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## Knowledge and Methodic Discipline

A Shared Nāth Siddha and Sant Paradigm

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### Introduction

The Sants of Rajasthan, propagators of a formless god in the interior of man and identical with his soul, entertained a symbiotic relationship with a particular variant of the Nāth tradition. This claims to be the trustee of the unadulterated yogic lore. Its representatives decry the magic, miracle working, and sexual ritual practices of Nāthyogīs related to the tantric Kaula tradition, the sectarian emblems and the social organization of these in roving bands. They were ascetics calling themselves the Nāth Siddhas, who left behind Hindi compositions preserved as a corpus of texts comprising the works of Gorakhnāth and some twenty-seven more authors. Their names replicate names of the ancient Siddha tradition, but their connection with these is tenuous. No settlements of them are recorded. The various genres of their texts correspond largely to those of Sant literature. Aphorisms and lyrics point to public performance from which ensue questions as to the composition of audiences and the patronage extended to ascetics. Didactic treatises addressing the ascetic yogic disciple point to lineages of teachers and disciples. Though the ascetic is the sole addressee of the texts, this can well be due to a literary convention and need not preclude their being also performed for wider audiences. As for the social setting of ascetics depending on a lay following, this would have hardly differed from that of the Sants.

The Nāth Siddha texts were transmitted not by a Nāth Siddha constituency, of which there are no traces, but by Dādūpanthīs. The codices of these are known from the beginning of the seventeenth century, and from the earliest known ones the Nāth Siddha corpus of texts forms part of these. This corpus shows the signs of redactional interventions, such as numerical grouping of texts or a particular uniform style of colophons, and even as it makes its first appearance is revealed as copied from earlier manuscripts. For the Dādūpanthīs, the Nāth Siddhas represented yogically specialized precursors of themselves. When appending the Hindi Nāth Siddha tradition to the texts canonized by them, they never mixed it with their own texts, but kept them as a separate text block.<sup>1</sup> This strict separation is, however, not found in anthologies in which the text material is grouped according to themes.

By size and quality, the Nāth Siddha corpus of texts is dominated by the oeuvre of Gorakhnāth, to whom some of the Nāth Siddhas in that corpus point as their spiritual ancestor. Though the transmission of the Nāth Siddha corpus was quite stable, it is not all that clear to whom and to what time range the 'Hindi Gorakhnāth' or other 'Nāth Siddhas' refers. Apart from the compositions of Dādū, the early Dādūpanthī manuscripts passed down corpora of other pan-Indian and Rajasthani Sants, Sufis, the Nāth Siddhas, and others. In this, the constituents of the manuscripts appear as completely simultaneous. Except for a few compositions bearing dates, these manuscripts represent a single frozen moment in textual history. Scholarship has been able to establish a relative chronology, particularly for the authors of pan-Indian recognition, but for a great number of authors this has not yet been attempted. Moreover, uncertainty surrounds the relationship of the authors as historical figures and the works assigned to them. To add to the problem, it is unknown how those works might have differed according to different sectarian traditions.<sup>2</sup> As for Gorakhnāth, it is uncertain if the *Gorakhbānī* appearing in manuscripts precedes in time of composition the works of other Hindi Nāth Siddhas referring to him. H. P. Dvivedi thought that most of those other Nāth Siddhas lived before the fourteenth century (Dvivedi vs 2014: 25). In terms of historical linguistics, their texts cannot be strictly chronologically ordered

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- 1 Two landmark editions of the Nāth Siddha works are *Gorakhbānī* (GB), first published in 1942, and that of H. P. Dvivedi of c.1957 (Dvivedi vs 2014). GB is based on a named Dādūpanthī manuscript, and Dvivedi's main textual source seems also to be a Dādūpanthī manuscript, although not identified as such.
  - 2 A case in point would be the Rāmānandī sect, for which see the final section "The Epicentre of the Tenets Observed".

nor do they much differ from the Sant compositions so far analysed in depth.<sup>3</sup> Because of the supposed floruit of the historical Gorakhnāth in the twelfth or thirteenth century, the lower limit of the Hindi Nāth Siddha literature mentioning him is the thirteenth century, but there are no valid testimonies for the upper time limit of their works or the redaction of these in that single corpus of texts, of which the compiler is anonymous. As has been shown, the Nāth Siddha tradition was only gradually aligned to Gorakhnāth (Briggs 1973: 67–77). It cannot be taken for granted that the Hindi Nāth Siddha referring themselves to Gorakhnāth meant the same thing by this reference. Numerous historical questions, then, relating to the Nāth Siddhas composing in Hindi await answers.

## Prithīnāth

A single Nāth Siddha author can serve as a trajectory from the historically undifferentiated appearance of the Nāth Siddha corpus of texts to a point in real time. This author is Prithīnāth, the last of the Nāth Siddhas recorded in 1660 by the Dādūpanthī hagiographer Rāghavdās. According to him, Prithīnāth was a contemporary of emperor Akbar and can thereby be assigned to the second half of the sixteenth century (Horstmann 2021b: 82). This makes him also a contemporary of key figures among the Sants of Rajasthan. In the following I will focus on what, according to him, was at the heart of Gorakhnāth's teaching and, subsequently, how this may be related to the Sants of Rajasthan who refer expressly to Gorakhnāth as a religious model. This may sharpen our understanding of the relationship between the basic concepts of the Nāth Siddhas and Sants, seemingly to the extent of revealing a single pivotal concept governing the thought of Nāth Siddhas and Sants alike. Though Nāth Siddha and Sant concepts of interior religion can be distinguished theoretically and heuristically, the respective concepts tend to fuse in reality; a shift of perspective from that which distinguishes them to that which unites them may therefore suggest itself.

Prithīnāth declares himself a disciple of Gorakhnāth, the disciple of Matsyendranāth (Machindranāth), and propagator of his teachings. Both, as well as any perfected yogi, are identical with Śambhū and Ādināth Nārāyaṇa, from whom the manifest world starts unfolding.

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3 For a profound linguistic study of the Kabīr corpus as transmitted in early-seventeenth-century Rajasthan, see Strnad 2013.

Prithināth's genealogical link with Gorakhnāth is thereby spiritual rather than historical. He affirms that he is only the transmitter of Gorakhnāth's message, which is identical with the interior unstruck sound.<sup>4</sup> Prithināth, then, conceives of himself as one in the chain of human voices transmitting the supreme revelation descended into the world of phenomena. In 1615 (MS. Sharma 3190) and 1659 (MS. VB 34), the treatises of Prithināth appear in a redaction comprising twenty-seven and twenty-eight works, respectively.<sup>5</sup> In that redaction one notices more often than not some incongruence between the title of an individual treatise and its contents matter, the title moreover not appearing in the composition itself.<sup>6</sup> Though titles seem assigned somewhat arbitrarily, these are by and large common for yogic treatises. We find similar ones in GB, but as such titles are also found with other authors, one can only speculate that the redaction of older text layers of Gorakhnāth's oeuvre preceded the redaction of Prithināth's works, although there are no clues that Prithināth might have had in mind the GB in terms of the collection known to us. Redactorial intervention in Prithināth's compositions is also visible in the dialogical parts of his treatises. Comparing these with similar texts of GB, which display a strict logical coherence between questions and answers, in Prithināth's treatises questions put in the mouths of disciples are not always answered stringently. This suggests that in some cases independent verses of Prithināth were strung together to form a treatise corresponding to the quite dominant dialogic principle governing texts of instruction.

Compositions assigned to Prithināth are recorded in great number in the Gopāldās' anthology of 1628 (GopS). Quite often they occur as strings of verses, which also appear in the various treatises arguably consolidated by redaction. Apart from these, however, Gopāldās also included three complete treatises of Prithināth, all of these preceded by their titles, which are identical with the titles appearing in the

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4 *goraṣa bāṛṇṇī anahada nāda, prithinātha kahai gurū prasāda* (Bārahmāsī-grantha, v. 5cd).

5 The treatise in excess of the collection of twenty-seven, the *Sidha-cautīsā-grantha*, is partly identical with the collection of verses classified as *Kuch pad* in GB, pp. 241–3. Apart from those treatises, Prithināth composed also a collection of distichs, the *Sabadī* (Dvivedī vs 2014: 68–9), and a few songs of which so far seven have been recovered (unedited).

6 See, for example, *Solaha-kalā-joga-grantha*, partly quoted below. While it covers the complete yogic ascent to liberation, the text does not explicitly follow a serial cliché of sixteen stages as one would expect from its title.

Prithīnāth corpus.<sup>7</sup> All the three are relatively short and absolutely coherent in their reasoning and style. It therefore seems that Prithīnāth did indeed compose a number of treatises, including those three, and that his freely floating independent verses or clusters of these were at one point recast in the form of independent treatises. Prithīnāth enjoyed obvious authority, which accounts for the fact that in the eighteenth-century verses of his were absorbed into the ever-growing apocryphal Hindi corpus of Gorakhnāth. They figure in the spurious *Gyānatilaka*, a work of a total of forty-five stanzas, out of which thirty-five formed part of the sixteenth-century redaction of the Prithīnāth corpus.<sup>8</sup>

An examination of the doctrine of Gorakhnāth as perceived in the sixteenth century specifically by Prithīnāth, automatically excludes perceptions setting in around the mid-seventeenth century. At that time Sundardās honed Gorakhnāth's teaching to the model of influential Sanskrit texts, and the trend to graft the *haṭhayogic* apparatus of notions and practices upon the Nāth Siddha yoga remained unabated thereafter.

## Basic Yogic Tenets according to Prithīnāth

Rather than laying out a comprehensive system of the Nāth Siddha yoga, Prithīnāth presupposes it. It can be safely said that it does not differ significantly from the one displayed in the layers of GB as these existed by the turn of the sixteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Going by key concepts, its relatively simple structure can be established.

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7 These are *Bhagati-baikunṭha-grantha* (GopS 47.76), *Sūtradhaṇīm-karatā-kathigrantha* (GopS 63.31–49), and *Ajapā-gāitri-grantha* (GopS 84.8; this appears also as RajS 122.1).

8 GB: 207–18. Twenty-two of these are identical, or for certain lines of verses identical, with his *Jugati-sarūpa-grantha*, and the other thirteen, with stanzas of his *Gyānapacīsī*. Listed in the sequence of their occurrence in the text, *Gyānatilaka* stanzas 14–8, 25cd, 20, 21, 24, 23, 28, 27, 29, 30–2, 37, 34, 26, 38, 40–4 correspond to stanzas in the *Jugati-sarūpa-grantha*, while *Gyānatilaka* 1–13 correspond to *Gyānapacīsī* 37–49.

9 In the final third of the eighteenth century incongruent material accrued to the system, namely, the concept of eight *cakras* in the yogic body, against the six *cakras* taught formerly. Concurring views must have been at work for some time, for in the seventeenth century Sundardās also tries to accommodate eight *cakras* to the six-*cakra* system. For the text, see GB, pp. 249–50, for the relevant manuscripts, p. 150 for the table in question.

## Yogi, Guru, the Community of Sadhus

The addressee of Prithīnāth is always the ascetic yogi. The yogi aspiring to become a *siddha puruṣa*, the undifferentiated absolute being, has to apply methodical yogic practice (*jugati*) to ascend to the place of absolute eternal union. A suitable guru, whom his father and mother may have found for him – a topos and a fact which bring to mind the child sadhus of Sant groups – teaches him the method of yogic practice. Without the guru, he cannot attain the goal; when he eventually does so, he realizes his identity with the guru and the supreme self, and that he comprises in himself all the deities. These are thereby deprived of their popularly acknowledged standing. The yogi himself is now all that is, and he dwells forever in a state attained by rolling back diversity. Because he is identical with all, he is at once the yogi and the enjoyer (*bhogī*). Now, no interior god, not to speak of exterior deities, nor the name of God as the subtlest equivalent of God, is required to accomplish the yogi's search.

Prithīnāth is, however, a Vaiṣṇava Nāth, so that in some passages of his work the relationship between the aspiring yogi and his guru resembles the devotee's bhakti to the formless god, named in Prithīnāth's compositions variously as Hari, Govinda, Kṛṣṇa, or Rāma. The eternal place, the *pada*, is therefore also called Vaikuṇṭha.<sup>10</sup> Teacher, disciple, Govind (or the interior supreme of any other name) are one and identical with Gorakhnāth down to the primeval beginning. All of them are *brahman*.

## Prithīnāth's Anthro-po-cosmology

The supreme principle devoid of difference – *puruṣa*, *ātma*, Nārāyaṇa etc. – appears differentiating itself in the power at work in the cosmos, identical with the yogi himself. The supreme real (*tata*, Skt. *tattva*) manifests itself in the five elements (*bhūta*) and the five qualities or properties (*guṇa*) each of these possesses. Together with the five elements these form the *piṇḍa*. This is perishable but can attain immortality by yogic practice, which presupposes insight into the ontological principles. Enlivening the *piṇḍa* is the vital breath, *prāṇa* (also *pavana* or *bāi*). Death and immortality depend on the mind (*mana*). This is directed outwards, entangled with the sense objects, that is, with the

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10 For translated examples, see Horstmann 2021b: 87–8 for bhakti and Hari; Horstmann 2021a: 167, v. 3 for the Vaikuṇṭha paradise.

transient world. It mistakenly imagines that this is different from itself and, implicitly, from the supreme principle. As long as the mind engages with the world, it remains caught in *samsara*. It therefore needs to shed its false belief, rooted in ego-mindedness (*ahankāra*), of an independent existence of the created world. This false belief is the characteristic of a human being of bestial disposition, the *paśu(-jīva)*.<sup>11</sup>

For liberation to take place, the mind must turn away from the perishable phenomena, roll back all imaginations (*kalpanā*)<sup>12</sup> and perceptions into the supreme principle, and tie itself to the soul. The mind and the vital breath have to unite forever. This requires the methodical discipline (*jugati*) by which the vital breath (*dvādasāṅgula*) is made to circulate through the body. In exhaling, it is directed outwards and has to be continuously redirected into and preserved in the yogic body. In this way the creative power (*śakti*), which is itself a product of a non-ontological differentiation of the supreme self, ascends to the top of the anthropo-cosmos to fuse with the supreme, the Self of the self. The yogi's body in terms of what can be transformed into the supreme is usually named *kāyā*. The perfected *kāyā* has no shape (*māyā*) and does not cast a shadow. It belongs to him who is transformed from old man to the eternal child. In the *kāyā*, the *piṇḍa* is free from difference. Called dying and living at the same time, it is eternal.

Ṭhe vital breath circulates in the channels of this body. There are three of these: *Ilā*, *Piṅgalā*, and *Suṣumnā*.<sup>13</sup> The place of union is gradually ascended over six consecutive stages, the *cakras*. These are, bottom-up: the *mūla* (*mūlādhāra*, -*dvāra*), *nābhi*, *hṛdaya*, *mīna* (normally called *maṇi*), *anahata*, and *sahasradala cakras*. No further description of the *cakras* is given. Only for the *sahasradala cakra*, whose description lies in its very name, is the play of the wind (*prāṇa*) in its petals mentioned. None of the *cakras* is assigned attributes in the fashion of tantric texts (e.g., *Kaulajñānanirṇaya*), which collocate with these the numbers of their petals, colour, presiding deities, etc.

## Practice

The yogic practice consists in withdrawing the mind from the world by tying it firmly to the breath and directing it into the *kāyā*. From the *mūlādhāra*, the vital breath (*prāṇa*) passes upwards. This *cakra* has to be blocked to lock out Time, which is located there. In the abdomen

11 See below, v. 4 of the *Bindu-siddhānta-grantha*.

12 See below, v. 24 of the *Solaha-kalā-joga-grantha*.

13 With the exception of the Śaṅkhinī, no other channels are mentioned by name.

are stored the bodily fluids and waste produced by digestion. At the next stage, the *nābhicakra*, the vital breath enters the dwelling of the sun. The continuously produced and, for waste and semen, discharged bodily fluids are impure. By breath discipline, the yogi dries (*sokh*-) these up, that is, drains them so that they rise like vapour. In the process, the semen is converted into the *bindu*, the drop of the elixir of immortality, and the yogi's body becomes hard as diamond. The following verses from Prithināth's *Solaha-kalā-joga-grantha* illustrate the six-*cakra* system:<sup>14</sup>

बंधस्य बंधि बिषमं यहु बाइ, बंधहु  
चंचल कही न जाइ ।

Block the restive breath, block the fickle one so that it cannot stray,

करंम कलपनां बंधन देहु, इसि बिधि  
आप बसि करि लेहु ॥२४॥

Block deeds and imaginations; this is how you must subdue your self. (24)

मूल अकूचन अजपा सार, कथंत  
प्रिथीनाथ तत बिचार ।

The essence is bending (the breath) at the base<sup>15</sup> and the *ajapā*, says Prithināth reflecting on the supreme principle.

तंन जल ब्यब अलष करि पालि, राषि  
लै मंछा, ज्यू पडै न जालि ॥२५॥

In the body you must make an embankment for the water of invisible reflection, protect the fish from being trapped in the net. (25)

तहां नवमुषि ब्रह्म, आहुति ऐक, तहां  
निरंजन प्रतषि देष ।

There, in the nine-mouthed one (the body), *brahman* and libation are one, and Nirañjana is in plain view.

असंष कंमल दल पवन फिरै,  
बंकनालि बहु नीझर झरै ॥२६॥

The breath passes through the lotus with innumerable petals, and a rich stream pours down from the curved conduit. (26)

गुहजि स्थान बिलंबे चीत, तहां द्वादस  
किरंगि तपै आदीत ।

The mind dwells at the hidden place where the sun emits heat from the rays of its twelve digits.

ससि सोलह सोषै रवि झाल, बंधि बज्र  
ज्यू दवै न काल ॥२७॥

The moon (is full with its) sixteen digits. [From there] the flames of the sun drain; blocked, [hard as] a diamond one is not burned by Time. (27)

इस बिधि अग्नि बिंद कू चरै, तब फिरि  
भरम बसेरा करै ।

In this fashion he moves through the fire-*bindu*, and then, after roaming, takes the bee's resting place.

इला पिंगला पवनां पूर, गगन गुफा मैं  
बाजै तूर ॥२८॥

The breath fills Ilā and Piṅgalā, the trumpet resounds in the cave in the sky. (28)

14 The text is edited on the basis of the full text which appears in MS. Sharma 3190, foll. 632v–634r and MS. VB 34, foll. 426r–427. Words in round brackets are explanations added by the author.

15 The term is otherwise not attested in the works of Prithināth or in GB, but occurs from early on, for example, in *Dattātreyā-yoga-śāstra*, v. 131 (c. thirteenth century).



नाभि चक्र निज हंसा सार, तहां ज्ञान  
महारस पवनं अधार ।

At the *nābhi-cakra* is his essence, the *ham-sā*, the great elixir of gnosis<sup>16</sup> is there supported by the breath

रबि करि उपरि तलि करि चंद, सिव  
सक्ती दोड़ समि करि बंधि ॥२९॥

When he has brought the sun up and the moon down, tied Śiva and Śakti together, and made them from two into one. (29)

तब हंसा टलै न सूकै नीर, अषै सरोवर  
रहिबा थीर ।

Then *ham-sā* does not recede, nor the water dry up, the eternal lake will remain stationary.

गुरू गोरष सबद विच्यषिण, ग्यान  
उलटी बाड़ अजपा ध्यान ॥३०॥

Gnosis arises from examining the word of Guru Gorakhnāth; as the breath moves in a reverse fashion, there are *ajapā* and meditation. (30)

हृदै चक्र चित धरि करि षेल, बाहरि  
जाता भीतरि मेल ।

Keeping his mind at the *hṛdaya-cakra*, he plays. In the interior is found that which was heading outwards.

भाठी पाचि अमीरस झरै, इहि रसि  
रावल छाका फिरै ॥३१॥

Cooked over the burner, the elixir of immortality streams down, the Rāval sways drunk with this juice. (31)

तहां निसा न निद्रा, पाप न पुन्य, तिस  
घरि फिरि बिश्रामैं मन ।

There are no night or sleep, no sin or merit in the house where the mind comes to rest after roaming.

पंच आत्मां इस बिधि द्विदी, भए  
मुक्ति गुर बांनीं चढी ॥३२॥

In this way the five and the self are firm when there is the liberation arisen from the guru's speech. (32)

मीन चक्र मली मूंदै घाट, तहां टूटै  
संकल पुलहि कपाट ।

When he occupies the *mīna-cakra* and seals the bank, the fetter breaks and the doors open.

परम निरंजन बिण आकार, जा  
कारणि नर तजहि भंडार ॥३३॥

The supreme Nirāṇjana without form [is there] for whose sake men let go of their coffers. (33)

कहि प्रिथीनाथ इहै ज्ञान निवास, परचै  
पुरिष भवहि बनवास ।

Prithināth says: This is the dwelling-place of gnosis, the experience through which Perfect Men (*puruṣa*) roam as through a forest dwelling.

परम जोग जोगी के लक्षिण, ऐका  
ऐकी बीर बिचषण ॥३४॥

The signs of the yogi's supreme yoga are that he is one with the One, a discriminating hero. (34)

अनहथ चक्रहि बंध न करै, तब लग  
चंचल बाहरि फिरै ।

As long as he does not make a blockage at the *anahata-cakra*, the fickle mind strays outside.

आतम तत अनंत मुषि संधि, चींटी कै  
घरि हस्ती बंधि ॥३५॥

When the self is united with the supreme principle of innumerable faces, the elephant is tied in the house of the ant. (35)

तब मन क्यंच्यत मुक्तता होइ, दुलंभ  
पंथ न पावै कोइ ।

At this stage, the mind is liberated slightly; no one reaches this path hard to find.

16 The term is *jñāna*. When translating this, the term 'gnosis' is preferred over 'knowledge' to accentuate that this knowledge is ontological in transforming transient into eternal life.

तौ पावै जे अजपा जपै, गंगन इंद थिर सूरिज तपै ॥३६॥	One reaches it if one recites the <i>ajapā</i> while the moon is fixed in the sky and the sun scorches. (36)
अभेद भेदै सु अछेद छेदै, अजपा जपै सु जापं ।	He (the yogi) splits the unsplittable and cuts the uncuttable, he recites the <i>ajapā jāpa</i> .
द्विष्टि अदृष्टि अमूर्ति पूजै, ते पद पुन न पापं ॥३७॥	With sight without vision he worships the formless one, at the place where there is no sin or merit. (37)
तहां रूपै न रेषै, हस्तै न पादं, बेदै न बांणी, बिद्या न बादं ।	No form or contour is there, no hand or foot, no Veda or speech, no science or argument,
तहां गुरु न सिष्यं, मंत्र न सिक्ष्या, बनं नग्री जोगी न भिक्ष्या ॥३८॥	No guru or disciple, no mantra or teaching, no forest or city, no yogi or begging. (38)
षट चक्र षट सुत्र, षट दरसण मंत ऐक ।	There are six <i>cakras</i> , six <i>sūtras</i> , six views, [but only] a single doctrine.
ए भूले जुगति न पावहि, जब लग नही बमेक ॥३९॥	As long as they lack discrimination, the errant do not grasp methodical discipline. (39)

Prithīnāth, then, holds that rather than austerities, discrimination is the foundation of yoga, and only by discrimination can one grasp the fiery drop (*bindu*) of *brahman*. This is at the heart of Prithīnāth's yoga: *bindu* is fire, by breath discipline and meditation *bindu* is brought to the supreme place from where it falls again down into the yogi's body to circulate there as a continuous stream of fire. *Bindu* is the eternal sound beyond phonation, *bindu* is *brahman*.

Among the three treatises of Prithīnāth anthologized as early as 1628, one is on *bindu*. In this, the sublimated Nāth Siddha view is contrasted with, one might say, a mechanical view of the practice of the retention of semen believed to lead to eternal life. The word *bindu*, 'drop, semen', is to the unenlightened yogi a drop of semen, which to prevent from spilling fully absorbs his attention (v. 1–3ab). He does not possess the discriminative knowledge which alone would enable him to recognize that *bindu* is the fire of *brahman* itself (vv. 3cd foll.).<sup>17</sup>

इस बिंदु भरोसै ईंद्री कसैंहीं, रांडी कै डर बंन मैं बसैंहीं ।	Counting on this drop (semen), people discipline their senses; out of fear of women, they settle in the forest.
जै उमेटै तौ मूलि न रहै, फोडि कछोटी रात्यू बहै ॥१॥	If the semen spills over, it does not stay at the base, but runs at night into the tattered loincloth. (1)

17 Edited on the basis of MS. Sharma 3190, foll. 631r–631v and MS. VB 34, foll. 425v–426r.

जै साथै सोधै तन्य संचरै, तौ सगली  
देही गंदी करै ।

द्रुबासणा बिगाड़े गात, उपटि पडै,  
मल राषै जात ॥२॥

इस बिंद भरोसै जरा न मिटै, इस  
ब्यंद भरोसै जुरा न घटै ।

इस ब्यंद भरोसै लांवहि बंध,  
अविचल होत न देखू कंध ॥३॥

अग्निहीन इंद्री बलु नाहि, अग्नि  
बिनां उपजहि मरि मरि जाहिं ।

अग्नि बीज बिनां, उपज्या संसार,  
पसुवा न जानहि अग्नि बिचार ॥४॥

अग्नि बिंद अग्नि जिंद, अग्नि रूप  
गोरष गोबिंद ।

अग्नि जोति जब घट मैं नाहिं, तब  
इन के इंद्री गुण कहां बिलाहिं ॥५॥

इंद्री ढलै स बिंद न होइ, बिंद बिचित्र  
अवरै कोइ ।

बिंद पुरिस अग्नि की धार, अनंत  
सिधा तहां उतरे पार ॥६॥

मुष दाइ जै कहिये बात, मूठी गहै  
तौ दाइ हाथ ।

तन मैं रमै तौ सिध सरार, ऐ बिंद  
उलबे बावन बीर ॥७॥

इहै बिंद बस्त जै साथै सोधै कोइ,  
बृध पलटै बालिक होई ।

प्रिथीनाथ बिंद बिधि गही, जीवन  
मरण की संक्यां नहीं ॥८॥

तब जोगी जब इंद्री जती, जापहि  
बिंद की बस्त, न भागै रती ।

इहै बिंद गहै तौ जोगी सोइ, जोगी  
बिणां न ईश्वर कोइ ॥९॥

जोगी पुरिस अग्नि की झाला, जा  
कूं राज छाडि सेवैहि भोवाला ।

जोगी के घरि पद त्रिबांण, सब तीर्थ  
जा कै नोसांण ॥१०॥

If one moves through the body to ascertain it, one  
soils the whole body.

Its stench fouls the body, it flows over, heading for  
death one remains defiled. (2)

Counting on this drop, aging is not wiped out; count-  
ing on this drop, aging does not diminish.

Counting on this drop, one lays blockages, but I do not  
see anyone's body endure. (3)

He who does not have the fire has no strength; those  
who lack the fire are born and die;

Because there is no seed of fire, the world comes into  
existence; beasts have no discrimination of the fire. (4)

Fire is *bindu*, fire is life, Gorakha-Govinda have the  
form of fire.

If the light of the fire is not in the body, where will the  
qualities of one's senses dissolve? (5)

When the senses are in motion there is no *bindu*, the  
wonderful *bindu* is different and rare.

*Bindu* is Perfect Man, a stream of fire which innumer-  
able achievers of perfection have crossed. (6)

If you talk of it, it burns your mouth; if you seize it, it  
scorches your hand.

If it fluctuates in the body, the body becomes perfect,  
to this *bindu* the supreme heroes are attached. (7)

The rare person who ascertains this *bindu*, which is  
the real thing, is transformed from an old man into  
a young boy.

Prithināth: He who has grasped the way of *bindu* is  
not concerned about life and death. (8)

One becomes a yogi by restraining the senses; by prac-  
tising *jāpa* not a bit of the real thing that is the *bindu*  
will disperse.

A yogi is he who grasps this *bindu*; there is no *Īśvara*  
except the yogi. (9)

In the yogi, who is the Perfect Man, is a blaze of fire; to  
dedicate themselves to this, kings resign their rule.

In the house of the yogi is the place of *nirvāṇa*, it bears  
the sign of all sacred places. (10)

पार्वती ईश्वर अर्धगा, लक्ष्मीं कृष्ण की लाई संगी ।	Pārvatī and Īśvara share one body, Lakṣmī is united with Kṛṣṇa,
सोलह सहस्र गोपी सूं भोग, चालि जती ऐसी बिधि जोग ॥११॥	The cowherd is united with sixteen thousand cow- herdesses when an ascetic has pursued yoga in this fashion. (11)
ब्रह्मा जोगी बिष्णु जोगी, जोगी देव महेस्वरं ।	Brahmā is a yogi, Viṣṇu is a yogi, god Maheśvara is a yogi,
अठसठ तीरथ जोग तैं उपजे, थान रचे परमेश्वरं ॥१२॥	The sixty-eight sacred places came into existence by yoga; Parameśvara created them. (12)
बिंदही जोग बिंदही भोग, बिंदही द्रपन, जा कै हरिष न सोग ।	<i>Bindu</i> alone is yoga, <i>bindu</i> alone is enjoyment, <i>bindu</i> alone is a mirror in which neither joy nor sorrow are reflected.
बिंदही हरै चौस्टि रोग, बिंद पवन मुष अबिचल जोग ॥१३॥	<i>Bindu</i> alone removes the sixty-four diseases; if it is ori- ented towards <i>bindu</i> and breath, yoga endures. (13)

The process of converting the perishable fluids of the body into that which is imperishable is described in tropes of distillation (Zhang 2019). Besides distillation, the alchemical conversion of base metal into gold furnishes another set of tropes. Prithīnāth uses, however, frozen literary tropes rather than describing the full alchemical practice. As for distillation, in contrast to the split distillation apparatus operating with a distillation vessel heated by an exterior fire and a receiver vessel, the anthropo-cosmic distillation still is fully interiorized and represents perpetual circulation in communicating channels within the one vessel of the yogic body. In ordinary distillation, the fire setting this in motion burns under the still, but in yogic practice it burns at the *mūla* inside the yogi's body. This is the fire of *brahman* identical with the guru's word. On top of the still is the pipe through which the distilled product flows. This is the *mahārasa*, the great elixir. In split distillation, the vapour rising to the top of the first vessel is liquified by cooling it down with the help of a wet cloth put over the apparatus. The liquid then runs into the receiver vessel. Similarly, the *bindu-mahārasa*, which is the fire of *brahman*, is perceived as a cool stream of fire. The *brahma* fire is inside that single bodily vessel, and so is the flow of *mahārasa*, running over the yogi's palate down again into this vessel. All the while the yogi meditates on and practices the *ajapā gāyatrī*, that is *ham-sā*, the two sounds produced by breathing. By breath discipline, the sun residing at the navel rises to the house of the moon on top, and, reversely, the moon is transported to the place of the sun, a process running through the sun and moon channels. When thereby the sun occupies the orb of the

moon, the ultimate union is attained. In this way, Śiva and Śakti merge (*Solahakalā-joga-grantha*, vv. 28–9). The *prāṇāyāma* of inhalation and exhalation is enforced by blockages which help sustain the flow of the vital breath tied to the mind. These hinder the mind from straying into the world of sense objects. The numerous forms of blockages, the various fixtures, and the details of breathing known from Sanskrit *haṭha-yogic* treatises since around the twelfth or thirteenth centuries and digested in compendia by around 1500 are not discussed by Prithīnāth. Apart from the advice to sit in a stable position when practicing breath discipline, no sitting postures are mentioned. *Prāṇayāma* combined with continuous meditation on the *ajapā gāyatrī* forms the essence of yogic practice (Horstmann 2021a: 166–7). In this way the yogi reaches the eternal place, Hari in the orb of the void.<sup>18</sup> This is Vaikuṇṭha, this is Nārāyaṇa, illuminated to the yogi by *brahman*-gnosis. The yogic perfection is commonly characterized by the union of the mysterious inner sound *om* and *bindu*, the sublimated form of which Prithīnāth explains in his treatise on *bindu*. *Nāda*, finally, he explains as the unstruck sound identical with Gorakh and *brahman* itself.

## The Fire of Gnosis

Fire is of central importance in Prithīnāth's compositions. In the fashion of tantric-yogic thought at large, he reflects on it in the context of the Vedic sacrifice. He speaks of the *brahma* libation poured out over the nine-mouthed deity, that is, in the interior of the body. Kindled by the guru, it is identical with the *mahārasa*. It is the *svāti* rain of *brahma*-gnosis (*Nakṣatra-joga-grantha*, v. 15). The *siddha puruṣa* burns in the *brahma* fire and therefore no other fire can consume him. The eternal place is the sheer light of the flaming *brahma*. In brief, the yogi is the receptacle of and ultimately himself *brahma* fire. *Brahma* fire is the cause and end of yoga.

## *Brahma*-gnosis (*brahmajñāna*) and Methodic Discipline (*jugati*) as a Shared Paradigm

In the period and region concerned, the tantric anthropo-cosmology was widely influential in religious thought and practice. The system underlying Prithīnāth's yoga is not only fairly congruous with that of

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18 *Pratibodha-jñana-joga-grantha*, v. 57, quoted at GopS 74.12.

GB, but is also shared as a worldview and a practice by the Sants native to Rajasthan. Heuristically that relationship of Nāth Siddha yoga and Santism can be regarded as a continuum between opposite poles, the one represented by the methodical discipline of yoga, the other, by the methodical discipline of bhakti, a yoga in its own right. At the Nāth Siddha pole, one finds *joga jugati*,<sup>19</sup> at the Sant pole, the *jugati* of *bhakti*, which is essentially the remembrance of the name of the interior god. At the Nāth Siddha pole, there prevails trust in human agency, at the Sant bhakti pole, the main agency lies with the interior god. But far from being rigid, this distinction rather tends to fuse. Heuristic distinction, then, is not vindicated by reality.

The works of Dādū and his immediate disciples by and large share the foundational principles of *brahma*-gnosis (*brahma-jñāna*) and yogic practice as they were pronounced by GB and Prithīnāth. Similarly, these principles are put in the mouths of other prominent Sant figures such as Kabīr or Raidās. Suffice it to quote two passages. The refrain of a song of Kabīr as quoted in GopS reads:<sup>20</sup>

Oh Man, examine your body, don't aggrandize yourself!  
How will you attain bhakti without methodic discipline?

And in a song warning against enticing worldly appearance, Dādū says:<sup>21</sup>

She shows him love and takes away all of his wealth, he keeps  
nothing of it,  
She searches for the butter inside of him, takes all of it away,  
and discards him like worthless buttermilk. (2)  
When devotees have come to know and renounce [*māyā*] with  
methodic discipline, they experience the innate place.  
Dādū points to those whom Time does not devour and who  
never die. (3)

Therefore, a shift away from a principle dividing Nāth Siddhas and Sants to a uniting principle seems advisable, and this is found in the

19 See *Nakṣatra-joga-grantha*, v. 29.

20 GopS 47.14, refrain: *tana sojau nara na karau baḍāi/ jugati binām bhagati kini pāi*.

21 Dādū n.d.: 340, no. 340; GopS 86.4, stanzas 2–3: *heta lagāi sabai dhana levai, bākī kachū na rāṣai re/ māṁṣana māṁhi sodhi saba levai, chāchi chiyā kari nāṣai re//2// je jana jāṁni jugati sūṁ tyāgaīm, tina kūṁ nija pada parasai re/ kāla na ṣāi marai nahīṁ kabahūṁ, dādū tina kūṁ darasai re//3//*

shared paradigm of the Nāth Siddha yoga and Sant bhakti. This is the *brahmn*-gnosis conducive to which is methodic discipline as strongly emphasized by Prithīnāth and other Nāth Siddhas as by the Saints. The disciplines of *joga jugati* and bhakti yoga form two differently accentuated, but not mutually exclusive methods in pursuit of this goal. Because both claim the liberating knowledge of *brahma* coupled with the appropriate yogic practice as their exclusive possession, they decry all established creeds as invalid.

## Antecedents of Yoga Coupled with Bhakti

As is well known, the principle of knowledge arising from recognizing one's own self coupled with bhakti and yoga figured in Vaiṣṇava bhakti long before the period under review. As also acknowledged by Prithīnāth (*Sādhaparakhyā* v. 12), the *Bhagavadgītā* is, of course, a *locus classicus* for this, notably its twelfth chapter. It also appears in the third book of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, where it is named the teaching of Kapila.<sup>22</sup> In this it is elaborated in the spirit of Kṛṣṇa bhakti, and leads the yogi to the vision of the corporeal god. The actual execution of yoga taught in that text is as simple as that which is credited to Gorakhnāth and propagated by other Nāth Siddhas, including Prithīnāth as well as the Saints. Absent in Kapila's teaching is, however, the tantric anthropo-cosmology which was propagated by the various groups of yogis tracing their lines to Gorakhnāth and other Nāths and in which the Nāth Siddhas took an anti-Kaula position. Kapila is not mentioned by Prithīnāth, and by Saints very rarely in stereotyped lists of *bhaktas*. A mythical sage, he is invoked both by the Rāmānandī Nābhādās in his *Bhaktmāl* and by Rāghavdās in his *Dādūpanthī* remake of this. It is noteworthy that their remarks on Kapila differ in thrust. Nābhādās ranges him without further comment among the twelve main *bhaktas* of Hari, while around 1800 the commentator of Nābhādās' hagiography labels him briefly as the great teacher of Sāṅkhya. As for Rāghavdās, he describes him as the conqueror of all passions by yoga, the corporeal *brahma* in whom resounds the perpetual interior sound (*akhaṇḍa dhuni*). He does not mention his generally acknowledged role as a propagator of Sāṅkhya, perhaps because Sāṅkhya was tacitly understood to be coupled with yoga.<sup>23</sup>

The *Bhagavadgītā*'s, Kapila's or any other relevant teachings of the remote past cannot be related straightforwardly to the fused Nāth

22 Chapters 25–33. Attention to this was drawn at Dvivedī 1998 [1966]: 198–200.

23 Nābhādās 1977, *chappay* 7 and pp. 64–5, resp.; Rāghavdās 1965, v. 23.

Siddha–Sant views emerging centuries later in the vernacular literature of Rajasthan. Such antecedents indicate, however, that this fusion had existed long before it actually appeared in that particular Nāth Siddha–Sant amalgam.<sup>24</sup>

## The Epicentre of the Tenets Observed

How does the phenomenon of a fused Nāth Siddha–Sant tradition fit geographically in the spectrum of aniconic religion in sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Rajasthan? Here, the bhakti yoga of the relatively simple form prevailing in Prithināth's treatises and congruent with GB is shared and powerfully expressed in the early- or mid-sixteenth century by the bhakti yogi Hardās (Hardās 2007), that is, at a time previous to the rise of the Dādūpanth and the Nirañjanī sect. He is attested in the local and oral history of Didvana (Nagaur District), which emerged as the Nirañjanī epicentre. As for Nirañjanī history, this is entangled with that of the Dādūpanth. The founding fathers of this added Hardās' works to their canon and thereby acknowledged him as a forerunner to their own sect. For Hardās, yoga and bhakti are coupled as means and end, and they are of course the gift of the guru.

The principle of this is simple enough, but Hardās' poetry, similar to that of GB, is rich in yogic tropes that need to be deciphered. As for his longish treatises, these abound in self-comprised verses not necessarily consecutively connected but rather forming vignettes, which were, as one would imagine, commented on during performance.<sup>25</sup> The principles of the methodical yogic discipline shared by Prithināth and Hardās suggest the following: The Sant trusteeship over the Nāth Siddha legacy formed in the region of Didvana, which falls within the sphere of action of the early Dādūpanthīs. Dādū himself was praised by his own disciples as the most accomplished yogi, and yogic concepts run through the works also of these.<sup>26</sup> These Sants were practitioners

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24 A previous witness thereof is the Maharashtrian *bhakta* Jñāndev or the several teachers known by this name (Kiehnle 1997: 2–6).

25 For translated samples of Hardās' compositions, see Horstmann 2021b: 164–8; Horstmann and Rajpurohit 2023: 95–108. The fact that independent verses, strung together to form longish texts of instruction by the authors themselves or their redactors, reflects a homiletic practice founded on these rather than on abstract doctrinal issues. This can be easily compared with the ongoing homiletic practice and calls for analysis.

26 One could name Bakhanān and Rajab. The works of these remain largely untranslated, with the exception of the *sākhīs* of Rajab as anthologized by



of yoga by rule rather than exception. As for Hardās, several groups reportedly claimed him as an ancestral figure (SG, p. 385, *savaiyā* 1.5). However, neither he nor any Nāth Siddha, nor other yogic author, nor the Sants of Rajasthan active at his time appear in the Rāmānandī *Bhaktmāl* of Nābhādās. This cannot have happened by accidental omission, for the ways of Rāmānandīs, whose stronghold was Galta (now part of Jaipur), and those other traditions crossed. One of the causes of this rather seems to be that the Rāmānandīs and the Sants of Marwar differed in constituencies and views. What unfolds before our eyes are distinct ways of negotiating a formerly widely shared tradition. A number of aspects of the relationship between the Rāmānandīs and Sants of Marwar seem noteworthy.

- 1) Consider the place of the Nāth Siddha tradition in these. Principles similar to this were pronounced by the yogically inclined Vaiṣṇava *bhakta* Hardās and were endorsed by the Dādūpanthī. At that time, the Nirañjanī sect was still *in statu nascendi*.
- 2) Judging by Nābhādās' *Bhaktmāl*, Rāmānandīs ignored the Nāth Siddhas. Given the tantric-yogic profile of the Vaiṣṇava founder of the seat of Galta, who in his turn deposed yogis who held Galta before him, Rāmānandī affinity to the yogic tradition cannot be questioned (Burchett 2019). This points to differences between the Sants and the Rāmānandīs regarding the right kind of yoga. The Nāth Siddha yoga espoused by the Marwari Sants distanced itself expressly from tantric yoga, while no debates on right or wrong yoga are recorded from the Rāmānandīs of the period.
- 3) The Dādūpanthīs held Rāmānand in high esteem and also disseminated in their manuscripts compositions of Rāmānandī authors. Their keen awareness of Rāmānandīs is above all revealed by the fact that the hagiography of Nābhādās served the Dādūpanthī Rāghavdās as the blueprint for his own hagiography.
- 4) The Rāmānandī Nābhādās lists many of the Sant authors preceding Dādū and transmitted in the Dādūpanthī manuscripts. While he does not provide citations from the texts of these, he lists them in sequential clusters for a considerable part similar to those found in Dādūpanthī manuscripts (Horstmann 2021b: 65–6). This points to a previously established tradition once shared by Sants and Rāmānandīs (or the Vaiṣṇavas who later on emerged as the Rāmānandī sect). The fault line between Sants

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himself (Callewaer 1978). For more translated samples of the poetry of both these authors, see Horstmann and Rajpurohit 2023: 119–43.

and Rāmānandī does not lie at the divide of non-iconic versus iconic worship, for the Rāmānandī bhakti portfolio comprised both forms of bhakti.


- 5) Different attitudes towards Muslim *bhaktas* prevail. Dādūpanthīs, who formed a mixed Hindu–Muslim constituency, emphasized that their faith was above the Hindu–Muslim divide. They also transmitted Sufi authors in their manuscripts, these too – like the Nāth Siddhas – assigned a distinct category in these.

Finally, in 1660 Rāghavdās ranged these in his *Bhaktmāl* under the rubric ‘Muslim devotees’ (*yavan bhakt*). For Hardās, Kabīr is a paragon of bhakti, but he does not specifically ponder the relationship between Hindus and Muslims or the ideal of a devotion above the Hindu-Muslim divide. The Nirañjanī authors of a slightly later period do neither. This caused no split between Dādūpanthīs and Nirañjanīs, but in the decades between the death of Dādū and that of his prominent Muslim disciples – torchbearers of Dādū’s principle of the interior religion beyond and above Hindu and Muslim doctrine – the bent of intellectuals in the sect became more Hinduized, which may have been abetted by the spiralling decline of the authority of the *mahant* of Naraina after the death of Dādū’s successor Garībdās in 1636. This Hinduization is visible in the sadhu community of Fatehpur in Shekhawati, the most distinguished Sant monastic settlement of the seventeenth century which was populated by sadhus of mixed Dādūpanthī–Nirañjanī parentage from Didvana and elsewhere. No Muslim sadhus are recorded there. While the Dādūpanthī bhakti above the Hindu and Muslim divide continued being emphasized in poetry, with rare cases of engagement with Sufi philosophy, weighty long-term intellectual programmes emerged in the ashram. These were inspired by Sanskrit Vaiṣṇava literature or literary aesthetics connected with Sanskrit, very much of the kind otherwise typical of the period. This suggests a gradual erosion of Sant intellectual interest in the Muslim legacy, although into the early eighteenth century Muslims continued being conspicuous in the Dādūpanth. As for Rāmānandī hagiography, Muslims were irrelevant to it, with the exception of Kabīr, who figures in it as the low-caste *bhakta* blessed with initiation by the Brahman Rāmānand – saying more about Rāmānand’s catholicism than about Kabīr’s Muslimhood.

The consolidation of the different sectarian attitudes briefly delineated can hardly be seen in isolation from patronage systems. These are far from being sufficiently explored, but their dominant features can be at least painted in broad strokes. Dādūpanthīs and the sadhus, from

among whom the Nirañjanīs of Didvana originated in the seventeenth century, enjoyed a powerful merchant-caste patronage, though not to the exclusion of other patrons, such as land-holding castes and nobility. In Shekhawati, patronage came also from the Hindu–Muslim Chauhan rulers of the Kyāmkhānī dynasty. Against this, the Rāmānandīs of Galta had since the early-sixteenth century made themselves indispensable as religious guarantors of the rule of the Kachvāhās of Amer (Jaipur). The royal legitimation which they helped uphold was formulated in unalloyed Vaiṣṇava terms. Expanding farther afield in Rajasthan, Rāmānandīs also tapped benefits from the castes and communities involved in the salt trade and thereby became competitors for patronage of the various Sant groups. Varying local conditions must thus have shaped the networks of sadhus and patrons and played a role in the drawing of sectarian boundaries of which the micro-historical examination remains largely to be explored.

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## Abbreviations

GB	see <i>Gorakhbānī</i> 1971
GopS	see Gopāldās 1993
MS. Sharma 3190	Sanjay Sharma Museum and Research Institute (Śrī Sañjay Śarmā Saṅgrahālay evam Śodh Sansthān), Jaipur
MS. VB 34	Vidyābhūṣaṇ Collection, Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Jaipur
RajS	see Rajab 2010
SG	see Sundardās vs 1993

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