in this world or described in scripture, but ultimately for any *object*, anything in the realm of matter, the three *guṇas* (*guṇavaitṛṣṇya),* due to experience of that which is beyond matter (*prakṛti).*[19] This is the ultimate in *letting go*, total renunciation (*saṃnyāsa*), literally 'throwing down'.

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[17] 1.13 *Tatra sthitau yatno 'bhyāsaḥ.*
1.13 In this regard practice is the undertaking to gain steadiness [in the state of quiescence].

[18] 1.14 *Sa tu dīrgha-kāla-nairantarya-satkārāsevito dṛdha-bhūmiḥ.*
1.14 Moreover, this is firmly established when it has been practiced assiduously in the proper way without interruption over a long period of time.

[19] 1.15 *dṛṣṭānuśravika-viṣaya-vitṛṣṇasya-vaśīkāra-saṃjñā vairāgyam.*
1.15 Dispassion (*vairāgya*) is a technical term (*saṃjñā*) for the mastery of one

Attaining perfection demands we take another long breath in and out.

Perfecting the External Limbs of Yoga

Although supernormal powers are mentioned here and there throughout the *YS*, the application of the principles of *practice* (exerting the will, restraining the mind, holding a thought or place, maintaining a spiritual discipline) and *detachment* (letting go of desire for objects, thoughts, tension, and egoic will, renunciation) is laid out in *YS* Chapter Two, devoted to *sādhana*, or spiritual practices. These practices are systematized finally into eight *subdivisions* or *limbs* (*aṣṭāṅga)* of yoga, given as the sovereign means to destroy the *impurities* which are blocking the achievement of enlightenment.[20] *Siddhi*s *appear as impurities disappear*: the full mastery of each limb of yoga is marked by the sign of supernormal attainments. When the limb is exercised it develops muscle and skill.[21] Clearly these are signposts of success, and inducements to practice.
The first five limbs,

1. virtuous observances (*yama*),
2. disciplines (*niyama*),
3. yogic postures (*āsana*),

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who is without thirst for objects perceived or revealed [by scripture].
1.16 *tatparaṃ puruṣa-khyāter guṇavaitṛṣṇyam.*
1.16 Superior to that [dispassion] is the state in which there is no thirst for the gunas on account of the knowledge of pure consciousness (*puruṣa*).

[20] *2.29 yama-niyamāsana-prāṇāyāma-pratyāhāra-dhāraṇādhyāna-samādhayo'-ṣṭāvaṇgāni.*
2.29 The eight subdivisions [of yoga] are:
virtuous observances (yama),
disciplines (niyama),
yogic postures (āsana),
breath control (prāṇāyāma),
withdrawal [of the senses] (pratyāhāra),
fixity [of awareness] (dhāraṇā),
meditative flow (dhyāna), and
meditative absorption (samādhi)

[21] The *limbs* or arms (*aṅgāni*) of yoga create perhaps a vision of an anthropomorphic sacred image with multiple arms, each bearing symbols of divine power as one often sees in Indian iconography. In a certain sense this may be more correct than seeing them merely as sequential steps. See below.

4. breath control (*prāṇāyāma*),
5. withdrawal [of the senses] (*pratyāhāra*),

are categorized as *external,* and each has its rewards, but the last three limbs

6. fixity [of awareness] (*dhāraṇā*),
7. meditative flow (*dhyāna*), and
8. meditative absorbtion (*samādhi*).

are *internal*, the ultimate engine of inner transformation and perfection, and the fountainhead of many advanced powers. Yoga, after all aims at a transformation of the inner being, the *buddhi*, the highest material agent of knowledge, and that ultimate attainment, in a way frosts the cake of enlightenment, demonstrating the furthest range of sanctification and power. Let's explore the eight layers of the 'cake' and the baking process from the bottom up[22] (recalling that one of the meanings of *siddhi* is *complete cooking*[23]).

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[22] It is by no means certain that these eight subdivisions of yogic *sādhana* are stages or sequential steps. Clearly each 'limb' or 'subdivision' is related to the rest rather than entirely independent or preliminary. Moral virtues such as non-attachment (*aparigraha*, non-grasping) could certainly strengthen physical postures, *āsana*, as well as the final limb, *samādhi, and doubtless samādhi would strengthen aparigraha* and *āsana*, etc. The direction the texts points to is definite, however, from external to internal. The real focus of *Sāṃkhya-Yoga* is the purification and transformation of the faculty of refined thought, the *buddhi*, whose lack of clarity creates and perpetuates suffering and lack of self knowledge. The subdivisions of yoga as listed progress from moral virtues and attitudes to lifestyle (cleanliness, contentment, recitation of sacred texts etc.) to physical postures, breath control, sense withdrawal and meditation. Power increases with the internal limbs. Even so it may be going to far to assume that the listing of the eight subdivisions is anything but a convenient traditional means of organizing and addressing the aspects of yoga. The *YS* is full of alternatives and alternative ways of organizing the path—probably due to being an amalgam of various early traditions which agree more on the goal than the exact conceptualization of the means, much like the Upaniṣads themselves, as a collection of the views of various successful gurus.

[23] *Siddhi*s are the fruit (consequence) of yogic *tapas*, or 'heating' the name given generically to the transformative heating that purifies and matures the aspirant through *sādhana (*see *YS 2.1).* A *yogin* is *cooked* by *tapas* from his raw natural state to the state of complete power and perfection. See regarding *tapas* and its history: Walter O. Kaelber, *Tapta Mārga: Asceticism and Initiation in Vedic India* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

I apologize for using what may be a confusing array of metaphors in the essay. We have breathing, baking , agriculture (fruit etc.), hydrodynamics, and even eventually coherent state laser physics is in play. Analogical thinking is, I believe a very traditional way to explain and argue points in the Indian tradition. A range of meta-

We notice immediately in the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* the important verb root √*yam* to *hold, support, restrain, govern or subdue*.[24] This type of *holding or disciplined restraint* appears in the first two subdivisions of *yama* and *niyama, virtuous observances* and *disciplines.*

> 2.30 *ahiṃsā-satyāsteya-brahmacaryāparigrahā yamāḥ.*
> 2.30 The virtuous observances are: non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, chastity, and non-attachment.
> 2.31 *jāti-deśa-kāla-samayānavacchinnāḥ sārva-bhaumā mahāvratam.*
> 2.31 Unqualified by class, location, time, or circumstance, they are universal, [comprising] a great vow.

The mastery of these virtues is arguably the first *systematic* example mentioned in the *YS* of attaining to supernormal powers. The basic model is negative: the *yogin* seems to attain virtue by *holding back from vice:* Most of the rules of the virtuous observances *(yama)* are stated negatively as well: non-harming *(ahiṃsā),* non-stealing (*asteya*), non-greediness (*aparigraha*). Establishing oneself in truth *(satya)* and chastity (*brahmacarya*), though the terms are positive, easily fit the same ethos. Interestingly enough, *holding to* virtue implies also a *letting go* of vice. The two-fold power of discipline and renunciation is on display. The model (stated rather cryptically) is 2.37:

> 2.37 *asteya-pratiṣṭhāyām sarva-ratnopasthānam.*
> 2.37 To one established in non-stealing, all jewels present themselves.

In other words renunciation gives mastery or positive power, control, over that which one steadfastly renounces—the very opposite of worldly common sense. Another example is *truthfulness*:

> 2.36 *satya-pratiṣṭhāyām kriyā-phalāśrayatvam.*
> 2.36 For one established in truthfulness the consequences of action conform [to his speech].

By establishing *truthfulness* (the renunciation of dishonesty, lying, and denial) one gains *conformation of one's words with reality*. What is that? Apparently this gives one the power, to have ones speech change reality—if, having mastered truth, you say it is true, it becomes true—a kind of omnipotence (often displayed in Vedic literature as the awe-

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phors approaches the subject from a number of perspectives. This very variety can converge on a clear outline of the subject much like intersecting logical sets.

[24] Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 845.2

some power of sages to bless or curse). By the same token *abstention*, holding back, from sexual conduct, gives one virile power (2.38).[25]

The next subdivision layer, *niyama*s*, disciplines***,** follow the *yama*s and the text continues to stipulate the results of mastery, as *siddhi* in each.

> 2.32 *śauca-santoṣa-tapaḥ-svādhyāyeśvara-praṇidhānāni niyamāḥ.*
> 2.32 The disciplines are: cleanliness, contentment, purification, internalization, and meditation on Īśvara.

This list is an odd collection, largely a repetition of the so-called '*kriyā-yoga*' of the first part of Chapter Two.[26] This collection of forms of restraint seems more inward than the *yama-s*, less oriented to the outside world of interpersonal relations[27]:

> 2.40 *saucāt-svāṅga-jugupsā parair asaṃsargaḥ.*
> 2.40 From cleanliness there is disgust with one's own body and a lack of sensual attraction to others.
> 2.41 *sattva-śuddhi-saumanasyaikāgryendriya-jayātma-darśana-yogyatvāni ca.*
> 2.41 Purity of awareness (*sattva*), inner happiness, one-pointedness, mastery of the senses, and the capacity for the experience of pure consciousness [also result from cleanliness].
> 2.42 *santoṣād anuttamaḥ sukha-lābhaḥ***.**
> 2.42 From contentment incomparable happiness is attained.
> 2.43 *kāyendriya-siddhir-aśuddhi-kṣayāt-tapasaḥ.*
> 2.43 From purification (*tapas*) there is the perfection of the body and the senses
> 2.44 *svādhyāyād iṣṭa-devatā-saṃprayogaḥ.*

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[25] 2.38 *brahmacarya-pratiṣṭhāyām vīrya-lābhaḥ.*
2.38 For one established in chastity, there is the acquisition of [special] power.
Vīrya here as 'power' has several possible meanings—*virile power, manliness, vigor, energy,* and *spiritual luster*. The thought probably relates to folk and *āyurvedic* notions of the virtue of retaining semen, and the weakness incurred in losing semen. Sexual desire is also a major sign or test of one's ability to demonstrate mastery of desire (*vairāgya)*—a test (along with resisting anger) which in the traditional epic literature even the greatest sages and saints can often fail.

[26] *Viz.* 2.1 *tapaḥ svādhyāyeśvara-praṇidhānāni kriyā-yogaḥ.*
2.1 Purification, internalization, and meditation on Īśvara are practical yoga.

[27] Feuerstein notes that lists of the elements of yoga predate Patañjali and often consist of less elements, such as the second century (BCE) *Maitrāyaṇīya-Upaniṣad*. Which excludes the *yama*s and *niyamas* of *YS* (as well as *āsana)* in its list of six. Viz. Georg Feuerstein, *The Yogasūtra of Patañjali*: *A New Translation and Commentary* (Folkstone, Kent, G.B.: Wm Dawson & Sons Ltd 1979), 79.

2.44 From internalization there is communion with the chosen deity.
2.45 *samādhi-siddhir īśvara-praṇidhānāt.*
2.45 Samādhi is perfected by meditation on *Īśvara*, the Lord.

It is notable that *purity, purification*, (*śauca, sattva, tapas*) or in terms of the three *guṇas, becoming sattvic, sattva-fication* (to coin a term) is the main theme. Everything from happiness to mastery of the senses, to the salvific experience of pure consciousness (*ātman, puruṣa)* is promised as the supernormal fruit of attainment of *purity*. Purity in yoga is *powe*r. And power proceeds from renunciation, not indulgence. Renunciation means holding on to what is pure and letting go of what is not. *Tapas*, literally 'heat' is the traditional key to removing impurity. *Tapas* means ascetic practices—all of which revolve about renunciation. This is purification by fire, i.e. by heating, excitation—transformations in cooking or metallurgy. Such purifications are likely not particularly pleasant and involve a great deal of 'holding on', firm unflinching mental stability in the face of pain and adversity. [28] This outer purification promises to perfect the body and the senses, probably both the five sense organs (*buddhīndriya*s) and the corresponding five organs of action (*karmendriya*s); with outer purification one should expect a great increase in acuity and effectiveness.

Interestingly, the negative purification through *tapas* and renunciation of pain is balanced by a positive purification of experiencing *santoṣa*, *contentment*.[29] This implies that growing purity has its reward, not just in power, but in happiness. What kind of mind can hold on with greatest fixity? Not the suffering mind or the heroic mind. Only the contented mind. So, somewhat unexpectedly (by reference to the scriptural tales of the extreme painful asceticism of the sages), the path of purification is not just a 'marine corps bootcamp', but also apparently a climb to increasing satisfaction. This makes sense since the total settling down of the mind in *samādhi* is also the state of highest

[28] Again I am influenced here by Kaelber's, *Tapta Mārga*. See note 23 above.

[29] There are traditionally two main ways to purify something, by fire and by water, i.e., by extreme heating or by extreme cooling. Indian thinking tends to conceptualize suffering as a kind of heating and the settling down into immobile silence and peace as a form of gratifying peace. Naturally they may be related as binary complements of each other: One may need to move into a form of extreme excitation before one can sink into deep silence, contrast is all in the world of *prakṛti*. By the same token one may need to emphasize the physical and external side of the binary world to isolate internal, the mental and spiritual side.

peace and happiness. Contentment here shows the yogic path to power is not one of unbalanced strain, heroic tension, and willpower as one might expect of heroes in the martial arts, but also one of letting go, relaxation and contentment. Contentment and peace, and bliss are not just the fruit of strenuous austerities, but are also a kind (kinder?) *discipline* which can melt away impurities. Those who have little experience with meditative techniques may be easily convinced from Indian epic literature that the inner path is entirely one of strenuous *kṣatriya dharma*, martial arts training. While it is likely true that a substantial part of the yoga tradition disciplines come from *kṣatriya* rather than *Brahmin* contexts, as Hauer and others assert, the gentler and devotional side is equally important. We dare not underestimate the positive fulfillment and joy of moving even a little in the direction of a settled meditative mind. If enlightenment is the greatest bliss, the annihilation of suffering, movement in that direction, while requiring discipline, effort, and *holding on*, is balanced by the relief and bliss of *letting go* of desire, strain, and effort. In a sense the *purpose* of *holding on* is to attain a deeper *letting go*. Vyāsa merely quotes the *Mahābhārata* here:

> In this connection it is said:
> What in this world is love's fair pleasure
> And what the joy of gods ev'n higher,
> Are not even worth a sixteenth measure,
> of the joy of lost desire.

Patañjali in fact often recommends meditation on positive states as part of yogic practice to quiet the mind:

> 1.33 *Maitrī-karuṇā-muditopekṣāṇām sukha-duḥkha-puṇyāpuṇya-viṣayānām bhāvanātaś citta-prasādanam.*
> 1.33 The awareness is rendered tranquil and clear by meditating on friendliness, compassion, happiness and indifference with reference to the happy, the suffering, the virtuous, and the unvirtuous respectively.

And later again the pleasant alternative:

> 1.36 *Viśokā vā jyotiṣmatī.*
> 1.36 Or [the arising of activity] which is luminous and free from sorrow [causes steadiness of the mind].

The experience of deep contemplation, (the most subtle of the seeded *samādhi*s, the attainment of *nirvicāra samādhi)* yields a state of quiet

lucidity which bestows our first *siddhi* of 'omniscience', a level, free from bias where one may discern the truth of anything:

1.47 *Nirvicāra-vaiśāradye 'dhyātma-prasādaḥ.*
1.47 In the clear experience of the ultra-contemplative *(nirvicāra)* [absorption] there is a tranquil spiritual brightness.
1.48 *Ṛtambharā tatra prajñā.*
1.48 Therein intuitive perception brings the truth.

This pleasant power of bliss becomes quite clear in the last two of the *niyama*s, which focus on experience of union with the most *sattvic* beings, the deities (*deva*s), through internalization of scriptural *mantra*s (*svādhyāya)* and *meditation on the Lord* (*īśvara*), the supreme contentment for the mind. From this level of peace and contentment, it is apparently possible to maintain a level of unshakable objectivity. Vyāsa claims: "*Samādhi* is perfected for one whose whole being is fixed on *Īśvara*. By this [perfection of *samādhi*] he knows all he desires [to know] as it truly is in other places, other bodies, and other times. Then his awareness perceives things as they are."

This excursus into the powers from perfecting even the first two limbs of yoga, *moral laws* and *disciplines* brings us already to visions of the ultimate power and attainment. This shows again that to some extent in the *YS* everything is everywhere—in this compilation of yoga paths the perfection of any major part will bring us the vision of the whole. Every section is a kind of microcosm, and its perfection potentially renders the ultimate fruit. This is apparently the holistic vision of the sage who has reached the goal; the reality of the path makes organized lists and systematic progression useful for teaching purposes.[30] The attitudes and disciplined purity of the yogin's life, however powerful, provide a context for a further range of concrete applications.

The next two layers, *limbs* three and four, of yogic practices bring the *physical body* more into focus:

2.46 *sthira-sukham āsanam.*
2.46 Yogic posture [should be] stable and comfortable.

[30] Even though there is some inevitable jumble to an edited compilation of various early threads of yogic practice with differing outlooks, numbered lists and stages, Patañjali, I believe, does his best to include all such paths while emphasizing the commonality of the principles, such as an underlying concern with the pair of *holding* on and *letting go* based on the binary structure of reality in Sāṃkhya ontology.

Notable here is the holding of the body in stable positions, *āsana*s, not through force (as the term *haṭha-yoga* implies), but again through comfort, realized through a balance of *holding on* and *letting go*.

> 2.47 *prayatna-śaithilyānanta-samāpattibhyām.*
> 2.47 By absorption in the infinite and relaxation of effort [the yogic postures are accomplished.
> 2.48 *tato dvandvānabhighātaḥ.*
> 2.48 Due to this one is no longer afflicted by the pairs of opposites.

This is another key example. Physical stability is an obvious support for mental stability. How do we relax the muscles completely to sit for long periods in meditation? How do we get rid of unconscious (half-held) muscular tensions? By *tensing the muscles consciously and completely, then letting go. Full tension enables full release*. Here the supernormal attainment is termed "going beyond the pairs of opposites afflicting the body". The same mechanism is true (as we have already noted for *breath control*, *prāṇāyāma*, the fourth limb, discussed in the introduction. This practice brings fitness for deepest meditation. By balancing the opposites of holding and releasing, awareness goes beyond the binary, the opposites, eventually beyond the *guṇa*s of nature.

The fifth yogic limb, *pratyāhāra*, the withdrawal of the senses, takes us beyond the senses and opens the door to the core of the *subtle body*. Comfortable holding and letting go of body and of breath, causes a deeper inwardness as the senses recede and no longer hold on to their external objects, unleashing the mind from the external world.

> 2.54 *sva-viṣayāsamprayoge cittasya sva-rūpānukāra ivendriyāṇāṃ pratyāhāraḥ.*
> 2.54 Withdrawal of the senses is like the senses imitating the nature of consciousness in not connecting with sense objects.

The supernormal power gained is:

> 2.55 *tataḥ paramā vaśyatendriyāṇām.*
> 2.55 From this there is supreme mastery of the senses.

What we let go of, we master.

Let's take a long conscious deep breath in and out.

Notice the balance.

Perfecting the Internal Limbs of Yoga

We have made our way through the five external subdivisions, the five limbs of yoga. We are now ready to plunge inward with the last three internal subdivisions, which Patañjali takes as a single process: *saṃyama*, the final frosting on the yogic cake. and the main engine for generating supernormal powers: These comprise the trinity of holding on (*dhāraṇā*), *meditative flow* (*dhyāna*), and *meditative absorbtion* (*samādhi*). These three components of the meditative process are said to be practiced *simultaneously*.

> 3.4 *trayam ekatra saṃyamaḥ.*
> 3.4 These three [holding on, meditative, and samadhi] taken together are [called meditative] *convergence* (*saṃyama*).
> 3.7 *trayam antaraṅgaṃ pūrvebhyaḥ.*
> 3.7 These three are the internal subdivisions [of yoga] with respect to the previous [list of eight].

As the overall practice of meditation they are given the name of *convergence* (*saṃyama*). This *convergence (as with other limbs)* is separated out for the sake of analysis. Again we return to the balance of *holding on* and *letting go*.

> 3.1 *deśa-bandhaś cittasya dhāraṇā.*
> 3.1 Holding on (*dhāraṇā*) is holding the awareness in a [particular] place.

The first element, holding on, meditative fixity *(dhāraṇā)* is defined as 'holding awareness in a [particular] place' (3.1). Vyāsa notes that this means either an object (the *mantra* Oṁ, for example) or a location such as the *cakra* of the navel, the lotus of the heart, forehead, etc.[31]

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[31] It is interesting that later forms of yoga, particularly tantric forms go into much explicit detail with respect to mystical physiology of such places, the seven major *cakra*s and many minor ones, which are inevitably connected with mantra repetition and the theory of *kuṇḍalinī*.

It is a curious fact that in the modern West, the thinking process is felt to be located in the head. William James, for example, located the human sense of individuality, the locus of our sense of individual consciousness as identical with certain almost subliminal sensations of "intracephalic muscular adjustments" and "breath moving outwards between the glottis and the nostrils" ("The Notion of Consciousness" in *The Writings of William James*, p. 183, J.J. McDermott, ed., 1967). Such a view is undoubtedly promoted by the scientific knowledge of brain function. Since, however, the brain is not a tactile organ there is no real reason other than cultural why thought or awareness should be 'felt' and localized in the head. Non-Western cultures and Western culture before modern times have almost universally located

3.2 *tatra pratyayaikatānatā dhyānam.*
3.2 Meditative flow (*dhyāna*) is the continual abstraction of a single object in this holding on.

The second practice, *dhyāna, meditation* is the 'continual abstraction of a single object in this holding on' (3.2). This is the repetitive element, the essence of *japa*, a *continuous flow of single particular thought* which is free (with simultaneous detachment, *letting go*) to sink to quieter and more subtle levels of repetition and experience. This implies a new subtlety: *holding an object of meditative attention, while simultaneously allowing it to fade*, to flow to more subtle and absorbing levels. *Simultaneously* with the holding there is a letting go. This sounds impossible, but in practice it is the kind of thing we recognize as skill in most physical endeavors, such as sports. If you think about it, it is not really foreign to experience. Perhaps it is just a reflection of the balance of our binary nervous system, sympathetic and parasympathetic or the complementarity of the two hemispheres of the brain. We are often called upon to be both focused (static) and in motion (flowing). In yogic meditation the ensuing state is one of deepening absorption, moving from gross to subtle and from the dualism of subject and object, to non-dual convergence. The meditator and the object eventually become one.

3.3 *tad evārthamātra-nirbhāsaṃ svarūpa-śūnyam iva samādhiḥ.*
3.3 S*amādhi* is [the state of coherent awareness when] this very meditation presents itself [transparently] as the object alone, as if devoid of any intrinsic nature of its own.

This absorption could be called *coherent* awareness. It is so strong as to exhibit a great empowerment of the human mind, an epiphany of divine potential. Just as a laser beam, every photon coherently in step both in phase and frequency, displays exponentially greater power than the scattered and diverse light from an ordinary bulb, so the supernormal powers of the coherent awareness necessarily result from such non-dual convergent *samādhi*, the *synthesis* of *holding on* and *letting go*.

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the thinking process in the heart or navel regions. That the *yogin* might hold his thinking, even of a *mantra*, in a variety of locations is not so odd as it may sound. Shifting the felt location of the thinking process even a short distance might, indeed, result in a corresponding shift from the habitual narrow identification with the mind/body complex to an expansive, more impersonal identity.

3.5 *taj-jayāt prajñālokaḥ.*
3.5 By mastering this there is intuitive-vision.
3.6 *tasya bhūmiṣu viniyogaḥ.*
3.6 This [convergence] is employed in stages.

The *YS* generally differentiates *samādhi*s into two categories, *absorbtion with* and absorbtion *without an object*, *samprajñāta samādhi* and *asamprajñāta samādhi.* The *convergence* on an *object* produces the whole range of *siddhi*s—up to total omniscience and omnipotence, the mastery of all objects, in a sense allowing the yogin to *inhale* the universe, the highest form of mastery and power, his deification. But the ultimate form of *samādhi*, a*samprajñāta samādhi,* allows the yogin to *exhale* and let go of himself and the whole of creation he has identified with, and just be. His true unchanging, quiescent self, pure consciousness, is all that remains: the seer *in his own form*

1.3 *tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe 'vasthānam.*
1.3 Then the seer abides in its essential nature

By letting go of all, even of *vibhūti*, the epiphany of divine powers, he achieves, he proves, his eternal stability and his complete renunciation, not just *vairāgya* but, total letting go, *paravairāgya*, supreme dispassion (*YS* 1.15 above). Now the *guṇa*s of his mortal frame can devolve, dissolve into the balance of *mūlaprakṛti*, unmanifest primordial matter and unmanifest silent primordial consciousness, *puruṣa*. His mistaken identity can dissolve with them. This is the highest *siddhi*. The stillness after total exhalation. What does it all mean? Let me hold you just a little more. The mechanics of the *siddhi*s in the *YS* recapitulate the main thrust of the text and help us to understand the necessary tension between purity and power in the *YS*. Time to lick the frosting.

Having Your Cake (and Not Eating It Too)

Sāṃkhya-Yoga presents us with a totally binary system. The following chart may help to appreciate how binary the *Sāṃkhya-Yoga* system is:

BINARY SYSTEM OF *SĀṂKHYA-YOGA*

Prakṛti Primordial matter	*Puruṣa* Pure consciousness
Three *guṇa*s	Beyond three *guṇa*s
Cittavṛtti	*Cittavṛttinirodha*
Holding on	Letting go
Practice *(abhyāsa)*	Detachment *(vairāgya)*
Effort *(prayatna)*	Relaxation of effort *(prayatna-śaithilya)*
Inhalation *(vidhāraṇa)*	Exhalation *(pracchardana)*
Saṃyoga (of seer and seen)	*Saṃyama* (on distinction of *buddhi* and *puruṣa*)
Dhāraṇā (meditative holding on)	*Dhyāna* (meditative flow)
Samprajñāta samādhi (absorption with object)	*Asamprajñāta samādhi* (absorption without object)
Power	Transcendence
Impurity (complexity)	Purity (simplicity)
Creation	Dissolution
Evolution *(pravṛtti)*	Involution *(pratiprasava)*
Duḥkha (*kleśa*)	*Kaivalya*

What is the point of two? The point of two is always one! Two brings us to one. (No, I am not just another Vedāntin reading *advaita* into *YS*.) When two is eternal and irreducible, 1+1=1. The two form one complementary system—a system in total order. Two is based in experience.

After baking and frosting the yogic cake it's time to do the dishes. Another analogy may help, this one based in the same wavy water from which Patañjali gets his primary definition of yoga—

1.2 *Yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ.*
1.2 Yoga is the quiescence of the waves of awareness.

In the beginning there are two: air and water, atmosphere and ocean. They appear to get mixed up in the surf and there is a great display of bubbles and foam. Each bubble reflects the whole in its own way; and every reflection is more complexity (and more trouble—more apparent difference from the sources). The air appears to be confined and the filmy bubble appears bound to other bubbles or thrown about by the lightest motion, vulnerable and temporary. The solution is to *expand each bubble* until it resolves itself back to basics: *back to two*; quiescent air and quiescent water. They dance for a while, but in the end it is clear that water and air are eternally separate. Their apparent union in bubbles was mistaken perception. Back to peace.

The purpose of power is peace. A binary complementary pair is an ultimate image of an order which transcends multiplicity, trouble and egoistic suffering. The way from multiplicity to binary balance is twofold, *holding on* and *letting go*, *contraction* and then *expansion*, *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya,* tension and relaxation, power and renunciation of power, *dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna*, *samprajñāta and asamprajñāta samādhi, saṃyoga* of the *seer* and the *seen* (*YS* 2.17) and *saṃyama* on the difference between seer (*puruṣa)* and seen (*prakṛti* ,*YS* 3.49), creation and dissolution. So the *yogin* must have his cake, the whole cake, and *not eat it too*. Ultimately this is easy since he sees there is nothing to his bubble, no one to hold on, nothing to hold on to. There is just two, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, eternally pure and separate. Believing himself once to be a fragile fragment of a chaotic material cosmos, he undertook an expansion of his purity and his power by eight limbs, mastering eight layers of perfection, gaining powers that surpass even the *devas (jumbo bubbles)* and equal to the supreme nobody, *īśvara* himself.[32] Dropping omniscience and omnipotence, dropping the highest success, he releases into blissful isolation of pure consciousness alone, k*aivalya*.

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[32] I have argued in previous papers that the unique nature of *īśvara* in the *YS* is that he has only omniscience but not omnipotence, and is reduced to a tool for purification of the *yogin's* mind by meditation on *īśvara*'s *mantra*, Oṁ. The perfected yogin, however gains both omniscience and omnipotence and renouncing both has liberation. In my account, based on Patañjali rather than on the later *bhakti* influenced commentaries, *īśvara* is nothing more than an anthropomorphic representation of pure consciousness, the ultimate goal and inner nature of the *yogin*. See Lloyd Pflueger,"Person, Purity, and Power in the *Yogasūtra*," in *Theory and Practice of Yoga*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 29-60.

After a good dessert of eight layer cake, what is there left to do? Take a long deep breath in, and let it go.

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CHAPTER TEN

POWERS AND IDENTITIES: YOGA POWERS AND THE TANTRIC ŚAIVA TRADITIONS

Somadeva Vasudeva

The Tantric Powers of Śaivism (*Siddhayaḥ*)[1]

The early literature of Tantric Śaivism, or more accurately, in the present context, the Śaiva Mantramārga, makes reference to a bewildering number of *siddhi*s, here translated variously as 'powers', 'power substances' (metonymically for *siddhadravya*), 'perfections', 'supramundane[2] abilities', or 'occult arts'. A brief study such as the present one cannot pretend to provide a rigorous, philologically grounded typologist's perspective. Instead, we will proceed with a limited, synoptic perspective that makes use of exemplary citations (an inherently provisional project) from early Śaiva Tantric works and narrative literature of comparable dates to uncover commonly held views about some of the powers and also the power-seekers who pursued them.

Early Śaiva scriptures commonly arrange large catalogues of concepts into hierarchical taxonomies that incidentally reveal the value judgments informing the proposed gradations. Many of the Śaiva powers can be traced back to the earliest surviving stratum of tantric Śaivism, the archaic *Niśvāsa*-corpus, originating ca. 450–550 CE.[3] Order is imposed already in the earliest surviving phase of Śaiva scriptures by classifications that subsume this diversity. A common early

[1] I thank Bergljot Chiarucci and Michael Slouber for comments on an earlier draft.

[2] This intends, of course, that they are not common for ordinary humans, but ordinary for accomplished yogins.

[3] This range of dating was first proposed by Goodall and Isaacson in "Workshop on the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*: The Earliest Surviving Śaiva Tantra?", *Newsletter of the NGMCP* 3 (2007): 6.

schema, found in the *Guhyasūtra*[4] of the *Niśvāsa*-corpus, is tripartite:[5] powers are either 'minor' (*adhamā*, *kanyasā*, *kṣudrā*, *sāmānyā*), 'middling' (*madhyamā*), or 'superior' (*uttamā*, *jyeṣṭhā*, *divyā*).[6] Variations of this trichotomy of powers recur in many slightly later works that are foundational to the more evolved Śākta and Śaiva traditions:[7] The *Kiraṇatantra* of the Śaivasiddhānta,[8] the Trika's *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*,[9] the *Svacchandatantra*[10] of the Dakṣiṇasrotas or Southern transmission of the Bhairavāgama, and the Yoginītantra called the *Picumata* or

[4] Though not the earliest stratum of that corpus, this work still must rank among the earliest Siddhāntatantras.

[5] A very similar threefold classification, using the same labels of *adhama*, *madhyama* and *uttama*, is seen in early Buddhist Tantras. Ronald Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), discusses the three grades of *siddhi* in the *Subāhuparipṛcchā*, one of the earliest Buddhist tantric scriptures, translated into Chinese in 726 CE. The three grades are also mentioned in the *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* (see Alexis Sanderson "The Śaiva Age—The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period," in *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, ed. Shingo Einoo (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009), 129–131 for the dating and nature of this work). As Glenn Wallis notes in *Mediating the Power of Buddhas: Ritual in the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002) there is no explanation of the typology, implying perhaps, that it was already well established. A thorough philological study of the parallel evolution of the Buddhist and Śaiva schemes against the earlier discussions of various catalogues of *siddhi*, *iddhi*, *pāṭihāriya* miracles, *acchariyā*, supramundane *abhiññā* and *vijjā*, and other *lokottara* phenomena, holds the promise of uncovering new insights into nature of these powers.

[6] *Niśvāsaguhya* 9.10–11: … *mucyate 'sau mahāpāpāt kṣudrasiddhiṃ ca vindate | dvimāsān madhyamā siddhir abdārdhād uttamā bhavet* ||, "… He is released from a major sin, and achieves a minor power. After two months [he masters] a middling power, after half a year a major power."

[7] On the relationship between the Śaivasiddhānta, the liturgical systems for the propitiation of the ferocious deity Bhairava, and early Śāktism see Sanderson (ibid.), 45–53.

[8] *Kiraṇatantra* (N) 50.13ab: *uttamā madhyamās siddhīr (em. : siddhir cod.) adhamāś ca śṛṇuṣvataḥ*. For a discussion of the place this work occupies in the Śaivasiddhānta see Dominic Goodall, *Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's Commentary on the "Kiraṇatantra"* (Vol. I. Pondichéry: Institut français de Pondichéry, 1998).

[9] Ca. 7th century, see Törzsök, "The Doctrine of Magic Female Spirits: A Critical Edition of Selected Chapters of the Siddhayogeśvarīmata(tantra) with Annotated Translation and Analysis" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Oxford, 1999), vii.

[10] *Svacchandatantra* 2.281ab: *jāyate vipulā siddhir adhamā madhyamottamā*; 6.53ab: *tataḥ siddhim avāpnoti adhamāṃ madhyamottamām*; 7.120ab: *aihikāmuṣmikī siddhir adhamā madhyamottamā*; 2.144a: t*risiddhisiddhidaṃ*, Kṣemarāja (*ad loc.*) glosses *trisiddhi* as the three grades of *siddhi*: *uttamamadhyamādhamabhedāt trirūpā yā siddhiḥ*.

Brahmayāmala.[11] For the *Kiraṇatantra*, the superior power (*uttama-siddhi*) is, in the earlier Nepalese recension, the ability to 'be anywhere' (*yāyitvaṃ* or *anuyāyitvaṃ*) in the universe[12] encircled by the *Lokāloka* mountain range.[13] Perhaps because this would be a comparatively unimpressive achievement the South Indian recension adds an interpretive gloss that this designates universal sovereignty (*cakravartitvam*). The middling powers, more prominent in tantric literature, are:[14] the sword, the collyrium, the rift, the reanimation[15], etc. The

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[11] Shaman Hatley, "The Brahmayāmalatantra and Early Śaiva Cult of Yoginīs" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 228, places this work in the ca. 7th–8th centuries CE.

[12] *Kiraṇatantra* (N) 50.13cd: *lokāloke tu yāyitvam* (*lokāloke tu yāyitvam*] conj. Slouber, *lokālokastuyāyitvām cod.*) *iṣyate (em., iśyate cod.) siddhir uttamā* ||. Another possibility is *jāyitvam/jayitvam*. The South Indian recension reads*: lokālokānuyāyitvaṃ cakravartitvam uttamā*. Here *lokālokānuyāyitvaṃ*, lit. "the state of being recurrent in *lokāloka*," is difficult to interpret convincingly as the greatest of all supernatural powers, and the added *cakravartitvaṃ* presumably is intended to clarify its sense. It may originally have intended no more than the ability to be anywhere. Or perhaps, it intends that one's will is pervasive, and thereby signifies a form of "universal sovereignty". A closely intertextual hemistich, also promising universal sovereignty over all within the *Lokāloka* mountains, is found at *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* (T) 20.100cd: *vaśe cāsya bhavanty āśu lokālokeṣu yā* (or: *ye*) *sthitāḥ* ||, but it would not be possible to emend *Kiraṇatantra* (N) 50.13c to this variant without supplying another *pāda* naming universal sovereignty as the subject.

[13] In Śaiva sources (largely in agreement with Purāṇic cosmography on this point) the *Lokāloka* mountains are ten thousand *yojana*s in extent. See *Kiraṇatantra* 8.83–84ab: *tasyāṃ cādriḥ paro jñeyo lokāloka iti śrutaḥ | sahasradaśavistīrṇo deśānām āśrayo bhuvi || arvāgloko na lokordhvaṃ lokālokas tatas tu saḥ |*. Cf. further *Mataṅgapārameśvara Vidyāpāda* 24.36, *Parākhyatantra* 5.108–109, *Suprabheda* 3.145–148 etc.

[14] *Kiraṇatantra* 50.14: *khaḍgāñjanabilotthādi (*em., *pila-ādi* cod.*) madhyamā siddhir iṣyate | vaśīkaraṇavidveṣā (*em., *vaṣī* cod.) *stambhanādyādhamā matā* ||. The South Indian recension is corrupt for 50.14ab: *anyaddhanavilambādi madhyamā siddhir iṣyate |*.

[15] *Uttiṣṭha* is in origin not a nominal but a 2nd sg. imperative of *ut+sthā*, meaning: "Get up!" (For this interpretation, see Törszök in *Tāntrikābhidhāṇakośa, sv. uttiṣṭha).* Dezső, "Encounters with Vetālas, Studies on Fabulous Creatures I," in *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 63, no. 4, 2010, 392–3, compares this to the *utthāpana* type of *Vetāla* (see 8. above), and the similarities are indeed unmistakable. The difference is the technical detail that in the *uttiṣṭha* method, taught, for example, at *Niśvāsaguhya 11.87,* there is no mention of a *Vetāla* being summoned as the animator of the corpse *(Niśvāsaguhya* 11.87*: oṃ acetana namaḥ. anena mantreṇa śavam akṣatāṅgaṃ strīpuruṣaṃ vā gṛhītvā gandhapuṣpadhūpārcitaṃ kṛtvā dakṣiṇaśira sthāpya raktacandanadigdhaṃ hastaṃ tasyopari dattvā tāvaj japed yāvad uttiṣṭhate. tasya na bhetavyam. so bruvate kiṃ karomīti. sa ca vaktavyaḥ sahāyo bhavasveti. tataḥ prabhṛti kiṅkaro bhavati. tasya pṛṣṭham āruhya yatrecchati tatra vrajati. atha strī hy apsarasopamā bhavati. tayā saha adṛśyo bhavati. daśavarṣasahasrāṇi jīvati).* The re-animation of the corpse requires a laying on of

inferior powers[16] are subjugation, sowing dissension, paralysis, etc. [17] In the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*[18], on the other hand, the superior powers are the eight *siddhi*s of the *Yogasūtra* and liberation (*mokṣa*). The middling supernatural powers are: entering the nether realms, becoming a sky-goer, invisibility or disappearance, the pill, the wand,[19] the magic waterpot. The minor powers are the rendering servile of ministers and nobles, subjugation, the powers of terrorizing and giving succor,[20] and winning the friendship of all people. Though many individual *siddhi*s are named in these early schemes, later scriptures treat them largely as open lists and thus modify them and incorporate

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hands and a mantra that addresses the corpse as *acetana,* "O insentient one!" This absence of a demonic *Vetāla* possession is confirmed by the mantrin's motivation in producing the re-animated corpse, for it is to be instructed: "Become my companion!" If the corpse was male the mantrin can climb on its back and use it for transport. If the corpse was female, she becomes as beautiful as a celestial nymph and the *mantrin* lives invisibly with her for ten thousand years. Evidently, mantrins might be loathe to live with a Vetāla as a close companion. They feature more commonly as servants summoned as needed.

[16] Chapter 50 continues with detailed prescriptions for the mastery of magical murder (*māraṇa*), exiling (*uccāṭana*), attraction (*ākarṣaṇa*), healing (*puṣṭi*), removing venom (*viṣa*), etc.

[17] These readings of the ninth century Nepalese MS are further shored up by the tenth century Kashmirian Saiddhāntika commentator Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha, who expands the lowest class of powers as subjugation, sowing dissension, etc., the middling powers as the sword, the collyrium, etc., and the highest as universal sovereignty etc: *Mṛgendra Caryāpāda* 77c (referring to the *Parākhyatantra*): … *vaśīkaraṇ avidveṣādyadhamasiddhyapekṣayā bhāṣyarūpaṃ, khaḍgāñjanādi madhyamasiddhyā nuguṇyenopāṃśusaṃjñaṃ, cakravartitvādyuttamasiddhyapekṣayā ca mānasaṃ kuryāt* |.

[18] *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* 29.8–11: *siddhis tu trividhā jñeyā uttamādhamamadhyamā* | *aṇimādiguṇāvāptir mokṣaś caivottamāḥ smṛtāḥ* || *pātāle khecaratvaṃ ca tathāntardhānam eva ca* | *gulikāsiddhim evaṃ hi siddhakāṣṭhakamaṇḍalum* || *evamādyākṛtā devi tantre madhyamasiddhayaḥ* | *maṇḍalīkanarendrāṇāṃ kiṃkurvāṇavidheyatā* || *vaśyākarṣaṇam evaṃ hi nigrahānugrahāv api* | *samastajanavātsalyam ityādyāḥ siddhayo 'dhamāḥ* ||.

[19] See the discussion of the magic wand (syn. *yaṣṭi*) that can be used to sketch desired future events at *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa* 2:105. We may add that according to the *Uḍḍāmareśvaratantra* 14.25 (Jagad D. Zadoo, *The Uḍḍāmareśvara Tantram: (a Book on Magical Rites)*, Srinagar: Research Department, 1947) a spike made from such 'power-wood' (*siddhikāṣṭha*), measuring nine digits, empowered by a thousand mantra repetitions, will subjugate someone in whose house it is buried: *oṃ hrīṃ klīṃ śrīṃ huṃ amukaṃ chaḥ chaḥ* | *anena mantreṇa siddhikāṣṭhamayaṃ kīlakaṃ navāṅgulaṃ sahasreṇābhimantritaṃ yasya gṛhe nikhanyate sa vaśyo bhavati* ||.

[20] The pair of *nigraha* and *anugraha,* lit. 'chastisement' and 'benevolence'. The *Svacchandatantra* 6.55ab uses the synonym *śāpa*, "curse" for *nigraha: bhayadātā ca hartā ca śāpānugrahakṛd bhavet.* Kṣemarāja explains: *śāpānugrahakṛttvād bhayasya dātā hartā ca.*

many other powers. For example, the *Saiddhāntika Kāmikatantra* adds a class of *śreṣṭha*, or 'best' powers, such as becoming a god *(devasamānatā)*, above the levels of lower, middling and highest,[21] and then subdivides each one of these further into three sub-levels.[22] It is also clear that the threefold classification is already composite, incorporating lists originating outside of the Mantramārga, such as the eight *siddhi*s of the *Yogasūtra*. The *Brahmayāmala* labels some of the 'middling' powers that concern us here as another group of 'the eightfold powers', that is: the sword, the orpiment, the nether realms, the condition of being a *vidyādhara*, the sandals, the collyrium, the reanimation, and invisibility.[23] Similar eightfold lists can also be found in early Buddhist Tantras.[24]

The picture is complicated even further by the fact that some of the *siddhi*s are paralleled by the 'eight occcult arts' (*aṣṭāṅgavāda*). For example, *khanyasiddhi*, the power to find treasure troves, and *rasasiddhi*, alchemical perfection, are related to *khanyavāda* and *rasavāda*. *Khanyasiddhi* can thus come to mean the 'mastery' of the occult art of *khanyavāda*, but *rasasiddhi*, confusingly, is usually not equivalent to *rasavāda*, the occult art of elixirs, but rather to *dhātuvāda*, the occult art of alchemy.[25] As is evident from this brief overview, some of these *siddhi*s are paranormal abilities or deeds, some are powerful or magical substances or objects, some are supernatural events, and some the mastery of occult arts.

Once such classifications are established, they find application in the regulation of a wide variety of practices. Let us consider, as an

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[21] *Kāmikatantra* 37.3cd–4ab: *kanyasaṃ bhūpatīśatvaṃ madhyamaṃ balasiddhayaḥ || uttamaṃ khecaratvaṃ ca śreṣṭhaṃ devasamānatā |* etc.

[22] *Kāmikatantra* 37.1cd–2: *kāmyāni siddhayo jñeyāḥ siddhayo bahudhā smṛtāḥ || kanyasaṃ madhyamaṃ jyeṣṭhaṃ śreṣṭhaṃ* (*śreṣṭhaṃ*] em., ommitted ed) *ceti caturvidham | pratyekaṃ trividhaṃ proktam uttamādivibhedataḥ.*

[23] *Brahmayāmala* 15.13–14 *Mahāvetālasādhanā*: *adhunā sampravakṣyāmi mahāvetālasādhanaṃ | yena tv aṣṭavidhā siddhiḥ sādhakasya prajāyate || khaḍgaṃ rocanapātālaṃ vidyādharapadaṃ tathā | pādukāv añjanañ caivottiṣṭhāntardhānakaṃ tathā* (em. *caiva uttiṣṭhā* cod.) ||.

[24] See Ronald Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

[25] For this distinction see the common formula given in *Svacchandatantra* 10.108c: *rasaṃ rasāyanaṃ divyaṃ.* Kṣemarāja explains that *rasa* here means the manufacture of gold *(rasaṃ hemasādhanam),* and *rasāyana* is a means to preserve the body *(rasāyanaṃ śarīrasthairyahetuḥ).* Cf. also *Tantrasadbhāva* 20.318c.

example, mantra-repetition (*japa*).[26] The *Kiraṇatantra* uses its *siddhi*-scheme to determine which fingers are to be used for the rosary (*japamālā*).[27] If a superior power is to be mastered, the ring finger, middle finger and the thumb are appropriate, if a middling power is sought, then the index finger and the thumb are to be used, and if a minor power is the target, then the little finger and the thumb are prescribed. The desired power also determines which of three different styles[28] of mantra repetition is permitted: audible (*bhāṣya*) for the lowest, secret (*upāṃśu*) for the middling, and mental (*mānasa*) for the highest.[29] Or, a higher *siddhi* might be mastered by continuing the *japa* two or three times as long.[30] The type of *siddhi* may determine the selection of a mantra-deity in general, and even more specifically it can even determine the single circuit in *ekāvaraṇapūjā* worship.[31]

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[26] See André Padoux, "Contributions à l'étude du Mantraśāstra : III. Le Japa," *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 76 (1987), for a general discussion of Tantric *japa*.

[27] *Kiraṇatantra* 14.39cd–40 (=*Pūrvakāmika* 4.506–508ab): *madhyamānāmikāṅguṣṭhakarṣaṇāt siddhir uttamā || aṅguṣṭhatarjanīyogān madhyamā siddhir iṣyate | kaniṣṭhāṅguṣṭhasaṃyogāt siddhir uktā kanīyasī ||*.

[28] Taught already in *Manusmṛti* 2.85ff.

[29] Cf. Nārāyaṇakaṇtha's commentary to *Mṛgendra Kriyāpāda* 4.5, based on the *Pauṣakarapārameśvara* and the *Parākhyatantra* as scriptural sources. Bhojadeva's *Siddhāntasārapaddhati* fol. 12r explains the mental type as repeating only in the mind-stream (*mānaso manomātravṛttinirvartyaḥ svasaṃvedyaḥ*), the secret type as inaudible to others and as a form of inner discourse (*upāṃśuḥ punaḥ {punaḥ} parair aśrūyamāṇo 'ntaḥsaṃjalparūpaḥ*), and the audible type as repetion heard by others (*yas tu parair śrūyate sa bhāṣyaḥ*). This assignment of the grades of *siddhi*s to the grades of repetion is also found in the eighteenth chapter of the *Brahmayāmala* (see, e.g., 18.2cd *upāṃśuṃ ca japaṃ kuryāt madhyamāsiddhim icchataḥ*).

[30] This is taught in the Trika's *Tantrasadbhāvatantra* 4.13–14: *eṣu deśeṣu japtavyā vidyā caivāparā śubhā (śubhā] em., śubhāḥ codd.) | adhamā (adhamā]* QD*, +dhamā* N*) madhyamā siddhir uttamā vātha (uttamā vātha]* QD*; uttamātha (unmetrical)* N*) sādhayet || dviguṇaṃ triguṇaṃ (triguṇaṃ]* ND*, tṛguṇaṃ* Q*) kāryaṃ kalpoktaṃ (kalpoktaṃ]* QD; *kalyokta* N*) yad vyavasthitam | vidhānavihitaṃ tantre (tantre] em., tantrai NQ, ta[n]trai D) yadīcchet (yadīcchet] em., yad icchet codd.) siddhim uttamam (uttamam]* QD, *uttamaḥ* N*) ||*. Similarly, the *Svacchandatantra* 6.54ab teaches that an extended, triple repetion makes the mantrin equal to Svacchandabhairava: *triguṇena tu japyena svacchandasadṛśo bhavet |*.

[31] *Mṛgendratantra* 8.44–45: *ekāvaraṇako yāgaḥ sarvāvaraṇako 'pi vā | sarvakāmopayogitvād ucyate sārvakāmikaḥ || jñānāvāptyai patiprānto gaṇānto divyasiddhaye | madhyamādhamasiddhyarthaṃ lokapālāyudhāvadhi ||. Vṛtti: jñānāvāptyai = jñānaprepsunā patiprānto = vidyeśvarāvaraṇayukto yāgaḥ kāryaḥ | divyasiddhaye = divyasiddhīcchunā gaṇānto = gaṇaikāvaraṇayuktaḥ | madhyamādhamasiddhyarthaṃ = madhyamādhamasiddhyarthinā, lokapālāyudhāvadhi = vajrādilokapālāyud hāvadhikaikāvaraṇaḥ ||*. The *Vṛtti* of *Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha* clarifies that the pantheon (*yāga*) is to consist of only the *Vidyeśvaras* (*patiprānto*) if gnosis (*jñāna-*) is sought,

When Śaiva religious activities are classified teleologically into the pair of those that are conducive to liberation (*mokṣa*, *mukti*) and those that are conducive to experience or enjoyment (*bhoga*, *bhukti*), the latter goal is often synonymous with *siddhi*. Similarly, when the fourfold Mīmāṃsaka categorization of religious activities into 1. *nitya*, 'obligatory and regular', 2. *naimittika*, 'obligatory but occcasional', 3. *kāmya*, 'desiderative', and 4. *niṣiddha*, 'forbidden' is applied, the *siddhi*s are normally considered desiderative rites.[32] Einoo[33] has moreover demonstrated that for many of these *siddhi*s there is a continuity to an earlier class of *kāma*s sought by the performers of Vedic rituals. This notably excludes those he calls 'more fantastic'. The persistence and evolution of the inherited classification schemes can also tell us much about the affiliations of Tantric scriptural traditions. Thus Törzsök,[34] positing, in an act of dialogical philology, a meta-categorization into *sāttvika*, *rājasa*, and *tāmasa*, has traced the role of the threefold gradation of *siddhi* into lower, middling and higher, as a significant factor in the evolution of the Trika's three high deities Parā, Parāparā and Aparā in relation to a group eight goddesses derived from the Eight Mothers.

The Middle Powers *(Madhyamasiddhayaḥ)*

Among these three grades, the middle powers are among the most common *siddhi*s promised in Śaiva scriptures. This may be taken as a measure of the popularity of their goals. Let us consider three representative examples: *siddhi*s [1.] of attaining wealth (*pauṣṭika* meth-

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and if higher powers (*divyasiddhi*) are sought the pantheon consists of the *Gaṇas*, and if a middling power is sought, the *Lokapālas*, and if a minor power is sought, the pantheon is formed solely by the circuit of the *Āyudhas*, or weapon-deities, of the *Lokapālas*.

[32] See Dominic Goodall in Hélène, Brunner Gerhard Oberhammer, and André Padoux, *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa: II* (Wien: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004), 88–89, and Dominic Goodall, *Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's Commentary on the "Kiraṇatantra"* (Vol. I. Pondichéry: Institut français de Pondichéry, 1998), 192.

[33] "From kāmas to siddhis—Tendencies in the Development of Ritual towards Tantrism" in *Genesis and Development of Tantrism,* ed. Shingo Einoo (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009).

[34] See Judit Törzsök, "Tantric goddesses and their supernatural powers in the Trika of Kashmir, (Bhedatraya in the Siddhayogeśvarīmata)" in *Rivista degli Studi Orientali,* Rome, 2000, 138–142.

ods), [2.] power or authority (*aiśvarya*), and [3.] attracting, controlling and manipulating others (*ākarṣaṇa*, *vaśīkaraṇa*). The initial judgment, that seekers of such middle powers have quite mundane ambitions, can be further corroborated (with awareness of the problems inherent in arguing across boundaries of genre) by comparison with abundant passages from historical, narrative, and hagiographical literature where such powers are recurrent elements of the plot.

[1.] Among the crudest expressions of the supernatural quest for personal enrichment are *rasasiddhi* and *khanyasiddhi*. *Rasasiddhi* in this context is a middle power substance that translates as 'the perfection of *rasa*'. There are several usages of the lexeme *rasa* (often synonymous with *amṛta*) in tantric works that need to be disambiguated here. Most importantly, we are not concerned, in this context, with the occult science of elixirs (also: *rasāyanasiddhi*), or with the esoteric five nectars or five jewels that are impure body-products used as magical power-substances in non-dualistic practice.[35] Rather, the *rasa* intended is perfected mercury, and the power-seeker who has mastered it becomes a *rasasiddha* alchemist capable of transmuting base elements into gold. While the mundane incentive is primarily one of personal enrichment, a historical chronicle, the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* of Jonarāja,[36] shows that the profession of this *siddhi* was also a means to gain access to the medieval royal court in Kashmir (even after the advent of Islamic rule).[37] Such claims came with their own dangers. Jonarāja recounts how the fraudulent alchemist called Mahādeva lost his life once *Sulṭān* Sikandar Šāh Butšikān (reg. 1389–1413) had seen through his deceit. Jonarāja does not question the validity of the *siddhi* of *rasa* itself. He takes issue with Mahādeva's boast that he produced this *rasa* himself, whereas he had actually been given it by another, genuinely *rasasiddha* alchemist. Wealth is also the goal of *khanyasiddhi*, mastery of the occult art of recovering concealed trea-

[35] For an identification of these five see Sanderson, "Religion and the State: Śaiva Officiants in the Territory of the King's Brahmanical Chaplain (with an appendix on the provenance and date of the *Netratantra*)," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 47 (2004), 110–114, footnote 63.

[36] That the *Rājataraṅgiṇīs* contain genuine 'history' is demonstrated in Walter Slaje, *Medieval Kashmir and Science of History* (Austin: South Asia Inst., Univ. of Texas, 2004).

[37] *Rājataraṅgiṇī* of Jonarāja 580–84 in Jonarāja and Srikanth Kaul, *Rājataraṅgiṇī* (Hośiārapuram: Viśveśvarānanda-Sansthānam, vi. 2024, 1967).

sure and also the art of supernaturally concealing treasures.[38] The seventh century poet Daṇḍin portrays a successful treasure hunt as follows:

> At the outset I concluded that money is the prime means to achieve every end. Then I gathered a group of disciples who had the know-how to assist me in the magical power I had obtained by your favor. We made for the sites of ancient cities, in the middle of the Vindhya forest. Magic ointment on our eyes revealed pots filled with riches, buried beneath trees that pointed to various sorts of treasure. With guards posted all around, we dug, uncovered the pots and piled up countless gold coins.[39]

Many of these details are elaborated on in the *Nidhipradīpa* of Siddha Śrīkaṇṭhaśambhu,[40] a treasure hunting manual in four chapters. This work is explicit that rescuing the practitioner from poverty is the goal of *khanyavāda*.[41] To achieve this, the treasure hunter needs to begin by finding an ideal assistant (*sahāya*), he must then study portents and

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[38] This occult science has a long history, see Einoo, *From kāmas to siddhis*, 34–5, footnote 52. It's fraudulent application features already in the *Arthaśāstra* (13.2.8–12) as a means to entice kings by secret contrivances. Shamasastry translates the passage as follows: "An ascetic, with shaved head or braided hair, and followed by a number of disciples with shaved heads or braided hair, and pretending to be aware of whatever is contained in the interior of the earth, may put in the interior of an ant-hill either a bamboo stick wound round with a piece of cloth drenched in blood and painted with gold dust, or a hollow golden tube into which a snake can enter and remain. One of the disciples may tell the king: "This ascetic can discover blooming treasure trove." When he asks the ascetic (as to the veracity of the statement), the latter should acknowledge it, and produce a confirmatory evidence (by pulling out the bamboo stick); or having kept some more gold in the interior of the ant-hill, the ascetic may tell the king: "This treasure trove is guarded by a snake and can possibly be taken out by performing necessary sacrifice. When the king agrees to do so, he may be requested to come and remain… (as before)" See, Kauṭilya, and Shamasastry, Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* [Mysore: Sri Raghuveer Press, 4th ed. 1951], p. 426.

[39] *Daśakumāracarita* 4.17 as translated by Isabelle Onians in Daṇḍin, and Isabelle Onians, *What Ten Young Men Did* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

[40] This work was published in 1930 but has not yet, to my knowledge, been discussed in scholarly literature, and its date and provenance remain for now uncertain.

[41] Petitioned by vagrant sages desiring to perform costly sacrifices, Śiva declares that he will reveal a doctrine that will help them cross the ocean of poverty *(Nidhipradīpa* 1.10ab*: pravakṣyāmi muniśreṣṭhā dāridryārṇavatāraṇam).* Also *Nidhipradīpa* 1.3ab*: dāridryānalataptānām agatīnāṃ śarīriṇām,* "… for helpless persons scorched by the fire of poverty." This halfline is perhaps best construed with verses 1.1–2, rather than with 1.3cd–4. It is possible, but much less likely that they intend the *vājapeya vikṛti* of the *agniṣṭoma*, where bountiful food is won, making it a metaphorical goal for the verbal action in 1.4a.

omens, discern astrologically favorable occasions, and learn the classification of treasures according to the three places from which they can be recovered: subterranean, aqueous and aerial. The third chapter teaches prognosticatory methods to test the *śaṅkāsthāna*, the locus where the tell-tale signs (*sūcaka*) lead one to suspect the presence of treasure (3.1–35ab). Various concoctions are smeared on the ground and a subsequent reaction, such as discoloration, reveals the precise spot where the treasure is concealed. A subvariety of this is the occult science of *paṭṭa*s,[42] prognostication based on the iconic images that might appear when a piece of cloth is smeared with the above-mentioned concoctions. Then follow recipes for occult collyria (*varti*, 3.56–91) and occult eye-salves (*añjana*, 3.92–135) that make it possible to see treasures buried in the ground (*nidhidarśana*).[43] The chapter ends with the mantras required for many of the abovementioned procedures (3.136ff.) and the final chapter explains how treasures may be concealed.

This occult science appears to have relied, at least in part, on more realistic methods of finding treasure, for chapter 2 contains a long investigative catalogue of telltale signs that reveal the presence or absence of treasure. These include natural and artificial features such as unusual or deformed trees, vines, shrubs, curious growths (*praroha*) on trees etc., strangely behaving cattle, bulls, lizards, dogs, donkeys, hogs, boars, jackals, birds such as falcons, crows, and herons, insects, sightings of spectral beings, unusual or unseasonal fruits and flowers, places with echoes, flames or lights (*jvālā*), certain rock paintings,

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[42] In a preliminary attempt to make sense of this, I am reading this as a synonym for *paṭa*, rather than just "turban, flag, banner", and interpreting it as "iconic representation". The image that appears might be comparable to the *Kṣauma-prasenā* or *Khoma-pasiṇāiṃ* discussed in Diwakar is seen in it as an apparition as a variety of *Kṣauma-Prasenā*. On the *Khoma-Pasiṇāiṃ* see Diwakar Acharya, *"The Original Paṇhavāyaraṇa/Praśnavyākaraṇa Discovered," International Journal of Jaina Studies (Online)* 3, no. 6 (2007), 1-10. For other prognostications based on the size and shape of turbans, see *Bṛhatsaṃhitā 48 paṭṭalakṣaṇādhyāyaḥ*.

[43] That magical eye-salves were a topic taught in *Khanyavāda* is borne out by their use as an example in the *Nareśvaraparīkṣāprakāśa* 1.111–112: *sākṣāc ca sevanīyo hi yogas tenādarāt tataḥ | khanyavādādisiddhena saṃskṛtākṣas+ añjanādinā || yathā paśyati sūkṣmādy apītareṣām atīndriyam | saṃskṛtātmā tu yogena tathā yogī prapaśyati || māheśvareṇa vastūni sarvāṇi parameṇa tu | The commentary explains: yathā siddhāñjanādinā saṃskṛtanetraḥ puruṣaḥ puruṣamātrāgocarāṇy atyantavyavahitāni nidhānādīnīti* "… just as a man whose eyes have been consecrated with empowered eye-salves can see thoroughly hidden treasures beyond the perception of mortals …".

unusual icons etc. Some of the tell-tale signs appear to be places with striking features that could have served as a reminder to the original concealer, making the recovery of the hidden valuables easier, others might indicate disturbed soil or architectural features that have been tampered with. Others purport to reveal cryptic codes, for example:

> A great treasure worth ten million is buried beneath a defaced icon with a seven petalled lotus in its hand.[44]

Locating treasure in deserted temples and inside icons is a major topic in the *Nidhipradīpa*. It is not inconceivable that some unusual iconography (the finger points to 'X') might have rather mundane origins.[45] It is tempting, in light of this apparent invitation to vandalism, to reconsider some of the damage to temples and icons commonly attributed to religious conflict or iconoclasm.

This *siddhi* again needs to be disambiguated from *bilasiddhi* (*pātālasiddhi*, *bilapraveśa*, *bilasādhana* and the related *bilavāda*) or the science of using mantras to unlock portals or 'rifts' leading to the subterranean realms.[46] In this occult enterprise, the goal sought was not monetary enrichment but rather a pleasant sojourn, often involving sexual gratification, in an underground paradise inhabited by supernaturally beautiful Nāginīs, Asurīs or female Daityas, as it was

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[44] *Nidhipradīpa* 2.88: *vikṛtapratimā yatra saptāśra{ṃ}padmapāṇikā | tasyāḥ pādatale vidyāt koṭisaṅkhyadhanaṃ bṛhat ||*

[45] There appears to be also a long history of religiously motivated vandalism that has not yet been explored, for an early example see Csaba Dezső, Somadeva Vasudeva, Śyāmilaka, Vararuci, Śūdraka, and Īśvaradatta, *The Quartet of Causeries* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2009), xxiii. Another rather striking example can be found in the Badâun Stone Inscription of Lakhaṇapāla (defeated by Qutub-ud-din in 1202 CE), *Epigraphia Indica: Vol. 1* (New Delhi: Govt. of India Press, 1971), 61–66. It reveals the way in which some charismatic Saiddhāntika Śaivācāryas wished to present themselves and their lineage of teachers. We learn that a certain Varmaśiva of Aṇahilapāṭaka, in his youth, is said to have seen a Bauddha image in the South and angrily somehow managed to steal it.

[46] On *bilasiddhi* see Sanderson, "The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir," in *Mélanges Tantriques à la mémoire d'Hélène Brunner/Tantric Studies in Memory of Hélène Brunner,* eds. Dominic Goodall and André Padoux (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2007) pp. 49-50, footnote 15, referring to *Tantrāloka* 8.101, and especially Sanderson 2005, pp. 280-282: "The aim is to use one's Mantra-ritual to destroy the magical seals that bar these entrances; see, e.g. *Niśvāsaguhya,* f. 82v4 (10.125ab*): bilapraveśe japatau sarvayantrān pranāśayet*." Compare here also the account of Einoo, "From *kāmas* to *siddhis,"* on *Amoghapāśa* 21b.5–23a.2 where a related practice of opening a portal to enchanted forests *(vanavidhisādhana)* leading to the world of the *Nāgas* is discussed.

proclaimed by the hero Naravāhanadatta in the *Bṛhatkathāślokasaṃgraha*: "I shall use the hell-spell and have some fun with a demoness!"[47] When such adventures in the underworld, a well-worn topos in narrative and poetic works, were more than just pleasure trips, the protagonist may have been engaged in a quest to recover something of value. An early example is Kṛṣṇa's descent to the underworld to defeat the bear king Jāmbavat and recover a diamond in the *Pātālavijaya* (or *Jāmbavatījaya*) episode of the *Mahābhārata*. Koūhala's telling of the Līlāvaī story combines the recovery motif with the pleasure trip notion, Nāgārjuna aids king Sātavāhana to win a queen in the underworld. In such tales the protagonist is often noble or even royal. It would be hasty, therefore, to conclude that these more humble or mundane *siddhi*s are invariably manifestations of the ambitions of marginalized or excluded groups seeking magical redress to a disenfranchised existence.[48] In historical chronicles and hagiographies, too, this *siddhi* became a stereotypical supernatural achievement marking the life of extraordinary personages. The Kashmirian chronicler Kalhaṇa reports that the goddess Raṇarambhā granted her devotee, King Raṇāditya, a mantra called Hāṭakeśvara that would give him *pātālasiddhi*. Kalhaṇa describes Raṇāditya's enjoyment of the *siddhi* as follows:

> Gathering unbroken confidence from dreams and supernatural marks, he proceeded to the cave of [the demon] *Namuci* after passing through the water of the *Candrabhāgā*. While the cave was open during twenty-one days, he led the citizens into it and thus made them first partake in the love of the *Daitya*-women.[49]

For some kings, the mastery of *bilasiddhi* and similar fantastic *siddhi*s became central to the projection of their *sāhasika* courage, their dashing charisma and royal power. Thus the Caulukya king Jayasiṃha (1093–1143 CE)[50] even bore the sobriquet 'The Siddharāja', a title he

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[47] *Bṛhatkathāślokasaṃgraha* 16.33, translated by Mallinson in Budhasvāmin and James Mallinson, *The Emperor of the Sorcerers Vols I–II* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

[48] Concerning the rather exalted clientele for such rites see especially Törzsök, "Helping the King, Ministers and Businessmen?—Apropos of a Chapter of the Tantra of Magic Femal Spirits *(Siddhayogeśvarīmata),*" *Cracow Indological Studies* 8 (2006).

[49] *Rājataraṅgiṇī* 3.468–469, as translated by Stein in Kalhaṇa, and Stein, *Kalhaṇa's Rājataraṅgiṇī, A Chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir, Translated, with an Introduction, Commentary, & Appendices* (Westminster: A. Constable & Co, 1900), p. 114.

[50] See Haribhadra, and Hermann Jacobi, *Sanatkumāracaritam, ein Abschnitt aus*

earned in a battle against the king of the *Yātudhānas* whose name was Barbara.[51] According to Jaina polymath Hemacandra's eulogizing patron-poem, the *Dvyāśrayamahākāvya*,[52] the ferocious battle degenerated into a wrestling match, after which Barbara became an ally of the king.

In hagiographies the mastery of *bilasiddhi* is usually deployed rather differently. Unlike pleasure- or power-seeking kings, celebrated religious figures use rifts into the underworld to disappear at the end of their lives. This may be motivated by a desire to show that they have overcome death. The Chinese pilgrim-traveler Xuanzang (629–645 CE) recounts that the Mādhyamaka philosopher Bhāviveka, using a mustard seed, is supposed to have entered a rock cavern in Dhānyakaṭaka, there to await the arrival of the future Buddha Maitreya. Beal (1884:226, note 116) sees this as the source of the legend of Ali Baba, the name itself presumably deriving from Bhāviveka's aliases 'Bhāva' or 'Bhavya', and the mustard seed has been transmuted in the retelling into the 'open sesame' formula. Only six of his followers dared enter

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Haribhadras Nemināthacaritam: eine Jaina-Legende in Apabhraṃśa (München: Verl. der Bayerischen Akad. der Wiss, 1921) xi.

[51] *Yātudhānas (*fem. *-ī)* are an ancient class of sorcerer or demonic being that is mentioned already in the *Ṛgveda* and is known from Iranian cognates *Yātus (*Pahl. *ǰadūg),* "wizards". The *Svacchandatantra* 11.168cd *(yātudhānāḥ piśācāś ca tāmasāḥ parikīrtitāḥ)* classifies them as "dark" beings, and they are commonly grouped with other ominous, flesh-eating beings (see also *Kuṭṭanīmata* 250 on their diet of flesh). In the *Skandapurāṇa* 119.93d a female *Yātudhānī* is addressed as "O night-stalker" *(niśācari).* In the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (3.19.20cd and 8.10.48ab in Jagadisalala Sastri, ed., *Śrīmadbhāgavatapurāṇam with the Ṭīkā Bhāvārthabodhinā of Śrīdharasvāmin* (Delhi: Motilala Banarasidas, 1983), they are described as being naked, they bear spears and their hair is loose. They are supposed to inhabit Laṅkā *(ibid.* 9.10.024ab) by the thousands. In the *Vāyupurāṇa* (Khemarāja, Śrīkṛṣṇadāsa, *The Vāyumahāpurāṇam* [Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1983], 47.16ef: *antarikṣacarair ghorair yātudhānaśatair vṛtaḥ)* they can move in the sky. The *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* reveals that they can be warded off simply by scattering sesame seeds on the ground (1.141.7ab, so also *Viṣṇupurāṇa* 3.16.14cd in Pathak, M.M., *The Critical Edition of the Viṣṇupurāṇa* [2 volumes, Pāda-Index Prepared by Peter Schreiner, Vadodara 1997, 1999]). See also *Arthaśāstra* 14.1.06. Clearly we see in the passages mentioned several different conceptions of *Yātudhānas*, some more fearsome than the others.

[52] *Dvyāśrayamahākāvya* canto 12 (in: Hemacandra, and Abhayatilakagaṇi, *Dvyāśrayamahākāvyam: Śrī Abhayatilakagaṇiviracitayā Ṭīkayā Sametam* (Manaphera, Kaccha: Sri Manaphara Jaina Sve. Mu. Sangha, 1983). There are several other witnesses that corroborate this event, for example the *Kīrtikaumudī* of Someśvaradeva 2.38: *śmaśāne yātudhānendraṃ baddhvā Barbarakābhidham | Siddharājeti rājendur yo jajñe rājarājiṣu ||*, "In a cremation ground this moon among kings captured the king of the Yātudhānas whose name was Barbaraka, and thus he became known as the Siddharāja in the line of the kings."

with Bhāviveka, the others said: "This is a den of serpents,"[53] exactly what one would have expected from an opening to the subterranean realm of the *Nāga*s. Oral tradition reports that the Śaiva *ācārya* Abhinavagupta, too, is said to have entered a cave and disappeared at the end of his life.

[2.] A comparably raw expression of the quest for power can be seen in the 'mastery of the sword' (*khaḍgasiddhi*), an occult object that grants its wielder sovereignty over the *Khecara*s or *Vidyādhara*s[54] and also the ability to fly. Again, the seeker of such magical swords is frequently an already powerful king who seeks to maximize his power,[55] an idea related to the pre-tantric quest for divine weapons (*divyāstra*) found in the epics and Purāṇas. These magical swords are not simply inert symbols of royal power.[56] Whitaker has shown that such weapons are embodiments of *tejas*, or 'fiery energy', and as such they can only be wielded by extraordinary persons who can match their *tejas*. In the *Mahābhārata*, when Śiva gifts Arjuna a 'supreme, stainless sword', Śiva first needs to empower Arjuna to wield the dangerous weapon,[57] and as we will see below, the most common method of acquiring *siddhi*s in Tantric scriptures is through mantra-ritual performed by an empowered, and thereby authorized, *sādhaka* initiate. Origination myths [58] conceive of swords as the embodiment of demons

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[53] Translation by Beal, Xuanzang, and Samuel Beal, *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World* (London: Trübner, 1884 [Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1969]), 226.

[54] On the great antiquity of the sword as the central identifier of the Vidyādhara (against the Gandharva, for example) see von Hinüber "Das Schwert des Vidyādhara," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens und Archiv für indische Philosophie 22 (1978).*

[55] See especially Sanderson, "The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir," 288–295. See also Sanderson, "Religion and the state: Śaiva Officiants in the Territory of the King's Brahmanical Chaplain (with an appendix on the provenance and date of the Netratantra)," in *Indo-Iranian Journal* 47 (2004): 255–257, and Hatley, "The Brahmayāmalatantra and Early Śaiva Cult of Yoginīs" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 106–9, on the famous case of the sword Aṭṭahāsa in the Harṣacarita and on king Māradatta's quest for a magical sword in the Yaśastilaka of Somadevasūri.

[56] See Brockington, "The Sword as a Symbol in Indian Literature and Folk Tales," *Cracow Indological Studies* 1 (1995): 81–89.

[57] Jarrod L Whitaker, "Divine Weapons and Tejas in the Two Indian Epics," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 43 no. 2 (2000), p. 99.

[58] See Oppert, *On the Weapons, Army Organization, and Political Maxims of the Ancient Hindus, with Special Reference to Gunpowder and Firearms* (Madras: Higginbotham 1880), 24–25.

of great power.[59] In the *Nītiprakāśikā* of Vaiśampāyana we find such a story in a dialogue between Brahmā and Pṛthu: The *Daitya*s Hiraṇyakaśipu, Hiraṇyākṣa, Virocana, Śambara, Vipracitti, Prahlāda, Namuci and Bali assail the *Deva*s (3.9–10). To aid the gods, Brahmā performs a fire sacrifice (3.11–12) on Himālaya for a thousand years. An incandescent demonic being (*bhūta*) rises out of the flames (3.13). It is hard to endure: towering, thin, lotus-blue, and sharp-fanged, and wreathed in flames. The red-eyed creature makes a ringing sound so cruel that it strikes terror into all living beings, it is so ferocious that none dare gaze upon its wrathful aura (3.14) etc. This is the demon Khaḍgāsi, who takes on the form of a sword measuring fifty digits in length and four across. Brahmā passes it on to Śiva, who gives it to Viṣṇu, and eventually it is handed down to Manu, so that he may punish the wicked. This demonic aspect increases the element of danger for the seeker of this power, just as it does in the mastery of other demonic beings, such as *Vetāla*s. Demon-swords may be inherently potent, but they are also inherently perilous. To negotiate this conjunction of the ominous and the powerful, the sixth century CE *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* of Vārāhamihira[60] distinguishes marks (*vraṇa*) whereby the specific threats posed by various swords can be identified. It teaches a series of 'weapon-drinks' (*śastrapāna*) to be offered to the sword, which are meant to encourage, appease or nourish the sword's power.[61] A 'drink of blood' (*rudhirapāna*) is appropriate for the seeker of glory.[62]

[3.] The *siddhi* of subjugation (*vaśīkaraṇa*), or of winning power over others, appears to be commonly employed by male practitioners targeting women. Let us consider the case of the power substance

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[59] See Slouber 2007, pp. 11–17. Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 109–110, has also collected evidence for the worship of swords as goddesses. See also Gode "Hari Kavi's Contribution to the Problem of the Bhavāni Sword of Shivaji the Great," *New Indian Antiquary* 3 (1940–1941), 81–100, on the Bhavāni sword of Śivājī.

[60] *Bṛhatsaṃhitā 49 khaḍgalakṣaṇādhyāyaḥ,* in *Varāhamihirācārya, Bhaṭṭotpala, and Avadhavihārī Tripāṭhī, Bṛihatsaṃhitā* (Varanasi: Varanaseya Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, 1968).

[61] There are many other, and more elaborate rites that seek to increase the power of the sword and thereby that of its owner, often the king. See for example Anderson 1971, pp. pp. 156–63: "In the Kathmandu festival of Pachali Bhairab, he incarnates himself in an impure low-caste dancer once every twelve years to renew the power of the king's sword by ritually exchanging his own sword with the latter." See also Slusser 1982, pp. 238-9, Damant 1875, pp. 114–115.

[62] *Bṛhatsaṃhitā 49.23.*

'chalk-powder' (*khaṭikā*)[63], a kind of tantric 'fairy-dust'.[64] Literary sources attest to it also simply as *cūrṇa*, 'the powder', as *vaśīkaraṇacūrṇa*, 'thralldom-powder', or as *siddh(a/i)cūrṇa*, 'occult powder'. In narrative and hagiographical literature this powder is often specifically deployed to ensnare nuns.[65] An example of its use can be found in the *Prabandhakośa* chronicle of the life of the Jaina saint Jīvadevasūri narrated by the Gujarati Śvetāmbara Jaina author Rājaśekharasūri. In this story the monk Jīvadeva engages in *siddhi* warfare with a hostile Kāpālika yogin who shadows him as his Tantric nemesis.[66] The yogin

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[63] *Khaṭaka, khaṭikā*, "chalk powders" or "pieces of chalk" are a commonly used ritual substance (*yāgadravya*). Kṣemarāja, commenting on *Svacchandatantra* 3.42b states that the chalk is to be used for sketching *maṇḍala*s: *khaṭakāraṇyau maṇḍalārtham*. At *Svacchandatantra* 1.30vv it is evident that the *khaṭikā* can also be a piece of chalk rather than a powder, the *ācārya* takes it in his hand and sketches the *prastāra*-grid to decode the mantra (*mantroddhāra*). That a *khaṭikā* can be a piece of chalk is confirmed by literary usage. At *Kalāvilāsa* 2.23 (in Nīlakaṇṭha, Somadeva Vasudeva, Kṣemendra, and Bhallaṭa, *Three Satires* [New York: New York Univ. Press, 2005]) a merchant is described as using a khaṭikā to calculate his profits: *vivid hanavāṃśukamṛgamadacandanakarpūramaricapūgaphalaiḥ | khaṭikāhastaḥ sa sadā gaṇayati koṭīr muhūrtena. Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha* ad *Mṛgendra* KP 7.45 (*khaṭikāśaṅkusūtrāṇāṃ (em.; ghaṭikā Bhatt) […kāryas … saṃpātas …]*) also states that chalk is used for sketching *maṇḍala*s: *khaṭikā maṇḍalopayoginī (*em. Sanderson; *ghaṭikā maṇḍapopayoginī* Bhatt). *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṃgraha* 12.7. A masc. (*aiśa*?) form *khaṭika* is attested at *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā Nayasūtra* 4.147ab: *taḍidvalayasantānaṃ khaṭikena prakāśayet*. When a spectrum of colored powders (*rajas*) is required, chalk powder is used for white, the mineral lazurite (*rājavarta*, *lājavarta*, or *rājapatta*) is used for blue, and red lead or minium (*sindūra*) is used for red, cf. *Tantrāloka* 23.23, 31.101, 31.39ab: *tato rajāṃsi deyāni yathāśobhānusārataḥ | sindūraṃ rājavartaṃ ca khaṭikā ca sitottamā*.

[64] This must in some cases be distinguished from the alchemical *siddhacūrṇa*, see e.g. *Ānandakāṇḍa* 1.10.5cd–8 in S. V. Rādhākṛṣṇaśāstrī, *Ānandakandaḥ: Rasavādagranthaḥ* (Tañjāpura: Tañjāpura Sarasvatīmahāla-granthālaya-nirvāhaka-samiti, 1952).

[65] This use is attested in the *Kādambarī* of Bāṇa. Hatley, *The Brahmayāmalatantra and Early Śaiva Cult of Yoginīs* (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 74 translates the relevant passage as follows: "… one who had often employed powder for controlling women or elderly nuns, who were staying [in the Caṇḍikā temple precincts] after arriving from another land". It is noteworthy that in the *Ṛgvidhāna* 3.100cd–107, that teaches sorcery to attract women, there is a ban on performing the rite targetting a married woman, a female ascetic, or a chaste woman (see Einoo 2009, 22).

[66] The whole narrative is translated in Granoff, *The Forest of Thieves and the Magic Garden, An Anthology of Medieval Jain Stories* (London: Penguin, 2006 [1998]), 69–75. Rivalry appears as a central theme in this narrative: at first Jīvadeva was a Digambara who rivalled his brother who had become a Śvetāmbara. After his conversion to the Śvetāmbara faith, the evil yogin becomes his nemesis. *Prabandhakośa Jīvadevasūriprabandha* §3.13: *ekadā deśanāyāṃ yogī kaś cid āgataḥ | sa trailokyajayinīṃ vidyāṃ sādhayituṃ dvātriṃśallakṣaṇabhūṣitaṃ naraṃ vilokayati |*

sought the empowered skull of the saintly Jīvadeva to use as a magical alms-bowl. This would confer upon him mastery of the triple world.[67] It is this evil yogin who makes use of magical powder:[68]

> The master assembled his own order and told them: "An evil yogin dwells in a remote cloister in such and such a direction. No monk or nun may go in that direction!" They all agreed: "So be it!" But two nuns, with naive curiosity, went in that direction. They met the yogin and with the power of his magical powder (*cūrṇaśaktyā*) he subjugated them so that they did not leave his side. The master made an effigy of *darbha* grass in his own home.[69] When he cut its hand the Yogin's hand was cut too. The nuns were freed. After bathing their heads to remove the hostile spell they recovered.

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tasmin samaye te traya eva | eko vikramādityaḥ, dvitīyo jīvasūriḥ, tṛtīyaḥ sa eva yogī, nānyaḥ |, "Once a yogin came for instruction. He sought a man adorned with the thirtytwo marks in his quest to perfect the wisdom-spell of mastery over the triple-world. At that time there were only three. One was King Vikramāditya, the second was Jīvasuri, the third was that very Yogin himself, there was no other."

[67] *Ibid.: rājāvadhyaḥ | narakapāla ekapuṭī ṣaṇmāsīṃ yāvad bhikṣā yācyate bhujyate ca, tataḥ sidhyati | tena sūriṃ chalayitum āyātaḥ | sūrīṇāṃ sūrimantra-prabhāvād vastrāṇy eva nīlībhūtāni na punar vapuḥ | tato gurusamīpasthavācakajihvā stambhitā | śrījīvadevasūridṛṣṭau jihvayā yogapaṭṭaparyastikāṃ babandha | sabhyaloko bibhāya | prabhubhiḥ sa kīlitaḥ | tatas tena khaṭikayā bhūmau likhitam – 2. uvayāraha uvayāraḍaü savvu loü kareï | avaguṇi kiyaï ju guṇu karaï viralaü jaṇaṇī jaṇeï || ahaṃ tava chalanārtham agato 'bhuvam | tvayā jñātaḥ, stambhitaḥ, prasīda, muñca, kṛpāṃ kuru—ityādi | tataḥ kṛpayā prabhubhir mukto 'sau Vāyaṭanagare bahirmaṭhīṃ gatvā tasthau |*, "He was not able to kill the king. The yogin planned to perfect his power by begging for and consuming alms for six months from an unbroken skull-bowl of such a man (for this motif see Mādhavācarya's *Śaṃkaradigvijaya* etc.). So he had come to outwit the Sūri. But by the power of the Sūri's mantra only the Sūri's clothes were blackened, not his body. Next the tongue of the reciter near the teacher was paralysed. When the illustrious Jīvadeva glanced at him, the yogin tied his tongue into a knot (lit. a "meditation-belt twist", or: "when he saw Jīvadeva he tied his meditation-belt with his tongue," perhaps to show off his mastery of the Haṭhayogic *khecarīsiddhi*). The onlookers were terrified. The master pinned him down. Then, with a piece of chalk the yogin wrote on the ground: 'The whole world gives assistance to someone who has been of assistance, but it is rare for a mother to give birth to someone who helps a detractor.' I had come to outwit you. You perceived this and blocked me, spare me, release me, show me mercy", etc. Then, the master released him out of compassion and he went to stay in a cloister beyond the city of Vāyaṭa."

[68] *Ibid.: prabhubhiḥ svagacchaḥ samākāryoktaḥ—yogī duṣṭo bahirmaṭhe 'sty amukadiśi | tasyāṃ diśi kenāpi sādhunā sādhvyā vā na gantavyam eva | tatheti tan mene sarvaiḥ | sādhvyau tu dve ṛjutayā kutūhalena tām eva diśam gate | yoginā sametya cūrṇaśaktyā vaśīkṛte tatpārśvaṃ na muñcataḥ | prabhubhiḥ svavasatau darbhaputrakaḥ kṛtaḥ | tatkarachede yogino 'pi karachedaḥ | mukte sādhvyau | mastakakṣālanāt paravidyāvidalane susthībhūte te |*

[69] For such effigies see, e.g., *Picumatabrahmayāmala* 29.22ff.

Although Jīvadeva always managed to foil the yogin's plans, he could not get rid of him once and for all, and before he died, he instructed his disciples to smash his own potentially dangerous skull once he was no more.[70] While this hagiography evidences *siddhi*s deployed as weapons, it also raises ethical problems for both combatants. Rājaśekharasūri does not think he needs to justify Jīvadeva's act of violence (*krūrakarman*)—even if it is by proxy—in cutting the effigy of the yogin, and similarly, the yogin's megalomaniac quest passes without remark.[71]

The mastery of these middling powers can involve identifiably yogic procedures. Nevertheless, they are not considered yogic *siddhi*s per se. In many early Śaiva works, the yogic *siddhi*s, usually called the *guṇāṣṭaka*, feature as yet another, and very prominent,[72] group of eight powers.

The Yogic Powers (*Guṇāṣṭaka*)

When the Śaiva exegetes draw attention to the fact that certain doctrines exist in other systems such as the Yoga or Sāṃkhya, they of course do not bring to bear the perspective of a historian of *śāstra* or religion. There is no investigation of relative priority or intertextuality, but rather a concerted effort to demonstrate the superiority of the

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[70] *Ibid.*: *kālāntare maraṇāsannaiḥ sūribhis tasmād yogino bibhyadbhiḥ svakīyākhaṇḍakapālasya sarvasiddhihetor bhañjanaṃ śrāvakāgre ka ethitam | anyathā vidyāsiddhau saṅghopadravaṃ kariṣyati | tathaiva tais tadā cakre yogī nirāśaś ciram arodīt |*, "After some time the teacher was close to death. Apprehensive of that yogin, he ordered, in front of his Śrāvaka desciples, that his skull should be smashed. Unbroken it was the source of all supernatural powers. Otherwise, mastering his spell, the yogin would ruin the community. They did so, and the yogin wept a long time, starving."

[71] Compare here Sanderson "The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir" in *Mélanges Tantriques à la mémoire d'Hélène Brunner/Tantric Studies in Memory of Hélène Brunner*, eds. Dominic Goodall and André Padoux (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2007), 288–91 for other cases of revered figures acting pragmatically and performing aggressive Tantric ritual. As he notes, this was not considered unusual: "There are other reports of liberationist Gurus engaging in destructive rites of this kind, which, while hagiographical and therefore unreliable as records of history, nonetheless demonstrate that the co-existence of these extremes was not considered aberrant."

[72] In the Saiddhāntika *Parākhyatantra* 14.98a (see Dominic Goodall, *Parākhyatantram: The Parākhyatantra, a Scripture of the Śaiva Siddhānta* [Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2004]) yoga is even defined as a union with these eight powers.

Śaiva systematization. The *guṇāṣṭaka* present a rather special problem. In the Sāṃkhya system the category of the 'self' (*puruṣa*) is conceived of as an inactive witness. This evidently cannot be reconciled with the inherited Śaiva doctrine of the self as an 'agentive experient' (*bhoktṛ*). A concise and summary presentation of the non-dualist argument against the Sāṃkhya view can be found in the non-dualist Śaivite Kṣemarāja's eleventh century *Svacchandatantroddyota*, in the context of a discussion of the realms existing at the reality level (*tattva*) of the 'self' (*puruṣa*).[73] In the *Svacchandatantra*'s serial ascent through the ontology of reality levels (*bhuvanādhvan*), the reality level of the self (*puruṣa*) is a form of consciousness that appears contracted because the supreme lord has concealed his identity. There exist, at this ontological level, consciousness-based 'worlds' or 'realms' (*bhuvana*), which are merely grounded on aspects of this contraction, since in reality the self/lord is unchanging.[74] Kṣemarāja states that in the Sāṃkhya system these realms are considered the nine *tuṣṭi*s and eight *siddhi*s, inhabited by presented ideas (*pratyaya*), that are understood to be positive qualities of the intellect (*buddhi*). Kṣemarāja rejects this view. For the Śaiva system, so he argues, these are rather 'coverings' (*āvāraka*) of the self (*puruṣa*), which has not yet discerned the veils (*kañcuka*) of *kalā* etc.,[75] and whose nature is a contracted form of awareness, and which in this way can function as an agentive experient or 'enjoyer' (*bhoktṛ*).[76] If the self were, as the Sāṃkhya system posits, a bare perceiver or witness but not an agentive experiencer (*abhoktṛ*), then there would be no possibility for any experience at all, because this is mediated by the intellect and its evolutes. For the

[73] *Svacchandatantroddyota* 10.1069cd-1072ab. For the dualist Śaiva view see Alex Watson, *The Self's Awareness of Itself. Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's Arguments against the Buddhist Doctrine of No-Self* (Wien: Publications of the De Nobili Reseach Library, 2006).

[74] *Svacchandatantroddyota* 10.1069ab: *ataḥ puruṣatattve tu bhuvanāni nibodha me | ata iti prakṛter ūrdhvam, pārameśasvarūpagopanāvaśād yat saṃkucitacidābhāsarūpaṃ puruṣatattvam, tatra saṅkocāṃśāśrayāṇi bhuvanāni tu cinmātrāśrayāṇi tasya nirvikāratvāt ||*

[75] On these limiting factors see Raffaele Torella, "The Kañcukas in the Śaiva and Vaisnava Tantric Tradition: A Few Considerations Between Theology and Grammar," in *Studies in Hinduism: II, Miscellanea to the Phenomenon of Tantras*, ed. Gerhard Oberhammer (Wien: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenscha

[76] *Svacchandratantroddyota*, *avataraṇikā* to 10.1072: *sāṃkhyaśāstre tuṣṭinavakaṃ siddhyaṣṭakaṃ ca yat pratyayasevyaṃ buddhidharmatayā gaṇitam, tad iha saṃkucitacitsvabhāvasya kalādikañcukāvivekinaḥ puruṣasya bhoktur āvārakam, na tu puṃsi dṛśimātrasvabhāve 'bhoktari buddhyādivaśotthitasya bhogasya kathaṃ cid api sambhavaḥ |*

Sāṃkhyas cannot claim that an experience of 'cold' is possible, even by some secondary operation, simply because snow is internally reflected in the self.[77] All experiencing can only be coherent if we accept the Śaiva view that the self is, from the ultimate viewpoint, an agentive experient (*bhoktṛ*), and therefore, the presented ideas such as *tuṣṭi* etc. can be present in it.[78] With this adjustment made, the superiority of the Śaiva systematization is secure, and further details of Sāṃkhya doctrine relating to the nature of these *siddhi*s and *tuṣṭi*s may be imported verbatim from the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* without further concern. The *Svacchandatantra*'s goddesses Ambā, Salilā, Oghā, Vṛṣṭiḥ, Tārā, Sutārā, Sunetrā, Kumārī, Uttamāmbhasikā are then identified as the presiding deities of the nine *tuṣṭi*s, and the goddesses Tārā, Sutārā, Tārayantī, Pramodikā, Pramoditā, Modamānā, Ramyakā and Sadāpramudikā are the presiding deities of the eight *siddhi*s.[79] The eight yogic powers headed by *aṇimā* etc., consequently also exist as veils *(āvāraka),* at the reality level of the self, and they can be mastered by Śaiva yoga because they are controlled by these eight Śaiva goddesses.[80] The sequence of this ontology of reality levels *(bhuvanādhvan)* differs from Tantra to Tantra, and thus the eight *siddhi*s can be accommodated in other locations too.[81]

Kṣemarāja explains the eight powers inherited from the *Yogasūtra* as follows: [1.] miniaturization (*aṇimā*) is the ability to make the body minute,[82] [2.] weightlessness (*laghimā*), is the ability to produce lightness like that of a ball of cotton, [3.] enlargement (*mahimā*), is the capacity to bring about large size, [4.] attainment (*prāpti*), is the ability to reach any place by willing it, [5.] the capacity of a single person

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[77] *Ibid: na hi himāny antardevadatte pratibimbite sati śītānubhavalakṣaṇo bhogo gauṇyāpi vṛttyā sambhavati |*

[78] *Ibid: ataḥ sarvo 'yaṃ bhoga uktarūpapuṃsi pāramārthike bhoktari sati ghaṭata iti tatraiva tuṣṭyādipratyayasadbhāvo yukta ity evam uktam |*

[79] *Svacchandratantra* 10.1069–72ab.

[80] *Svacchandratantroddyota*, *avataraṇikā* to 10.1072: *kiṃ ca, pārameśamatayogakramasādhyaṃ yad aṇimādyaṣṭakarūpam aiśvaryaṃ tad apy etannāmakadevatāṣṭakādhiṣṭhitam atraiva puṃstattve proktanītyāvārakatayā sthitam.*

[81] The *Mālinīvijayottara*, a Trika Tantra forming the root-text (*mūlatantra*) that Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka* explicates, has worked out an even more complex scheme to incorporate the *siddhi*s, see Somadeva Vasudeva, *The Yoga of Mālinīvijayottaratantra: Chapters 1-4, 7-11, 11-17* (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2004).

[82] *Svacchandatantroddyota* to 10.1073*: aṇimā śarīrasya sūkṣmatākaraṇe sāmarthyaṃ, laghimā tūlaval lāghavotpādanaśaktatvaṃ, mahimā mahattvotpādanaśaktatā, prāptiḥ saṃkalpamātrāt tattaddeśāvāptiḥ, prākāmyam ekasyaiva yugapan nānāśarīrakaraṇe śaktatā, īśitvam aiśvaryaṃ, vaśitvaṃ bhūtavaśīkāraḥ, yatrakāmāvasāyitvaṃ saṃkalpamātrād deśakālasvabhāvavyavahitavastuniścayaḥ.*

to produce multiple bodies at will (*prākāmya*), [6.] sovereignty (*īśitva*), [7.] control of the elements or animals (*vaśitva*), and the [8.] determination (*yatrakāmāvasāyitva*) of objects concealed by place, time, or their nature.[83] These eight yogic *siddhi*s became the focus of ongoing Śaiva exegesis,[84] both in Sanskrit and in the later Tamil Śaivasiddhānta.[85]

What methods do the Śaiva Tantras teach to master the powers?

Mastering Power (*Siddhisādhanā*)

The eight yogic powers can self-evidently be mastered, among other means, by practicing Śaiva *ṣaḍaṅgayoga*.[86] The most common method of acquiring one or more *siddhi*s is the mantra ritual,[87] with specific powers occasionally associated with certain inflections of the main ritual.[88] Let us consider the *siddhisādhanā* taught in the ninth chapter

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[83] For a *Saiddhāntika* account see *Parākhyatantra* 14.93–96 in Dominic Goodall, *Parākhyatantram: The Parākhyatantra, a Scripture of the Śaiva Siddhānta* (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2004).

[84] In the *Mahārthamañjarī,* a medieval South Indian work of the Krama, we find the middle powers labelled as mundane and the yogic powers as 'great powers' *(mahāsiddhi): loke hi khaḍgagorocanoddiṣṭapātālaprabhṛtayo 'pi vibhūtispandāḥ siddhaya ity ucyante | tadapekṣayā kiñcit saṅkocaśūnyatvād aṇimādiśaktīnāṃ mahāsiddhitvam | tāsāṃ cāṣṭakatvaṃ tattatsādhakajanahṛdayollāsarūpāṇāṃ cidānandec chājñānakriyānubhavasmṛtyapohanānāṃ dharmāṇāṃ brāhmyādimātraṣṭakādhiṣṭh ānadvārā bahirvibhūtirūpatvāt,* "Popularly, the sword, orpiment, reanimantion, the nether-realm etc., which are ripples of power, are called *siddhi*s. Compared to them, the [eight yogic] *siddhi*s such as miniaturization etc., are called 'great *siddhi*s', because contraction *(saṃkoca)* is somewhat relaxed. They are eightfold because the *dharmas cid, ānanda, icchā, jñāna, kriyā, anubhava, smṛti, apohana*, that appear as euphoria in the hearts of various *sādhaka*s, are externally manifested through the controlling agency of the octet of Mothers headed by Brāhmī etc." It continues to propose a sophisticated overcoding of the yogic powers when they are viewed as grounded in the propensities of consciousness.

[85] For the nature of this Tamil Śaivasiddhānta, still commonly misrepresented in secondary sources, see the introduction in Dominic Goodall, *Parākhyatantram: The Parākhyatantra, a Scripture of the Śaiva Siddhānta* (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2004).

[86] See Dominic Goodall, *Parākhyatantram: The Parākhyatantra, a Scripture of the Śaiva Siddhānta* (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2004); Somadeva Vasudeva, *The Yoga of Mālinīvijayottaratantra: Chapters 1-4, 7-11, 11-17* (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2004), on *Mālinīvijayottara* chapter 17.

[87] For the very similar concern with achieving *mantrasiddhi* in the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā,* an early *Pāñcarātrika* scripture, see Marion Rastelli, "The Religious Practice of the Sādhaka According to the Jayākhyasamhitā," *Indo-iranian Journal* 43.4 (2000): 334ff.

[88] In the *Bhairavamaṅgala's* Mahāgaurīyajana* ritual, if the rite of gratification (*mantratarpaṇa*) is performed with human flesh (*mahāmāṃsa*), then the *siddhi*s of

of the *Matasāra*. As an authorizing prerequisite, the *sādhaka* must have received the guru's and the deity's *anujñā* (syn. *ājñā*), or 'permission'.[89] This refers to both initiatory permission and also to the actual scriptural and oral instructions. The time is the fourth lunar night of the waning fortnight and the ideal location is similarly stereotypical: a crossroads,[90] a cremation ground, at the auspicious confluence of rivers, or in a protected, empty house. Isolation is stipulated to protect the practice from being inadvertently revealed to outsiders. The power-seeker must be focused with non-dual motivation on gratifying the mantra deity.[91] His rosary should be made of human bone and half the usual size.[92] Ever higher powers are won by increasing numbers of mantra repetitions (*japa*). After repeating the mantra twenty-thousand times he masters the lower powers,[93] after thirty-thousand repetitions the middle powers, and after forty-thousand repetitions the higher powers.[94] The three grades of powers taught in the *Matasāra* are comparable to those we saw earlier in the 'foundational works' of the Śaiva Mantramārga. The higher powers are the eight yogic powers and union with Śiva (*śivayojya*), synonymous with liberation.[95] The middle powers are the subjugation of all beings, terrorizing and favoring (*nigrahānugraha*), and easily accomplishing whatever one says.[96] The lower powers are attraction, sowing enmity, magical murder, driving away, rendering servile of ministers and

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making gold, elixiers etc. are achieved, 140–41ab: *rasaṃ rasāyana{ā}ṃ vātha anyaṃ vā manasepsitam / tat sarvaṃ labhate devi mahām[ā]ṃsena tarpaṇāt //*.

[89] *Matasāra* 9 fol. 63v: *labdhvānu{saṃ}jñāṃ tataḥ (em., tato cod.) siddhisādhanāṃ prāk samārabhet |*

[90] In this context a crossroads intends a remote and powerful place where two major routes intersect, far from a settlement.

[91] *Matasāra* 9 fol. 64r: *nirvikalpena bhāvena mantrārādhanatatparaḥ |*

[92] *ibid.: mahāśaṅkhamayāṃ mālām ardhamātrāpramāṇataḥ |*

[93] *ibid.: ayutau dvau ca vidhinā na drutaṃ ca vilambitam (na drutaṃ]* em., *ya drutaṃ* cod.*) japate yas tu deveśi sādhako nirmalātmanaḥ | (nirmalātmanaḥ] aiśa for nirmalātmā | sāmānyasiddhī siddhyanti pūjyo bhavati mānuṣaiḥ | (siddhyanti]* em., *siddhīni* cod., a *ma-vipulā* with caesura after the fifth syllable).

[94] *Matasāra* 9 fol. 64r: *dinastho japate yo hi caturdhā vīravandite (dinastho japate]* em., *dinasthaṃ yapate* cod.; *vīravandite]* em., *rīravandite* cod.*) | uttamāṃ siddhim āpnoti iti śāstrasya niścayaḥ |* For the term *dinastha* as a stage of *japa* see *Svacchandatantroddyota* 2.140b glossing *dinastho: hṛdayād dvādaśāntaṃ prāṇavāhaḥ dinam, tatra tiṣṭhati, iti nirgarbham apānavṛttyā praviśya mantragarbham ūrdhvaṃ prāṇānte viśrāntiparo japed iti yāvat ||*

[95] *ibid: aṇimādiguṇāvyāpti śivayojyaṃ ca me vaca | ity eṣā uttamā siddhi kathitā tu mṛgekṣaṇe ||*

[96] *ibid: sarvabhūtavaśīkartṛnigrahānugrahakṣamaḥ | vācā karoti karmāṇi līlayā sādhakottamaḥ | ity eṣā madhyamā siddhi ākhyātā tava śundari |*. Taking *vācā karoti*

nobles, and winning the friendship of all people.[97] If the practitioner continues his *japa* for fifty-thousand repetitions then he masters all three grades. He becomes ageless, deathless, freed from the influence of all pairs of opposites. He becomes the lord of the heroes (*vīra*), respected by the *Yoginī*s, he masters the power of flight and is bowed down to be all the gods. He roams the whole universe, equal to Bhairava. He enjoys pleasures (*krīḍate*) with the women of the subterranean paradises, or with *Yakṣiṇī*s, becoming their husband.[98]

*Siddhi*s can also be asked for as favors when the *sādhaka* has succeeded in summoning a deity. The *Kulasāra* teaches that once the *Yoginī* host (*devatāvṛnda*) has appeared before the *sādhaka* and has spoken to him, he must gratify them as follows:

> Cutting open his left arm he should present [his blood] as welcome-water (*argha*). He should prostrate to them [stretching himself on the ground] like a rod and make his offering as required. Receiving whichever he desires: the alchemical mercury, the elixir, the sword, the pill, the seven-league sandals, the collyrium, the finding of treasure, the *Vetāla*,[99] the orpiment, the chalk, and unheard of *caru*, the magnanimous great hero, O Bhairavī, masters [them, and] his body is perfected.[100]

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karmāṇi līlayā as a separate power, "he easily accomplishes whatever he says", rather than just as referring to the other three powers.

[97] *Matasāra* 9 fol. 64v: *vaśyākarṣaṇavidveṣamāraṇoccāṭanāni ca |maṇḍalīkaraṇendrāṇāṃ kiṃkurvāṇavidheyatā | (maṇḍalīkaraṇendrāṇāṃ]* conj.*, vigrahajarāṃdīśvaraṃ* cod. The conjectural emendation is based on parallels in the *Siddhāyogeśvarīmata* and the *Kulapañcāśikā) samastajanavātsalyam adhamā siddhir iṣyate | (samastajanavātsalyam]* em.*, samajanavāṃcchalyaṃ* cod.*)*

[98] *Matasāra* 9 fol. 64v: *ajaraś cāmaraś caiva sarvadvandvavivarjitaḥ | vīreśo bhavate devi yoginīpadasaṃmataṃ (vīreśo]* em. Sanderson*, vīraśo* cod.*) bhavate khecarīsiddhi<ḥ> sarvadevanamaskṛtaḥ | vicared akhilāṃ lokāṃ bhairavas tu yathā hi saḥ (vicared]* em. Sanderson*, vicāred* cod.*) krīḍate saha kanyābhi<ḥ> pātālavarayoṣitām | athavā yakṣakanyābhiḥ patir bhūtvā tu bhuñjati | (patir] em.* Sanderson*, patiṃ cod.; tu bhuñjati] em, na bhuñjati* cod.*) etad devi samākhyātaṃ japasaṃkhyāphalapradam (samākhyātaṃ]* em.*, samākhyāto* cod.*)*

[99] Concerning the *siddhi* of *Vetālas* see Dezső, "Encounters with *Vetālas*, Studies on Fabulous Creatures I," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 63, no. 4 (2010).

[100] *Kulasāra* fol. 82v: *vāmāṅgaṃ (em., vāmāṅgau cod.) bhedayitvā tu teṣām arghaṃ pradāpayet | praṇamya daṇḍavat teṣāṃ yatheṣṭaṃ tu nivedayet || rasaṃ rasāyanaṃ khaḍgam gulikā pāduke ['']thavā | añjane khanyavetālarocanā khaṭikāpi vā | carukaṃ vātha vīrendro ['']pūrvaṃ yatheṣṭaṃ bhairavi | te labdhā siddhyate devi siddhadeho mahāmatiḥ ||*

A similar (and intertextual) list in the same work adds a few more, showing how fluid these lists can be:[101] reanimation (*uttiṣṭha*), the magic bell (*ghaṇṭikā*), the power of flight or levitation (*ākāśagamana*), entering the bodies of others (*parakāyapravaśana*), the mastery of *Ḍāvī*s, the mastery of *Ḍāmarikā*s, the mastery of *Caṇḍā*s, the mastery of various types of *Mātṛ*s, the entry of subterranean realms (*pātāla*).[102]

Anti-cosmic Indifference (*Udāsīnatā*) to the Occult Amusements (*Krīḍākarman*)

The powers sought by Tantric power-seekers can be quite diverse, but the motivating factors are often quite mundane. In some *phalaśruti* listings we find an explicit acknowledgment that *siddhi*s are meant for fun or entertainment (*krīḍā*). The yogin, after mastering some power, 'amuses himself' (*krīḍate*) with it. There even exists a category of powers called the *krīḍākarman*s, the 'occult amusements' that are various forms of heightened sensory awareness, and most notably, also the ability to enter into the bodies of others. In seeking such occult entertainment, the Śaiva *mantrin* is doing no more than emulating Śiva himself, who has on occasion incarnated for his own amusement, as a *krīḍāvatāra*, with no intention of benefitting other souls.[103] Abhinavagupta[104] presents the *krīḍākarman*s as epiphenomena of the arising of 'intuitive' (*prātibha*) extrasensory discernment *(viveka)*,[105] which itself is a form of self-awareness (*svaparāmarśa*).[106] When this tran-

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[101] *Kulasāra* fol. 38v: *ṣaṇmāsābhyantare tasya siddhyante sarvasiddhayaḥ | ye ke cit pratyayā‹ḥ› proktā vācayā kurute tu saḥ | uttiṣṭhakhaḍgavetālarocanāṃjanam eva ca | rasaṃ rasāyanaṃ khanyaṃ pāduke gulikādayaḥ | ghaṇṭikākāśagamanaṃ parakāyapraveśanam | ḍāvyā ḍāmarikāś caṃḍā ghorādyāyaś ca mātarāḥ | bhūpātālakhagāminya<ḥ> siddhyante tasya nādaraḥ ||*

[102] See *Netratantra* and *Uddyota* to 18.99–101 for these supernatural beings.

[103] *Svacchandatantra* 10.822c: *rudrakrīḍāvatāreṣu*. Kṣemarāja glosses this as "… places in which Rudra incarnated for his amusement, with no intentiom of bestowing grace, such as 'The Pine Forest'" (*rudrasya krīḍayā na tu anujighṛkṣayāvatāro yeṣu te devadāruvanaprabhṛtayo rudrakrīḍāvatārāḥ*).

[104] *Tantrāloka* 13.179cd–180ab.

[105] *Tantrāloka* 13.177a: *viveko 'tīndriyas tv eṣa*.

[106] *Tantrālokaviveka* to 13.177–179ab: *sa svaparāmarśātmā viveko nāma*. For the notions of *svaparāmarśa*, *svavimarśa*, *ahaṃparāmarśa* etc. see Alex Watson, "Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's Elaboration of Self-Awareness (*svasaṃvedana*), and How It Differs from Dharmakīrti's Exposition of the Concept," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 38.3 (2010): 297-321. On the problems of adequately translating the term see Isabelle Ratié, "Otherness in the Pratyabhijñā Philosophy," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 35,

scendental faculty of discrimination arises it spontaneously manifests the gnostic realization of the categories of the lord, the soul, and the bonds.[107] Once this has arisen, one is biased toward it and therefore rejects first conventional sensory cognitions, as one would a lamp in day time, and eventually, in a rejection of anti-cosmic proportions, even the supramundane pleasures of the occult amusements.[108] Commenting on this, Jayaratha quotes an untraced explanatory definition of the *krīḍākarman*s:

> The occult amusements taught in all scriptures are now revealed. One experiences these at once when surfeited by the gnostic experience of Śakti. One grasps the body with the six wheels and the sixteen loci, one performs the piercing initiation etc., and also the benign possessions etc. Instantly one enters the bodies of others, O [Pārvatī,] joy of the mountain god.[109]

The *krīḍā*s are the manifestations of a heightened sensory awareness that makes supramundane sensory perceptions possible. Jayaratha cites another untraced source to clarify this:

> I will tell you the characteristic of one for whom discernment has arisen. With whatever sense faculty something needs to be achieved, the acuity of that [faculty] arises spontaneously: [One attains] the occult art (*vijñānaṃ*) of hearing from afar, knowing [from afar], and seeing [from afar].[110]

As a consequence of the gnostic context in which they arise, the occult amusements are merely distracting byproducts. Abhinavagupta insists that they can hold no fascination for the practitioner who has become

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no. 4, 2007, 336–7, especially footnote 48 (Ratié prefers "grasping of the 'I'" for *ahaṃparāmarśa*-).

[107] *Tantrāloka* 13.177bcd: *yadāyāti vivecanam | paśupāśapatijñānaṃ svayaṃ nirbhāsate tadā.*

[108] *Tantrāloka* 13.178–179ab: *prātibhe tu samāyāte jñānam anyat tu sendriyam | vāgakṣiśrutigamyaṃ cāpy anyāpekṣaṃ varānane | tat tyajed buddhim āsthāya pradīpaṃ tu yathā divā |*

[109] Untraced citation in Jayaratha's *Tantrālokaviveka* 13.179: *krīḍākarmāṇy athoktāni sarvatantroditāni tu / kṣaṇenānubhavet tāni śaktijñānopabṛṃhitaḥ // ṣaṭcakraṃ ṣoḍaśādhāraṃ kulaṃ jānāti suvrate / mantravedhādi kurute svasthāveśādikāni tu // kṣaṇād anyāni viśate purāṇi naganandini /*

[110] Unidentified citation in Jayaratha's *Tantrālokaviveka* 13.179cd–180ab: *prādurbhūtavivekasya lakṣaṇaṃ yat pravartate / tathā te kathayiṣyāmi yena yenendriyeṇa tu //sādhyaṃ yat tasya tasyaivaṃ pāṭavaṃ jāyate bhṛśam / dūrāc chravaṇavijñānaṃ mananaṃ cāvalokanam.* The triad of remote hearing, knowing and seeing occurs already in the *Niśvāsamūla* 7.20ab (*dūrāc chravaṇavijñānaṃ darśanaṃ mananaṃ tathā*) in a longer list of powers.

averse to all things because he has discerned their nature and has found repose in the highest awareness.[111] One may wonder, at this point, what role the vast repertoire of *siddhi*s taught in the Śaiva scriptures can play at all in Abhinavagupta's doctrine that privileges gnosticism and the quest for liberation.[112] As might have been expected, they play a minor role. Since Abhinavagupta has already established that an accomplished yogin cannot desire *siddhi*s, he reduces them to the status of *pratyaya*s, mere miracles meant to generate faith in the liberatory efficacy of Śaiva initiation.[113]

> The plethora of supramundane powers is taught for the sake of showing faith-inspiring miracles to convince outsiders, so that they realize that those accomplished in this [Śaiva system] will be released after death.[114]

Faith-inspiring miracles had long been used as proofs that the soul had undergone a fundamental change during initiation,[115] for example in *tulādīkṣā*, 'initiation with the scales', where the candidate is weighed before and after the initiation. A loss of weight would prove that the binding defilements of the soul had been removed, and the initiand would be released after death. The 'others' or 'outsiders' (*para-*) Abhinavagupta refers to are probably non-Śaivas, but elsewhere he claims that *pratyaya*-miracles occurring during initiation are meant to give comfort to the simple-minded.[116] Granoff 1996 has analyzed a similar twofold discourse of miracles in Buddhist texts, the first was meant to convince non-believers of the greatness of Buddhist

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[111] *Tantrāloka* 13.180cd–181ab: *sarvabhāvavivekāt tu sarvabhāvaparāṅmukhaḥ || krīḍāsu suviraktātmā śivabhāvaikabhāvitaḥ |*. Jayaratha glosses the amusements here as "entering other's bodies etc.", *parapurapraveśādiprāyāsu krīḍāsu.*

[112] *Tantrālokaviveka* introducing 13.183: *nanv akiṃcitkaryaś cet siddhayas tat kimartham uktā[ḥ]*, "Surely, if the *siddhi*s are useless, then for what purpose are they taught?"

[113] "… for otherwise," as Jayaratha comments, "who would believe that liberation is achieved at the end of life?" *Tantrālokaviveka* on 13.183: *siddhir hi nāma pareṣāṃ pratyayamātram anyathā dehānte muktir iti kasya samāśvāsaḥ |*

[114] *Tantrāloka* 13.183: *siddhijālaṃ hi kathitaṃ parapratyayakāraṇam | ihaiva siddhāḥ kāyānte mucyerann iti bhāvanāt ||*

[115] See Alexis Sanderson, "History Through Textual Criticism in the Study of Śaivism, the Pañcarātra and the Buddhist Yoginītantras," *Les Sources Et Le Temps = Sources and Time: a Colloquium, Pondicherry, 11-13 January 1997* (Pondicherry: Institut français de Pondichéry, Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient, 2001), 10–11, n. 7.

[116] *Tantrāloka* 20.1cd: *atha dīkṣāṃ bruve mūḍhajanāśvāsapradāyinīm ||*

doctrine, and the second provided the faithful with reasons to continue to believe in Buddhism.

Posthuman Identities

Let us consider the further implications of the occult amusement of entering other's bodies (*parakāyapraveśana*) encountered above.[117] How does it relate to other transformations? According to a commonly invoked proverb, the power of certain gem-stones, mantras and herbs is so unimaginably great[118] that it is capable of altering the normal powers or functions (*śakti*) of objects,[119] even to the extent of suppressing, among others, a fire's capacity to burn, or the toxicity of snake venom.[120] This suppression of normal functions represents a weaker kind of change than is seen in other miraculous types of transformation (*vikurvaṇa*) or shapeshifting (*rūpaparivartana*, *kāmarūpatā*) etc.[121] that are popular in Epic, early Buddhist, and Tantric literature, for there we often encounter various degrees of a change of nature or identity.

To see these processes in context, let us consider the transformations of a human being into two very different kinds of supernatural beings: the *Vetāla*[122] and the *Khecara* (often synonymous with the

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[117] An early description of a yogic method of ejecting the soul from the body so that it can travel anywhere in the heavens, on earth and in the subterranean realms to take on various forms is taught in the *Brahmayāmala's Krīḍākarma* chapter 43, labelled as 44. It simply ends by affirming the efficacy of the practice, 44.8: *antarikṣe tathā bhūmau pātāleṣu ca dehiṣu | anya-m-anyeṣu rūpeṣu vicaren nātra saṃśayaḥ ||*

[118] *acintyo hi maṇimantrauṣadhīnāṃ prabhāva iti*. See Goodall 1998, p. 273.

[119] *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* (in Vācaspatimiśra, Chittenjoor Kunhan Raja, and S. S. Sūryanārāyana Śāstrī, *The Bhāmatī of Vācaspati on Śaṅkara's Brahmasūtrabhāṣya Catussūtrī*, Adyar: Theosophical Publ. House, 1933) to *śrutes tu śabdamūlatvāt //2.1.27// … laukikānām api maṇimantrauṣadhiprabhṛtīnāṃ deśakālanimittavaicitryavaśāc chaktayo viruddhānekakāryaviṣayā dṛśyante …*

[120] Vidyāraṇya (Vidyāraṇya, S.Subrahmanya Sastri, and T.R.Srinivasa Ayyangar, *Jīvanmuktiviveka of Vidyāraṇya*, [Madras: Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1978]) attributes this to the *Parāśarasmṛti*. 22. *tad uktaṃ parāśareṇa: maṇimantrauṣadhair vahniḥ sudīpto 'pi yathendhanam |pradagdhuṃ naiva śaktaḥ syāt pratibaddhas tathaiva ca ||*

[121] On *rūpaparivartana*, or *kāmarūpa* see Hatley, "The Brahmayāmalatantra and Early Śaiva Cult of Yoginīs" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 83, 105.

[122] A detailed analysis and typology of the different types of *Vetālas* can be found in Csaba Dezső "Encounters with Vetālas, Studies on Fabulous Creatures I," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 63, no. 4 (2010).

Vidyādhara). To begin with the *Vetāla*, how do Śaiva Tantras propose that such a being comes into existence at all? The Trika's *Tantrasadbhāva* views the condition of the *Vetāla* as a punitive rebirth for those Śaivas who have taken vows (*vratin*) but nevertheless engage in illicit sexual activities:[123]

> One devoted to vows and *caryā,*[124] but negligent due to infatuation, who engages in sexual activity, is reborn as a great *Vetāla*. One who spills his semen in a non-*yoni* or a bad *yoni* is also reborn as a *Vetāla*, he bears the burden of his infatuation on his back.

The *Ātmārthapūjāpaddhati*, a medieval *Śaiddhāntika* ritual manual, attributes a similar retributive origination myth to the *Rāmāyaṇa*:[125]

> A man who goes to a Śiva temple and then ejaculates semen or emits feces or urine is reborn as a *Vetāla*.

We see here an attempt to encompass even these malific beings within a loose Śaiva fold: they are lapsed Śaivas. This strategy parallels the Śaiva exoneration of the performer of animal or human sacrifice from any moral guilt he may feel towards the sacrificial victim. There the victim is portrayed as the reincarnation of a similarly lapsed Śaiva who has broken his post-initiatory *samaya* vows (see Vasudeva forthcoming). The *Saiddhāntika Mṛgendratantra* adds details concerning the typology of the demonic bodies (*paiśācaṃ vapuḥ*) that are the rebirth destiny (*gati*) of lapsed Śaivas and also the method to prevent such a mishap. The tenth century commentator Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha glosses as follows:[126]

> When [protection from karmic consequences] is not performed, souls, when the previous karma of transgressing the initiatory vows matures after death because it was not annulled during initiation, obtain a demonic body, despised by the good, and undergo torment.

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[123] *Tantrasadbhāva* 7.141–142.

[124] See *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa*, sv. *caryā*.

[125] *Ātmārthapūjāpaddhati*, the verse is, however, not cited in the BORI critical edition of the *Rāmāyaṇa*: *tathā rāmāyaṇe ca—śivālayam upāgamya yas tu sūṣayate naraḥ | malamūtraṃ ca niṣṭhīvya (em., niṣṭhī vai T) sa vetālo bhaviṣyati ||*

[126] *Mṛgendratantra Kriyāpāda* 8.138cd–139ab: *yad aprāpya narāḥ pūrve prāpte karmaṇi yātanāḥ // prāpnuvanti vapuḥ prāpya paiśācaṃ sadvigarhitam.* Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha comments: *yad aprāpya yasminn anivṛtte narāḥ pumāṃsaḥ piṇḍapātānantaraṃ pūrve karmaṇi pūrvasmin samayācārollaṅghanarūpe karmaṇi dīkṣāyām evākṛtavighātatvāt prāpte sati paiśācaṃ vapuḥ piśācādivapuḥ sadvigarhitaṃ prāpya yātanāḥ prāpnuvanti //.*

> The transgressors become Vetālas, Ulkas or Kṣetrapālas inhabiting the earth or water. They are ruled by the five Kāraṇeśvarī sense-deities that control the faculty that committed the transgression. Brāhmī controls the ears and skin, Vaiṣṇavī the tongue, Raudrī the nose and eyes, Aiśvarī controls pride, and Sādāśivī the mind. The demonic rebirths are also classified according to these controlling deities into Brahma-demons, Viṣṇu-demons, etc.[127] To prevent this destiny, expiatory offerings consisting of the corresponding sensory media (*tanmātra*) must be made during the initiation (*nirbījadīkṣā*) to the respective Kāraṇa deity. That is, sound and touch must be offered to Brahmā, taste must be offered to Viṣṇu, smell and form must be offered to Rudra, intellect and egoism must be offered to Īśvara, and the mind must be offered to the Kāraṇa deity Śiva.[128]

The tormented state of being a *Vetāla* is a punishment brought on by a lapsed Śaiva's own misdeeds after death, it is not a condition that can be attained in the present life. The *siddhi* of *Khecaratā*[129] (lit. 'the occult attainment of sky-goer-hood'),[130] on the other hand, is a self-promotion that takes place without the intervention of a rebirth. It is not so much a transformation into a new, superhuman identity as a posthuman continuity of the present life with an expanded identity. As van Buitenen puts it (though not quite accurately from a Śaiva perspective): "For unlike any other god, deity, vampire or hobgoblin, the *Vidyādhara* is originally a man … there can be no real doubt that the *Vidyādhara* represents man become superman by virtue of his knowledge."[131] After mastering the respective *vidyā*, mantra or magical sword, the successful (*siddha*) practitioner is more than a human being, he is a *Khecara*. Remaining on earth among mortals would be incommensurate with his new-found status, and narrative literature usually shows the new *Khecara* ascending beyond the human realm,

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[127] Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha to *Mṛgendratantra Kriyāpāda* 8.139cd–140ab.

[128] Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha to *Mṛgendratantra Kriyāpāda* 8.140cd–141.

[129] For this power see James Mallinson, *The Khecarīvidyā of Ādinātha: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of an Early Text of Haṭhayoga* (London: Routledge, 2007).

[130] Abhinavagupta is explicit that it is in this case not the power of flight that is sought, but rather that the power-seeker wishes to become a sky-goer *(Khecara):* "A yogin intent on 'devouring time' becomes a sky-goer in an instant," (*Mālinīvijayavārttika* 1.153ab: *kālagrāsaparo yogī jāyate khecaraḥ kṣaṇāt*) and "Someone solely devoted to 'devouring time' becomes a sky-goer himself" (ibid. 1.155ab *kālagrāsaikarasiko jāyate khecaraḥ svayam*).

[131] Hans van Buitenen, "The Indian Hero As Vidyādhara," *Journal of American Folklore* 71, 281 (1958): 308.

as "… a sā*dhaka* with a magical sword flying off into the sky".[132] This endeavor might legitimately be identified as an early strand of some current theorizations of posthumanism. Some aspects of this quest also foreshadow the influences of eugenicist and Darwinist social thought that Singleton[133] has identified as formative to Modern yoga. Although lacking any evolutionary element, the pervasive belief that human identity is malleable, and can be tampered with through determined personal effort, may have facilitated the reception of such theories.

But let us return to the case of the yogin who enters somebody else's body. Who is the yogin when he is someone else? Or, as Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta pose the question, what exactly is happening when a yogin is perceiving the contents of someone else's mind?

Merged Identities

The problem of the yogin's identity during yogic perception (*yogipratyakṣa*) is addressed in Utpaladeva's *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* 1.4.5. The context is the establishment of a synthesizing agent of remembrance as non-different from the synthetic unity[134] of cognitions occurring at different times (1.4.3).[135] This prompts an opponent to propose that it would be simpler to accept that the previous cognition is objectified in the present moment of cognition.[136] Utpaladeva denies this possibility, one cognition cannot be the object of another. [137] The opponent then attempts to contradict this by introducing the example

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[132] See the discussion in Dezső, "Encounters with Vetālas, Studies on Fabulous Creatures I," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 63, no. 4 (2010): 400 of: *Bṛhatkathāślokasaṃgraha* 20.96: *sādhakaṃ siddhinistriṃśam utpatantaṃ nabhaḥ kva cit.*

[133] See Mark Singleton, "Yoga, Eugenics, and Spiritual Darwinism in the Early Twentieth Century," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 11 (2007): 125-146.

[134] *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* 1.4.3: *aikyam = anusaṃdhānam, anusaṃdhātur abhinnam iti.*

[135] *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* 1.4.3: *na ca yuktaṃ smṛter bhede smaryamāṇasya bhāsanam | tenaikyaṃ bhinnakālānāṃ saṃvidāṃ veditaiṣa saḥ.*

[136] *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī Avataraṇikā* to 1.4.4: *so 'nubhava idānīṃ smaraṇena viṣayīkriyate.*

[137] See Torella "*Variazioni kashmire sul tema della percezione dello yogin (yogipratyakṣa),*" *Rivista degli Studi Orientali 81,* no. 1–4 (2009): 35–58, p. 476–477. He notes: "On this point, in fact, the Śaiva and his principal opponent, the Buddhist epistemologist, are in full agreement: a cognition is self-luminous and cannot be the object of another cognition."

of yogic perception: Surely, when a yogin reads the mind of someone else, is he not perceiving that person's cognitions as the objects of his own cognition? This leads Utpaladeva to clarify what is happening in yogic perception:

> Even for yogins, cognitions do not appear with reference to another cognition. They appear as one with [the yogin's] self-awareness, even when they are [considered] objects.[138]

Abhinavagupta's *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* commentary to this verse distinguishes two different types of yogins. The first has not yet overcome the differentiation between self and other (*avigalitasvaparavibhāgo yogī*) and he therefore imagines (*abhimanyate*) that "this is the cognition of another" (*idaṃ parajñānam iti*). The second type perceives everything as himself (*sarvam ātmatvena paśyan*) and sees that the differentiation into self and other is his own fabrication (*svasṛṣṭam eva svaparavibhāgaṃ paśyati*).[139] Abhinavagupta does not elaborate on the identity of these two types of yogins, but his commentator Bhāskara does. He states that the first yogin, for whom the distinction between self and other has not yet disappeared, has attained the level of Īśvara but not the level (*-daśā*) of Sadāśiva,[140] which the higher (*prāptaprakarṣaḥ*), second type, has. By doing so Bhāskara has actually introduced elements of the Trika's *pramātṛbheda* phenomenology,[141] elaborated in the in the tenth book of Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka*,

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[138] *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* 1.4.5: *yoginām api bhāsante na dṛśo darśanāntare | svasaṃvidekamānās tā bhānti meyapade 'pi vā ||*. Abhinavagupta's *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* commentary to this important verse has been recently translated and discussed in *Isabelle Ratié,* "Otherness in the Pratyabhijñā Philosophy," *Journal of Indian Philosophy 35,* no. 4, (2007): 313–370, and Utpaladeva's *Vivṛti* commentary has been edited by Torella, "Studies on Utpaladeva's Īśvarapratyabhijñā-vivṛti. Part III: Can a Cognition Become the Object of Another Cognition?" *Mélanges Tantriques à la mémoire d'Hélène Brunner/Tantric Studies in Memory of Hélène Brunner,* ed. Dominic Goodall and André Padoux, *475–484, Collection Indologie 106*. Pondicherry: Institut français de Pondichéry, 2007. See also Torella *"Variazioni kashmire sul tema della percezione dello yogin (yogipratyakṣa),"* *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 81, no. 1–4 (2009): 35–58.

[139] *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* 1.4.5: *pramātrīkṛtaparadehaprāṇādisamavabhās asaṃskārāt tu tanniṣṭhām idantām eva prakāśabhāge 'pi manyamāna idaṃ parajñānam iti abhimanyate 'vigalitasvaparavibhāgo yogī | prāptaprakarṣas tu sarvam ātmatvena paśyan svasṛṣṭam eva svaparavibhāgaṃ paśyatīti jñānasya na yogijñānena prakāśyatā.*

[140] Bhāskarī to *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* 1.4.5: *avigalitasvaparavibhāgaḥ = īśvarāvasthāṃ prāptaḥ, na tu sadāśivādidaśām adhiśayānaḥ.*

[141] See Somadeva Vasudeva, *The Yoga of Mālinīvijayottaratantra: Chapters 1-4, 7-11, 11-17* (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2004), 189–202.

into the discussion. Abhinavagupta himself does not here introduce this theory, for to do so could be seen as a conflation of doctrines, the dreaded *śāstrasaṅkara*. Of course, the very same categories are discussed in extenso in the *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī's Āgamādhikāra*, where the divergent views of the Trika are noted, so this is not a substantive issue. Nevertheless, although the yogin's cognitive instrument (the *śakti* whereby he perceives) is equated with that of the Trika's transcendental Vidyeśvara perceivers, namely *śuddhavidyā*, the yogin's ranking in the phenomenal hierarchy is not explicitly identified as either the Sadāśiva or Īśvara state. At *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* 3.1.3cd, giving Utpaladeva's primary view, the experiential levels of Sadāśiva and Īśvara are located between the two poles of 'I-ness' (*ahaṃtā*) and 'that-ness' (*idaṃtā*); Sadāśiva represents the predication: "I am this" (*aham idam*), where objectivity is indistinct, and Īśvara represents the predication: "This am I" (*idam aham*), where subjectivity is indistinct. The experiential level of Yogins and gnostics is referenced only later, in the introduction to 3.1.7. This introduces an opposing view that Bhāskara attributes to the Trika.[142] The nature of the three transcendental *Vidyeśvara* perceivers, that is, the *Mantramaheśvara-*, the *Mantreśvara-* and the *Mantra-*perceivers, is explained as a negotiation between these two subjective and objective aspects of Paramaśiva. According to this view, the Sadāśiva and the Īśvara conditions of perceiverhood are two spontaneous manifestations[143] of Paramaśiva, with an emergent differentiation into subject and object, one that is however unstable, because it is not yet well developed (*aprarūḍha*).[144] When this differentiation is not vivid (*asphuṭa*), Paramaśiva's[145] volitional power (*icchāśakti*) is engaged, and when it is vivid (*sphuṭa*), his cognitive power (*jñānaśakti*) is engaged. When the differentiation has become more developed (*prarūḍha*),[146] we can distinguish two further stages. When the objective aspect is distorted (*grāhyaviparyāsa*) then the power of action (*kriyāśakti*) is engaged, when both the objective and the subjective aspects are distorted (*grāhyagrāhakaviparyāsa*), as it is for ordinary,

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[142] *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* introduction to 3.1.7: *pare prāhuḥ,* Bhāskara: = *anye trikaśāstrapāradṛśvāṇaḥ.*

[143] *ibid.*: *-avabhāsanam, Bhāskara: svātantryeṇa prakāśanam.*

[144] *ibid.: aprarūḍhabheda-* Bhāskara: *śithilatvena viśrāntyasahaḥ yo bhedas tasyāvabhāsanam.*

[145] *ibid.*: Bhāskara: *īśvarasya = śrīśivabhaṭṭārakasya.*

[146] *ibid.: prarūḍhe tu bhede*, Bhāskara: *prarūḍhe = bhedaviśrāntau.*

limited souls, then the power of delusion (*māyāśakti*) is active. Abhinavagupta then locates the yogin and the gnostic against this theorization of the layered phenomenology of transcendental perceivers. Yogins and gnostics are not bound souls (*apaśu*),[147] but they still retain latent impressions of the distortion (*viparyāsa*) of both the objective and the subjective aspects. As such their conventional instrument of perception is the same as for ordinary limited souls, *māyāśakti*. But in 'yogic perception' *(yogipratyakṣa)*, when they perceive the real nature of things *(vastuparamārtha)*, then it is *śuddhavidyā* that is operative, just as it is for the transcendental *Vidyeśvara* perceivers.[148] Abhinavagupta insinuates, by implication, that this view was attractive to Utpaladeva too, because he did not label it as the view of 'others'.[149] The commentator Bhāskara, on the other hand, explicitly imports the Trika doctrine of the *pramātṛbheda* phenomenology, and distinguishes the two types of yogic perception phenomenologically on the basis of where the yogin finds himself in the hierarchy of the transcendental perceivers: the yogin in the *Īśvarāvasthā* and the yogin in the *Sadāśivāvasthā*.

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[147] By yogin Abhinavagupta of course means those who have attained yoga, not merely those practising yoga .

[148] *ibid.*: *grāhakagrāhyobhayaviparyāsasaṃskāre tu avinivṛtte 'pi yad etat vastuparamārthaprathanaṃ tatra vidyāśaktivyāpāro yogijñāniprabhṛtiṣv apaśupramātṛṣu |*

[149] *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* to 3.1.7: *ayam eva ṣaḍardhasārādidṛṣṭo 'py asyācāryasya hṛdayam āvarjayati pakṣo 'anya ity anukteḥ |*

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

LIBERATION AND IMMORTALITY: BHUŚUṆḌA'S YOGA OF *PRĀṆA* IN THE *YOGAVĀSIṢṬHA*

Sthaneshwar Timalsina

Contextualizing the Narrative of Bhuśuṇḍa

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Two Yogas: Bhuśuṇḍa as Vasiṣṭha's Counterpart

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

rise to the state of the dissolution of mental imprints (*vāsanā*), which in turn leads to immersion in the state of liberation while living (*jīvanmukti*) (*YV* 6.I.13.2). The text provides the root √*yujir* for the etymology of *yoga*, and identifies it as a method (*yukti*) for liberating from transmigration (13.3). The text, then, identifies two types of yoga: the realization of the self and the control of breath (13.4). Elaborating upon this, Vasiṣṭha states: "Although both types are identified with the term yoga, it has been conventional [to use] this term in the method of *prāṇa*. In the sequence of liberating from the world, one is yoga and the other is realization. These both are considered equal approaches that give the same result" (*YV* 6.I.13.6-7)[5].

Both the practices of the contemplation upon the self and the breathing exercise are presented here as equal instruments for the pacification (*upaśama*) of mind (13.3). Unlike the two distinct yogas discussed in *BhG* in which *karma yoga* is prescribed as being easier for practitioners, *YV* holds that the ascertainment through wisdom is easier for some, while yoga, i.e., the practice of *prāṇa*, is easier for others. Just as Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa to tell him which one of the two yogas is better (*BhG*, chap. 3, 1-2), Rāma asks Vasiṣṭha, traditionally the author of the text, which one of the yogas is easier (*YV*, VI. 13.5). Although Vasiṣṭha indicates that his preference is the determination through wisdom (*jñāna-niścaya*) (*YV* 6.I.13.8), telling that the yoga through *dhāraṇā* and *āsana* is not easy to practice (13.10), the chapter and the entire narrative *is* about yoga as opposed to the ascertainment of the reality through contemplation. Described in terms of *prāṇa* and *apāna* (13.12), *prāṇāyāma* is identified as the central component of the yoga under consideration. Placing the practice of *prāṇa* at the core of the practice also allows us to argue that the yoga of Bhuśuṇḍa is not identical to Patañjalian yoga.

The Practice of Prāṇa

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

[5] *prakārau dvāv api proktau yogaśabdena yady api |*
tathāpi rūḍhim āyātaḥ prāṇayuktāv asau bhṛśam || 6 ||
eko yogas tathā jñānaṃ saṃsārottaraṇakrame |
samāv upāyau dvāv eva proktāv ekaphalapradau || 7 ||
(YV 6.I.13.6-7).

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

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[6] *prāṇād vāyur ajāyata* | *Ṛgveda* 10.90.13.

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

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

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

[10] *Yogavārttika* of Vijñānabhikṣu 2.51. See T. S. Rukmani, *Yogavārttika* of Vijñānabhikṣu (Vol. 2), *Sādhanapāda* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1981), 229.

inhaling, holding the breath, and the constellation of different flows (*saṅghaṭakaraṇa*).[11]

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

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

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

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[11] *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* 2.35.

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

[13] For instance:
padmāsane sthito yogī nāḍīdvāreṇa pūritam |
mārutaṃ dhārayed yas tu sa mukto nātra saṃśayaḥ || *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* 1.51.
padmāsane sthito yogī prāṇāpānavidhānataḥ |
pūrayet sa vikuktaḥ syāt satyaṃ satyaṃ vadāmy aham || *Śivasaṃhitā* 3.110.
prāṇāyāme mahān dharmo yogino mokṣadāyakaḥ | *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* 114.

[14] *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* 1.69.

[15] *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* 3.15.

[16] *Mṛgendratantra* (*Yogapaṭala* 7 ab) and *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha* (20.32) describe reflexive thought with the term *cintā*. For discussion on yogic *cintā*, see Vasudeva *The Yoga of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra*, 428-429.

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

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

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

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

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

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

[17] The commentary identifies the flow of *prāṇa* from heart up to the palate, the half of the exhalation as internal *recaka* and the remaining half, initiating from the palate to the extent of the external end of twelve inches as the external *pūraka.* See *Tātparyaprakāśa* (*TPP*) on *YV* 6.I.25.6-7.

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

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[18] *TPP* interprets *antarmukhatva* as: *tathā ca praspandapūrvakṣaṇe yad antarmukhatvaṃ praspandonmukhatvaṃ tam ity arthaḥ* | *TPP* on *YV* 6.I.25.17.

[19] *bāhyonmukhatvaṃ prāṇānāṃ yad hṛdambujakoṭarāt* |
svarasenāstayatnānāṃ taṃ dhīrā recakaṃ viduḥ || *6* ||
dvādaśāṅgulaparyantaṃ bāhyam ākramatām adhaḥ |
prāṇānāṃ aṅgasaṃsparśo yaḥ sa pūraka ucyate || *7* ||
bāhyāt parāpataty antar apāne yatnavarjitaḥ |
yo 'yaṃ prapūraṇaḥ sparśo vidus tam api pūrakam || *8* ||
apāne 'staṅgate prāṇo yāvan nābhyudito hṛdi |
tāvat sā kumbhakāvasthā yogibhir yānubhūyate || *9* ||
recakaḥ kumbhakaś caiva pūrakaś ca tridhā sthitaḥ |
apānasyodayasthāne dvādaśāntād adho bahiḥ || *10* ||
svabhāvāḥ sarvakālasthāḥ samyag yatnavivarjitāḥ |
ye proktāḥ sphāramatibhis tāñ chṛṇu tvaṃ mahāmate || *11* ||
dvādaśāṅgulaparyantād bāhyād abhyuditaḥ prabho |
yo vātas tasya tatraiva svabhāvāt pūrakādayaḥ || *12* ||
mṛdantarasthān niṣpannaghaṭavad yā sthitir bahiḥ |
dvādaśāṅgulaparyante nāsāgrasamasammukhe || *13* ||
vyomni nityam apānasya taṃ viduḥ kumbhakaṃ budhāḥ
bāhyonmukhasya vāyor yā nāsikāgrāvadhir gatiḥ || *14* ||
taṃ bāhyapūrakan tv ādyaṃ vidur yogavido janāḥ |
nāsāgrād api nirgatya dvādaśāntāvadhir gatiḥ || *15* ||
yā vāyos taṃ vidur dhīrā apānaṃ bāhyapūrakam |
bahir astaṅgate prāṇe yāvan nāpāna udgataḥ || *16* ||
tāvat pūrṇaṃ samāvasthaṃ bahiṣṭhaṃ kumbhakaṃ viduḥ |
yat tad antarmukhatvaṃ syād apānasyodayaṃ vinā || *17* ||
taṃ bāhyarecakaṃ vidyāc cintyamānaṃ vimuktidam |
dvādaśāntād yad utthāya rūpapīvaratā parā || *18* ||
apānasya bahiṣṭhaṃ tam aparaṃ pūrakaṃ viduḥ |

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

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

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

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The numbering follows verse 20 that identifies only eight variants. The commentary thereon suggests that although there are ten variants of *prāṇa* discussed in this sequence, since there is the primacy of *kumbhaka*, these variants are not separately counted. *TPP* on *YV* 6.I.25.20.

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

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[20] This translation relies on the exposition given in *Tātparyaprakāśa* (*TPP*): "*tatra bahirdvādaśāṅgulaparyante prasṛtaḥ prāṇo yāvad arkatām auṣṇyaṃ parityajya candratāṃ śaityaṃ na gataḥ sā prāṇāpānayoḥ sandhyāvasthā | tasyāṃ dehād vahiḥ prāṇalayād ātmano nirdehatvaniṣkriyatva-nirmanastvādayo vāstavasvabhāvāḥ saṃbhāvayituṃ śakyatvād vicāryante | tatra bāhyakumbhake dehādi-deśaparicchedābhāvāc candrasūryātmakaprāṇāpānakriyāprayuktāyuḥkālaparic-chedābhāvāc cādeśakāle svātmani pratiṣṭhitena yoginā na śocyata ity arthaḥ.*" *TPP* on *YV* 6 I.25.40.

[21] This, according to *TPP*, indicates inner *kumbhaka*, where the flow of *prāṇa* and *apāna* are held within. *TPP* on *YV*, 6.I.25.41-42.

The *TPP* understands the term *ātman* as *manas*. *TPP* gives another interpretation of the confusing clause, *ātmano nijam ādhāram* as: "*athavā hṛdayasthaḥ svātmaiva prāṇa-sūryaḥ sa evāpānātmakacandratayā udayāsta-mayatadraśmibhūtavyānādivṛt tibhedādy ātmanā vivartate na tadvyatiriktaṅ kaścid astīty upāsanaṃ svātmadarśane hetur ity āha |* " *TPP* on 6.I.25. 42.

[22] *prāṇasyābhyudayo brahman padmapatrād hṛdi sthitāt || 29 ||*
dvādaśāṅgulaparyante prāṇo 'staṃ yāty ayaṃ bahiḥ |
apānasyodayo bāhyād dvādaśāntān mahāmune || 30 ||
astaṅgatir athāmbhojamadhye hṛdayasaṃsthite |
prāṇo yatra samāyāti dvādaśānte nabhaḥ-pade || 31 ||
padāt tasmād apāno 'yaṃ khād eti samanantaram |
bāhyākāśōnmukhaḥ prāṇo bahaty agniśikhā yathā || 32 ||
hṛdākāśonmukho 'pāno nimne vahati vārivat |
apānaś candramā deham āpyāyayati bāhyataḥ || 33 ||
prāṇaḥ sūryo 'gnir athavā pacaty antar idaṃ vapuḥ |
prāṇo hi hṛdayākāśaṃ tāpayitvā pratikṣaṇam || 34 ||
mukhāgragaganaṃ paścāt tāpayaty uttamo raviḥ |
apānendur mukhāgraṃ tu plāvayitvā hṛdaṃbaram || 35 ||
paścād āpyāyayaty eṣa nimeṣasamanantaram |
apānaśaśino 'ntasthā kalā prāṇavivasvatā || 36 ||
yatra grastā tad āsādya padaṃ bhūyo na śocyate |
prāṇārkasya tathāntasthā yatrāpānasitāṃśunā || 37 ||
grastā tatpadam āsādya na bhūyo janmabhāṅ naraḥ |
prāṇa evārkatāṃ yāti sabāhyābhyantare 'mbare || 38 ||
āpyāyanakarīṃ paścāc chaśitām adhitiṣṭhati |
prāṇa evendutāṃ tyaktvā śarīrāpyāyakāriṇīm || 39 ||
kṣaṇād āyāti sūryatvaṃ saṃśoṣaṇakaraṃ padam |

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

> Having long followed the external *kumbhaka* [at the moment] when *prāṇa* has ceased and *apāna* has turned towards its rise, one does not grieve again. Having long followed the internal *kumbhaka* [at the moment] when *apāna* has been ceased and *prāṇa* [has] oriented towards the rise to a certain degree, one does not grieve again. Having practiced the empty {*svaccha*: lit. clear} *kumbhaka,* having followed the exhalation of *prāṇa* that is—at its furthest distance from *apāna*, one does not grieve again. Having practiced {*dṛṣṭvā*: lit. seen} the *pūraka* residing within the body [in the course of] *apāna,* where the *prāṇa* is filled and what is the foundation of *recaka*, one does not suffer again. Having followed the peaceful state where both *prāṇa* and *apāna* are dissolved, the self does not suffer again. Having contemplated upon space and time, whether inside or outside, devoid of [its] aspects in [the course of] *apāna* that is devouring *prāṇa*, one does not suffer again. Having observed space and time, whether inside or outside, in the *prāṇa* that is devouring *apāna*, the mind does not rise again. Observe those two, space and time, whether outside or inside, where *prāṇa* is devoured by *apāna* and *apāna* is devoured by *prāṇa*. [Yogins] realize that state as the external *kumbhaka* that has been established without any effort, when *prāṇa* is dissolved for a moment and *apāna* has not arisen. The inner *kumbhaka* that has been established effortlessly is the supreme state. (*YV*, 6.I.25.50c-59d)

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

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arkatāṃ saṃparityajya na yāvac candratāṃ gataḥ || *40* ||
prāṇas tāvad vicāryante 'deśakāle na śocyate |
hṛdi candrārkayor jñātvā nityam astamayodayam || *41* ||
ātmano nijam ādāraṃ na bhūyo jāyate manaḥ |
sodayāstamayaṃ senduṃ saraśmiṃ sagamāgamam || *42* ||
hṛdaye bhāskaraṃ devaṃ yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati |
(Yogavāsiṣṭha 6. I. 25.29c-43b*)*

Since life is viewed as the continuation of *prāṇa*, it is reasonable to infer that long life is linked to its regulation and mastery over it. The crucial problem that arises with the yoga of Bhuśuṇḍa is how the transcendental self and corporeality are interlinked, as it is otherwise difficult to relate the physical practice of *prāṇāyāma* with self-realization. The text addresses this problem. The self of the nature of awareness, as Bhuśuṇḍa identifies, is situated within *prāṇa* as fragrance resides within the flower, and this self is neither *prāṇa* nor *apāna*. As taste is situated within water, so is the self of the nature of awareness located within *apāna* and it is neither *prāṇa* nor *apāna*. The self is at the culmination of, and in the middle of, *prāṇa* and *apāna* (*YV*, 6.I.25.61-63). The self, in this depiction, is thus not transcendental to the body, but rather its living essence. The intermediate state between *prāṇa* and *apāna*, in this depiction, is where the self is revealed and the self is realized through abiding in this state. Retention of breath focused within the heart is identified as the *kumbhaka* of *prāṇa* and the one performed outside is the retention of *apāna* and with the practice of holding the breath, one resides next to consciousness itself (chap. 25.69-72).

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

The Perfections of Bhuśuṇḍa

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

[23] Vasudeva, *The Yoga of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra*, 391.
[24] Vasudeva, *The Yoga of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra*, 393.

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

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

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

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

> this huge surge of water I remain with a fixed mind, having concentrated upon air (*vāyavī dhāraṇā*). Having reached to the end of the cosmos, I abide in the deep sleep state [and stay in] the pure abode at the end of all the principles. When the Lotus-born again observes the act of creation, I enter the cosmos and stay there in the abode of the bird.[25] (*YV* 6.I.21.17-21)

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

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

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[25] *pratapanti yadādityāḥ śakalīkṛtabhūdharāḥ |*
vāruṇīṃ dhāraṇāṃ baddhvā tadā tiṣṭhāmi dhīradhīḥ || 17 ||
yadā śakalitādrīndrā vānti pralayavāyavaḥ |
pārvatīṃ dhāraṇāṃ baddhvā khe tiṣṭhāmy acalaṃ tadā || 18 ||
jagadgalitamervādi yāty ekārṇavatāṃ yadā |
vāyavīṃ dhāraṇāṃ baddvā saṃplave 'caladhīs tadā || 19 ||
brahmāṇḍapāram āsādya tattvānte vimale pade |
suṣuptāvasthayā tāvat tiṣṭhāmy acalarūpayā || 20 ||
yāvat punaḥ kamalajaḥ sṛṣṭikarmaṇi tiṣṭhati |
tatra praviśya brahmāṇḍaṃ tiṣṭhāmi vihagālaye || 21 ||
YV 6.I.21.17-21

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> I remember the three worlds having an identical assemblage sequence and many [others] having different [ones] or half identical [assemblage] in the same way. (*YV*, 6.I.22.35)[27]

> Brāhman! In every *manvantara*, when the sequence of the world is reversed and the structure is altered and the wise people have passed away, I have different friends, different relatives, different and new servants, and different habitations. (*YV*, 6.I.22.37-38)[28]

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

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

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[27] *samaikasanniveśāni bahūni viṣamāṇi ca |*
tathārdhasamarūpāṇi trajaganti smarāmy aham || 35 ||
(*YV*, 6.I.22.35)

[28] *pratimanvantaraṃ brahman viparyaste jagatkrame |*
sanniveśe 'nyathājāte prayāte saṃśrute jane || 37 ||
mamānyāny eva mitrāṇi anya eva ca bandhavaḥ |
anya eva navā bhṛtyā anya eva samāśrayāḥ || 38 ||
YV, 6.I.22.37-38

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

YV addresses *jīvanmukti*, liberation while living. As Slaje points out, "the *Mokṣopāya* belongs to the oldest texts that know of the concept of, and at the same time make deliberate use of, the technical term, *jīvanmukti*".[29] As the narrative of Bhuśuṇḍa begins with a chapter giving a preface that uses the term '*jīvanmukta*', it becomes contextual to address this concept in light of the highest perfection of Bhuśuṇḍa. Although yogic practice in general is not the central theme of *YV*, the narrative in this context is about yoga, the yoga of the *prāṇa* and *apāna*. This particular yoga is neither contemplation upon the empty nature of the objective world, nor is it about "gaining insight into the absolute non-existence (*atyantābhāva*) of the world by '*reflection*' (*vicāra*) only,"[30] but simply the 'rise of the dissolution of mental imprints' (*vāsanāvilayodaya*) through the practice of *prāṇa*.[31] The state of *jīvanmukti*, in light of this narrative, arises due to the dissolution of *vāsanā* that results through the instrumentality of the 'cessation of the pulsation of *prāṇa*' (*prāṇaspandanirodha*) (*YV* 6.I.13.2). Although the general course of contemplation as taught in *YV* is through questions such as "Who am I?" and "Whose is transmigration?" and although Vasiṣṭha acknowledges that yoga is hard to prac-

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

[30] Ibid., 173.

[31] The mind free from agitation is described in this text with the term of *upaśama* *YV* 6.I.20.36.

tice since it is accomplished through the perfection of contemplation, position, and so on (*YV* 6.I.13.10), Bhuśuṇḍa does attain the state of *jīvanmukti,* with his practice of the cessation of the flow of breath. Therefore, it is difficult to reductively conclude that *YV* in general teaches liberation only through the practice of *jñāna* and not through the practice of yoga. Actually the text is explicit that "for some, yoga is hard to accomplish, and for others, the determination [is] through *jñāna*" (*YV*, chap. 13, 8).[32]

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

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

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

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

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

contemplation,[35] it becomes necessary to give a closer look to the narrative of Bhuśuṇḍa.

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

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

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CHAPTER TWELVE

SIDDHI AND *MAHĀSIDDHI* IN EARLY *HAṬHAYOGA*

James Mallinson

In a forthcoming monograph on pre-modern *haṭhayoga* and its practitioners[1] I identify a corpus of Sanskrit texts on early *haṭhayoga*,[2] texts which are the sources for early *haṭhayoga*'s syncretic systematization into the classical *haṭhayoga* of the *Haṭhapradīpikā*.[3] In this article I shall examine the treatment in those works of *siddhi*s, the supernatural powers which arise either directly or indirectly as a result of the practice of yoga or tantric rites.[4]

The oldest traditions of *haṭhayoga* are informed by tantric yoga, both Śaiva and Pāñcarātrika, and traditions of brahmanical yoga found in, for example, the original *Skandapurāṇa* and the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*.[5] In a secondary stage of its development *haṭhayoga* was appropriated by practitioners in the traditions of Western Transmission (Paścimāmnāya) and, subsequently, Southern Transmission (Dakṣiṇāmnāya) Kaula Śaivism.[6] It is this Kaula-influenced form of

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[1] James Mallinson, *Yoga and Yogis: The Texts, Techniques and Practitioners of Traditional Haṭhayoga* (forthcoming).

[2] These works are the *Amṛtasiddhi*, *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*, *Gorakṣaśataka*, *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*, *Khecarīvidyā*, *Yogabīja*, *Amaraughaprabodha* and *Śivasaṃhitā*. To these may be added the *Amaraughaśāsana*, which, although not used to compile it, is likely to predate the *Haṭhapradīpikā* and teaches variants of the practices classified therein as *mudrā*s, practices which set *haṭhayoga* apart from other varieties of yoga. There is one text not written in Sanskrit which teaches the haṭhayogic *mudrā*s and predates the *Haṭhapradīpikā*: the Old Marāṭhī *Jñāneśvarī*, on which see Catherine Kiehnle, "The Secret of the Nāths: The Ascent of Kuṇḍalinī according to Jñāneśvarī 6.151-328," *Bulletin des Études Indiennes* 22-23 (2005): 447-494.

[3] The *Haṭhapradīpikā* can be dated to approximately 1450 CE (Christian Bouy, *Les Nātha-Yogin et les Upaniṣads* [Paris: Diffusion de Boccard, 1994], 81-85).

[4] They can also arise as a result of birth, herbal preparations or asceticism: *janmauṣadhimantratapaḥsamādhijāḥ siddhayaḥ* (*Yogasūtra* 4.1).

[5] These oldest traditions of *haṭhayoga* are found in the *Amṛtasiddhi* and *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*.

[6] The Western Transmission appropriation is evinced by the *Gorakṣaśataka*, *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* and *Khecarīvidyā*; that of the Southern Transmission (or at least its later reformation) by the *Śivasaṃhitā*.

haṭhayoga, with its subtle physiology of Kuṇḍalinī's ascent through the *cakra*s, which became its dominant paradigm.

Kaula Śaivism is a late manifestation and reformation of the *siddhi*-oriented Śaivism of the Mantramārga, which, "though it accommodates the quest for liberation, is essentially concerned with the quest for supernatural experience."[7] This 'supernatural experience' takes the form of both the attainment of *siddhi*s and the enjoyment of otherworldly pleasures (*bhoga*).[8]

In its earliest manifestations, *haṭhayoga* was the preserve of the *mumukṣu*, the seeker of liberation (*mokṣa*), rather than the *bubhukṣu*, the seeker of enjoyment (*bhoga*). After its appropriation by various Kaula traditions, *haṭhayoga* incorporated their subtle physiology but did away with their complex and exclusive *bhoga*-oriented systems of initiation, mantras and *maṇḍala*s, together with the direct quest for *siddhi*s. Texts on *haṭhayoga* from the period of its appropriation by the heirs of the Kaulas betray a heightened preoccupation with *siddhi*s but this is absent in its subsequent classical reformation in texts such as the fifteenth-century *Haṭhapradīpikā* and the seventeenth-century *Haṭharatnāvalī*.

Intentional and Unintentional *Siddhis*

Only two texts in the corpus of Sanskrit works on early *haṭhayoga*, the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* and the *Yogabīja*, voice explicitly the understanding of *siddhi*s which is implicit throughout most of the corpus. In the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* the many powerful *siddhi*s which arise in the second of *haṭhayoga's* four *avasthā*s or 'stages', the *ghaṭāvasthā*, are said to be obstacles to *mahāsiddhi*, 'the great *siddhi*', and the wise yogi is instructed not to delight in his powers, nor to show them to anyone else. He should behave like a fool in order to keep his powers hidden; if not he will attract a large number of disciples, busy with whom he will neglect his practice and become absorbed in worldly concerns.[9] The *Yogabīja* distinguishes between two types of *siddhi*:

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[7] Alexis Sanderson, "Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions," in *The World's Religions*, ed. S. Sutherland, L. Houlden, P. Clarke and F. Hardy (London: Routledge, 1988), 660–704, 667.

[8] *Ibid*., 664.

[9] This is a paraphrase of *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* 193-197. The exact same sentiment was expressed to me by a Dasnāmī Nāgā Saṃnyāsī of the Jūnā Akhāṛā in 2006 when I asked him in the course of an interview at his *kuṭiyā* in Chauntra, Kangra District,

kalpitā and *akalpitā*, 'intentional' and 'unintentional'. Intentional *siddhi*s are sought deliberately and are achieved by means of alchemy, herbs, mantras, the body and so forth. They are impermanent and of little potency. The same *siddhi*s occur spontaneously, but unintentionally, in the master yogi, in which case they are permanent and very powerful. These spontaneous *siddhi*s have no purpose; they simply signify one who has mastered yoga and are signs on the path to *mokṣa* like the many *tīrtha*s seen by pilgrims on the way to Kāśī. One can identify a perfected master, liberated while living, by the attainment of such *siddhi*s.[10]

The attitude towards *siddhi*s made clear in the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* reflects that found in the *Yogasūtra*, namely that *siddhi*s are obstacles to the goal of yoga practice.[11] In the *Yogasūtra*, however, explicit instructions are given on how to achieve the various *siddhi*s. If the yogi wants divine hearing, for example, he should practice *saṃyama* on the relationship between hearing and the ether (3.41). Intentional *siddhi*s of this sort are not taught in mainstream haṭhayogic texts.[12]

The lack of importance given to *siddhi*s in the majority of the texts of *haṭhayoga* results in their *akalpitā* variety not always being distinguished from trivial or even undesirable by-products of practice, particularly in its early stages. Thus at *Amaraughaśāsana* 9.2, Kuṇḍalinī's ascent of the central channel is said to bring about trembling and fainting as well as the ability to attract and see distant objects. In the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*, the perfection of unassisted breath retention (*kevala kumbhaka*) means that nothing in the three worlds is difficult to attain. Increasing durations of its practice result in, in sequence, sweating, trembling, jumping about like a frog (*dardurī*), leaving the

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Himachal Pradesh, whether he thought it was possible for yogis to fly. This part of the interview can be seen at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5jWGRn3t8c. The yogis of the Jūnā Akhāṛā, whose *iṣṭadevatā* is Dattātreya, are direct heirs of the yoga tradition of the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*.

[10] This is a paraphrase of *Yogabīja* 173c-182d. For descriptions of *akalpitā siddhi*s achieved in the course of the practice of *haṭhayoga*, see e.g. *Yogabīja* 164a-170b, *Khecarīvidyā* 2.106a-110b, *Amaraughaśāsana* 10.33-37, *Jñāneśvarī* 6.259-270, 6.296-298.

[11] *Yogasūtra* 3.37: *te samādhau upasargā vyutthāne siddhayaḥ* |. See Hara 1999 on similarly anti-*siddhi* stances taken by the Buddha and Pāśupatas.

[12] One exception to this is the practice of the elemental *dhāraṇā*s, in which concentration on an element leads to its conquest and concomitant *siddhi*s (see e.g. *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* 221-242, *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* 132-140 [= Nowotny, *Gorakṣaśataka* 153-161]). These *dhāraṇā*s are stages in a type of *layayoga* in which the elements and other *tattva*s are sequentially resorbed into the supreme element.

ground,[13] indifference to eating a lot or a little, diminished excretions and sleep, the absence of worms, slobber, sweat and bad odors in the body, strength, power over terrestrial animals (*bhūcarasiddhi*) and, finally, becoming as handsome as the god of love.[14] The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* says that there are three levels of *prāṇāyāma*, low, middle and high, resulting respectively in the body becoming hot, trembling and rising upwards (86-87 (= Nowotny *Gorakṣaśataka* 107)).

Identifying what constitutes a haṭhayogic *siddhi* is made more difficult by the ambiguity of the word *siddhi* itself, which in haṭhayogic works is more often used to mean 'success' than 'supernatural power'. *Śivasaṃhitā* 3.19-20, for example, teaches the seven signs of *siddhi*. In haṭhayogic works the eight classical *siddhi*s[15] are called *guṇa*s, not *siddhi*s.[16] Thus, apart from those few instances where *siddhi*s are explicitly identified, there are no criteria by which to draw a line between the relatively mundane benefits of yogic practice (e.g. increased digestive fire)[17] and those that are more impressive (e.g. the ability to eat nothing or huge amounts of food with equal indifference).[18] Rather than attempt either to define a haṭhayogic *siddhi* or to give a comprehensive enumeration and typology of the benefits of yogic practice as described in all the texts of early *haṭhayoga* (which would be prohibitively long and for the most part unenlightening), I shall examine their treatment in just two works of the corpus, the *Amṛtasiddhi* and the *Śivasaṃhitā*. Not only will this give an overview of the types of *sid-*

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[13] 'Leaving the ground' (*bhūmityāga*) is not necessarily beneficial, or even fun. Lāl Jī Bhāī, a yogi I met in Rishikesh in 1997, reported that often when meditating while practicing *khecarīmudrā* he would involuntarily fly across the room, which would occasionally result in his *jaṭā* becoming caught in his fan.

[14] *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* 146-165. This final side-effect, becoming as handsome as the god of love, has the deleterious result of women lusting after the yogi; he must carefully guard against wasting his *bindu*.

[15] *Yogasūtrabhāṣya ad* 3.45.

[16] *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* 245, 254; *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* 129, 155 (= Nowotny *Gorakṣaśataka* 150, 178); *Khecarīvidyā* 2.109, 3.6; *Amaraughaprabodha* 43; *Śivasaṃhitā* 3.90, 4.108, 5.57, 5.106, 5.179, 5.207; *Haṭhapradīpikā* 3.126. In the *śaivāgama* too *guṇa* is the preferred name for the eight classical powers. See e.g. *Netratantra* 1.29, 18.103 and *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 5.31 (and *passim*). At two instances in the *Haṭhapradīpikā* and one in the *Śivasaṃhitā* the eight classical *siddhi*s are called *aiśvarya*s (*Haṭhapradīpikā* 3.7, 3.126, *Śivasaṃhitā* 3.58; cf. *Yogasūtrabhāṣya ad* 3.26). In the *Amanaskayoga* (1.67, 2.8) and *Matsyendrasaṃhitā* (8.60, 8.65, 21.4), two texts which do not teach *haṭhayoga* but which are closely related to the *haṭhayoga* tradition, the eight powers of *aṇimā* and so forth are called *siddhi*s.

[17] *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* 135.

[18] *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* 157.

dhi associated with the practice of *haṭhayoga*, but it will also demonstrate the two opposing attitudes towards *siddhi* evinced by the corpus. The *Amṛtasiddhi* is almost certainly the oldest text on *haṭhayoga*, dating to the twelfth or perhaps eleventh century CE, and it is exemplary of the attitude towards *siddhi*s of the *mumukṣu*, the seeker of liberation. The *Śivasaṃhitā*, which can be dated to the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, is one of the youngest texts in the corpus and teaches *haṭhayoga* for the *bubhukṣu*, the seeker of supernatural experience.

Siddhi in the *Amṛtasiddhi*

The sectarian origins of the *Amṛtasiddhi* are unclear. In its colophons it is ascribed to either Mādhavacandra or Avadhūtacandra and is said to represent the teachings of Virūpākṣa. Although it has been claimed that this means that the text was produced by the Nātha *saṃpradāya* on the grounds that Virūpākṣa was a 'Nātha Siddha',[19] this is unlikely, not least because the text predates the appearance of a Nātha *saṃpradāya* by several centuries[20] and possibly also the life of its alleged founder, Gorakṣa.[21] External evidence suggest that the *Amṛtasiddhi* may have been produced by forerunners of the Dasnāmī Saṃnyāsīs.[22]

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[19] Kurtis R. Schaeffer, "The Attainment of Immortality: from Nāthas in India to Buddhists in Tibet," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 30 (2002): 515-533. I enclose the phrase 'Nātha Siddha' within quotation marks because it is not to be found in premodern Indic literature.

[20] The earliest example that I have found of the word 'Nātha' being used to describe a *saṃpradāya* of yogis is in a manuscript from Jodhpur of a text called the *Ādeśapadavyākhyā*. The manuscript appears to have been written in the early part of the nineteenth century, when the Nāthas had a brief period of influence over the Jodhpur court. The c.1700 *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* mentions *nātha* as one of five yogi lineages (5.43). The earliest reference to yogis being divided into twelve *panth*s, an important (if only nominal) feature of Nātha identity to this day, is in a *vār* written by Bhāī Gurdās in 1604 (*Vāraṅ Bhāī Gurdās* 8.13).

[21] The earliest datable reference to Gorakṣa is in the *Amṛtakaṇikodyotanibandha*, a sub-commentary on the *Āryamañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* (p. 202, l.18) of Vibhūticandra, who flourished in the first half of the thirteenth century (Stearns 1996). I am grateful to Professor Harunaga Isaacson for drawing my attention to this reference.

[22] Śiva as Virūpākṣa was the tutelary deity of the first rulers of Vijayānagara, who in the fourteenth century patronised an *advaita maṭha* at Śṛṅgeri which later became one of the first Dasnāmī Saṃnyāsī monastic institutions. The Vijayānagara monarchs had earlier had Kālāmukha gurus who may have introduced them to the cult of Virūpākṣa. (Matthew Clark, *The Daśanāmī-Saṃnyāsīs: The Integration of Ascetic Lineages into an Order* [Leiden: Brill, 2006], 198). 19 verses from the *Amṛtasiddhi* are

The *Amṛtasiddhi's* yoga involves mastering the breath, raising it upwards through three *granthi*s, uniting *bindu* and *rajas* (the male and female physical essences) and accessing the *amṛta*, the nectar of immortality, in the head. The yogi thus becomes liberated while living (*jīvanmukta*) and can live for as long as he wants, until he decides to exit his body through the 'Gateway of Brahmā' (*brahmadvāra*) and go to final liberation (*mahāmukti*). The *Amṛtasiddhi* makes no mention of Kuṇḍalinī nor of *cakra*s.

The *siddhi*s in the *Amṛtasiddhi* are very much of the *akalpitā* variety described in the *Yogabīja*: they are signposts on the way to *mahāsiddhi*. In what follows, I shall describe the various benefits and powers that arise in the course of the practice of the Amṛtasiddhi's yoga. The basis of the *Amṛtasiddhi*'s yoga is the three practices called *mahāmudrā*, *mahābandha* and *mahāvedha*, and it is the first text to teach these important haṭhayogic techniques. *Mahāmudrā* gets rid of impurities, nourishes the *nāḍī*s, steadies *bindu* and *nāda*, and kindles the digestive fire (11.6). No subsidiary benefits are said to result from the practice of *mahābandha*, which reverses the natural downwards flow of the *nāḍī*s (12.8), nor from *mahāvedha*, which brings about the breath's piercing of the three knots and the opening of the Gateway of Brahmā. Knowledge of this triad of practices brings knowledge of the three worlds. The yogi becomes an omnipotent and omnipresent god and has the ability and entitlement to do what he wants (13.10-15).

There are four stages (*avasthā*s) on the yogi's path: *ārambha, ghaṭa, paricaya* and *niṣpatti*. When the yogi is established in his practice, but before he reaches the first stage, physical signs of progress start to appear as a result of the increasing mastery of the breath: the constituents of his body (*dhātu*s) increase, he does not suffer disease and his body becomes firm and strong (*viveka* 14).

Once established in the *ārambhāvasthā*, the yogi hears various 'unstruck' (*anāhata*) sounds, his body shines, he develops great digestive fire and strength, and a fine intellect, and he becomes completely beautiful and fragrant (*viveka* 19). In the *ghaṭāvasthā*, his posture (*āsana*) becomes firm, knowledge (*jñāna*) arises, he becomes like a god, he is physically powerful, he knows the truth (*tattva*), he knows what is to be done (*vidhi*), indeed he knows everything; he behaves auspiciously, he is endowed with all auspicious signs and he is free

found in the *Śivasaṃhitā*, suggesting a link with the latter's Saṃnyāsī tradition (on which see p. 333).

from all faults; he hears the sound of a kettledrum (*viveka* 20). On attaining the *paricayāvasthā*, the yogi's body becomes perfected. This results in his becoming indifferent to hot and cold, and free from fear, desire, greed, disease, old age, pain and sorrow (*viveka* 24). An auspicious sound arises, which is a sign that success (*siddhi*) is near at hand (*viveka* 25). As a result of the mastery of the breath achieved in the *paricayāvasthā*, external powers (*bāhyasiddhi*s) of a more supernatural nature arise: the yogi can transport his own body and gain entry to someone else's city, and he can see and hear distant objects (*viveka* 28). He attains omniscience (*viveka* 29). In the final stage, *niṣpattyavasthā*, when the breath pierces the knot of Rudra (*rudragranthi*) the sound of a large kettledrum is heard. *Mahāsiddhi* arises, which bestows *jīvanmukti*, liberation while living. All-knowing and all-seeing, his hearing, sight, bliss and knowledge are unimpeded. He is endowed with all powers (these are variously called *aiśvarya*s, *guṇa*s and *siddhi*s). He cannot be burnt, drowned or harmed. Happy, he can create worlds, angry he can destroy them. He frightens the gods. Such *siddha* yogis can remain thus for hundreds of thousands of years (*viveka* 31). When finally he leaves his body by way of the 'Gateway of Brahmā' (*brahmadvāra*), the sweet sound of a *vīṇā* is heard (*viveka* 33).

SIDDHI *IN THE* ŚIVASAṂHITĀ

In contrast to the difficulty of locating the *Amṛtasiddhi* within a specific tradition, internal and external evidence points to the *Śivasaṃhitā* being the product of the orthodox tradition of the Śaṅkarācāryas of Kanchi and Shringeri, a tradition which came to be incorporated within the Daśanāmī Saṃnyāsī *saṃpradāya*.[23]

[23] The *Śivasaṃhitā* includes teachings influenced by both *advaita* Vedānta and Śrīvidyā, the latter a purified form of Southern Transmission Kaula Śaivism. These two traditions formed the doctrinal basis of the Śṛṅgerī *maṭha*. The *Śivasaṃhitā* also borrows from and extensively paraphrases the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*, a text which is the product of a tradition of Vaiṣṇava yogis later incorporated within the Daśanāmī *saṃpradāya*. The *Śivasaṃhitā* does not, however, borrow significantly from texts such as the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* and *Gorakṣaśataka*, which came to be associated with the Nātha *saṃpradāya*.

Siddhi is first mentioned in the third *paṭala* of the *Śivasaṃhitā* in verses redolent of the *Amṛtasiddhi*.[24] Purification of the *nāḍī*s, which is the result of assisted breath retention (*sahita kumbhaka*), gives the yogi a balanced body, a good smell and a good complexion, and makes him a receptacle for the nectar of the gods. He thus attains the first stage of yoga, the *ārambhāvasthā* (3.29-30). In the second stage, the *ghaṭāvasthā*, the yogi has a strong digestive fire, eats well, is happy, has a beautiful body, is big-hearted and has great willpower and strength (3.33).

Interpolated in the description of the four *avasthā*s is a passage on the things to be avoided or cultivated while practicing yoga (3.34a-44b), followed by a passage on breath retention (*kumbhaka*) which is a reworking of a similar passage in the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*.[25] In the course of his mastering unassisted breath retention (*kevala kumbhaka*),[26] the yogi first sweats, then trembles, then jumps about like a frog and finally moves about in the sky. When the yogi leaves the ground, he is known to have achieved mastery (*siddhi*) of the wind/breath (3.46-48). The yogi should observe the rules of yoga until his sleep, feces and urine diminish. He is freed from disease and unhappiness. Sweat, slobber and worms, and imbalances of the three humors do not arise in his body. He can eat as much or as little as he likes. He obtains *bhūcarīsiddhi*.[27] Then, by means of *prāṇāyāma*, he destroys his past karma, attains the eight classical *siddhi*s and becomes the lord of the three worlds (3.58). Once he can hold his breath for three *ghaṭikā*s (72 minutes), he is sure to achieve complete success (*sakalā siddhi*) (3.59). This includes mastery of speech, the ability to go where he wants, long-distance vision and hearing, subtle sight and the powers of entering another's body, producing gold by smearing objects with his feces and urine, making things invisible and moving through space (3.60-61).

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[24] The *Śivasaṃhitā* directly borrows 19 verses from the *Amṛtasiddhi*. None is in the *Śivasaṃhitā*'s third *paṭala* but the latter's teachings on the four *avasthā*s of yoga are derivative of those found in the *Amṛtasiddhi*.

[25] Compare *Śivasaṃhitā* 3.44c-52 with *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* 143-162 (the *editio princeps* of the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* is numbered by half-verses).

[26] Assisted breath retention (*sahita kumbhaka*) involves particular methods of inhalation and exhalation, and holding the breath for specified lengths of time. Unassisted breath retention (*kevala kumbhaka*) has no such strictures and can be performed comfortably for as long as the yogi wishes.

[27] The ability to move like animals which are hard to catch when one claps one's hands (3.52).

When, in the course of his progress from the *ghaṭāvasthā* to the *paricayāvasthā*, the yogi develops the ability to hold his breath for three hours, he can then perform *pratyāhāra* and achieve mastery over his sense organs (3.64-65). Through further breath retention[28] the yogi can support himself on one thumb. Once he has reached the *paricayāvasthā* the yogi can practice the five elemental *dhāraṇā*s on five locations in the body. He thus gains the *siddhi*s of earth and the other elements and does not die even in a hundred deaths of Brahmā (3.72-75). In the course of his practice the yogi finally attains the *niṣpattyavasthā*, thereby breaking free of karma and drinking the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*). He can enter *samādhi* at will (3.76-77).

This passage on the four *avasthā*s is followed by one describing various ways of inhaling air and, by means of an unnamed *khecarīmudrā*, drinking the liquid from the moon (3.80-95). These result in the yogi defeating disease, fatigue, old age and death, obtaining the powers of long-distance hearing and sight, becoming Bhairava, obtaining the eight classical *siddhi*s, conquering the elements, becoming a second god of love, becoming neither hungry nor thirsty, neither sleeping nor fainting, being able to move where he wishes, not being reborn and enjoying himself in the company of the gods.

Four *āsana*s are taught next. They are somewhat easier methods of obtaining *siddhi* than the extended *prāṇāyāma*s already taught: *siddhāsana* brings about the *niṣpattyavasthā* and the yogi can use it to reach his ultimate destination (3.99); *padmāsana* gets rid of all diseases (3.105) and by correctly inhaling while sitting in *padmāsana*, the yogi becomes liberated (3.107); *paścimottānāsana* removes fatigue and kindles the digestive fire (3.109) and those who practice it attain complete success (*sarvasiddhi*); *svastikāsana* prevents disease and grants mastery of the wind.

The *Śivasaṃhitā's* fourth *paṭala* teaches haṭhayogic *mudrā*s. *Yonimudrā* (4.2-19) grants the powers of cheating and conquering death (*kālavañcana* and *mṛtyuṃjaya*), mastery of speech and the ability to go where one wants. In the description of the *mahāmudrā* which follows (4.25-36), three and a half verses from the *Amṛtasiddhi's* description of *mahāmudrā* are incorporated, including, at 4.32, the *Amṛtasiddhi's* description of the *siddhi*s which arise from its practice (on which see above). To these are added perfect physical beauty, the

[28] I.e. for a duration of eight *daṇḍa*s (3.67). The length of a *daṇḍa* is unclear.

destruction of old age and death, the achievement of desired goals, happiness and the conquest of the senses (4.33). Next is *mahābandha* (4.37-42). This passage incorporates one verse from the *Amṛtasiddhi*, in which the mechanics of the practice are taught. Unlike the *Amṛtasiddhi*, however, the *Śivasaṃhitā* includes verses describing the benefits of the practice (4.41-42): it nourishes the body, makes the skeleton strong, fills the yogi's heart and allows him to achieve all that he wants. The practical details of the *mahāvedha* of the *Śivasaṃhitā* are somewhat different from those of the *Amṛtasiddhi*'s, but like that of the latter it is said to enable the yogi to use the breath to pierce the knots in the central channel and open the Gateway of Brahmā. In both the *Amṛtasiddhi* and the *Śivasaṃhitā*, the gods situated along the central channel are said to tremble thanks to the rising wind; the *Śivasaṃhitā* adds (4.46) that Kuṇḍalinī comes to rest at Kailāsa. The *Śivasaṃhitā* further adds that the yogi thereby achieves the *siddhi* of wind, which gets rid of old age and death, and that by regular practice of *mahāvedha*, *mahāmudrā* and *mahābandha* he is sure to conquer death within six months (4.48). *Khecarīmudrā* (4.51-4.59) brings about perfection of the body (*vigrahasiddhi*), enables the yogi to enjoy divine delights before being born in a good family and to reach the ultimate destination. *Jālandharabandha* (4.60-4.63), by diverting the nectar of immortality from the fire at the navel, makes the yogi immortal. *Mūlabandha* (4.64-68) destroys old age and death, and enables the yogi to conquer the wind, thereby rising up from the earth. By means of *viprarītakaraṇī* (4.69-71) the yogi conquers death. *Uḍyānabandha* destroys sorrows, brings mastery of the wind, perfection of the body and elimination of disease. *Vajrolīmudrā* and its variants *amarolī* and *sahajolī* (4.78-4.104) enable the yogi to achieve *mokṣa* even if he indulges his senses, in particular by having sex. *Śakticālana* (4.105-110) destroys diseases, brings perfection of the body, bestows the eight classical *siddhi*s and removes the fear of death. In concluding the chapter on *mudrā*s, it is said that each of them, when mastered, bestows *siddhi* (4.111).

The *Śivasaṃhitā's* fifth and final *paṭala* teaches practices which are more subtle than the haṭhayogic techniques taught in the third and fourth *paṭala*s. At 5.36-46 the yogi is instructed to use his fingers to block his ears, eyes, nostrils and mouth and then listen to the internal sounds. A progression of sounds arises, absorption in which results in *laya*. 5.53-59 teaches an obscure practice which involves pressing the

two *vijñāna nāḍī*s,[29] resulting in mastery of the breath, the destruction of sins, the eight classical *siddhi*s and the ability to wander freely about the three worlds. There follow visualizations based in part on some of the *saṃyama*s taught in the *Yogasūtra*'s *vibhūtipāda* and which are similarly said to result in various *siddhi*s. Concentration on the adam's apple, for example, is said to get rid of hunger and thirst (5.60-71; cf. *Yogasūtra* 3.30).

At 5.77-207, there is a long and detailed description of various locations in the subtle body, including the seven lotuses, complete with associated *bījamantra*s, colors, deities and *siddha*s. Meditation on these, which is said to be *rājayoga*, results in a plethora of *siddhi*s. To give just one example, meditation on the *mūlādhāra* lotus results in the ability to leave the ground like a frog (*dardurīsiddhi*), a very beautiful body, increased digestive fire, good health, sharp faculties, knowledge of the past and future, knowledge of all speech and of all sacred texts and their secret doctrines, the goddess of speech dancing in the yogi's mouth, *mantrasiddhi*, the immediate destruction of all sins, the attainment of whatever is wanted and, eventually, complete (*sakalā*) *siddhi* (5.87-101). And that is just the first lotus. Finally, at 5.232-252, *mantrayoga* is taught. By means of increasing numbers of repetitions of a three-syllabled mantra (from 100,00 to 10,000,000), together with ritual fire-offerings, the yogi summons the goddess Tripurabhairavī and attains another bewildering array of *siddhi*s, including the subjugation of all beings, mortal and divine, and culminating in the attainment of the state of Śiva.

There is thus a marked difference between the treatment of *siddhi* in the *Amṛtasiddhi* and its treatment in the *Śivasaṃhitā*. The goal of the *Amṛtasiddhi* is the great *siddhi*, liberation, and the lesser *siddhi*s which arrive along the way are signs of mastery of yoga's techniques and progress through its stages. The attitude towards *siddhi*s implied by the *Amṛtasiddhi* is akin to that evinced by the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* and *Yogabīja* paraphrased above. The redactor of the *Śivasaṃhitā* incorporated much of the *Amṛtasiddhi* within the text, both by borrowing verses wholesale and paraphrasing them, but added a Kaula slant to the *Amṛtasiddhi*'s treatment of *siddhi*. *Siddhi*s are everywhere in the *Śivasaṃhitā*. Where it borrows from other works on *haṭhayoga*, such as in its descriptions of the four *avasthā*s and three *mudrā*s

[29] The location of these *nāḍī*s is obscure.

taught in the *Amṛtasiddhi*, it adds several extra *siddhi*s, to the extent that it becomes unclear whether they are *kalpitā* or *akalpitā*. In other practices, particularly the typically Kaula visualizations and mantra techniques taught in its fifth *upadeśa*, wildly supernatural *siddhi*s take centre stage. Techniques of obtaining *siddhi*s taught in the *Yogasūtra* are also found in the *Śivasaṃhitā*, but not the *Yogasūtra*'s admonition that *siddhi*s, even though they are signs of awakening, are hindrances to *samādhi*.

The *Śivasaṃhitā's* promotion of *siddhi*s is concomitant with its Kaula *bubhukṣu* heritage. The most explicitly Kaula text in the early corpus of haṭhayogic texts, the *Khecarīvidyā*, takes a similar position. At the end of its first *paṭala*, *khecarīmudrā* is said to bestow a wide range of *siddhi*s—in fact it is said to bestow all the *siddhi*s that exist in the three worlds—including ones not mentioned elsewhere in the haṭhayogic corpus but common in Kaula works (where they are usually *kalpitā*, 'intentional') such as finding buried treasure, entering subterranean realms, controlling the earth, mastering alchemy,[30] winning power over male and female genies, and procuring magical sandals, swords and elixirs.[31] In the second *paṭala*, accessing the different stores of *amṛta* in the body is said to make the whole gamut of *siddhi*s available to the yogi.[32] In the *Khecarīvidyā's* fourth *paṭala* various herbal preparations are said to bestow various physical benefits, in particular rejuvenation.

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[30] *Pace* David Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) who argues (p. 10) that "if they were not one and the same people, [*haṭhayogi*s and alchemists] were at least closely linked in their practice", the *Khecarīvidyā*'s assertion that *khecarīmudrā* can give the yogi the *siddhi* of alchemy suggests that the practitioners of *haṭhayoga* and alchemy were quite distinct. This is also implied by the *Khecarīvidyā*'s deliberate trumping of alchemical practice with its technique of *aṅgamardana* (*Khecarīvidyā* 2.72-79, on which see Mallinson, *The Khecarīvidyā of Ādinātha*, 220 n.328). Other works also teach that the techniques of *haṭhayoga* can bestow alchemical *siddhi*. In both the *Śivasaṃhitā* (3.61) and *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* (197) it is said that the yogi in the *ghaṭāvasthā* can turn objects into gold by smearing them with his faeces and urine. *Śivasaṃhitā* 5.112 teaches that meditation on the Maṇipūra lotus gives the power to create gold. In the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*, alchemy is said to be one of the obstacles to success in the practice of yoga (103).

[31] *Khecarīvidyā* 1.65-77. The Kaula *siddhi*s are listed at 1.68 and 1.75c-1.76b; see the notes *ad loc*. for parallels in Kaula works, including the *Matsyendrasaṃhitā*.

[32] *Khecarīvidyā* 2.1-69.

Siddhi in Classical *Haṭhayoga*

The *Haṭhapradīpikā* is a compilation of earlier works on *haṭha* and other methods of yoga whose teachings are synthesised into a new classical *haṭhayoga* consisting of four types of practice: *āsana*, *kumbhaka*, *mudrā* and *nādānusandhāna* (1.56). The *Haṭhapradīpikā* became *haṭhayoga*'s *locus classicus* and its teachings formed the basis of most subsequent texts on the subject. Its combination of verses from various different texts is remarkable for its inclusivity, even if this does lead to some inconsistencies. In spite of its inclusivity, however, the *Haṭhapradīpikā* represents a successful attempt to appropriate *haṭhayoga* by a *siddha* tradition which traced its lineage through Kaula teachers such as Matsyendra and Gorakṣa, and which was, at the time of the *Haṭhapradīpikā*'s composition, starting to coalesce into the order which would several centuries later become known as that of the Nāthas. It is striking that the *Haṭhapradīpikā*, despite borrowing over 40 verses from texts associated with orders of yogis that were, at the time of its composition, beginning to coalesce into the Daśanāmī and Rāmānandī *saṃpradāya*s, makes no mention of their legendary teachers, in particular Dattātreya, from whose *yogaśāstra* the *Haṭhapradīpikā* borrows 20 verses.[33]

The haṭhayogic tradition represented by the *Amṛtasiddhi* and *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* is likely, at least on textual evidence, to predate that linked with Matsyendra and Gorakṣa. The former teaches a yoga that uses the breath to raise *bindu* upwards along the central channel, piercing three knots along the way. The latter superimposes Kuṇḍalinī and the *cakra*s or *padma*s onto this system.[34] This superimposition results in some problems. The aim of the *bindu*-oriented yoga is to keep *bindu* in the head; the Kuṇḍalinī-based systems want to flood the body with *amṛta*, *bindu*'s analogue. The primacy of the *bindu* paradigm can be inferred from its being found in the systems of yoga taught in the *Amṛtasiddhi* and *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* in which Kuṇḍa-

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[33] Kapila, who is the first *siddha* to be associated with *haṭhayoga* (*Dattātreyayogaśāstra* 57) is also not mentioned in the *Haṭhapradīpikā*. Vasiṣṭha is mentioned once, at 1.18, in the context of *āsana*. The rivalry between the yogi followers of Dattātreya and those of Gorakṣa persists in North India. In the Deccan region they were reconciled in the 17th or 18th centuries, a reconciliation legitimized in texts such as the *Gorakṣasiddhāntasaṃgraha* and *Yogisaṃpradāyāviṣkṛti*.

[34] These two paradigms of the practice of *haṭhayoga* are summarized at *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* 4365a-4371b; for a translation and commentary, see Mallinson, *The Khecarīvidyā of Ādinātha*, 28-30.

linī plays no part.[35] Every comprehensive text on *haṭhayoga* which teaches the raising of Kuṇḍalinī also tries, with mixed results, to accommodate *bindu*-oriented yoga.[36]

The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*, perhaps the earliest text to impose the subtle physiology of the Kaula Western Transmission onto the *bindu* system, does not impose its *bubhukṣu* approach to *siddhi*s. The latter is only to be found in works such as the *Khecarīvidyā* and the *Śivasaṃhitā*, which postdate the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* by approximately a century. The *Haṭhapradīpikā*, while incorporating several verses from these later works, reflects the *mumukṣu* attitude towards *siddhi*s. It relegates *siddhi*s to a place of even less importance than that which they hold in the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*. Physical practices such as *āsana*, *kumbhaka* and the *ṣaṭkarma*s have, unsurprisingly, physical benefits as well as benefits which further the yogi's progress towards mokṣa,[37] but supernatural *siddhi*s are rare. A handful are mentioned in the context of the *mudrā*s taught in the third *upadeśa*,[38] but, as in the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*, the more outlandishly supernatural powers found in other tantric and yogic works, such as *bhūcarīsiddhi* or the abilities to fly, to enter someone else's body (*parakāyapraveśana*)[39] or to cast off one's own body at will (*utkrānti*)[40] are nowhere to be found. The aim of the *Haṭhapradīpikā*'s *mudrā*s, which any one of them is able to effect singly, is *mahāsiddhi* (3.124).

The *Haṭhapradīpikā*'s attitude towards *siddhi* is in keeping with *haṭhayoga*'s rejection of the exclusivity, complexity and esotericism of

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[35] Kuṇḍalinī is not mentioned in the *Amṛtasiddhi*; she is mentioned in passing at *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* 213.

[36] There are two texts which present Kuṇḍalinī-based systems of *haṭhayoga* almost entirely free of any mention of *bindu*: the *Khecarīvidyā* and the *Gorakṣaśataka*. The former is among the later texts of the corpus since it mentions the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* (1.14). The latter (on which see James Mallinson, "The Original Gorakṣaśataka," in *Yoga in Practice*, edited by David Gordon White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming 2011), 257-272, can be tentatively dated to 1400 CE but the similarities between its yoga techniques and those of the *Jñāneśvarī* suggest that they were well established by the time of its composition. They might thus represent a Kuṇḍalinī-based *haṭhayoga* tradition independent of the *bindu*-oriented tradition.

[37] E.g. *bhastrikā kumbhaka*'s removal of the knot of phlegm (*kapha*) which blocks the mouth of the *brahmanāḍī* thereby enabling Kuṇḍalinī to pierce the three *granthi*s (*Haṭhapradīpikā* 2.66c-67b = *Gorakṣaśataka* 48).

[38] See *Haṭhapradīpikā* 3.49, 3.94, 3.98.

[39] On *parakāyapraveśana* see Mallinson, *The Khecarīvidyā of Ādinātha*, 237 n.439.

[40] On *utkrānti* see ibid.: 238 n.448.

tantra. Gone are tantra's mantras, maṇḍalas, initiations and visualizations (all methods of attaining *kalpitā siddhi*s in their own right); gone too are the associated *kalpitā siddhi*s.[41]

Conclusion

Like much of its technical vocabulary and soteriological framework, *haṭhayoga* shares its *siddhi*s with other tantric and yogic systems. Except for some of the lesser physical benefits associated with particular physical practices,[42] all the haṭhayogic *siddhi*s can be obtained by other types of yoga.[43] Many of them can also be obtained by the technique of *saṃyama* taught in the *Yogasūtra*'s *vibhūtipāda*. Unlike the latter, however, classical *haṭhayoga* as taught in the *Haṭhapradīpikā* and most of the earlier texts of the haṭhayogic corpus does not prescribe direct means to intentional *siddhi*s; its *siddhi*s arise unintentionally as by-products of techniques which lead to *mahāsiddhi*, the great *siddhi*, namely liberation while living.

Thus, in contrast to what one might expect, the *Haṭhapradīpikā* and the majority of the texts of early *haṭhayoga* are less concerned with the supernatural than the *Yogasūtra* (and many tantric works), since they proscribe intentional striving after *siddhi*s and make no reference to occult *siddhi*s such as *parakāyapraveśana* and *utkrānti* which are taught, or at least mentioned, in the *Yogasūtra* and Kaula-influenced haṭhayogic works such as the *Khecarīvidyā* and *Śivasaṃhitā*.[44]

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[41] Particularly noteworthy is the absence of *cakra*s or *padma*s in the *Haṭhapradīpikā's* subtle physiology, in spite of Kuṇḍalinī's primacy in the text. Perhaps, in his quest for inclusivity, amidst a plethora of different *cakra* systems (the six/seven *padma* system of the Paścimāmnāya was yet to achieve hegemony) Svātmārāma did not want to alienate any groups by prioritising one particular system.

[42] See, for example, the benefits associated with the *kumbhaka*s and *ṣaṭkarma*s taught in the *Haṭhapradīpikā's* second *upadeśa*.

[43] See, for example, the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*, in which the *siddhi*s obtained by means of *mantra*°, *laya*° and *rājayoga* are very similar to those obtained by *haṭhayoga*, or the *Amanaskayoga*, which roundly condemns the practices of *haṭhayoga* (see in particular *Amanaskayoga* 2.31 and 2.42), but whose non-physical yoga is said to achieve a wide range of *siddhi*s similar to those found in haṭhayogic texts.

[44] *Parakāyapraveśana* and *utkrānti* are the results of particular *saṃyama*s taught at *Yogasūtra* 2.38-39. *Parakāyapraveśana* is mentioned as a *siddhi* at *Śivasaṃhitā* 3.60 and 5.111. *Utkrānti* is taught at *Khecarīvidyā* 3.48-53. Intentional *siddhi*s and practices such as *parakāyapraveśana* and *utkrānti* do resurface in later formulations

These Kaula-influenced texts were *bubhukṣu* blips in *haṭhayoga*'s otherwise smooth progress towards becoming the dominant method of *mumukṣu* yoga, as evinced by its orthodox canonization in the Yoga Upaniṣads in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Alternatively, we might view these curious and wonderful works, together with their *mumukṣu* counterparts, as unintentional *siddhi*s manifesting on *haṭhayoga*'s own path to *mahāsiddhi*.

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of *haṭhayoga*: see, for example, *Jogpradīpakā* 797-804 which teaches *parakāyapraveśana*, *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* 2.10-25 which describes the rewards to be obtained from physical practices relating to each of the sixteen *ādhāra*s and *ibid*. 5.38 where *parakāyapraveśana* is included in a list of *siddhi*s.

[45] I am very grateful to M. Christian Bouy for providing me with a copy of this manuscript. This *Gorakṣaśataka* is a different text from that of the same name edited by Nowotny, which I refer to in this paper as the "Nowotny *Gorakṣaśataka*". The latter was originally known as the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*, which is how I refer to it in this paper, and when referring to verses from the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* I cite the verse numbering as found in its oldest manuscript, which was copied in 1477 CE, rather than Nowotny's edition of the *Gorakṣaśataka*, which represents a later recension. On the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* and *Gorakṣaśataka*, see Mallinson, "The Original Gorakṣaśataka," and Mallinson, *The Khecarīvidyā of Ādinātha*, 166 n.9.

[46] See note 45.

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[47] See note 45.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MY MIRACLE TRUMPS YOUR MAGIC: ENCOUNTERS WITH *YOGĪ*S IN SUFI AND *BHAKTI* HAGIOGRAPHICAL LITERATURE

Patton Burchett[1]

This essay analyzes a genre of episodes in Sufi and *bhakti* hagiographical literature involving confrontations and spiritual competitions with *yogī*s. My intention is to draw out a key distinction between the categories of 'miracle' and 'magic' that seems to exist in both the Sufi and *bhakti* traditions. I propose that in examining this miracle/magic distinction and the conceptions of God and appropriate religious behavior linked to it in these hagiographies, we can demonstrate a potential area of Sufi influence on 'the *bhakti* movement' while also providing evidence for a marginalization and 'magicalization' of Tantra which seems to have occurred in parallel with the rise of *bhakti* in early modern north India.

Since the early twentieth century, the history of *bhakti* has generally been told in terms of 'the *bhakti* movement.'[2] As typically conceived, "the *bhakti* movement" was "a transformatory avalanche in terms of devotion and social reform" that began in south India between the sixth and ninth centuries CE with the Śaiva Nāyaṇārs and Vaiṣṇava Āḻvārs and swept its way across the subcontinent and into the north as a single, coherent movement.[3] This relatively recent term

[1] I am indebted to Rachel McDermott, Jon Keune, Allison Busch, and John S. Hawley for their detailed and thoughtful comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this essay.

[2] On the trope of the '*bhakti* movement,' see John S. Hawley, "Introduction: The Bhakti Movement—Says Who?", *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 11, no. 3 (2007): 209-25.

[3] After originating in the Tamil south, *bhakti* is typically described as having made its way northward (often in decayed form) into Karnataka and Andrah, then traveling to Maharashtra and Gujarat, and finally entering into north India and Bengal. Prema Nandakumar,"The Bhakti Movement in South India," in *Theistic Vedānta*, ed. R. Balasubramian (New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilizations, 2003), 794, 857.

and the narrative commonly linked to it are misleading at best in that they posit a rather illusory historical continuity and coherence to the development of *bhakti* while glossing over significant qualitative differences in the form and style of *bhakti* practiced in various regions.[4] In this essay, '*bhakti* movement' does not refer to any such single, coherent, India-wide rise of emotional devotional religion. Rather it is meant to serve as a convenient if imperfect term denoting the historical fact, beginning especially in the sixteenth century, of the development in north India (namely the Gangetic plains, Rajasthan, and the Panjab, but to an extent also including Bengal and west-central India) of a diverse set of communities linked by (a) their emphasis on personal devotion to God (as opposed to ritual or the practice of *tapas*), a devotion infused with a certain emotion often expressed in song;[5] (b) their production of written literature based on the lives and poetry of *bhakti* saints such as Nāmdev, Kabīr, Nānak, Raidās, and Sūrdās, among others; and, (c) their opposition to a form of religiosity most

[4] The narrative of the '*bhakti* movement' and the conceptions of *bhakti* associated with it are especially problematic in that their origins lie in a complex mixture of colonial Christian motivations, Orientalist scholarship, and Indian (Hindu) nationalist projects. As I have noted in another essay, this notion of a single, coherent, and socially-progressive '*bhakti* movement' grew especially "out of the context of early twentieth century Indian nationalist agendas which sought to create a sense of national identity by propagating the notion of a shared pan-Indian *bhakti* religious heritage." Patton Burchett, "*Bhakti* Rhetoric in the Hagiography of 'Untouchable' Saints: Discerning *Bhakti*'s Ambivalence on Caste and Brahminhood," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 13, no. 2 (2009), 115.

[5] It is John Stratton Hawley who has most insightfully and articulately hit on this point. He writes that "The word *bhakti* is usually translated 'devotion' or 'loving devotion,' and indicates a style of religion in which an intense relationship to God and, by extension, to others who share such a relation is paramount. 'Relation' is the proper term, for *bhakti* means devotion not in the sense of cool, measured veneration, but as active participation: the word *bhakti* derives from a Sanskrit root meaning 'to share'"(244). Hawley highlights the importance of "the term *bhajan* (Sanskrit *bhajana*), which is in form the action noun that implies the doing of *bhakti* and which therefore completes the circle between the divine *bhagavān* [God] and the *bhakta*s [devotees] of this world. It is most significant that this [term] … has a distinctly musical connotation, for *bhajan* means devotional song, the act of singing to God. It is in a specifically musical context, then, that the circle of believers comes to be completed, or rather, charged with life. Indeed, the association between *bhakti* and *bhajan* is sometimes so close that it is virtually impossible to distinguish the two. [For Hindus] the act of making contact with God and participating in a divine interaction has something intrinsically to do with the realm of song" (244-45). Hawley, "The Music in Faith and Morality," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 52, no. 2 (1984): 243-62.

clearly represented by the tantric asceticism and magic of the pervasive Nāth *yogīs* of the day. It is this last point about the relationship of Tantra and *bhakti* to which scholars have drawn all too little attention and which I therefore intend to highlight in what follows.

Making a Place for Sufism and Tantra in the History of *Bhakti*

As John Stratton Hawley has pointed out, the idea of 'the *bhakti* movement' is largely a "figment of the north Indian imagination" created in order to demonstrate how the "the striking innovations that made their appearance in the *bhakti* landscape of north India roundabout the sixteenth century were actually continuous with earlier religious formations farther south."[6] Popular elements of 'the *bhakti* movement' narrative, such as the notion of the *catuḥ sampradāya* ('the four sects or traditions'), seem to have been developed by northern *bhakti* communities in order to link themselves to the prestige and authority of earlier, southern, brāhmanic lineages.[7] In nearly all of its features and iterations, 'the *bhakti* movement' has been a story—a version of history—constructed by 'Hindus' (of mostly north Indian provenance), for the benefit of 'Hindus.' For this reason, Islam and Sufism often find themselves occluded from the history of *bhakti* in India. While Sufism has on rare occasion been incorporated into historical narratives of the *bhakti* movement in north India, generally such formulations have been all too simplistic and vague, centering on prob-

[6] John S. Hawley, "The Four Sampradāyas--and Other Foursomes," paper presented at the Tenth International Bhakti Conference, Miercurea Ciuc, Romania, July 21-24, 2009.

[7] While much of 'the *bhakti* movement' narrative we know today took its shape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, certain features, such as the *catuḥ sampradāya*, stretch back to at least the turn of the seventeenth century. The *catuḥ sampradāya* model projects a narrative of *bhakti* originating in the Tamil south, decaying, and then being brought north and revived by the theological and initiatory lineages (all originally established in the south) of Rāmānuja (the Rāmānandīs/Rāmānujīs), Nimbārka (the Nimbārkīs), Madhva (the Caitanyites/Gauḍīyas), and Viṣṇusvāmī (the Vallabhites/Puṣṭi Mārg). At a certain point it seems to have become quite important to many northern *bhakti* communities that they link themselves to the prestige and authority of these earlier, southern, brāhmanic lineages. Yet Hawley writes, interestingly, that "[a]s far as I have been able to determine, there is no evidence that any south-Indian observer of the shape of Vaishnava religion ever perceived these four traditions as a group until very recent times" ("The Four Sampradāyas—and Other Foursomes").

lematic notions of 'conversion' and 'syncretism' and failing to explain in any specific terms how Hindu *bhakti* communities may have drawn on Sufi conceptions and traditions.[8]

In contrast to such trends, the work of Aditya Behl has opened up new vistas for understanding Sufi contributions to the *bhakti* movement. Behl has argued persuasively that Muslim Sufi writing in the three centuries prior to the *bhakti* poet-saints was, in fact, fundamental in shaping the poetic, metrical, and narrative conventions—even the motifs and images—that *bhakti* poets used in their own writings. Providing one illustration of this point, Behl explains that "the great aesthetic and philosophical move that allows the resources of Sanskrit criticism to be used by the *bhakti sampradāya*s"—the reformulation of *sṛṅgāra-rasa* as *bhakti-rasa*—is in fact a move "anticipated by the Ṣūfī poets, who emphasize the central value of *prema-rasa* as the linchpin of their narrative romances" as early as the late fourteenth century.[9] While the *bhakti* saints' vernacular poetry receives all the fanfare, Behl explains that, "The uncomfortable fact is that the first substantial body of devotional and narrative literature in pre-modern Hindi was penned by Muslims."[10]

While Behl's work focuses on the genre of Hindavi Sufi romances,[11] in what follows I hope to contribute to our understanding of the Sufi role in the *bhakti* movement through a focus on the genre of hagiography. As we will see, the hagiographical tradition of Indian Sufis precedes and heavily informs the later *bhakti* hagiographies. As Simon

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[8] Aziz Ahmad, for instance, writes that "In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as Sūfism penetrated into the masses of converts and semi-converts from Hinduism, the Bhakti movements rose as a popular Hindu counter-challenge to the proselytizing pull of Sūfī humanism" (136). He later adds that the Bhakti movement "when in north India it came in contact with Islam, was inspired by its monotheism and stimulated by its challenge, and developed against it a system of self-defence and self-preservation for Hindu spirituality by borrowing Islam's monotheistic egalitarianism" (140). See Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 136-66. For insightful discussions of how and why the models of 'conversion' and 'syncretism' are flawed (and some viable alternatives to these models), see especially Tony Stewart, "In Search of Equivalence: Conceiving Muslim-Hindu Encounter through Translation Theory," *History of Religions* 40, no. 3 (2001): 260-87; and Carl Ernst, "Situating Sufism and Yoga," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 15, no. 1 (2005): 15-43.

[9] Aditya Behl, "Presence and Absence in *Bhakti*: An Afterword," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 11, no. 3 (2007): 321-22.

[10] Ibid., 320-21.

[11] See Aditya Behl and Simon Weightman, "Introduction," in *Madhumālatī: An Indian Sufi Romance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Digby writes, "Vaiṣṇava *bhaktamālas*, Sikh *janamsākhīs* and other *vitae* of non-Muslim men of religion repeat the emphasis and structure of Sufi anecdotes, particularly regarding contests of superiority, magical displays, and a general lack of charity towards opponents and doubters."[12] Bruce Lawrence notes further how the Sufi tradition of hagiographical literature was well-established and flourishing prior to the north Indian *bhakti* movement and was clearly influential in molding the hagiographical writing of early *bhakti* communities. As he explains it, there is one realm in which the *bhakti* movement was "indisputably dependent on, and indebted to, the Sufis: the concept of a hagiographical tradition."[13] While these parallels have been noted by Digby and Lawrence, no scholar has yet taken the time to draw them out or make a sustained argument about their significance. Here I hope to begin that project through a comparative analysis of Sufi and *bhakti* miracle stories.

If the role of Sufism in the historical development of *bhakti* has not been adequately understood, the same can also be said for the role of Tantra, or more specifically, tantric *yogī*s and ascetics, who often seem to have served as a crucial foil for emerging conceptions of *bhakti* self-identity. In order to highlight the crucial roles of both Sufism *and* tantric yoga in the *bhakti* movement, in what follows I build on the work not only of Hawley, Digby, and Behl but also of William Pinch, one of very few scholars to have addressed the presence of an important tension between *bhakta*s and *yogī*s in early modern north India. As Pinch explains, for the *bhakta*s, the yogic pursuit of immortality and power through mystical knowledge or ascetic discipline was greatly mistaken because the only valid spiritual path was that of *bhakti*, "the rapturous and captivating love of God." *Bhakta*s' conflict with tantric *yogī*s was thus "not simply an argument about style. It reflected a profound disagreement about the very nature of God: and whether men could legitimately aspire to be gods. As such, it reflected a deep disagreement about the meaning of religion."[14]

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[12] Simon Digby, "The Sufi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Medieval India," in *Islam et Societe en Asie du Sud: Collection Puruṣārtha 9*, ed. Marc Gaborieau (Paris: EHESS, 1986), 60.

[13] Bruce Lawrence, "The Sant Movement and North Indian Sufis," in *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*, eds. Karine Schomer and W.H. McLeod (Berkeley: Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 1987), 371-72.

[14] William Pinch, *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empires* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 195.

It is this essay's focus on miracle stories, especially those involving competitions with *yogī*s, that will allow me to join together here several trajectories of scholarship— those on *bhakti*, Sufism, and Tantra— that have until now been rather distinct, but which must be connected if we are to better understand the history of *bhakti*. As we will soon see, these miracle narratives prove especially valuable in offering us a window into important Sufi-*bhakti* parallels regarding the designation of a perceived difference between devotional 'religion' and tantric-yogic 'magic.'

The Devotee versus the Tantric *Yogī*: Setting the Stage

One story that illustrates the aforementioned themes particularly well is a popular oral tradition from eastern Rajasthan. The tale begins in early sixteenth century Amber with the Kacchwāhā ruler Mahārāj Pṛthvīrāj (r. 1503-1527), who was initially a devotee and patron of the Nāth Siddhas. He is said to have been a disciple of the Nāth *yogī* Tārānāth, who resided in the hills of Galta just outside present-day Jaipur. According to this oral tradition, one of Pṛthvīrāj's queens, Balan Bāī, was a disciple of a Rāmānandī guru by the name of Kṛṣṇadās Payohārī,[15] but faced constant pressure from the king to abandon her guru and become a disciple of Tārānāth. When Balan Bāī reported this situation to him, Kṛṣṇadās Payohārī immediately made his way to Galta where a confrontation ensued between him and Tārānāth. Using his yogic powers, Tārānāth took the form of a ferocious tiger to attack and frighten Payohārī away. With the tiger about to leap upon him, Payohārī remarked, "What a jackass (*gadhā*)!" and Tārānāth was immediately transformed from a tiger into a donkey. Having sent the defeated donkey off into the forest, Payohārī entered a nearby cave and began to meditate. Searching for his missing guru at Galta, King Pṛthvīrāj came upon Payohārī in his cave and inquired as to the whereabouts of his guru Tārānāth. When Payohārī explained what had happened, the king ordered him to find Tārānāth, bring him back, and reinstate him to his human form. However, once restored to his

[15] According to both Nābhādās's *Bhaktamāl* and Anantdās's *Pīpā-paracaī*, Kṛṣṇadās Payohārī was a disciple of Anantdās (a different and earlier Anantdās than the later author of various *bhakti paracai*s just referred to), who was a disciple of none other than Rāmānand himself. The mysterious figure of Rāmānand is commonly said to have come from the south and initiated the *bhakti* movement in north India, becoming the guru of Kabīr, Ravidās, and Pīpa, among other *bhakti* saints.

human self, Tārānāth immediately told the king, "This Kṛṣṇadās Payohārī is far more powerful than me. From now on, he is your guru. And I too will be his disciple."[16]

Crucial to this story are how and why Payohārī is able to defeat Tārānāth. In many important respects, these two resembled each other—both were ascetics capable of effecting supernormal powers—however, they differed importantly in that one's power issued from God, the result of devotion (*bhakti*) to an ever-present, all-powerful divine, while the other's came from himself, the fruit of tantric *haṭhayoga* and the ascetic practice of *tapas*. As Pinch explains:

> The key difference that separated them was the manner in which they conceived of and related to God. Taranath affected a yoga-tantric asceticism, the sole purpose of which was to cultivate supernormal power within—in effect, to turn himself into a God. Paihari Krishandas, by contrast, only appeared to conjure Taranath's transformation into a jackass. In fact, this was the work of a distant yet ever-present Lord, God as a thing apart, God with an upper-case 'G'—a being who inspired total self-abandonment, and offered a sheltering refuge of love in return.[17]

In other words, this tale depicts the extraordinary acts of Payohārī as 'miracles' from God, while essentially labeling Tārānāth's similar feats as forms of 'magic,' a mode of power issuing forth from one's self, acquired through individual ritual/ascetic action, and thus inherently inferior to that from God. It is exactly this sort of distinction, in both *bhakti* literature and earlier Sufi sources, that I want to analyze in this essay.

Regardless of the historical fact or fiction of the confrontation between Payohārī and Tārānāth, the story reflects a change of genuine historical significance that occurred in early sixteenth century Rajasthan when the *bhakti* community that would come to be known as the Rāmānandīs defeated the Nāth Siddhas at Galta and, whether through debate or physical force, took control of that strategic location. At that same time, Mahārāj Pṛthvīrāj and the Kacchwāhā royal family shifted their patronage and allegiance from Tārānāth and his Nāth *yogī* brethren to Kṛṣṇadās Payohārī and the Rāmānandīs, inau-

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[16] This legend was related to me by several different *sādhū*s during personal visits to Galta in 2007-08. For another version of this popular story, see William Pinch, *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empires* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 18-19.

[17] Pinch, *Warrior Ascetics,* 19.

gurating a period of over 300 years in which the Kacchwāhās would remain closely affiliated with Vaiṣṇava *bhakti*. The Payohārī-Tārānāth episode thus provides evidence for two very important larger trends in north India. First, it demonstrates the emergence of an increasingly close relationship between *bhakti* communities and royal power, a trend in which we see the state allying itself more and more with institutional forms of *bhakti* religiosity. Secondly, and more important for the purposes of this essay, the episode points toward an expanding sphere of *bhakti* religiosity and its historical confrontation with, and gradual social and political marginalization of, the sphere of Tantra and 'magic' represented most prominently by the pervasive Nāth *yogī*s. As Pinch states, "For their part, *bhakti* reformers were adamant in their disdain for yogis who claimed special powers by virtue of their hathayogic and/or tantric prowess. The *bhakti* literature is rife with examples of puffed up yogis who are deflated and sent packing by humble, God-loving sadhus."[18] In the pages to come, we will draw out this point more fully through an examination of miracle narratives in the *bhakti* hagiographies and their Sufi precursors.

Sufis and Nāths: Miracles in the Context of Competition

Interaction between Sufis and local religious practitioners has a long history in India. The first Sufi centers in north India were built in the wake of Ghaznavid rule over the Punjab in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. At the beginning of the thirteenth century the Delhi Sultanate was established and Sufi orders (*silsilas*) began to expand, in the process encouraging and promoting beliefs and practices held in common by Hindus and Muslims.[19] Digby writes that from the thirteenth to early sixteenth century Indian Islam was "permeated by Sufi influence, to the extent that it is almost impossible to find a non-Sufi writer or writer hostile to Sufi thought in the corpus of the surviving literature of the Delhi Sultanate."[20] Indian Sufis' frequent interactions with *yogī*s are well documented. As Satish Chandra states, "[*Yogī*] presence in the gatherings of Sufis was considered quite normal. …

[18] Ibid., 211.

[19] Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India 1200-1800* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2004), 82.

[20] Simon Digby, "Encounters with Jogis in Indian Sufi Hagiography" (unpublished paper presented at the Seminar on Aspects of Religion in South Asia, University of London, January 1970), 2.

[T]heir presence in the *khanqahs* and the *jamaat khanas* added further to the prestige of the Sufis among the Hindu masses."[21] Ram Chandra Shukla has noted, along with a host of other scholars, how many Sufis learned breathing methods and other physical and mental techniques from Indian *yogīs*,[22] and it has often been pointed out that a Nāth treatise on *haṭha-yoga* practices, the *Amṛta-Kunda* (or *Pool of Nectar*) was translated into Arabic and then into Persian as early as the thirteenth century.[23] Indeed, it was especially the Nāths with whom Sufis most often interacted and whose practices—such as breath control techniques and meditations on the *cākra* centers—they most frequently adopted and 'Islamized.'[24]

Not a monolithic order, but rather a confederation of ascetic groups claiming a similar body of Śaiva and Siddha tradition, the Nāth Siddhas (sometimes termed Kānphaṭas or just *Yogīs*/*Jogīs*) seem to have first emerged in the thirteenth century around the founding figure of Gorakhnāth. The Nāths purged earlier Tantric cults of certain erotico-mystical elements and focused on the hydraulic dynamics and alchemical possibilities of the subtle body, an emphasis that maintained traditional Siddha goals of bodily immortality and this-worldly power.[25] Regarding the Nāths' relationship with Sufism, Carl Ernst remarks:

> When one turns to the historical context for the encounter of Sufism and yoga, it is a curious coincidence that the arrival of Sufis in India took place not long after the Nath or Kanphata *yogīs* became organised, that is by the beginning of the thirteenth century. While ascetic orders certainly had existed in India for many centuries, the Naths appear to

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[21] Satish Chandra, *Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 1996), 136.

[22] Ramchandra Shukla, *Hindī Sāhitya ka Itihās* (Jaipur: Devanagar Prakashan, 2009 [1929]), 63.

[23] On the history of this text, *The Pool of Nectar*, which, in multiple versions and translations, made available to Muslim readers certain practices/teachings associated with the Nāth yogis, see Carl Ernst, "The Islamization of Yoga in the Amrtakunda Translations," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, ser. 3, 13, no. 2 (2003): 199–226.

[24] In an excellent discussion of one instance of the "Islamization" of Nāth tantra-yoga, Shaman Hatley discusses how "Bengal Sufism adapted to itself the basic template of the yogic body as formulated by the Nātha cult and reconfigured it within the parameters of Indo-Islamic thought" (353). See Hatley, "Mapping the Esoteric Body in the Islamic Yoga of Bengal," *History of Religions* 46, no. 4 (2007): 351-68.

[25] For more extensive background on the Nāth Siddhas, see David G. White, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

> have had a remarkable success at this particular time. The Nath *yogī*s did not observe the purity restrictions of Brahminical ritual society, and were free to drop in for meals at Sufi hospices, which in turn were open to any and all visitors. While hardly representative of 'Hindu' culture as a whole, the *yogī*s were perhaps the only Indian religious group with whom Sufis had much in common. This was also an encounter between two movements that shared overlapping interests in psycho-physical techniques of meditation, and which competed to some extent for popular recognition as wonder-workers, healers, and possessors of sanctity.[26]

While Sufis and Nāth *yogī*s interacted and shared much in common, they were also in clear competition with each other. As Shukla explains, in order to win over and spread their influence among the masses, Sufi *pīr*s and *fakīr*s had to confront Siddhas and *yogī*s, as is attested in the numerous Sufi hagiographical stories in which a Sufi saint encounters and defeats a Siddha or *yogī* in a 'miracle battle.'[27] The sheer number of these types of stories indicates an atmosphere of religious competition between *yogī*s and Sufis, for as Nile Green has pointed out, while such stories "are ostensibly demonstrations of the strength of the saintly victor, they are by their very existence in fact testament to insecurity and potential weakness. After all, real power is about the absence of competition. Such narratives therefore flourish most in societies in which different religions co-exist."[28] Richard Davis echoes this view, positing that stories of miracles most often "occur in situations of conflict, where differing systems of belief compete and questions of faith and power are directly at issue. This is when supernatural communications are most needed."[29] Any miracle story thus conveys a message that depends on and elucidates the specific context within which that story was written, giving insight into the contentious religious questions and issues of the day. While miracle stories, broadly construed, certainly existed in India well prior to the Sufi presence and reflected the religious competitions and debates of the time of their writing (e.g., the value of temple ritual, caste, intellectual

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[26] Carl Ernst, "Situating Sufism and Yoga," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 15, no. 1 (2005): 23.

[27] Shukla, *Hindī Sāhitya ka Itihās*, 63.

[28] Nile Green, "Oral Competition Narratives of Muslim and Hindu Saints in the Deccan," *Asian Folklore Studies* 63, no. 2 (2004): 222.

[29] Richard H. Davis, "Introduction: Miracles as Social Acts," in *Images, Miracles, and Authority in Asian Religious Trad*itions, ed. Richard H. Davis (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 6.

knowledge, and mystical absorption, to name a few), the point to keep in mind here is that after the thirteenth century, Indian miracle stories increasingly reflected a heightened tension/conflict between the perspective of devotees (Sufis, and later, *bhakta*s) and that of tantric *yogī*s and ascetics.

Sufi Miracle Stories (I): God-Power Beats Yoga-Power

A fourteenth century example of a miracle contest between a Sufi and a *yogī* appears in what is perhaps the earliest authentic collection of descriptions of Indian Sufi saints,[30] the *Fawā'id al-fuwād* (or *Morals of the Heart*)[31], in which the poet Amir Hasan records the conversations of Shaykh Nizam ud-Din Auliya of Delhi:

> The conversation that occurred on 5 Safar 710/4 July 1310 turned on the topic of levitation. … [Nizam ud-Din] recalled how a Jogi had come to the town of Ucch (in the Panjab) to dispute with Shaykh Safi al-Din Gazaruni. The Jogi challenged the Shakykh to display any powers which he could not equal. To this the Shaykh replied that it was the Jogi who was advancing a claim and he should show his accomplishment first. The Jogi rose from the ground into the air until his head reached the ceiling, and then he came down to the ground in the same fixed position, and then he invited the Shaykh to show his power. The Shaykh turned his gaze towards heaven, and he said: "O Lord! You have given this power to one who is a stranger to You! Bestow upon me this grace!" The Shaykh then rose from his place and flew away towards the *qibla*. From there he flew to the North and then towards the South, and he finally came back to his own palace and sat down. The Jogi was astonished, and, laying his head at the Shaykh's feet, said: "I can do no more than rise straight upwards from the ground and come down in the same way. I cannot go to the right and to the left. You turned whichever way you wished! This is true and from God: my own powers are false."[32]

As this tale indicates, most Muslims took it for granted that *yogī*s could perform extraordinary feats and demonstrate supernatural powers. The issue, however, was the source and level, or quality, of

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[30] S.A.A. Rizvi, "Sufis and Natha Yogis in Mediaeval Northern India (XII to XVI Centuries)," *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* 7, no. 1-2 (1970): 127.

[31] I am grateful to Pasha Mohammad Khan for his generous assistance with the Persian sources referenced in this essay.

[32] Digby, "Encounters with Jogis in Indian Sufi Hagiography," 4-5; Sijzi, *Fawā'id al-fuwād* (Lahore, 1966), 84.

these powers. The crucial line comes at the very end of the story when the *yogī* marks the Sufi's display as 'true' and 'from God' while labeling his own levitation powers as "my own" [i.e., not from God] and 'false.' In Rivzi's translation of this same line, the *yogī* accepts his defeat and says, "Your miracle was possible because of Divine Grace; mine was the result of human efforts."[33] Note that, in contrast to the *yogī*, the Shaykh calls on God to bestow upon him the grace to perform the miraculous feat of flying. Furthermore, the Shaykh's 'levitation' is not only superior to the *yogī*'s, but dramatically so; in this way the miracle reveals the unbounded power that is God. While *yogī*s may obtain powers through their austerities and ascetic practice, they are hard earned and limited, unlike the infinite power of God for which the Sufi is a conduit.[34]

In these hagiographies, the Sufi saints' miracles are typically marked by a specific word, *karāmāt*, used in contradistinction to the term employed to identify the magic powers of the *yogī*s. An example of this occurs in Nizam Yamani's *Laṭā'if-e-Ashrafī*, which tells a story from the late fourteenth century in which Jamal al-Din Rawat, the disciple of Shaykh Ashraf Jahangir, is sent to compete against a *yogī* named Kamal, who is occupying the site where Ashraf Jahangir means to establish a *khanqah*. Jamal al-Din arrives at the site and says to the *yogī*, "We do not think it becoming to give a display of miracles (*karāmāt*). Nevertheless we will give an answer to each of the powers (*istidrāj*) that you display!" Jamal al-Din deals easily with a series of attacks by the *yogī*, including columns of black ants from all directions and an army of tigers. Then, "[w]hen the Jogi had exhausted his tricks, he said: 'Take me to the Shaykh! I will become a believer." The Jogi says the profession of faith before the Shaykh and he and all his 500 disciples become Muslims and burn their religious books.[35] In this

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[33] Rizvi, 126; Hasan al-Sijzi, *Fawā'id al-fuwād* (Buland Shahr, 1855-56), 57-58.

[34] Raziuddin Aquil makes this key point about Sufi miracle tales: "[T]he notion that the miracle stories were later concoctions by the shrewd keepers of the shrines that sought to exploit the credulity of ignorant followers is not at all supported by the sources. On the contrary, the leading Sufis themselves believed that the *auliya* or the friends of God, who had followed the mystic path (*tariqat*) could acquire supernatural faculties." Raziuddin Aquil, "Miracles, Authority and Benevolence: Stories of *Karamat* in Sufi Literature of the Delhi Sultanate," in *Sufi Cults and the Evolution of Medieval Indian Culture*, ed. Anup Taneja (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre and Indian Council of Historical Research, 2003), 129.

[35] Digby, "Encounters with Jogis in Indian Sufi Hagiography," 9-10. Regarding this story, see also Bruce Lawrence, "Early Indo-Muslims Saints and Conversion," in

story, we see the Sufi referring to the feats that he can bring to bear as 'miracles' while he marks the *yogī*'s abilities as mere 'powers.' Both Digby and Rizvi note that in the Sufi contest anecdotes of the Sultanate period, the term most frequently used for the display of powers by *yogī*s is *istidrāj*,[36] while the separate term *karāmāt*, "a beneficence, or special grace," is reserved for the miracles of the Sufi shaykhs.[37] The essential point here about the *karāmāt*—something attributed only to saints and never to *yogī*s—is that it is *not performed by the saint*, but rather *through divine grace*.[38]

If this account does not make the common Islamic distinction between miracle and magic clear enough, it is made explicit by the authoritative North African Sunni scholar, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406). In his best-known work, the *Muqaddimah* (1377), Khaldun explains the difference between the miracle worker, who "is supported in his activity by the spirit of God," and the magician, who "on the other hand, does his work by himself and with the help of his own psychic power, and, under certain conditions, with the support of devils."[39] Khaldun goes on to explain that, "Miracles take place with the support of the spirit of God and the divine powers. Therefore, no piece of sorcery can match them. One may compare the affair of the sorcerers of Pharaoh with Moses and the miracle of the staff. Moses' staff devoured the phantoms the sorcerers produced, and their sorcery completely disappeared as if it had never been."[40] Here Khaldun draws on a long-standing Abrahamic perspective regarding the difference between 'miracle' and 'magic', referring to a story and to conceptions of God and the miraculous shared by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In that story from Exodus 7:8-13, Moses and Aaron confront the sorcerers and magicians of the Pharaoh, and through the power of God, easily overcome them. As we can see from the use of this same story by

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Islam in Asia. Volume 1: South Asia, ed. Yohanan Friedmann (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1984), 116-18.

[36] "Withdrawing or advancing gradually; seeking to remove by degrees; consigning to punishment; an obstinate sinner on whom numerous benefits had been conferred."

[37] Digby, "Encounters with Jogis in Indian Sufi Hagiography," 4; Rizvi, 128.

[38] As Mohammad Ishaq Khan states, "it needs to be emphasized that *karāmāt* is not wholly a supernatural feat performed by the saint, but springs from human action through divine grace." Khan, *Kashmir's Transition to Islam: The Role of Muslim Rishis* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1994), 206.

[39] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, Trans. Franz Rosenthal, Vol. 3 (New York: Bollinger Foundation, 1958), 167.

[40] Ibid., 168.

Augustine of Hippo (354-430) over a thousand years earlier, this miracle/magic distinction is part of an old Abrahamic tradition. In his *City of God*, Augustine commented on the story of Moses and the Pharaoh's sorcerers in trying to establish a clear-cut boundary between Christian miracle-working and gentile magic.[41] As Noel Brann explains:

> Augustine interpreted the miraculous feats of Jesus as springing from a supernatural power of the kind which was also granted to the Hebrew patriarch Moses. Whereas Pharaoh's magicians 'worked the kind of sorceries and incantations to which evil spirits or demons are addicted,' declared Augustine, Moses performed his miracles in a state of holiness 'and helped by the angels.' At a further stage in the providential plan of world history laid down by God, according to Augustine, the miracles of Jesus and of His apostles 'occurred in order to encourage the worship of the one true God and to put a stop to polytheistic practices.' To still any suggestion that they might have anything in common with sorcery, Augustine added that '*they were wrought by simple faith and pious trust, not by spells and incantations inspired by the sacrilegious curiosity of the art of magic*—vulgarly called *goetia* and, more politely, theurgy'. [italics mine][42]

This distinction between magic and miracle, the one being the work of one's own self (or evil demons/spirits), the other being the work of all-powerful God (and/or faith in that God), is then not only an Islamic one, but a larger Abrahmanic conception. Interestingly, as we will see below, it is exactly this distinction that we find present throughout the *bhakti* literature.

On Miracles: Historical and Cultural Context

A very specific genre of stories, that dealing with miracles, occupies center stage in this essay and is deserving of some preliminary comments, especially considering that the category of the 'miracle' is not South Asian in origin and seems to have no exact counterpart in Indian sources prior to the thirteenth century. The word 'miracle' comes from the Latin *mirari* "to wonder at," and *mirus* "wonder-ful." At the most basic level then, a miracle is an event, incident, or action

[41] Noel L. Brann, *Trithemius and Magical Theology: A Chapter in the Controversy Over Occult Studies in Early Modern Europe* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 15.

[42] Ibid.

that inspires wonder. The 'miraculous' has this broad sense of 'evoking wonder' when we use it in everyday expression—the 'miracle on the Hudson,' the 'miracle of birth,' a 'miraculous play' in a basketball or football game. The event described as 'miracle' defies easy explanation and throughout history has usually connoted (even if only by hyperbole) the intervention or assistance of the divine. The word marks an action or occurrence as beyond our ordinary human, worldly capacity to accomplish or understand and as something that therefore must be referred to an alternate, higher realm. Ordinarily, scholars may employ the term 'miracle' in this general sense without any problem; however, in the context of scholarly writing on the wondrous acts so common in religious scriptures, myths, and hagiographies, this term ought to be used with heightened precision. Attention should be given to how this word has, as we saw above, a distinct history in which it has been invested with specific meanings by the Abrahamic religious traditions in order to distinguish a certain brand of extraordinary powers and occurrences ('miracles') from other similar ones ('magic').

In discussing miracles in *bhakti* hagiography or in Indian literature of any kind, it thus becomes critical to note that, in fact, "there are no precise equivalents in Indic languages for the semantic field occupied by the term 'miracle' in the West." While "[s]ome Sanskrit approximations stress the unusual character (*alaukika*) of an event, some emphasize the response of wonder and astonishment (*adbhuta, ascarya, vismaya*) it evokes, and still others might be chosen to point to divine or non-human agencies (*daiva, apauruseya, amanusya*) believed to cause the marvel," none equate to the meaning inherent in Islamic, Christian, and Judaic conceptions of the miracle.[43] In contrast to Abrahamic understandings of the miraculous, Richard Davis explains that, "For the most part, Indians did not seek a single agency to account for all miracles, but rather recognized a multiplicity of possible agents: gods, various categories of semi-divinities, and unusually accomplished humans."[44] As he goes on to say, "Indians considered powers such as those Patañjali [author of the *Yogasūtra*] and his commentators describe to be inhering human capacities theoretically available to all, rather than special gifts from God or other divinities."[45]

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[43] Davis, "Introduction: Miracles as Social Acts," 8.
[44] Ibid., 9.
[45] Ibid., 10.

Even those with a theistic orientation "located this transforming moment of divine favor within a lengthy program of learning, ritual activity, and devotional exercise necessary to ready the novice for grace, and an even more rigorous program after God's power had fallen."[46] In other words, with respect to the meanings historically embedded in the term 'miracle,' it seems that prior to the Sufis and north Indian *bhakta*s, the 'miracles' of Indians were, strictly speaking, not really miracles at all. Thus we can say that the Abrahamic notion of 'miracle' as a category established in contradistinction to 'magic,' as the wondrous act of an all-powerful God wrought through the pious faith of a devotee, seems to be one generally absent in Indian literature prior to Sufi presence in the subcontinent, and one not present in Hindu sources in any significant way until the hagiographies associated with the north Indian *bhakti* movement.[47]

Sufi Miracle Stories (II): The Superfluity of Yogic Powers

Before moving on to the *bhakti* sources, we must note one other important type of miracle story related in the Sufi hagiographical tradition. While in many anecdotes, the Sufi shows his superiority to the *yogī* by performing a miracle from God, perhaps even more commonly, after witnessing the *yogī*'s display of power the Sufi Shaykh responds simply by demonstrating the superfluity of such magic to true religion. In other words, while some stories show that because the

[46] Ibid., 10-11.

[47] Comparison with several medieval Sanskrit 'miracle tales' discussed by Phyllis Granoff seems to confirm this point. In the pre-fifteenth century Sanskrit hagiographical literature she examines, we do see critiques of tantric "black magic" as shameful, but the critiques are purely rhetorical with no apparent substantive content. Furthermore, in these stories we do see supernatural abilities and wondrous events made possible by the power and assistance of gods; however, devotion is rarely their cause and the Abrahamic binary of miracle versus magic never presents itself as it does in the early modern *bhakti* sources. In the few medieval instances where devotion is praised as the force behind a wondrous occurrence, the nature of the devotion and the nature of the miraculous is not placed in contradistinction to tantra/yoga and magic in the same way it is in the Sufi and *bhakti* hagiographies (rather it is contrasted with intellectual knowledge, temple ritual, etc.). See Phyllis Granoff, "Scholars and Wonder-Workers: Some Remarks on the Role of the Supernatural in Philosophical Contests in Vedānta Hagiographies," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 105, no. 3 (1985): 459-67; and Granoff, "Halāyudha's Prism: The Experience of Religion in Medieval Hymns and Stories," in *Gods, Guardians, and Lovers: Temple Sculptures from North India AD 700-1200*, eds. Vishakha Desai and Darielle Mason (New York: The Asia Society Galleries, 1993), 67-92.

Sufis' power comes from God it is always stronger than yogic powers, other stories emphasize that such powers are trivial since devotion and humble submission to God are what really matter.

A particularly revealing episode of this kind occurs in the *Jawāmi' al-kalīm* of Sayyid Muhammad Akbar Husayni, a text recording the conversations of his father, the great Chishti Shaykh Sayyid Muhammad Gesudaraz, after he left Delhi in 1398 in the wake of Timur's invasion. This story relates the Shakyh's refusal of a series of gifts proffered by the Nāth *yogī* Bālgundāī in the year 1400. Showing the kinds of magical gifts and powers popularly attributed to *yogī*s, in the anecdote the visiting *yogī* successively offers the secret of alchemy (*rasāyan*), knowledge to preserve the Shaykh from his enemies, a substance that gives invisibility to its wearer, and a drug for the retention of semen during intercourse. Finally, he offers to make the Shaykh's cot move by itself. Realizing that such yogic gifts can only lead to corruption and away from God, the Shaykh promptly rejects all of them, to which the Nāth responds, "Listen! I have come from far away, and I am being put to shame. You have accepted nothing of mine." The Shaykh replies, "Why are you ashamed? You have told well all that you can do, but why should I stretch forth my hand for what is of no use to me? What is the use of superfluities?" Later, the Shaykh relates a similar encounter with another *yogī* who, after having his gifts denied, said "Why are you turning me away from your door? The whole world is mad about me!" The Shaykh responded, "As God is my Refuge, why should I take a thing which is of no use to me?"[48] The message here is clear: God is the source, the goal, and the refuge—these other powers are not *from* God and not *for* God; they are superfluous.

Another example of this perspective on yogic magic comes from the narrative poem *Shajarat al-Atqiyā* describing an encounter between the Chisti Sufi Amin al-Din A'la (d. 1675) and a Hindu *sannyāsī*. The *saṃnyāsī* presents a philosopher's stone to Amin al-Din after having demonstrated its gold-producing qualities, but Amin al-Din merely throws it into a large reservoir of water. When the *saṃnyāsī* begins weeping for his lost philosophers' stone, Amin smiles and says, " 'Go in the water and find the stone, And if you find it take it.' The *saṃnyāsī* went there and discovered that many philosophers' stones were in the water. Thereupon he became a believer in Amin

[48] Digby, "Encounters with Jogis in Indian Sufi Hagiography," 5-6.

and having said the *kalima* [the Muslim confession of faith] he became his *murīd* [disciple]."[49] This story is mirrored by a nearly identical one in the seventeenth century *Siyar al-aqṭab* in which a *yogī* gives a philosopher's stone—that he had discovered "after a thousand exertions and labors" and fancied as infinitely valuable—to Shaykh Jalal al-Din Kabir al-Auliya (c. fourteenth century), who considers it worthless and promptly throws it into a stream. When the *yogī* goes to retrieve his stone in the stream he finds "thousands upon thousands of philosophers' stones were lying there" and, amazed, asks the Shaykh to teach him how to get beyond such desires, recites the *kalima*, and becomes his disciple.[50]

Foreshadowing the argument to come, we might note here that the *bhakti* hagiographer Mahīpati's eighteenth century *Bhaktavijay* (or *Victory of the Devotees*) tells a strikingly similar story in which the *bhakti* poet-saint Nāmdev takes away the philosopher's stone of a poor man named Parisā Bhāgavat[51] and throws it into the river. This man had achieved great wealth with the stone but now lived a greedy, duplicitous life. For this reason, Nāmdev finds a way to acquire the stone and then promptly throws it into the river. Greatly angered, Parisā Bhāgavat goes to the river to find his stone; however, when he pulls his hands out of the riverbed they are filled with philosopher's stones, prompting him to realize the superiority of Nāmdev's spiritual path—that of *bhakti*—and the superfluity of, and potential corruption in, magic and alchemy.[52] In this *bhakti* story, then, we seem to have evidence of a specific narrative trope borrowed from the earlier Sufi hagiographical tradition. As we will see below, these sorts of shared literary tropes and themes emerge persistently in the tales from the *bhakti* hagiographies, reflecting key attitudes and beliefs held in common by *bhakta*s and Sufis regarding the nature of God and proper religious behavior.

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[49] Richard Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300-1700: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1996 [1978]), 167.

[50] Digby, "Encounters with Jogis in Indian Sufi Hagiography," 12-13.

[51] The Marathi word *parisa* actually means "philosopher's stone."

[52] Christian Novetzke, *Religion and Public Memory: A Cultural History of Saint Namdev in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 66-67. Alchemy is a practice closely associated with the Nāth Siddha tradition. On this subject, see White, *The Alchemical Body (*1996).

Bhakti versus Tantra: A 16th-Century Sufi Perspective

As we shift our attention to miracle stories from the *bhakti* literature of the late sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, it is important that we stay attuned to the historical context of a rising *bhakti* religiosity that found itself coming into conflict with tantric-yogic forms of thought and praxis. Earlier we discussed the oral tradition of the Rāmānandī *bhakta* Kṛṣṇadās Payohārī defeating the Nāth *yogī* Tārānāth at Galta in order to highlight this emerging tension between *bhakti* and tantric yoga in north India in the first half of the sixteenth century. Interestingly, one of our earliest pieces of written evidence for this confrontation actually comes from a Sufi text, Malik Muhammad Jayasi's *Kanhāvat*, completed in 1540. In this unique text—a Sufi telling of the story of Kṛṣṇa—Jayasi (also renowned as the author of the *Padmāvat*) narrates a meeting that occurs in Mathura between Kṛṣṇa and Gorakhnāth, the illustrious medieval Nāth Siddha and supposed historical founder of the Nāth tradition. As Francesca Orsini explains, Gorakhnāth, accompanied by a host of *yogī*s, comes to Mathura "because the fame of bhakti has spread through the whole world and he has heard of Kṛṣṇa as a famous and talented *gyānī* [wise man], but is now disappointed to see him enveloped in *bhoga* [enjoyment]: he should take advantage of the time he has left to become a jogi, so as to acquire an immortal body and the powers that come with it."[53] Kṛṣṇa rejects this advice on various grounds and defends the value of *bhakti*-based *bhoga* in a world manifested for the sake of God's *līlā* (play). "After this debate they decide to fight, but it is a brief and inconclusive fight with an accommodating ending: 'Yoga is best for the *jogi*, and *bhoga* best for the *bhogi*.'"[54] Despite the fact that *bhakti* does not win in this confrontation as clearly as in the Payohārī-Tārānāth episode at Galta, it certainly does not lose, and if anything, Kṛṣṇa—not Gorakhnāth—seems to hold the position of strength in the narrative. Furthermore, what is more important here is the fact that a Muslim author from Awadh would compose a narrative in 1540 in which the most revered figures of *saguṇ bhakti* and tantric yoga openly challenge each other, seemingly illustrating just how clear to

[53] Francesca Orsini, "For a Comparative Literary History: Malik Muhammad Jayasi's Kanhavat (947H/1540)" (unpublished paper), 17.

[54] Ibid., 18.

everyone this confrontation was becoming in the north Indian religious landscape of the time.

Bhakti Miracle Stories (I): Marathi Materials

It is with this *bhakti*-Tantra confrontation in mind that we turn at last to the *bhakti* hagiographical literature, keeping our gaze upon the miracle/magic distinction we saw earlier in the Sufi sources. The *bhakti* literary sources I draw on range in date from the turn of the seventeenth century to the second half of the eighteenth century and come from Rajasthan, the Gangetic plains, the Panjab, and Maharashtra.[55] We begin with Mahīpati (1715-90), the Maharashtrian author of several *bhakti* hagiographical collections.[56] While Mahīpati writes from Maharastra in the mid-late eighteenth century, he seems to have largely recycled stories already in circulation, including many from north India. In fact, Mahīpati relies considerably on Nābhādās's circa 1600 *Bhaktamāl* (*Garland of the Devotees*) and explicitly cites that foundational hagiographic text, written in Rajasthan, as a model for his own. Jon Keune and Christian Novetzke both remark that Mahīpati seems to have made a conscious effort to affiliate Maharashtrian *bhakti* with north India in order to enhance the Marathi *bhakta*s' legitimacy and prestige.[57]

In his *Bhaktavijaya* (1762), Mahīpati relays this story about Nāmdev, the great *bhakti* poet-saint, and Jñāndev (or Dnyāndev), who was a Nāth *yogī* as well as the author of the *Jñāneśvarī* (a vernacular verse commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*). Nāmdev and Jñāndev

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[55] The examples I present do not proceed chronologically, but this is of no real import as all post-date the Sufi literature we have discussed and all fall in a nearly two hundred year period (c. 1600-1775) that saw the explosive growth of *bhakti* communities across north India, western-central India, and Bengal.

[56] For more information on Mahīpati and his first hagiographical work, the *Bhaktavijay*, see: Jon Keune, "Gathering the Bhaktas in Marāṭhī," *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies* 15, no. 2 (2007): 169-88.

[57] Keune also points out that, despite Maharashtra's lack of distinctive geographical boundaries with Karnataka to the south, Mahipati and the Marathi *bhakta*s remain rather oblivious to south India and seem to have been somewhat disconnected to (or uninterested in) southern religious happenings. Jon Keune, "Gathering the Bhaktas in Marāṭhī," *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies* 15, no. 2 (2007), 84-85; Christian Novetzke, *Religion and Public Memory: A Cultural History of Saint Namdev in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 37.

were traveling together in an arid land and became intensely thirsty. The text relates the incident as follows:

> [B]eing overcome with thirst they searched about for water to drink. Suddenly they spied a deep well and as they looked down into it they could not determine its depth. They were puzzled to know what device to adopt to obtain some water. Then Jnandev said to Nama, 'There is a method which is possible for me.' Saying this he reduced his own size through his yoga powers and went down into the well. Having drunk the water he quickly came out again. Nama was now extremely thirsty but could think of no way of obtaining the water. Jnandev then said to him 'Why is your heart troubled? I will bring the water and give it to you at once. You know nothing of the methods of mystic yoga power by which one can reduce his size.[58]

At this point, Nāmdev cried to Viṭṭhal (a local form of Kṛṣṇa), going deep into prayer and imploring him for help. According to the text, the moment he heard of Nāmdev's need, Kṛṣṇa "hastened more quickly than thought. Just then the well with a rumbling noise became filled, and began to overflow. As Jñāndev saw this miracle, he thought to himself, 'This is a most remarkable deed. I do not understand how Nāma has made God his debtor.' Then awakening Nāma to consciousness he lovingly embraced him and said, 'Kṛṣṇa has come to your aid, and has shown us this seemingly impossible miracle."[59] Not only are Nāmdev and Jñāndev supplied with water, but the well flows over with such vigor that it provides much-needed water to the entire drought-stricken village. Here, as in our earlier Sufi tale, the power of God, and of devotion to God, is shown as dramatically superior to the powers of yoga. Again we see the boundlessness of God revealed through the miraculous, this time in the image of the overflowing well. The tale ends with Jñāndev admitting the superiority of *bhakti* (devotion) over *jñāna* (knowledge). As Christian Novetzke explains, "Jnandev's yogic powers serve only him; though he might perform a service for someone else, he commands this power. This is not a social power. However, in Namdev's case, his plea for help transcends individual ability, and the result, likewise, extends far beyond his own needs."[60]

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[58] Justin Abbott and Narhar Godbole, *Stories of Indian Saints: Translation of Mahipati's Marathi Bhaktavijaya* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982 [1933]), 187-88; *Bhaktavijaya* 12:8-13.

[59] Ibid., 190; *Bhaktavijaya* 12:38-40.

[60] Christian Novetzke, *Religion and Public Memory: A Cultural History of Saint Namdev in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 62.

In his third hagiographical collection, the *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* (*Nectar of the Divine Play of the Devotees* [1774]), Mahīpati tells another fascinating story involving Jñāndev, this time in his role as *bhakti* saint. Jñāndev's dual identity as both a Nāth *yogī* and a *bhakti* saint speaks to the unique regional situation of Maharashtra, one seemingly quite different from that in north India in that the degree of difference and tension between *yogī*s/tantrikas and *bhakta*s, while still present, does not seem to have been as pronounced.[61] Catharine Kiehnle has argued that the songs attributed to Jñāndev "reflect the opinions of what one could call a school of Nātha Vaiṣṇavas" in Maharashtra, a group of *yogī*s among whom *bhakti* was quite central, even if also quite different in nature than that associated with and advocated by *bhakti* poet-saints like Nāmdev, Sūrdās, Nānak, Kabīr, and Mīrābāī.[62] While Jñāndev and his peers may have practiced both tantric yoga and *bhakti* devotion (and have been praised for both), Mahīpati's hagiographies indicate clearly the superiority of humble reliance on God to any yogic powers. In contrast to the story involving Nāmdev and the well (where Jñāndev plays the role of Nāth *yogī* foil), in the tale now at hand Mahīpati places complete emphasis on Jñāndev's *bhakti* dimension in

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[61] In west-central India, the political environment seems to have been more unstable and fractured, so sponsorship of *yogī*s and *bhakta*s was likely less of a contentious issue than in the north during the early modern period. In what we might construe as evidence of the *bhakti* movement's enduring and pervasive success, in Maharashtra today, the Nāth side of memories about Jñāndev are quite played down. He is remembered to have been a Nāth, but with no other related information beyond the word itself. While the Nāths are not demonized by the Marathi *bhakta*s, they are thoroughly (and seemingly intentionally) neglected. Personal communication with Jon Keune (December 2009).

[62] Catharine Kiehnle, "Love and Bhakti in the Early Nāth Tradition of Mahārāṣṭra: The Lotus of the Heart" in *Bhakti Literature in South Asia*, eds. M.K. Gautam and G.H. Schokker (Leiden: Kern Institute, 2000), 256. This raises an important larger point about *bhakti*, for there is no doubt that, if defined simply as devotion, *bhakti* has consistently been a part of Hindu religiosity from Vedic times to the present, and certainly a part of Tantra as well. While this may be true, I would argue that with the *bhakti* movement in north India, beginning in the fifteenth century, we have something (not unrelated to but still) qualitatively different from earlier forms of Hindu devotionalism, including those earlier Southern iterations of "*bhakti*" (Āḻvārs, Nāyaṇārs, Vīraśaivas, etc.) typically linked to the northern *bhakti* saints in narratives of a pan-Indian "*bhakti* movement." As I conceive it, this north Indian *bhakti* movement and its "new" style of *bhakti* (see footnote 5) probably begins in some measure with the figure of Nāmdev (followed by Kabīr), who was not from north India at all, but from Maharashtra, and who may have traveled north where (regardless) he clearly made his mark as attested by the prominent place his name and memory holds in all of the earliest north Indian hagiographies. Elaborating these points any further is unfortunately beyond the scope of this essay.

his encounter with a famous Nāth *yogī* named Chāngdev.[63] Having learned of Jñāndev's miraculous abilities, the *yogī* Chāngdev states "[T]hough I have performed wonders by dint of superhuman power, this power (of Jñāndev's) is not in me."[64] Mahīpati next invokes the popular Sufi hagiographic trope of the 'Two Riders'—the Rider on the Tiger and the Rider on the Wall.[65] Riding a tiger and using a snake as a whip, Chāngdev sets off to visit Jñāndev, who miraculously causes a wall to leap forward to meet the fast-approaching *yogī*. Mahīpati writes that:

> [Chāngdev] had studied the fourteen sciences, he had mastered the sixty-four arts, he had protected his body for fourteen centuries, and by his power he had conquered death. But all his power had vanished at the sight of Dnyāndev [Jñāndev], just as the stars disappear at dawn; just as one, who is proud of knowing by heart some poems, feels ashamed in the presence of a saint who has inspiration. … In the same way was it with the power of Dnyāndev, for he had made the wall of lifeless stone to move a mile from Ālandī, and at that sight Chāngdev was overcome with shame. Dismounting from the tiger, he let go of the snake he had used as a whip. With an unusually reverent attitude and with loving devotion, he rolled himself with delight at Dnyāndev's feet.[66]

At this point in the text, Mahīpati mourns those *yogī*s like Chāngdev who have achieved profound mystical absorption but do not know the pleasures of *bhakti*, lauding Jñāndev as a rare exemplar of one who possesses knowledge of non-duality while also delighting in loving devotion to the *saguṇa* form of God.[67] The tale resumes with Chāngdev

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[63] G.S. Ghurye notes that the Nāth *yogī* Changdev was Jñāndev's "chief contestant" and may have been the head of "a Jogī monastery not far away from Paithana, where Jñāneśvara first made his mark" (133). See G.S. Ghurye, *Indian Sadhus*, 2nd ed. (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1964).

[64] Justin Abbott, N.R. Godbole, and J.F. Edwards, *Nectar from Indian Saints: An English Translation of Mahīpati's Marāthī Bhaktalīlāmrit (*Poona: United Theological College of Western India, 1935), 51; III:183.

[65] For a detailed investigation of the fascinating history of this hagiographic trope, see Simon Digby, "To Ride a Tiger or a Wall? Strategies of Prestige in Indian Sufi Legend," in *According to Tradition: Hagiographical Writing in India*, eds. Winand Callewaert and Rupert Snell (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag: 1994), 99-129. Digby notes that the earliest example in which both "Riders" occur in the same story is a fourteenth century Sufi text of the Delhi Sultanate. Interestingly, such Sufi anecdotes were likely preceded by those of Siddhas (Nāths) riding tigers or walls (though apparently never in the same story).

[66] Ibid., 67-8; IV: 153-59.

[67] Ibid., 69-70; IV: 173-76, 182-83.

asking Jñāndev how he was able to move the wall, a feat that despite his own superhuman powers, he calls "beyond the power of all understanding." Jñāndev responds by explaining that:

> If God wills to do a thing, what is there that He will not do? … Ants will forever subsist on the rays of the sun, and even crops will grow on a fiery tableland, but all this is only by the power of Shrī Hari. [Viṣṇu] pervades the movable and the immovable creation; everything in creation is His form, and it was He who by His prowess easily moved the wall. … He it was who in order to fulfill your longing made the wall move by His own power. The Husband of Rukminī [Kṛṣṇa] alone knows that it was not our power at all.[68]

Here we have a theme that emerges repeatedly throughout the *bhakti* hagiographies and the earlier Sufi literature: the notion that the devotee's power is so great—and so much better than that of the *yogī*—because it is not his power at all; it is the power of God, who can accomplish anything. A final tale from Mahīpati's writings further illustrates this point.

In a rather bizarre story from the *Bhaktalīlāmṛt* (1774), the Maharashtrian *bhakti* saint Eknāth (c. 1533-99) harshly rebukes an ascetic *yogī* by the name of Śrīpād for displaying yogic powers to the public by responding to a challenge from a group of Brahmans to raise a donkey from the dead. Ashamed of his behavior, Śrīpād volunteers to be buried alive as penance. Eknāth buries the *yogī* alive but then finds himself confronted by Brahmans accusing him of killing Śrīpād out of jealousy at not possessing such yogic power (*siddhāī*) himself. The Brahmans threaten to excommunicate Eknāth on the charge of murder if he does not perform a miracle by having the stone image of Nandi eat *kadabā* stalks from his hands. When the stone bull devours a sheaf of stalks before their eyes, they are filled with amazement and free Eknāth from the penalty of excommunication, remarking to each other that "This miraculous deed performed by Eknāth is an act that cannot be acquired through the practice of Yoga. This astonishing deed comes from *Bhakti*. Because of his former devotion to his Guru, his service to saints, and his loving worship of Śrī Hari, Pāṇḍuraṇg [Kṛṣṇa] has become pleased with him, and protects him moment by moment." All seems well until another group of Brahmans arise, claiming that they did not see the supposed miracle and that unless he can perform it again, he will still be excommunicated. Eknāth prays to

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[68] Ibid., 70-71; IV: 188-96.

Nandi to find a way to remove these Brahmans' doubts and as soon as he utters the prayer, the stone bull rises up and running, jumps into a deep hole in the Godavari River. The Brahmans finally believe Eknāth's holiness, stating that "[This] is a deed that does not belong to man," and then, "There is now no excommunication for you. You may return to your home. Blessed is your loving devotion. You have brought life to a stone Nandi. The God-of-Gods is pleased with you. We now recognize the real meaning of what has happened." The reader is left free to decide upon exactly what this 'real meaning' is, but one key message seems clear: God's power (not man's) is greatest and man gains access to this boundless power only through *bhakti*. As the text states, such a miraculous deed "cannot be acquired through the practice of Yoga," but is a deed that "does not belong to man" and comes only from loving devotion to God.[69]

A Southern Precedent?

Before proceeding to more *bhakti* miracle tales, it is important to note that while the nature, content, and heightened intensity of early modern (Sufi and *bhakti*) critiques of Tantra/yoga/magic was distinctive, criticism of Tantra certainly had precedents in Indian literature. There is, for instance, a long history of mocking and negatively marking *tāntrika*s and black magic, as evidenced by depictions of Kāpālika ascetics in early medieval Sanskrit dramas. One notable precedent to the north Indian *bhakti* movement's miracle stories comes from Gūḷūra Siddhavīraṇāryaru's edition of the *Śūnyasaṃpādane* (ca. 1510 CE), a collection of Kannada prose poems (*vacana*s) about the Vīraśaiva saints.[70] In one section, this text tells the tale of Allama Prabhu (circa twelfth century in Karnataka), who encounters, defeats and converts Gorakṣa, the leader of the Siddhas.[71] In the story, Gorakṣa professes to have conquered death as evidenced by his diamond-hard body. To prove the claim, he asks Allama to strike him with a sword, but when Allama swings the sword, it clangs against Gorakṣa's adamantine body. Gorakṣa laughs with pride and Allama, amused at his

[69] Justin Abbott, *The Life of Eknāth* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981 [1927]), 128-34; v. 19:19-99.

[70] Michael, R. Blake, *The Origins of the Vīraśaiva Sects* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992), 29.

[71] I am grateful to Gil Ben-Herut for his assistance with the scholarship on this particular story.

vanity, responds with a *vacana* mocking his yogic powers: "Go to; your yōga of trickery and fraud with roots and fibres, is no yōga! Go to; it is no yōga to have the trance of body, senses and the soul! The real and natural is Guhēśvara [Śiva, 'Lord of the Mystics']!"[72] After indicating to Gorakṣa that all *siddhi*s [yogic powers] actually take one away from the one Reality, Allama then invites Gorakṣa now to swing the sword at him. However, when he does so the sword simply swishes through Allama's body as if it were pure space. Seeing this, Gorakṣa is stunned and humbled and asks Allama to initiate him into Vīraśaivism. Allama says to the defeated *yogī*: "With your alchemies, you achieve metals, but no essence. / With all your manifold yogas, you achieve a body, but no spirit. / With your speeches and arguments you build chains of words but cannot define the spirit. / If you say you and I are one, you were me but I was not you."[73] The critique of yoga and its 'magical powers' is clear in the story, but devotion is not here exalted in the same way that it is in the Sufi and north Indian *bhakti* hagiographies. Rather, a form of non-dual mystical knowledge is what is praised and contrasted with yogic powers. While Vīraśaivism is typically considered a form of Śaiva *bhakti* and a southern precedent directly linked to what would happen in the north, we see here how such south-to-north '*bhakti* movement' narratives gloss over substantial qualitative differences in the form and style of *bhakti* being practiced.

Bhakti Miracle Stories (II): Panjabi & Hindi [Braj] Materials

Let us now turn to a story from the *bhakti* hagiographical literature of the Sikhs. That the Panjab was not only home to the Sikhs but was also a major center of Nāth presence can be seen in the large number of compositions that Guru Nānak addresses to Nāth *yogī*s. As W.H. McLeod writes:

> The part played by Gorakhnāth in the *janam-sākhī* traditions reflects a substantial reputation, one which is surpassed only by a few distinguished disciples of Baba Nanak. Anecdotes in which he or other Nāths appear also imply a considerable awe, and although Baba Nanak invari-

[72] *Śūnyasaṃpādane*, Vol. V, eds. M.S. Sunkapur and Armando Menezes (Dharwar: Karnatak University, 1972), 390.

[73] A.K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Śiva* (London: Penguin Group, 1973), 145-47.

> ably overcomes them he sometimes has to contend with an impressively fearsome display of magical powers. The Nāth *yogī*s who wandered through sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Pañjāb must have been held in some dread by the people for their alleged possession of such powers. They must have commanded both fear and a grudging respect, for the asceticism of the Nāth order cannot go entirely unrecognized.[74]

In the B-40 *janam-sākhī*, written in the 1730s, an incident is related in which Guru Nānak visits the Nāth Siddha location of Achal in the Panjab, where he has a confrontation with a *yogī* by the name of Bhangarnāth. Bhangarnāth calls in "the eighty-four Siddhs, the nine Nāths, the six Jatis, the unseen and the visible, demons of the air and dwellers on the earth, the fifty-two Vīrs, and the sixty-four Yoginīs" to engage Baba Nānak in spiritual competition.[75] The Siddhas showcase their supernormal powers by causing deerskins to fly, stones to move, and walls to walk, but Baba Nānak is unimpressed and challenges them to a match of hide-and-seek. The Siddhas hide first and Nānak easily finds them. It is now Nānak's turn to hide and he becomes invisible by merging into the four elements. Unable to find him, the Siddhas finally acknowledge their defeat. As soon as they make their submission, Baba Nānak reappears and utters the following *salok* from stanza 19 of the *Vār Mājh*:

> If I were to clothe myself with fire, build my dwelling in the snows, and subsist upon a diet of iron;
> If I were to turn all suffering into water and drink it, [or] reduce the [entire] world to my command;
> If I were to lay the heavens upon scales and weigh them against a copper coin;
> If I were to distend [my body] to infinite dimensions, [or] bind all in subjection;
> If my mind possessed such power that I could act and command as I chose, [all would be profitless].
> Just as He, the Lord, is glorious so too are His gifts glorious, gifts which he bestows in accordance with His will.
> He upon whom the [Lord's] gracious glance rests—he it is, Nanak, who acquires the glory of the True Name.[76]

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[74] W.H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition: A Study of the Janam-sākhis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 145.

[75] W.H. McLeod, *The B40 Janam-Sakhi* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1980), 137-38.

[76] McLeod, *The B40 Janam Sakhi*, 139.

Here Nānak stresses that yogic powers and austerities are profitless; they are utterly futile in comparison with the glorious gifts of God. True power comes not from tantric incantations and bodily regimens but from God alone, and when God bestows His gifts—not in response to ritual action, ascetic feats, or recitation of mantras, but only in accordance with His will—then the limitless power of the divine makes itself known in the miracle.

Gilbert Pollet's extensive analysis of the circa 1600 CE *Bhaktamāl* of Nābhādās confirms this same *bhakti* conception of the miraculous. Pollet states that Nābhādās mentions fifty-three miracles in his text and that "In 42 of [these] 53 instances, the deity itself is at the origin of the miraculous event."[77] He notes that in the other eleven cases, the miracle is performed by a devout human and that no divine intervention or presence is mentioned explicitly, but that "the very nature of the miracle and the religious attitude of the *bhakta* refer ultimately to a supernatural power;"[78] that is, the miracle is done through the power of devotion to God.

For our next example from the *bhakti* hagiographies we look to Priyādās's *Bhaktirasabodhinī* (1712), composed in Vrindavan as the indispensable commentary on Nābhādās's *Bhaktamāl*.[79] While this story does not involve an encounter with a *yogī*, it speaks directly to the set of themes we have been addressing thus far. Priyādās tells the story of Tulsīdās who was requested to visit the Mughal emperor in Delhi. Upon arrival, the emperor (who remains unidentified, but would have been Akbar or Jāhāngir) states that Tulsīdās is world-renowned for his miraculous powers and demands that Tulsī perform a miracle for him. Tulsī replies by stating that such powers are nonsense; i.e., it is a lie that he is responsible for such miracles, and only God (Rām) should be recognized.[80] Angered, the emperor locks Tulsī in prison. Tulsī then prays to Hanumān who answers his devotee's call

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[77] Gilbert Pollet, "The Mediaeval Vaiṣṇava Miracles as Recorded in the Hindī *Bhakta Māla*," *Le Museon* 80 (1967), 476.

[78] Ibid., 478.

[79] On the relationship between Nābhā's *mūl* text and the commentary by Priyādās that nearly always accompanies it, see James Hare, "A Contested Community: Priyādās and the Re-Imagining of Nābhādās's Bhaktamāl." *Sikh Formations* 3, no. 2 (2007): 185-98.

[80] Nābhājī, *Śrī Bhaktamāl, with the Bhaktīrasabodhini commentary of Prīya Dās. Exposition in modern Hindi by Sitaramsaran Bhagavanprasad Rupkala* (Lucknow: Tejkumar Press, 1961), 768-69. The line is "*jhūṭh bāt ek rām pahicāniyai*" (*ka*. 515), which Pinch translates as "it's a lie, all I know is Ram" (218).

by sending an army of monkeys to wreak havoc upon the palace, "scratching eyes and noses," "tearing clothes off the emperor's women," and "heaving down bricks from the ramparts."[81] Realizing what is happening, the emperor falls at the poet's feet and begs for mercy, to which Tulsī replies, "enjoy the miracle [*karāmāt*] a little bit longer."[82] Finally, with the emperor "drowning in shame," Hanumān's assault ends.[83]

In this story, we see a trope common in both Sufi and *bhakti* miracle stories: the refusal of the miracle worker to perform a marvel requested of him. In the eyes of both Sufis and *bhakta*s, displays of magical powers are considered futile since they are done for man's ends, not out of love for God; they are superfluous and trivial because devotion and humble submission to God are what really matter. Tulsī refuses to perform a marvel for the emperor but the miraculous power of God nevertheless manifests itself when Hanumān comes to Tulsī 's rescue—why?—out of tender mercy and sincere love for his supplicant's devotion. In the miracle, then, as opposed to the magical display, attention shifts from the individual to God—and equally perhaps, to devotion to God—as the source of genuine power. As Pinch states, "Those who would claim supernormal abilities as a function of their own human effort—in other words, those who would claim to be gods—were, in the eyes of the newly pious, whether *bhakta* or Muslim, simply tricksters. Hence Priyādās' need to deride such claims as '*jhuthi karamat*'—false marvels."[84] Pinch goes on to say that "Tulsidas scoffed at the very idea of performing a marvel for the emperor not simply because 'all I know is Ram' but because he did not dabble in the kind of marvel the emperor was interested in witnessing."[85] For Tulsī and devotees like him, tantric rites, mantras, and ascetic physical regimens were worthless in the authentic religious life of devotion to the Lord. As Kabīr states in a poem from his oldest dated manuscript (the Fatehpur manuscript of 1582), "Tantras, mantras, medicines—

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[81] Ibid., 769-70 (*ka*. 516); Pinch, 218.

[82] Ibid., 771. The line is "*karāmāt neku līijyai*" (*ka*. 517).

[83] Ibid. (*ka*. 517). The ending of this Brajbhāṣā *kavitt* is extremely difficult to interpret and neither Pinch's nor Rūpkalā's explanation/translation—which posit that the emperor prays to Rām for protection—seems justifiable to me based on Prīyadās's text.

[84] Pinch, 218-19.

[85] Pinch, 218. In this way, Pinch interprets the tale as "a Vaishnava *bhakti* response to the legacy of Akbar's fascination with esoteric yogis and the mysteries of *hathayoga*" (219).

fakes, one and all; And only Kabīr is left around to sing the name of Rām."[86]

At this point one might be tempted to inquire about Kabīr's widely supposed Nāth links.[87] If this *bhakti* saint is as influenced by the Nāths as many scholars have argued, why would he be so critical of Tantra and mantra? Indeed, it is true that Kabīr's poetry is often littered with Nāth terminology and many of his social attitudes, cosmological suppositions, and even yogic practices parallel those of the Nāths; however, the key point is that he (at least so far as we can tell from the poetry attributed to him) differed from the Nāths in at least one crucial area: he believed the route to God was through *bhakti*; men were not meant to try and *become gods*, but to devote themselves wholeheartedly *to* God. For this reason, like other *bhakti* reformers (and Sufis), Kabīr held a clear disdain for *yogī*s who claimed special powers by virtue of their yogic and/or tantric prowess.[88]

It is now to the *hagiography* of Kabīr that we shift our attention. In his late sixteenth century Kabīr *parachaī*, the Rāmānandī Anantadās, contemporary with and part of the same guru lineage as Nābhādās, tells the story of how Shah Sikander Lodi once came to Kāśī (Benares) where the *qāzī*s, mullahs, brahmans, and baniyas together approached him with a complaint about Kabīr. They explain to Sikander that Kabīr has abandoned the customs of Muslims and Hindus, scorned the sacred places and rites, and in this way has corrupted everyone and tarnished the reputation of both Hindu and Muslim religious authorities. Sikander orders that Kabīr be brought before him to be killed. Standing before the Shah, Kabīr states "If Rām is my protector,

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[86] John S. Hawley, *Three Bhakti Voices: Mirabai, Surdas, and Kabir in Their Time and Ours* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 288.

[87] On this subject, see especially Charlotte Vaudeville, *Kabir. Vol. I.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).

[88] Pinch writes that "For [Kabīr], the only difference that mattered was the difference between those who loved God and those who pretended to love God—and even worse were those who pretended to be gods. For Kabīr and the *bhakta*s (God-lovers), *sadhu*s (anchorites), and *sant*s (truth-tellers) who followed in his considerable wake, immortality could not be had via ritual expertise, privileged textual knowledge (such as was peddled by the many *maulvi*s and *pandit*s who lined the streets of Banaras), or as a by-product of caste prerogative. They held that there was only one route to immortality: through *bhakti*, the rapturous and captivating love of God." Pinch, *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empires*, 195. It seems, then, that already with the compositions of Sant poets like Kabīr who are typically considered the trailblazers of *bhakti* in north India, we see a self-identity and a conception of religion that are in fundamental conflict with ordinary tantric-yogic approaches, one much more closely aligned with Sufi notions regarding the nature of God and the meaning of religion.

no one can kill me. Badashah, I am not afraid. Whatever God does, that is what will be," to which Sikander replies, "You are a fool not to fear me. Now let's see a true miracle (*karāmāt*). Tie Kabīr's feet and bind him with chains. Drown him in the water of the Ganges." This is done, but as soon as Kabīr is dropped into the river, his chains inexplicably come loose and he begins to float. Enraged, Sikander next ties up Kabīr, throws him into a house, and sets it on fire. However, when Kabīr recites the name of God the fire becomes "cool as water" and he emerges unscathed. In describing this incident, Anantadās writes, "The gods and men witnessed a true miracle (*sācī karamātī*)."[89] Angered, the *qāzī*s and brahmans tell Sikander that Kabīr has used "magic arts" and thus his apparent miracle must not be accepted as such. Sikander next calls upon a frenzied elephant famed for its ferocity in battle. The elephant is brought and made to attack, but Kabīr does not budge, feeling no fear as he remains there "absorbed in the love of Rām." At this point Keśav (Kṛṣṇa) appears in the form of a lion and seats himself in front of Kabīr, causing the elephant to flee backward and refuse to advance. When Sikander sees the lion he is astounded and says, "Elephant driver, take the elephant away. A miracle (*karāmāt*) has just occurred." Sikander humbly admits the power of Rām ("the true God") and begs Kabīr to spare his life. In the end, Kabīr returns home, saying "Bhakti to Hari destroys millions of sins. Hari comes running for his devotees. … Without bhakti to Hari, no work can prosper. I recognized the guru and Govinda [Kṛṣṇa] through devotion. That is why Sikander could do nothing to me."[90]

As in the Tulsīdās story, the focus here is completely on God. Kabīr does not actually *do* anything—other than remain absorbed in devotion God—rather it is God who does everything. The pro-*bhakti* message could hardly be more explicit. All one needs is devotion to the Lord, who provides power and protection greater than any magic art or yogic discipline could possibly offer. Kabīr refuses to perform a marvel himself, yet nevertheless not one, not two, but *three* miracles

[89] It is interesting to note that both Anantadās and Priyādās make frequent use of the Persian word *karāmāt* to refer to miracles in their hagiographies, suggesting that words from the Sanskritic lineage perhaps did not convey as precisely the desired meaning. However, Nābhādās consistently uses the Braj word *acaraja*, from the Sanskrit *āścarya*, to denote miracles.

[90] David Lorenzen, *Kabir Legends and Ananta-das's Kabir Parachai* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 107-15; Kabīr *parachaī* sections 7-9.

occur in the story as God repeatedly saves the life of his cherished devotee.

Conclusions

In examining the hagiographical episodes above my intention has been to suggest that with the rise of *bhakti* devotional religiosity in sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century north India, we see the beginnings of an articulation of two separate spheres paralleling the Western/Abrahamic categories of 'religion' and 'magic.'[91] Early modern *bhakti* literature's heightened emphasis on the distinction between miracle and magic seems to me evidence of an appropriation of Sufi perspectives regarding the nature of the Divine and the proper human relationship to that Divine. My argument, then, is that it was in significant part through the influence of Sufism that Indian devotional practices and attitudes—those viewing the divine as the sole source of power—increasingly took on the tenor of the "religious," while tantric and yogic-ascetic modes of practice—those viewing the human being as the primary source of power—increasingly came to be represented as something akin to the 'magical' with all that term's typical negative connotations.

While the marginalization of certain tantric and folk religious practices as 'magical' is typically attributed to the British colonial importation of Western post-Enlightenment, post-Reformation categories, I suggest here that there was a clear Indian precedent for this kind of thinking. Furthermore, I posit that in this kind of thinking we can see indigenous roots—that paved the way for and later combined with certain Western Orientalist conceptions as well as certain Indian nationalist agendas—for the manner in which many tantric and folk practices came to be isolated and discarded as illicit, sinister, and irrational 'magic.'

In the history and culture of the Indian subcontinent, few things if any are clear-cut or universal and this case is certainly no exception; nevertheless, I do believe that in the early modern period in India—prior to the advent of any significant Western presence—we see a definite trend in which Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* saints and institutions are carving

[91] For more on the nature, function and history of this religion/magic distinction, see my essay, "The 'Magical' Language of Mantra," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 76, no. 4 (2008): 807-843.

out an authorized sphere of 'religion' for themselves in opposition to a marginalized and unauthorized sphere of tantric 'magic.' As I have shown, we can see this fact in the miracle/magic distinction articulated in, among other sources, the hagiographical literature. Of course, in many ways, this miracle/magic distinction was simply an intellectual explanation meant to give rhetorical weight to what, for many people—both kings and commoners—amounted simply to a choice of whose supernatural service was more effective, whose power was most powerful.[92] As Alexis Sanderson has recently argued so persuasively, since roughly the fifth century, tantric Śaiva and Śākta forms had been the dominant forms of religion across most of India.[93] In north India, beginning especially in the sixteenth century, in part due to Sufi influence, we begin to see Vaiṣṇava devotional modes taking the place of tantric Śaiva-Śākta traditions and coming to be considered the most effective way for both kings and paupers to achieve their varied desires. In addition to the beauty and contagious emotion inherent in their poetry and its performance, Vaiṣṇava *bhakta*s achieved this coup in part through an appropriation of certain tantric modes of practice and thought, but even more so through a critique of the magic and asceticism associated with much of Tantra. In other words, while they did so in a distinctly Sufi-inflected fashion, north Indian *bhakti* reformers drew on the religion/magic distinction in the way it has always been drawn upon throughout its history, as a rhetorical device used to neg-

[92] Green, "Oral Competition Narratives of Muslim and Hindu Saints in the Deccan," 227-28. In this context, it is important to note that while the miracle/magic distinction is a common and consistent one, there are certainly stories that present *bhakta*s as clearly more powerful than yogis, but which do not necessarily *explicitly* locate that superiority in the practice of devotion as opposed to yogic magic. For example, there are stories in the oral tradition in which Kabīr has confrontations with Gorakhnāth but in which the miracle/magic distinction we have been emphasizing does not seem to be present. In one, Gorakh invites Kabīr to a miracle contest in which he plants his iron trident in the ground, rises up and sits on one of its prongs, then challenges Kabīr to come up and sit on one of the other prongs. Kabīr responds by taking out a ball of thread and, holding one end, throwing it up into the air. He then rises up and takes a seat on the other end of the thread, far above Gorakh on his trident. In another story, Gorakh challenges Kabīr to find him in a pond. He changes into a frog and dives into the water, but Kabīr finds and grabs him easily. Kabīr then asks Gorakh to find him and, entering the pond, converts himself into water itself. Gorakh is unable to find him and, again, loses the miracle contest. These stories are briefly discussed in Lorenzen, *Kabir Legends and Ananta-das's Kabir Parachai*, 54-55.

[93] Alexis Sanderson, "The Śaiva Age—The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period," in *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, ed. Shingo Einoo (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009), 41-350.

atively mark a competing group and their perspective and to identify one's own spiritual method—Vaiṣṇava devotion, in this case—as, pragmatically speaking, the best and the most powerful available.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SĀĪ BĀBĀ OF ŚIRḌĪ AND YOGA POWERS

Antonio Rigopoulos

The wooden plank of absurdly
meagre measure
You turned into a hanging bed
truly!
Your yogic powers
Were displayed to the devotees.
The barrenness of many women
You have completely eradicated.
The diseases of many
You have cured with the *udī*.

(Das Ganu, *Shri Sainath Stavanamanjari*, 100-101)

Om, to Him who grants yogic powers
and realization, prostration!
(24th in the series of Sāī Bābā's 108 names)

Introduction

Nowadays Sāī Bābā of Śirḍī (Shirdi) (d. Oct. 15, 1918) is the most popular saint in India, to whom all sorts of miracles and powers are attributed. His temples and shrines are found all over the country, and Shirdi in the Ahmednagar District of Maharashtra has become a national pilgrimage centre. The *samādhi mandir* and tomb of the saint are visited all year by huge crowds of devotees from all walks of life and bearing diverse religious affiliations, especially at festival times and on the occasion of the death anniversary of Sāī Bābā. The charismatic *faqīr* is venerated not just as a God-realized saint but as the embodiment of divinity by multitudes all across the subcontinent and even outside of it, his renown being largely due to his fame as miracle-

worker. His portrait is ubiquitous on town and village walls, in shops, cars, etc. and he has a place in almost all family altars and *pūjā* rooms.[1]

Although no historical evidence is available concerning the time and place of birth, the identity of his parents,[2] and his religious affiliation and training, it has always been evident that Sāī Bābā was an unconventional *faqīr* part and parcel of the Maharashtrian Sufi tradition of Shekh Muhammad (1560-1650) and Shah Muni (c. 1756-1807), who advocated an integrative spirituality or 'fusion of horizons' accommodating Sufism and Hindu devotionalism (*bhakti*), above and beyond the orthodoxy (and caste strictures) of institutionalized religions. Such an orientation finds its paradigmatic model in the figure of Kabīr, the fifteenth-century Sant of Benares.[3] Sāī Bābā's life and teachings promoted the mystical recognition of the unity of being, of reality as a unified whole (*waḥdat al-wujūd*, *advaita*). His burning love of God was cultivated through the constant remembrance of his omnipresence, primarily achieved through the recollection of Allāh's name (*dhikr*, *nāmasmaraṇa*) and a life of poverty and renunciation.[4]

Even during his lifetime, Sāī Bābā's *faqīri*, Sufi character tended to be either downplayed or non recognized by the overwhelming majority of his Hindu *bhakta*s. Soon after his death, the complete 'Hinduization' of his persona and cult was achieved.[5] In an effort to 'restore

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[1] The towering spread of Sāī Bābā's fame appears to have started rather late, that is, around the 1970s; up until 1950 the coming to Shirdi of 100-150 devotees for a festival celebration was considered a rush day; see M. Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma: Shirdi Sai Baba in the Light of Sufism* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1999), 27.

[2] The current legend is that he was born to Brahman parents in 1838 in Pathri, a village in the Nizam's Dominions. Even his actual name is unknown, since Sāī Bābā is an appellative which was attached to him by local people at Shirdi: Sāī is a term of Persian origin often attributed to Muslim ascetics meaning 'holy one' or 'saint'. Bābā, on the other hand, is a Hindi term attributed to respected seniors and holy men and literally means 'father'.

[3] Kabīr holds an important place in the religious tradition of Maharashtra. A significant hagiographic treatment of Kabīr's life is to be found in the *Bhaktavijaya* of Mahīpati (1715-1790), written in 1762, chaps. 5-7, 11, 24.

[4] For an introduction to Sāī Bābā's figure and cult I would still recommend my 1993 book, *The Life and Teachings of Sai Baba of Shirdi* (Albany: State University of New York Press).

[5] From 1918 to 1922, the *faqīr* Abdul still acted in the role of a *pīrzada* or custodian of Sāī Bābā's tomb. In 1922, however, the influential devotee Hari Sitaram Dikshit (1864-1926), a high-caste Brahman, set up a Public Trust through the Ahmednagar District Court to administer the shrine following Hindu rules and rites. Abdul thus lost his position and was persuaded to file a counter-suit declaring that he was the legal heir to Sāī Bābā and that the Public Trust was illegal. He lost the case, however, and was deprived of all authority. Sāī Bābā's shrine became a Hindu

the balance' and counter the Hindu gloss which has always been dominant in the devotional literature, the late Marianne Warren wrote in 1999 an important book: *Unravelling the Enigma*: *Shirdi Sai Baba in the Light of Sufism*. Herein, she has emphasized Sāī Bābā's Islamic traits, historically reconstructing his life and teachings in the context of Deccani Sufism, and showing the various ways in which the *faqīr* tended to adjust or accommodate himself to Hindu rituals and beliefs.[6] The most precious contribution of Warren's book is the translation (from Urdu) and analysis of the notebook of Sāī Bābā's *faqīr* servant Abdul (1871-1954), who first arrived in Shirdi in 1889 and whose tomb rests near his master's temple. This notebook contains Abdul's notes of Sāī Bābā's utterances, taken while reading the *Qur'an* with the saint at the Shirdi dilapidated mosque (*masjid*).[7]

Although Sāī Bābā maintained a most sober attitude, living all his life as a humble *faqīr* depending on alms and mainly dispensing blessings to people, his fame as a wonder-worker possessing *siddhi*s or *baraka* rapidly grew, especially from around 1900. If he didn't emphasize the miraculous, Sāī Bābā seems to have attributed special proper-

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temple, the *samādhi mandir*, and in 1954 a huge white marble *mūrti* of the saint was installed behind the tomb. On H. S. Dikshit, also known as Kakasaheb, see B. V. Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba* (Madras: All India Sai Samaj, 1980-1985[3] [1955-1956[1]]), vol. 2, 155-211. Yoginder Sikand has rightly observed that the eclipse of Sāī Bābā's Sufi background "must be understood in the broader context of the growing assertion of Brahminical Hinduism in Maharashtra from the late nineteenth century onwards;" see Y. Sikand, *Sacred Spaces: Exploring Traditions of Shared Faith in India* (New Delhi, Penguin, 2003), 128.

[6] To please his *bhakta*s, Sāī Bābā himself, particularly towards the end of his life, allowed the Hindus to worship him as a *deva*, a god, and to perform various Hindu rituals at the mosque. It is reported that when on an occasion Sāī Bābā allowed a Hindu devotee to smear sandal paste on his forehead, as per the Hindu custom, he told a perplexed Muslim follower who witnessed the scene: 'While in Rome, do as the Romans do', i.e. when one is in a different country one should adopt the local custom; see Narasimhaswami, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, 179. The first author to counter the 'Hinduizing' tendency by presenting Sāī Bābā as a Sufi adept, possibly of the *majzūb* variety, was Kevin Shepherd in his book *Gurus Rediscovered: Biographies of Sai Baba of Shirdi and Upasni Maharaj of Sakori* (Cambridge: Anthropographia Publications, 1985). In a recent work, *Investigating the Sai Baba Movement: A Clarification of Misrepresented Saints and Opportunism* (Dorset, Citizen Initiative, 2005), K. Shepherd presents an updated study (or second installment) of the figures of Sāī Bābā of Śirḍī, Upāsnī Mahārāj of Sākurī, and Meher Bābā of Ahmednagar, plus three appendixes on the controversial figure of Sathya Sāī Bābā of Puṭṭaparthi. It should be noted that in his presentation of Sāī Bābā (chap. 1, pp. 2-58) he strongly criticizes my 1993 book on a number of issues as well as Warren's study (albeit more limitedly).

[7] On Abdul's figure, for whom Sāī Bābā seems to have had a high regard, see Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 261-274.

ties to the ash (*udī*) he would offer his devotees as a token of his favour.[8] While giving the *udī*, which he extracted from the *dhunī*, the fire he always kept burning inside the *masjid* where he resided, he would bless by saying *Allā acchā karegā* or *Allā bhalā karegā* i.e. 'Allāh will do good/provide',[9] thus referring all power and glory to Allāh and not to himself.

To be sure, the hagiographical sources present us with a wealth of *signa* and *portenta* operated by our *faqīr*, from turning water into oil to commanding nature, from curing all sorts of diseases to averting impending death, from having water springing from his toes to being ubiquitous. In particular, these sources insist on Sāī Bābā's omniscience (*antarajñāna*), offering a variety of anecdotes and stories 'proving' his extraordinary capacities.[10] Even the saint is reported saying: "My eye (of vigilant supervision) is ever on those who love me. Whatever you do, wherever you may be, ever bear this in mind, that I am always aware of everything you do."[11] Perhaps the most stunning type of miracle (*camatkār*, *karāmāt*) reported in the literature is the vicarious taking on of the suffering of a particular person, attracting the pain to his own body.[12] The 'transfer' of a disease from a devotee to himself, for instance plague with its buboes, proved a most spectacular feat.[13] Besides resorting to the saint as a healer, people would turn to Sāī Bābā to ask the blessing/miracle of granting them offspring.[14] This kind of request was and still is one of the most sought after, which devotees and pilgrims ask to Sufi as well as Hindu holy men. Thus Sāī Bābā became especially famous for his alleged capacity of curing barrenness: he would usually dispense his blessing and *udī*, coupled with a symbol of fertility such as a coconut, a mango or a tamarind fruit.[15]

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[8] See G. S. Khaparde, *Shirdi Diary* (Shirdi: Shri Sai Baba Sansthan, n. d.), 37 (entry dated December 9, 1911).

[9] *Ibid.*, 121 (entry dated March 15, 1912).

[10] See B. V. Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*. With Foreword by Justice M. B. Rege (Madras: Sai Nath & Co., 1942[4]), 177-196.

[11] *Ibid.*, 2.

[12] See Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 69-70.

[13] See G. R. Dabholkar (Hemad Pant), *Shri Sai Satcharita: The Life and Teachings of Shirdi Sai Baba*. Translated from the Original Marathi by Indira Kher (New Delhi: Sterling, 1999), 113-114 (chap. 7, vv. 100-110); Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 61.

[14] See Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 53. See also Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 97.

[15] See Dabholkar, *Shri Sai Satcharita*, 412-413 (chap. 25, vv. 87-103), where thanks to the saint's blessing—Sāī Bābā's gift of eight mango fruits—eight children

Apparently, Sāī Bābā himself acknowledged that he had vast powers. For example, on December 7, 1910, the Brahman devotee Ganesh Shrikrishna Khaparde (1854-1938),[16] a highly educated man and a distinguished lawyer and political figure, member of the Central Legislative Assembly who served as an aide to B. G. Tilak (whom he also took to visit Sāī Bābā at Shirdi on May 19, 1917), noted in his diary the following words of the saint: "God is very great and has his officers everywhere. They are all powerful. One must be content with the state in which God keeps him. But I am very powerful. I was here eight or ten thousand years ago."[17] Moreover: "Sayin Baba also said that his order was supreme (Bala)."[18] In an entry dated March 12, 1912, Khaparde wrote: "Sayin Sahib said, 'People are very ignorant. When they do not see my physical body they think I am absent'."[19] Another *bhakta*, Rao Saheb Yeshwant Janardan Galwankar, a Brahman landowner from Bombay who first came to Shirdi in 1911, once heard the *faqīr* say "that he (Baba) was not the three and a half cubits height of body, that he was everywhere, and that the devotees should see him in every place."[20] Abdul Ghani Munsiff, a follower of Meher Bābā, reports that

> during the war years [World War I], Sai Baba would often say: "I am formless and I am everywhere. I am not this body you call Sai… I am the Supreme Soul-the entire creation. I am everything and I am in everyone. I am in saints, criminals, animals, and everything else… Nothing happens without my wish. My light is of God; my religion is *Kabiri*—Perfect Mastery—and my wealth lies in the blessings I alone can give".[21]

The Brahman devotee G. G. Narke, a geology professor in Pune who first came to Shirdi in 1913, observed that Sāī Bābā appeared to be living and operating in other worlds, and that he was working in an

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were born to the younger wife of one Damu Anna, four sons and four daughters.

[16] On his figure, see Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 2, 298-335. See also Khaparde, *Shirdi Diary*, 108-125 (Appendix 1, "More about 'Shirdi Diary' of Dadasaheb Khaparde," by V. B. Kher).

[17] *Ibid.*, 3-4. See also Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 16.

[18] Khaparde, *Shirdi Diary*, 62 (entry dated January 22, 1912).

[19] *Ibid.*, 104.

[20] It seems that this was told to him by Sāī Bābā in 1917; Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 138-139.

[21] A. G. Munsiff, *Sai Baba: The Perfect Master* (Pune: Meher Era Publications, 1991), 57. This book is a compilation of Munsiff's writings, which originally appeared in the *Meher Baba Journal* (1938-1942).

invisible body.[22] Though seated in his own place at the *masjid*, Sāī Bābā was thought to wander freely everywhere. As Narasimhaswami reports: "While sitting in front of the *dhuni*, he would often say to what distant places he went overnight and what he had done …. Baba did travel with the invisible body to distant places and there render actual service. Baba was often describing scenes in other worlds."[23]

Though he underlined the fact of being but a poor *faqīr*, on occasions he would plainly say "I am Allāh," and not infrequently he identified himself with *brahman* and the various gods of the Hindu pantheon.[24]

Sāī Bābā's eyes are described as having been especially powerful. He would gaze at people or even at inanimate objects such as his portrait, 'enlivening' it by his glance and touch,[25] as well as at space, directing his look towards the cardinal points.[26] A woman devotee, Tara Bai Sadasiva Tarkhad of Pune, offered the following testimony:

> There was such power and penetration in the glance that none could continue to look at his eyes. One felt that Sai Baba was reading him or her through and through. Soon one lowered one's eyes and bowed down. One felt that he was not only in one's heart but in every atom of one's body …. He was the *Antaryami* [Inner Ruler], call him God or Satpurusha [Perfect One] …. In his presence, no doubts, no fears, no questionings had any place, and one resigned oneself and found that was the only course, the safest and best course.[27]

G. G. Narke, who also recognized Sāī Bābā as the *antaryāmin*, recalled: "I still have the indelible impression of Baba sitting in the Chavadi[28] with piercing eyes." The saint's smile was also most charming. Khaparde, in a diary entry dated December 7, 1910, wrote: "Sayin Sahib spoke with such a wonderful sweetness and he smiled so often and with such extraordinary grace that the conversation will always remain engraved in my memory."[29] Moreover, on January 17, 1912, he noted: "Sayin Baba showed his face and smiled most benignly. It is

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[22] See Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 116.
[23] *Ibid.*, 117.
[24] See Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 9-11.
[25] *Ibid.*, 96.
[26] See Khaparde, *Shirdi Diary*, 84 (entry dated February 14, 1912).
[27] Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 58.
[28] A local hostel where Sāī Bābā, from an early period, used to sleep. The saint developed the habit of sleeping one night at the *masjid* and the other night at the *cāvaḍī*.
[29] Khaparde, *Shirdi Diary*, 4.

worth while spending years here to see it even once. I was overjoyed and stood gazing like mad."[30]

Sāī Bābā used to look at people very intensely, which for a Hindu is reminiscent of *dṛṣṭi* or 'gaze concentration', a well-known *haṭhayoga* practice. By the same token, the spiritual, transforming power of a saint's glance is well-documented even in Sufism. Narasimhaswami observes that:

> when Bala Saheb Bhate visited Baba in 1909… the very look of Baba pierced and transfixed him. He sat for half an hour, then for an hour, and when reminded by those near him that it was time to move away, had not the slightest inclination to move… It was with difficulty that he was pulled away from Baba. Here is a case of what we might term fascination.[31]

On December 11, 1910 Khaparde wrote: "…Sayin Maharaj looked at me with an eye that blazed wonderfully and sparkled with anger."[32] Moreover, on January 6, 1912, he noted: "Sayin Maharaj was in an exceptionally pleased mood, made mystic signs to Megha, and did what are known as 'Drishti pata' in Yoga."[33] Again, the following day he wrote in his diary: "Sayin Maharaj looked exceedingly pleased and gave Yogic glances. I passed the whole day in a sort of ecstasy."[34]

Even Meher Bābā (1894-1969), who first met Sāī Bābā in Shirdi in December 1915, emphasized the lustre of the *faqīr*'s eyes. As A. G. Munsiff reported:

> Avatar Meher Baba used to say that Sai Baba had lustrous eyes. The light in his eyes attracted most persons towards him. All Perfect Ones are unique. If there was a physical characteristic that set him above other men, it was his eyes. The eyes of this Perfect One were so luminous, with such power and deep penetration in his gaze that no one could look into them for long. One felt that he was reading the story of the soul from the time of his creation; nothing could be kept secret from that gaze. Once those eyes beheld one, that look was never forgot-

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[30] *Ibid.*, 54.

[31] Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 4, 34.

[32] Khaparde, *Shirdi Diary*, 10.

[33] *Ibid.*, 46. *Dṛṣṭipāta* or *dṛṣṭinipāta* is the 'falling of the sight,' that is, a yogic look/glance believed to be most powerful and a token of the saint's grace (*dṛṣṭiprasāda*, *vīkṣaṇa*).

[34] *Ibid.*, 47. In an entry dated January 13, 1912, Khaparde wrote that "Sayin Maharaj did not say a word today and did not even throw the glances which he usually does." Similarly, on January 19, 1912, he observed: "The Kakad Arti was done, but Sayin Maharaj did not show his face clear and did not appear to open his eyes. He never threw glances spreading grace."

> ten. After seeing his face and eyes, people could only bow to him in worship as their Lord.[35]

Sāī Bābā's touch was also believed to be mighty and healing,[36] and he would often bless people by placing his palm upon their heads.[37] Narasimhaswami remarks:

> He would simply touch with his palm the head of a devotee and this would have one kind of influence. Sometimes he pressed his hand heavily on the head of a devotee as though he was crushing out some of the lower impulses. On occasions, he would pat on the devotee's back or would pass his palm over the head. Each had its own effect affecting the sensations and feelings of the subject.[38]

To cite but one case: "Baba placed his palm over his head. That had a strange effect on him. He completely forgot himself and all surroundings, and was in an ecstatic trance."[39] Our *faqīr* was also in the habit of making signs in the air, which were mostly unintelligible to people. Narasimhaswami notes: "Baba in the morning would sit near his *dhuni* (or fire) and wave his arms and fingers about making gestures (which conveyed no meaning to the onlookers) and saying 'Haq', which means God."[40]

The combination of glance and touch were of course reputed to be most powerful. Again Narasimhaswami mentions the following instance: "Suddenly Baba turned back and fixed him with a glance and touched his left wrist. At once the Rohilla[41] cowered and sank like a lump of lead. He was not able to lift up either himself or the club. This man later left Shirdi for good."[42]

All in all, Sāī Bābā's whole persona, his glances, movements and utterances, conveyed an immediate experience of the sacred. As the old villagers of Shirdi told me when I interviewed them in October

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[35] Munsiff, *Sai Baba: The Perfect Master*, 38-39. See also *ibid.*, 45.

[36] Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 55, reports that Sāī Bābā once cured a Bandra lady from her headache by touching and gently stroking her head.

[37] See Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 32, 178.

[38] *Ibid.*, 130. See also *ibid.*, vol. 4, 35.

[39] *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 138. The person who had such experience was Rao Saheb Yeshwant Janardan Galwankar; see also Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 199.

[40] Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 66. See also Khaparde, *Shirdi Diary*, 80 (entry dated February 9, 1912), 101 (entry dated March 8, 1912).

[41] The term refers to a Muslim of Afghan descent.

[42] Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 82.

1985, being in the presence of Sāī Bābā gave them the awesome feeling of being in the presence of God.[43]

Our *faqīr* appears to have assured his presence even after his death. The *Shri Sai Satcharita*, the veritable 'Bible' for all Sāī Bābā devotees, at chap. 25, vv. 105-108, quotes these words of the saint:

> Even when I am no more, trust my words as the truth. My bones will give you an assurance from my grave. Not me alone, but even my tomb will speak to you. He who surrenders to it whole-heartedly, with him will it sway. Do not worry that I will be lost to you. You will hear my bones speaking to you of matters of your own interest. Only remember me, always, with a heart that is trusting. Worship me selflessly and you will achieve your highest weal.[44]

Also to Abdullah Jan, a *faqīr* who first visited Shirdi in 1913 and once expressed his fear that he would die, the saint is reported saying: "From within the tomb, I will beat with sticks."[45] Indeed, the tomb or *dargāh* of a Sufi saint is believed to be the repository of the saint's power (*baraka*). As Warren observes: "It is a well-known *Sufi* phenomenon that a *Sufi* saint's power remains at his tomb, so the saying goes that he never dies…. People continue to report that they have received posthumous help 'from the tomb' as he [Sāī Bābā] promised."[46]

Sāī Bābā and Yoga in the *Shri Sai Satcharita*

The *Shri Sai Satcharita* or "The True Life of Lord Sai" is unanimously regarded by Hindu devotees as the most authoritative repository of the life and deeds of their beloved saint. This 'official' hagiography or devotional biography is revered as the most sacred book (*pothī*) by all Hindu *bhakta*s, who read/recite its chapters as part of their daily worship. The *Shri Sai Satcharita* was composed in Marathi by Govind Raghunath Dabholkar (1859-1929), who conceived it while Sāī Bābā

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[43] The collection of these interviews constituted an appendix to my BA Thesis, which I discussed at the 'Ca' Foscari' University of Venice, Italy, in June 1987. Unfortunately, they were deemed too lengthy and not included in the *The Life and Teachings of Sai Baba of Shirdi*.

[44] Dabholkar, *Shri Sai Satcharita*, 414.

[45] Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 183. For a similar assurance given to one Raghuvir and to H. S. Dikshit on October 3, 1918, see A. E. Bharadwaja, *Sai Baba the Master* (Ongole: Sai Master Publications, 1983), 110.

[46] Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 204. Similar beliefs surround the tombs or *samādhi*s of Hindu saints.

was still alive having obtained the saint's permission and blessings. Sāī Bābā, placing his hand on Dabholkar's head and handing him the *udī*, would have exclaimed (chap. 2, vv. 72-77): "Your wish will be fulfilled … Make a collection of all the authentic stories, experiences, conversations and talks, etc. It is better to keep a record. He has my full support. He is but the instrument; I myself will write my own story … He should subdue his ego and offer it at my feet."[47] The inspiration came to him after seeing Sāī Bābā performing one of his bizarre actions i.e. grinding large quantities of wheat at the mosque, and hearing his final command to the women of the village to throw the flour at the side of a brook at the village boundary. Local people in Shirdi gave the interpretation that in this way the saint banished a cholera epidemic, preventing it from entering the village: it was not wheat, but the terrible disease that he fed to the quern to be crushed (chap. 1, vv. 104-138).

Dabholakar, whom Sāī Bābā nicknamed Hemadpant (the famous thirteenth-century prime minister and court-poet of the Yadavas), was a Gaud Saraswat Brahman who served as a clerk of the Bombay government and later also as a magistrate in Bandra, a Bombay suburb. He came to Shirdi for the first time in 1910, just eight years before Sāī Bābā passed away, and became a permanent resident of the village in 1916 when he retired. He thus started gathering data and recording the main facts and incidents of the saint's life in the final years of Sāī Bābā's life (he had sketched two chapters before the *faqīr*'s death). The actual writing appears to have started in 1922-23, and was completed and published in 1929. The *Shri Sai Satcharita* is divided up into 53 chapters (51, plus an Epilogue and an Epitome), and is written in the traditional *ovī* verse form, comprising more than 9,300 verses.[48] With its unsystematic yet captivating mixture of stories and anecdotes of Sāī Bābā's life and teachings, it is a fine example of the hagiographic genre (despite its rather rough literary style),[49] under the evocative spell of celebrated works of the *advaitabhakti* tradition of the saint-poets of Maharashtra, such as the *Eknāthī Bhāgavata*. Indeed, Dabhol-

[47] Dabholkar, *Shri Sai Satcharita*, 22-23.

[48] The *ovī* meter, which originally used to be recited and singed, consists of either six or eight syllables, the quantity as a rule being that of a long syllable.

[49] On the relevance of hagiographic models and materials and the hagiographic literary genre, see F. Mallison, éd., *Constructions hagiographiques dans le monde indien. Entre mythe et histoire* (Paris: Editions Champion, 2001). On the cult of Muslim saints, see M. Gaborieau, "Inde," in H. Chambert-Loir—C. Guillot (éds.), *Le culte des saints dans le monde musulman* (Paris: Presses de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1995), 197-210.

kar conceived his work in the trail of the Maharashtrian Vārkarī movement, explicitly linking Sāī Bābā to it, so as to situate his beloved saint within a well established tradition. Thus Shirdi is praised as a sacred ford or *tīrtha* along the Godavari river and as a modern Pandharpur, and Sāī Bābā is identified with Viṭṭhala/Viṭhobā (as well as with various other Hindu deities).

The actual model of the *Shri Sai Satcharita* appears to be the Marathi *Gurucaritra* ("Life of the Master"), the Gospel for all devotees of the god Datta/Dattātreya, written by Sarasvati Gangadhar around the middle of the sixteenth century.[50] Divided into 51 chapters containing more than seven thousand *ovī*s, this hagiography presents the miraculous lives of Shripad Shrivallabh (c. 1323-53) and Nṛsiṃha Sarasvatī (c. 1378-1458), the two seminal figures venerated as the first 'historical' *avatāra*s of Dattātreya. To be sure, Dabholkar as well as most Hindus viewed and still view Sāī Bābā to be a manifestation of Dattātreya,[51] an integrative deity revered as highest *yogin* (*paramahaṃsa* or *avadhūta*), supreme *guru*, and eternal *avatāra*, even accommodating Islamic tenets. Dattātreya is a most important figure in the pan-Indian sect of the Nāths, a *śaiva* yogic tradition which became popular especially from the twelfth century onwards. Dattātreya had and still has an important place in the Western, Deccani pantheon of the 'nine Nāths' (*navnāth*), being revered as an immortal *yogin* and one of the originators of the movement along with Gorakhnāth and Matsyendranāth. In the tradition of the Vārkarīs, the saint-poets Eknāth (1533-99)—advocate, via his *guru* Janardan, of a synthetic mysticism, open to all—and the encyclopaedic Dāsopant (1551-1615) are especially linked to Dattātreya. The hagiographer Mahīpati offers accounts of the *darśana*s which Dattātreya, as a Muslim soldier and as a Muslim *faqīr*, would have granted to Eknāth (*Bhaktavijaya* 45.82-85, 45.105 ff.; *Bhaktalīlāmṛta* 13.164-205). Mahīpati also narrates stories of the meetings between Eknāth and Dāsopant, in which

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[50] Originally the *Shri Sai Satcharita* consisted of 44 chapters, the text ending with the narrative of Sāī Bābā's '*niryan*' or passing away. However, precisely in order to conform itself to the model of the *Gurucaritra*, seven more chapters were later added, plus an epilogue and an epitome. For the text of the *Gurucaritra*, see R. K. Kamat, ed., *Śrīgurucaritra* (Mumbai: Samdeep Press,1990 [1937]).

[51] For instance, Narasimhaswami in his *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 147, reports: "Baba was considered as Datta Avatar by Das Ganu and by those who heard his *kirtans*." On Dattātreya, see my monograph *Dattātreya: The Immortal Guru, Yogin, and Avatāra. A Study of the Transformative and Inclusive Character of a Multi-Faceted Hindu Deity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

Dattātreya appears to the latter as the guardian of Eknāth's house (*Bhaktalīlāmṛta* 22.79-101; see also 22.48-65). After Eknāth and Dāsopant, in the development of the devotional and ascetic movement linked to Dattātreya we find significant *guruparamparā*s of both *vaiṣṇava* and *śaiva* masters (many of Nāth inspiration) comprising also *pīr*s i.e. saintly figures of Sufi background, integrating Islamic mysticism with non-dual Vedānta. Besides Sāī Bābā, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries important *guru*s revered as incarnations of Dattātreya were Māṇikprabhu (1817-1865), Akkaḷkoṭ Mahārāj (d. 1878), Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī (1854-1914), Mahārāj Bāḷekuṇḍrikar (1855-1905), Nūri Mahārāj (1869-1923), Purohit Svāmin (1882-1941), Nisargadatta Mahārāj (1897-1981), and Raṅga Avadhūta (1898-1968). All these, often exhibiting a bizarre, antinomian personality following Dattātreya's pattern, are honored both as great *jñānin*s and miracle-workers, givers of liberation, *mukti*, as well as mundane enjoyments, *bhukti*.

Beginning in 1923, the chapters of the *Shri Sai Satcharita* started appearing serialized in the Shirdi monthly magazine *Shri Sai Leela*. Following its book publication in 1929, the text was rendered in Marathi prose form and also translated in other Indian languages, such as in Gujarati. An English adaptation of the *Shri Sai Satcharita* appeared in 1944 written by Nagesh Vasudev Gunaji. It proved greatly successful and ever since it has had many editions. Recently, in 1999, Indira Kher has produced a fine, integral translation of the Marathi text, chapter by chapter and verse by verse.[52] This translation is important, since Gunaji's adaptation proved to be not always reliable. As noted by Warren, whereas Dabholkar, albeit from his Hindu perspective, was honest enough not to silence the Sufi aspect of Sāī Bābā—for example, reporting that he was circumcised, and quoting the saint's statement that he belonged to the Muslim caste (chap. 11, verse 62)—Gunaji tended to omit references to Sāī Bābā's Muslim identity, even adding sections of his own Hindu interpretation of the saint's actions, in an effort to present a purely 'Hinduized' picture of the *faqīr*.[53] Regarding every word and action of Sāī Bābā as sacred, Dabholkar felt a moral obligation to be most accurate in his account. Thus, whenever

[52] For the original Marathi, see G. R. Dabholkar, *Śrī Sāī Saccarita* (Shirdi: Shri Sai Baba Sansthan, 1982[12] [1929]).

[53] Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 18, rightly criticizes my relying in my 1993 book on Gunaji's adaptation.

Sāī Bābā spoke in Deccani Urdu he recorded it[54] and also included some significant Muslim incidents: for instance, in chapter 38, verse 30, Dabholkar notes that Sāī Bābā would occasionally go through the special Muslim ritual known as *takkya*, when a goat is to be killed on an altar so as to ensure that its meat be *halal* or appropriately purified. As Warren writes, it appears that Dabholkar "personally regarded Sai Baba as a Muslim, although he was limited in fully understanding Sai Baba's Muslim-*Sufi* identity due to his own ignorance of Islam and Sufism in Maharashtra."[55]

Utilizing Kher's reliable translation, I'll here quote what appear to me as the few relevant passages of the *Shri Sai Satcharita* in which Dabholkar describes Sai Baba as a *yogin* or presents incidents of his life which might be referred to the practice of yoga. Here and there, Dabholkar calls Sai Baba a *yogin*: in chapter 4 he defines him as "this greatest among *yogis*" (v. 38), whose "*samādhi* was unperturbed" (v. 49), "born a *siddha*" (v. 56), and in the final, 53rd chapter, he reiterates that Sai Baba was "the greatest of *yogis*" (v. 43).

The value of the *Shri Sai Satcharita*, steeped in Vedāntic lore, lies primarily in its being a testimony and most powerful propagator of the Sai Baba cult, offering a picture of how the saint was understood and worshipped by the overwhelming Hindu majority of devotees in the final years of his life.[56] Its historical, documentary value is also relevant and should be recognized, though it needs to be carefully evaluated and critically assessed. Besides Dabholkar's work there exist other memoirs of Sāī Bābā written by devotees as well as some holy figures who were his contemporaries. Among secondary authors, mention must be made of the contributions of B. V. Narasimhaswami (also known as H. H. Narasimha Swamiji), founder-president of the All India Sai Samaj: he collected the sayings attributed to Sāī Bābā in his *Charters and Sayings* (4th ed. 1942); in 1936 and 1938 he interviewed

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[54] Narasimhaswami himself acknowledged that "Baba knew Arabic and Urdu, and taught *Koran* to Abdul," see *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 166. Moreover: "Baba prepared *khichdi* [boiled mixture of rice and split pulse] with mutton;" *ibid.*, 167, and "distributed not merely vegetarian food, but also meat for non-vegetarians prepared … by himself;" *ibid.*, 184.

[55] Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 150.

[56] An important propagator of Sāī Bābā's fame during the saint's lifetime was the Citpāvan Brahman Ganesh Dattatreya Sahasrabuddhe, better known as Das Ganu (1868-1962), especially through his song-sermons (*kīrtan*s). A presentation of this staunch Hindu nationalist and Maharashtrian chauvinist in relation to Sāī Bābā is afforded by Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 2, 122-154.

many Shirdi devotees, publishing in 1942 their experiences in 3 vols.; and in 1955-1956 published a *Life of Sai Baba* in 4 vols. Indeed, as the saint's 'apostle', Narasimhaswami was instrumental in the spreading of Sāī Bābā's renown throughout India, as he himself noted.[57] His emphasis on the miraculous (in vol. 4 of his *Life* he devotes the final three chaps. to Sāī Bābā's *siddhi*s and *līlā*s)[58] calls for discrimination on the reader's part, but does not diminish the overall relevance of his work. Most if not all of these documents concern the final part of the saint's life i.e. more or less his last ten years (1908-1918), when Sāī Bābā had become popular. They were written by urban, high-caste Brahmans, mainly coming from the Bombay area, who interpreted Sāī Bābā through their own Hindu perspective and thus reinforced the Hindu gloss over the saint.[59] I shall selectively utilize these contributions and the work of other more recent authors who have studied the complex figure of our *faqīr* when analyzing the passages quoted below, which can be reduced to five main narratives.

1. The Seat of Sāī Bābā's Furu (Chap. 4, vv. 121-138)

… He [Sāī Bābā] never visited anyone, but remained near the Neem tree, day and night.

….

A strange thing happened, one day! A few persons were possessed by the spirit of the deity, Khandoba[60]. In their frenzy, they started puffing and grasping and panting, emitting loud deep sounds. So people began to ask them questions.

"To which fortunate parents does this boy belong? From where and how has he come up to here? O Khandoba, at least you find the answers for us," one of them said to the god.

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[57] See *ibid*., vol. 3, 187.

[58] See chap. 10 ("Baba's *Siddhis*, Their Origin and Their Use"), chap. 11 ("Baba's Recent *Lilas* in the South and Their Purpose"), and chap. 12 ("Baba's Teachings as to *Siddhis*"), 129-192.

[59] Narasimhaswami nonetheless dedicated chaps. 13-15 of vol. 3 of his *Life of Sai Baba* to Islam: "Baba and Muslims' Contacts," "Some Muslim Devotees," and "Other Muslim Devotees. Abdul (1871-1954)," 151-187.

[60] Popular pastoral god, typically identified with Śiva, whose home is the temple at Jejuri in Pune District.

And the god said, "Go, get a hoe, and strike at the spot that I show you. Strike here with your hoes and you will get your answers about this lad."
Then, in the same spot, near the enclosing wall of the village, under the same Neem tree, they struck blow upon blow with their hoes till they came upon some bricks.
The layer of bricks over, they found an underground cell with four metal lamps burning in it, the entrance to which was closed by a quern-stone.
The cell was paved with limestone and contained a wooden seat, a *Gomukhi*[61] with a beautiful rosary. Then the god said, "For twelve years this boy undertook penance at this spot."
All the people were wonderstruck at this and started plying the boy with probing questions. But the lad was full of playful mischief and told them a story, altogether different.
"This is my Guru's seat," said he, "and my most sacred legacy. Listen to me this once and preserve it as it is."
So said Baba, said the listeners who were present. But why is this, my tongue, moved to say that Baba was giving it a different turn?
I was amazed at myself. Why should I think in such terms about Baba? But now I have realized that this must have been his spontaneous sense of humour.
Baba dearly loved a joke. Maybe, the cell was his own dwelling. But what does one lose in saying that it is the Guru's? How does its importance suffer?
And so on his orders, the cell was, once again, sealed as his Guru's seat, by restoring the bricks to their former position.
The Neem tree was to Baba as great and as sacred as the *Ashwathha* (*Peepul*) or *Audumbar* tree. He loved that Neem tree dearly, and greatly revered it.
Mhalsapati[62] and other old residents of Shirdi village bow to this place as the *samadhi* of Baba's Guru.
It is common knowledge among the villagers that Baba sat near this *samadhi*, in meditation, observing total silence for a period of twelve years.

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[61] A glove, shaped like a cow's mouth, which covers the hand in counting rosary beads.

[62] The keeper of the local Khaṇḍobā temple and one of the first devotees of the saint. It was he who, according to our sources, first called him 'Sāī'. On Mhalsapati (d. 1922), see Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 2, 1-42.

2. Sāī Bābā's Peculiar Way of Practicing Dhauti and His Feat of Separating His Limbs at Will (khaṇḍayoga) (Chap. 7, vv. 53-69)

Baba knew '*dhoti-poti*' (a *haṭhayoga* practice). Without anybody's knowledge, he would go to some secluded spot, take a bath and then bring out his intestines (through the mouth), which he would then wash and hang them up to dry.

Equidistant as the well from the mosque, was a banyan tree and beyond this tree was another well. To this latter, he used to go every two days.

In the scorching heat, at high noon, seeing that no one was around, he would himself draw water from the well and wash his mouth, face, etc.

And so, on one such occasion, when he was sitting down to his bath, he hurriedly brought out his intestines and began washing them at that place.

When a goat is killed, its intestines are turned inside out, washed clean, and put, fold upon fold, to dry.

Similarly, he took out his intestines, and turning them inside out, cleaned them carefully. He then spread them out on the guava tree, to the consternation of the people around.

Even now, there are people alive in Shirdi, who have seen Baba in this condition with their own eyes, who say that he was a unique saint.

Sometimes he would practice *Khanda-yoga*, separating hands, legs, etc., from the trunk. And these parts of his body could be seen fallen off at different places in the mosque.

And when the people, in large numbers, came running to see the shocking spectacle of his body thus severed into parts, what they always saw was Baba, whole and in one piece.

Once a spectator was terrified in seeing such a scene and thought that some wicked person must have killed Baba and committed such an atrocity.

In the four corners of the mosque, parts of the body could be seen scattered at different places. It was the midnight hour and not a soul was around. He became greatly worried.

If he were to go and tell someone, he would himself get implicated. This was his difficulty. So he went and sat outside.

But that it could be some yogic practice of Sai, he did not even dream. The sight of the mutilated body struck terror in his heart.

He wanted very much to inform somebody of what he had seen, but the fear that, being the first informer, he would himself be accused of the crime, –
Prevented him from telling anyone. Doubts and fears crowded his mind. So once again, at dawn, he went to see and was quite astonished.
What he had seen earlier had vanished completely, and Baba sat in his usual place, hale and hearty. He began to wonder whether this was a dream.
These yogic practices of *dhoti-poti*, etc., were being practiced by Baba, since childhood. But nobody could comprehend the extent of his yogic powers and the mysterious behaviour consequent upon it.

3. Sāī Bābā's 'Temporary Death' (Vhap. 44, vv. 62-89)

It was the full moon in the brighter half of the month of *Margashirsha* (December), when Baba became restless with an attack of Asthma and in order to be able to bear the physical affliction, he went into *nirvikalpa samadhi*.
And Baba had already told everyone, "For three days from now onwards, I shall go into *samadhi*. Do not try to rouse me."
That corner of the *Sabha-mandap*[63] that you see, that was the place to which Baba had pointed his finger and said, "Dig the *samadhi* there and place me at that spot."
Addressing Mhalsapati, Baba had himself said, most positively, "Do not abandon me with unconcern, the next three days.
And put up two flags at that place as a sign indicative of the spot." So saying, he went into *nirvikalpa samadhi*.
And, as in a sudden fainting fit, his body fell down, motionless. Mhalsapati took his head on his lap; but the others gave up all hope.
It was night time; the clock had struck ten, when this incident took place. People fell silent, thinking, "Alas! What a sudden calamity!"
No breathing, no pulse—life seemed to have abandoned the body. To the people, it appeared a terrible state; but to Sai, it was a state of greatest happiness.
Thereafter, Mhalsapati, who was always alert in his mind, kept guard over Baba, day and night, sitting up wide awake, all the time.

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[63] A portico in front of a temple, where people assemble.

Although it was a command from Sai's own mouth, to dig his *samadhi*, yet no one had the heart to do so.
The whole village gathered there to see Baba in the state of *samadhi* and people stared at him in utter astonishment. Bhagat,[64] however, would not put down Baba's head from his lap.
So that it may not be a sudden shock to the people to see that life had departed from his body, Baba had asked them to guard him for three days. "Really, Sai had deceived them," thought the people.
His breathing ceased; all the bodily organs became still, without any trace of activity and the glow of life over it dimmed, too!
Consciousness of the outside world was lost; speech fell silent. Everyone was deeply worried as to how he would regain consciousness.
The body would not gain consciousness. Two days passed in this way. *Mulla, Maulavi,*[65] *fakir*—all came and began discussing what was to be done next.
Appa Kulkarni, Kashiram came, and took a firm decision that Baba had attained his Eternal Abode. So his body should be laid to rest.
Some said, "Wait a moment, such haste is not good. Baba is not like others. His words are always true."
At once, the others replied, "From where will life come into a body that is already cold? How thoughtless all these people are!
Dig the grave at the spot indicated. Oh, do call all the people and give a timely burial! Get everything ready for it."
And even as the debate continued, the period of three days passed. Then, early morning, at three o'clock, they saw signs of life returning.
Gradually, consciousness returned; the twisting and turning of the body began; breathing too, resumed and the stomach could be seen heaving up and down.
The face began to look pleased and happy, the eyes opened. The motionless state had disappeared and signs of life, of waking up, appeared.
…
Everyone was pleased to see that Sai had regained consciousness. By God's Grace, a great calamity was averted. But still, the devotees were filled with amazement.

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[64] The term identifies Mhalsapati. It is popularly attributed to one who is possessed by a deity—in Mhalsapati's case it would have to be Khaṇḍobā—and acts as an intermediary between the god or goddess and the community of the faithful.

[65] These terms identify teachers of Islamic law.

Bhagat gazed into his face with fond admiration and Sai too, nodded silently. The *Maulavi* and *fakir* turned pale in the face. Thus a terrible situation was prevented.
Had Bhagat failed to obey Baba's command, on seeing the obstinate insistence of *Maulavi*, had his resolution wavered ever so slightly, then indeed, the situation would have been terrible.

4a. Sāī Bābā's Wooden Plank (Chap. 10, vv. 15-21, 29-30)

A wooden plank, four times an arm's length, wide as an outstretched palm (the measure of the thumb and the little finger, extended) would be suspended from the rafter, like a swing, fastened at both ends by pieces of rags.
On such a plank Baba used to sleep. Earthen oil-lamps burned at the head and foot of his bed. No one ever understood when he climbed up or down from it.
He would either sit up there, with head bent, or would be sleeping on it. But when he climbed up or got down from it, nobody ever saw him doing so.
The plank was secured by strips of rags—but how did it balance Baba's weight? Well, when all the *Mahasiddhis* reside in you, is not the plank only for name's sake?
Where even the tiniest particle pricks the eye, a man who has attained the *siddhi* of *Anima* (ability to reduce oneself to an atom) can hide quite comfortably in it. Hence Baba's power to move with ease in the form of a fly or a worm or an ant.
He who has *Anima* as his slave, will he take long, transforming himself into a fly? And he who can stay suspended in mid-air, of what consequence is a wooden plank to such a one?
The *Ashtasiddhis*[66] like *Anima*, *Mahima*,[67] *Laghima*,[68] etc., and the *Navanidhis*[69] stood by his side with folded hands. The plank was to him but an instrumental cause!
….
Always Self-engrossed, sitting still in one *asana* (posture), without the bother of going or coming here and there; with his baton as the trea-

[66] The eight traditional yogic powers.
[67] The power to enlarge one's body at will, making it heavier and heavier.
[68] The power to make one's body light and thus be able to levitate.
[69] The nine mythical treasures of Kubera, the god of wealth.

sured staff of a *sannyasin*,—his was indeed a quiet peaceful existence, free from worldly cares!
Without the least desire for wealth or fame, and alms collection as the sole means of subsistence, he passed his days in this yogic state of withdrawal of all the senses (from the attraction of sensual pleasures).

4b. Significance of Sāī Bābā's Sleeping on the Plank (Chap. 45, vv. 130-142)

A detailed description of this plank has already been given in an earlier chapter (Ch. 10). So now, listen to its significance.
Once, as Baba was earnestly describing the importance of this plank, listen to the thought that arose in the mind of Kakasaheb Dikshit.
And he said to Baba: "If you are so fond of sleeping on the plank, I shall very lovingly, suspend it from the roof. Then you can comfortably lie down on it."
Baba said to him, "Leaving Mhalsapati below, how can I sleep up, alone? I am all right below, as I am."
So Kaka, very lovingly, said further, "I will suspend another plank. You can sleep on one, and Mhalsapati, on the other."
Just listen to Baba's reply to this. "Can he sleep on the plank, indeed? Only he can sleep on the plank who is an aggregate of virtues."
"Sleeping on the plank is not easy. Who can sleep on it, except me? Such sleeping is possible only for him, who can drive away sleep and keep his eyes open."
"When I go to sleep, I command him (Mhalsapati) 'Put your hand on my heart and keep sitting near me'."
"But even this work he cannot do. He keeps nodding drowsily, where he is sitting. To him, this plank is of no use. This plank is my bed only."
"In my heart the chanting of the Name goes on, ceaselessly. See for yourself, by keeping your hand there and if I happen to fall asleep, wake me up. When such is my instruction, to him,
"When he himself falls asleep instead, his hand becomes heavy as a stone. On my calling out '*Bhagat*', the sleep disappears from his eyes, causing him confusion and fright."
"One who cannot sit steadily on the ground, whose seat is not firm, the man who is a slave of sleep, i.e. *tamas*, how can he sleep on a height?"

Thus Baba pointed out, at the appropriate time, and out of affection for the devotees, "Do the duty ordained by your own nature and do not imitate the law of another."

5. The Breaking of Sāī Bābā's Brick (Chap. 44, vv. 45-46, 54-56); References to Sāī Bābā's Death on October 15, 1918 (Chap. 43, vv. 63-64)

For years together, there used to be an old brick of Baba's, on which he rested his head, while sitting in *yogasan*.
Every night, taking support of that brick, Baba used to sit in the mosque, in solitude, very peacefully, in a *yogic asana*.
….
It was this same brick, resting his elbow on which, Baba would spend hour after hour, sitting in *yogasan*, all ready for *Yoga*. He naturally had great love for it.
"The brick, in the company of which, I go into a state of Self-absorption, and which was dearer to me than life itself—that companion of mine is broken and I too, cannot remain without it."
"That brick, my companion of a lifetime, has gone, leaving me behind."
Remembering its many qualities in this manner, Baba started crying.
….
Now that the cause of the devotees is accomplished, therefore, it is said, he has abandoned the body. But who will believe these words? Does a *yogi* have *niryan* and rebirth?

Empowered with the ability of death-at-will that Sai Samarth[70] was, he burned down his body in the *yogic* fire and, himself merging into the Unmanifest, he yet dwells in the hearts of his devotees.

A Tentative Evaluation

The Seat of Sāī Bābā's Guru

With reference to Sāī Bābā's early years in Shirdi, it is reported that the saint was in the habit of living at the foot of a local *nīm* or margosa tree, practicing austerities and contemplative exercises. He appears to have kept aloof from the local villagers, living in solitude and wander-

[70] An epithet often given to *guru*s and saints meaning strong, powerful.

ing in the nearby woods. Because of his lonely, taciturn and apparently weird demeanour many considered him to be a *pāgal*, that is, a madman. If Sāī Bābā's connection with trees recalls the Hindu typology of the human (as in the case of the Buddha) and divine *yogin* (as in the case of Śiva), such behaviour is by no means exclusive of yoga adepts, being widely resorted to by both Hindu and Muslim ascetics. The utilization and incorporation by Sufi adepts of a variety of yoga postures and practices is well documented. Warren observes:

> During Sai Baba's first advent in Shirdi he was seen sitting in the manner of a wandering *darvish* or *sa'ih* under a *neem* tree …. The practice of making the base of a tree, particularly a *neem* tree, a temporary resting place, is a typical Sufi mode of behaviour for an itinerant *faqir* …. It has already been noted that Sai Baba's contemporaries, Hazrat Babajan and Tajuddin Baba both made their home under trees. According to an old devotee, Sai Baba lived first under a *babul* tree, and later spent four or five years under a *neem* tree, and only after much persuasion moved to a more permanent home in an old *masjid*.[71]

In his early years at Shirdi, Sāī Bābā's ascetic disposition tallies with his dressing as an athlete and his involvement in wrestling,[72] and also with his being envisioned as a *hakīm*, a Muslim term denoting a doctor. Sāī Bābā

> would collect herbs and inexpensive drugs from the local shops and apply them to the sick. He is said to have cured snake bite, leprosy by using snake poison, and 'rotting eyes' with *bibā* (washer-men's marking-nut) as an alkaline aseptic…. Such medicinal knowledge, coupled with his mastery of yogic practices, already suggest the connotation of a knower of the secrets of human physiology and of a thaumaturge.[73]

The story of the seat/tomb of Sāī Bābā's teacher (*gurusthān*), purportedly located under the same *nīm* tree which the saint elected as his temporary residence, is hagiographically significant since it estab-

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[71] Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 223. See also Rigopoulos, *The Life and Teachings of Sai Baba of Shirdi*, 48-49.

[72] *Ibid.*, 66-67.

[73] *Ibid.*, 65. Narasimhaswami writes that Sāī Bābā told his devotee H. S. Dikshit "that he went on saying Hari, Hari, and Hari appeared before him. Thereafter he stopped giving medicine and went on giving *udi* only. Therefore Hari and Allah were the same to Baba" (*Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 156). In fact, Sāī Bābā's habit of preparing medicines is not restricted to his early years. On December 10, 1911, G. S. Khaparde noted in his diary that "Sayin Maharaj this afternoon prepared some medicine which he [one Balasaheb Bhate] took;" Khaparde, *Shirdi Diary*, 19. See also Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 60.

lishes a connection between Sāī Bābā and the village. Such link, according to various authors, would extend to one of the saint's previous lives: a current belief is that the *guru* to whom Sāī Bābā referred to was Kabīr.[74] Such belief is substantiated by the following statement attributed to our *faqīr*: "Kabir was my Guru. I put up at that foot tree, for that reason. God will bless those who burn incense here on Thursdays and Fridays."[75] Interestingly, Narasimhaswami does not even mention this episode in his *Life of Sai Baba*, possibly judging it to be irrelevant or unbelievable.[76] To the contrary, this narrative is taken to have historical value by other researchers. In particular, Swami Sharan Anand, a devotee of Sāī Bābā, was seemingly told by him that his *guru* was one Roshan Shah Mian, a Sufi who would have shed his mortal coil in Shirdi. Sāī Bābā would have then buried him under or near his beloved *nīm* tree.[77] Leaving aside these conjectures concerning the saint's *guru*, what is noteworthy is that this story conforms itself to a hagiographic pattern. It may be usefully confronted with a similar one of the fifteenth-century poet Harihara who wrote about the life of Allama Prabhu, a Vīraśaiva/Liṅgāyat holy man who hailed from Karnataka. A. K. Ramanujan summarizes the story as follows:

> While he was sitting in an out-of-town grove, downcast, scratching the ground idly with his toenail, he saw something: the golden *kalaśa* (pinnacle, cupola) of a temple jutting forth from the earth …. When he got the place dug and excavated …. before him stood the closed door of a shrine. Careless of consequence, Allama kicked the door open, and entered. He saw before him a *yogi* in a trance, concentrated on the *liṅga*. His eyes and face were all aglow, his locks glowing, a garland of *rudrākṣi* seeds round his neck, serpent earrings on his ears. Like the All-giving Tree, he sat there in the heart of the temple. The *yogi*'s name was Animiṣayya (the One without eyelids, the open-eyed one). While Allama stood there astonished, Animiṣayya gave into his hand a *liṅga* …. This experience of the secret underground, the cave-temple, is what is probably celebrated in the name Guheśvara or Lord of Caves, which appears in almost every Allama *vacana*.[78]

The hagiographic theme of the underground cell of a great *yogin* in the proximity of a sacred tree (the *yogin* being understood to be an

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[74] *Ibid.*, 101-102.
[75] Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 62. See also *ibid.*, 54.
[76] See Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 1, 21.
[77] See Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 42-43.
[78] A. K. Ramanujan, trans., *Speaking of Śiva* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 144.

immortal, absorbed in an eternal *samādhi*) is testified in the legend of Jñāndev appearing in a dream to Eknāth, asking him to open his tomb in Alandi so as to push aside the roots of an *ajan* tree that were hurting him, hindering his contemplation.[79] From Dabholkar's viewpoint, the statement that young Sāī Bābā undertook penance near a *nīm* tree at the holy spot of the seat/tomb of his *guru*, practicing meditation and observing silence for a period of twelve years—symbolic of a totality or fullness of time—is aimed at portraying the saint as a great *yogin*.

Concerning Sāī Bābā's *guru* and his full absorption in him, Narasimhaswami reports that our *faqīr* once stated:

> For twelve years I waited on my *guru* who is peerless and loving. How can I describe his love to me? When he was *dyanastha* (i.e., in love-trance) I sat and gazed at him. We were both filled with bliss. I cared not to turn my eye upon anything else. Night and day I pored upon his face with an ardour of love that banished hunger and thirst. The *guru*'s absence, even for a second, made me restless. I meditated on nothing but the *guru*, and had no goal, or object, other than the *guru*. Unceasingly fixed upon him was my mind. Wonderful indeed, the art of my *guru*! I wanted nothing but the *guru* and he wanted nothing but this intense love from me. Apparently inactive, he never neglected me, but always protected me by his glance. That *guru* never blew any *mantra* into my ear. By his grace, I attained to my present state. Making the *guru* the sole object of one's thoughts and aims one attains *paramartha*, the Supreme Goal. This is the only truth the *guru* taught me. The four Sadhanas[80] and six Sastras[81] are not necessary. *Trusting in the guru fully is enough*.[82]

With regard to the need of a *guru*, Sāī Bābā is reported saying:

> "The way is difficult. There are tigers and wolves in the jungles on the way." I (Kakasaheb) asked: "But Baba, what if we take a guide with us?" Baba answered: "Then there is no difficulty. The guide will take you straight to your destination, avoiding wolves, tigers and ditches etc. on

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[79] See J. E. Abbott—N. R. Godbole, trans., *Stories of Indian Saints: Translation of Mahipati's Marathi Bhaktavijaya*. With an Introduction by G. V. Tagare. Vols. 1 & 2 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1995 [Poona, 1933[4]]), Part 2, 186 [chap. 46, verses 163-169.

[80] These are the four paths (*mārga*s) of action (*karman*), devotion (*bhakti*), discipline (*yoga*), and knowledge (*jñāna*).

[81] Also known as *darśana*s, that is, the six orthodox systems of Hindu philosophy: Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā, and Vedānta.

[82] Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 60-61.

> the way. If there be no guide, there is the danger of your being lost in the jungles or falling into ditches."[83]

The fundamental practice advocated by Sāī Bābā, here recalled with intense emotion, was a burning love for his *guru*, to the point of absorbing/identifying himself with him. Everything is understood to be the *guru*'s grace. Nothing else is needed but a heart full of love for one's *guru*. Such intense devotion is coupled with awe: thus the saint is reported saying "I would tremble to come into the presence of my Guru."[84] As Narasimhaswami puts it: "The Guru is the only *sadhana* of the pupil in Baba's school, and the Guru's knowledge and power sink into the *sishya* by the intensity of faith and love of the *sishya*."[85] Such practice of making the teacher the focus of one's contemplation is commonly prescribed in both Hinduism and Sufism. With respect to Sufism, France Bhattacharya notes: "La méditation sur le maître spirituel est caractéristique de la pratique des Soufis. Le disciple doit-il méditer sur un miroir qu'il voit à l'intérieur de lui même, ou bien se tenir face à un miroir…"[86] From a Sufi perspective, absorption in the teacher leads to *tawakkul*, that is, to the perfection of faith/trust in Allah. From a Hindu perspective, such emphasis on pure love, through the interiorization of the *guru* and the final 'universalization' of the *guru* principle (*gurutattva*, as may be gauged in a popular text such as the *Gurugītā*), is the acme of *bhakti* leading to blissful union with the Beloved. Narasimhaswami thinks that it is precisely through the *guru*'s grace and one-pointed yogic contemplation upon him that Sāī Bābā acquired his powers: "Sai Baba had by the grace of his Guru and by his prolonged and continuous *dhyana*, *dharana* and *samadhi* on God-Guru-God, attained *laya*[87] in Him and all the powers flowing from God are found in such a devotee who had got *poorna laya*[88] in God."[89]

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[83] N. V. Gunaji, *Shri Sai Satcharita or The Wonderful Life and Teachings of Shri Sai Baba* (Adapted from the Original Marathi of Hemadpant) (Bombay: Shri Sai Baba Sansthan, 1982[10]), 9.

[84] Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 118.

[85] *Ibid.*, 73.

[86] F. Bhattacharya, "Un texte du Bengale médiéval: le yoga du kalandar (*Yoga-Kalandar*)," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, 90-91 (2003-2004): 86 n. 154.

[87] Dissolution or contemplative absorption.

[88] Full contemplative absorption.

[89] Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 4, 145.

Naturally, the Hindu sources frame Sāī Bābā's experience within an overall *bhakti* and Vedānta context. Narasimhaswami, nonetheless, occasionally recognizes Sāī Bābā's link to Sufism:

> In Sufism the Guru is the only God that the pupil is to have in his mind. He must be swallowed up in the contemplation of his Guru and in the appreciation of his love, and think of nothing else. … So, for years and years he [Sāī Bābā] gazed on his Guru with love and completely forgot everything else in the world. That is the concentration that Sufis want.[90]

One episode in a long story reported by Dabholkar appears to be biographical and betrays a Sufi character, which Warren has pointed out. In *Shri Sai Satcharita*, chap. 32 vv. 37 ff., Sāī Bābā narrates a tale of how he as a young man and three friends were discussing how to attain God-realization while wandering in a forest. What is stressed here is the greatness of the *guru*, imparting the teaching that only he who has love, without any expectation in return, is a true sage or *jñānin*. In particular, in verses 69-82 we read:

> He took me to a well, tied a rope to both my legs and lowered me in the well in a feet-up head-down position. Gururaya[91] suspended me in the well in such a way that the hands should not reach the water nor should any water go in my mouth. There was a tree near the edge of the well to which was tied the other end of the rope. Gururaya then went away, who knows where, with a mind free from doubt or anxiety. About four to four and a half hours passed by, after which he came back. He then quickly took me out and asked me "Are you all right?" I replied "I was full of joy. The happiness that I experienced—how can a lowly creature like me describe it?" Gururaya was very pleased to hear these words. He moved his hand on my back, very affectionately, and made me stay with him. Even as I am relating this to you, love surges in my heart. The Guru then took me to his school, showing for me the same loving concern as the mother-bird who clasps her young ones under her wings. And oh, how fascinating was the Guru's school! So much so that I forgot my fond attachment to my parents; the chain of delusion, attachment was broken and I was liberated, quite effortlessly…. I felt like embracing the Guru, storing up his image in the eyes themselves. Unless his image lives in the eyes all the time, the eyes will be but two balls of flesh. Or, I would rather be blind without his image …. When Guru alone is the object of meditation for the eyes and all else is as Guru himself, so that there is nothing separate from him, then it is called single minded meditation. When thus meditating

[90] *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 155.

[91] The *guru* extolled as supreme king.

> on the form of the Guru, the workings of the intellect cease. Therefore, ultimately, only make an obeisance to him, observing speechless silence.[92]

Warren aptly comments:

> A variation of … normal *chillah*[93] is the *chilla-i-ma'kusa* in which the aspirant is suspended in an inverted position while performing secluded prayers and meditation. The idea of an 'inverted *chillah*' is very old …. The technique consisted of being hung upside down in a lonely place such as a well, for a number of hours a day …. When the *pir* thought the *salik*[94] was spiritually prepared, he would confer an experience of bliss through his own spiritual power known as *baraka*. This feat was considered to be one of the most challenging in *Sufi* asceticism. In the classical period of Sufism, the *Sufi* with whom the *chilla-i-ma'kusa* is most associated is the thirteenth-century Chishti Sheikh Fariduddin Ganj-shakar of Pakpattan, more familiarly known as Baba Farid …. Sai Baba is describing a conversion experience which is well-defined as *tawbat* in the *Sufi* path. His life changed thereafter, for he then relates how he at once joined the *guru*/*pir*'s school, which we can now interpret as a *Sufi* school, known as a *madrasah*, where he was trained. The official biographers, however, treat this crucial event as a parable or as merely symbolic, due to their ignorance of the significance of *tawbat* in the *Sufi tariqat*.[95]

What is emphasized in this story is no special yogic technique but an intense outpouring of love. It is this 'intoxicated' love which is thought to promote the highest contemplation, ultimately leading to union with God through union to one's *guru*/*pīr*. It should be noted that from a Hindu perspective Sāī Bābā's identification with Dattātreya appears most fitting, given the fact that devotion to the *guru as God* is a paramount feature of the *Dattasampradāya*, in which Dattātreya is revered as the supreme *gurudeva*. Significantly, most editions of the Marathi *Gurucaritra* have incorporated the Sanskrit *Gurugītā*.[96]

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[92] Dabholkar, *Shri Sai Satcharita*, 521-522.

[93] A forty-day retreat in Sufi training.

[94] Adept along the spiritual path, disciple.

[95] Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 213-215. The *ṭarīq* or *ṭarīqa* (plural *ṭarīqāt*) is the Sufi path. If the episode of Sāī Bābā's being hung upside-down may well be biographical, still the impression is that this story is also highly symbolical.

[96] On the *Gurugītā* within the *Gurucaritra*, see my study *Guru: Il fondamento della civiltà dell'India. Con la prima traduzione italiana del 'Canto sul Maestro'* (Roma: Carocci, 2009), 225-299.

Sāī Bābā refused the traditional Hindu mode of instruction (*upadeśa*) consisting in a formal initiation through a *mantra*.[97] This was confirmed to me by the old villagers of Shirdi who had known the saint, who repeatedly told me that Sāī Bābā never gave *mantra* or *upadeśa* to anyone. Apparently, he gave only *āśīrvād*, that is, blessings, and that's all.[98] As his own *guru* did not teach this way, Sāī Bābā never taught any kind of specific practice (*sādhana*) or ritual. In the *Shri Sai Satcharita*, chap. 10, v. 113, Dabholkar states: "Baba prescribed no *Yogasanas*, no *Pranayama*, no violent suppression of the sense organs, nor *mantra*, *tantra* or *yantra pooja*. And he did not ever whisper *mantra* in the ears of his devotees."[99] To a Hindu woman, Radhabai Deshmukin, who wished to fast until death in order to persuade Sāī Bābā to give her a *mantra*, he refused saying: "I do not instruct through the ear. Our traditions are different."[100] The *faqīr* further told her that his *guru* just asked from him the 'two coins' of faith in God (*niṣṭhā*) and courageous patience (*saburī*): "Mother, Saburi is courage, do not

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[97] The Brahman Rao Bahadur Hari Vinayak Sathe, a retired Deputy Collector who first visited Shirdi in 1904, once specified that "Baba never gave *upadesha* or initiation to anyone, so I did not ask him;" A. Osborne, *The Incredible Sai Baba* (Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1970 [1957[1]]), 108.

[98] There is, however, one noticeable exception reported in *Shri Sai Satcharita*, chap. 27, vv. 166-167, where Sāī Bābā advises Mrs. Khaparde to practice the repetition (*japa*) of the *mantra* '*Rajaram*'. See also Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 4, where the saint is said to have advised the repetition of his name, and *ibid.*, 252-254, where he approved the *japa* of his name. See also Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 143, where Sāī Bābā is said to have revived the interest of one Rao Bahadur Moreshwar W. Pradhan for a *mantra* which the latter had received from his *guru* but had long neglected.

[99] Dabholkar, *Shri Sai Satcharita*, 158.

[100] Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 274. Narayan Govind Chandorkar, prominent among the saint's *bhakta*s, significantly reported that "all *mantras* that Baba spoke or recited were Arabic or Persian etc. and not Sanskrit;" see B. V. Narasimhaswami, *Devotees' Experiences of Sri Sai Baba*. 3 pts. (Hyderabad: Akhanda Sainama Saptaha Samithi, 1989 [Madras: All India Sai Samaj, 1942[1]]), 230. On N. G. Chandorkar's figure, see Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 2, 43-122. See also Narasimhaswami, *ibid.*, 251, where the saint discouraged his pupil Kashinath i.e. Upāsnī Mahārāj (1870-1941) from practicing *mantra-japa*; he rather advised him to keep quiet and do nothing, that is, to simply await the *guru*'s liberating grace. According to G. G. Narke, who thought that *bhaktimārga* was the main plank of Sāī Bābā, "in Baba's school, the Guru does not teach [through *mantra*s]. He radiates or pours influence. That influence is poured in and absorbed with full benefit by the soul which has completely surrendered itself…;" *ibid.*, vol. 3, 119. See also, *ibid.*, 125-126, 153-156.

discard it. It ferries you across to the distant goal. It gives manliness to men, eradicates sin and dejection and overcomes all fear."[101]

Sāī Bābā's Peculiar Way of Practicing Dhauti and his Feat of Separating his Limbs at Will (Khaṇḍayoga)

Through these stunning, 'theatrical' performances, the aim of the Hindu hagiographer is clearly that of depicting Sāī Bābā as an exceptional *yogin*, who had the power to severe the limbs of his body at will and who did not practice the *dhauti* or cleansing in the accustomed way i.e. by means of a long piece of cloth swallowed and left for some time in the stomach (as described for instance in *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* 2.24-25, where it is said to cure various ailments, among which is asthma). In my book *The Life and Teachings of Sai Baba of Shirdi*, I commented that "the hagiographic character of the narrative when it indulges in such details … does not diminish the general impression of an assiduous practice of *haṭha-yoga* on Baba's part, reproposing the hypothesis of a training in which Nātha influences might have played a role."[102] The terrifying *sādhana* of *khaṇḍayoga* is believed to be resorted to by extraordinary Nātha and Aghori ascetics, though these are by no means the only ones.[103] In nineteenth-century Maharashtra, that a Sufi might have practiced *haṭhayoga* and be exposed to Nātha influences is not at all exceptional. The 'Islamization' of yoga or the accommodation of Nāthism by Sufi adepts, establishing correspondences between the notions and practices of yoga and those of Sufi mysticism, has been a common phenomenon in medieval as well as modern India, at least from the fifteenth century.[104] As I noted in my 1993 book, citing Annemarie Schimmel, the performance of *khaṇḍayoga* finds an analogous Sufi counterpart: "A miracle which I have not found anywhere outside India is that some saints (in Sind, the Punjab, and South India) were seen during the *dhikr* when their limbs got separated from their body, each limb performing its own *dhikr*."[105]

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[101] Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 43.

[102] Rigopoulos, *The Life and Teachings of Sai Baba of Shirdi*, 47.

[103] For a contemporary account, see R. E. Svoboda, *Aghora II: Kundalini* (Calcutta: Rupa & Co., 1994), 113-115.

[104] See, for instance, C. W. Ernst, "The Islamization of Yoga in the *Amrtakunda* Translations," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 13, no. 2 (2003): 1-23.

[105] A. Schimmel, *Islām in the Indian Subcontinent* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), 132.

Meher Bābā was one of the first to highlight Sāī Bābā's Sufi characterization, declaring him to be the Perfect Master, the 'Centre/Pole of Creation' (*Quṭb-e-Irshad*) at the head of a spiritual hierarchy. He seemingly conceded that phenomena such as the one described as *khaṇḍayoga* by Dabholkar could actually occur. Commenting upon such episode in the *Meher Baba Journal*, sometime between 1938 and 1942, A. G. Munsiff wrote:

> Sai Baba was a '*ghouse*' type of spiritual personality. This *ghouse* type of master is very rare …. For their inner work, Perfect Ones sometimes enter the *ghouse* state and parts of their physical bodies separate. When that particular phase of work is finished, parts of their bodies automatically join together again when they return to gross (bodily) consciousness. It is a curious observation that Sai Baba had this *ghouse* characteristic. Since he was in charge of World War I, it could relate to all those human bodies that were shattered into pieces and their limbs scattered over the battlefields…. Each night, it seems, Sai Baba entered the *ghouse* state…. The *ghouse* state, according to some, is a rare state of spiritual ecstasy witnessed in saintly persons. It connotes, according to Sufis, a certain stage of spirituality (*Ghousiyat*) wherein the divine aspect of love is so very intense and overpowering as to effect visibly even the separation of the limbs of the physical body as stated above. It is also said that saints having this state of spiritual ecstasy do not long remain in it; they eventually outgrow the experience. This *ghouse* characteristic is also predominant in some God intoxicated persons—*masts*.[106]

Sāī Bābā is believed to have been detached from his body, his *guru* having freed him from this 'erroneous' identification. Once he is reported saying: "My Mourshad (Guru) has taken me away from this body. You can put the whole of this body on fire and I will enjoy the *ganath* (fun)."[107] These peculiar feats of our saint, which Dabholkar states were witnessed by various Shirdi villagers, are narrated by other sources besides the *Shri Sai Satcharita*. One Shivamma Thayee, a woman devotee, also claims to have witnessed Sāī Bābā performing both *dhauti* and *khaṇḍayoga* (the severing of his limbs she would have witnessed around 1915).[108] On the other hand, Narasimhaswami,

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[106] Munsiff, *Sai Baba: The Perfect Master*, 41-42.

[107] Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 28. See also *ibid.*, 118, where the body is said to be his house.

[108] Supposedly, Sāī Bābā would have told her: "Daughter Rajamma, I had done my '*Khand Yoga*' last night, which I some times do. I separate my limbs from my physical body, and then my physical life is no more there. My Soul (Spirit) had seen you moving in the street and stumbling against my mutilated legs and head but I did

though typically emphasizing the miraculous in Sāī Bābā's life, in this case refuses to give factual credit to such reports.[109] The question whether these narratives are true or false is of course not an issue here. While cultivating an empathic appreciation of hagiographical literature i.e. recognizing the importance the miraculous has in popular religion and in the cult of saints, one should avoid the two extremes represented by the uncritical acceptance of the devotional viewpoint and the rationalistic prejudice of refusing *a priori* all purported miracles or 'powers'.[110] The rejection of the charismatic dimension precludes the possibility of even trying to understand what it feels like to

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not speak to you because, firstly, my physical body was dead as my limbs lay scattered, and secondly, although My Spirit was mutely observing your movement in the street I could not talk to you; I chose not to give you any assurance or sign of My presence there, lest you should be frightened in that pitch dark midnight. I will also teach you this '*Khand Yoga*' shortly;" Sri La Sri Shivamma Thayee, *My Life with Sri Shirdi Sai Bab*a (*Thrilling Memories of Shivamma Thayee, 102 Years Old Lady, the Only Surviving Direct Devotee of Sri Shirdi Sai Baba*). Interview and Presentation by Dr. Satya Pal Ruhela (New Delhi: Franksons, 1992), 9. Moreover, Shivamma Thayee reports: "On some occasions, Baba used to take me to the well outside Shirdi …. He used to take out His intestines from His mouth, then wash them with well water and then He would spread those intestines on the outer ring wall of the well. He used to entrust me the responsibility of guarding His intestines from eagles, crows and other birds, because I was His *shishya* (disciple). Baba sat at some distance near the wall waiting for the intestines to dry up. On one occasion, I saw a big eagle circling around in order to pick up Baba's intestines which I was guarding. I at once cried to Baba, 'Swami, the eagle is coming to take your intestines. Swallow them immediately.' Baba immediately replied: 'Don't worry. I will create another one.' The eagle ultimately did not take away those intestines and after a few minutes Baba swallowed them back;" *ibid.*, 10.

[109] "Coming to *siddhis* …. it is said that he performed *kandayoga*, that is, separated the various parts of his body and kept them far apart and appeared as a dead body, and later on reunited those parts. It is unnecessary to discuss whether *kandayoga* is a case of mass hypnotism or individual hypnotism creating the impression in the mind of the beholder that the body is in pieces. Physiologically the body cannot be cut into a dozen pieces and kept apart for a long time and reunited at a pleasure so as to form one organic whole, and hence the probabilities are very much in favour of this *siddhi* being the same as or similar to the obstruction to seeing—*antardhana*—following which heading, Patanjali says, a similar *antardhana* of ideas takes place. That is, a *yogi* can make his entire body invisible to people or he can black out their ideas about his body …. Whether in the case of Baba there was really any *kandayoga* and what exactly it represented, are matters about which definite information is not available. Again it is said that Baba performed other yogic feats, that is, that he took out his entire entrails and placed them on a tree for drying up. These confound our notions of physiology and serve no useful purpose. We shall not discuss these further;" Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 4, 189-190.

[110] For a discussion of powers in relation to the *guru*'s supreme authority, see my *Guru: Il fondamento della civiltà dell'India*, chap. 3, 161-188.

come in touch with a saintly figure. Leaving aside all speculations, what is of interest is that *dhauti* as well as *khaṇḍayoga*—interpreted in a Sufi perspective as *ghousiyat* by Munsiff—could well have been incorporated by a Sufi adept who was not *strictu sensu* a *yogin*. Indeed, that Sāī Bābā might have been exposed to yoga and Nātha practices in his religious training is highly probable and not at all unreasonable, although it is impossible to estimate the actual weight of such hypothetic influence. For instance, he never prescribed *prāṇāyāma*, although breath-control is of paramount significance in Nātha ideology and practice. Our *faqīr* seems to have even warned against it, saying that "whoever proceeds by means of *pranayama* will have to come to me ultimately for further progress."[111]

Sāī Bābā's 'Temporary Death'

Sāī Bābā's apparent death is said to have taken place thirty-two years before his actual demise in 1918, that is, in 1886. The evaluations of this episode, which if only for its emotional, dramatic force is most noteworthy, differ considerably in the sources. The saint himself offered no explanation concerning the reason of such feat of temporarily 'going to Allah'. The *Shri Sai Satcharita*, strangely enough, presents the story in a plain form, with no miraculous overtones, saying that Sāī Bābā went into a 72 hours *samādhi* for bearing/ridding himself of an acute asthmatic attack. Narasimhaswami, however, develops a suggestive theory, interpreting the 'death' and 'resurrection' of the saint as a turning point, an event that determined the expansion of the *guru*'s mission.[112] Even Warren takes this episode to be of utmost significance, marking Sāī Bābā's crucial experience of *fanā'* ('passing away'), that is, his loss of his 'lower self' consciousness through which he would have 'died to himself' achieving a new life in God.[113] This would have been the apex of Sāī Bābā's spiritual achievement, the attainment of the condition of a 'perfected man' (*al-insanu al-kamil*). She writes:

> In 1886, when he was nearing the age of fifty, after having a number of mystical experiences, it appears that Sai Baba had a direct experience of union with God…. It was after this incident that his powers became

[111] Osborne, *The Incredibile Sai Baba*, 106.
[112] See Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 1, 176-186.
[113] See Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 253-254.

> evident, and he became a *pir* or guide for wandering *faqirs* who came to Shirdi. After his enlightenment experience, he demonstrated God-like powers such as clairvoyance known in Marathi as *antarajnana* (and called *firasa* by the *Sufis*), the ability to appear in devotees' dreams, or to appear in distant locations…. He had acquired the power to cure illnesses and protect individuals even in distant places…. As can be gathered from stray conversations with devotees, there were thus two distinct phases in Sai Baba's life. Up to age forty-eight or so, Sai Baba was a *faqir* practicing daily austerities to the extent that he was often categorized as a madman or *pagal* in the local language. After 1886… he became one of the *awliya*[114]. In the first period we can talk about his going through the steps and stages of the *Sufi tariq* as an aspirant. In the latter period from 1886 to 1918 he was a Realized Master guiding and teaching Sufi precepts to those who became his disciples…[115]

Moreover:

> Four phases can be identified in the spiritual evolution of Sāī Bābā. The first was as a child under the care of a *Sufi faqir* for his first four years, and possibly also for the next twelve years with his *guru* Venkusha or Roshan Shah Miyan. The second was as a *salik*, an aspirant or traveller on the *Sufi* path, from age sixteen when he wandered around Marathwada, meditated in a cave, lived under the *neem* tree and wandered in the jungle. At this time he displayed the typical characteristics of a 'mad *faqir*'. The third was after he returned to Shirdi permanently and began to live in the dilapidated *masjid*. The fourth was from 1886 onwards as a perfectly realized soul, a level which he apparently attained after his three-day ordeal.[116]

Dabholkar interprets the saint's feat as a yogic exploit, stating that he would have entered into a condition of *nirvikalpasamādhi*. Sāī Bābā himself is reported using the term *samādhi* in instructing his devotees not to rouse his inert body for three days. The technical term *nirvikalpasamādhi* ('concentration without distinction') is used in Vedānta as synonymous of *asamprajñātasamādhi* or 'unconscious *samādhi*' of classical yoga. It is understood as that perfect, objectless concentration in which only karmic impulses/residues are left (*saṃskāra*s), which is achieved after having eliminated all mental functions (*cittavṛtti*s).

Attaining a condition of apparent death is by no means the exclusive characteristic of Hindu ascetics. In India, it is also reported to

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[114] 'Friends [of God]' i.e. saints.
[115] Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 45-46.
[116] *Ibid.*, 125.

take place among Sufi saints and mystics. As I wrote in my 1993 book: "Certain *faqīrs* … are said to possess the power of remaining completely buried underground for a considerable time without detriment to their health. Indeed, this is a common theme in legends concerning heterodox Sufis, as in the case of Shah Madar."[117] Even the Sufi woman saint Babajan is said to have gone through a 'death experience' thirty years or more before her actual demise in 1931.[118] If the reference to Sāī Bābā's entering a state of *nirvikalpasamādhi* is an input of Dabholkar's Hindu over-interpretation, it is certainly not unreasonable to hypothesize that the saint as many Sufi *faqīr*s before and after him was exposed—during the years in the company with his *guru*/*pīr*, or through various contacts during his itinerant life—to some kind of yogic training, which he integrated in his own 'synthetic' mysticism. On the other hand, it should be stressed that Sāī Bābā neither practiced nor taught *prāṇāyāma* or breath-control techniques, which as mentioned is a prominent feature especially among Nātha adepts.[119] He even reprimanded a man who, by *prāṇāyāma*, claimed to have developed the *siddhi* of clairvoyance, saying "I can never exhibit tricks."[120] Narasimhaswami thinks that Sāī Bābā's yogic capacities were not the result of any formal yoga practice—he advocated no particular *mārga*, such as the yoga *mārga* –[121] but rather came to him through the grace of his *guru* and the saint's perfect surrender to him. He writes: "About *Ashtanga Yoga* it is not known whether Baba performed *pranayama*, etc., but very probably these would have come to him easily by faith in his all powerful Guru."[122] The woman devotee Tara Bai Sadasiva Tarkhad observed that

> other saints used to get into the *samadhi* or trance condition, and then they would forget their body. … But in the case of Sai Baba, he never had to go into trance to achieve anything or reach any higher position. Every moment he was exercising a double consciousness, namely, (1)

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[117] Rigopoulos, *The Life and Teachings of Sai Baba of Shirdi*, 94.

[118] See Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 202. On Babajan, see K. Shepherd, *A Sufi Matriarch: Hazrat Babajan* (Cambridge: Anthropographia Publications, 1985).

[119] A. E. Bharadwaja reports that in 1910 Upāsnī Mahārāj had contracted breathing trouble during the practice of yoga. Having reached Shirdi, Sāī Bābā told him to reside at the local temple of Khaṇḍobā, where his brother Balakrishna later found him cured of his illness; Bharadwaja, *Sai Baba the Master*, 21-22.

[120] Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 143. See also Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 4, 186-187.

[121] *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 66, 125.

[122] *Ibid.*, vol. 4, 190.

> the ego called Sai Baba and (2) the *antaryami* of all …. His knowledge of the other people's minds was not a matter of effort. He was in *the all-knowing state always*.[123]

Sāī Bābā's Wooden Plank and its Significance

This story is to be referred to about 1898[124] or even after 1900, and the plank seems to have been in use for a short time only. The crowds' expectation for the miraculous, for seeing how Sāī Bābā managed to ascend and descend from the wooden plank, was probably the reason why at one point the saint himself decided to break it to pieces. From his Hindu perspective, Dabholkar portrays Sāī Bābā as an ideal *yogin* and renunciant (*saṃnyāsin*), having all the eight traditional *siddhi*s starting with *aṇiman* at his disposal. Most sources imply the saint's power of levitation and atomization through which he was able to mount upon the thin, narrow, precariously suspended plank, and was able to avoid it from crashing under his weight. A parallel to this story is found in an anecdote concerning Nityānanda (d. 1961), the *siddha* of Kanhangad and future preceptor of Svāmin Muktānanda (1908-1982), who is reported sleeping upon a suspended string.[125]

Sāī Bābā is presented as practicing a mental, interiorized form of recollection of the divine name, avoiding sleep. The impression that he did not sleep at all or slept very little is repeatedly mentioned in the sources.[126] Indeed, he is reported saying: "It is not easy to sleep up on the plank. He, who has many good qualities in him, only can do so. He

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[123] *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 61-62.

[124] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 9 (footnote).

[125] "As is the custom with many Hindus, the narrator of this incident invited the thin, dark *sadhu* home to stay for the night, as he was impressed by the bearing of the young man. Given a room, the *sadhu* asked him for a string. Wondering at this strange request, the host decided to sleep in the same room. When he returned, he was surprised to see the young man carefully attaching the string to swing between two walls. The host was even more surprised a few minutes later, when the young *sadhu* climbed up on the string, stretched out, and went to sleep! He was apparently totally comfortable, as he turned this way and that, a picture of complete rest and tranquility. Remembering similar incidents in the life of Sai Baba of Shirdi, the devotee lay there, lost in the sheer wonder of it;" M. U. Hatengdi and Swami Chetanananda, *Nitya Sutras: The Revelations of Nityananda from the Chidakash Gita* (Cambridge: Rudra Press, 1985), 120. As is well-known, Muktānanda considered Sāī Bābā to be a great *siddha*, whom he would have 'seen' in the *siddha-loka*; see Swami Muktananda Paramahansa, *Chitshakti Vilas* (Ganeshpuri: Shree Gurudev Ashram, 1974), 157.

[126] See, for instance, Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 2, 205.

who can sleep 'with his eyes open' can effect that."[127] Recollection of the name of Allah, that is, the Sufi exercise of *dhikr* leading to a state of union or identification with God, constituted the focus of his spiritual practice.[128] All his life Sāī Bābā appears to have performed *dhikr* for many hours a day, to the point that this remembrance must have become natural to him. Although he occasionally used to repeat other divine names (Islamic, such as 'Haq', as well as Hindu), the sources repeatedly inform us that our *faqīr* used to practice the remembrance of *Allāh Mālik* ('Allah is the Sovereign'), revered as one of the ninety-nine beautiful names of Allah. This he did especially when absorbed in contemplation seated in front of his sacred fire, the *dhunī* inside the *masjid*,[129] as well as during his night vigils,[130] always keeping earthen lamps near him. Sāī Bābā's remembrance of Allāh's name and incorruptible kingdom can be related to a mysticism of light. In Sufism, light (*nūr*) is viewed as the distinctive sign of Allāh's sovereignty. Methods of *dhikr* typically involve breath-control, the goal being to move from a kind of vocal remembrance (the *dhikr* of the tongue) to a silent *dhikr*, internalizing the formula within the heart (the 'presence' of the formula being attuned to the beatings of one's heart). The *dhikr* is then believed to take place 'by itself', spontaneously, with no special effort of the will. Narasimhaswami reports Sāī Bābā as saying "I lie down making mental *namasmarana*,"[131] and from his Hindu perspective interprets such practice as a yoga trance. He writes: "The ordinary sleep is a hindrance to the Yoga trance; it resembles it in some respects, but the heart beat at the *namasmarana* stage of trance differs from the heart beat of natural sleep."[132] Even some devotees of Sāī Bābā were capable of performing the repetition of the divine name while in their sleep. Khaparde, in a diary entry dated December 8, 1911, wrote: "Madhavrao Deshpande was here and fell asleep. I saw with my own eyes and heard with my own ears what I only read about but never

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[127] Narasimhaswami, *Devotees' Experiences*, 57, 234.

[128] *Dhikr* is recommended in the *Qur'an*; see 3.190-191. On Sāī Bābā's practice of *dhikr*, see my *The Life and Teachings of Sai Baba of Shirdi*, 292-297.

[129] It appears that Sāī Bābā never leaned against the wall but sat a few inches away from it; see Bharadwaja, *Sai Baba the Master*, 65. This might be an indication that he usually sat keeping a straight posture, as required by all yoga schools.

[130] His avoidance of sleep was also meant for the protection of his devotees, Sāī Bābā being thought to keep constant watch over them; see Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 23-25, 75.

[131] Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 116. *Nāmasmaraṇa* is the Hindu recollection of the divine name.

[132] *Ibid.*

experienced. With every outpouring and indrawing breath of Madhavrao Deshpande comes the clear sound of 'Sayin Nath Maharaj, Sayin Nath Baba'. This sound is as clear as can be and when Madhavrao snores the words can be heard at a distance. This is really wonderful."[133]

The highest form of *dhikr*, even beyond that of the heart, is the one called 'intimate' or 'mystery' *dhikr* (*sirr*), subtler even than spirit, in which all dualities are transcended. Here the mystic, perfectly surrendered, abandons even the formula but the formula does not abandon him, *dhikr* having penetrated his innermost being. To be sure, the physiology characterizing *dhikr* is quite similar to that of Tantric yoga and the linking of the name to the natural 'rhythm' of breathing-in and breathing-out appears to betray the influence of *haṭhayoga* schools. Yet, although heart *dhikr* is akin to a silent form of *nāmasmaraṇa* (and our *faqīr* himself apparently called it *nāmasmaraṇa*) and has even been interpreted as a parallel to yogic contemplation i.e. *dhyāna*, Sāī Bābā's remembrance of Allah, despite similarities, need not and should not be interpreted as a yoga practice.

The Breaking of Sāī Bābā's Brick. References to Sāī Bābā's Death on October 15, 1918

Significantly, when referring to Sāī Bābā's last days, Dabholkar defines him a *yogin*, who in the end burned down his body in yogic fire. The breaking of the saint's brick, caused by the devotee Madhav Phasle who had lifted it and allowed it to fall, appears to have taken place at the beginning of October, 1918, just ten or twelve days before Sāī Bābā's passing away. According to Narasimhaswami's *Charters and Sayings*, at the breaking of the brick the saint, in grief, would have exclaimed: "My fakir's wife left me with Venkusha at Selu. I stayed with him twelve years, and left Selu. This brick (which Baba always lovingly used to support his arm or head) is my Guru's gift, my life companion. It is not the brick that is broken now, but my *karma* (*prarabdha*) it is that has snapped. I cannot survive the breaking of the brick."[134]

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[133] Khaparde, *Shirdi Diary*, 119-120. The Shirdi villager Madhavrao Deshpande, also known as Shyama, was a Brahman teacher and an important figure, often acting as a precious intercessor mediating between Sāī Bābā and the devotees.

[134] Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 61. *Karmaprārabdha* is the *karman* accumulated in previous births. See also Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 2, 20.

For Sāī Bābā the brick represented a *gurudīkṣā* of sorts, a concrete testimony of spiritual transmission or power transfer, also symbolic of his *guru*'s presence and a token of his grace. Its breaking is interpreted as signaling the exhaustion of the saint's karmic residues, calling for the relinquishing of all ties and of life itself. Dabholkar states that Sāī Bābā, all through his life in Shirdi, sat for hours in a yogic posture with the aid of this brick (upon which he rested his head or elbow). Sāī Bābā himself is reported to have said that in the company of the brick he would go into a state of Self-absorption. In particular, Dabholkar writes that every night, taking support of that brick, Baba used to sit in the mosque, in solitude, very peacefully, in *yogāsana*. Sāī Bābā would have kept to a yogic posture not so much during the day but during his solitary night vigils at the *masjid*, presumably while contemplating the fire of his *dhunī*. In *haṭhayoga*, *yogāsana* is typically identified with the yogic posture par excellence, that is, *padmāsana*, the lotus posture (see *Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā* 2.44-45). In fact, various contemporaries of our *faqīr* among whom Balaji Pilaji Gurav, an old Shirdi villager whom I interviewed in October 1985, reported that the saint never practiced any *āsana*. Evidently, at least during the day, Sāī Bābā was not seen performing any special yogic exercise or keeping to any yogic posture. Moreover, as Dabholkar himself tells us, Sāī Bābā prescribed no "*yogasanas*" (chap. 10, v. 113). That the saint kept to special postures during his contemplative exercises is quite probable, however, though it does not represent a proof of his being a *yogin*. Sufis are known to keep to definite postures while performing their *dhikr*. If Dabholkar's statement that Sāī Bābā sat in *yogāsana* might be attributed to his Hindu orientation, this possibility should not be ruled out. As a Maharashtrian saint upholder of an integrative kind of mysticism, it appears only natural that Sāī Bābā may have selectively incorporated yoga postures and practices: the contrary would frankly appear surprising if not unrealistic.

Conclusion: 'Swimming at the Confluence'

All in all, even though one comes across sayings attributed to Sāī Bābā as the following, "Life is lived in vain if no Yoga, Yaga,[135] Tapas[136] and

[135] Any sacrificial practice.
[136] 'Heat'. Any ascetic practice.

Jnana be achieved,"[137] he actually never taught any *yogamārga* and he definitely cannot be classified as a *yogin*.[138] Even if our *faqīr* may have employed Sanskrit terms such as *nāmasmaraṇa*, *dhyāna*, *samādhi*, etc. one must take into account his integrative saintliness, plus the omnipresent cultural influence of 'Hinduism' and of the Hindu majority with whom he interacted.

If Sāī Bābā was not *strictu sensu* a *yogin*, he certainly lived his whole life as a genuine *faqīr* practicing renunciation and poverty, detachment and celibacy, stressing to his last day the importance of feeding the poor and of almsgiving.[139] According to Munsiff, "in his personal habits he was ascetic to the last."[140] Nonetheless, our saint always recommended moderation.[141] He was against extreme asceticism and taught the majority of his devotees, who were lay people, that they should realize their spiritual goal by remaining in the world and leading a simple, orderly life, regulating their meals, rest, etc.[142] Sāī Bābā was also against unnecessary fasting and even broke traditional dietary rules.[143] To his dear servant Abdul, himself a *faqīr*, our saint gave advice on how to live a 'faqīri' life. Narasimhaswami reports that Sāī Bābā told him: "Eat very little. Do not go in for a variety of eatables.

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[137] Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 115.

[138] An oblique link of Sāī Bābā to yoga comes through the figure of Dattātreya. Thus we read that the Brahman Kusa Bhav had as his *guru* one Datta Maharaj, who trained him in yoga and the raising of the energy of *kuṇḍalinī*. At a certain point, he was told by his teacher to go to Sāī Bābā, whom he referred to as his elder brother. Kusa Bhav reached Shirdi in 1908 and became an ardent follower of the *faqīr*, also purportedly obtaining from him the power to materialize the *udī* simply by holding forth his hands and remembering the saint's name. Sāī Bābā, however, never gave him any *upadeśa* or *mantra*, though Kusa Bhav felt the loss of mantric exercise keenly. Later on, the Shirdi saint would have left Kusa Bhav under the care of one Datta Baba or Pakir (Faqir) Shah, who would have told him that he and Sāī Bābā were interrelated as persons belonging to the same order; see Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 132-137.

[139] See *ibid.*, 184, 205.

[140] Munsiff, *Sai Baba*: *The Perfect Master*, 45. In an entry of Khaparde's diary dated February 15, 1912, we read: "He was in a pleased mood and said that he had laboured very hard, had gone without food for months, fed on leaves of 'Kala Takal' Nimb and other trees. He said God was very good to him, for life never became extinct though all flesh got wasted and bones appeared to be in danger of crumbling away" (*Shirdi Diary*, 84-85). Most probably, however, Sāī Bābā was here referring to one of his 'former lives;' see Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 210.

[141] See Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 67.

[142] See Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 109.

[143] The sources report instances of Sāī Bābā eating onion, disconcerting his Hindu devotees and especially a yoga adept. Onion is thought to be tāmasic and something which a *yogin* should always avoid eating; see 110-113.

One sort of dish will suffice. Do not sleep much." Abdul followed this advice. He kept awake all night, and in a kneeling posture was repeating his *Koran*, that is, Baba's words. He was meditating on them. Baba said: "Have *dhyan* on what is read, and think 'Who I am'."[144]

Through his authority and charisma, Sāī Bābā succeeded in creating an atmosphere of harmony between Hindus and Muslims. As Shepherd notes, our Sufi *faqīr* "was very socially adroit in maintaining a balance between two rival religious contingents in his following."[145] He disapproved conversion to a new religion[146] and advised people to keep to their own faith.[147] Indeed, if Sāī Bābā advocated universality over sectarianism as supreme value, devotees were invited to preserve their religious affiliations. Even Christians he considered his brothers[148] and he once sent away his devotee H. S. Dikshit who had been speaking ill of Christ and Christianity.[149] The saint recommended inter-religious brotherhood and tolerance, true to his conviction that all religions are but particular paths leading to one ineffable goal. For this reason, Sāī Bābā at some point renamed the *masjid* by the Hindu name of Dvārkāmāī, that is, 'Many-gated Mother', stressing the fact that people of all castes and creed were welcome to come. As Narasimhaswami writes: "Baba would not allow the Hindus to interfere with his loud recitals of *Koran* at night…. nor would he allow the Rohilla to interfere with the Hindus' religious practice. Baba discountenanced intolerance in every class and in every person. To Baba, Vitthal and Allah were one and all saints were the same."[150] According to Rao Bahadur Dhumal, a Brahman pleader who first came to Shirdi in 1907, Sāī Bābā himself was above Hinduism and Islam i.e. transcended them.[151] As the saint is reported saying: "All Gods are one. There is no difference between a Hindu and a Mohammadan. Mosque and temple are the same. Yet I will respect your (people's) susceptibilities, and not

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[144] Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 174. Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 203, states how Sāī Bābā "instructed the *faqir* Abdul on the *Qur'an* and guided him along the ascetic renunciate *Sufi* path." It should be noted that Abdul, later in his life, married and had a family.

[145] Shepherd, *Investigating the Sai Baba Movement*, 18.

[146] Sāī Bābā once slapped a Hindu convert to Islam who had been taken to him by Bade Baba, also known as Faqir Baba, saying: "Ah! You have changed your father!;" Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 263.

[147] See Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 89.

[148] See Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 205.

[149] See Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 262.

[150] Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 82-83.

[151] *Ibid.*, 93.

enter the temple (as you object to the entry). Look at Cokhamela's life."[152] Our *faqīr* was perceived as an outcaste by orthodox Hindus and his plea to consider Cokhāmeḷā's life is significant, the latter being a celebrated fourteenth-century untouchable saint-poet.

Sāī Bābā wanted to be viewed as neither a Muslim nor a Hindu, that is, above and beyond all castes and religious affiliations, and when pressed on whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim he would get angry and abuse people. In an interrogation by a legal officer, which must have taken place during the saint's last years, Sāī Bābā is reported answering that his 'creed or religion' was 'Kabīr'.[153] As other integrative mystics, he viewed Kabīr as his spiritual model and more than once identified himself with him, even saying that Kabīr was his teacher. Khaparde, in a diary entry dated December 9, 1910, wrote: "He said he was Kabir before and used to spin yarn."[154] And Narasimhaswami notes: "Kabir according to Baba was his former Avatar … Kabir's songs were sung by Baba especially in his earlier days at the *takia*[155] …. Baba included Kabir amongst his inspiring agencies, and once said: 'Kabir was my Guru'."[156]

Shepherd has recently reiterated his idea that Sāī Bābā may be linked "to the *majazib* tradition of the Deccan, an unorthodox Sufi movement of very varied manifestations, and very much in the *qalandar* mould of eccentricity."[157] In Abdul's notebook, Warren has noted significant references to the beliefs of the Nizari Ismaili sect, which in the nineteenth-century was centered in the Bombay Presidency.[158] Following Warren's study, in 2005 Dominique-Sila Khan has pointed out other similarities. She writes:

> … Sai Baba's words quoted in Abdul's manuscript, such as "From Needa Aneeda, from Aneeda, Shunya, from Shunya, Shana" etc. correspond—with very few differences—to the same words as listed in the

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[152] Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 262.

[153] *Ibid.*, 256. Shepherd, *Investigating the Sai Baba Movement*, 19, thinks that Sāī Bābā "was referring to his liberal inter-religious approach when he asserted his 'Kabir' religion."

[154] Khaparde, *Shirdi Diary*, 7.

[155] A resting-place for Muslim visitors.

[156] Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 155-156. See also Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 62. On Kabīr as Sāī Bābā's model, see my *The Life and Teachings of Sai Baba of Shirdi*.

[157] Shepherd, *Investigating the Sai Baba Movement*, 10.

[158] See Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 174-180, where she compares the avatāric cosmological genealogy given in Abdul's notebook to the lists of *avatāra*s found in Nizari Ismaili Khoja texts.

> Nizari and Imamshahi genealogies reproduced in the *duas*[159]. This is certainly not a coincidence: Sāī Bābā's Ismaili connections should be explored as they may be related to the tradition of the Nizari preacher Shah Tahir or the Sayyidkhani line of the Imamshahi main branch. I have started some research on this subject with the help of Zawahir Moir, whom I thank for this invaluable information.[160]

To be sure, Nizari Ismailism borrowed extensively from indigenous sources such as *vaiṣṇava bhakti*, both 'without attributes' (*nirguṇa*) and 'with attributes' (*saguṇa*), and the Nāth movement. In particular, there are striking affinities with the *nirguṇa* Sant tradition and the composite figure of Kabīr. As D.-S. Khan remarks: "Like them [i.e. the Nizari *pīr*s], the Sants seem to have consciously associated a number of Sufi concepts and terminologies with elements drawn from the Nāth heritage or from the indigenous idiom of *bhakti*, without identifying themselves with any of these traditions."[161] The liminality of Nizari Ismailism, where holy men simultaneously embody the personality of a *faqīr* and the character of a Hindu *sādhu* or renunciant, is certainly akin to Kabīr's model[162] and thus to Sāī Bābā's own liminal figure. That our saint may have been connected to Nizari Ismailism is thus a possibility which should be duly explored.

Leaving aside the issue of any specific affiliation what appears most significant is that, as in past centuries, even in Sāī Bābā's times Sufi-Hindu liminality favored an accommodation process, that is, the rapprochement between various faiths and communities, generating what may be called overlapping identities. These identities are not fixed but rather dynamic, flexible, constantly adapting themselves over time. So-called Hinduism and Islam have never been monolithic and unchanging 'essences'. As Carl W. Ernst points out, we need to "complicate our picture of Hindu-Muslim interaction, not to derive it from predetermined concepts of the essential characteristics of a religion…. To understand a multi-century process of inter-civilizational interpretation … it is necessary to take seriously the hermeneutical structures and categories that guided the efforts of those interpreters."[163]

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[159] Ritual texts.

[160] Dominique-Sila Khan, "Reimagining the Buddha," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33 (2005): 326 n. 9.

[161] Dominique-Sila Khan, *Crossing the Threshold: Understanding Religious Identities in South Asia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 49.

[162] See *ibid.*, 62.

[163] C. W. Ernst, "Muslim Studies of Hinduism? A Reconsideration of Arabic and Persian Translations from Sanskrit," *Iranian Studies* 36, no. 2 (2003): 195. By the

In this perspective, even Warren's 'essentialization' of Hinduism and Islam, as when she argues that "Baba emerged from the dual Maharashtrian Bhakti and Sufi traditions whose goal was to directly experience God'[164], appears inadequate. Historically, in the Deccan and in Sāī Bābā's own training and experience Sufism and *bhakti* were never two separate, distinct blocs. Sāī Bābā's figure is the result of a complex, 'non-dual' process of identity development, freely combining Hindu and Islamic elements 'on the ground.'[165]

Sāī Bābā' strong, reiterated belief in rebirth and prenatal karmic ties (*ṛṇānubandha*) is part and parcel of his 'synthetic' identity.[166] He would say to have been in Shirdi 'thousands of years ago',[167] and would tell many cryptic, symbolic stories (*goṣṭi*s) about former lives of himself and/or of his devotees and acquaintances.[168] Our *faqīr* even told Khaparde that in a former birth he was with him for two or three years and that he, Khaparde, went into royal service though there was enough at home to live in comfort.[169] Sāī Bābā would also claim to

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same author, see also "Situating Sufism and Yoga," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 15, no. 1 (2005): 15-43.

[164] Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 205.

[165] In the words of Narasimhaswami: "The essence of both Sufism and *bhakti marga* is development by love to reach the goal, which is perfect *satchitananda* [Being, Consciousness, and Bliss] or love. Hence, in his own case … the fusion had become perfect, and Baba often referring to God or Guru could use with equal felicity the word Allah or Fakir or Hari;" *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 155. On the historical and social dynamics of Hindu-Muslim interaction in the bordering State of Karnataka, determining analogous hybrid identities, see the fine monograph of J. Assayag, *Au confluent de deux rivières: Musulmans et hindous dans le Sud de l'Inde* (Paris: Presses de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1995).

[166] Shepherd notes that this topic "was in currency amongst dissident Muslims over the centuries;" *Investigating the Sai Baba Movement*, 53.

[167] Khaparde, *Shirdi Diary*, 3 (entry dated December 7, 1910).

[168] For one episode concerning Khaparde's wife Lakshmibai, see *Shri Sai Satcharita* chap. 27, verses 139-169. With reference to Khaparde's diary, see *Shirdi Diary*, 40 (entry dated January 1, 1912), 97 (entry dated February 29, 1912), 100-101 (entry dated March 8, 1912), 102-103 (entry dated March 10, 1912), 104 (entry dated March 12, 1912). See also Narasimhaswami, *Charters and Sayings*, 198-212. Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 108-109, regards his storytelling as a method of Sufi teaching, and mentions the collection of short Sufi stories collected by Idries Shah. According to M. V. Kamath and V. B. Kher, Sāī Bābā "began to speak in parables and symbology from 1910 as the number of his visitors began to grow in volume;" M. V. Kamath—V. B. Kher, *Sai Baba of Shirdi: A Unique Saint* (Bombay: Jaico, 1991), 9. For an ethnographic account of storytelling in Maharashtra, see K. Narayan, *Storytellers, Saints, and Scoundrels: Folk Narrative in Hindu Religious Teaching* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

[169] See Khaparde, *Shirdi Diary*, 98-99 (entry dated March 3, 1912).

have the power to decide the time and place of his devotees' rebirth i.e. to control the destiny of departed souls.[170] For instance, on February 9, 1912, Khaparde wrote in his diary: "Sayin Saheb said that Pishya was a Rohilla in his previous birth …. He died and Sayin Saheb put him into the womb of his present mother."[171] Sāī Bābā also assured some of his devotees that he would be with them in future rebirths.[172]

In conclusion, even accentuating the Islamic, Sufi side of Sāī Bābā in order to 'restore the balance' and counter the Hindu gloss, as Warren repeatedly states, is a merely quantitative way of addressing the inextricably interwoven fabric of Maharashtrian nineteenth-century popular religion: it presupposes a dualist, 'essentialist' model in which Sufism and Hinduism 'face each other' as separate, even antagonistic religious objects. To unilaterally or too strongly emphasize either Sāī Bābā's Hindu or Sufi identity is not only to betray his mystical teaching of oneness and universalism but is also a historical, scholarly fallacy in that it does not recognize his liminal, hybrid character. The Shirdi *faqīr* may be said to swim at the brisk confluence of two rivers, Sufism and *bhakti*, the waters of which, so to speak, run very close to each other and often overflow, intersecting and mingling at various points of their path. Precisely for this reason, as Sāī Bābā himself pointed at, Kabīr's composite legacy stands as the most authoritative paradigm for understanding his integrative persona, mirroring the synthetic, overlapping identity of the Deccani *faqīr*.[173]

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[170] See Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 118.

[171] Khaparde, *Shirdi Diary*, 79-80. For another case relative to Rao Sahib Yeshwant Janardhan Galwankar, see Narasimhaswami, *Life of Sai Baba*, vol. 3, 138.

[172] See *ibid.*, 78, where he is said to have given such assurance to M. B. Rege, a judge of the high court of Indore.

[173] Warren, *Unravelling the Enigma*, 18, has criticized my 1993 book for merely acknowledging and not pursuing Sāī Bābā's Sufi aspect. In fact, I have portrayed the saint's figure from a triple angle, that is, Hindu, Islamic, and, lastly and most importantly, a 'Kabīrian' perspective, in an effort to highlight Sāī Bābā's universalism. Warren, *ibid.*, has also accused me of contributing to the Hindu gloss on Sāī Bābā, since, in presenting his teachings, I used the broad categories of the Hindu path to liberation i.e. love, knowledge, and action. She is in error, however, as even a scholar of the stature of William C. Chittick underlines the importance that these three categories bear in Sufism and mentions the hypothesis that they may correspond to the Hindu *mārga*s of *bhakti*, *jñāna*, and *karman*; see W. C. Chittick, *Il sufismo*. A cura di Francesco Alfonso Leccese (Torino: Einaudi, 2009 [2000]), chap. 6, 89 (significantly, he titles this chapter *La via dell'amore* i.e. *The path of love*, which is exactly the title I chose to give to chap. 9 of my book).

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

YOGIC POWERS AND THE RĀMĀNANDA SAMPRADĀY[1]

Ramdas Lamb

Introduction

The concept of *siddhi*, technically translated with terms such as 'perfection', 'accomplishment', or 'mastery', is more commonly understood in the West as yogic or supernatural power. When the term first appears in the *Mahābhārata*, it refers to the skills or perfections that are attained through the performance of various practices and types of austerities (*tapas, tapasya*), which were often done in conjunction with yogic practices. From the outset, those who did *tapa*s and yoga traditionally separated themselves from the prevalent society so they could focus all their time and energy in their chosen pursuit. Because of this, commoners knew little about them and thus looked upon them with both awe and fear. The present day renunciants of India, known by general labels such as *sādhu*, *swāmī*, *saṃnyāsī*, etc., are the inheritors of and builders upon the tradition of *siddhi* seekers. Over the millennium, there have been a large number of ascetic orders, often centered around a particular type or set of *tapa*s. Many of these orders have disappeared, other have transformed into new orders, while some more closely maintain their ancient roots. Among the largest existing ascetic orders is the Rāmānanda Sampradāy.[2] It is also one of the orders in which the practice of yoga and the quest for *siddhi*s remains an integral part of its focus. This chapter will begin with a brief overview of the development of asceticism and yoga in India as they are understood and relevant to the Rāmānandīs. It will then focus

[1] Earlier versions of various portions of this chapter can be found in other writings by the author (see *References*).

[2] When discussing Sanskrit literary sources, I will use a standard form of transliteration. However, because the Rāmānandīs are primarily Hindi speakers, I will use the common Hindi transliteration of those terms when specifically discussing Rāmānandī beliefs and practices, unless otherwise stated. Additionally, all translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

on the *sampradāy*, from its antecedents and origins to its present day manifestations. Emphasis will be on what *siddhi* means to ascetic members of the order, what texts are utilized to this purpose, what practices are undertaken, and what role the attainment of *siddhi*s plays in their lives.

Origins of Yoga and the Quest for Yogic Powers

Archaeological evidence from the Indus Valley civilization point to the presence of ascetics and yogic practices more than four millennia ago. Some have theorized an early connection with an ancient shamanistic tradition in India and associated undertakings that later became subsumed under yoga, since shamans, ascetics, and yogis all sought some form of transcendence and the attainment of knowledge and powers beyond the physical. Vedic chants mention a diversity of forms and suggest a relatively early development and elaboration of asceticism. There is reference to those who willfully adopted a life of austerity, as well as to others who renounced life within the confines of the prevalent society altogether (*saṃnyāsa*). Ascetics were believed to have power that was developed through yoga and *tapa*s. Such was the degree of power attributed to the practice of austerities that even the gods are said to have performed them.[3] One type of ascetic mentioned in the latter portions of the *Ṛg Veda* was the *muni*, who had long hair and lived a life of poverty and bodily mortification. *Muni*s were said to have mystical powers, presumably gained through their *tapas*. The *Atharva Veda* tells of ascetics who use *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* as well to attain spiritual powers. In the text, *prāṇa*, or 'breath', is identified with the supreme spirit and the source of all life.

The Vedic literature describes the rituals and various forms of worship that brahmin priests used to propitiate the gods. For them, the fire sacrifice arose as a primary means of appealing to and gaining benefits from the gods. Typically, these benefits included male progeny, wealth, strength, material prosperity, fame, etc. However, during the period, there is a shift in the recognition of power in the Vedic thinking "away from the gods and into the elements of ritual tech-

[3] M.G. Bhagat, *Ancient Indian Asceticism* (Delhi: Munshiram Manorharlal, 1976), 3-5.

Fig. 15.1. *Tyāgī*s doing *dhūnī tap* ritual. Photo: Ramdas Lamb.

nique,"[4] an important part of which was the recitation of sacred sounds or verses (*mantra*) to invoke protection. Gradually, the sounds themselves, when properly chanted, came to be seen as a source of power, and this is one of the factors that led to the knowledgeable and capable priest being elevated in position to the top of the social hierarchy. While the priest made offerings to his sacred fire, the ascetic lit the fire within through the performance of *tapas* (lit. 'heat'). While the priest sought worldly benefits through his rituals, the search for inner knowledge and the attainment of transcendental experience and inner power became the overriding goals of the ascetic. Each undertook his[5] efforts with some form of power as a goal. For one it was material, for the other it was transcendental.

With the rise of Upaniṣadic thinking and literature, the tradition of the ascetic interiorization of sacrifice becomes apparent. Various writings tell of the ancient seers emphasizing practices to bring about

[4] Ellison Banks Findly, "*Mántra kaviśastā*: Speech as Performative in the *Ṛgveda*," in *Mantra*, ed. Harvey Alper (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 23.

[5] Because the ascetic tradition from ancient times up to and including the present day has been a primarily male undertaking, I will use the masculine pronoun in reference to ascetics and ascetic members of the Rāmānanda Sampradāy. This is not to say that there have been no female renunciants, for they have and continue to exist, but they have always been an extreme numerical minority.

knowledge of and identity with Brahmaṇ, the Absolute, over the performance of external ritual. References to yogic practices are also evident in some of the earliest Upaniṣads, as well as those later associated with eight-limbed system known as Rāja Yoga. These appear alone and in connection with *tapas*. By the time of the later Upaniṣads, *tapas* and yoga are accepted as integrated and integral forms of *sādhanā* ('religious practice'). They are an important part of the teachings that were passed down from guru to disciple, and they were understood to be an important vehicle for awakening or attaining power.

Both the Upaniṣads and the Epics (*Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*) reference the use of *dama* (self-restraints), *tapas*, and *vrata* (vows) to gain control over one's body and mind, as well as to gain *siddhi*s. The Epics present practitioners of yoga as being primarily ascetic yogis (male) and some yoginīs (female), with little mention made of lay practitioners. The practices are confined, for the most part, to those who have renounced the householder lifestyle and who focus on the practice of various forms of *tapas* and of yoga to acquire both *siddhi*s and *mukti* ('liberation'). The undertaking of intense vows as a part of their endeavors is also discussed. The powers thus attained include levitation, controlling the thoughts of others, knowing past and future lives, and gaining power over certain types of spirits. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the goddess Pārvatī undertakes extreme vows (*ugram suvratam*) and fasts for thousands of years to gain both ascetic power as well as Śiva's favor.[6] The text also tells of the sage Viśvamitra, who took vows and endured various forms of *tapasya* for penance, first to gain worldly power and eventually to gain spiritual perfection.[7] For most subsequent ascetics, vows are seen to be fundamental for almost any worthwhile accomplishment.

Yoga and Siddhis

Patañjali 's *Yogasūtra (YS)* is a one of the earliest texts to organize and elaborate the yogic practices that ascetics have long used in their quest to attain knowledge and *siddhi*s. In the text, the latter term is found in reference to accomplishments, perfections, and powers. Patañjali seems to say that the latter can also be acquired through birth, herbs,

[6] Vālmīki, *Rāmāyaṇa* (I.35.19-20).
[7] *Rāmāyaṇa* (I.51-65).

mantra recitation, and *tapa*s (*YS* 4.1), but the primary focus of the text is on the attainment of mental and spiritual states, including self-awareness, non-attachment to the material world, calmness of mind, truth, non-violence, and surrender to the Divine. Some time after Patañjali 's work, a series of 'later' or 'minor' Upaniṣads began to appear, collectively known as the Yoga Upaniṣads. These contain many of the practices found in the *YS* plus additional teachings and undertakings. Several texts within the group, especially the *Maitri Upaniṣad*, have found popularity with members of the Rāmānanda Sampradāy. Two other sets of 'Upaniṣads' that focus specifically on asceticism appeared as well, the Śaiva and the Samnyāsa Upaniṣads. Some Rāmānandīs also have been attracted to these. However, of all the Upaniṣads, Rāmānandīs consider the Vaiṣṇava Upaniṣads to have the greatest importance and relevance to their lives and goals. Of these, there are three that focus on the worship of the Divine as Lord Rāma (or Rām), the *Rāma Rahasya Upaniṣad*, the *Rāma Pūrva Tāpanīya Upaniṣad*, and the *Rāma Uttara Tāpanīya Upaniṣad*. They promote a *sādhanā* that combines ascetic and devotional practices for the attainment of *siddhi*s, devotion (*bhakti*) to Rām, and liberation.

In the first of these, Rām is equated with Brahman, ultimate reality, truth, and being in the early or major Upaniṣads, but in a clearly accessible and caring form. In addition, a long list of deities is given as his manifestations, including Śiva, Gaṇeśa, and a variety of feminine divinities. A detailed description and explanation of various *mantra*s are provided that use the name of Rām in combination with other words or sounds to create more elaborate and powerful incantations. There are instructions on building an altar to Rām and constructing *yantra*s. In all three texts, there is frequent and profuse praise of the benefits of chanting the name of Rām (*Rāmnām*). It brings fulfillment of desires and is so powerful that when used in the appropriate form, with the required number of repetitions, it can rid one of any sin. The primary Rām *mantra* given is referred to as the *tāraka mantra*, the recitation of which assures liberation upon death. It is spoken by Lord Śiva into the ears of all those who die in Kāśī (Varanasi) and thereby guarantees them either liberation, or at least another human birth. This is one of the reasons the city is seen to have great power and sanctity.

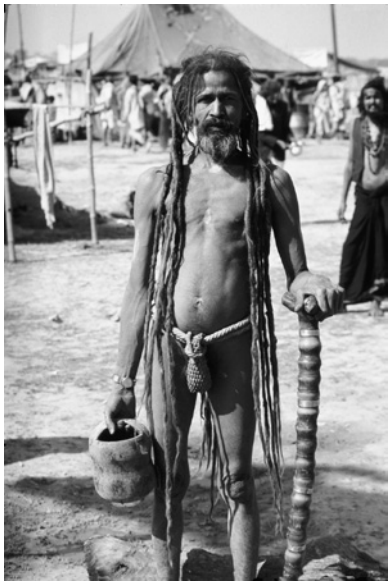

Fig. 15.2. *Mahātyāgī* who has taken a vow to wear no cloth. His loincloth is made of woven hemp bark. Photo: Ramdas Lamb.

Medieval Ascetics and Their Influence

The first millennium CE saw the formation of a variety of ascetic groups in which yoga and asceticism were practiced for both power and liberation. Earliest among the more known is the Pāśupata from South India. During the nearly one and a half millennia of their order's existence, Pāśupatas and members of the Kālāmukha and the Kāpālika ascetic orders spread a philosophy and set of teachings that combined *tapasya*, *siddhi*s, and *bhakti* to Śiva.[8] The latter groups also utilized practices drawn from the medieval tantric tradition. Although these orders no longer exist as such, they set the tenor of ascetic *bhakti* and put into place important elements of the theological and practical ethos for the Rāmānanda Sampradāy.

One of the earliest of the extant ascetic orders that combines elements of the yoga, asceticism, and *tantra* to achieve the twin goals of power and enlightenment is the Gorakhnāth Sampradāy. The order

[8] David Lorenzen's *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas* is a good source for understanding these groups.

began in North India some time near the twelfth century CE, and its members are known as Kānphaṭa or Nāth Yogis. Hagiographic legends of the founder, Gorakhnāth, and his guru, Matsyendranāth, tell of amazing miracles, feats of strength, and yogic *siddhi*s. The present day order gives reverence to departed members referred to as *siddha*s, or individuals who are believed to have attained great *siddhi*s. Followers credit Gorakhnāth with writing a pivotal and in-depth treatise entitled *Haṭhayoga*, the substance and philosophy of which is important to their contemporary religious practices. He is also believed to be the author of several other books on yoga, one of the more popular being the *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati*. A fifteenth century member of the lineage, Svātmārāma, wrote the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*, a well respected manual on yoga that Rāmānandīs consider to be an important text. In contemporary times, members can be found in various regions of northern India. Many in the order continue to be respected as great yogis, and some are said to have become quite adept *siddha*s as well. Nāth Yogis and Rāmānandīs tend to have good relations, and some members of each order have been known to learn techniques from teachers of the other order. Throughout the history of the Hindu ascetic tradition, elements of the existing groups have been adopted and reconfigured in the formation of new ones. The largest contemporary ascetic order in the overall tradition, which has utilized many elements of past groups, is the Rāmānanda Sampradāy.

The Rāmānanda Sampradāy[9]

The origins or the Rāmānanda Sampradāy are steeped in mythology and legend.[10] Most Rāmānandīs venerate Svāmī Rāmānanda (circa 14th-15th century) as founder of their order. While little actual evidence of him, his life, and his practices exist, there are stories about his various disciples that mention Rāmānanda as an important ascetic teacher and guru. In addition, some sources suggest that a group of ascetics devoted to Rām were present in or around the 15th century in

[9] Earlier versions of some of the material in this section can be found in several previously published articles and chapters I have written (see *References*).

[10] In attempting to understand any Indian ascetic tradition, we are often left to depend on secondary sources for information, since ascetics have seldom ever written about themselves and their practices. Thus, as is the case with most of our understanding of the past in India, we must rely on speculation in our interpretation of these secondary sources.

North India. These renunciants may well have been early followers of Rāmānanda or at least forerunners of his *sampradāy*.

Tradition tells us that Rāmānanda was initially an ascetic in the Śrī Sampradāy, an order founded in the eleventh or twelfth century by the South Indian philosopher/theologian Rāmānuja. The latter's Viśiṣṭād-vaita philosophy became an important part of the developing Vaiṣṇava tradition, and his order combined it with practices of asceticism, yoga, and devotion. Rāmānanda's attraction to these elements led him to join the order. However, he eventually came to realize the degree to which a variety of post-Rāmānuja doctrines and rules discriminated against low caste, householders, and females, setting them apart as being inherently inferior and ritually impure. Realizing them to be incompatible with his own spiritual path and values, he ultimately left the order along with other ascetics and devotees of his teachings and he started his own *sampradāy*. Since his disagreement was with the later inclusions, he kept much of the theology, philosophy, and ascetic aspects that Rāmānuja himself had promoted, while rejecting the bulk of the order's caste and gender restrictions and other narrow social doctrines.

In developing the guidelines of his own monastic order, Rāmānanda drew on aspects of previous and existing ascetic traditions like the Nāth Yogis, devotional movements like the Āl̲vārs and Marathi Sants, and prevalent elements of Rām *bhakti* like those in the Rāma Upaniṣads. He emphasized that the primary goal of *sādhanā* should be liberation from bondage to the cycle of birth and death so that one can experience eternal love of and oneness with God, through the aspect of Rām. The means to be used for the realization of this goal include both selfless devotion and renunciation of attachment to the material world. Because of his inclusive social and religious beliefs, Rāmānanda attracted a widely diverse group, including individuals from many castes and occupations, women, householders, and even Muslims, the most famous of the latter being Kabīr. Although he was a renunciant himself, this did not prevent Rāmānanda from teaching householders both ascetic and devotional practices. Consequently, the current Rāmānanda Sampradāy has an enormous lay membership that closely and regularly interacts with and supports the ascetics of the order.

Rāmānandīs traditionally refer to the founder of their order as a great yogī and a *siddha*, yet there is little actually known, even within the order itself, the extent to which he practiced yoga and *tapasya*. There are, nevertheless, a few popular stories of him and his powers,

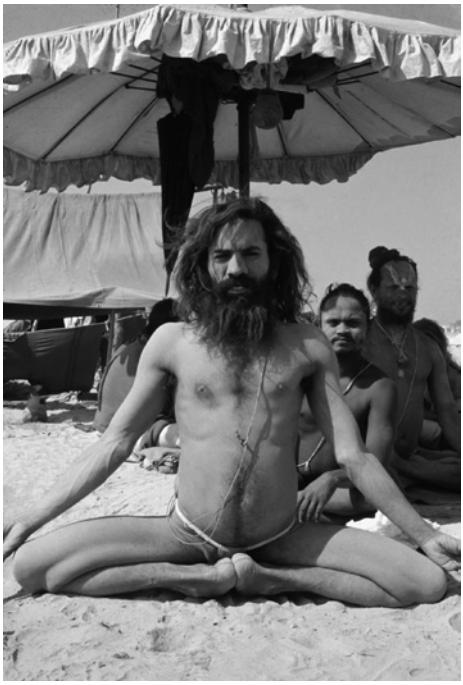

Fig. 15.3. *Mahātyāgī* doing *gorakṣāsana*, one of the more difficult meditation poses. Photo: Ramdas Lamb.

the most repeated of which tells of an encounter between Rāmānanda and a brahmin widow. According to the story, she was still young when her husband died, and after his cremation, she became extremely depressed with what she saw as a bleak future. Having heard of Rāmānanda, his powers, and the efficacy of his blessings, she went to him hoping he would help her to find some form of peace in her life. She approached him, but before she could explain her situation, he said "May you have a son who will be great and bring you honor." She was horrified because as a brahmin widow, she knew she could never remarry. Not long afterwards she realized that the power of his blessing had caused her to become pregnant, so she hid herself and remained that way until she gave birth. She then went to the Ganges River upstream from where women regularly washed clothes on its banks, put her new born infant into a basket, and set it into the river so it would float down toward the women. As she had hoped, one of

them saw the basket and retrieved it. The woman was a Muslim, took the child home and raised him as her own. She named the boy 'Kabīr'.[11]

Other stories depict Rāmānanda as a popular religious reformer, whose his teachings and own ascetic existence attracted people from various castes and occupations to follow him into a life of renunciation. This tradition of drawing renunciant and lay followers from many castes has continued up to the present day. Currently, the Rāmānanda Sampradāy has the largest number of *virakt* ('renunciant') members of any Hindu order, an estimated one and a half million.[12] Commonly referred to as 'Rāmānandīs', '*vairāgī*s', '*tyāgī*s', or simply '*sādhu*s', most members come from villages in the northern and western states, especially Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat.[13] Since they bring with them elements of their own religious cultures, the diversity of the order's beliefs and practices shows not only the influence of previous ascetic movements but also of a variety of regional religious traditions and practices. Thus, the present-day order represents a contemporary manifestation of a long tradition of renunciants who practice both yoga and asceticism.

For all Rāmānandīs, Rām *bhakti* is the primary form of *sādhanā,* and for most it is also the central goal. Even for those who seek liberation from rebirth, devotion to Rām is a fundamental part of the path. However, Rām *bhakti* takes on a different form than what is more commonly found and practiced in relationship to Kṛṣṇa. As evidenced in the *Bhagavadgītā* and the subsequent *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, devotion to Kṛṣṇa became incorporated relatively early into the brahmanical tradition and absorbed a variety of orthodox elements as a consequence. The Rām tradition, on the other hand, remained more distant, both philosophically and geographically from the orthodoxy, and from brahmanical influences. An indication of this is the lack of any Purānic text dedicated to Rām as there are for the other major deities of the day. Among the main reasons for this peripheral status may found in the Rām story itself. Scholars place the writing of the earliest

[11] This story of the birth of the famous Kabīr is common among Hindus, while Muslims reject it, saying he was born into a Muslim family.

[12] This number is based on a 1990 study done by the Akhil Bhāratiya Sādhu Samāj, an organization of renunciants and others connected with the tradition.

[13] The terms '*vairāgī*' and '*tyāgī*', which are used in specific reference to ascetic members of the Rāmānandī order, come from the Sanskrit '*vairāgya*' ('non-attachment') and '*tyāga*' ('renunciation'), respectively. The term, '*sādhu*', on the other hand, can be used as a general term for any Hindu ascetic.

portions in pre-sixth century BCE. Most of the geographic locations where major episodes of the story occur are in northeastern India, which had not yet become brahmanized at the time of the earliest writing of the text. In addition, much of the story of the life of Rām takes place when he is an ascetic, away from cities and from the orthodox tradition. Those in whom he places his greatest trust in the story include a low caste boatman (Guha), a demon (Vibhiṣaṇ), and a monkey (Hanumān), while he associates primarily with villagers and ascetics, and his entire army consists of monkeys and bears. Likely influenced by these, the communities in which Rām *bhakti* became popular and predominated, then, were primarily comprised of low caste rural peoples, ascetics, and others who existed primarily on the periphery of orthodox Hinduism. This allowed more diverse aspects and understandings of Rām *bhakti* to develop, and it made room for non-brahmanical elements to play a more pivotal role.

Integral to the *sādhanā* of Rāmānandīs is the reading of the *Rāmcaritmānas* of Tulsīdās, as well as his other writings. The *Mānas*, as the text is more popularly known, is written in Hindi rather than in Sanskrit. This makes it more easily read and understood by commoners and ascetics without the need for brahmin interpreters as is almost always the case with Sanskrit texts. For this and other reasons, the *Mānas* has become the most popular scripture in all of North India and among the people of the Diaspora Hindu communities that began in the nineteenth century.[14] Rām devotees give the *Mānas* the status of *śruti*, the level of sacredness assigned by the orthodox tradition to the Vedas. This status appropriation for the *Mānas* is first found in the text of an early Rāmānandī, Nābhādās. His *Bhaktamāl* relates a story in which Tulsīdās's writing of the text enraged the brahmin priests of Varanasi, who put it to a test. The *Mānas* was ultimately shown to be the superior to all the existing scriptures. Since that time, and with the influence of the Rāmānanda Sampradāy, the text has become commonplace throughout northern and central India. Its verses are believed to have great power, are commonly recited by villagers throughout Hindi speaking regions, and are used regularly by Rām devotees to gain Rām's blessings and favor. Rāmānandīs use specific verses or sections for specific purposes. In addition to the writings of Tulsīdās, they also turn to a variety of other texts for inspiration and

[14] These are the lands where low caste Hindus and some Muslims were sent by the British as indenture servants from the 1840s until the beginning of the twentieth century, including the Caribbean, Fiji, South Africa, and Mauritius.

knowledge, such as the *Nārada Pāñcarātra*, an important Vaiṣṇav devotional work. Regarding the practice of yoga for the attainment of *siddhi*s, the most popular of texts for Rāmānandīs are the *Yogasūtra*, the three sectarian Rāma Upaniṣads, and the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*.

By far, the most important individual practice for all Rām devotees is recitation of the name of Rām. It is the focal point and centerpiece of all other forms of *sādhanā*. It is the key to unlocking the wisdom, power, and devotion that is within. Due to the power attributed to the name, *vairāgī*s believe it to be the most powerful of all *mantra*s for almost any purpose. Since the majority of couplets in the *Mānas* contain the name of Rām, many have come to be used on the path to obtaining *siddhi*s. Very few *mantra*s used by the Rāmānandīs do not contain the name, the main exceptions being those addressed to Hanumān. This is because it is said that when one prays or chants to Hanumān, Rām appears as well, and when one chants *Rāmnām*, Hanumān appears. For Rāmānandīs, then, the majority of all prayer is directed to either 'Rām Jī', 'Sītā Mā' (Rām 's wife and female counterpart), or 'Hanumān Jī'.[15] However, when one is seeking to obtain a *siddhi*, Hanumān is most commonly at the center of attention. In addition to *Mānas* reading and *Rāmnām*, the practice of yoga, the performance of various forms of *tapasya*, and other elements have become integral in Rām *bhakti sādhanā* for Rāmānandī ascetics. As will be discussed below, when these elements are combined in various ways, they create an extremely multifaceted corpus of practices available to members of the order, and the way they are utilized depends upon the particular *vairāgī* practioner's goal, be it power, liberation, devotion, or some combination of the three.

There are several sub groupings within the Rāmānanda Sampradāy, and each tends to approach the issue of *sādhanā* a bit differently. An understanding of these differences is an important precursor to understanding how *sādhanā* is viewed and performed. First, all members of the order, both ascetic and householder, can be referred to as Rāmānandīs. Those who take renunciant initiation are traditionally referred to within the order as '*vairāgī*s'. Over time, some choose to take additional initiation into one of the order's sub groups, each of which focus on a particular form or set of *tapasya*. The most common

[15] 'Rām Jī', 'Sītā Mā', and "Hanumān Jī' are the ways in which the three divinities are referred out of respect by Rāmānandīs. In deference to that tradition, I will use these titles hereafter.

of these initiations is called *kāk dīkṣā* (literally 'ash initiation'), and its members take on the additional name '*tyāgī*'.[16] They are expected to cover their bodies with ash from a sacred fire every day after bathing and perform specific types of *tapasya* at specified times throughout the year. Their austerities are more extreme than most other *vairāgī*s and are thus generally believed to have more access to power and *siddhi*s.

Rāmānandī Practice of Yoga and Tapasya

Integral to the *sādhanā* of nearly all *vairāgī*s is some practice of yoga. Technically, they see only the first six limbs of *aṣṭāṅgayoga* as something that is 'practiced', since the last two are considered states of mind to be attained through the practice of the first six. Yoga is believed to generate important physical and mental abilities. These include greater control over the functions of the body, as well as the development of mental focus, will power, emotional stability, and intuitive perception. It is hoped that such practices will also inspire wisdom and an emotional maturity that manifests as devotional and ethical behavior, but Rāmānandīs acknowledge that this is not always the case. Nevertheless, the various aspects of yoga are understood to be important tools for renunciants to gain a level of self control necessary to successfully live the ascetic life and to be able to devote oneself to the practice of *tapasya*. Together, yoga and austerities blend seamlessly in the life of many *vairāgī*s and nearly all *tyāgī*s. The practices are done to awaken power and powers unknown to and unobtainable by most humans and to take the practitioner beyond the realm of normal abilities and consciousness and into a realm where psychic powers are attainable. From the time of *dīkṣā*, *vairāgī*s are taught the importance of both yoga and austerities as valuable and powerful tools for constructing their own individual ascetic life styles. After their initial efforts at these, some find them difficult or otherwise unappealing and turn instead to other forms of *sādhanā*, such as textual study, ritual performance, or service of their guru. On the other hand, those who are attracted by the practices tend to dedicate a major portion of their waking hours and energy to learning yoga while performing

[16] Many householders and others outside the order refer to all Rāmānandī *sādhu*s as '*tyāgī*', but within the order, this is not generally the case.

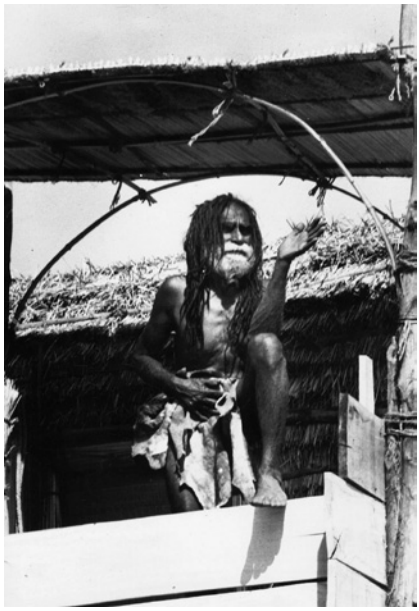

Fig. 15.4. Deoraha Bābā in one of the elevated huts in which he regularly stayed wherever he went. Photo: Ramdas Lamb.

tapasya. One's guru, ascetic family,[17] and individual personality all influence the degree to which these practices are learned and incorporated into one's individual *sādhanā.* Nevertheless, the two dimensions of yoga and austerities are important elements that help give identity and direction to both the order as well as the individual.

Whether or not they practice all the aspects of Rāja Yoga, Rāmānandīs give deference to the system and all formally seek to imbibe its overall ethos and approach into their lives. Initially, *āsana*s and *prāṇāyāma* are taught in conjunction with *mantra*s to help prepare the body and mind to practice concentration (*dhāraṇā*) and enhance efforts to withdraw focus from the things of the world and direct it toward things of the *spirit.* For those who make a commitment to undertake more intensive forms of *tapasya*, a more committed prac-

[17] Rāmānandīs define their family in a fashion parallel to birth families. Thus, one's teacher is the 'father' of one's spiritual life; other disciples of the same teacher become one's guru brothers and sisters, whether or not they are renunciants. One's teacher's teacher is called grandfather guru, while his other disciples become one's uncle or aunt gurus, etc.

tice of yoga is fundamental. Since many forms of austerity can put a strain on the physical body, such as long periods of fasting, yoga helps to maintain strength and resistance to weakness and subsequent illness during such undertakings. When performing *tapasya*, mental control is also important and yoga aids here as well. As *vairāgī*s and *tyāgī*s incorporate such practices into their individual *sādhanā*, the importance and the value of taking vows and making commitments are integral for these provide both incentive and strength to make greater strides on the path to power, liberation, and devotion.

Vrat, Saṃkalp, and Anuṣṭān

Vows, fasts, promises, and associated practices are fundamental to the Hindu ascetic life. The fruits and the power generated by *sādhanā* are believed to be enhanced when vows are involved; the more strict the vows and the more severe the practices, the greater the power. Contemporary Hindu culture uses an assortment of terms to distinguish various types of vows and promises. Some of the more common words that can be translated as 'vow', 'oath', or 'promise' are: *bacan (*or *vacan), śapath*, and *pratigya.* Each of these can be utilized in a variety of contexts. However, because they frequently possess a secular connotation, Rāmānandīs do not find them befitting their particular practices and instead employ three distinctive and precise terms to describe what they do in this regards: *'vrat', 'saṃkalp',* and *'anuṣṭān*'.[18]

Vrat (Skt: *vrata*)—*Vrat* is usually translated as 'fast' or 'vow' and refers to some form of sensory restriction or regulation, such as fasting, silence, celibacy, etc. A *vrat* can last for a day, a lifetime, or any period between. There are certain *vrat*s that all *vairāgī*s are expected to take upon initiation and adhere to throughout their lives, such as vegetarianism, no consumption of alcoholic drinks, celibacy (for the most part), and certain restrictions on occupational activities and modes of dress.[19] In addition, they may take vows limiting speech, sleep, or any

[18] Because Rāmānandīs nearly all speak a dialect of Hindi and used Hindi pronunciation of Sanskrit terms, the transliteration of terms from here on in the chapter will reflect their pronunciation.

[19] Celibacy is actually the least emphasized in practice of the first three vows mentioned. The reason for this is that consensual sex is not seen as bad or harmful to anyone as such. The main reason for the restriction is that sex is considered a waste of important vital energy that is necessary for progression on the path to enlightenment.

of a large variety of other activities. A *vrat* can be of a more traditional nature, such as those mentioned above, or it can be a distinctively and individually formulated endeavor, such as not sitting down, living under no shelter, limiting body covering to a loin cloth, or wearing nothing made of cotton, silk, or wool. *Vrat*s are seen as strength builders of both body and mind. For Rāmānandīs, an ascetic's *vrat*s are what determine the quality and extent of his renunciation and are among the most significant characteristics that distinguish a *vairāgī* or a *tyāgī* from a *gṛhasth* ('householder'). They are tools to facilitate separation and freedom from a strictly sensual pleasure-seeking existence in the material world, so the enactment of any type or length of *vrat* is considered a form of *tapasya*. Not only do they mark the *vairāgī*'s entrance into the ascetic life, but they enhance the development of will power and prepare an individual for more in depth forms of *sādhanā*, including those done with the goal of attaining *siddhi*.

There is a corpus of *vrat*s that are regularly practiced by all *vairāgī*s, but the specific ones to be undertaken are ideally self-chosen, since members are expected to fashion their own particular *sādhanā* based on their personality, level of willpower, and spiritual maturation. Most *vrat*s are either periodic, such as fasting on Tuesdays, or last for short periods, from one to 40 days. *Vairāgī*s who are drawn to a particular *vrat* may undertake it for an extended period, depending upon the vow itself as well and the intention behind it.

For certain *vrat*s, the length may be as long as twelve years, the time span traditionally considered optimal for success in gaining the *siddhi* associated with such *vrats*. Because very few *vairāgī*s actually undertake these practices, those who commit to and are well established in such vows may become identified by and with their undertaking. For example, one who is currently undertaking or has fulfilled a vow to keep silence for twelve years, might be given the name 'Maunī Bābā' ('Revered Silent One'). If the vow is particularly difficult and is fully completed, then that *vairāgī* may continue to be addressed with this type of honorific title even after his *vrat* has ended. Within the order, there are always *vairāgī*s performing ascetic practices who act both as sources of inspiration and as *upagur*us (literally, 'assistant teachers') for younger *sādhu*s to guide them in the practices they are personally doing. Newer *vairāgī*s are encouraged to look to more experienced members of the order for such guidance, but it is ultimately up to the individual to develop a *sādhanā* that will inspire a personally deeper sense of *vairāgya* and *bhakti*.

Hindus believe that until individuals become enlightened and transcend all attachment to material existence, their actions create karma. Adhering to this, Rāmānandīs traditionally direct or dedicate the karma of their *sādhanā* for a specific purpose. This may be for the attainment of devotion, for world peace, or for a specific benefit for another individual, etc. Once a *vairāgī* decides to commit to more intense or involved *vrat*s, especially those that are enacted for longer periods, the process is begun with a conscious expression of intention and commitment, known as the taking of a *saṃkalp*.

Saṃkalp (Skt.: *samkalpa*)—Rāmānandīs underscore the importance of intentionality in the performance of any action, especially a religious endeavor, for it is understood that one's objectives and intentions influence not only the success or failure of one's efforts but also the fruit or karma that is accrued as a result. They traditionally begin any *vrat* or other form of vow taking with a *saṃkalp* (lit. 'definite intention' or 'determination'). The *mantra*s used in reciting a *saṃkalp* usually begin with the propitiation of the deity or form of the divine to whom the efforts are being directed.[20] The individual then recites his own name and, in précis, his denominational affiliation and its history, to remind him of the tradition from which he comes and the responsibility he faces in undertaking the vow. Finally, he specifies the particular forms of *sādhanā* and *tapasya* to be done, as well as the intended goal or recipient of the fruit of the undertaking.

Rāmānandīs also view *saṃkalp*s as carefully conceived promises and resolve to successfully complete specified actions. Because they are viewed as sources of power that must, if at all possible be completed, unfulfilled *saṃkalp*s are like an unkept promises and are believed to result in negative karma, the degree of which is influenced by the reasons for the failure. In a verse from the *Mānas*, King Daśarath attests, 'It is better to die than go back on your promise'. Dying, therefore, in an attempt to complete a *saṃkalp* is actually seen as auspicious and beneficial, since it shows a commitment that transcends attachment to the physical body. Young *vairāgī*s are told about the importance of letting go of physical attachments, and there are various examples of this in the order for initiates to observe and learn from. Several years after becoming a *vairāgī*, I had the opportunity to witness more closely what that commitment can mean.

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[20] For *vairaāgi*s, there are three forms of the divine to whom nearly all efforts are aimed: Lord Rām, Mother Sītā, and Hanumān.

For the particular practices in which I was involved, I was living alone in a small cottage in the Himalayas when a *tyāgī* a few years my senior appeared at my door. He had heard that a brother *vairagī* was living and doing *sādhanā* in the valley and stopped at my cottage to spend a day or two before continuing on his journey into the higher mountains. We did not speak together much, but the words we did share were about *sādhanā*, non-attachment to the physical body, and the need to use the former in order to achieve the latter. When asked about his onward plans, he replied that he was going to a cave I was familiar with in the mountains north of my home to perform an *anuṣṭān* (a spiritual retreat during which one practices a related body of *vrats* and disciplines). Since it was already November, the cave was nearly 14,000 feet elevation, and I knew that it would soon be covered with snow, I asked him how long he planned to stay there. He smiled and replied, "*Jab tak*" ('Until then'). I sensed at that moment that he knew he may not return alive. He seemed quite clear in his intention and resolve to push his current physical body as much as possible in attempting to transcend attachment to it. When he departed a few days later, he seemed happy and had a look of both contentment and commitment on his face. As the snows began to melt the following spring, I received word that the Indian military stationed in that area of the mountains had found the body of a young Rāmānandī *sādhu* in the cave.[21]

Not all *saṃkalp*s are as severe, but all are meant to be taken seriously and committed to only after deep reflection upon the responsibilities and consequences of the undertaking. The making of a *saṃkalp* is viewed as an opportunity to clarify and recall one's resolve and commitment to the ascetic life, framed as it is in vow-taking. Some *sādhu*s will repeat a *saṃkalp* every morning during their prayer rituals, earmarking the fruits of the day's *sādhanā*. Many see this ritual as a means of keeping their focus and making a daily affirmation to the single-minded attainment of their goal, be it *mukti* or *bhakti*. Practically speaking, shortened forms of the *saṃkalp* statement are generally done as preparation for one's daily *sādhanā*, but *vairāgī*s almost always do a full *saṃkalp* when initiating a new *vrat* or as a part of an *anuṣṭān* (Skt: *anuṣṭāna*)

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[21] Ramdas Lamb, "Devotion and Reincarnation as Factors in Hindu Ascetic Practices," in *Cross Currents* (New York: Association for Religion and Intellectual Life, 2008).

Anuṣṭān—There is no English term or phrase that expresses the breadth of what *anuṣṭān* means to Rāmānandīs, but the contemporary concept of a 'spiritual retreat' comes somewhat close. An *anuṣṭān* typically consists of a set of *vrat*s, initiated by a specific *saṃkalp*, for a predetermined time period. During its performance, the combination of related *vrat*s and practices becomes the primary focus of the life of the performer. It can last for almost any period, from as few as nine days up to a year or more. Some *sādhu*s will continue practices begun in an *anuṣṭān* for their entire lives. *Anuṣṭān*s often involve a degree of isolation from others so all one's energy can be devoted to the committed practice or set of practices. In some cases, two or more *vairāgī*s will engage in an *anuṣṭān* together, with the primary *sādhanā* of one of them consisting of caring for the needs of the other(s) involved. It is believed among *vairāgī*s that a person who serves and cares for another who is engaged in an *anuṣṭān* gets a portion of the spiritual merit or power gained by the undertaking.

Young *vairāgī*s are expected to experiment with *anuṣṭān*s, initially those that last for short periods of time. These serve two primary purposes: to introduce initiates into a deeper individualization of their personal focused practice, and, more importantly, to serve as a test of their abilities and resolve. If young renunciants cannot successfully undertake these initial efforts, then they are generally not considered to have the qualifications for success as a *sādhu* and may be encouraged to abandon the lifestyle. However, those who succeed and exhibit the qualities for further success are encouraged in their efforts by elders in the order. At some point, they will likely be taught some forms of *sādhanā* that are more prevalent in the practice of *tantra*, although many *vairāgī*s may avoid the label, due to its often negative connotations.

Rāmānandīs and the Issue of Power

Most Hindu ascetic orders have had to confront the issues of power, *siddhi*, and the potential for their uses and misuses. The various orders have recognized value in having powers and abilities, yet warn their members about the dangers as well. Although the *siddhi*s themselves can be problematic, it is often the desire to acquire them that becomes an addiction and can be thus more dangerous. Since the traditional goal in ascetic schools is liberation from attachment to the physical

body and the material world, anything that enhances that attachment is counterproductive to the goal. If an ascetic who is striving for freedom becomes bound to the temporal self through an addiction to *siddhi*s and the quest for them, then not only will his further progress be halted, it is very likely to be reversed. The Rāmānandī understanding of the role of *siddhi*s in their lives takes this problem into serious consideration, and there is often debate by ascetic members of the order over the perceived degree of danger that exists in their pursuit.

Several terms associated with power are prevalent within the Hindu tradition. The most common of these is '*śakti*'. Although the word can and does refer to the feminine aspect of the Divine as well, it is typically understood to refer to 'power' in a generic way. In itself, it has neither a positive nor negative quality when used in this sense. *Śakti* can be manifested physically, mentally, emotionally, or materially, and it can be either used or misused. On the most physical level, a thing such as a charged battery or a motor can be said to have *śakti*. Places and other things are also said to have *śakti*, this is meant in a more subtle and spiritual sense, such as the *śakti* of a temple, venerated places such as the Himalayas, or a *tulsī* plant, for example. A practice can awaken *śakti*, and a person can naturally or through actions possess *śakti*.

The best way to translate the Rāmānandīs' use of the term '*siddhi*' would be as 'supernatural faculties' or 'supranormal powers'. They perceive any ability as a form of power. There are those that most people have, such as the ability to walk, talk, think, eat, and so forth. Then, there are the powers that exist beyond what most people have in the natural course of human life. Several such abilities can be seen, then, as supernatural in that they are a part of a realm of existence that is above what is common or 'natural'. Whether an ability or power becomes labeled as a *siddhi* is, to some extent, a matter of interpretation.

Rāmānandīs see '*siddhi*s' as powers that come through an 'accomplishment' or 'perfection' of some sort, provided that which a *vairāgī* has perfected brings with it a significant degree of power beyond what is believed to be available to the 'normal' human. For example, a person who is able to perform a yogic posture perfectly and without any movement for a certain period of time, such as *padmāsana* for 24 hours, is said to have obtained the *siddhi* of that pose. When an otherwise unschooled person is able to make a highly effective medicine from a particular herb, especially if done in conjunction with *mantra*s

and rituals, he or she may be said to have learned the *siddhi* of the herb. Regarding those powers labeled '*siddhi*', most *vairāgī* initiates are taught to renounce them as well as the quest for them, since they can become a major obstacle for attaining *bhakti*. Instead, they are taught to begin each day's *sādhanā* with a *saṃkalp* to seek only devotion and wisdom. Yet, for those Rāmānandīs who go more deeply into their *sādhanā* practices, power and *siddhi*s become apparent and prevalent in their lives.

Deoraha Bābā is arguably one of the best known Rāmānandī *siddha*s of the past century.[22] Some devotees claim he was more than 250 years of age when he left his body in 1989. Others put the number between 150 to 175 years. Influential Indians, from film actors to politicians and businessmen, would visit him to gain his blessings before starting a new movie, election campaign, or business venture. A commonly heard story in North India is that Dr. Rajendra Prasad (b. 1884), Independent India's first president, said that when he was a youth, his father had taken him to see Deoraha Bābā, a respected religious figure at the time. During the 1970s, several octogenarians from Prayag told me they had seen him at the various Kumbha Melā festivals in their town when they were very young, and that he appeared the same then as when they related their stories so many years later.

Deoraha Bābā's longevity apparently came about through a practice known as *kāyākalp*. During fairly regular visits to see and listen to him throughout the 1970s and several times during the 1980s, I had regular opportunities to talk with his primary *vairāgī* disciple who traveled with him and cared for his needs. According to his disciple and others who knew him, Deoraha Bābā's *kāyākalp* practice involved a one to three month *anuṣṭān*, in which he would not sleep, speak, or eat (except for certain herbs), and would remain in a state of great yogic meditation. He began doing the ritual in the early twentieth century, and would undergo it every 20 years or so after that. The disciple also said his guru stopped wearing clothes and stopped eating sometime in the mid-twentieth century, although he would occasionally drink a glass of milk. Even the last time I saw him shortly before he left his body in 1989, his voice was strong, his mind seemed sharp, and he

[22] Both the Rāmānanda Sampradāy and the Rāmānuja Sampradāy claim he was a member of their order. Although he never wore a distinguishing *tilak* (forehead mark), he used to associate closely and meet regularly with *vairāgīs* and *tyāgīs* at the annual Magh Melā in Prayag every year.

easily performed several activities requiring a good amount of physical strength.

Over time, many *vairāgī*s become adept at various forms of *sādhanā*. Those who are attracted by more intense practices and have the desire and will power to immerse themselves deeply in such activities will likely incorporate into their *sādhanā* elements that are reflective of some of those found in various tantric schools and traditions for gaining psychic powers and *siddhi*s. These practices include the recitation of certain types of *mantra*s, the performance of specific rituals, the inclusion of a variety of visualization techniques, and prayers to certain types of spirits, all coupled with more extreme and concentrated forms of *tapasya*. For the purpose of this chapter, these practices will be referred to as *tantra*, acknowledging the reticence many Rāmānandīs have in using the term. Also, when discussing the issue of *tantra*, two elements have the greatest relevance. The first deals with the source of power**,** or *siddhi***,** and the second addresses its intention and use (*prayog*). Both are categorized using the traditional Hindu threefold classification of *guṇa*s ('qualities', 'characteristics') which consist of '*tamas*' (based in darkness, ignorance, negativity, immorality, etc.); '*rajas*' (based in passion, selfishness, obsession with self benefit, etc.), and '*sattva*' (based in purity, cleanliness, healthy, morality, selflessness, etc.).[23]

The intention of any form of *sādhanā*, from a simple prayer to an elaborate tantric ritual, goes a long way to determining its quality. When the intention is centered around love of God, then such *sādhanā* is almost always sāttvic. When it is done with the overarching goal to benefit someone materially or sensually, it is rājasic. If it is done with the goal of attaining a *siddhi* to be used for personal material benefit or in a way that causes injury, either by direct intention (see *māran prayog* below) or as an obvious consequence, it is tāmasic. In addition, there are obviously gray areas between the categories and room for justification of actions that may normally be looked down upon by others. Most *vairāgī*s avoid all rājasic and tāmasic forms of *sādhanā*, unless they believe that have a very good reason to do otherwise.

Rāmānandīs acknowledge the existence of the eight *siddhi*s commonly referenced in Hindu writings and tradition, but warn of the potential for misuse, especially those that directly affect the external

[23] The interpretation given for each *guṇa* refers to the general way they are understood by Rāmānandīs.

world and others.[24] In addition to the various sāttvic uses of tantric power, they recognize six main non-sāttvic *prayog* as well, all of which are primarily negative and have the potential of causing an opposite to that which is sought. For example, one who attempts to attract another (*mohan*) but does the requisite *mantra*s and rituals improperly will cause the other person to develop a dislike or even hatred for the one who did the performance; one who unsuccessfully performs *māran prayog* may die instead of the intended victim. The six non-sāttvic uses are: *mohan* (create a feeling of attraction in another), *uccāṭan* (cause mental confusion or prevent one from completing a function), *vaśikaraṇ* (gain control over someone), *vidveṣan* (cause enmity between individuals), *stambhan* (prevent a person from doing an activity), and *māran* (cause death or life threatening injury). Of the six, the last one is obviously the most dangerous. Even if done correctly and the person against whom it was performed dies or is seriously injured, the one who performs the ritual accrues the negative karma of that action, no matter how justified the act in his mind.

*Vairāgī*s and *tyāgī*s traditionally avoid any involvement with the powers listed above. However, as they progress along the path to the Divine and have a need for additional 'help', they are told to strive instead for those among the variety of 'minor' *siddhi*s that will have practical application in their lives. These include: freedom from hunger and thirst, freedom from the effects of weather (heat or cold), ability to control heart beat, metabolism and blood pressure, knowledge of the three times (past, present, future), the ability to read the minds and karmic status of others, the ability to cure most illnesses, longevity, and the ability to speak to and control the actions of wild animals. Some say knowledge of palmistry and astrology are also *siddhi*s, while others disagree. The *Mānas* provides examples of either the use or misuse of all the major *siddhi*s and many of the minor ones, and this serves as a guide for how they should be utilized.

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[24] The eight and their associated powers are:
1. *Āṇimā*—make one's body extremely small
2. *Mahimā*—make one's body extremely large
3. *Garimā*—make one's body extremely heavy
4. *Laghimā*—make one's body extremely light
5. *Prāpti*—physically or intellectually reach as far as one wishes.
6. *Prākāmya*—fulfill all one's wishes
7. *Īśiṭva*—possess divine power, including raising the dead.
8. *Vaśitva*—bring others under one's control.

Rāmānandīs see the power of *siddhi*s as coming from three primary sources, and they can be used in three primary ways. The first source is internal and is where all the relevant minor *siddhi*s have their origins. Depending on how they are awakened and used, these powers can have the qualities of any of the three g*uṇa*s mentioned above. The second source is external, coming from the spirit world. The easiest *siddhi*s to obtain from here are from lower spirit forms and are typically seen to have the characteristics of *rajas* or *tamas*. The last and highest source of power is either directly from Rām Jī, or through Sītā Mā or Hanumān Jī. Since Rām Jī is omnipresent, this source is both internal and external and is always of the quality of *sattva*.

In the case of the first source, because these powers are internal, they are ever present and thus need not be obtained but only awakened. Yoga is fundamental for this, especially when coupled with various forms of *tapasya*. One of the first of the tantric style practices to be included in a *vairāgī*'s *sādhanā* to awaken inner power is the use of visualizations. As *vairāgī*s learn the process, they are able to both awaken and direct the subtle power contained in the inner energy centers (*cakra*s). According to the yoga tradition, there are seven *cakra*s in the body, and each contains a particular form of energy, can facilitate a specific *siddhi*, and is also associated with particular personality characteristics. If one wants to develop a power or ability connected with a specific *cakra*, then the various yogic practices that help to cleanse, purify, and awaken the energy of that *cakra* are performed. When working with *cakra*s, the term for the subtle inner energy is '*kuṇḍalinī*'. This is visualized as a serpent sitting at the base of the spine with her tail in her mouth. On being awoken, she begins the journey up the spine. At each *cakra*, she is stopped until the site is opened, cleansed, and purified, at which time she can flow through it adding to her energy that which is associated with the site. The personality traits connected with the site are also empowered and purified, and the *siddhi* associated with the *cakra* is attained. For example, if one wants to become a good speaker on and teacher of Rām *bhakti*, the two *cakra*s on which one's attention would be focused are those connected with the heart and the throat. The former will aid in the attainment of a devotional attitude, wisdom, and strength, while the latter will help to make one's words more effective and influential on the listeners. Various *mudrā*s (hand gestures) and *bandha*s (muscle constrictions) are used during breath control and concentration practices in order to increase the *śakti* that is awakened. Because of the

subtle nature of this process, there are strict dietary and lifestyle restrictions placed on these efforts.

In addition to *bhakti*, the most important of these *siddhi*s that are relevant to the lives of all renunciants, as well as the foundation of all the other powers, is the ability to control bodily functions and needs. Many of the common forms of *tapasya* are undertaken for this purpose. Fasting, living in constant exposure to the weather with little or no clothing, going without sleep for long periods, and intensive practice of the various yogic limbs all help one to awaken these abilities. Intellect and critical thinking are not necessarily a requirement, and this can be either good or bad. The positive side of the non-intellectualization of praxis is that an obsession with dualistic thinking is less likely, and one tends to have a greater ability to focus more on process as well as accomplishment. The downside is that psychological reflection on the propriety and ethics of the subsequent use of any powers gained may be less likely to occur.

Rāmānandīs pray to a variety of deities besides those specifically from within the Rām *bhakti* tradition (i.e. Rām Jī, Sītā Mā, Hanumān Jī). Ascetics may include prayer to Śiva as Yogirāj ('King of the yogis'), to a departed *siddha*, or to a guru to help them be successful in their various forms of *tapas*ya. Most other deities to whom prayers are offered are female, such as Lakṣmī for material prosperity necessary for sustenance, Sarasvatī for knowledge or musical ability to aid in one's *sādhanā*, or Durgā for wisdom and strength. Typically, such prayers and their fruits are seen as sāttvic.

The easiest source from which to obtain *siddhi*s, however, is from spirit world beings such as *bhūt*, *pret*, *piśāc,* and other similar beings. These are among the various primarily negative spirits that most Hindus believe exist, somewhat similar to the western concepts of 'ghosts' and 'spirits' that have not experienced human life. Although the only powers obtainable from them are of the non-sāttvic types mentioned above, they are seen by some to be useful nevertheless. Due to the relative ease of acquisition, some ascetics who seek *siddhi*s will settle for and even become addicted to the powers obtained from such spirit forms. If Rāmānandīs seek power from these sources, they will typically hide their actions from other members of the order. Not only is this approach to powers looked down upon, but it is widely believed to come with a price. This includes blood or flesh offerings, the consumption of tāmasic food and drink, such as meat and alcohol, and the inclusion of other elements into one's life that most Hindus

consider to be impure and/or unethical. The methods used to gain power here are almost always tantric in nature and form, and the *guṇa* of the power is either *rajas* or *tamas*.

While I was still a young *vairāgī*, another young male took *dīkṣā* as a member of my guru family. He was from Bengal, a land where *tantra* is quite popular, and he began to reveal his own interest in its power rather soon after initiation. At first, his guru paid little attention to his comments, hoping that *bhakti sādhanā* would help lead him to a more *sattva guṇa* way of thinking. The following year, he went wandering on his own, a traditional practice for many *sādhu*s, and when he returned two years later, he disclosed to some of his *vairāgī* brothers that he had been secretly studying *tantra* in Nepal. He was immediately warned about the dangers of what he was doing, especially since he had not disclosed this to his guru. He soon left again to wander.

On his return the following year, he let it be known to several more people that he had become deeply involved in tantric *sādhanā*. When his guru found out, he made it clear to his disciple that he must stop the practice or he would be kicked out of the 'family'. He said that he would stop, but many of us knew that he would likely continue because of his obvious obsession with the power of *tantra*. A few months later, a poor village householder whom the *sādhu* had befriended came to him begging for help. Apparently, there was a rural gang of thieves in the area of his home, and the head of it was the villager's neighbor. The gang had become increasingly daring and violent over the years, and their bribing of the local police officials gave them relatively free reign to do what they wished. Several village girls had been raped by gang members, and many of the villagers in the area feared for their lives, including the friend of the young tantric. The villager told him the story, detailing many abuses, and begged for his assistance. The *sādhu* agreed to help him.

There was a temple near the village where the *sādhu* went to begin preparation for a nine-day *anuṣṭān*. Although he made sure no other villager became aware of his plans, several *vairāgī*s came to know that he was planning to perform a *māran prayog* ritual and besieged him to not go through with it. He remained steadfast in his decision, saying that he was doing so to help a friend in grave danger. He waited for a conducive astrological configuration to occur, then began his *anuṣṭān*. He remained in silence and spent nearly his entire waking hours chanting a particular *māran mantra* and performing rituals. Six days

into the *anuṣṭān*, one of the gang members kidnapped, raped, and then released an attractive young girl he saw in a nearby town. When the local police chief, who was a recipient of the gang's bribe money, found out, he was furious for the girl was his daughter. Because of his connection with the gang, he knew their movements and the whereabouts of their hideouts. Three nights later, on the evening of the ninth and final night of the *anuṣṭān*, a contingent of police attacked the gang when it was gathered together at one of their jungle hideouts, killing several, including the head of the gang. When news of the attack and the *anuṣṭān* reached his guru, the *sādhu* was immediately ousted from his guru family and prohibited from associating with any of its members. Nevertheless, the *sādhu* became both famous and infamous in the eyes of villagers in the region, and many sought his assistance for a large variety of problems.

The tantric *sādhu* left the area and moved into another region of India, where he became a popular tantric teacher with a rather large following. He also became an alcoholic, and his body began to age fairly rapidly. He still has a rather large following in the region where he lives, but he appears far older than his chronological years, now needs help in walking, and has a variety of rather serious health problems. More recently, he has sought reconciliation with his Rāmānandī guru, claiming that 'most' of his practices are now strictly sāttvic.

Power and *siddhi*s that come from prayer to Rām Jī, Sītā Mā, or Hanumān Jī (often referred to as 'Bajaraṅgabali', or 'He whose body is like lightening') are always of the quality of *sattva*. Nothing asked for will be attained unless it ultimately provides spiritual benefit. Practically speaking, Rām Jī is rarely approached directly for *siddhi*s, since he represents Ultimate, Non-dualistic Reality in which such powers are irrelevant. Although the most popular form of Rāmānandī *sādhanā* is *Rāmnām*, this is done almost solely for devotional purposes. Nevertheless, *vairāgī*s will recite prayers such as the *Rāma Rakṣa Stotram* and certain verses or sections from the *Mānas* to gain his blessings or protection. Additionally, prayers to Sītā Mā are fundamental for *vairāgī*s wishing to overcome sexual desires and physical attraction to females. Through certain prayers found in the *Mānas* and in other of Tulsīdās's writings, it is believed that Sītā Mā will grant the *siddhi* to be able to see all females as daughters, sisters, or mothers, depending upon their ages in relation to the *vairāgī* seeking the power. The importance of this power, or ability, cannot be overemphasized,

since most *vairāgī*s do not spend their lives separate from females.[25] Although there may not be daily interaction, for most there is regular contact, as a consequence of which any existing sexual longings may be awoken, stimulated, or enhanced. For *vairāgī*s, one of Sītā's primary roles as the Divine Mother is to aid them in both sublimating sexual desires and in transforming them into devotional energy. Just as one's sexual desires are not stimulated by the presence of one's mother, so the presence and blessings of Sītā Mā are believed to help create a similarly non-sexual relationship with all females.

Hanumān Jī is, by far, the one to whom most *vairāgī* prayers are directed, whether it be for devotion or for the purposes of gaining power and *siddhi*s. The *Hanumān Cālīsā* says that Sītā Mā blessed him to be the grantor of the eight *siddhi*s and nine *niddhi*s (nine forms of material prosperity). Thus, he is the one to whom *vairāgī*s naturally turn. When one Rāmānandī teacher was asked if Rām Jī grants powers or if only Hanumān Jī does so, his response was emblematic of Rāmānandī theology as well as thinking in this regards:

> When you pray to Rām Jī for something, Hanumān Jī will take care of it, since that is his job. When you pray to Hanumān Jī for something, it is, after all, Rām ji whose power you receive, since he is the ultimate source. Therefore, it doesn't matter to whom you pray, all power is Rām Jī's, and the deliverer is Hanumān Jī.[26]

The same teacher further noted,

> In the divine play of life [*divya līlā*], Rām Jī takes many forms, but all are him. In his *līla*, we respect his various forms, knowing that all are him. Ultimately, only Rām Jī exists. Even Sītā Mā is not separate but is his creative energy. Everything is him.

This syllogistic blending of both dualistic and non-dualistic thinking is common in many schools of Hinduism and integral in the formation of Rāmānanda theology.

There are various prayers and texts and a multiplicity of ways in which Hanumān Jī is propitiated for protection, powers, and devotion. Prayers to him are also believed to develop both physical and psychic power. Among the most popular textual sources for such prayers are the *Mānas*, especially the Kiṣkindhakāṇḍ and Sundarkāṇḍ

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[25] *Tyāgī*s and *mahātyāgī*s, on the other hand, have relatively less interaction with females, thus less 'need' for this power.

[26] Interview with Śrī Mānas Maharāthy Tyāgī, January 4, 2010.

chapters; the *Hanumān Cālīsā;* the *Hanumān Bahuk*; the *Hanumān Astik*, and the *Hanumān Upāsanā.* All Rāmānandīs, both householder and renunciant, use these texts. However, the most powerful of the prayers used specifically by *vairāgī*s for protection and for the acquisition of *siddhi*s are the *Eka Mukhi* and the *Pañca Mukhi* versions of the *Hanumat Kavacam*. '*Kavaca*' means 'armor' or 'protective covering', and the primary purpose of the prayers is for protection against physical and spirit sources of potential harm, including curses such as the evil eye.[27] Since *vairāgī*s perceive these prayers to be highly effective, their use has broadened to encompass a wide range of purposes, including the acquisition of a variety of *siddhi*s. Yogic practices, forms of *tapasya*, *vrat*s, and *saṃkalp*s are typically performed along with *kavaca* prayers to increase their effectiveness. Again, these are never to be used for non-sāttvic purposes, although what is considered sāttvic is, to some extent, left up to the discretion of the person using them.

The most common of the daily prayers to Hanumān Jī by nearly all Rām devotees is the *Hanumān Cālīsā*, a forty verse prayer attributed to Tulsīdās. *Vairāgī*s see it as a powerful source to awaken devotion but also to grant powers. Different methods of recitation are used, depending upon the desired results. For example, if a *vairāgī* wants to know about a future event or about someone whose condition or whereabouts is unknown, then he may fast and keep silence on a Tuesday or Saturday and repeat the *Cālīsā* 108 times. That night, the performer is supposed to have a dream that will reveal to him what he wishes to know, provided he can interpret it correctly. The *Cālīsā* may be used to cure the illness of devotee or to help someone find a spouse for a devotee's son or daughter. Rāmānandī teachers will encourage all their disciples to use the *Cālīsā*, in conjunction with other methods and actions, to help them solve almost any problem that arises. All these uses are seen to be sāttvic, since it is believed that only those results that will benefit a person spiritually will occur.

[27] Although the placing of curses is a prevalent part of various shamanistic traditions, and a few ascetic orders, the Rāmānandīs avoid these. They are seen to create highly negative karma and have no value in the spiritual life.

Bhakti as siddhi

Amidst all the various powers that *vairāgī*s seek to obtain, none is seen to be greater than the power of devotion. Moreover, it is said to provide the greatest form of *śakti* and *siddhi*. A Rāmānandī teacher once said,

> If you have a desire for *śakti* or *siddhi* in your heart, *bhakti* will never come, for she is a jealous *devī* [female divinity]. However, if you empty your heart of other desires and make room for *bhakti*, only then will she come, and she will bring her own *śakti* and her own *siddhi* with her, which are the most powerful of all.[28]

Power is an important part of anyone's life, from the simplest actions to the most complex. However, wherever there is power, there needs to be the knowledge to use it responsibly. This is why Rāmānandīs focus on those powers that are generated from within or from Rām Jī. In addition, they ideally limit themselves to uses that fall within the guidelines of *sattva*, and they only apply the powers to further themselves and others along the path of *bhakti*. Acknowledging those few who misuse the powers they attain, most Rāmānandīs hold to the belief that there is no *siddhi* more powerful and effective than selfless love of the Divine. For all Rāmānandīs, the doctrines and practices of *sādhanā* that frame their lives help to assure that most are able to stay on a path that keeps devotion to Rām Jī as their guiding light and their ultimate goal.

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[28] He was obviously utilizing the fact that '*śakti*', '*siddhi*', and '*bhakti*' are all feminine gender nouns.

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

YOGA POWERS IN A CONTEMPORARY SĀṂKHYA-YOGA TRADITION

Knut A. Jacobsen

A significant part of the *Yogaśāstra* (the *Yogasūtra* combined with the *Vyāsabhāṣya*) concerns different kinds of abilities that are beyond the reach of most people: the yoga powers (*jñāna*, *vibhūti*, and *siddhi*). These powers are described in chapter three of the *Yogasūtra* and include extraordinary knowledge (*jñāna*) and extraordinary abilities (*vibhūti*, *siddhi*). Since the *Yogaśāstra* is the foundation text of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga system of religious thought (*darśana*), one would therefore expect that the yoga powers played an important role in the yoga practice of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga traditions. In this essay I investigate the position and interpretation of the yoga powers in a contemporary Indian Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition. I will present some of the views on yoga powers and their place in the practice of Sāṃkhya-Yoga of Hariharānanda Āraṇya (1869–1947) and the Kāpil Maṭh tradition. *Yogaśāstra* is the foundation text of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, the Yoga *darśana* which originated as a school of Sāṃkhya. The significance of the tradition of Sāṃkhya-Yoga of Hariharānanda Āraṇya is that it is a living representation of this 'original yoga'. The *Yogaśāstra*, although describing and conveying a rational analysis of many superhuman abilities and explaining them as inevitable as the yogin advances towards salvific liberation, has ultimately a critical view of these yoga powers. Hariharānanda Āraṇya and the Kāpil Maṭh tradition are in general agreement with this view.

Sāṃkhya-Yoga

Hindu systems of religious thought have since medieval times been classified into six schools (*ṣaḍ-darśana*s), and Sāṃkhya and Yoga are two of these schools, which, when joined together, are called Sāṃkhya-Yoga. Sāṃkhya and the Yoga *darśana* systems can be considered as

two versions of one philosophical tradition, referred to by the name Sāṃkhya-Yoga. Sāṃkhya and Yoga have different foundation texts, the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa (350–400) and the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali with the commentary *Vyāsabhāṣya* (350–400), collectively called *Yogaśāstra*. However, the texts are joined together because they are based on the same theory and there are only minor differences between them. They share an identical philosophical foundation: the same three means of knowledge (*pramāṇas*)—perception, inference, and authoritative testimony; an equal number of fundamental principles (twenty-five *tattvas*); the same doctrine of two ultimate principles (*puruṣa* and *prakṛti*); and the same salvific goal (*kaivalya*) of the realization of *puruṣa* as pure consciousness and only a witness, separate from *prakṛti* and its emanations. One difference between Classical Sāṃkhya (Sāṃkhya as presented in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* and its commentarial tradition) and Yoga (Yoga as presented in the *Yogaśāstra* and its commentarial tradition) is that in Yoga, devotion to *īśvara* (*īśvarapraṇidhāna*) is recommended as a yoga practice. Yet, *īśvara* in this system is not a separate principle in addition to the twenty-five *tattva*s, as it does not constitute an additional ultimate principle. *Īśvara* is neither a creator god nor a god with salvific powers, but is only a special *puruṣa* which has never been associated with *prakṛti*. Much of the vocabulary used in the *Yogasūtra* is different from the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*. However, a great deal of the vocabulary in the *Yogasūtra* which is absent in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* is similar to the Buddhist Abhidharma tradition.[1] This vocabulary might have been common to several philosophies of meditation in ancient India or, perhaps more likely, the similarity is evidence of a direct influence from Buddhism. Scholars argue that a controversy between Sāṃkhya and Abhidharma Buddhism was one reason for the formulation of the Yoga school of philosophy and this explains the difference in vocabulary between the Sāṃkhya and Yoga schools.[2] This means, however, that the Sāṃkhya and Yoga schools (*darśana*s) are just two interpretations of Sāṃkhya. Before these Sāṃkhya schools developed there were

[1] See Gerald James Larson, "Introduction to the Philosophy of Yoga," in *Yoga: India's Philosophy of Meditation*, ed. Gerald James Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya. Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, Vol IV (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008), 21–159.

[2] Ibid.

probably many Sāṃkhya centers where more or less parallel doctrines developed.[3]

Sāṃkhya and Yoga, however, are not merely two schools of Hindu philosophy. Sāṃkhya is in many ways *the* philosophy of Hinduism.[4] Sāṃkhya dominates many of the systems of knowledge, such as Indian medicine (*ayurveda*); it had an enormous influence on the later theological systems, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, and Śākta, and its central concepts are omnipresent in narrative traditions such as the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*. Yoga has a different history, but is often associated with Sāṃkhya in early texts. The earliest descriptions of yoga in Hindu manuscripts appear in texts dominated by the Sāṃkhya views and categories. Nonetheless, yoga is also one of the main forms of spiritual practice in Hinduism. There are many traditions of yoga in Hinduism, and the yoga system of religious thought, the Yoga *darśana*, is only one of these. Yoga was probably never a homogenous tradition. There are descriptions in *Mahābhārata* of different traditions associated with yoga and yoga seems to have been even then a pluralistic phenomenon.[5] Some of these traditions are perhaps included in the *sūtra*s of the *Yogasūtra*, but the plurality of traditions was probably greater. There has also since been a continuous development of new schools of yoga. Nevertheless, the *Yogasūtra* attained a unique position since the yoga tradition that was based on this text was included as one of the Hindu *darśana*s.

That the Sāṃkhya and Yoga *darśana*s developed as two closely related Sāṃkhya schools means that the *Vyāsabhāṣya* (the commentary text on the *Yogasūtra*) can be understood as a text that blends Sāṃkhya theory and yoga practice. The *Sāṃkhyakārikā* mostly deals with only theory, not practice; for example, we do not learn how Sāṃkhyans live and what they do. Yoga teaches a method to realize the Sāṃkhya principles. The *Yogasūtra* and the *Vyāsabhāṣya* elaborate on both theory and practice, and the practice of yoga leads to knowledge of the twenty-five Sāṃkhya principles. Knowing the twenty-fifth, the *puruṣa* principle, is the means to *kaivalya*. The *Vyāsabhāṣya* is the

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[3] J. A. B. van Buitenen, "Studies in Sāṃkhya (III)," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 77 (1957): 88–107.

[4] Gerald James Larson, "Introduction to the Philosophy of Sāṃkhya," in *Sāṃkhya: A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, ed. Gerald James Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya. Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, Vol IV (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987).

[5] See the chapters by Angelika Malinar and David Gordon White in this book.

longest of the old texts of Sāṃkhya philosophy available, although it represents a different school than the one referred to as classical Sāṃkhya and identified with the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* tradition. A significant part of the *Yogaśāstra* is about yoga powers. In some yoga traditions the attainment of yoga powers was the goal of their practice. According to *Vyāsabhāṣya*, yoga powers are encountered in the yoga practice, but the goal is attainment of the separation of *puruṣa* from *prakṛti*. The powers are part of *prakṛti*, not *puruṣa*. According to the Sāṃkhya-Yoga theory of meditation, in the process in which the yogin attains perfection in mastering different *tattva*s, the yogin also gains power over the reality created by those *tattva*s. Consequently, the powers are primarily abilities attained from gaining control over the *tattva*s. The Sāṃkhya-Yoga doctrine of yoga powers is that superhuman knowledge and abilities are attained as the yogin masters different aspects of meditation and concentration, but their attainment is not the aim of the practice. In fact, they are considered disturbances in yoga practice. Nonetheless, since Sāṃkhya-Yoga is a rational system of religious thought, the nature of the powers and the fact that they are attained in yoga practice needed to be explained.

Kāpil Maṭh

There is no reliable description of a continuous Sāṃkhya tradition as a spiritual practice, not even from the mythical founder of Sāṃkhya, Kapila, to Īśvarakṛṣṇa,[6] the author of *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, nor of a continuous Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition. Sāṃkhya and Sāṃkhya-Yoga (the Yoga school of Sāṃkhya philosophy) traditions have probably in different periods of time had very few practitioners, and although there might have been revivals on several occasions in India's past, the practitioners of Sāṃkhya and Yoga were perhaps always few in number. The traditions have in all probability more or less disappeared and been revived several times throughout Indian history, such as in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Bengal. Here, Sāṃkhya-Yoga was revived by the Sāṃkhya-Yoga ascetic Hariharānanda Āraṇya. The tradition of Sāṃkhya-Yoga founded by Hariharānanda Āraṇya is

[6] Knut A. Jacobsen, *Kapila: Founder of Sāṃkhya and Avatāra of Viṣṇu* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2008).

a living Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition and is centered round Kāpil Maṭh in Madhupur in the North Indian state of Jharkhand.[7]

Hariharānanda Āraṇya was from Kolkata (Calcutta) and after a period of college tuition, in which he studied Sanskrit, among other subjects, he took the *saṃnyāsin* vow (became an ascetic) and devoted the rest of his life to the practice of Sāṃkhya-Yoga. He spent six years in solitude in the caves of the Barabar Hills in Bihar and for the last twenty-one years of his life (from 1926-1947) he lived in the cave Kāpil *guha* ("cave of Kapila") of Kāpil Maṭh. This was the origin of a distinct tradition of the guru being permanently confined in an artificial cave.[8] Hariharānanda Āraṇya remained in the cave for more than twenty years, the next guru Dharmamegha Āraṇya stayed in the cave for more than thirty years, and the current guru Bhāskara Āraṇya has been living there for around twenty-five years (since 1986). These are all self-imposed solitary confinements. The only means of contact between the guru and the devotees is through a small window opening in the hall of the building. It is not unusual in the Hindu tradition for *sādhu*s to isolate themselves in caves for periods of intense meditation that may last for several years, but it is unusual that *sādhu*s take the vow to never ever leave the inside of a cave. The goal of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, *kaivalya*, is isolation of the self, the *puruṣa*, from materiality, *prakṛti*, and its products. The meaning of *kaivalya* is 'isolation' and 'detachment'. Isolation of the guru in the cave can therefore be understood to symbolize the isolation of the self, *puruṣa*, from materiality, *prakṛti*. Dwelling in the cave is a method of realizing the isolation of the self but is at the same time a statement of faith in the doctrine. The goal of Sāṃkhya of the self in isolation is mirrored in the isolation of the guru in the cave. The self is absolutely passive and is separated from everything else. It is a pure witness, a sheer presence, independent, and uninvolved. Realization of the self means therefore to comprehend the self as something it already is, independent and separate from materiality. When all the changes in the mental organ (*citta*)

[7] See Knut A. Jacobsen, "In Kapila's Cave: A Sāṃkhya-Yoga Renaissance in Bengal," in *Theory and Practice of Yoga: Essays in Honour of Gerald James Larson*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 333–349; Jacobsen, *Kapila*; and Knut A. Jacobsen, "The Wisdom of Kapila's Cave: Sāṃkhya-Yoga as Practice," in *Hinduism in Practice*, ed. Hillary Rodrigues (London: Routledge, 2011), 104-117.

[8] For the cave tradition of Kāpil Maṭh, see Jacobsen, "In Kapila's Cave: A Sāṃkhya-Yoga Renaissance in Bengal."

cease, the self is established as such and, according to Sāṃkhya-Yoga, all connection with the world is severed.

Hariharānanda Āraṇya, a practical yogin, gained his authority from both yoga practice and scholarship. The famous Tāntrika Gopinath Kaviraj of Varanasi wrote (in 1936) in the "Foreword" of Hariharānanda Āraṇya's *Sāṃkhyatattvāloka* that Āraṇya was a yogin "whose deep personal experiences stand behind all his utterances."[9] Āraṇya's authority is based on his own experience, but also on his scholarship. He wrote a number of books in Sanskrit and Bengali, some of which are Sanskrit and Bengali commentaries on Sāṃkhya-Yoga texts and some are independent texts such as Sanskrit *kārikā*s and *stotra*s. He also wrote a text on the life of a yogin that is semi-autobiographical. He was respected for his proficiency in Sanskrit by Sanskrit *paṇḍit*s and he was admired for his ascetical lifestyle by *sādhu*s, devotees, and disciples. His reputation is based on his yoga practice, his knowledge of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, his writings in Sanskrit and Bengali, and his uncompromising ascetical lifestyle.

Hariharānanda Āraṇya and Yoga Powers

The fact that Hariharānanda Āraṇya was a practical yogin in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition makes his understanding of yoga powers particularly interesting. Sāṃkhya-Yoga is a rational system of religious thought based on a text which is largely devoted to extraordinary knowledge and abilities. His views of yoga powers are to a large degree based on his own yoga practice. Hariharānanda Āraṇya disliked the sometimes exaggerated focus on yoga powers among many of the *yogin*s, *sādhu*s, and lay people he encountered, and he prohibited his disciples from writing his biography, one reason being that he feared that the biography would become a typical Hindu hagiographical narrative that focuses on yoga powers instead of the philosophy of Sāṃkhya-Yoga.[10] In other words, he was aware that lay people often associate yogins with yoga powers and with the common Hindu belief which claims that the greater the yogin the greater the powers he is

[9] Hariharānanda Āraṇya, *The Sāṃkhya-sūtras of Pañcaśikha and The Sāṃkhyatattvāloka.* Edited with an Introduction by Jajneswar Ghosh (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977). Quotation is in the Foreword to *Sāṃkhyatattvāloka*, iv.

[10] This was conveyed to me by Adinath Chatterjee, a lay follower of the Kāpil Maṭh.

believed to have attained. Āraṇya emphasized the rational quality of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, and Sāṃkhya-Yoga as a philosophy, and his views on the powers were probably also influenced by a critical attitude to that element of Hindu folk religion.

Hariharānanda Āraṇya seems to have accepted the reality of the yoga powers as they are described in the *Yogasūtra*. Āraṇya wrote many books that attempted to explain every aspect of Sāṃkhya-Yoga. Since the Yoga powers are such an important part of the *Yogaśāstra*, he therefore had to also give explanations of the powers. In his writings he tried to explain the superhuman powers attained by yoga practice by relating them to the philosophy of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, modern science, common sense, and the practice of magicians. Mostly, he explains them by connecting them to the philosophy of Sāṃkhya-Yoga. Sometimes, however, he explains them by relating the powers to modern science, common sense, and magicians and this is especially the case in his commentary on the *Yogaśāstra*, written in Bengali, but not in the commentary written in Sanskrit, the *Bhāsvatī*. Consequently, he may have had the audience in mind when he explained the powers in this way, and the reasons for relating them to modern science, common sense, and magicians might have been pedagogical, to make the powers understandable for the readers.

When Āraṇya pays homage to his own guru, it is the extraordinary knowledge of the guru he emphasizes. Very little information is available about Hariharānanda Āraṇya's guru Swāmī Trilokī Āraṇya, but one thing Āraṇya reveals about him is that he was famous for his extraordinary knowledge. He mentions this in a Sanskrit poem called "Gurunamaskāra va utsarga" printed in the dedication to a book in Bengali published in 1902. In this poem, Āraṇya described his lineage of teachers, his *guruparamparā*, and he mentioned specifically that Trilokī Āraṇya became famous for his supersensory knowledge (*jñanam atīndriya*).[11] Unfortunately, he does not elaborate on the particular knowledge Trilokī Āraṇya had attained.[12] The mentioning of

[11] The verses have been recently translated into English by the Kāpil Maṭh. In this translation *jñānam atīndriya* is translated as 'supernormal powers'. *Jñāna* is used in the *Vibhūtipāda* of the *Yogasūtra* thirteen times (YS 3.16, 3.17, 3.18, 3.19–20, 3.22, 3.25, 3.26, 3.27, 3.28, 3.29, 3,35, 3.52, 3.54) to designate a number of extraordinary cognitive capacities that are usually included in the category of 'superhuman powers'. In the translation chosen by the Maṭh, 'supernormal powers' seem to emphasize that Trilokī Āraṇya had yoga powers which *jñānam atīndriya* most probably implies.

[12] According to the tradition of the Kāpil Maṭh, Hariharānanda spent only one day with Swāmī Trilokī Āraṇya.

supersensory or transcendent knowledge could of course be simply a way of saying that Trilokī was a great yogin, but had Āraṇya been critical of the powers, he would not have referred to them in a homage to his guru. The other facts that Hariharānanda relays about Trilokī are that he lay on the ground meditating while wild creatures moved around him and that he wandered about without lifting his arm, not even to feed himself (that is, he never asked for alms). This emphasizes the extreme ascetic lifestyle of Trilokī. Trilokī Āraṇya's teacher was Triputi Āraṇya, whose teacher Paraṃsvabhāraṇya, as described by Hariharānanda Āraṇya in his writings, made the light of Sāṃkhya-Yoga burn in his disciple. Āraṇya further informs that Paraṃsvabhāraṇya learned Sāṃkhya-Yoga from his guru Śrī Bhāsvataprajña. Hariharānanda does not anywhere in his many texts elaborate further on this *guruparamparā*, so this is all that is known. However, this shows that there was a living, albeit minor, tradition of Sāṃkhya-Yoga ascetics in India at the time, and that Hariharānanda encountered an ascetic who belonged to this tradition and was known for his supersensory or transcendent knowledge and who initiated him as his disciple.

Views on Superhuman Powers

According to the Kāpil Maṭh tradition, Hariharānanda was critical of the exaggerated focus on yoga powers among *sādhu*s and others he encountered. He did not deny their reality but pointed out that focusing on yoga powers did not help in attaining the goal of Sāṃkhya-Yoga. However, since yoga powers are such an important part of yoga, they should not be denied. In a book he wrote on the life of a yogin that was partly autobiographical and partly fictional, entitled *A Unique Travelogue,* he gives a favorable view of the yoga powers. In this book he claims that superhuman powers possessed by the founders of religions are the basis of these religions. He argues that every religion is based on the founders' superhuman powers. He explains that he had spoken with "a so- called 'all-knowing' saint" (a saint who, according to Āraṇya, boasted of knowledge but had no self control) about concentration and self-realization.[13] This saint told the following story. Through meditation, a man had acquired the power of walking on

[13] Hariharānanda Āraṇya, *A Unique Travelogue* (Madhupur: Kāpil Math, 2005), 75.

water (see *Yogasūtra* 3.39 and 3.42, this power can be gained by mastery of *udāna*, the arising breath [*prāṇa*], according to *Yogasūtra* 3.39, or by practicing *saṃyama* [the combination of meditative fixation, meditation, and concentration] on the relation between space [*ākāśa*] and the body, according to *Yogasūtra* 3.42). When he returned home his brother asked what he had accomplished. He then told his brother that he had attained the power of walking on water. His brother suggested that they should go down to the river in order for him to prove this superhuman power. The yogin then crossed the river on foot. The brother took the ferryboat and paid a small coin to the ferry man. He then ridiculed his yogin brother by saying that the value of his accomplishment was only worth the small coin that he had paid. The so-called 'all-knowing' saint took much pride in telling this story, Hariharānanda notes. Hariharānanda further comments on the so-called 'all-knowing' saint that "such men were unable to appreciate the true value of spiritual attainment" and "could easily be lured by worldly possession."[14] He therefore has the narrator of the book tell the saint that he had told only half of the story. After the brother had ridiculed the yogin, they took the same ferry to get back to the other side. On the return journey halfway across the river, the boat capsized. The brother fell in the water and was drowning. However, the saint who could walk on water rescued him and thus brought him back to life. He then said to the brother: "You have got back your life due to the superhuman power acquired through spiritual practice. Tell me now; what is the value of your life and for that matter the worth of special power."[15] The brother then responded: "I did not realize it before. Your power is invaluable."[16] In this story, Āraṇya defends superhuman powers against an opponent who considered them valueless. Here, he seems to see criticism of the value of superhuman powers as a criticism of yoga, religion, and spirituality itself. The reason for this defense of superhuman powers is probably that in yoga there is a close connection between superhuman powers and faith. Critique of the powers can therefore be understood as a criticism of spirituality itself, since according to Hariharānanda every religion is based on the superhuman powers of the founders. Surendranath

[14] Ibid., 76.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.

Dasgupta confirmed the function of the yoga powers to deepen the faith in his *Yoga as Philosophy and Religion*:

> These *vibhūtis*, as they rise with the performance of the processes of Yoga, gradually deepen the faith *śraddhā* of the Yogin in the performance of his deeds and thus helps towards his main goal or ideal by always pushing or drawing him forward towards it by the greater and greater strengthening of his faith. Divested from the ideal, they have no value.[17]

Hariharānanda considers the powers extremely difficult to attain:

> Realization from *dhyāna* enables keeping the object of meditation steadfastly for some time in mind. This may lead to greater conviction and enhanced *siddhi* (associated powers etc.). Realization from *samādhi* involves perfect awareness and greatly developed *siddhi* or powers etc. However, this is extremely difficult and rarely attained.[18]

Nevertheless, Āraṇya describes in a letter an experience of powers while staying in the Barabar Hills in 1894. It started with the body and senses becoming inert as though he "had departed from this earthly life." He describes what followed: "My body felt light as though it were only a ball of flame. Like a piece of pith moving upward in a mass of water, I made easy passage in the surrounding atmosphere. But as I proceeded further the speed started decreasing." He had visions of different cosmic regions and when he "entered the cave, which itself was a vast expanse," he felt himself "becoming one with the universe."[19] "All the gross realms (millions of them, yet all within my range of vision) were at the periphery. The subtle realms were closer to the center from which emanated a very subtle and potent flow of energy." He speculates that Lord Viṣṇu lying on the snake (Anantaśāyī) was the source of this energy. However, he next reports, "millions of universes like ours came within my field of vision" and he grasped the meaning of limitlessness.[20] This marked the end of the experience of superhuman powers, because he then realized that what he was seeking was lasting peace, and that lasting peace transcends the powers.[21] The idea

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[17] Surendranath Dasgupta, *Yoga as Philosophy and Religion* (1924; reprint: Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973), 158.

[18] Ibid. 157.

[19] Hariharānanda Āraṇya, "The Unexpected (A Unique Experience)," in Hariharānanda Āraṇya, *Progressive and Practical Sāṃkhya-Yoga* (Madhupur: Kāpil Math, 2003), 113–119, quote p. 114.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

of becoming one with the universe is one of the central superhuman powers and is one of the meanings of *vibhūti*.[22]

A story was related to me by a disciple of Kāpil Maṭh who emphasized that Āraṇya had an unfavorable attitude toward the yoga powers.[23] Dharmamegha Āraṇya was a disciple of Āraṇya who became the second guru of the tradition. When Dharmamegha lived as *brahmacārī* in the hermitage of the *maṭh* in Kurseong in Darjeeling, he had an experience of being able to foreknow the future (see *Yogasūtra* 3.16, 3.33, and 3.36, prescience [*prātibha*] arises from the knowledge of *puruṣa*). It dawned on him that Hariharānanda Āraṇya would arrive that same day on the train and he wrote this premonition on a piece of paper with the date and time. Later, when he went down the hill to the railway station at the scheduled time of the train's arrival, he found the guru walking towards him. Dharmamegha quietly gave the piece of paper to the guru. However, the guru read it and immediately threw it away in an unceremonious fashion. When Dharmamegha narrated this to the disciple, he said that by that simple act of throwing away the note as if it were dirt, his guru Hariharānanda had instilled in him the teaching that all superhuman powers, in whatever form they might appear, had to be completely avoided. The disciple commented that the instruction that all superhuman powers are impediments on the path of yoga is also the message of *Yogasāstra* 3.37.

Yogasāstra 3.37 states that superhuman powers can be hindrances when the yogin is in *samādhi*, but they can be valuable in ordinary life (*te samādhau upasargā vyutthāne siddhayaḥ*). One problem in the interpretation of this *sūtra* is, of course, whether the word 'they' *(te)* refers only to those powers mentioned in the previous *sūtra* (superhuman abilities), to all superhuman knowledge mentioned in the previous *sūtra*s or to all *jñāna*s, *siddhi*s, and *vibhūti*s. One argument in favor of the word 'they' referring to all the powers is that all the superhuman powers disturb the one-pointedness of *samādhi*, and this is how the *sūtra* is usually understood. *Sūtra* 3.36 marks the end of the treatment of superhuman knowledge and from *sūtra* 3.38 starts the treatment of superhuman powers of action. Hariharānanda Āraṇya concludes the whole chapter on *vibhūti*s by commenting on *Yogasūtra* 3.55, stating that for the acquirement of spiritual progress "attainment of supernormal powers is not necessary, because complete annihila-

[22] See chapters by Angelika Malinar and David White in this volume.
[23] In a written statement by Adinath Chatterjee to the author.

tion of sorrow cannot be effected through supernormal knowledge or powers."[24] Āraṇya also argues that the superhuman power of knowledge called Prātibha or Tāraka, described in *Yogasūtra* 3.33 and 3.54, stands in the way of attaining liberation. Only discriminative enlightenment can cause liberation.[25]

Hariharānanda Āraṇya believed that yoga powers could be obtained from meditative fixation (*dhāraṇā*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and concentration (*samādhi*). However, at the stage of meditative fixation (*dhāraṇā*) superhuman powers are not usually achieved, he comments. He adds that they come rarely, if at all, and then in "small glimpses of foreknowledge of the future etc."[26] The example recounted by the disciple about the foreknowledge of the guru's future arrival might perhaps be an example of superhuman abilities gained by the practice of meditative fixation (*dhāraṇā*).

Explanations of Superhuman Powers

A significant part of the *Yogasūtra* and the *Vyāsabhāṣya* deals with yoga powers. Hariharānanda wrote explanatory commentaries, both in Bengali and Sanskrit, on the *Yogasūtra* and the *Vyāsabhāṣya*. As part of his explanation of every aspect of yoga, he also had to describe the yoga powers, but his comments on these are often brief. This is a general tendency in most if not all of the commentaries on the *Yogasūtra* and the *Bhāṣya*. How then did Hariharānanda explain the superhuman powers in his commentaries? What value did he assign to them? What characterizes his explanations? Common to the explanations are that he attempts to give rational accounts of the powers by relating them to different systems of knowledge.

A dominant pattern in Āraṇya's writings is to explain the yoga powers by the Sāṃkhya theory of the *tattva*s and the Yoga theory of *samādhi*. To relate the powers to the *tattva*s is also common in Indological scholarship.[27] By mastering the *tattva*s, the yogin gains power over all the products of those *tattva*s. *Yogasūtra* 3.25 states that the yogin is able to see subtle objects and objects obstructed from view or

[24] Hariharānanda Āraṇya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali with Bhāsvatī* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 2000), 345.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Hariharānanda Āraṇya, *Sāṃkhya Across the Millenniums* (Madhupur: Kāpil Math, 2005), 157.

[27] See the chapters by Chapple, Malinar, Pflueger, and Sarbacker in this volume.

far away, and Āraṇya explains this knowledge by referring to the all-pervading power of the *buddhi*. The ability to see subtle objects, objects obstructed from view or far away knowledge does not come from the sense organs, but the objects are known directly through the *buddhi*.[28] Further explanation is given in the commentary on *Yogasūtra* 3.26. Here, the same principle is used to explain the power of knowledge of the whole universe. The *buddhi* is in reality ubiquitous, but ordinarily it is limited by the actions of the senses. As these limitations disappear the power of *buddhi* increases and "one goes from higher to higher regions."[29] "From the point of view of *buddhi* there is no such thing as far and near."[30] He concludes:

> Thus Buddhi of each creature and the stellar regions are on the same plane, and the power of attaining them is gained when the Vṛttis or modifications of Buddhi are purified.[31]

Yogasūtra 3.38 states that when the movements of the mind are known the yogin can pass into another body. He can withdraw the mind from his own body and project it into another person. Āraṇya explains this by arguing that through concentration the knowledge "I am not the body" becomes established, the mind is set free from the body and can enter another body and influence it. This explanation is also based on Sāṃkhya theory. The mind is a more subtle principle than the *tattva*s, which are the material causes of the body. The explanation follows logically from the Sāṃkhya theory of the *tattva*s.

The power to walk on water (*Yogasūtra* 3.39) is explained by Āraṇya by connecting the *prāṇa* called *udāna* to the nerve where the perception of the bodily humors resides. By meditating on the presence of *sattva guṇa* "in all the humors of the body, the body is felt to be light."[32] Also, the Sāṃkhya theory is used to explain the power. The *guṇa sattva* is lightness, and by focusing on *sattva guṇa*, the yogin experiences lightness. The *udāna* is the ascending breath and represents the upward movement and, therefore, *sattva guṇa*.

The power to move in air at will is stated in *Yogasūtra* 3.42 to be the result of *saṃyama* on the relationship between the body and the *tat-*

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[28] Āraṇya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali with Bhāsvatī*, 297.
[29] Ibid., 303.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., 303. Compare this with the experience of being one with the universe of Āraṇya above.
[32] Ibid., 315.

tva ākāśa and by concentrating on the lightness of cotton and wool and so on. Āraṇya explains this by stating that *ākāśa* has the property of sound and that sound is nothing but a collection of activity without any form. To think of the body as nothing but a collection of activities and vacant like *ākāśa*, is to think about the relationship between body and *ākāśa*. This is done by contemplating the unstruck sound (*anāhatanāda*) pervading the body, he explains. He continues to clarify that both the body and heaviness are products of the *tattva ahaṃkāra* (egoity). By controlling *ahaṃkāra* a person also controls the *tattva*s which have *ahaṃkāra* as their material cause. Through the power of *samādhi*, the opposite of heaviness is conceived and the matter of the body changes to lightness. By contemplating the unstruck sound (*anāhatanāda*) pervading the body and controlling *ahaṃkāra*, the ability to move in the air is attained, explains Āraṇya.[33]

To explain the ability to understand sounds of all sentient creatures (*Yogasūtra* 3.17) Āraṇya also draws on the Sāṃkhya method of analysis:

> When a proficient Yogin, on hearing a word of unknown meaning, applies Saṃyama to it, he can reach the vocal organ of the speaker. Thence his power of knowledge proceeds to the latter's mind producing the word and he comes to know the sense in which the word has been uttered.[34]

Another pattern is to explain yoga powers by referring to the world of magicians. Since it is accepted that it is possible for magicians to perform acts similar to displays of superhuman powers, it is argued that it must be accepted that the same act can be performed by yogins. Magicians in India often used the belief in yoga powers to make their tricks believable.[35] There is a close relationship between yoga powers and the tricks of the magicians, and for Hindus and others there are often great difficulties in separating them. The sacredness of *guru*s, yogis, and *sādhu*s and the attitude of devotion to them is part of this, but the idea of superhuman powers allows the possibility for magicians and their performances to be given religious meaning. Āraṇya explains some yoga powers by referring to how magicians trick their audience. Āraṇya seems to believe that magicians' tricks are per-

[33] Ibid., 318–319.
[34] Ibid., 286.
[35] For an entertaining investigation into the relationship between yogins/fakirs and magicians in India, see Lee Siegel, *Net of Magic: Wonders and Deceptions in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

formed by means of psychic powers. The power of becoming invisible is stated in *Yogasūtra* 3.21 as a possible result of *saṃyama* on the connection of light, the eye, and the body (*kāyarūpasaṃyamāt tadgrāhyaśaktistambhe cakṣuḥprakāśāsamprayage 'ntardhānam*). The *Vyāsabhāṣya* explains that when the property of being visible is suppressed, the body ceases to be an object of observation by another person and the yogin can thus remain unseen by others. Invisibility appears here to mean invisibility to an audience, and not only a subjective experience of being invisible. How does Hariharānanda explain this? He writes: "Magicians follow this system. They exert their will-power on the spectators who see only such things as the former wants them to see."[36] He continues: "This shows how extraordinary things can be brought about by will-power. It is no wonder, therefore, that yogins can, if they so will, make their bodies totally imperceptible to others."[37] Āraṇya uses ideas about magicians, which were common at the time, to explain a yoga power, and is perhaps influenced by the blending of ideas of magicians and yoga powers in Indian culture.

A third pattern in Āraṇya's elucidations is to explain yoga powers by means of modern science.[38] Commenting on *Yogasūtra* 3.42, Āraṇya first uses the Sāṃkhya teaching to explain the power to move in the sky, but then he adds support from modern science. The body is just a collection of particles, he argues, "the minute particles or atoms are made up of even smaller particles like electrons, protons, and neutrons."[39] He writes:

> Electrons move round a nucleus consisting of protons and neutrons millions of times in a second and between these two subtle entities there is a lot of gap (as between the sun and planets). Our ego acting on the materials constituting the body shapes them into the form of a body and makes it feel heavy. By concentrating on the relationship

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[36] Āraṇya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali with Bhāsvatī,* 293.

[37] Ibid.

[38] For an example of the role of science in the interpretation of yoga in nineteenth century Bengal, see Anantanand Rambachan, "Swāmī Vivekānanda's Use of Science as an Analogy for the Attainment of mokṣa," *Philosophy East and West* 40, no. 3 (1990): 331–342. Rambachan writes: "Science as a method of attaining knowledge about man and the universe and as the key to human progress was enjoying considerable prestige among the Bengali intelligentsia in the nineteenth century. It was widely felt that all systems of human thought, including religion, had to be validated by the scrutiny of science and reason."

[39] Ibid., 319.

> between the body and Ākāśa, it is possible to transform the ego. The Sūtra can be explained in this way.[40]

A fourth pattern is the application of common sense interpretations of yoga powers; *Yogasūtra* 3.24 says that through *saṃyama* on physical strength the yogin can attain the strength of an elephant. *Vyāsabhāṣya* elaborates on this and says that by *saṃyama* on Garuḍa (the bird vehicle of Viṣṇu), the strength of Garuḍa is attained, and by *saṃyama* on the strength of Vāyu (wind), the strength of Vāyu is attained. In other words, you gain the strength of that on which you perform *saṃyama*. Āraṇya comments on this:

> All physical culturists know that by consciously applying the willpower on particular muscles, their strength can be developed. Saṃyama on strength is only the highest form of the same process.[41]

Common sense is also used to explain the possibility of knowledge about the future. He argues: "That we have knowledge of the future is amply proved by dreams that come true."[42] He argues that since it has been proven that the mind has the capability of knowing the future, it cannot be denied that such power can be further developed through practice.

The powers are, in general, explained by using Sāṃkhya theory of the *tattva*s. That different theories are used to explain the powers might reveal the author's wish to make the powers understandable and to communicate with different persons. The use of the example of science, common sense, and magic seems to show the eagerness to provide to the reader a rational analysis of every aspect of the *Yogasūtra*.

Conclusion

The theory of superhuman powers implies that, through the realization of the twenty-five Sāṃkhya principles (*tattva*s), the individual gradually transcends the normal human limitations until the whole universe comes under the control of the *buddhi,* the most subtle *prakṛti* part of the individual. According to Sāṃkhya, all material

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 296.
[42] Ibid., 282.

manifestations are transformations of the single material principle, *mūlaprakṛti*. The teaching of the superhuman powers expresses the gradual development in which the yogin experiences that he is coextensive with the universe. Hariharānanda Āraṇya writes in his commentary on *Yogasūtra* 3.50: "When the powers of omnipotence and omniscience are acquired, the yogin becomes like almighty *īśvara*."[43] He continues:

> That is the highest state of Buddhi, Puruṣa with such adjuncts, i.e. such adjuncts and their Seer combined, is called Mahān Ātmā or the Great Self.[44]

The great self, *mahān ātmā* or *buddhi* of a yogin who becomes like almighty *īśvara* is coextensive with the universe as it is the first product of the ultimate material principle, *prakṛti* and there is only one *prakṛti*. Āraṇya writes: "As the Seer, coming into contact with Buddhi as an object, brings it under his control, so by establishing contact with the basic constituent he brings everything under him. It is said in the Śruti in this connection: 'When Puruṣa is realized, omniscience is acquired'."[45] By realizing the principle that is at the source of all experience, the whole universe becomes part of the experience. This explains how it would be possible, according to the Sāṃkhya teaching, for Āraṇya to have had the experience of 'becoming one with the universe,' described above. The creator god, *īśvara*, was a previous *siddha* (*pūrvasiddha*) who attained omnipotence, omniscience, and the other superhuman powers. A yogin who has attained superhuman powers 'becomes like almighty *īśvara*'. However, he is unable to become the actual *īśvara* because he cannot alter the disposition of things ordained by the previous *siddha* (see *Yogasūtra* 3.45). He can transcend the disposition of things, but he cannot alter them. Like the Buddhist *nirvāṇa* that is beyond the *abhjñās*, the *puruṣa* is beyond the yoga powers:

> The state immediately higher than this is that of liberation. To abide in the state beyond supernormal powers and omniscience, in which the Self remains alone, is liberation.[46]

According to Sāṃkhya-Yoga, the goal of yoga practice is *nirodha*. The yoga powers are *vṛttis* (fluctuations) of the *citta* (mind, awareness). In

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[43] Ibid., 332
[44] Ibid., 332–333.
[45] On *Yogasūtra* 3.49. Ibid., 331.
[46] Ibid., 332–333.

samādhi, therefore, the superhuman powers are disturbances and hindrances to the realizations of *puruṣa*, which is actualized in *samādhi* when all fluctuations cease (*cittavṛttinirodhaḥ*). Hariharānanda does not deny the yoga powers. *Īśvara,* he writes, was a *siddha* who attained the yoga powers of omniscience and omnipotence. However, according to the teaching of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, the goal is not to become *īśvara*, but to realize *puruṣa*. Āraṇya considered the philosophy of yoga as rational and as a large part of the *Yogaśāstra* is about yoga powers, the yoga powers also had to be explained rationally. The powers were unintended outcomes of yoga practice, and Āraṇya used Sāṃkhya philosophy, the tricks of magicians, science, and common sense to explain and dispel any doubts that might arise about the powers.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE EVOLVING *SIDDHI*S: YOGA AND TANTRA IN THE HUMAN POTENTIAL MOVEMENT AND BEYOND

Jeffrey J. Kripal

> People like us, who believe in physics, know that the distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.
>
> Albert Einstein

> Men do not sufficiently realize that their future is in their own hands. … Theirs [is] the responsibility, then, for deciding if they want merely to live, or intend to make just the extra effort required for fulfilling, even on their refractory planet, the essential function of the universe, which is a machine for the making of gods.
>
> Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*

I want to begin with an image, the rather striking cover of the 2009 Russian translation of Michael Murphy's *The Future of the Body* (1992) [fig 17.1]. I want to treat this cover and the book that it quite literally wraps around as creative ciphers through which to trace, in the barest outlines, a specific 'history of superpowers', a modern history that is massively documented, but virtually unstudied and so untapped and almost completely un-theorized in the professional study of religion. I have treated some of the cultural, literary, theological, philosophical, mystical, psychedelic, biographical, and institutional prehistories of *The Future of the Body* elsewhere, where I have read the 800-page text as one of the premiere expressions of the American human potential movement.[1]

Very briefly, the author, inspired by the metaphysical system of Sri Aurobindo and the broad philosophical framework of evolutionary biology, sets out a vision in the book of what he calls 'metanormal capacities'. These he sees as the emerging 'buds' of an evolving human

[1] Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

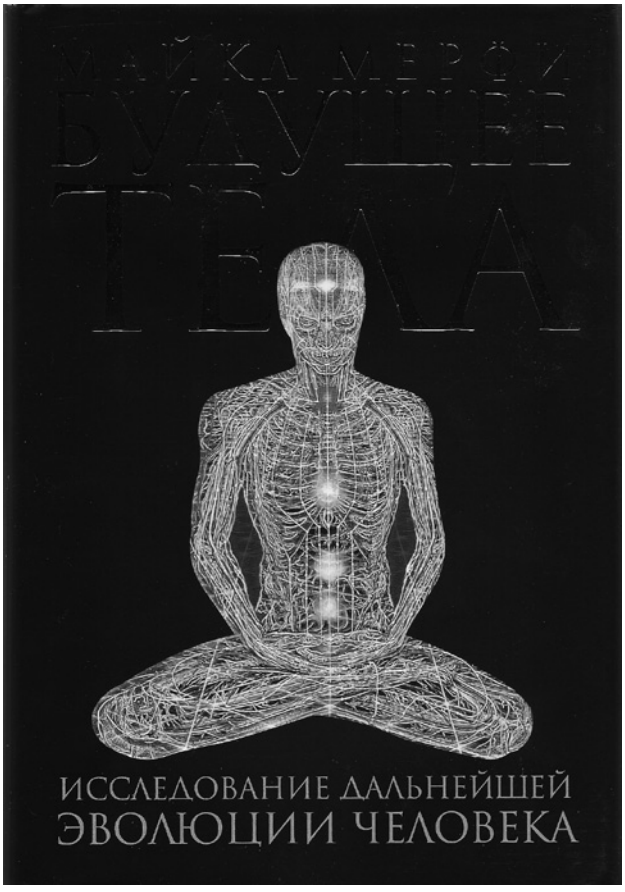

Fig. 17.1. The cover of the 2009 Russian translation of Michael Murphy's *The Future of the Body* (1992).

supernature, itself understood to be an expression of a universe shot through with consciousness, mind, divinity, or intelligence. Such metanormal capacities, Murphy goes on to argue, line up closely along our already established sensory, cognitive, and affective capacities, which we have inherited from our primate and animal ancestors. As such, these emerging metanormal capacities represent neither the misplaced fantasies of some kind of 'primitive' thinking nor the miraculous acts of some purely supernatural agent located outside the material universe. Rather, they are now seen as the signs of a panentheistic cosmos and 'the future of the body'.

In order to establish this thesis, Murphy ranges widely and deeply through the anthropology of shamanism, the charisms and miracles of Catholic hagiography, the subtleties of Indian philosophy, the *siddhi*s of the yoga traditions, the history of comparative mysticism, psychoanalytic studies of psi phenomena (which, believe it or not, were remarkably open to such possibilities in the middle of the last century), the history of psychical research and parapsychology, scientific studies of meditation, the mind-body mysteries of modern medicine (especially the fundamental aporia of the placebo effect), and, perhaps most interesting of all, the spontaneous paranormal experiences of modern-day athletes. That all of this is iconographically crystallized on the recent Russian edition by an artistic representation of the subtle body and a *cakra* energy system painted by an American artist with strong and clearly stated commitments to Tantric forms of experience and self-understanding, is, at the very least, provocative.[2]

It also happens to fit seamlessly into the models of American-Asian metaphysical fusion that I have advanced in my cultural history of the human potential movement. The latter movement's origins can be traced back to September of 1962 and the founding of a symposia series in Big Sur, California, that would soon morph into something called the Esalen Institute. Of course, the human potential movement, as it eventually came to be called (in 1965, via the coinage of journalist and human potential author George Leonard, who was thinking of the civil rights movement upon which he had extensively reported and in which he had actively participated), also emerged from earlier streams of thought and practice. These included centuries of what historian of American religions Catherine Albanese has called metaphysical religion, the mystical theology of a Protestant theologian and Stanford professor of comparative religion by the name of Frederic Spiegelberg, various Westernized forms of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism (particularly through the writings of Aurobindo, Aldous Huxley,

[2] For a discussion of the artist's Tantric experiences and self-understandings, see Alex Grey, *The Mission of Art* (Boston: Shambhalah, 1998). Murphy played no role in the selection of the cover or its art, nor does he believe that the designers were aware that he and Grey know one another. According to Murphy, Grey has long been a fan of his second novel, *Jacob Atabet*, which is about a metaphysical painter who accesses *siddhi*s through the medium and methods of painting. Grey also contributed a cover to one of the editions of Murphy's book on the paranormal experiences of athletes: Michael Murphy and Rhea A. White, *In the Zone: Transcendent Experience in Sports* (New York: Penguin, 1995).

Gerald Heard, and Alan Watts), and the British and American branches of the psychical research tradition.[3]

One of the many things that struck me about this cultural history—and which jarred dramatically with my earlier assumptions—was the absolute centrality of 'superpowers' to the various public narratives and intimate personal experiences of the central historical actors. Indeed, I was so struck and so puzzled by these super-patterns that I have spent the last five years doing little more than trying to trace their genealogies, tease out their theoretical implications, and follow their colorful leads through intellectual history and American popular culture, particularly pulp fiction, science fiction, ufology, and the pop-mythologies of superhero comics and metaphysical film.[4] Murphy's metanormal capacities, it turns out, are *everywhere*.

And some of the most thoughtful interpreters have even suggested that such unusual human capacities *are* everywhere, literally, that is, that they are not capacities or powers at all, but entirely natural expressions of the shape of space-time or the mind-blowing subatomic behavior of matter—functions of the deeper structure of reality as it really and truly is beyond and before the *a priori* conceptual categories that structure our perceptions and thoughts. In this stunning reading, which can be traced back to Einstein himself (or Kant, with a little stretching), our experiences of space as always local and time as entirely linear and determinative are basically illusions. Space and time so construed are constructions of the brain and its neural processing, which have selected them out for adaptive and social reasons.

In some of the more radical and frankly mystical forms of this same reading, consciousness is understood to be fundamentally 'nonlocal' in its true scope and deepest nature, that is, consciousness as consciousness exists outside of space and time and is 'filtered' or 'transmitted' through the brain, not produced by it. Refigured thus, universally reported human abilities like precognition (a kind of seeing beyond time) and clairvoyance (a kind of seeing beyond local space), not to mention the innumerable experiences of transcendence in the history of religions, need not be read as immature forms of

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[3] See Catherine Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

[4] Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); and *Mutants and Mystics: Science Fiction, Superhero Comics, and the Paranormal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

'magical thinking', futile denials of death, or manifestations of the infantile cognitive stage of the 'omnipotence of thought'. They just as well might be read as neurologically mediated refractions and culturally shaped reflections of the way things really and truly are. 'Omnipotent' and 'magical', it turns out, may be fairly accurate descriptors of the true nature of Consciousness beyond culture, of Mind beyond brain.

One can easily see how some of this sounds more than a little like certain strands of Indian thought and practice (or Plato's parable of the cave). One can also begin to understand—rather than ridicule—why the history of quantum physics is laced with both elite and popular gestures to Asian religious ideas and symbols: why Niels Bohr put the Taoist yin-yang symbol on his coat of arms; why Wolfgang Pauli helped Carl Jung (ever attracted to the *coincidentias* of the Tantric traditions) fashion his category of synchronicity; why David Bohm was drawn to strike up a long, and very public, conversation with Krishnamurti; why physicist Fritjof Capra wrote a countercultural classic called *The Tao of Physics*; and why every decade since has seen literally *dozens* of books on the same physics-to-mysticism theme, with explicitly Tantric traditions like Kashmir Śaivism and Vajrayāna or Mahāyāna Buddhism playing central starring roles. It is easy to dismiss such efforts, either from the quantum physics side (which I cannot possibly do) or the professional study of religion side (which I could easily do). It is much more difficult to explain why such comparisons remain so attractive and so compelling, and, most of all, why they continue to do important cultural work, with or without the scientist or scholar's blessings.[5]

These various resonances, correspondences, even claimed identities between esoteric forms of religious thought and modern evolutionary biology and physics—what I have called the mysticism of science literature (to distinguish it from science *qua* science)—constituted one of the major meta-themes of the history of Esalen and the human potential movement. Another involved the ways that both the human potential movement and the American counterculture interfaced with, appropriated, and ultimately transformed Asian religious ideas and practices according to their own cultural needs, democratic values, and philosophical convictions. Here I have advanced a thesis

[5] For more, see Kripal, *Esalen*, especially chapter 13, "Jacob Atabet and the Tantra of Physics."

about what I call 'the Tantric transmission', a hypothesis that boils down to the suggestion that Americans tended to appropriate Asian religious ideas in very different ways in the two halves of the twentieth century: whereas the first half of the century witnessed a strong preference for ascetic, orthodox, and highly philosophical forms (think Advaita Vedānta and Theravāda Buddhism), the second half of the century showed an equally strong preference for erotic, heterodox, and Tantric forms (think *kuṇḍalinī yoga*, *śaktipāt*, Tibetan Buddhism, the Dalai Lama, and Zen).[6]

This, of course, is not some sort of iron-cast rule. The transmission was clearly set up in the first half of the twentieth century through major authors like Sir John Woodroffe and the as-yet-unpublished, but glowing Gopi Krishna (who, by the way, co-founded a research institute with the quantum physicist Carl Freidrich von Weizsächer of the Max Planck Institute—the mysticisms of physics and evolution, in other words, came together here). Woodroffe and Krishna wrote books that would become modern metaphysical classics, *The Serpent Power* (1919) and *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man* (1967), respectively. The latter book, I might observe, appeared right smack in the middle of the counterculture. There were also, of course, multiple exceptions to this Tantric transmission, like the ISKCON movement of A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda of the second half of the century, whose insistence on sexual abstinence and traditional *bhakti* or devotion to Kṛṣṇa were only heterodox and transgressive vis-a-vis the traditional Protestant parents of the young people who embraced such practices with drums, shaved heads, and ecstatic love.

Such prehistories and exceptions aside, the general patterns of this Tantric transmission, I continue to think, are quite helpful in thinking about the countercultural histories of Asian religions in America, including and especially the modern histories of yoga powers. The *siddhi*s, after all, have historically been associated strongly with the Tantric traditions (themselves Asian countercultures of sorts), where they are generally celebrated and embraced in ways that conflict with the usual warnings and even condemnations of them one commonly encounters in the more orthodox traditions. Perhaps that is one rea-

[6] I remain convinced that the most potent and telling example of my thesis is the absolutely central figure of Aldous Huxley, who moved from a very abstract and ascetic Hindu neo-Advaita perennialism in *The Perennial Philosophy* (1942) to an experimental, psychedelic, and Tantra- and Mahāyāna-laced nature mysticism in his very last novel and 'spiritual testament', *Island* (1962). See Kripal, *Esalen*, 86-91.

son the *siddhi*s were so popular, and so common, in the American counterculture. Counterculture resonated with counterculture across the cultures.

Here I want to extend this Tantric transmission thesis by tracing out, in the barest outlines, the encounters of human potential authors, psychical researchers, parapsychologists, and practicing psychics with Asian religious ideas and practices, particularly those that orbit around the general categories of Yoga and Tantra. This exercise will take us through four moments and eight figures, namely: (1) Frederic Myers and Sri Aurobindo; (2) Hereward Carrington and Sir John Woodroffe; (3) Ian Stevenson and his 2600 'case studies of the reincarnation type'; and, finally (4) Apollo astronaut Edgar Mitchell, Israeli superpsychic Uri Geller, and American super-shaman and UFO prophet Ted Owens. The list could be much longer, with sections on:

- the rich plethora of paranormal effects that UFO encounters have had on individuals as studied by researchers like Jacques Vallee and John A. Keel, with the eyes of the aliens often described as 'oriental' or as 'Asian';
- the equally rich parapsychological and orientalist dimensions of psychotropic substances, as evidenced in such factoids as the first Latin pharmacological name for the active ingredient in the Brazilian ayahuasca vine being *telepatina* or 'telepathic', or the baroque Hindu, Tantric, and Tibetan shapings of psychedelic states by writers like Alan Watts, Ram Dass, and Timothy Leary;
- laser physicist, remote viewing scientist, and psychical researcher Russell Targ's move from a career in cold war psychic espionage to a spiritual worldview of nonlocal Mind informed by Advaita Vedānta and Mahāyāna Buddhism;
- Icelandic psychologist Erlendur Haraldsson's elaborate, and generally positive, study of Sai Baba's reported miracles; and
- remote viewer and super-psychic Ingo Swann extensive invocations of Tantra and Taoism to discuss the erotics of the Western psychical research tradition in his astonishing, and exceedingly rare, book *Psychic Sexuality*.[7]

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[7] For some of the parapsychological and orientalist dimensions of UFO encounters, see Kripal, *Authors*. For the psychedelic orientalism of the counterculture and the paranormal dimensions of the ayahusaca phenomenology, see Kripal, *Esalen*, and Benny Shanon, *The Antipodes of the Mind; Charting the Phenomenology of the Ayahuasca Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). For Targ, Haraldsson,

We could go on and on here. Indeed, the list is seemingly endless. But this will have to suffice for now. Alas, what we really have here is a tiny prolegomenon to a future study.

A sketch in the sky

1. *Toward the Supernormal: Frederic Myers and Sri Aurobindo*

The Western encounter with India, as is well known, peaked in the second half of the nineteenth century under a colonial project and a general Protestant worldview. It is this colonial project and this Protestantism that we are asked to believe constituted and created, more or less *in toto* and without significant remainder, the early modern study of religion. There is a good deal of truth in such blanket assertions, of course, but there are also other key and crucial genealogies that can hardly be fitted into such hegemonic boxes. And few are more fascinating, and more subversively influential, than the countergenealogies of Spiritualism, Theosophy, and the psychical research tradition. Of course, these too were hardly free from colonial narratives and Protestant assumptions, but, as scholars like Gauri Viswanathan and Cathy Gutierrez have demonstrated, such movements also often acted powerfully against the usual Christian and colonial projects and worked in their own sincere ways to mythically subvert the standard Western ethnocentrisms.[8]

Numerous studies, for example, have demonstrated the radical ecumenisms and egalitarianisms, particularly around gender and sexuality, of the Spiritualist movement, which exploded in the U.S. in 1848 and then quickly spread to England and the Continent. Universal salvation (not to mention sex in heaven) was an extremely common theme in the séances that erupted pretty much everywhere. The mediums, for example, often met founding figures like Buddha and Jesus only to learn that they had changed their minds in the afterlife: essentially, they had figured out that theirs was not the only way. Heaven,

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and Swann, see Russell Targ, *Do You See What I See? Memoirs of a Blind Biker* (Charlottesville, Virginia: Hampton Roads, 2008); Erlendur Haraldsson, *'Miracles Are My Visiting Cards': An Investigative Report on the Psychic Phenomena Associated with Sathya Sai Baba* (London: Century, 1987); and Ingo Swann, *Psychic Sexuality: The Bio-Psychic "Anatomy" of Sexual Energies* (1999).

[8] Gauri Viswanathan, "The Ordinary Business of Occultism," *Critical Inquiry* 27/1 (Autumn 2000): 1-20; Cathy Gutierrez, *Plato's Ghost: Spiritualism in the American Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

moreover, was no longer about perfection. It was about progress. Plato and Neoplatonism, moreover, were all the rage, along with reincarnation, the nature of the soul, and more ghostly hands and floating accordions than you could shake a stick at.

Or tip a table at.

It was a wild time.

In some ways, Theosophy (founded in 1875 in New York City) and the Society for Psychical Research (founded in 1882 in London) were both critical responses to the riotous phenomena of Spiritualism. I cannot treat Theosophy here. But it is perhaps worth noting the well known fact that one of its three founding aims was the study, education, and perfecting of 'the latent powers of man'. In short, the *siddhi*s as human potentials.

The Society for Psychical Research, or the S.P.R., took a very different tact (and pretty much despised Theosophy, especially in the figure of Madame Blavatsky). It looked to professional science, such as it was in the 1880s of England. One of the key figures here was a Cambridge-trained classicist by the name of Frederic Myers. It was Myers who coined the term *telepathy* or 'deep feeling at a distance' in 1882. It was Myers again who helped fashion the English terms *subliminal*, *supernormal*, and *imaginal*, each of which he linked closely to an evolutionary model doubly inspired by Darwin's *Origin of Species* and Neoplatonic mystical notions of emanation and return. Myers defined the supernormal, for example, as the normal energized by a 'spiritual influx' (hints of Swedenborg) and moving toward an evolutionary future that was both physical and spiritual—essentially, an early version of Michael Murphy's metanormal capacities as "buds" of the future of the body. Myers' two-volume, posthumously published *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (1903) is widely considered a classic in parapsychological circles to this day.[9]

I have offered my own readings of this most remarkable text elsewhere.[10] Here I want to address, however briefly, Myers' understanding of Asian religions and how they intersected with his psychical data, his "Provisional Sketch of a Religious Synthesis," a little essay that begins immediately after his Epilogue to *Human Personality*.[11]

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[9] Frederic W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1904/1903), henceforth *HP*, followed by volume and page number.

[10] Kripal, *Authors*.

[11] Appendix A, "The Function of a Society for Psychical Research" (*HP* 2.292-

This late text records Myers's growing fascination with Buddhism, the beginnings of a kind of personal comparative theology, and a rather obvious preference for reincarnation over the Western one-life doctrines as the most appropriate model for his psychical data.

The essay begins with a firm rejection of any simple solution to the problem of religious pluralism, any quick synthesis of all the parts into some artificial whole that privileges some existing creed or worldview. What is needed, Myers writes, is "the actual acquisition of new knowledge, whether by discovery or by revelation."[12] One gathers that Myers believes his own researches point to this new knowledge, whether conceived as discovery or as revelation, or as both. He had written, after all, that telepathic communication opens up the way to revelation, that the former can slide into the other, as it were.

One also gathers that Myers believed that the central spiritual truth of evolution carries unmistakable theological consequences, and that among these consequences is a firm rejection of the traditional doctrine of hell. Myers, at least, suggests, "that endless life exists for all, with infinite possibilities of human redress and of divine justification."[13] Toward the end of his life (or at least his book), in other words, Frederic Myers was moving toward a reincarnation model for his data. "Nay," he writes, "as to our own soul's future, when that first shock of death is past, it is in Buddhism that we find the more inspiring, the truer view. That Western conception of an instant and unchangeable bliss or woe … is the bequest of a pre-Copernican era of speculative thought."[14] In short, by the turn of the century, thoughtful interpreters like Myers were already linking the assumed progresses of reincarnation and evolution, which of course transformed the original meanings of both terms within Asian religions and Darwinian biology in a profoundly positive, progressive, and world-friendly direction. Spiritualism had left its mark.

Myers' reference to the Copernican revolution is also interesting. And telling. Myers no longer believed that Western Europe was the center of the world, or that Christianity had some monopoly on religious truth. He had developed his own comparative mystics, a kind of esoteric optics that saw religious truth reflected in each historical tra-

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307) is also especially rich in comparative theological speculations and a certain "turn East."

[12] *HP* 2.284.

[13] *HP* 2. 285.

[14] *HP* 2.289. Myers clearly prefers Buddhism over what was only then being constructed as 'Hinduism'. Thus Myers generally refers to Brahmins, but not to Hindus.

dition but also insisted that such a light was neither bound to or fully revealed by any single prism. One might be tempted to call this a perennialism, except for the telling fact that, for Myers, the fuller truth lays *in the evolving future*, not in some past and perfect religious revelation.

"[N]o historical religion can persist as a logical halting-place upon the endless mounting way," Myers wrote in his usual evolutionary mode, "yet many a creed in turn may well be close inwrought and inwoven with our eternal hope."[15] The religions were thus both true and false for Myers. In his own terms again, "such words as Natural Religion, Pantheism, Platonism, Mysticism, do but express or intensify varying aspects" of this theology's "main underlying conception." What is that conception? "That conception is the co-existence and interpenetration of a real or spiritual with this material or phenomenal world."[16] A few pages later he will write of a "growth in *holiness*" that contains "no unreal opposition or forced divorcement of sacred and secular, of flesh and spirit." This is that "rapture of love which we still strive to attain."[17] Elsewhere he invokes Plato's *eros* to capture this unity of flesh and spirit. An at once physical and spiritual *eros*, in fact, was at the very center of Myers' entire system and was the secret key to what he repeatedly called 'the telepathic law', that is, the mysterious, essentially erotic, forces that bind us all, but especially individuals who are passionally connected.[18] Hence that most famous of his coinages: telepathy or tele-*pathos*.

Certainly Myers now desired a vast cosmos immeasurably grander than the Bible had imagined. He thus takes a few swipes at the biblical creation stories and their puny worlds. "What rest or pasture for the mind in the seven days of Creation, the four rivers of Paradise, the stars 'made also'?" Myers asks. Four rivers indeed. Asia was far more imaginative and far bolder here. "The farther East has reached blindly forth towards astronomical epochs, sidereal spaces, galactic congregations of inconceivable Beings." It has "created by one sweep of the imagination a thousand Universes, to be the Buddha's realm."[19] In short, Mahāyāna Buddhism. This was an oddly modern cosmos, an

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[15] *HP* 2.291.
[16] *HP* 2.286.
[17] *HP* 2.291.
[18] For a discussion of the erotic in Myers and *Human Personality*, including the conjugal story of its censorship, see Kripal, *Authors*, 85-91.
[19] *HP* 2.289.

astronomical universe (if one still couched in mythological language), in which Myers could feel at home. In short, at the very end of his life, Frederic Myers, the coiner of telepathy and the premiere psychical researcher of the nineteenth century, was looking toward Asia.

And Asia was looking toward him.

If with a decidedly less Buddhist lens. Like Frederic Myers, Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) was a trained classicist. Like Myers again, he received his classics training at Cambridge. Afterwards, he returned to India and became a revolutionary freedom fighter in Bengal and then, after a long and famous legal battle, imprisonment, and political flight, a practicing yogi and metaphysical writer at the French enclave of Pondicherry (Puducherry) on the southeast coast of India. It was probably at Cambridge that he heard about the work of Myers and the Society of Psychical Research.

The *Record of Yoga* is a recently published, two-volume transcription of Sri Aurobindo's private journals, which he wrote to himself in order to track his yogic and psychical experiments from 1909 to 1931, that is, during the same time period that he was publishing the 54 journal installments that would become *The Life Divine* (1914-1919). Indeed, he tells his journal the precise date on which he commenced *The Life Divine*—July 18, 1912. Taken together, then, the *Record* and *The Life Divine* give us an extraordinary window into a particularly creative period of Aurobindo's spiritual and literary life.

Reading the journals, one cannot but be struck by their incredibly elaborate linguistic and conceptual architectonics, that is, the numerous Sanskrit words the writer coined or adopted from the classical literature to describe hundreds, if not thousands, of altered states of consciousness, subtle nuances of emotion (from joy to depression), delight (*ānanda*), and desire (*kāma*), various metaphysical levels of existence, and so on. Most of all, though, there are supernormal powers here involving active mind-reading (*prākāmya*) and telepathic reception (*vyāpti*), a kind of hyperdimensional vision of past, present, and future, what he called the 'vision of the three times' (*trikāladṛṣṭi*), synchronistic desire and magical prayer (*īśitā*, *vaśitā*), even a supernormal form of laughter (*hāsyasiddhi*). *Siddhi*s are *everywhere*.

There is no question that the *Record of Yoga* is linked to *The Life Divine*, and that his yogic discipline was intimately connected to his contemplative writing practice. Indeed, one of the most common *siddhi*s described in the *Record* is the apparition of lipis, that is, written texts or words that would "appear" to him. He often notes these down.

They regularly appeared in both English and Sanskrit. He also describes supernormal experiences of translating Sanskrit poetry, a kind of synchronistic reading practice, literary inspiration, and automatic writing (which, of course, was an extremely common feature of the American and British Spiritualist circles of the nineteenth century).

There are also some very familiar words here. To take the three most obvious examples, *supernormal* and *subliminal* are extremely common words in *The Life Divine*, and the phenomenon of telepathy—refigured and ramified as *vyāpti*, *prākāmya*, and *trikāladṛṣṭi* in the *Record*—is probably the central concern of the yogi's occult experiments, much as it had become for the theorizations of Myers in his *Human Personality*. On a deeper philosophical level, Aurobindo also came to embrace evolution as his central organizing spiritual concept, much along the lines that Myers had earlier developed it in *Human Personality*.

It is, of course, always difficult to track influences, much less causal connections, and these two thinkers certainly cannot be conflated, but a close reading of Aurobindo renders it well-nigh impossible not to posit some sort of textual influence from Myers to Aurobindo. Consider, for example, the following passages that appear in *The Life Divine*. I have italicized what I consider to be textual echoes of Myers:

> *Survival of the body by the human personality* may hereafter be proved even to the satisfaction of the sceptic; but even then what will be established will only be a greater continuity and not the eternity of the conscious being.[20]
>
> For immortality in its fundamental sense does not mean merely some kind of *personal survival of the bodily death*; we are immortal by the eternity of our self-existence without beginning or end … the spirit's timeless existence is the true immortality.[21]
>
> What if it were found that *the human personality survives the death of the body* and moves between other planes and this material universe?[22]
>
> *A survival of the material body by the personality* implies a supraphysical existence … .[23]

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[20] Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 2000), 524.
[21] Ibid., 769.
[22] Ibid., 780.
[23] Ibid., 831.

Obviously, what we have here are titular echoes in which Aurobindo reveals that he is at least aware of Myers's masterwork, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*. It is, of course, possible to read such passages with the suspicion that all Aurobindo has in fact read of Myers is his title. I suspect strongly, however, that Aurobindo was in fact quite familiar with this work, and that it was Myers's supernormal language and enthusiastic turn to evolution as spiritual process that provided Aurobindo with one of the earliest and most influential systems upon which he could build his own yogic practice, metaphysical system, and intercultural coinages.

I am not suggesting any kind of simplistic reduction of Aurobindo's system to that of Myers, as if the philosopher-seer relied on the psychical researcher for his yogic experiences. Not at all. I am simply identifying what I believe to be an important psychical-spiritual lineage in which the two Cambridge classicists participated and helped form in their own original and unique ways.

2. *Palladino's Prāṇa: Hereward Carrington and Sir John Woodroffe*

One of the most productive and prolific psychical researchers of the twentieth century was the British writer Hereward Carrington. During his long career, Carrington was involved in some of the most important studies of mediums and psychics, including the major S.P.R. study of the Italian peasant and physical medium Eusapia Palladino. Carrington wrote dozens of books, including *Eusapia Palladino and Her Phenomena* (1909), the early classic on "astral travel" with Sylvan J. Muldoon, *The Projection of the Astral Body* (1929), and a collection called *Essays in the Occult* (1946), which includes a long chapter on "Yoga and Magic" (as a trained stage magician, or "prestidigitateur" as they used to so horribly put it, he also wrote an entire book on *Hindu Magic*).

More relevant for our own purposes, however, is a two-volume treatise Carrington put together on how to cultivate one's own psychic powers: *Your Psychic Powers and How to Develop Them* (1920) and *Higher Psychical Development (Yoga Philosophy)*. The second of these volumes, what Carrington calls his "post-graduate course," is presented as a series of "secrets," a series of secrets, moreover, that "have never before been published" in any English work. Carrington claims he obtained these "'secrets' of the Hindu yogis" through two

methods: an extensive, exhaustive textual study and "several years' actual experience and experimenting on the part of the author."[24]

The original lectures upon which the book is based were delivered in New York, in 1918. As Carrington prepared these lectures for publication, however, Arthur Avalon's *The Serpent Power* appeared, in 1919, to be exact. Carrington immediately integrated this text into his. The result is a kind of oral-textual fusion, a conversation between the British psychical researcher lecturing in New York and the British Judge turned Tāntrika living in Calcutta. "Arthur Avalon," of course, was the pen-name of Sir John Woodroffe (1865-1936), the Calcutta High Court Judge who revolutionized Western understandings of Hindu Śākta Tantra in the second and third decades of the twentieth-century through a series of remarkable lectures, books, and translations (which were really done by the Bengali Tantric *paṇḍit* Atul Behari Ghosh, hence the pen-name encoded both a "fused friendship" and a kind of "double personality").[25] In short, Carrington is writing from his own yoga and reading practices, which are in turn put into conversation with his extensive psychical research resume and the very beginnings of the serious Western study of Tantra. This cross-cultural conversation in turn produces all sorts of Indic-Western fusions, with Sanskrit phrases like *āsana*s, *mantrayoga*, and *kuṇḍalinī* linked to modern metaphysical and theosophical notions like cosmic consciousness and astral projection, which are in turn related to scientific and anatomical categories like the pineal gland, hyperdimensional geometry, and atoms.

Higher Psychical Development (Yoga Philosophy) is well worth dwelling on for a moment. The text as a whole is a highly eccentric one, filled with numerous discussions that would make any contemporary scholar wince. My own line was crossed somewhere around the claims that "a vegetarian diet tends to make the molecules of proto-plasm in the body smaller and more sensitive to shorter wavelengths," that Christ traveled to Tibet, or that there are such things as "psychical perfumes."[26] There are also, however, some truly fascinating moments in the book that exhibit real insight and, if nothing else, function as historical markers of what I have called the Tantric trans-

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[24] Hereward Carrington, *Higher Psychical Development (Yoga Philosophy)* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1978), vii-viii; cf. 172.

[25] Kathleen Taylor, *Sir John Woodroffe, Tantra, and Bengal: 'An Indian Soul in a European Body'* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), 102-104.

[26] Ibid., 34, 26, 78.

mission (including Christ's pilgrimage to Tibet!). I do not have the space to give each of these moments justice, much less to contextualize this single book within the immense corpus that was Carrington's life work. I can only resort here to a series of teasing synopses and summaries. These include:

- Carrington's unambiguous glossing of '*Siddhi*s' as 'psychic powers' (168);
- his metaphysical model of the mind as divided into three 'layers': (1) consciousness or normal awareness; (2) subconsciousness, more or less equivalent to Freud's notion of the unconscious, "which is very much talked about nowadays"; (3) and superconsciousness, the layer in which "all these psychic phenomena occur" (92-93); later, Carrington will collapse the Freudian subconscious/unconscious and his own superconsciousness when he explains that it is the subconscious will, not the conscious one, that normally performs psychic feats, and that this subconscious will can only be reached and trained, or made 'solid' as Eusapia Palladino used to say, by occult methods (271);
- Carrington's comparative model of traditions of psychic development as breaking down into three major schools—Yoga, the Occult, and the Mediumistic or Psychic—with Yoga and Occultism being the preferred schools, since they encourage the conscious control and cultivation of the psychical powers, whereas mediums and psychics generally do not have a clue how their powers work or from whence they arise (181, 211-212);
- his innocent descriptions of experimenting with various drugs and their profound effects on consciousness, including "hasheesh and mascal and two or three other things" (118); in another place, he speaks of "our old friend Hashish" (78), and in another he even claims to be in possession of a recipe for the Witches' Unguent, "which, when soaked into the pores of the skin, included insensibility and hallucinations—these being coloured by the times in which they lived and the beliefs current at that particular period" (222-223);
- Carrington's understanding of the effects of drugs like morphine and cocaine ("the two or three other things"?) as catalysts rather than producers of the states that result from their ingestion via a model of what he calls "these extraordinary latent capacities," in effect, what will later be called human potentials: "But the happi-

ness you experience," Carrington wrote, "is not *in* the cocaine,—it does not exist *in* that little white powder, —it is *in* the human being, and the drug simply brings it up to the surface."[27] He then goes on to gloss this claim with a line from Avalon: "The body is a vast magazine of power (Shakti). The object of the Tantrick rituals is to raise these various forms of power to their full expression" (131-132);

- his Tantric understanding of *samādhi* as "representing a perpetual state of 'bliss' corresponding" "on our earth plane, by the sexual crises," and his further insistence that, "there is, of course, much erotic symbolism in all the Hindu teachings,—just as we find close connections between sex and religion here in the West" (125);
- Carrington's further explicit linkage of occult energies to "the sex-energies of the body" via the extremely common pattern of poltergeist cases occurring in emotionally and sexually troubled pubescent girls or boys: "The spontaneous outburst of these phenomena is, I am sure, associated with the awakening of the sex-energies at that time,—which find this curious method of 'externalization'" (145). "There is," he concludes, "a great deal of occult knowledge extant concerning the relations of psychic force and the sexual energies; but the pupil must be far advanced to obtain this" (146), after which he falls silent on the subject;
- his affirmation of Avalon's insight that the Orientalist and the missionary have regarded the Indian teachings as "ignorant and absurd" because they "know nothing of occultism" (151)—in short, an implicit, if undeveloped, claim that Western occultism and the psychical research tradition would have been much better and much more fruitful comparative bases from which to develop the comparative study of religion than Western ethnocentrism and Protestant theology;
- Carrington's description of a friend (of course) who attended a black mass in Paris (224);
- his reading of censoring astral beings or "Guardians of the Threshold" as "thought-forms" or—my favorite expression now—"mental Frankensteins" that are created by the mind until they take on a reality of their own outside the subjective psyche (206);

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[27] Aldous Huxley would advance an almost identical "permissive" or "brain filter" model for the metaphysical revelations of mescaline in his classic *The Doors of Perception* (1954), which in turn had a massive influence on the mystical appropriation of psychedelia in the counterculture.

- Carrington's quoting of Swami Vivekānanda's, basically Tantric, understanding that whenever there is any manifestation of supernatural power or wisdom, at least "a *little* current of kundalini" must have found its way into the central spinal channel or *suṣumṇā* (244); and finally,
- his description and promotion of "dreaming true," that is, a kind of dream-yoga or, in his own terms, a "dream body" in which one can learn to fall asleep conscious and "step into that picture," that is, step into the dream and control it from within (288-289).

Obviously, this is a breathless book. Is there any way to summarize all of this for our own purposes here? I would isolate three meta-themes: (1) Carrington's insistence that the erotically charged metaphysical energies of the human body are the final and deepest 'secret' of occultism, yoga, *and* all psychical phenomena; (2) the philosophical implications of his constant glossing of '*Samādhi*' as 'Cosmic Consciousness'; and (3) his comparative flourishes linking Western psychics and Indian yogic notions like *prāṇa*, *kuṇḍalinī*, and *śakti*. A word on each meta-pattern is in order here before we move on.

1. The real 'secret' of all psychic powers for Carrington is the release and development of "a hidden, latent and sacred energy, known as *Kundalini*." It is this mystical energy, "when aroused," that activates the various energy centers of the body and so stimulates the psychic powers of the Yogi.[28] In other places, Carrington will suggest that this same latent energy can be "exteriorized" toward various magical effects in the external world. For Carrington, in other words, yoga powers are not simply about consciousness. They are also about energy, a subtle or occult but also very real energy that we will someday better understand and bring under conscious control.

2. Carrington consistently glosses the yogic category of '*samādhi*' as 'Cosmic Consciousness'. This is no neutral move, no simple translation, for Carrington is very clearly deriving the expression from Richard Maurice Bucke, the Canadian psychologist and doctor whose classic *Cosmic Consciousness* appeared, posthumously, in 1901. From our own present perspectives, Bucke's book, much like Carrington's, is a combination of profundity and naivete, but the key point to flag here is that, for Bucke, the phrase Cosmic Consciousness signals both an energetic infusion or spiritual influx (modeled on his own experi-

[28] Carrington, *Higher Psychical Development*, 23.

ence of just such a metaphysical energy that overwhelmed him one night in London) and an evolutionary thrust or telos. As Bucke wrote and Carrington quotes, "the cosmically conscious race will not be the race that exists today any more than the present is the same race that existed prior to the evolution of self-consciousness."[29] In short, Cosmic Consciousness signals an evolutionary mysticism again.

3. Perhaps, though, the most interesting aspect of Carrington's book is the occasionally artful, and oddly persuasive, way he compares Western mediums and specific Tantric doctrines. Three places in the text come to mind. The first involves a two-page description of how Eusapia Palladino could 'charge-up' a table and literally *will* the thing off the floor, as if she were zapping it with the vital energy the yogis call *prāṇa*. Speaking from personal experience, Carrington explains that, "You could then put your hands on the back of the table, and it felt like a live thing,—like the back of a dog!"[30] The second involves a discussion of how both Western physical mediums and meditating Tantric yogis report a certain 'coldness' in their bodies when the energies erupt and the paranormal phenomena ensue.[31] The third case involves a report in the *Proceedings* of the S.P.R. entitled "A Case of Incipient Obsession." Carrington rightly notes that the symptoms reported by the subject reproduce, almost exactly, the oft-reported phenomenology of a *kuṇḍalinī* awakening. The subject, for example, reported a mysterious 'fluid' leaving its proper place in the lower body and traveling to the head, where it made him 'crazy'. He even reported how the only way to keep it controlled or held in was through breathing.[32] Intellectual correctness and the usual contextualisms aside, it is very difficult to be anything other than a comparativist at such moments.

Carrington's own final conclusion? That we should study and practice Yoga in order to develop and master our own psychic powers. He does not just tell us this, though. He shows us how to practice what he considers to be the most interesting and universal of all psychical powers, the projection of the astral body. Such a practice can be mas-

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[29] Ibid., 115-116; cf. 23, 103, 120.

[30] Ibid., 58-59. Carrington may have been inspired to make this comparative move by Swami Vivekānanda, whom he approvingly quotes interpreting American Mind-healers, Spiritualists, and Christian Scientists as deriving their powers from what is essentially the same thing as the *prāṇa* of the Yogi (260).

[31] Ibid., 179; cf 283.

[32] Ibid., 244.

tered, Carrington insists, through the 'dynamization' or empowerment of the will (akin to what later metaphysical authors will call 'affirmations'), the 'division of self' (a kind of spiritual dissociation affected by the imagination), and the exteriorization of the secret energies that he has just spent an entire book tracing through yoga, occultism, and the psychical research tradition. Frederic Myers, Carrington tells us, invented a word for this exteriorization of energy: *telergy* (which resonates with both *telepathy* and *theurgy*). What it all means for Carrington is that nervous energy *can* exist apart from the body, whether it works over a few inches, as in psychokinesis, or over extremely long distances, as in astral projection.[33]

In other words, Hereward Carrington's *Higher Psychical Development (Yoga Philosophy)* ends with a lesson on how to fly.

3. *The Biology of Reincarnation: Ian Stevenson*

As is well known, the ability to remember one's previous lives is commonly framed as a *siddhi* of an advanced guru or enlightened teacher in traditional Hindu and Buddhist literature. What is not so well known is the fact that such a *siddhi* received both striking empirical confirmation and a radical re-reading in the second half of the twentieth century through the life-work of a University of Virginia psychiatrist by the name of Ian Stevenson (1918-2007). For over forty years, Stevenson churned out hundreds, then thousands, of elaborate case studies of past-life memories, particularly in Hindu and Buddhist South and East Asia (India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Burma), Shiite Lebanon and Turkey, West Africa, Northwest America, and, most recently, Europe. These resulted in a series of four massive volumes entitled *Cases of the Reincarnation Type*, with a fifth and final installment entitled *European Cases of the Reincarnation Type*.

As of 1997, Stevenson had collected 2,600 reported cases of past-life memories and had published 65 detailed reports on individual cases, including what is widely considered to be the crown jewel of his corpus, *Reincarnation and Biology*. The latter work is a massive 2,300-page, two-volume study of 225 cases of what he calls 'the biology of reincarnation', that is, the phenomenon of birth-marks or birth-defects as physical 'marks' corresponding to a previous life's violent ending by knife, rope, bullet wound, or, in one particularly gruesome case, dismemberment.

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[33] Ibid., 265-268.

Through his entire database (still being coded, organized, and analyzed by his colleagues), Stevenson isolated what he calls "four universal features" found in every cultural complex that he studied, including Europe. These are: "an early age (usually between 2 and 4 years) of a subject's first speaking about a previous life; a slightly older age (usually between 5 and 7 years) when the subject stopped speaking spontaneously about a previous life; a high incidence of violent death in the previous life; and frequent mention of the mode of death in the child's statements."[34] A fifth feature has been more recently identified by Stevenson's UVA colleagues, namely, the over-representation of previous male lives in the data set, a feature the researchers believe correlates closely with the violent death pattern, since males in almost any culture are more likely to die sudden, violent deaths than females.

Although it is impossible to convey the detail and power of even a single case here, it is worth admitting that I find many of these convincing. And I am not alone. Even a professional debunker like the inimitable Carl Sagan, who, by the way, also thought that telepathy and mind-to-matter interactions were worth looking at scientifically, was persuaded that this material is worth examining further.[35] Anthropologist and cultural psychologist Richard Shweder has also made a point to flag Stevenson's work as unusually suggestive. "What are we to make," he asks with reference to this corpus, "of those cases in which a child claims to have memory of a former life in another family at another time and many of the details in the child's account of that family turn out to be accurate?" The facts, as he rightly notes, seem "resistant to either genetic or environmental explanations."[36] That is putting it mildly. But it is also putting it correctly. Again and again (and again), Stevenson minutely documents "cases of the reincarnation type" in which people, generally young children, appear to remember extremely accurate, detailed, and otherwise unavailable information about a former life that is then confirmed empirically and objectively. *Siddhi*s indeed.

There are two features of Stevenson's corpus that deserve comment in this context. The first is the fact that one of the major organizing

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[34] Ian Stevenson, *European Cases of the Reincarnation Type* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2003), 250.

[35] Carl Sagan, *A Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* (New York: Ballantine, 1996), 302.

[36] Richard Shweder, *Thinking Through Cultures: Expeditions in Cultural Psychology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 61.

themes of his interpretive scheme is the apparent ability of the mind to influence the body. Stevenson's discussion of mind-to-matter influence in *Reincarnation and Biology* ranges from the placebo effect, psychosomatic illnesses, and the conversion disorders of psychiatry (whereby a physical symptom is also a symbolic sign written, as it were, by the unconscious mind), through the reported phenomenon of "maternal impressions" (whereby an emotional or mental state of a pregnant woman is imprinted on another related body still connected to hers, that is, the fetus), to the biology of reincarnation (whereby the wounds of a violent death are inscribed as birthmarks into the flesh of a completely different *future* body). This mind-over-matter thesis, of course, lies at the base of much magical practice and thought and is fundamental to many premodern cultures. If we define magic as the mind's ability to influence or shape material reality, then reading Stevenson's corpus is a very good way to become convinced that magical powers are quite real. Here that magical history is inscribed on the body, sometimes quite literally as an anomalous birthmark or a symbolic wound—the human body as the ultimate text, the *corpus mysticum*.

The second relevant feature involves the radical differences between Stevenson's tentative interpretations of the *siddhi* of remembering a previous life and that of the traditional Hindu and Buddhist teachings. Here, after all, a previous life is only generally remembered if it ended suddenly or violently, without being properly processed, as it were. Such memories, in other words, are hardly signs of the spiritually enlightened in Stevenson's corpus. Quite the contrary, they are signs of the previously traumatized. Moreover, and more radically still, if such memories persist past the age of four or five, they can result in serious psychological and sexual suffering, especially if the previous life was in a differently gendered body. Clearly, these are *siddhi*s that can come with a very heavy price. They are best forgotten.

4. *Samādhi in Space: Edgar Mitchell*

Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell walked on the moon on February 5, 1971. He was the sixth man to do so. On his trip back home in the Kittyhawk command module, Mitchell became absorbed in a weightless contemplative mood before the beauty of a blue jewel planet suspended in black space and had an overwhelming experience of the universal connectedness of all things within an intelligent, evolving,

self-aware universe. He knew cosmos and consciousness as one. He called this life-changing experience both his 'grand epiphany' and his '*samādhi*'. It was this same *samādhi* in space, moreover, that led Mitchell to found the Institute of Noetic Sciences the following year in order to pursue the rigorous study of psychical phenomena. It was this institute, and its two major research scientists Dean Radin and Marilyn Schlitz, that Dan Brown recently fictionalized in his mega-bestseller *The Lost Symbol*.

Mitchell was not trained in the specifics of Indian philosophy and the history of yoga. He does, however, explicate in considerable philosophical detail what he means by this grand epiphany that was his *samādhi*. And what he comes up with, if it were translated in Indic terms, is thoroughly and completely Tantric in the simple ontological sense that he insists, over and over again, on the fundamental unity of mind and matter, spirit and body, or what he alliteratively calls in his subtitle to his autobiography "the material and mystical worlds."

He goes on to call this striking vision of immanent transcendence or transcendent immanence his "dyadic model," which he directly and explicitly links—in what should be a very familiar pattern by now—to the still mysterious processes of evolution. And why not? If matter can never be separated from mind, or mind from matter, then the material processes of cosmic and biological evolution must possess mind-like or intentional dynamics, just as mental processes possess matter-like dynamics. Inspired by his *samādhi* in space and this dyadic model, Mitchell goes on to envision a most striking human future, one that strongly echoes the evolutionary mysticisms of Michael Murphy, Frederic Myers, Sri Aurobindo, Richard Bucke, and Hereward Carrington. Indeed, we are approaching a veritable X-Men scenario here:

> A dyadic model predicts that evolution is ongoing but coming under conscious control. To suggest that evolution is coming under conscious control also implies that it has been under subconscious or unconscious control … The individual who exhibits startling conscious control with mind-over-matter processes represents only the tip of an iceberg in an aware and intentional sea. The untapped potential that lies just under the surface is almost incomprehensible at our current stage of evolution.[37]

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[37] Edgar Mitchell, with Dwight Williams, *The Way of the Explorer: An Apollo Astronaut's Journey Through the Material and Mystical Worlds* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1996), 186-187.

This notion of "conscious control" of once unconscious or subconscious processes, I might add, is precisely what Hereward Carrington had in mind with his categories of occultism and yoga philosophy.

When Mitchell writes of the "individual who exhibits startling conscious control with mind-over-matter processes," he is not imagining. He is remembering. He is thinking of people like Uri Geller, the Israeli super-psychic whom he brought to America so that he could be studied by American scientists. After a stint in the Israeli military during the Six-Day War, Geller gained worldwide fame for doing things like bending silverware like butter, photographing UFOs outside a Lufthansa plane window, and, in one truly bizarre scene right out of the sci-fi movie *Jumper*, spontaneously teleporting from a street in the East Side of Manhattan through the porch screen window of his colleague Andrija Puharich's house in Ossining, almost an hour away.[38]

Another "individual who exhibits startling conscious control with mind-over-matter processes" whom Mitchell was likely thinking of was Ted Owens, the self-described "PK-Man" or Psychokinetic Man. Owens, who possessed a genius IQ, sincerely claimed to correctly predict (or cause) the ending of major droughts, the assumed lightning strike of Apollo 12 on November 14, 1969, and—my personal favorite—the near total ruination of the entire 1968 season of the Philadelphia Eagles football team. Owens had written over a dozen sports writers about the latter intention. The Eagles suffered 30 injuries that season and lost 11 games in a row. The next summer, on July 30, 1969, to be exact, he wrote President Nixon in order to warn him of a Cuban kidnapping attempt, via the sea, at his Key Biscayne residence in Florida. On August 24, 1969, the *Miami Herald* published a story with the headline, "Spy Plot Shatters Prospects for Renewing U.S. Cuba Ties." It read eerily close to Owens's letter. More bizarrely still, one could conclude that Owens 'guided' Hurricane Inez with a map that he had drawn in October of 1966 (according to his biographer, Jeffrey Mishlove, the hurricane did things that no one expected) and cor-

[38] Geller appears to be an artful combination of stage magician and the real deal. For a balanced and elegant study of the superpsychic demonstrating both sides of the equation, see Jonathan Margolis, *Uri Geller: Magician or Mystic?* (New York: Welcome Rain Publishers, 1999). I have strongly criticized the simplistic either-or "It's all true" or "It's all trick" epistemology of the professional skeptics and true believers in my *Authors of the Impossible*. It is, of course, often both.

rectly predicted the appearance of three simultaneous hurricanes in September of 1967 (Beulah, Chloe, and Doris were all active on the same weekend). All in all, Owens claimed psychokinetic influence over approximately 200 separate events. And we're not talking spoons and wristwatches here. We're talking hurricanes, sports seasons, and a U.S. President.[39]

To make things even more interesting (and more bizarre), both Geller and Owens attributed their seeming superpowers to encounters with UFOs: Geller as a child in a garden in Tel Aviv; Owens as an adult before a cigar-shaped craft spewing red, white, blue, and green flames near Fort Worth, Texas (Edgar Mitchell, by the way, is also on record stating his own clear conviction in the existence of both UFOs and aliens). Finally, when the Apollo astronaut brought the Israeli superpsychic to America to be studied by the scientists, he brought him to SRI, the same secret think-tank and the same scientists in Palo Alto who were responsible for initiating the American "remote viewing" or psychic espionage programs of the cold war recently featured in the Hollywood film *Men Who Stare at Goats*.

But that is another story.[40]

Concluding Thoughts: The Tantric Transmission and the Evolving *Siddhis*

As even this hopelessly brief history has shown, the motif of the supernormal power or yogic *siddhi* is absolutely central to the history of psychical research, the human potential movement, and, indeed, a whole spectrum of metaphysical and mystical movements. Yoga powers, it might be concluded, have not been left behind in the modern world. But they have mutated. They have evolved.

There are two features of this modern mutation that I would like to flag here before I close. One involves the traditional shape or contours of the highly specific Asian religious ideas, symbols, and practices that

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[39] I am relying here on two sources, one secondary and one primary: Jeffrey Mishlove, *The PK Man: A True Story of Mind Over Matter* (Charlottesville: Hampton Roads, 2000); and Ted Owens, *How to Contact Space People* (Global Communications, 2008). The first edition of the latter book was published by Saucerian Press in 1969.

[40] For more on this, see Jeffrey J. Kripal, "Les vies secrètes des super-pouvoirs: la littérature de la vision à distance, et l'imaginal," in Antoine Faivre and Silvia Mancini, eds., *Techniques du corps et de l'esprit dans les deux Ameriqués*: *Continuités et discontinuités culturelles* (Paris: Éditions Imago, forthcoming).

have been "selected out" for activation in this history. The other involves the radically new scientific or parascientific episteme in which the supernormal powers are now embedded, experienced, and expressed.

First, the traditional shape. If one takes a broad historical view of the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, one can identify at least two types of liberatory models: one orthodox, one heterodox. The orthodox models generally see the cycles of *saṃsāra* as long and tedious, if not virtually endless, and the processes of liberation as gradual and extremely slow. On the other hand (the left hand in this case), the heterodox models, which we have named 'Tantric' in our modern scholarship, generally take a different approach: they claim that liberation, salvation, or even divinization can be realized in a single life, and that there are particular esoteric methods, often involving forbidden acts and the ingestion of dangerous substances, that are 'sudden' and 'quick'. One might also observe a further general pattern here whereby *siddhi*s are criticized or downplayed in the orthodox traditions as distractions from the proper path, whereas they are celebrated, cultivated, and emphasized in the heterodox Tantric traditions as intimate and integral features of that same path.

What interests me about this meta-pattern is the way it resonates with the modern evolutionary mysticisms that I have made the focus of the present essay. Consider that the traditional or standard biological model of evolution involves endless adaptations and extinctions with no seeming grand purpose and, with respect to human evolution, an excruciating slow 'progress' toward more and more complex forms of consciousness. Not so with the various evolutionary mysticisms. More or less like the Tantric traditions of Asia, they envision an intentional embrace of or entrainment with the cosmic élan toward a much quicker transformation and a radically new human future. They also claim to *experience* this evolutionary energy in this life, both spontaneously and through various intentional meditative practices. Moreover, whereas the standard evolutionary view recognizes no supernormal abilities, the evolutionary mysticisms not only recognize these, but see them as clear and exciting signs of a likely human future. Seen in this, admittedly very abstract, structural light, the "evolving *siddhi*s" of the modern metaphysical milieu clearly line up with a Tantric sensibility, not an orthodox Hinduism or Buddhism. In short, the *siddhi*s are an intimate and inseparable part of what I have called the Tantric transmission. This is why in an Introduction to Gopi Krishna's

Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man, Frederic Spiegelberg associates Krishna's book with those of Sri Aurobindo and identifies the ultimate source of both systems of practice and philosophy with 'the world of Tantra'.[41] That seems exactly right to me.

This is not to say, of course, that the modern *siddhi*s or the modern evolutionary Tantras are the same as the *siddhi*s and Tantric systems of South Asia, Nepal, or China. Not at all. They have certainly been informed and inspired by these Asian traditions, but everything also has been almost completely transformed. Put most simply, the modern scientific registers of evolutionary biology and physics have radically and permanently changed the understandings of the yoga powers in the contemporary metaphysical scene.

Which brings me to my second point—the new episteme. These modern registers, it must be added, have almost completely transformed the phenomenology of the *siddhi*s. Such events are now not only interpreted in scientific or parascientific terms. They are actually *experienced* and *expressed* in these terms. Hence Gopi Krishna does not simply experience the raising of the *kuṇḍalinī* through the *cakras* and insist, *exactly* like Swami Vivekānanda, that any measure of genius or wisdom is the result of a rising *kuṇḍalinī*.[42] He also experiences this mystical uprush as 'the evolutionary energy in man' and insists, very much unlike the Swami, that individuals who have been so awakened, so empowered, should by all means engage in procreative sexual intercourse, so that they can pass their mutant talents on to the next generation (sex, of course, being the primary Tantric method or *mārga* of biological evolution). So too, Fritjof Capra does not have a traditional Taoist experience of the oneness of the natural world and the human, nor does he visit some elderly sage on a mountain. Rather, he experiences a cosmic vision on a California beach in which he actually 'sees' the quantum world froth and foam below our sensory surface world. Similarly, Edgar Mitchell does not see 'God', much less some 'heaven', while floating weightlessly in outer space. He experiences a '*samādhi*' in which he *knows* that the universe is conscious and consciously evolving, and that mind and matter are two sides of the same cosmic coin. Finally, when Alex Grey's modern meditator with glowing *cakras* appears on the Russian cover of

[41] Introduction to Gopi Krishna, *Kundalini: The Evolutionary Energy in Man* (Berkeley: Shambala, 1971), 9.

[42] Gopi Krishna, *The Biological Basis of Religion and Genius* (New York: NC Press, 1971).

Michael Murphy's *The Future of the Body*, he actually appears *through* the paper cover via a bodily cut-out. When one removes the paper cover and looks at the boards of the book covers below, what one sees is the same glowing meditator now sitting in a multi-dimensional field, that is, in a representation of Einsteinian space-time.

Given the almost total epistemological dominance of science in our modern world, are such experiences and expressions really that difficult to understand and appreciate? How else are thoughtful, scientifically minded individuals *supposed* to enter, experience, and then express a mystical experience? Moreover, and more radically, if quantum physics and evolutionary biology are what they say they are, that is, if they really do provide us with extremely accurate and precise models of reality (and I personally have no doubts about this), *and* if mystical experiences and paranormal events are extremely common features of this same, single, all-encompassing reality (and I personally have no doubts about this), then is it not perfectly logical, does it not *necessarily* follow that the latter mystical and paranormal events would mirror and match the former scientific models, and vice versa? How on earth, or in space, could they *not* correspond?

The easiest negative answer to such a question is very simple and very short: we can simply deny that magical powers, *siddhi*s, and paranormal events exist at all. This, of course, is the traditional skeptical or allegedly 'rational' or 'empirical' approach. It is not very convincing. It is also neither empirical nor rational, as anyone who has taken the trouble to read into the immense modern literatures on psychical and paranormal phenomena—and I mean *really* read these multiple literatures—knows.[43] We need to be reminded here, again and again (and again), that materialism and rationalism are not the same thing, and that if we are going to be empirical, we need to be empirical *about everything*, including and especially the astonishing and often very strange spectrum of human experience. Once we finally adopt such a truly radical and truly consistent empiricism, that is, once we admit that paranormal events are indeed a fairly regular feature of this world, it is easy to see that one can be perfectly rational and finally reject materialism (and, I would add, the attending pure contextualisms, constructivisms, and cultural relativisms that follow from such a

[43] For a start, see "Required Reading (That Is Never Read): A Select Annotated Bibliography," in Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

metaphysical commitment) as an ontology and a set of methodologies that are simply inadequate to the full sweep of the comparative data at hand.

Certainly the phenomenology of *siddhi*s and the modern history of superpowers suggest as much.

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