



# SAYINGS OF GORAKHNĀTH

Annotated translation of  
the *Gorakh Bānī*

*Translators*

GORDAN DJURDJEVIC  
*and* SHUKDEV SINGH

*Introduction and notes*

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*To the memory of Shukdev Singh (1933–2007)*



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# *Introduction*

*Gordan Djurdjevic*

SAYINGS OF GORAKHNĀTH (*Gorakh-Bānī*) is a title given to a compilation of the late medieval North Indian vernacular texts, in Old Hindi, by and about the Nāth yogis, which were collected, edited, and published by Dr. Pitāmbardatt Barṭhvāl in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> The main portion of these texts are translated here.<sup>2</sup> A good deal of the translations, and in particular the *sabads* and *pads*, which are the two largest and arguably most important groups of texts, are also accompanied by short annotations. The principal purpose of this book is to present the translations of these important and often rather enigmatic texts on yoga.

Although the traditional attribution of this literary corpus, as evident in the above title, acknowledges the semilegendary guru Gorakhnāth as its author, this is a claim that cannot be objectively verified. The obvious discrepancy is presented by the fact that Gorakhnāth probably lived circa the twelfth century C.E., while the language of the material in the *Gorakh-Bānī*, aside from the lack of formal linguistic consistency, appears to be of a later period, most of it typical of the sixteenth- to eighteenth-century

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1. See Barṭhvāl (1946). Barṭhvāl also provided loose, descriptive (and incomplete) translations of and commentaries on the texts. These were quite helpful in preparing present translations, and I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge my indebtedness to Barṭhvāl's scholarship. As Agrawal (2011: 11) rightly states: "It is also widely recognized that Barṭhvāl's edition of the *Gorakh-bānī* . . . remains the only decent critical edition of that important text so far published."

2. To clarify: we have translated all the texts included in Barṭhvāl's volume (1946: 1–221), except for the three appendices, which we considered less authentic, both historically and with respect to their content.

style of Hindi, and some of it possibly even more recent.<sup>3</sup> However, there is no inherent reason to suppose that the older material could not have been adapted in order to reflect subsequent conventions of the spoken language—a practice that is not unusual for, often orally transmitted—vernacular literature.<sup>4</sup> A pragmatic attitude, adopted here, is simply to treat Gorakhnāth as the assumed persona of the author or authors of these texts, with the tacit supposition that this is a traditional understanding of the provenance of the *bānīs* and not a historical fact. But the supposed derivation of the authorial source is not irrelevant. In the pertinent comments of Michel Foucault: irrespective of whether the assumed author of a work is an actual person or not, their name “serves to characterize a certain mode of being of discourse” and thus “shows that this discourse is not ordinary everyday speech,” but is on the contrary “a speech that must be received in a certain mode and that, in a given culture, must receive a certain status.”<sup>5</sup>

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3. Regarding the historical context of Gorakhnāth’s life, Mallinson (2012: 263) states that the “earliest datable reference to Gorakṣa are found in two texts written in the early part of the thirteenth century. They are from opposite ends of the subcontinent and refer to him as a master of yoga, suggesting that his reputation was already well established.”

4. “The fact that modern forms are included [in Hindi works attributed to Gorakhnāth] provides no conclusive evidence for a late date of composition since scribes occasionally modernized forms when copying texts. Conversely, the inclusion of Tantric Buddhist elements cannot be used as definite proof of the text’s antiquity, for scribes sometimes inserted apparently older concepts” (Offredi 1999b: 270). Ondračka (2011: 130), commenting specifically on the Bengali versions of “The Victory of Gorakṣa” but also on the vernacular North Indian Nāth texts in general, similarly argues that we cannot be certain of the exact date of the composition of these works, since the language was changing over time and these, primarily oral songs transmitted by the lower strata of society, were never fixed in a written form the way more respected poetry was. Lorenzen (2011: 21) surmises as the best estimate that “the earliest surviving Gorakh bani probably date from the thirteenth or fourteenth century or even later. It is also likely that they have been somewhat altered in the process of transmission from manuscript to manuscript.”

5. A more extensive quotation will be appropriate here: “Hermes Trismegistus did not exist, nor did Harpocrates [nor, we may add, Gorakhnāth]—in the sense that Balzac existed—but the fact that several texts have been placed under the same name indicates that there has been established among them a relationship of homogeneity, filiation, authentication of some texts by use of others, reciprocal explication, or concomitant utilization. The author’s name serves to characterize a certain mode of being of discourse: the fact that the discourse has an author’s name, that one can say ‘this was written by so-and-so’ or ‘so-and-so is its author,’ shows that this discourse is not ordinary everyday speech that merely comes and goes, not something that is immediately consumable. On the contrary, it is a speech that must be received in a certain mode and that, in a given culture, must receive a certain status” (Foucault 1979: 147).

Guru Gorakhnāth is renowned in India as one of the main founders of the Order (*sampradāy*) of the Nāth yogis,<sup>6</sup> who are also popularly known as the *jogis*, as well as *kānpḥaṭa* (“split-eared”), due to the fact that they typically wear earrings subsequent to their initiation into the order. The term “nāth” (Skt. “nātha”) deserves a note of explanation. The most general meaning of the word is “lord” or “master.” Baṛthvāl (1946: 4) takes it as a designation for *brahman*, which generally refers to the absolute ground of being, often conceived of as impersonal.<sup>7</sup> According to Gopinath Kaviraj (1987: 65), the Nāth yogis

speak of the *Nātha*, the Absolute, as beyond the opposition involved in the concepts of *Saguṇa* [i.e., possessing describable attributes] and *Nirguṇa* [without describable attributes] or of *Sākāra* [possessing of form] and *Nirākāra* [formless]. And, so to them the Supreme end of Life is to realise oneself as *Nātha* and to remain eternally fixed above the world of relations.

Sures Chandra Banerji (1992: 29) explains that the “state of *Nātha* is what is known in philosophy as *Kaivalya* (detachment of soul [*puruṣa*] from matter [*prakṛti*], identification with Supreme spirit).” He further adds (Banerji 1992: 30) that the attainment of the “state of *Nātha*” is equivalent with the achievement of the perfected body (*siddhadeha*) and becoming “liberated while living” (*jīvanmukta*). Kalyani Mallik (1954: 1) defines the term in a similar vein: “These Yogīs worshipped God as ‘Nātha’ or the Supreme Master, who according to their faith transcends not only the finite, but the infinite as well.” Hajāriprasād Dvivedī (1981: 3), in his study of the Nāth Order, relates a fanciful etymology according to which “nā” means “eternal, without beginning” (“anādi”) and “tha” means the “establishing, foundation” (*sthāpit*) of the three worlds; hence “nātha” means “the eternal *dharma*, which is the cause of the foundation of the three worlds.”

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6. Mallinson has established that it was in the fifteenth century that the order of yogis that came to be known as the Nāths began to attribute Hindi and Sanskrit works to Gorakṣa and to claim him as one of the founders. Based on his research, Mallinson (2012: 263) argues that “there is no evidence for the use of the name ‘Nāth’ to denote an order of yogis until the eighteenth century.”

7. The speculations about the nature of *brahman* have been a constant feature of Indian philosophy and spirituality since the compositions of the *Upaniṣads* (the oldest of which could be dated to c. fifth century B.C.E.). For a translation, see (among a dozen others) Olivelle (1996).

According to another similarly fanciful etymology, “nā” stands for the “lord-*brahman*” (“nāth-brahm”) that gives liberation and “tha” stands for the obstruction of ignorance; accordingly, “nāth” or “nātha” stands for the support in witnessing *brahman* and obstructing the *māyā* (Dvivedī 1981: 3). Dharmvīr Bhārti (1988: 257) quotes legendary *siddha* yogi Kanhapā’s pertinent statement, according to which the Nāth is the one whose mind is still. Mallinson (2012: 263) suggests that prior to the eighteenth century, “the word *nātha/nāth*, when used in Sanskrit and Hindi works in the context of *haṭha yoga* and yogis, always refers to the supreme deity.”<sup>8</sup>

The Nāth yogis are commonly associated with the development of *haṭha* (“forceful” or “vigorous”) yoga—another important term that calls for a comment. In his comprehensive account of the history of usage and meaning of the term “haṭha” in *haṭha* yoga, Jason Birch (2011: 531) comments that “the word *haṭha* is never used in Haṭha texts to refer to violent means or forceful effort” and argues that the “descriptions of forcefully moving *kundalinī*, *apāna* [one of five vital breaths], or *bindu* [semen] upwards through the central channel suggests that the ‘force’ of Haṭhayoga qualifies the effects of its techniques, rather than the effort required to perform them” (548). Birch notes the earlier occurrence of the term “in the eighteenth chapter of a Buddhist tantra called the *Guhyasamājatantra* (eighth century), in a discussion of the attainment of a visionary experience (*darśana*)” (535). More traditionally, and again based on a folk etymology, the term “haṭha” is taken as a compound denoting the union between the Sun (“ha”) and the Moon (“ṭha”). As Gerald Larson (2008: 142) comments, this allows further correlations such as the union between breaths, sexes, between sound and silence, macrocosmos and microcosmos, and finally, between Śiva and Śakti.

James Mallinson (2016) has demonstrated that the twelfth-century *Dattātreya yogaśāstra*, “the first text to teach the practices of *haṭha yoga* under the name of *haṭha*,” already borrows technical and theoretical aspects of teachings from the *Amṛtasiddhi*, a text composed in the Buddhist tantric (Vajrayāna) milieu. According to Mallinson, this latter text is of seminal importance and was the first to include a number of important concepts germane to *haṭha* yoga. His conclusions are extremely cogent in the

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8. It could be argued that at least several instances of the term *nāth* that are found in the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth* more likely refer to a yogi rather than a deity, but the point is somewhat moot since in most of those instances such yogi has either achieved immortality or is sufficiently advanced on the path of yoga that he can be deemed godlike.

present context: “Because they share traditions of the 84 *siddhas*, several scholars have posited connections between Vajrayāna Buddhists and the Nāth yogis, with whom the practice of *haṭhayoga* has long been associated. The *Amṛtasiddhi*’s Vajrayāna origins and its borrowings in subsequent *haṭhayogic* texts, some of which are products of Nāth traditions, provide the first known doctrinal basis for this connection and a stimulus for its further investigation.”<sup>9</sup>

In order to fully appreciate the significance of *haṭha* yoga, it is important to bear in mind its distinctive qualities that separate it from the classical yoga, which is commonly associated with the worldview articulated in *Yoga Sūtra* by Patañjali, probably composed in the early centuries of the Common Era. There are several elements constitutive of this distinction: temporally, the *haṭha* yoga emerges in the medieval period, while the classical yoga is already mentioned in the late *Upaniṣads* (composed around the beginning of the Common Era); sociologically, it is not an exclusive prerogative of priests (*brahmins*) or even aristocracy (*kṣatriyas*), as it is also practiced by what are often considered lower classes, some of them at least nominally Muslim (while in a sense, the *jogis* consider themselves a separate denomination); methodologically, it focuses not on the discipline of the mind but on the body and its occult centers of power. These distinctive elements will be elaborated upon in due course.

According to a well-known legend, the original founder of this yogic order was in fact the great god Śiva himself, who is for that reason referred to as the Original Master (Ādi Nāth). Śiva’s immediate disciple was supposed to be the guru Matsyendranāth, whose yogic career is somewhat controversial and who may have been associated with a particular style of practice that privileges the engagement with female *yoginis*, human or divine (or both). His foremost disciple was Gorakhnāth. It hardly needs highlighting that this account of the origin and the chain of transmission (*parampar*) is mythical and not historical. Based on what we know, Matsyendranāth and Gorakhnāth, if indeed historical personages at all, lived several centuries apart. Be that as it may, the popular story of the origin of the Nāth Sampradāy could be summarized as done below.

Śiva’s wife Pārvatī asked him once to explain to her the secrets of yoga. Acquiescing, he took her to an uninhabited island and expounded the teachings about the *haṭha* yoga there, in the seclusion. In the meantime

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9. For the translation of the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra*, see Mallinson (2013); for the Sanskrit text with a Hindi gloss, see Avasthī (1982).



Matsyendranāth, in the form of a fish or swallowed into the belly of a large fish (depending on the version of the story), overheard the dialogue and thus learned the secrets of yoga (Matsyendranāth, also known as Mīnanāth, means the “Fish-lord”). Later, while on a pilgrimage, Matsyendranāth enjoyed a hospitality of a *brahmin* couple and as a sign of appreciation, upon hearing that they were childless, gave to the woman a piece of magical ash (*vibhūti*) to eat. He explained that in this fashion she would conceive of a child. The woman was, however, persuaded by her friends not to eat it and instead threw the ashes on a cow-dung heap. After twelve years Matsyendra returned and inquired about the child; the woman confessed what she had done. The yogi went to the place where the ashes were thrown and called to the child. From the bottom of the hole filled with the cow-dung a voice replied, and when the place was cleared, a beautiful boy was found sitting in the yogic posture. Matsyendra gave him the name Gorakhnāth (Skt. Gorakṣanātha), which may be translated as “The Master Protected by Cows,” or “The Master Who Protects the Cows.” (The metaphorical underpinning of the name lies in the fact that a “cow” is also an expression for the senses.)<sup>10</sup>

There are several features in this mythic story of origin that deserve comments and elucidation. To start with, there is the mytheme of a divinely instituted tradition. This is a widely attested motif, which obviously aims to lend legitimacy to a particular social or religious institution. A well-known and illustrative example of such legitimizing strategy is observable in Buddhism, where both Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna divisions, emerging respectively (and approximately) five and ten centuries after the life of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni, argued that their teachings were in fact originally promulgated by the founder of the religion himself (and only “hidden” from general populace until the time for their revelation

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10. This summary is based on Gautam (1998 [1981?]: 5–9), whose source of information was most probably Candranāth Yogī’s *Yogisampradāyaviṣṭi*. See also a summary of the story in Tantreś (1993: 28–31). The earliest, and in some important details different, version of the story is given in the 16th Chapter of *Kaulajñānanirṇaya*, traditionally attributed to Matsyendranāth, which Bagchi places in the mid-eleventh century and Kiss (2010: 26) “as composed before 1300 A.D.” There, it is narrated how a book containing the secret knowledge of the Kaulas (early Śaiva Tantric group) was stolen by Śiva’s son Kārttikeya, and thrown into the sea. Śiva rescued it by catching and killing the fish that ate the book, and for that reason he was also called Matsyaghna (“fish-killer”), an alternative name for Matsyendranāth. See Bagchi and Magee (1986). On Matsyendranāth, see Karambelkar (1955); Bagchi and Magee (1986: 6–22, and passim); and Kiss (2010). White (2003) also contains a good deal of relevant information about Matsyendra and an extensive discussion on, and interpretation of, the *Kaulajñānanirṇaya*.

was “ripe”). It can be safely argued that such legitimizing strategies are universal in the history of religions. Returning to the Nāths, the additional element that is of relevance in the present context is the widely assumed notion that Śiva is a supreme master of yoga himself: to be engaged in the practice of this spiritual discipline thus amounts, among other things, to an *imitatio Dei*.

The fact that Śiva takes his wife to an isolated island in order to expound the teachings about yoga underscores the importance of secrecy in the transmission of this spiritual discipline: yoga is an esoteric tradition, on which we’ll see more later. I have argued in earlier writings that an appropriate and useful theoretical model, which could be adopted in order to approach and understand traditions of yoga and tantra, is the model of esotericism (otherwise mostly associated with the academic study of *Western* esotericism), and which also includes, or overlaps, categories such as magic and the occult.<sup>11</sup> A significant, though by no means the most important, aspect of esoteric teachings and practices is precisely the element of secrecy. Such teachings are not intended for everyone—they presuppose initiation, an intimate and often exclusive teacher-disciple relationship, they are expressed in a coded discourse (such as the “twilight language,” *sandhyā bhāṣā*<sup>12</sup>), and they are therefore typically secret. Joseph Alter in fact argued that “all techniques of yoga were conceived of as quintessentially secret, being imparted by a guru only to select highly adept disciples.”<sup>13</sup> Some other constitutive aspects of esoteric worldview will be addressed in more detail subsequently.

Jogis are widely believed to be engaged in magic and perceived as miracle-workers. Arguably, the most peculiar ability that they are associated with is the power of engendering children through nonsexual means. In addition, they are often, and in particular at the level of popular culture, seen and feared as ambivalent and even negative characters. To take advantage of David Gordon White’s recent study and its title, they are not rarely perceived as “sinister yogis.”<sup>14</sup> We see all of these notions displayed in the segments of the story under discussion: Matsyendra possesses a

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11. See Djurdjevic (2008; 2014).

12. Alternatively construed as “intentional language,” *sandhā bhāṣā*.

13. Alter (2005: 121). For the role of secrecy in (what I call) Indian and Western esotericism viewed from a comparative perspective, see Urban (1997; 2003).

14. See White (2011b).

magic powder that can produce a child when consumed, while the *brahmin* woman, although barren and desiring children, is easily persuaded against eating the *vibhūti*, afraid that Matsyendranāth might be one of those “sinister” characters intent on harming her. The power of his magic manifests itself, nevertheless, and the child is indeed produced, even though not through the agency of a human mother.

Gorakhnāth is thus a “yogic-child” par excellence, having no human parents. His birth was not occasioned by an ordinary sexual act. He is conceived out of the magic “ash,” and he gestated in, and was born from, the earth. All of these elements constitute significant aspects of the Nāth worldview. According to them, the human sexual act is the principal cause of aging and ultimately death, since it implies the loss of semen, which they associate with the “elixir of immortality,” *amṛt*. From their androcentric point of view, the yogis believe that *amṛt* resides on top of the (male) head and that in the form of a *bindu* (“drop”) it trickles down the spinal column, until it is ejected through the sexual act in the form of semen. This is the reason the yogis urge that the *bindu* needs to return back to its place of origin (through the practice of yoga) and as a consequence, sex is discouraged and the vagina is portrayed as a “vampire.”<sup>15</sup> The ashes, widely used by Śaiva ascetics and devotees (as a bodily adornment and a sign of sectarian identity), among other things symbolize the burned semen and as such they signal victory over sexual drive. I am inclined to interpret this segment of the story as a reference to Gorakhnāth as the child of Śiva (symbolized by the ashes, the burnt “semen”) and his *śakti* (symbolized by the earth) from one point of view, and also as the “child” of the contact between two *cakras*, the highest and the lowest, from another.<sup>16</sup>

In order to introduce the reader to the conceptual world of the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth*, an exposition of the basic doctrinal features associated with the yoga of the Nāths is in order. I have treated extensively the hermeneutics of the Nāth *haṭha* yoga in a previous work.<sup>17</sup> The interested reader is also invited to consult the literature that focuses more fully on the historical and anthropological approach to the Nāths, admirably presented in the

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15. See, as an example, *Gorakh Bānī, pad* [henceforth, GBP] 48, in chapter 2 of this volume.

16. The conjoining of the opposites, represented *inter alia* by these two *cakras*, is a typical methodological principle in tantra. See the relevant discussion on the “Polarity Symbolism in Tantric Doctrine and Practice” in the classical study by Bharati (1965: 199–227).

17. Djurdjevic (2008).

monographs by Briggs (1973 [1938]), Dasgupta (1995 [1969]), Gold (1992), Bouy (1994), White (1996), Bouillier (1997; 2017), and Mallinson (2007).

It has already been established by Dasgupta that the Nāth *haṭha* yoga represents an internalization of the principles of Indian alchemy, *rasāyan*.<sup>18</sup> In this context, instead of searching for the elixir of immortality by working on external substances, the yogis attempt to achieve the same goal by manipulating the bodily fluids and energies of the subtle body. This last-mentioned term deserves to be explained more fully. André Padoux (Padoux and Jeanty 2013: 9) comments that the specific form of yogic body, consisting primarily of *cakras* and conduits of energy, which is “imagined, visualized, even sometimes ‘felt’ as present (‘intraposed’) within the physical body of the yogin, is usually called ‘subtle body’ in English.” He prefers not to use the term, because in “all Sanskrit texts, the term *sūkṣmaśarīra* (or *sūkṣmadeha*) designates not this structure but the transmigrating element in the human being, which is made up of different *tattvas* and therefore has no shape, no visible aspect. It cannot be visualized as is the inner structure of *cakras* and *nāḍīs*” (Padoux and Jeanty 2013: 10; emphasis in the original). I continue to use the term subtle body nonetheless, among other reasons in order to acknowledge the commonality with the variously imagined subtle body in Western esotericism (the common element being the notion of the existence of another body superimposed, or “intraposed,” within the physical).<sup>19</sup>

The most important aspect of the Nāth *sādhana* consists of the transformation of the sexual fluids (often glossed as the “drop” of the sperm, *bindu*) into the nectar of immortality (*amṛt*). This is in practice achieved by the assumption of bodily postures (*āsan*), breathing exercises (*prāṇāyāma*), chanting of the mantras (*jaṇ*), and by meditation (*dhyaṇ*). In addition, and as already suggested, it may be argued that the ideological universe of the Nāth yogis may appropriately be described as a form of esotericism, and even as a form of magic. In the words of George W. Briggs, in his pioneering work on the *jogīs*, “Quite in keeping with the claims to supernatural power, which skill the Yoga is supposed to confer, is the popular belief that Yogīs work in magic.”<sup>20</sup> The social orientation of the Nāths is

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18. For a useful and informative summary, see White (2011a).

19. For a classic but rather dated study of the ideas regarding the subtle body in the Western culture, see Mead (1919); for a recent collection of essays that explore the subject from a multicultural perspective, see Samuel and Johnson (2013).

20. Briggs (1973 [1938]: 128).

characterized by the critique of the traditional supremacy of the *brahmins* and the associated *varṇāśramadharmā* system (the doctrine of the hierarchical ordering of society in accordance with social class and one's stage of life). In this respect, many of the poems in the collection resemble the content and tenor of Kabīr's poetry. The Nāth yogis eschew easy classification: they are both similar and distinct from the classical yogis, *tāntrikas*, *bhāktas*, *sants*, Sikhs, and Indian *sūfis*. In a sense, they are, and often consider themselves to be, a unique social and religious group.<sup>21</sup>

### *Major Themes in the Sayings of Gorakhnāth*

The ideological universe of the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth* is circumscribed by the focus on yoga. This type of yoga, as already mentioned, takes the body as a primary instrument of achievement. Here the mastery of the body does not exactly refer to an ability to assume a number of postures,<sup>22</sup> but, more importantly, it implies an ability to redirect the flow of the *bindu* and thus to escape or "trick" death. Alternatively expressed, the engagement with the body starts at the physical level, while the mark of adeptship lies in the mastery of the subtle body and its properties. The process of yoga is often referenced through the metaphor of "cooking," a notion associated with the concept of the ascetic "heat," *tapas*, which is of fundamental importance in Indian spiritual culture.<sup>23</sup> An important leitmotif of the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth* is that the scale of values among yogis is not the same as the normatively established social scale of values characterized by the superiority of the *brahmins*. Erudition and social class mean nothing when compared with the real knowledge that is, in their opinion, exclusive to the yogis. And this knowledge is primarily the knowledge of the occult properties of the body.

There is a cluster of related terms that are fundamental to the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth*: *bindu*, *sabad*, *nād*, and *amṛt*. *Bindu* is the "drop" of immortality that ordinary and ignorant people waste in the form of semen ejaculated in sexual activity, thus falling into the claws of death. Instead, the

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21. For an extensive discussion of this topic, see Lorenzen (2011).

22. There is a growing consensus among scholars that the postular yoga, as it is currently known and widely practiced in the West, did not emerge prior to the nineteenth century. See, in particular, Singleton (2010).

23. See, as an illustration, *Gorakh Bānī*, *sabad* [henceforth, GBS] 191, in chapter 1 of this volume.

*bindu* needs to be controlled through celibacy and returned to the top of the head through the process of yoga. *Sabad* and *nād* are related terms: on the one hand, they represent an encapsulation of the yogic gnosis in the form of the word (*sabad*) and sound (*nād*); on the other hand, they are the acoustic and verbal equivalents of the *bindu* in its subtle transformations. At the highest station, on the top of the head, the *bindu* turns into the elixir, *amṛt*. In its itinerary, from the bottom of the spine to the top of the head, the *bindu* passes through a set of *cakras*. In particular, the subtle center associated with the so-called third eye receives a great deal of attention, while its location is esoterically glossed as the confluence of the “three rivers” (*triveṇī*).

As is typical of Indian traditional culture, particularly within the milieu of yoga and tantra, the role of the spiritual teacher, guru, is of singular importance. The guru is a person who performs the ceremony of initiation to a disciple, and who in the process imparts the secrets of yoga. To paraphrase Gorakhnāth: only the person who has a guru can hope to drink the elixir of immortality; the one who is without a guru remains thirsty.<sup>24</sup> Several poems in the collection address somewhat unusual dynamics between Gorakhnāth and his own teacher Matsyendranāth. According to a well-known narrative, Matsyendranāth in the course of his career temporarily forgot about his yogic identity while living in the country of women, married to their queen, enjoying the pleasures of sensual and familial life. He is brought back to his yogic vocation only after Gorakhnāth personally intervened—disguised as a female dancer!—and through a series of poems imparted the teachings of yoga back to his own teacher.<sup>25</sup>

A number of poems are enigmatic and display characteristics of the “twilight language,” *sandhyā bhāṣā*. The symbolic capital inherent in such poems simultaneously attracts the attention of the listener, as all mysterious things do, while it also draws a line of demarcation over which the erudition of the scholars (*paṇḍits*) cannot cross: the solution to the enigmas of the Nāth lore lies not in books but in the practice of yoga and mastery of the body (*kāyā sādhanā*). The employment of enigmatic discourse, the “twilight language,” is otherwise typical of esoteric rhetoric, and its use among the Nāths and *tāntrikas* in general exhibits a strong formal resemblance to the vocabulary of Western alchemy and the so-called language of

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24. See GBS 23.

25. One of the earliest treatments of this episode is given in the Maithili verse-play *Goraḥsavijaya* (“The Victory of Gorakṣa”) by the medieval poet Vidyāpati. See the appendix.

the birds employed in the occult circles. A comparative study of the two is a desideratum.

An important formal device is employed through the “upside-down” (*uḷṭa bāmsī*) poems. The relevance of this stylistic device, which inverts the logical, causal, or chronological structure of the described content, lies in its association with the fundamental methodological orientation of the Nāth yogis. The project of the Nāth yoga is not only the “cultivation of the body” (*kāyā sādhanā*) but equally so the “cultivation of the reversal” (*uḷṭā sādhanā*). The world (*saṃsār*) is a current that inevitably flows to death and annihilation, just as on the microcosmic level the same predicament is the result of the drainage of the *bindu*, which trickles from the top of the head toward the destructive heat of the gastric fire and ejaculation in the act of sex. The way out, the Nāths urge, consists in the reversal of this process: the flow of the *bindu* needs to be reversed, which procedure also entails the reversal of the ordinary way of looking at things. This apparent psychological paradox finds its expression in the *uḷṭa bāmsī* poems. This same discursive strategy marks the boundary between the *jogīs* and ordinary people: their perception of truth and scale of values are mutually at odds.

In what follows, the major themes and concepts that are relevant for understanding the worldview of the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth* will be given more extensive treatment.

### *The Practice of Reversal: Uḷṭā Sādhanā*

The most distinctive methodological principle in the spiritual project associated with the Nāth yogis is arguably the practice of reversal, the *uḷṭā sādhanā*. This principle is evident in several aspects of the Nāth worldview. First and foremost, it relates to their fundamental insistence that the goal of yogic practice necessitates the reversal of the natural trajectory of the *bindu*: while in the case of ordinary people the *bindu* is wasted after it trickles down from its presumed source at the top of the head, and is either burnt in the gastric fire or ejaculated in the sex act, the Nāths attempt to push it back to its place of origin, the full success in which operation amounts to the achievement of immortality. To reach the state of immortality is thus the ultimate goal of this form of yoga, at the accomplishment of which the successful adept (*siddha*) becomes a “second Śiva.” Incidentally, this accomplishment signals a different goal from the traditional orientation prevalent in Indian spirituality, whose aim is liberation (*mokṣa*). Such a differently

conceptualized goal connects the Nāths with the *tāntrikas*: not an escape from the world but its conquering through divinization is the desired outcome of the practice. The connection between the successfully performed redirecting of the path of the *bindu* and divinization is aptly addressed in Dasgupta's (1995 [1969]: 246) summary: "It has been emphatically declared in all texts of yoga that he, who has been able to give an upward flow to the [seminal] fluid is a god, and not a man." In the words of a *sabad* from the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth*: "The yogi who holds above what goes below/ Who burns [the god of] sex, abandons the embrace [of a woman]/Who cuts through *māyā*—/ Even Viṣṇu washes his feet!"<sup>26</sup>

A larger issue concerns the fact that the habitual trajectory of the *bindu* corresponds paradigmatically to the orientation and predicament of the embodied existence as such: the path of the *bindu* coincides with the path of *saṃsār*, and to redirect its flow coincides with an attempt to oppose and conquer the force of *saṃsār*. This implies a lifestyle conducted "against the grain." It is equivalent to swimming against the current of *saṃsār* that otherwise carries ordinary people toward certain death and inevitable (and unwanted) rebirth. Here we encounter what is both an archaic and fundamental notion in Hinduism: the tendency toward liberation from the *saṃsār* is not commensurable with the conventions of ordinary life. In its most radical form, the path of *mokṣa* is set not only apart but even *against* the path of *dharma*, which is evident *inter alia* by the fact that a person adopting the lifestyle of renunciation (*saṃnyās*) ritually enacts this decision by cutting off the sacred thread that otherwise serves as an indication of his "second birth" into one of the three higher classes of Hindu society: such a person is subsequently considered as dead to the world.<sup>27</sup> According to some interpretations, Hinduism as a culture is in itself an attempt to reconcile the tension between *dharma* and *mokṣa* by integrating the latter into the former in such a way so as not to disrupt the regular functioning of the society (for example, by suggesting that renunciation is to be undertaken only after the person has fulfilled his social obligations by study, marriage, and fathering of children).

Ethically, this means, in the context of the worldview of the Nāths, that the morality of the world is at odds with the morality of the yogis. The

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26. GBS 17.

27. "Renunciation was considered the ritual death of the renouncer; that a renouncer is a ritually dead person, even though he is physically alive, is a significant aspect of the Brāhmanical theology of renunciation" (Olivelle 1992: 89–90).



latter are “neither smeared by sin, nor overcome by virtue”—a phrase often repeated in the literature of the Nāths that has its *locus classicus* in the *Bhagavad Gītā*.<sup>28</sup> This position creates a condition of moral relativism that advocates a philosophy “beyond good and evil,” since both good and evil refer to the categories that are intrinsic to *saṃsār*. As Gorakhnāth puts it, “The sin and the virtue are the house of *karma*.”<sup>29</sup> It is thus no surprise that such gesturing away from the consensual morality lead to the perception of yogis as sinister characters, as recently explored in a study by White (201b). But an additional qualification is in order. The path of power (*siddhi*) is also in and of itself to a large degree distinct or even opposed to the path of liberation (*mokṣa*) just as both of these paths, attempting to transcend the force of *saṃsār*, differ from the rules and regulations of ordinary, this-worldly, lifestyle dominated by the requirements of *dharma*. The “path of power,” typical of tantra, stands in contradistinction to the “path of purity” that is characteristic of the brahminical scale of dharmic values (Sanderson 1985). I have argued elsewhere (Djurdjevic 2008) that the path of power is also typical of magic, as a form of religious belief and practice, where power is approached as a manifestation of the sacred.

The practice of reversal also finds its echo in certain characteristic features of yogic discourse, where some of their poetic compositions are expressed in the form of “upside-down” poetry characterized by an inverted logic. To provide an example, we are told in a *pad* from the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth* that “The cuckoo is flowering/The mango is scattering the perfume./The fish in the sky/Swallows the heron.”<sup>30</sup> Significantly, the employment of inverted logic does not only indicate that the Nāths do things differently: it also suggests, through mirroring, that the ways of the world are actually upside-down and the message of yogic poetry expressed in this literary idiom serves as a reminder and an invitation to realize the foolishness of a secular lifestyle and thus, by implication, to redirect the attention of the audience to the path of yoga. “Those who reverse the breath, say reversed things,/Who drink the undrinkable: they are the ones who know *brahman*.”<sup>31</sup> The same principle of reversal is also observable

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28. *Bhagavad Gītā* 5:10: “lipyate na sa pāpena”—“he is not smeared by sin,” referring to a person, contextually a yogi, who acts without attachments.

29. “The String of Breaths,” v.2.

30. GBP 60:2.

31. GBS 90. To “drink the undrinkable” is a reference to the “elixir of immortality,” the *amṛt*.

in an unusual element concerning the yogic hierarchy, where the student Gorakhnāth chastises and effectively assumes the role of a teacher to his erstwhile guru Matsyendranāth, a “fallen” yogi!

The most characteristic feature of the practice of reversal, as already indicated, concerns the redirecting of the flow of the *bindu*. The *bindu* itself is a complex subject with a polyvalent range of meanings. In the parlance of the *yogis*, it refers mostly to the “drop” of seminal fluid with potentially ambrosial properties. “Where the *bindu* dwells, there is life,” states a *sabad* from the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth*.<sup>32</sup> In the ordinary circumstances, people waste their *bindu* through sexual activity and seminal emission: a lamentable state of affairs from the yogic viewpoint. “*Bindu* in the mouth of *the vagina* becomes [like] mercury in the mouth of fire,” warns Gorakhnāth.<sup>33</sup> Hence the need to not only preserve it through sexual abstinence but, more importantly, to redirect it toward its place of origin at the top of the head. “In the circle of the sky [i.e., in the *cakra* on top of the head], there is an upside-down well/There the nectar [*amṛt*] resides.”<sup>34</sup> In theological terms, the importance of the *bindu*—as well as the often-understated significance of the feminine menstrual blood—is made evident in the verse that proclaims: “Śakti is [manifest] in the form of menstrual blood /Śiva is [manifest] in the form of semen [*bindu*].”<sup>35</sup> And once the *bindu* has reached its point of origin, the achievement manifests, or rather, it is symbolically connoted, as the vision of the eternal child (*budhā bāl*, “old youth”) in the act of speaking that is beyond names and words: “In the summit of the sky, a child, who cannot be named, is speaking.”<sup>36</sup>

### *The Cultivation of the Body: Kāyā Sādhanā*

Aside from being engaged in the practice of reversal, the Nāth yogis are also distinguished by the cultivation of the body (*kāyā sādhanā*) for the purpose of achieving their spiritual goals. As is very well known, “there

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32. GBS 57.

33. GBS 142.

34. GBS 23.

35. GBP 12:5. See also *Gorakṣa Vacana Saṃgraha* 38 (in Banerjea 1999 [1962]: 335): “*Bindu* is Śiva, menstrual blood is Śakti.”

36. GBS 1. See also Baṛthvāl’s (1946: 1) pertinent comments on this verse.

are primarily two systematic forms of South Asian yoga.”<sup>37</sup> The classical yoga associated with the system elucidated in the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali focused primarily on the discipline of the mind as a way of reaching “isolation” (*kaivālyā*) of the subject (*puruṣ*) from its misidentification with aspects of the objective world of “nature” (*prakṛti*). In its philosophical background, this form of yoga relies on the worldview of *sāṃkhya*, the traditional school of thought that envisions reality as consisting of ontologically distinct but empirically intertwined dyad: the subject (*puruṣ*) consisting of pure consciousness without any describable qualities that could be attached to it, and the world of phenomena (*prakṛti*) that consists of not only material and corporal objects but also includes emotions, thoughts, and the sense of personality (*ahaṃkāra*). The origin of misidentification of *puruṣ* with *prakṛti* is not fully explained but is accepted as existentially given. By stilling the body through a steady posture (*āsana*), regulating the breath (*prāṇāyāma*), and turning the attention inward (*pratyāhāra*), the yogi is ready to engage with the control of the mind (*saṃyam*). This is achieved by first “holding” the mind (*dhāraṇā*) on a certain object (whether visualized externally or within the body, such as the navel or the middle of the forehead). By prolonging this mental stillness (*dhyāna*), one eventually and hopefully reaches the stage of “unity” (*samādhi*)—in other words, one achieves an “isolation” (*kaivālyā*) of the pure consciousness of *puruṣ* from *prakṛti*. Thus envisioned, the goal of Pātañjala yoga coincides with the acosmic tendency of Indian renunciate traditions, which focus on the escape from the phenomenal world (*samsāra*) that is characterized by illusion and suffering predicated upon the endless succession of rebirths and, more importantly, redeaths.

The virtually simultaneous emergence of tantric traditions within Hindu and Buddhist environments signaled, among other things, a re-evaluation of the nature of the manifest reality and, by implication and as a consequence, a reformulation of the goal of spiritual practice. While not suggesting that “tantrism” is a unified phenomenon (it is not), in

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37. Larson (2012: 73). Larson echoes the opinion of P. V. Kane (1977: 1427) who similarly suggests that there are only two main types of yoga and that “the difference between the two is that the Yoga of Patañjali concentrates all effort on the discipline of the mind, while Haṭhayoga mainly concerns itself with the body, its health, its purity and freedom from disease” (qtd. in Larson 2008: 140). It could be argued that Kane presents a modern, “medicalized” view of *haṭha* yoga (see Alter 2004; Singleton 2010) and that the traditional forms were much more oriented toward magic and the occult. In other words, the premodern *haṭha* yoga focused primarily on the subtle body and esoteric physiology.

simplified terms it may still be possible to define it as a religious and philosophical “style” of thought and practice that embraces rather than rejects the world, and that aspires toward power rather than liberation.<sup>38</sup> One consequence of this orientation lies in the increased interest in the religious potentials of the human body, including—in some strands of tantric theory and practice—the power of sexuality. Another important aspect of tantric traditions concerns the increased presence of what may be termed the occult or magical elements in their ideology and practice. Tantric traditions are for the most part a medieval phenomenon and although not extinct, their current position within Hindu society is rather marginal, with some notable exceptions to the contrary.<sup>39</sup>

To what degree are the Nāth yogis a tantric denomination is an open question. Their style of yoga certainly focuses on the occult aspects of the body that are being harnessed for the ultimate purpose of becoming a “second Śiva.” Despite the fact that the *haṭha* yoga, associated with the Nāths, contains a number of physical postures in its textual repertoire, the real issue here is not the engagement with the physical body but with its “subtle” constituents: the *cakras*, the conduits of the subtle energy (*nāḍīs*), elixir (*amṛt*), and what the jogis call “the fire of *brahman*” (*brahmāgni*), which is for all practical purposes identical with what is otherwise generally and better known as the *kuṇḍalinī*. (In other forms of tantric Hinduism, *kuṇḍalinī* is also, in one of its registers, a Goddess—the Nāths are typically androcentric and this may explain the alternative choice of designation for this inner force.) The whole purpose of the Nāth *sādhanā* lies not in the ability to assume corporal postures but in the mastery of the occult powers hidden in the body, just as their ideological worldview rests on the belief that the human body (*piṇḍ*) represents a telescoped equivalent of the external universe (*brahmāṇḍ*): the microcosm being analogous to the macrocosm. This is a fundamental esoteric notion, maintained in a number of traditional religious worldviews, and in this specific case it also stands as a particular development of the earlier *Upaniṣadic* concept of *bandhu*

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38. A by-now-classical essay by Sanderson (1985) explores magisterially the nature of the tantric worldview understood as the path of power, contrasted as such with the *brahminical* path of purity.

39. See, for example, Urban (2010), a work that focuses on the worship of the goddess Kāmākyā in Assam.

(“relation”), which concept also includes the ontological equation between *ātman* and *brahman*.<sup>40</sup>

The Nāths insist that to know and master the human body, especially in its occult aspects, amounts to the mastery of yoga, which leads to power, the *siddhis*, and in the final instance to immortality.<sup>41</sup> “Understand the body! Obtain the *siddhi*!” urges the short text (included here) “The Seven Days” (v.4). In a similar vein, the Sanskrit *Gorakṣa Śataka* (v.13) asks rhetorically: how is it possible to obtain success in yoga unless one knows what are precisely esoteric corporal constituents: *cakras*, “channels” (*nāḍī*), and “sheaths” (*vyoma*) of, and within, the body? The esoteric (“subtle”) human body, the main focus of the Nāth *sādhana*, is an analogical replica of the external universe. As Gorakhnāth says, “Within the one there is the infinite, and within the infinite there is the one./By the one the infinite is produced./When the one is experienced within,/The infinite is contained within the one.”<sup>42</sup> The cosmos is mirrored and present within the human body in both physical and metaphysical aspects.<sup>43</sup> The body contains inner replicas not only of this-worldly phenomena, such as rivers, mountains, places of pilgrimage, and astronomical luminaries, but also the heavenly and demonic realms, gods, demigods, and demons, and their respective domains.

In the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth*, the esoteric correlation between the individual and cosmic body implies that the engagement with the body as the locus of yogic practice ultimately leads to metaphysical truths and accomplishes spiritual goals: “[The one who] investigates the body and finds the indestructible [God]/Attains the unreachable immortal rank,”<sup>44</sup> claims Gorakhnāth. More elaborate enumeration of the spiritual and

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40. “The quest for homology or identity (*nidāna*, *bandhu*, *upaniṣad*) finds its Vedic culmination in the ultimate identity between Ātman, or essential Self, and Brahman, or cosmic foundation” (Kaelber 1989: 95). “The final *upaniṣad* or equation is between Ātman, the essential I, and Brahman, the ultimate real” (Olivelle 1996: lvi). I regard the *Upaniṣads* as quintessentially esoteric texts. Faivre (1994: 36) defines esotericism in a “restricted meaning” as “illumination & salvation via knowledge of . . . links between men & intermediary or Divine.” With a grain of salt, this is congruent with and comparable to the general tenor of the *Upaniṣads*, which insist that the true spiritual liberation consists of knowing the links (*bandhu*) between various aspects of reality (what Olivelle [1996: lii] calls “cosmic connections”).

41. This and the next paragraph are adapted from Djurdjevic (2008: 54–57).

42. GBP 14:1.

43. See, for example, Banerjea (1999 [1962]: 195–205).

44. GBS 252.

other cosmological phenomena hidden in the body is provided in the text (included here) called “A Line of Hair” (referring to the fine line of hair above the navel that is considered a mark of beauty). Here we are told that within the body are present *inter alia* the Hindu and Muslim *pīrs* (elders, teachers), the four Nāth gurus, the four cardinal directions, the Sun with its twelve aspects, and Moon with its sixteen aspects. The assumed presence of the Nāth gurus within the body is of significance that deserves further comments. Broadly speaking, one of the hallmarks of the Hindu tantric traditions concerns the assumed presence of the god Śiva in the highest *cakra*, and of his spouse (often glossed simply as *śakti*, “energy”) in the lowest *cakra* in the human body (in the form of *kuṇḍalinī*). This situation mirrors the macrocosmic stations of these deities: Śiva is on the top of the mount Meru or Kailās (esoterically and microcosmically identified with the spinal column), while his spouse is present on and as the phenomenal universe and the Earth. The Nāths also adopt this viewpoint, although, as already mentioned, there is a tendency—particularly in the *bānīs* translated here—to use the term “the fire of *brahman*” instead of, and as an equivalent of, *kuṇḍalinī*. Nevertheless, the following *pad* (GBP 19) makes explicit reference to both Śiva and Śakti as follows:

Śakti is inside the twelve petals of the Sun,  
 And Śiva’s place is inside the sixteen [petals] of the Moon.  
 Mūla[dhār]<sup>45</sup> and Sahasrār<sup>46</sup> are the house of *jīva* and Śiva.

As already stated, an interesting variant on the theme of the body as the locus of metaphysical realities as found in the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth* consists of the suggestion that the Nāth masters esoterically dwell within the human body as well. “In everybody’s heart is Gorakh/In everybody’s heart is Mina [Matsyendranāth]” [GBS 38]. This establishes an elaborate set of mutual mirroring based on the notion of the identity between a disciple and the teacher. Just as Gorakhnāth, as an

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45. Mūladhār is the lowest *cakra*. “The wheel (*cakra*) at the base of the spine where *Kuṇḍalinī* lies coiled like a snake. From Her seat at *mūladhara*, *Kuṇḍalinī* controls all the activities of the physiological system through its network of 72,000 nerves.” Grimes (1996), s.v. “Mūladhara, 2.”

46. Sahasrār is the uppermost *cakra*. “The topmost spiritual center or thousand-petaled lotus located in the crown of the head. It is the seat of Śiva, the supreme *guru*. When *Kuṇḍalinī* Śakti unites with Śiva in the *sahasrāra*, the *yogi* achieves the state of Self-realization.” Grimes (1996), s.v. “Sahasrāra.”

accomplished adept, is essentially identical with the great god Śiva, so is an individual yogi identical with Gorakh, who dwells “in everybody’s heart.” This line of thinking, as already suggested, is in itself one of the many contextualizations of the *Upaniṣadic* teaching regarding the ontological identity between the universal *brahman* and individual (but transpersonal) *ātman*.

An esoteric understanding of the nature of Gorakhnāth is already assumed in the important, first *sabad* in the present collection of texts, which deserves a comment. The *sabad* states: “Neither full nor empty, neither empty nor full: /It is inaccessible, mysterious. /At the summit of the sky, a child, /Who cannot be named is speaking.” The *sabad* describes a vision of the ultimate reality as it is experienced in the highest *cakra*, on the top of (or, rather, above) the head. This location is described as “the summit of [the mountain in] the sky” (“gagan sikhar”), which implicitly suggests the mythical Meru mountain, the *axis mundi* of the Indian spiritual traditions, and its esoteric correlate, the human subtle body where the central conduit of the vital energy passes through the spinal column, adorned by the six (or seven) *cakras*. This reality transcends the dualities inherent in the phenomenal world (*saṃsār*), which is indicated here by its depiction of being neither of the pairs of opposites characteristic of this world. What obtains in this “inaccessible and mysterious” reality is the presence of a “child” who cannot be named, given that the nature of this child similarly transcends the descriptive capabilities of ordinary language. The “child,” who by inference is Gorakhnāth himself (as a “second Śiva”), delivers a speech: arguably, the *bānīs*, sayings of truth, that constitute the body of this collection of texts.

### *Sexuality and Immortality: Bindu and Amṛt*

As we have seen, the human body, and in particular the esoteric body, as envisioned by the *jogis* is a site of numinous realities. One constitutive element of such esoteric physiology, already referenced on several occasions, deserves special mention. The conceptual vocabulary of the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth* contains numerous mentions of, and allusions to, what is often translated as the “seminal drop,” the *bindu*. It calls for an immediate remark that the *bindu* indicates more than its corporeal referent, the semen, which represents only the material form of an essentially subtle-body phenomenon. The really important properties of the *bindu* are consequently occult, and for that reason Gorakhnāth declares: “Very

few know the mystery of this *bindu*.”<sup>47</sup> In simplified terms, the *bindu* is the causal “root” of the body. At the same time, it has connections with the subtle realities represented by the sound, *nād*, and the ambrosia, *amṛt*. From another point of view, the *bindu* correlates with the breath and the state of the mind in that all of these three need to be controlled or “fixed” by the method of yoga.<sup>48</sup> Conversely, the state of spiritual ignorance in which most of the people habitually dwell is characterized by the lack of control when it comes to their mind, breath, and sexuality (which in the worldview of the *nāths* often paradigmatically equates with the focus on *bindu*). The accomplished yogi, *siddha*, is the one who has “preserved the *bindu*.”<sup>49</sup> The call to preserve the *bindu* is a leitmotif in the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth*; as the statement in “A Line of Hair” declares, “The *bindu* is the seal that needs to be sealed.”

According to the eleventh-century tantric text *Śāradā Tilaka* (“The Ornament of the Goddess”) (I: 9), “*Bindu* has the nature of Śiva, *bīja* of Śakti, and *nāda* is their mutual conjunction: it is declared so by all those who are versed in the *Āgamas* [i.e., *Tantras*].”<sup>50</sup> The *Sayings of Gorakhnāth* rarely reference Śakti, as their worldview is predominantly androcentric. Thus their primary tenor is the one expressing the concern for the preservation of the *bindu* understood as a vehicle of immortality, which should not be wasted through the sexual act. As the Sanskrit *Goraḷṣa Śataka* declares, “As long as the *bindu* stays in the body, how could there be the fear of death?”<sup>51</sup> This imperative naturally presupposes the practice of celibacy, which among other things also finds its reflection in the matters of social value judgment: the celibate yogis are considered superior to the householder *Nāths*. For this reason, it is rather curious to come across a *sabad* that seems to suggest a situation where the sexual activity is acceptable as long as it does not culminate in the seminal discharge: “Those who in the

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47. GBS 148.

48. “A Line of Hair” declares: “The mind is the tie that needs to be tied; the breath is the secret that needs to be penetrated; the *bindu* is the seal that needs to be sealed.” Mallinson (2016) has demonstrated that the correlation between the *bindu*, breath, and mind occurs for the first time in the twelfth-century Vajrayāna text, the *Amṛtasiddhi*.

49. See, as an example, GBP 5:5.

50. *Śāradātilakam of Śrī Lakṣmanadeśikendra* (1999: 10).

51. *Goraḷṣa Śataka* 70. In Briggs (1973 [1938]: 298). I have slightly emended the translation.



sexual intercourse preserve the *bindu*: They are Gorakh's guru-brothers [or, fellow-disciples]."<sup>52</sup>

The most important attribute of the *bindu* relates to its ambrosial properties. At its place of origin in the head *cakra*, the *bindu* equates with the elixir of immortality, *amṛt*. The yogi is supposed to drink the downward oozing *amṛt* by the process of reversal or by employing the technique of the *khecarī mudra*, which involves cutting the frenulum linguae and blocking with the tongue the throat cavity so as to stop the leakage of the elixir.<sup>53</sup> Having obtained the control of the flow of the semen, "the body becomes young, immortal, and settled."<sup>54</sup> This is the goal of yoga as envisioned by the Nāths: "The living yogi drinks day and night/the continually flowing elixir of immortality."<sup>55</sup> "Becoming immortal, he [the yogi] should be called the Lord of yoga."<sup>56</sup> This achievement establishes a state that is equivalent to the condition of the gods, who are also immortal, *amar*. The success in this form of yoga thus renders the yogi a "second Śiva." An important early Nāth text, the *Khecarīvidyā* (attributed to Ādināth, i.e., Śiva), declares that as a result of successfully executed practice, "by applying himself thus for six months he [the yogi] assuredly becomes ageless and undying. Truly, he becomes all-knowing, equal to Śiva [and] free of disease."<sup>57</sup>

### *The Sonic Theology of the Nād and Sabad*

The practice of yoga associated with the Nāths, and as referenced in the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth*, suggests that one of the signs of success in this discipline entails an experience of hearing the inner sound. This inner, "subtle," sound is frequently glossed as an "unstruck sound" (*anāhāt nād*), while the locus of its experience is typically, though not exclusively, at the region of the heart, in the *anāhat cakra*. (It is important to bear in mind that according to Indian, and in fact pan-Asian traditional worldview, the heart is also the locus of the mind.) To become cognizant of this subtle

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52. GBS 141. Similarly, "The *bindu* in the mouth of *the vagina* is [like] mercury in the mouth of fire. Whosoever preserves it, he is my guru." GBS 142.

53. See Mallinson (2007).

54. "Self-Understanding," v.14.

55. GBS 192.

56. "The Five Measures," v.3.

57. *Khecarīvidyā*, III:22, in Mallinson (2007: 132).

sound, inaudible to ordinary sensory perception, does not only indicate an ability to experience other, more refined levels of reality, but more importantly, it implies an increase in knowledge, in wisdom. Here, the act of perception entails a kind of knowing, or rather, it denotes the true knowing. This relates to some fundamental axioms of Hindu epistemology and spirituality, which may be described as the theology of sound and mysticism of language, already firmly rooted in the oldest layers of Vedic religion, which in itself emerges as a revelation of the sacred verbal formulas, *mantras*. The principal attribute of a *mantra* lies in its sound, the meaning being secondary in importance and even superfluous.<sup>58</sup> The most well-known example of such *mantra* is OM or AUM.<sup>59</sup> Simultaneously, a fundamental assumption, shared by all forms of Indian spirituality, asserts that whatever is more subtle is by this very token more real.

In the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth*, the category of *nād* is often correlated (it would be inappropriate to state, conflated) with the notion of *sabad*, while both are simultaneously connected to the process of “fixation” of the *bindu*. Expressed in a somewhat simplified manner, the success in reversing the direction of the seminal fluid, the *bindu*, at a certain stage of practice results in the experience of the inner sound (*nād*) or word (*sabad*). Hence, Gorakhnāth urges: “You should perfect both *nād* and *bindu*/And then play the unstruck sound.”<sup>60</sup> At another place, providing more substance to the methodology of the process, he elaborates that “The *nād* is the anvil, and the *bindu* is the hammer./The Sun and the Moon [i.e., the right and left channels of the *prāṇa*] are the bellows of the breath./[When you] press the root [*cakra*], seated firmly in the posture [*āsan*], then birth and death disappear.”<sup>61</sup>

The scholar of Sikhism Hew McLeod has made a pertinent comment regarding the proficiency in the practice of yoga and its connection with

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58. It could be argued that this is truer of tantric, rather than Vedic, *mantras*. However, the principle applies to both categories, irrespective of their (arguably significant) differences.

59. The greatness of OM is celebrated already in the classical, Vedic *Upaniṣads*: “This whole world is nothing but OM” (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 2.23.3). “Brahman is OM” (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 1.8.1). “Accordingly, the very self (*ātman*) is OM” (*Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, 12) (trans. Olivelle 1996).

60. GBS 184.

61. GBP 14:2.

the experience of the unstruck or (as he translates the term) soundless sound.<sup>62</sup> He observes that

the word [*sabad*] is characteristically used in conjunction with *anahad*, or *anahat*, and refers to the mystical “sound” which is “heard” at the climax of the *haṭha-yoga* technique. The *anahad śabad* is, according to such theories, a “soundless sound,” a mystical vibration audible only to the adept who has succeeded in awakening the *kuṇḍalinī* and caused it to ascend to the *suṣumṇā*.<sup>63</sup>

Several statements found in the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth* corroborate such view and underscore the importance of hearing the subtle sound or word. In one of the verses, Gorakhnāth proclaims that “acknowledging the *sabad*, the duality [a principal characteristic of *saṃsār*] ends.”<sup>64</sup> At another place, he sings with a triumphant certainty: “I have found it, listen, I have found this good!/With firmness [I have reached] the place of *sabad*./I had a vision of it [embodied] in form./Then I reached a complete faith.”<sup>65</sup> Most tellingly, and making the experience of the *sabad* the central element of the yogic endeavor, Gorakhnāth states: “*Sabad* is truly the lock, *sabad* is truly the key. *Sabad* wakes *sabad*./When *sabad* meets *sabad*, *sabad* is contained in *sabad*.”<sup>66</sup> Similarly, the Sanskrit *Gorakṣa Śataka* declares that the internal sound is heard when the subtle conduits (*nāḍīs*) are cleansed through the process of breath control.<sup>67</sup>

What all these mutual connections and analogies between the word, sound, breath, semen, and mind indicate is the dominant presence and

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62. It is to be remembered that Sikhism emerges, historically and culturally, in a milieu shared by the Sants (members of a devotional movement characterized by the orientation toward formless divinity), the Muslim Sufis, and the Nāth yogis. All of these often shared a common vocabulary and concerns, while presenting different convictions and mutual criticisms. For the relationship between Guru Nānak, the founder of Sikhism, and the Nāth yogis, contextually focused on the *Siddh* Goṣṭ, the supposed conversations between them, see Nayar and Sandhu (2007).

63. McLeod (1968: 191). Note that the author assumes an essential identity between the sound (*nād*) and word (*śabad*).

64. GBS 15.

65. GBS 80.

66. GBS 21. Compare “The Ornament of Wisdom”: “*Sabad* is truly the lock, *sabad* is truly the key. *Sabad* is truly enlightened by *sabad*” (1).

67. See *Gorakṣa Śataka* 101 in Briggs (1973 [1938]: 304).

importance of correlative thinking, itself a fundamental building block of esoteric worldview. Reality consists of layers that mutually differ from each other relative to their subtlety, and what is—from this perspective—more real is simultaneously more hidden from those whose epistemological convictions, whether based on traditional religious authority or on the evidence supplied by their ordinary senses, lack the experiential certainty possessed by the accomplished yogis.

### *The Concept of Unman*

The texts collected in the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth* frequently reference an important technical term, *unman* (or, *unmanī*). The Hindi word literally denotes “no mind” or what is “beyond the mind.” This state of “no mind” is a desirable condition sought after by the yogis and, for all practical purposes, it functions as an equivalent of *samādhi*, which Patañjali depicts as the goal of yoga and his commentator Vyāsa, in his *Bhāṣya* on *Yoga Sūtra* 1:1, glosses as the definition of yoga itself: “Yoga is *samādhi*” (“yogaḥ samādhiḥ”). The notion of *unman* is also conceptually related to what Patañjali terms *nirvicāra*, denoting one of the two types of *samādhi*, characterized by the absence of discursive thinking (*vicāra*). Significantly, Patañjali states that in this *samādhi* devoid of conceptualizations “there is lucidity of the inner self” (*Yoga Sūtra* 1:47; trans. Bryant 2009: 157). In a similar manner, in GBP 11:4, Gorakhnāth relates that “in the tenth gate dwells Nirañjan, beyond mind.”<sup>68</sup> Nirañjan is a typical name that refers to the formless god worshipped by the Nāths (the Hindi term literally means “devoid of embellishment”), while the “tenth gate” denotes *brahmarandhra*, the aperture located either on the top or slightly above the head, itself a locus of numinous occurrences. The implication is that the state, which transcends the ordinary mind (as such a part and parcel of *samsār*), is ipso facto a state where one becomes cognizant of either personally or impersonally constellated theophany. The correlation between Nirañjan and what Patañjali calls the “inner self” (*adhyātmā*) is underscored in a *śabad* (GBS 231), which literally states that Nirañjan is “your own self.” What is distinctive in the Gorakhnāth’s account (in GBP 11:4) is that this state of *unman* is also related to the esoteric anatomy of the subtle body, being accessible at a specific area of this body.

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68. GBS 135 also relates *unman* with the tenth opening in the body.

As Ian Whicher (1997: 1) notes, the “saṃsāric identity of self—ineluctably locked into an epistemological and ontological duality with the objective world—is ingeniously captured by Patañjali . . . in the expression *cittavṛtti* [‘whirling of the mind’].” We identify with the modifications of our minds (Whicher’s translation of the term *cittavṛtti*) but given that the mind is an aspect of nature, *prakṛti*, it cannot be the source of our true identity, since we are a *puruṣ* [‘person’]—as argued by the dualist philosophy of *sāṃkhya*, which yoga typically takes for granted. In order to reach our true identity, we then need to go beyond the mind. The philosophical position of yoga is that the harnessing of the mind by stopping its constant fluctuations through a process of meditation results in an epistemological and ontological breakthrough into the realm of true reality and our genuine identity. The Nāths call that realm “no-mind,” *unman*. What they also suggest is that the goal is equally reachable by the process of disciplining the subtle body and its currents of the occult energy. As a *sabad* (GBS 55) proclaims, one should remain in the *unmanī* by joining the Sun and the Moon, which in the Nāth parlance refers either to the conjunction of the two main *cakras* or the two main channels in the subtle body, but in either case to an aspect of the esoteric physiology and its assumed properties. This esoteric orientation, as arguably a major component of the Nāth *sādhana*, deserves some elaboration.

### *Esotericism of the Nāths*

As already indicated on several occasions, and as I have previously argued elsewhere (Djurdjevic 2005; 2008; 2014), I propose that there are theoretical advantages in categorizing the spiritual project of the Nāth yogis as a form of esotericism. Broadly speaking, esotericism is that form of cultural and religious life that is characterized by analogical or correlative thinking (“like attracts like,” “as above, so below,” “as in metal, so in the body”); by secrecy; by coded discourse; by cultivated imagination (Sanskrit *dhyaṇa* includes this within its range of meanings); by an insistence that the hidden aspects of reality both permeate and influence the everyday world; and by a conviction that the human potential is ultimately godlike.<sup>69</sup> Typical

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69. Standard introductory overviews of the field are Faivre (1994), von Stuckrad (2005), and Goodrick-Clarke (2008). Hanegraaff (2012) is a more ambitious historical survey of the scholarly and intellectual engagement with the field, perceived and imagined as “the domain of *the Other*” (3; emphasis in the original).

forms or currents of esoteric theory and practice include magic, alchemy, astrology, divination, and what is loosely termed the “occult” in general. This important and vast area of human activity was considered unworthy of serious academic research until several decades ago. Currently there are university departments, journals, dictionaries, learned societies, and international conferences dedicated to the subject. The academic field, still young, is vital and fast growing.

However, the bulk of the scholarship focuses on what is termed Western esotericism, with the argument that there pertains historical, ideological, social, and cultural similarity, and by the same token a uniqueness, in the manifestations of the current in the “West” (the term itself is neither monolithic nor unchallenged),<sup>70</sup> since the appearance of Alexandrian Hermeticism in the late antiquity all through the contemporary New Age in the bewildering variety of its forms. As part of the same argument, and proceeding from the aforementioned historical and cultural contingences, it is suggested that the category should not be extended outside of the boundaries of the West. It is assumed that by doing so the category might collapse in the attempt to morph into some vacuous “universal” esotericism. Consequently, forms of foreign (or, “exotic”) spirituality (such as yoga, tantra, Daoism, etc.) are interrogated only to the degree that they *influence* Western esotericism. Finally, one of the arguments against considering segments of specifically South Asian religious traditions as forms of esotericism proposes that such a move would represent a kind of neo-colonialism: a non-Indian category is being employed in order to explain her own cultural forms. Esotericism is, in this view, a type of Procrustean bed, and since the bed is Western, nothing foreign should fit into it, except by force.

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70. For an insightful criticism of the term “Western” as employed in this context, see Granholm (2013). The author demonstrates “how the term is problematic and vague throughout the history of Europe, how the appeal of the exotic other is an integral element of esoteric discourse and has often involved a ‘turn to the East,’ how the term ‘Western’ in the study of esotericism is directly derived from emic occultist discourse, and how late-modern societal processes of globalization, detraditionalization, increased pluralism and post-secular re-enchantment further complicate the already problematic issue of what is to be placed under the banner ‘Western’” (Granholm 2013: 31). Josephson-Storm (2017) similarly criticizes the term, in a manner that is largely identical with my own views on the issue, by stating: “I generally avoid the formulation ‘Western esotericism.’ The expression is useful insofar as it evokes European appropriations of South and East Asian thought, but the excessive emphasis on ‘Western’ presents an Orientalized East-West binary *and ignores esotericism’s global impact*” (359, n.11; emphasis added).

My position is that it makes perfect sense to consider Western esotericism (for a major part) culturally cohesive and as such distinct and different from, let us say, South Asian esotericism. At the same time, there is no denying that we see evidence of all the major traits of esotericism, as described earlier, displayed in Indian traditions since at least the emergence of the *Āraṇyakas* and *Upaniṣads* (several centuries before the Common Era) as the “texts” that explain hidden meanings behind the Vedic sacrificial ritual. We know that the Indian traditions engaged to a great extent in forms of knowledge and associated activities, which are otherwise typically considered esoteric, such as already mentioned alchemy (*rasāyana*), astrology (*jyotiṣh*), and magic (one of the words for which is actually yoga). Aside from these, some forms of yoga—and in particular the *haṭha* yoga associated with the Nāths—as well as tantric traditions in general, are arguably the closest parallels to Western forms of esotericism and occultism in South Asian cultural milieu. Focusing for the moment on the Nāths, the concepts of the subtle body with its *cakras* and channels of energy, the pursuit of extraordinary powers (*siddhi*), often associated with the “awakening” of the “serpent” *kunḍalinī*, the transmission of secret knowledge through rituals of initiation, the involvement with magic, the internalization of the alchemical process and the associated notion of the elixir of immortality (*amṛt*), just as well as the prospect of divinization—this all is a straightforward and “hardcore” esotericism.

While by no means proposing that esotericism exists as some universal, unified, and unchanging category, I still maintain that what we designate by that name can be observed in other, non-Western, cultures. I suggest that it makes most sense to talk about regional (e.g., European, Indian, Chinese), denominational (e.g., Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Daoist), and historical (e.g., ancient, medieval, contemporary) forms of esotericism. Each one of these forms is entangled in respective social, historical, religious, and cultural negotiations specific to their time and place, and these particular contingencies make them each specific, unique, and different from other forms of esotericism. What does make them similar are those traits that we, as scholars and theoreticians, postulate as characteristic of this notion that we have created as a second order category and call esotericism. It is a conceptual rather than ontological category. Even in the case of Western esotericism, the term itself is only a few centuries old (while it covers almost two millennia of perceived history), and most of the exponents we designate as esotericist did not apply the term self-referentially.

One could argue that it is as artificial to call these people esotericists as it is to apply the term to, say, the Nāth yogis.

To insist that only in the Western cultural sphere we find ideas and practices that privilege hidden aspects of reality, occult powers of the human body and mind, belief in magic, belief in the existence of intermediary beings, in coded discourse, the existence of initiatic models of the transmission of secret knowledge, and other related notions and activities effectively implies uniqueness, exclusivity, and even superiority of the West. Such exceptionalism does not stand up to comprehensive scrutiny. At the same time, it is worthwhile to recall that this category is only one possible and by no means sole interpretative and heuristic model that one can apply to a particular form of cultural life such as, let us say, the yoga of the Nāths. To the degree that doing so helps us understand such cultural manifestations better, more fully, more clearly, and to the degree that it provides a basis for meaningful comparative investigations, the category is useful. It is in that sense and to that degree that I feel justified in employing it while applying it to the Nāths and the tantric traditions in general. A great deal of insight and sophistication related to the understanding of magic and the “occult” has been made in the last few decades by the scholars of esotericism and our knowledge of these forms of religious life will be furthered by going beyond the narrow category of “Western,” and by embracing and investigating other, and in particular Asian, forms of this category.

### *Conclusions*

Considering the totality of texts gathered in the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth* translated here, it would be rather challenging to summarize their content in a cohesive and concise manner. The subject matter is obviously not unified, and the focus of instruction often shifts. But a definite picture of the Nāth worldview does emerge. The previous sections of this introduction addressed the major themes that are discernible in the textual material at hand. To paraphrase one more time the principle aspects of the ideological universe present in the *bānīs*, it could be said that Gorakhnāth (as the authorial persona behind the texts) emphasizes the experiential path of yoga, as opposed to the bookish knowledge associated with the Hindu and Muslim priestly authorities. This path is also distinct from the focus on the external trappings of yoga connected with the pursuits of those that Gorakhnāth considers as hypocrites (see GBS 47 and GBS 190): yoga does not depend on the sectarian paraphernalia, it is not concerned with



pilgrimages, it is not achieved by talking. Instead, the path lies inward and all the external accoutrements associated with the spiritual way of life are simply symbolic of the inner realities and qualities: “Mind is the yogi and the body is the temple; five elements make the robe./Forgiveness is [sitting in] the six postures./Wisdom is the supporting crutch and good judgment the wooden slippers./Thinking is the walking stick” (GBS 48).

Properly approached and understood the path of yoga further consists of several major domains of practice. The posture (*āsana*) is frequently mentioned, but never does it imply anything comparable to the contemporary postural yoga. In that sense, the *bānīs* are in sync with Patañjali’s injunction (Yoga Sūtra 2:46), which requires that the practice of yoga is conducted in a steady posture—not a series of postures. The control of breath (*prāṇāyāma*) is also recommended, often understood as the “chant without chanting (*ajapā jap*),” which amounts to the awareness of the natural (*sahaj*) cycles of breathing. Finally, the focus tends to be directed toward the subtle body, its *cakras*, the *bindu* that needs to be redirected in its flow, and, eventually, the elixir obtained. Occasionally, it is suggested that the results associated with the success in yoga could also be achieved through the alchemical means, and that the body may also be transformed in that manner (see GBS 49 and GBP 54:1). There are clear indications that to achieve the goal in these endeavors amounts to the divinization of the yogi (see in particular GBS 17–19). Aside from references to Śiva as the highest god, the absolute is also frequently addressed as Nirañjan, and understood as formless.

I am inclined to speculate that the thematic variations in the *bānīs* result from the fact that they are not addressing a uniform audience. I suspect that the key to the intended recipients of particular verses lies in the division of the yogis into four main classes (see GBS 136 and “Instruction to a King” v.1). The insistence on proper ethical behavior and the clarification of social priorities are of interest and value to the beginner yogis, while the difficulties inherent in the drinking of the elixir and the mystical states associated with the success in doing so are clearly intended for the benefit of the perfected yogis. Expressed somewhat alternatively, the subject matter varies depending on the stage of yoga that the texts are addressing, while the exposition is not chronologically or thematically arranged. But even if that suspicion is correct, and even if that brings certain light to the texts, there does remain so much in them that is enigmatic and that escapes scholarly analysis and comprehension. But such is the nature of theoretical knowledge and the texts gathered here

themselves acknowledge that: as Gorakh says, “Only rare yogis understand these states” (GBS 6).

### *A Note to the Translations*

The following translations of the *sabad* and *pad* sections from the *Gorakh Bānī* collection were done in Benares (Varanasi), India, in the period between November 2002 and early April 2003. I arrived in India on a doctoral research grant in October 2002 and immediately began to inquire about the possibility of working with someone on this text. I was fortunate enough to rather quickly get in touch with Dr. Shukdev Singh, a former professor of Hindi at the Benares Hindu University. Shukdev Singh had already successfully collaborated with Western scholars on several projects.<sup>71</sup> We arranged our first meeting over phone; the next day he came with his driver to pick me up and we then went to his house and agreed on the procedure of our future sessions. We initially decided to meet three, and later five, times a week; I was to work on the translations on my own, and he would be checking them and providing commentaries during our meetings.

I would translate as much as I could in between our meetings. On those days when we were to have our session, I would start in the morning from my residence close to Assi *ghāṭ* in the southern part of Benares, and ride a bicycle to my destination. It would take me approximately a half-hour of a slow bicycling through the congested streets of the city to reach his house in Sundarpur, in the outskirts of Benares. We would typically sit together for an hour, often longer, drinking tea and “fighting with the text,” as he was prone to say in his Rajput idiom. I would read my translations and he would correct them, spicing his commentaries with innumerable stories about Nāths, *tāntrikas*, and Indian culture in general. Sometimes my translations would be accepted as correct *in toto* (“*Śābās*,” he would say, “*bahut acchā* translation”); sometimes, more often than I liked, I would cross some of them out completely as incorrect. In general, the wording and the style were my own, but there were also a significant number of corrections. Dr. Singh was always happy when we entered into occasional disagreement over the translations: he often felt that I was too complacent

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71. The best known of these collaborations is probably Hess and Singh (1986 [1983]). See also a more recent translation of “The Deeds of Prahlād,” trans. David Lorenzen and Shukdeo Singh, in Lorenzen (1996: 41–74).

in accepting his corrections and that I should fight more forcefully for my perspective. From the beginning to the end, we both felt and talked about this as a mutual project.

Upon my return from India, I tried to improve and correct what I felt to be the more problematic translations. On a few occasions, I asked for and received comments on these from my PhD thesis supervisor, Dr. Ken Bryant from the Department of Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia. We did not go through the whole text but on the basis of samples that he read, Ken expressed his impression that the translations were generally correct. My wife Sasha Paradis went through the complete material, corrected grammatical mistakes, and gave several stylistic suggestions, but did not intervene in the text itself. This first version of the translations, containing the *sabads* and *pads* from the collection, was included as an appendix to my doctoral thesis (Djurdjevic 2005).

From December 2006 through early January 2007, I met with Dr. Singh in Benares again: we worked on the selections from the additional texts in *Gorakh Bānī* that we considered more important and genuine. The one text we did not have time to work on was “Machindra Gorakh Bodh,” which I eventually translated alone. Shukdev Singh passed away in September 2007.

In preparing the present edition, I revisited the complete translations once again and made numerous corrections and alternate renditions. In order to facilitate understanding, where possible and appropriate, I also provide short annotations. These typically address technical terms and provide cultural and religious context. My notes are in the square brackets and they appear either after a particular *sabad* (given that these are short: only two lines of text in the Hindi original and four lines of text in our translations), or after an individual verse in longer poetical compositions (such as *pads*). Unfortunately, in the case of prose texts, it proved cumbersome to comment within the body of text and for that reason these comments were moved to the footnotes. I refrain from providing the notes in cases where these would be redundant, unnecessary, or where the text is too enigmatic for a comment.

Any remaining errors and inaccuracies in these translations are my own responsibility.

The research on which these translations were based was funded by the Government of India (GoI) through the India Studies Program of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute (SICI). Neither the GoI nor SICI necessarily endorses the views expressed herein.

## SAYINGS OF GORAKHNĀTH

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### *Sabads*

[*Sabadī*]

1. Neither full nor empty; neither empty nor full:  
It is inaccessible, mysterious.  
At the summit of the sky, a child,  
Who cannot be named, is speaking.

[The opening verses indicate the transcendental nature of the ultimate reality (*param tattva*) as understood by the Nāths and as experienced in the highest *cakra*, here referred to as “the summit of the sky” (“gagan sikhar”). As Baṛthvāl (1946: 1) comments, this reality is neither being nor nonbeing, neither something nor nothing. What we here translate by the adjectives “full” and “empty” are in the original the nouns: “bastī,” “dwelling place, settlement,” and “sūnyam,” “emptiness.” Perhaps, “occupied” and “empty” would be the closest translations of these terms. In either case, the juxtaposed pair indicates a set of opposites, neither of which expresses satisfactorily the nature of ultimate truth. This is reminiscent of the opening lines of the Sanskrit *Gorakṣa Vacana Saṃgraha*: “Some seek non-duality, the others seek duality; none of them find the truth that is different from both duality and non-duality” (GVS 1; in Banerjea 1999 [1962]: 333).

The ontological reality addressed by the *sabad* is “inaccessible and mysterious.” More specifically, the adjective “inaccessible” (“agam”) also refers to the difficult passage that leads toward the highest *cakra*, where the yogi merges with the absolute. “The passage leading to the Absolute in the *sahasrāra*-lotus [on the top, or slightly above, the head] is imagined to be a narrow path” (Thiel-Horstmann 1983: 77). The “summit of the

sky” (“gagan sikhar”), as one of the most important centers of esoteric yogic physiology, understandably elicits a number of alternative referents throughout the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth*. The most important are: “the circle of the sky” (“gagan maṇḍal”); Kailāś (the sacred mountain, the peak of which is assumed to be the dwelling place of the great god Śiva, esoterically and microcosmically correlated with the top of the head); “the heavenly cave” (“gagan gupha”), “the empty circle” (“śūnya maṇḍal”), “the circle of the ether” (“ākāś maṇḍal”), and so on. See Junejā (1989: 188).

The “child” is, according to Barṭhvāl and other commentators, a reference to a person (or rather, to the essential, transpersonal selfhood, *paramātman*) who is untouched by either virtue or sin. Sinhā (1988: 279–80) follows Barṭhvāl’s analysis of this verse almost verbatim—a typical feature of his writing style, bordering on plagiarism. Gorakhnāth is sometimes called an “old child” (Barṭhvāl 1946: 1). This child cannot be named, because it is beyond the categories of “name and form,” which refer to the properties of *saṃsār*. It thus, and arguably, represents a Nāth yogis’ equivalent to what is termed *īśvara* [lord] in Pātañjala yoga.]

2. The unseen should be seen, the seen should be thought upon.  
The unseen has to be kept in the heart.  
The lower Gaṅgā should rise to the [top of the] universe,  
Where the pure has drank the water pure.

[Barṭhvāl (1946: 2) interprets the “unseen” as a reference to *parabrahman*. It has been a widely accepted dictum in the Indian tradition, since at least the speculations of the *Upaniṣads*, that the highest reality, which they term *brahman*, transcends the grasp of ordinary senses (including the mind). It was simultaneously widely accepted that such reality might be accessed through the special mode of perception furnished by the disciplined practice of yoga. Barṭhvāl, Sinhā (1988: 240), and Junejā (1989: 218) all understand the “Gaṅgā” (Ganges) as a metaphor for *kuṇḍalinī*. Sinhā also provides the alternative names for it: “woman,” “delicate girl,” “yoginī in the form of consciousness,” “black snake,” “cobra,” “serpent,” “the snake of breath.” Typically, the three main conduits of the subtle energy within the body are in the *haṭha* yoga lore correlated with the three sacred rivers: the Gaṅgā stands for *īrā* (ending up in the left nostril), Yamunā stands for *piṅgalā* (ending up in the right nostril), while Sarasvatī stands for the central channel, *suṣumṇā*, that goes through the spinal column. See, among many others, Dasgupta (1995 [1969]: 357), Eliade (1969: 253), and Bhārati (1988: 335). “The top of the universe” is an obvious reference

to the highest *cakra*, just as the “pure water” is an obvious reference to the elixir, *amṛt*.]

3. Right here is the imperishable, right here is the hidden;  
Right here is the origin of the three worlds.  
The one who keeps close the imperishable  
Becomes, for that reason, the lord of yoga to the countless *siddhas*.

[The “imperishable”: it is a notion shared by the Indian tradition in general, whether Hindu, Buddhist, or Jaina, that the phenomenal reality is impermanent and that this fact in and of itself causes suffering. Hence the search for permanence, which the Hindu spirituality associates with the *brahman*. The “three worlds” refer to the earth, nether regions, and heaven (or to the earth, atmosphere, and heaven, as was the case in the earlier, Vedic tradition).]

4. It is neither in the Vedas nor in the Book. It is neither the Form  
nor the Name.  
All of these are just veils.  
At the summit of the sky, the Word [*sabad*] bursts into light.  
There, [the yogi] sees the Invisible Gnostic.

[The truth is “neither in the Vedas nor in the Book”: the Nāths give precedence to the direct experience of the ultimate reality, which they contrast negatively with the bookish knowledge and the sanctity of traditional doctrines. The “word” that they cherish, the *sabad*, which Thiel-Horstmann (1983: 69) defines as “the ontological essence . . . innate in man and identical with his soul,” emerges as a gnostic *event* experienced in the highest *cakra*, the “summit of the sky.” (With a substantial grain of salt, the “sabad” could even be translated as “logos.”) The “book,” “kateb,” is almost certainly a reference to *the* Book, the Muslim *Kur’an*. This is one of the several pronouncements in the *Sayings of Gorakhnāth* where the Nāth yogis distance themselves from both Hindus and Muslims. Regarding the expression “the Form [and] the Name”: the original employs the phrase “khāṇṇīm bāṇṇīm.” The first term, “khāṇī” (modern Hindi, “khan”) means “a mine; (four) sources of life, or kingdoms of nature: egg-born (birds etc), placenta-born (man, animals, etc), water-born (plants) and heat-born (insects)” (Callewaert 2009: s.v. “khāṇī”). A possible translation of the phrase could be “the Origins and the Word.” Shukdev Singh suggested “the Name and the Form” and although admittedly a poetical license on our part, I believe it expresses the spirit of the original. We have translated

the “alakh bināṇīm” as the “invisible gnostic,” which contextually seems correct, although in the modern Hindi the “vijñāni” (the equivalent of the original’s “bināṇīm”) means “a scientist,” just as the related term “vijñān” means “knowledge of the world (as distinct from knowledge of *brahman* acquired by meditation and study).” See McGregor (1993) s.v. “vijñān.”]

5. The Invisible Gnostic has created two lamps,  
Three worlds, and one light.  
Contemplating it, the three worlds appear,  
And [the yogi] selects the bright pearl.

[Barṭhāvā (1946: 3) interprets the “invisible gnostic” as the manifest form (*svārūp*) of the otherwise formless *brahman*, and the “two lamps” as the two forms of *samādhi*: the *savikalpa* (involving thought constructions) and *nirvikalpa* (with no thought constructions involved). The alternative designations for these two types of the highest state of yoga are *sabīja* (“with seed”) and *nirbīja* (“seedless”); “*savicāra*” (“with thinking, or reflective awareness”) and “*nirvicāra*” (“without thinking, or reflective awareness”); *samprajñāta* (“with content, intentional”) and *asamprajñāta* (“without content, non-intentional”); and several others. Patañjali discusses these two forms in the first chapter (“Samādhi pāda”) of his *Yoga Sūtra*. Note that Gorakhnāth associates the experience of the true reality with manifestations of light and sound, the vision and the voice, the two main sources and instruments of knowledge. See Offredi (1999a) for a discussion of these concepts within the context of what she calls the “Gorakh Yoga.”]

6. It can’t be read about in the *Vedas* or in the volumes of the  
religious law,  
[It can’t be read about] in the books of the Qur’an.  
Only rare yogis know these states.  
The rest of the world is duped.

[“The volumes of the religious law” in our translation refers to the *śāstras*, which is a term that can be applied both to the *dharmaśāstras*—referring more specifically to the explications of the traditional Hindu religious legal system, of which the most famous is the “Law Book of Manu” (*Mānava Dharma Śāstra*)—or to any other traditional system of knowledge or “science.” The gist of the *sabad* repeats the thesis that only a direct experience,

and not the descriptive accounts and doctrines, constitutes real knowledge. The path of the yogis is again described as being distinct from both Hindu and Muslim traditions.]

7. You may laugh, you may play, and you may be merry.  
 But don't keep company with lust and anger!  
 You may laugh, you may play, and you may sing songs.  
 But keep your mind steady!

[This and the following *sabad* could be considered as an illustration of the tantric principle that suggests a possibility of being simultaneously engaged in both pleasures, *bhoga*, and the discipline, *yoga*, in pursuing both worldly enjoyment, *bhukti*, and the spiritual liberation, *mukti*. The "mind" translates the original "cīt" (Sanskrit "citta," modern Hindi "citt"), which is an important technical term in *yoga*, rich in meaning and connotations. It could as well be translated as "consciousness," "awareness," and "heart." The famous definition by Patañjali (*Yoga Sūtra* 1:2) refers to the cessation (*nirodha*) of the whirling (*vṛtti*) of this very *citta* as what is meant by *yoga*: "yogaś citta-vṛtti nirodhaḥ."]

8. You may laugh, you may play, but you should maintain  
 meditation.  
 You should speak day and night about the wisdom of *brahman*.  
 Do not break your meditation when laughing and playing.  
 Those established in firmness are always in the company of the  
 Lord.

[The "Lord" translates the Hindi "nāth" in the original. The *sabad* reiterates the theme and thesis of its predecessor.]

9. O priest [*kāzī*], don't say 'Muhammad, Muhammad'!  
 Muhammad's thought is difficult.  
 The essence of the dagger in Muhammed's hand  
 Was neither made of steel, nor of iron.

[Another *sabad* critical of the established religion and the authority of priesthood based on learning, instead of a direct experience of truth. *Kāzī* is a judge, whose expertise involves proficiency in the Islamic jurisprudence.]



10. By the *sabad* he killed, by the *sabad* he revived:  
Such a *pīr* was Muhammad.  
O priest [*kāzī*], stop pretending!  
Such power is not in your body.

[Here it is argued that the source of the Prophet Muhammad's spiritual authority lies in the experience of the *sabad*, which his followers, engrossed in exoteric aspects of religion, lack. The implication is that the esoteric core of spirituality provides both a basis for an essential unity of religions (making Gorakhnāth and the Prophet Muhammad spiritual brothers) just as it transcends their exoteric organized forms and doctrinal formulations. "Pīr" is a Muslim saint or venerated elder. The closing line of the text "Fifteen Days" ("Pandrah Tithi") declares that "To the countless *siddhas*/*Śrī* Gorakh is the *pīr*." Vaudeville (1993: 84) comments that the "fact that the Mahants of the Jogī *maṭhs* or *akhāḍas*, and famous Jogīs in general, are also called *pīrs*, reflects the confusion at work in the mind of the illiterate masses between the two main varieties of holy men and wonder-workers." I would suggest that the crux of the issue is not the confusion but an intuition of the mutual commonality between the two.]

11. The whole world was enslaved by saying "Lord."  
Those saying "Gorakh" are hidden.  
Muhammad was a master of faith,  
But he still died nonetheless.
12. The essence of essence, of profound depth,  
Is in the sound that reached the sky.  
The jewel found is hidden again.  
All discussions are mere lies.

[The "sound that reached the sky" refers to the inner, "unstruck" sound (*anāhat nād*), often considered to be heard once the *kuṇḍalinī* rises to the heart *cakra*. Gorakhnāth typically associates the locus of its manifestation with the highest *cakra*, metaphorically rendered as the "sky." Barthvāl (1946: 5) understands the "jewel" as a reference to the perception of *brahman* that occurs under such conditions, and which cannot be expressed in language. Hence the uselessness of all discussions about such matters. Junejā (1989: 198) lists the jewel as a referent to *kaivalya*, which is the state of the "isolation" of the true spirit (*puruṣ*) from the clutches of matter (*prakṛti*) and as such is the ultimate goal of yoga.]

13. The talks! The discussions!  
 O yogi, do not engage in debates!  
 Just as all the rivers are contained in the ocean,  
 So for you, yogi, all should burn up in the guru's mouth.

[“All the rivers are contained in the ocean”: the original text uses the term “sixty-four *tīrths*,” which are the sanctuaries and places of pilgrimage on the riverbanks. The *tīrth* also connotes the place of crossing, from one shore to another, from the world of *saṃsāra* to the world of spiritual liberation. The yogi is instructed to disregard the worldly theories and debates and to place his full confidence in the guru. To “burn in the guru’s mouth” is a technical term referring to initiation. Spiritual maturity is described through the metaphor of “burning” or “cooking.” An inexperienced yogi, whom we would call “green,” is in this idiom referred to as “uncooked.”]

14. We are Hindus by birth; yogis by burning;  
 Muslim *pīrs* by wisdom.  
 Acknowledge this path, oh judge and scholar,  
 Already acknowledged by Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva.

[This *sabad* is a good illustration of what the French scholar of Western esotericism Antoine Faivre designates as “the praxis of concordance,” which he defines as the tendency to establish “common denominators between two different traditions or even more” (1994: 14). The Nāths feel at home in diverse traditions because they believe that their path transcends all the worldly, inconsequential distinctions and denominations. On the subject of Muslim *jogis*, Vaudeville (1993: 76) suggests that the “very non-conformism of the Nāth-Yogīs, their strong opposition to caste distinctions and their contempt for the rules of ritual purity must have made the social contacts with Muslims particularly easy for them.” The “burning” is a metaphor for the ascetic practice.]

15. Accepting the *sabad*, duality ends.  
 Bharthari was made a king by determination, Gopīcand by  
 experience.  
 By determination the kings transcend opposites.  
 By experience the yogis [attain] the supreme bliss.

[Bharthari (Bhartṛhari) and Gopicand (Gopīcandra) were famous kings, who renounced their royal status in order to become Nāth yogis, and who are celebrated in numerous local songs and legends. Bharthari became a yogi after he became disillusioned with worldly pleasures occasioned by his wife's infidelity; Gopicand did so in order to fulfill his mother's vow, made in order to save him from premature death. See Grierson (1885), Gold (1992), and, for a general discussion of the relationship and tension between these two modes of life, Bouillier (1997).]

16. He who day and night fathoms the mind, who remains beyond  
the mind,  
Who abandons the accessible, and proclaims the inaccessible;  
He who renounces hope, and remains without hope—  
It is said that even Brahmā is his servant.

["Beyond the mind" translates an important technical term, "unman," which could also be translated as "no-mind." The idea is that this mode of consciousness, the *unman*, transcends the limitations of the ordinary mind, which Indian philosophical traditions influenced by *sāṃkhya* consider as simply another form of conditioned "nature," *prakṛti*. It follows by implication that *unman* shares in the properties of the true self, the *puruṣ*. Again, we witness the call to abandon the orientation toward externals, toward exotericism, and to reorient the attention toward the inner, the esoteric. Brahmā is the creator god.]

17. The yogi who holds above what goes below,  
Who burns the god of love, abandons the embrace [of a woman],  
Who cuts through *māyā*—  
Even Viṣṇu washes his feet.

[This *sabad* addresses the fundamental issue that concerns the redirecting of the seminal fluid, *ūrdhvaretas*. While ostensibly a description of a yogi, it can also be read as a depiction of the great god Śiva, who famously burned the god of love (Kāmdēv) to ashes, by opening his third eye. Gorakhnāth is sometimes deified as the "second Śiva," which condition is the ultimate goal for the Nāth yogis in general.]

18. He who does the *ajapā-jap*, maintains meditation on emptiness  
[*śūnya*],  
Who controls the five sense organs,  
And offers his body as an oblation in the fire of *brahman*—  
Even Mahādev bows to his feet.

["Ajapā-jap" or "ajapā-jāp" literally means "chanting without chanting," or "muttering [the *mantra*] without muttering." A "silent chant" would be a more elegant translation. It refers to one of the most characteristic features of the Nāth yogis' practice. According to the tradition, the exhaling breath produces the sound "ha" and the inhaling breath the sound "sa." One full cycle of breathing thus produces the sound "haṃsa," which among other referents also means "swan" and which is a metaphorical designation for the liberated soul. The implication is that the living beings endowed with breath always "chant" the *mantra* "haṃsa" spontaneously (*sahaj*). This silent chant is also correlated with the famous Vedic *Gayatrī mantra*. The Sanskrit *Gorakṣa Śataka* (v.44-45) states, "The *gayatrī* called *ajapā* bestows liberation on the yogis. A simple intention to [do it] eradicates all the sins. There is no other wisdom as this, no other chant as this, no other knowledge than this; it never was, it will never be." I have slightly emended the translation as found in Briggs (1973 [1938]: 293). See also, among others, Mallik (1954: 20); Sinhā (1988: 233-38); and Junejā (1989: 185) (who mentions that the [Buddhist] Siddhas, as distinct from the Nāth yogis, use the alternative term, the "thunderbolt chant," "vajra jāp"). Mahādev, the "great God," is Śiva, the lord of yogis.]

19. He who does not desire wealth and youth,  
 Who does not think about the sensuous woman,  
 In whose body the *nād* and *bindu* are burnt—  
 Even Pārvatī serves him.

[The "sensuous woman" ("kāṃmani") is the anthropomorphic representation of *māyā*, often translated as "illusion," although a "false reality" might be a more accurate rendering. From the androcentric perspective of the Nāths, given the paramount importance of the preservation of semen, the women are a temptation. The philosophy of yoga shares to a great extent the cosmological and soteriological perspective of *sāṃkhya*, where the suffering that is inherent in manifest reality stems from the fact that the immaterial subject, *puruṣ*, misidentifies with bodily, emotional, or psychological aspects of "nature," *prakṛti*. The goal of liberation thus becomes formulated as disassociation from such misidentifications. The closing lines of the foundational *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* compare *prakṛti* with a dancing woman who finally stops her sensuous dance once the spectator (*puruṣ*) stops paying attention to her. Callewaert (2009, s.v. "kāmani") notes that *māyā* is "compared to an attractive woman who makes it difficult for man to keep his semen during sexual play [see *sabad* 142, GD]. It is the purpose of some exercises to

excite but keep the semen, as a method to improve virility and increase spiritual power. The semen should be forwarded to the highest *cakra*.” Pārvatī is Śiva’s spouse.]

20. Those men who are restrained in boyhood and youth,  
They are the men of truth in good and in bad times.  
They make food quickly, and eat little—  
The *nāth* says: Their body is [the same as] mine.

[To eat little, in other words, to be able to control one’s biological drives, is a constant admonition given to yogis. “Their body is [the same as] mine” means: there are no distinctions between us, we are the same. See Barṭhvāl (1946: 8).]

21. *Sabad* is the lock, *sabad* is the key,  
*Sabad* wakes *sabad*.  
When *sabad* meets *sabad*,  
*Sabad* is contained in *sabad*.

[Barṭhvāl (1946: 8) understands these two *sabads* to be the inner, or subtle *sabad*, which he also identifies with the *nād*, and the outer, coarse *sabad*, which he relates to the instruction given by the guru. It is this coarser *sabad* that “wakes” its subtle correlate, and in the process, it becomes subtle itself.]

22. You should travel without path, burn without fire,  
Satisfy thirst by air.  
Śrī Gorakh has explained self-knowledge.  
Oh, scholars who [only] read, understand that!

[Another *sabad* that underscores the fact that self-knowledge cannot be read about in books. The target of Gorakhnāth criticism are the *brahmins*, i.e. the priests and scholars. The reproach is thus not only epistemological but also social in its implication. In the original, the thirst should be “cheated” by air; our translation opts for a more conventional rendering of the phrase.]

23. In the circle of the sky, there is an upside-down well.  
There the nectar resides.  
He who has a guru can drink it till full.  
Who is without a guru remains thirsty.

[Both the “circle of the sky” (which could also be translated as the “*maṇḍal* of heaven”) and “upside-down well” refer to the highest *cakra* in the human subtle body. Since the well of nectar is upside-down, its contents trickle down the *suṣumṇā*, the central channel in the spinal column, and get wasted in the process. The yogis attempt to drink the nectar by various means, the most prominent of which is arguably the *khecari mudra*, which involves cutting the *frenulum linguae* and pushing the tongue backward to block the “leakage.” See Mallinson (2007).]

24. The sky cannot hide him; the fire cannot burn him;  
 The wind can't push him in the air.  
 The weight of the earth can't break him; he cannot sink in the  
 water.  
 I say so, but who understands it?

[Barṭhvāl (1946: 9) takes the *sabad* to refer to the essence of the true self, *ātma tattva*. We, on the other hand, interpret it as a description of a perfected yogi. (The ambiguity rests on the fact that the Hindi original does not provide the object of the verbal action.) This concurs with the Vyāsa's description of the yogi who has removed the limitations imposed by the five elements (in his comments on *Yoga Sūtra* 3:44): the earth does not obstruct him, the water does not wet him, the fire does not burn him, and so on. See Bryant (trans.) (2009: 384). In the concluding line, Gorakhnāth again underscores the apophatic nature of esoteric knowledge.]

25. By its fragrance, the whole world is fragrant.  
 By its taste, all is sweet.  
 If I say the truth, the true guru will accept it,  
 And I will see its form.

[The truth pervades the manifest reality in a subtle manner, comparable to the way the fragrance spreads. Those who have experience of it do not perceive the world as a domain of sorrow, instead, they recognize the sweetness of its “taste.” The closing line is somewhat obscure, but if correctly interpreted, it suggests the possibility of perceiving reality “with the form” (*sagun*), as opposed to “without form” (*nirgun*). Barṭhwal (as Barṭhvāl Anglicized his last name) considered Gorakhnāth both an exponent of, and a major influence on, what he called the “Nirguna school of Hindi poetry.” See Barṭhwal (1936).]

26. Die, yogi, die!  
 Death is sweet.  
 Die in that death  
 In which Gorakh died and saw [the truth]!

[Dying to the external world, the yogi awakens into the reality of the spiritual world. This notion is amplified by the conventional reference to the tombs of the yogis (who are typically not cremated) as their “samādhis,” the term otherwise used for the final stage of yoga (a photograph of such tombs at the Nāth yogis’ center at Gorakhpur is reproduced in Briggs (1973 [1938], Plate XI). As Baṛthvāl (1946: 10) notes, it is a belief common among yogis that they do not die; accordingly, they rest in ecstasy of meditative absorption in their “tombs.” Similarly, the “death” described in this *sabad* is the “death while living,” which is the equivalent of being “liberated while living” (10). Commenting on a related phrase, *jivata-mṛtaka*, or “living corpse,” Thiel-Horstmann (1983: 69) notes that “this expression refers to the ideal of the person liberated during lifetime. Such a person is dead to the world but alive in God.” Dasgupta (1995 [1969]: 220) remarks cogently: “The great yogin with his perfect body moves in the world according to his own will—and as this perfect body is produced through the burning away of his physical body through the fire of yoga there is no death for him. Where an ordinary man lives (in his physical form) the yogin is dead—and where there is the death for all (in the physical form) there is no death for the yogin.” It is of some relevance to note that within the context of Buddhist tantric meditation and ritual, based on the instructions of Nagārjuna and Candrakīrti, the practitioner imaginatively enters into the “*maṇḍala* of ultimate reality,” in other words death, before re-emerging as an enlightened being in order to perform activities in this world. See Wedemeyer (2013: 117).]

27. One should not speak in haste,  
 One should not hesitate while walking: the feet should go with  
 composure.  
 One should not be arrogant, but remain in natural ease [*sahaj*]:  
 Thus says the great Gorakh.

[These apparently simple precepts regarding mundane activities nevertheless underscore the fundamental point of keeping one’s behavior under control. The term “yoga” is sometimes translated as “discipline”

(see, among others, Miller (1986: 157), and *passim*), as the notion does fall within its semantic range. The “natural ease” or *sahaj* (Skt. “sahaja”) is an important technical term in yogic and tantric vocabulary, both Hindu and Buddhist. In an important and influential paper, Kværne (1975) provides several possible translations of the term, starting from the literal “being born (-*ja*) together with (*saha-*),” and including other renderings such as “congenital, innate, hereditary, original . . . natural” (88). Herbert Guenther describes it as “the spontaneity and totality of the experience in which the opposites such as transcendence and immanence, subject and object, the noumenal and phenomenal indivisibly blend” (qtd. in Kværne 1975: 89). It refers to the natural spontaneity that emerges as a behavioral concomitant to the state of an accomplished adept (*siddha*). The related term, “*sahaja-yoga* (natural yoga)” refers to the pursuit of liberation “whose only practice (if any at all) is the repetition of the name of the divine” (Mallinson 2011: 423).]

28. Those who are full are still;  
 The half-full are overflowing.  
 Hey *avadhūt*, when a *siddha* meets a *siddha*,  
 They speak and they gain.

[The first half of the *sabad* points out to the somewhat paradoxical fact that those who are only “half-full,” i.e., those who are immature and unaccomplished, tend to show-off (their “water of wisdom” is overflowing, although it is shallow), while the truly wise refrain from such showmanship (they are full of wisdom but it is contained within and still). However, when meeting, true adepts, the *siddhas*, recognize each other, and they profit from the mutual discourse. The term “*avadhūt*” (Skt. “*avadhūta*”) refers to an ascetic who has “shaken off” the attachment to the world. In the *Gorakh Bānī*, the *avadhūt* is often the addressee of Gorakhnāth’s admonitions.]

29. The *nāth* says, listen oh *avadhūt*:  
 Be firm, keep your mind in control.  
 Give up lust, anger and egotism,  
 And everything becomes a foreign land.

[A dominant leitmotif in the *Gorakh Bānī* consists of the suggestion that the external trappings of religion, including yoga itself, are ultimately worthless. Consequently, Gorakh’s emphasis is on what Vaudeville (1964,



in reference to Kabīr) designates as “interior religion” and what I prefer to call esotericism. As Barthvāl (1946: 11) notes, “Yogis have no households, the whole world is their house. Thus they wander everywhere.” But the whole purpose of going to foreign lands is to turn away from the pull of *samsār*, to cut the attachments to the world. Hence Gorakh’s suggestion that the equivalent of going to foreign places, and a preferable one at that, is to cut off lust, anger, and egotism: this is a real detachment and in doing so, whether one stays home or travels abroad, the world truly becomes a foreign place.]

30. Oh Master, If I go to the forest, I am affected by hunger,  
 And in the city, there is *māyā*.  
 If I eat till I am full, the semen fills me.  
 How to cook the body made from a drop of liquid?

[This and the following *sabad*, including the beginning of the subsequent one, resemble a conversation between Gopicand and his guru Jalandarnāth, as recorded in a Sanskrit text, quoted (in the original) in Kaviraj (1987: 64; translation mine). Gopicand says:

“Greetings, Master, I will ask, please respond:  
 Staying in the house, the lust pervades;  
 Staying in the forest, the hunger afflicts;  
 Staying in a posture, the *māyā* seizes;  
 Walking on a path, the body is wasted;  
 Eating sweets, the disease grows:  
 Tell me how to succeed in yoga?”

Jalandarnāth responds:

“Listen *avadhūt*, investigating the reality  
 Is the essence of all, the crown-jewel.  
 When eating is under control, the lust does not pervade;  
 With no rushing [after food], the hunger does not afflict;  
 In the *siddha*-posture, *māyā* does not seize;  
 In a measured speech, body is not destroyed;  
 There is no pleasure through the enjoyment of the tongue;  
 Joining the mind with the breath there is success in yoga.  
 He who eats a little, he conjectures and chatters;

He who eats a lot, he is sick.  
 He who reflects on the middle ground of both sides of an issue,  
 Such a rare person is a yogi.”

[Kaviraj (1987: 64) considers the closing lines “the quintessence of the Nāthic teachings.”

“If I eat till I am full / the semen fills me.” The connection between food and semen is ancient. In the *Upaniṣads* we find the statements such as: “A fire—that’s what a man is, Gautama. . . . In that very fire gods offer food, and from that offering springs semen” (*Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 6.2.11; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 5.7.1; in Olivelle [trans.] 1996: 83, 141). In the same texts, the early conception of the process of reincarnation is described as a journey of the deceased soul to the Moon and back to the earth as rain, which goes into plants, becoming food. “When someone eats that food and deposits the semen, from him one comes into being again” (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 5.10.6, in Olivelle [trans.] 1996: 142).

“How to cook the body?” The process of yoga and spiritual perfection is in traditional India often glossed through the metaphor of cooking. The “drop of liquid” refers to *bindu*, the biological root of the body.]

31. Do not rush upon food or starve to death;  
 Day and night, probe the secrets of the fire of *brahman*.  
 Do not be obstinate or lie idle:  
 Thus said Gorakh-dev.

[“The fire of *brahman*” (“brahmāgni” or, as spelled in this particular *sabad*, “brahm agani”) could as well be translated as the “fire of knowledge” (see Callewaert 2009: s.v. “brahmāgni”). However, it is also one of the code words for *kuṇḍalinī*, the “fiery” serpent, in the *Gorakh Bānī*. On the one hand, this particular choice of vocabulary does reflect an androcentric orientation of the Nāths, but on the other, it indicates a fluid nature of the subtle-body physiology, which allows for a variety of symbolic representations. It is important to keep in mind that the *cakras*, *nāṛīs*, and *kuṇḍalinī* need to be created or “woken up” through the meditative engagement, in other words, through the employment of creative imagination, and that there is more than one uniform method of doing so. Hence there is no inherent contradiction in the fact that the Buddhists typically operate with the system of four, and the Hindu yogis with the system of six or seven *cakras*.

Apropos the ontological status of these systems of the subtle body and the fact that they are engaged with and actually created through the practice of disciplined imagination, Snellgrove’s comments, made more than half a century ago, are still relevant: “To ask what may appear to us an all-important question: ‘Are the *cakras* within the body conceived of as real psychic centres, or are they an imagined device like the external *maṇḍala*?’ is to bring contradiction into the whole basic theory from the standpoint of the texts. For them the whole process, internal and external, is *bhāvanā* (mental production), and the *maṇḍala*, although imagined (*bhāvita*) exists on a higher plane of reality than the phenomenal world it represents. Likewise, the idealized representation of the body, consisting of the veins and *cakras*, exists on the higher plane than the normal physical structure of the body” (Snellgrove 1959: 33, n. 3). In a similar vein, Kiss writes perceptively about the technical term *bhāva*, which he translates as “emphatic imagination” and describes (2010: 59) as including three elements: “[1] the mental creation by effort of something that is not normally present in the mind; [2] the vivid visualization of a predefined object; and [3] an emphatic, emotional attitude towards the created mental object or a total self-identification with it.” He further argues that most of the tantric texts “claim that one can control the real world by intense empathic imagination” (Kiss 2010: 58). For the role of imagination in (particularly South) Indian culture, see Shulman (2012).

Additional shade of meaning related to the “fire of *brahman*” concerns the metaphor of the “cooking” of the yogi. The mature, experienced, perfected yogi is considered “cooked,” whether in the “fire” of knowledge or through the agency of the “fiery” serpent, *kuṇḍalinī*. The related important, concept is the ascetic “heat,” *tapas*, produced through austerities and the practice of yoga.]

32. [The yogi] speaks a little and eats a little;  
 The breath pervades his body.  
 In the circle of the sky, the unstruck sound resounds.  
 But if he falls back into the body, it is a shame for the true teacher.

[“The breath pervades his body.” I understand this as an allusion to the breath control, *prāṇāyāma*. The ability to control the breath and keep it balanced is a hallmark of yoga. “The most important—and, certainly, the most specifically yogic—of these various refusals [to conform to elementary

human inclinations] is the disciplining of respiration [*prāṇāyāma*—in other words, the “refusal” to breath like the majority of mankind, that is, nonrhythmically” (Eliade 1969: 55). “The circle of the sky” is the topmost *cakra*, where the “unstruck sound (*anāhad*) resounds.” The gist of the *sabad* seems to be that by controlling the taste and the tongue (disciplining one’s food intake and one’s speech) and maintaining the *prāṇāyām*, one becomes privy to the experience characteristic of the highest level of reality. In other words, one reaches the essence of immortality (*amaratattva*; see Barṥhvāl 1946: 12). “To fall back into the body” would imply a fall into *saṃsār*, the realm of mortality, and a yogi who would let this happen to him, after reaching the *amaratattva*, would thus certainly put his teacher to shame.]

33. O *avadhūt*, reduce your diet, turn away from sleep,  
 And you will never be ill.  
 From time to time, transform the body,  
 As some rare yogis do!

[The admonitions to reduce food and sleep, in other words to bring under control one’s instinctual drives, are a persistent precept in ascetic traditions. The injunction to “transform the body” introduces an alchemical theme, the alchemy (whether Arabic, European, Chinese, or Indian) being primarily a “science of transformations.” The relevant phrase in the original is “*kāyā palaṭibā*,” the latter word being a form of the modern Hindi verb *palaṭnā*, which Callewaert (2009) translates as “to be turned upside down.” Barṥhvāl (1946: 13), on the other hand, interprets the phrase more specifically, rendering it by the modern Hindi “*kāyākalpa*,” which means “rejuvenation (esp. by magical means)” (see McGregor 1993: s.v. “*kāyā-kalpa*”). But, as McGregor (1993) notes, the phrase “*kāyā-palaṭ*” means “transformation, metamorphosis; change of body; rebirth” and, most importantly in this context, “an elixir of youth.” The Nāṥths, as well as the alchemists, attempt to gain an immortal body. Kaviraj (1987: 78) describes such a body as “rare even among the gods”: able to penetrate anything, indestructible, and invisible. He makes an important additional comment: “What the alchemists professed to accomplish by means of Mercury, the *Haṥṥa Yogins* attempted through the discipline of *Vāyu* [wind, i.e., breath]” (ibid.). See also GBS 92, 193, and 215.]

34. You should meditate with your divine part,  
 And you should eat for your physical constitution.  
 Breathing mindfully, and remaining in the *unmani*,  
 The yogis [attain] the essence of reality.

[To “meditate with one’s divine part” and to “eat for [the sake of] the physical constitution” expresses the equivalent of the phrase “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12: 17). “Breathing mindfully” is a somewhat loose translation of the original “man pavanā lai”: “to take mind [into] breath.” But the import is clear: the control of the vital breath is an essential practice of yoga. The *unmani* refers to the “mind beyond mind,” the “no-mind.” In other words, it refers to the state that is transcendental to the fluctuations of the ordinary mental apparatus and is, in that sense, an equivalent of the goal of yoga as defined by Patañjali. Stated alternatively, the *unmani* is an equivalent of *samādhi*.]

35. O *avadhūt*, in the house of sleep is the snare of death,  
 And in the house of eating is the thief.  
 In the house of lovemaking, the old age devours.  
 The power is in uniting the lower with the upper!

[“The power is in uniting the lower and the upper”: the phrase translated here as “the lower and the upper” is an important technical term, “aradh-uradh” in the Hindi original. It denotes a pair of opposites such as, aside from those already mentioned, “earth and heaven; this world and the next world,” and, significantly in the present context, “the highest and lowest *cakras* in the human body” (Callewaert 2009: s.v. “aradh-uradh”). One of the fundamental methodological and ideological postulates of tantric traditions consists of the conviction that the path to liberation implies the union of opposites and their eventual transcendence. In Bharati’s (1965: 200) insightful but somewhat heavy description, “both Hindu and Buddhist Tantrism visualize their respective noumena as a supreme non-duality (e.g., *advaita* in Vedāntic Hinduism and *advaya* in tantric Buddhism), which can be expressed only in terms of diametrical polarity due to the common axiomatic notion that the supreme is inexpressible and non-communicable in itself.” The yogis and *tāntrikas* typically operate with the sets of polarities involving the left and right conduits of *prāṇa* (*idā/irā* and *piṅgalā*), the Sun and the Moon, Śiva and Śakti, the semen

(*śukr, retas*) and the (menstrual) blood (*rakt, rajas*), white and red “drops,” the lowest and the highest *cakras*, and so on. Barṭhvāl (1946: 14) interprets the “thief” as the God of Love (*Kāmdev*), but it contextually makes more sense to take it as a symbol of *samsār* (see, for example, Junejā 1989: 197).]

36. Too much food disturbs the senses.  
 It destroys wisdom, keeps the mind on lovemaking.  
 It prolongs sleep; death hides in it.  
 The heart [of such a person] is always distressed.
37. Gorakh ploughs the field in everybody’s heart.  
 Whoever is born from it is one of us.  
 To everybody’s heart Gorakh tells the story.  
 An unbaked pot does not hold water.

[In this *sabad*, Gorakh is represented as an inner teacher, the “still small voice” that “tells the story” to our hearts. Barṭhvāl (1946: 14) interprets Gorakh here as standing for the essential self, *ātman*, absorbed in *brahman*. He “ploughs the field” of our body; a more familiar metaphor, perhaps, would be the one of planting the seed. Those who heed the call, those who are born from the “field” (or, “vegetable bed”) of their bodies, are the “ripe ones,” the mature yogis, *siddhas*. Both the “field” and the “(earthenware) pot” are metaphors for the human body (the latter is especially common in Islamic mysticism). According to *The Law Code of Manu* (12: 12), “The one who makes this body act is called Kṣetrajña, ‘the knower of the field’” (see Olivelle 2004: 212). Olivelle comments: “Kṣetrajña refers to the spirit that observes the body and its activities as if they were a field.” In *The Bhagavad Gītā* (13: 1–2), Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna: “This body, oh son of Kunti, is called the field, and the one who knows it is called by the wise the knower of the field. Understand that I am the knower of the field in all fields.” As Malinar (2007: 192–93) observes, here the “field” and the “knower of the field” represent, respectively, the *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* from classical Sāṃkhya. Van Buitenen (1981: 123) translates the relevant terms from the same verse as “the field” and “the guide” to this field, and argues (1981: 168) that “the sense of ‘guide’ . . . brings out more clearly the active role of the individual soul than the literal ‘knower of the field.’” “An unbaked pot” that “does not hold water” is an allusion to those who are unable to control and contain the *bindu* within their bodies.]

38. In everybody's heart Gorakh moves silently:  
 In some, he is awake; in some, he sleeps.  
 In everybody's heart is Gorakh, in everybody's heart is Mīna.  
 The knowledge of the self [*ātman*] is experienced from the guru's mouth.

[Mīna or Mīnanāth is an alternative name for Matsyendranāth, Gorakh's guru (both "mīna" and "matsya" mean "fish"). Here, their mutual and essential identity is implied. "The knowledge of the self is experienced from guru's mouth": as is common in yogic and tantric milieu, the importance of the guru, who explains the doctrine, transmits the *mantra*, and conducts the ceremony of initiation, is paramount. As Padoux (2000: 41) notes, "In this Indian context, the highest wisdom, liberating truth, can issue only from the mouth of the master: *gurumukhād eva*. . . . [Only someone endowed with superhuman powers can have access to and transmit such a power. This is a further reason why the Tantric guru is regarded as divine.]"

39. In wooden sandals, the foot slips, oh *avadhūt!*  
 Iron chains harm the body.  
 Being naked, keeping silent, eating only milk:  
 Yoga is not achieved in such a way.

[Another *sabad* that is critical of the focus on the externals in pursuing the spiritual path. Here, the target of Gorakh's criticism are the various practices associated with asceticism: whether it is wearing the wooden sandals (common among some renouncers), carrying heavy chains on the body, walking around naked (as Nāgā ascetics do), observing silence (*mauna*), or living on milk alone: these are all rejected as inessential.]

40. The mind of the one who consumes only milk is set on another's house.  
 The naked always needs firewood.  
 The one who keeps silence hopes for a friend.  
 Without a guru, the ascetic robe is not trustworthy.
41. The Southern yogi is passionate and pure.  
 The Eastern yogi is a talker.  
 The Western yogi is like a child.  
 The Northern yogi is a *siddha*.

[This and the next *sabad* glorify the northern region of India, the area dominated by the Himalayan mountains, thought to be the home of the great god Śiva, and a traditional retreat of the yogis. Śiva's wife, Pārvatī, is herself a daughter of the Himalayas. As Bārthvāl (1946: 16) comments, it is believed that Gorakhnāth himself also meditated in the caves of this mountainous range. Briggs (1973 [1938]) reproduces a photograph of one such cave (Plate I).]

42. Oh *avadhūt*, the Eastern region is full of disease,  
 In the Western region is the sorrow of death.  
 The Southern region revels in illusion.  
 In the Northern region, the *siddha* yogis live.
43. The [real] cheaters cheat the ego,  
 And eat the begged food without remorse.  
 They beg in the city of 'three-and-a-half.'  
 These *avadhūts* move in the world of Śiva.

[Indian ascetics, irrespective of denomination, typically beg their food. Gorakhnāth here suggests that these begging rounds should be conducted within the "city" of the body—a variant on the theme of inner pilgrimage. (Bārthvāl [1946: 16] glosses "three-and-a-half" as a measuring device referring to the length of the body, which is considered to be "three-and-a-half" hands in length.) In doing so, such ascetics eventually "move in the world of Śiva," that is, they reach the highest *cakra*.

The correlation between the city and the body is ancient; sometimes, metonymically, the house, fortress, palace, or temple is used instead. What all these various correlations have in common is the presence of an esoteric worldview: the external macrocosmic realities are considered to be microcosmically (inwardly) present. In these tropes, the domestic (house), social (city), military (fortress), and theological (temple) domains of external power typically correspond with the body itself, while their rulers and occupants symbolize the mental and spiritual principles. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (2.5.18) declares: "This very Person (*puruṣa*) is the fort-dweller (*purīśaya*) in all the forts" (see Olivelle [trans.] 1996: 33). The *locus classicus* of the "macrocosm equals microcosm" worldview in Indian tradition is the "Hymn of the Person" ("Puruṣa Sūkta") in the *Ṛg Veda* (10.90). Instances of such correlations in traditional cultures, East and West, are countless. For a magisterial study of the interpenetrating levels



of signification involving divine, royal, and human esoteric domains, contextually represented by the Vaikuntha Perumal temple in Kanchipuram (Tamil Nadu), see Hudson (2008).

The correspondences between the yogic body and the city or a fortress are also explored and employed in some important medieval North Indian Hindavī Sufi romances (to use Aditya Behl's rendition of the term *premākhyān*), the most well known among which is Malik Muḥammad Jāyasī's *Padmāvat*. The love-struck hero of the romance, Ratansen, leaves his own Chittaur palace and dressed as a Nāth yogi travels to the island of Singhala in order to conquer it and win the princess Padmāvati. Jāyasī describes the city and its fortress in a manner that displays the influence of the Nāth theories about the body with its nine openings (which now become nine doors) and the secret tenth door (*brahmarandhra*), the river that stands for the elixir, the five watchmen representing the sense organs, and so on. As is to be expected, Jāyasī mixes these motifs with an imagery that has its origin in Islamic, primarily Sufi teachings. For a discussion of the Nāth influences on Jāyasī, see in particular Behl (2012: 159–64) and de Bruijn (2012: 114–18).]

44. The [real] man of the house is the one who knows his body.  
 He keeps inside what goes outside.  
 Always the same towards everything, he cuts through illusion.  
 Such a householder should be called the house of Nirañjan.

[This *sabad* continues with a similar metaphor: here the house stands for the body. The first line involves a pun: it could also be translated as: “The man of the house is the one who knows his house.” What he keeps inside, and what otherwise and ordinarily goes outside, is the *bindu*. Nirañjan is the name for the Supreme Being, often used by both Gorakh and other representatives of the “*nirgun*” school.” It literally means “without collyrium” or “without ointment,” and by inference, “without embellishment,” “pure.” Its name thus indicates that the highest reality is without, or rather beyond, describable qualities. Thiel-Horstmann (1983: 122) comments that “*aṃjana*, ‘ointment,’ is the symbol of what is applied to the soul as matter. . . . ‘Ointment’ is also ‘stain, defilement,’ because the matter sticking to the self hinders it from attaining its absolute state of union with God. God is *niraṃjana* ‘without ointment—stain,—defilement’ because he [*sic*] is free from all attributes consisting of matter.”]

45. The [real] householder is he who controls the body.  
 In his heart, he abandons the false reality.  
 He maintains the body with a natural [*saha*] virtue.  
 Such a householder is like the water of the Ganges.

[This *sabad* refers to the second stage in life within the context of the traditional *varṇāśramadharmā*, the stage of the (married) householder (Skt. *gṛhastha*). Yogis are typically renunciators, but Gorakhnāth here again suggests that the external ordering of social reality is less important than the inner disposition, and essentially argues that it is possible to be “in the world” and at the same time not “of the world.” Esoterically, the body is our true “home,” hence the inner meaning of the stage of a “real householder” implies the mastery of the body. The “virtue” translates the original “*sīl*” (Skt. “*śīla*”), which also refers to one of the three main teachings in Buddhism (aside from meditation, *samādhi*, and wisdom, *prajñā*). The water of the Ganges is considered inherently clear, although it flows through the inherently impure world, and is as such an apt metaphor to the “householder” that Gorakhnāth depicts in this *sabad*. Also, “the water is the symbol of the Supreme Self” (Thiel-Horstmann 1983: 68).]

46. Those who are immortal and pure are beyond sin and virtue.  
 They are beyond *sattva* and *rajas* [and *tamas*], in emptiness.  
 They remember the *sabad* of *soham* and *haṃsa*.  
 Theirs is the highest truth and endless *siddhis*.

[Immortality is the goal of the Nāth yogis; in other words, their aim is divinization, for gods are immortal (*amar*). This objective of self-deification, in addition to the search for supernatural powers (*siddhis*), reflects the tantric orientation, which, as Sanderson (1985: 667) notes (concerning the Mantramārga), “though it accommodates the quest for liberation, is essentially concerned with the quest for supernatural experience (*bhoga*).” These yogis are “pure,” not exactly in the ethical connotation of the term, but in the sense of having transcended the “taint” of material condition. In the *Gorakh Bānī*, the accomplished adepts of yoga, the *siddhas*, are typically described as being “beyond sin and virtue,” since both of these, ethically opposed, conditions inhere in the world of *saṃsār*. That the mystical experience does not depend on ethical prerequisites is a contested thesis, but by no means uncommonly advanced. For an informative collection of essays on the subject, see Barnard and Kripal (eds.) (2002).

*Sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* are the three “strands” (*guṇas*) that are woven into the fabric of manifest reality (*prakṛti*) according to the philosophy of *sāṅkhya*. The self (*puruṣ*) is entangled in them, misidentifying its true nature with aspects of their various combinations; the liberation thus consists of disentangling oneself from them. The “emptiness” refers to the state of liberation from such involvement in the manifest existence. “Sohaṃ” and “haṃsa” are the sounds, or rather the spontaneous *mantras*, thought to be produced by inhaling and exhaling breaths; they thus refer to the *ajapā-jāp*, the “chanting without chant,” that is one of the principal elements of the Nāth yoga. The semantic richness of these two terms is enhanced by the fact that “sohaṃ” is also one of the “great sayings” (*mahāvākyas*) from the *Upaniṣads*; it means, “I am He,” and suggests the ontological identity between the human and divine self, or, alternatively, between *ātman* and *brahman*. “Haṃsa,” literally “goose” or “gander” is a common poetic symbol of the migrating human soul in Indian tradition.

The “siddhis” are the “magical powers,” sought after by the tantric practitioners; those who possess them are the “accomplished ones,” the *siddhas*. The Hindu tradition recognizes eight such powers (to become small, big, light, heavy, and to obtain, enjoy, come within reach, and control things and persons), which are also “generally known as the eight powers of the lord Śiva himself, who is the lord of yoga. The Nāth Siddhas . . . displayed throughout these eight supernatural powers” (Dasgupta 1995 [1969]: 212). The *siddhis* are already discussed by Patañjali, in addition to the related term, *vibhūti*; they are the focus of the third chapter of the *Yoga Sūtra*. As Bryant (2009: 384) points out, the fact that “Patañjali [in *Yoga Sūtra* 3:45] sees fit to describe only the first one (*animādi*) followed by etc. indicates that these were already well known to his audience.” White (201b) argues that one of the most characteristic yogic *siddhis* is the ability to enter into another’s body (*parakāyapraveśa*) and suggests that the abuse of such powers leads to the perception of yogis as “sinister.” For a criticism of this thesis, see Mallinson (2014). A major study of the subject is Jacobsen (ed.) (2012).]

47. The hypocrite is the one who only washes his body.  
 [The yogi] reverses his breath and lights the fire.  
 He does not let go of semen even in the sleep.  
 Such a ‘hypocrite’ should be considered equal to God.

[To wash the body by taking ritual baths (*snān*) several times a day is one of the obligations as well as one of the typical activities of the *brahmins*, but

Gorakhnāth here again suggests that the external observances are inconsequential. To express it in a biblical vocabulary, what the *sabad* proposes is not a baptism by water, but by fire. The “fire” of *kunḍalinī* is kindled by “reversing the breath”: the flow of the *prāṇa* needs to be redirected, so that it flows upward along the central channel through the spinal column. We have emended the text by substituting “supnai” (“sleep”) for the original “sumnai.” “Equal to God”: the literal translation is “equal to reality” or “essence.”]

48. Mind is the yogi and the body is the temple; five elements make the robe.

Forgiveness is [sitting in] the six postures.

Wisdom is the supporting crutch and good judgment the wooden slippers.

Thinking is the walking stick.

[In this *sabad*, the psychophysical and ethical aspects of a person are esoterically correlated with the attributes, characteristic practices, and external insignia of the yogi. Mind in the body is thus considered equivalent to a yogi in the temple; the five elements, from which the body is made, are equivalent to the patched robe of an ascetic, and so on. On the one hand, the implication is that the insignia of a yogi symbolize moral and spiritual qualities, but on the other hand, the assumption is that no external accouterments are essential since the person’s mental and physical components are as such sufficient for yoga. The similar esoteric correlations, in which the external realities are made equivalent with the human microcosm, are also prominent in the text “A Line of Hair” (“Romāvalī”), included in this volume. We have emended the original “gāyā” (“singing”) in the first line by replacing it with the logical alternative “kāyā” (“body”).]

49. In walking, the Moon sinks.

In sitting, the fire of *brahman* burns.

In the slanted posture, fasten the magic pill,

That makes the body remain as long as the earth.

[To “fasten the magic pill” translates the Hindi term *goṭikā bandh*. “Goṭikā” (also, and more commonly, “guṭikā”) is a small ball or pill with magical properties. “Goṭikā bandh” is a specific term for a technique “in which the yogin fixes a mercurial pill (*guṭikā*) in a recess of the palate as a means of catalyzing

the effects of his yogic practices” (White 1996: 277). Barṭhvāl (1946: 18) mentions a legend, according to which such pill, when held in the mouth, makes the yogi invisible, but, in general, many other *siddhis* are also attributed to the effects of the *guṭikās*. The context of the *sabad*, however indicates that what is meant by the acquisition of this magic pill in this case is the *siddhi* par excellence, the immortality. For a contrasting view, see “Instruction to a King” (“Narvai Bodh”), included in this volume, where we find the admonition: “Avoid crystals, alchemy, and magic pills!” (v. 13).]

50. This very mind is Śakti, this very mind is Śiva.  
 This very mind is the soul of the five elements.  
 The one who controls the mind and remains in the *unman*,  
 He may speak about the secrets of the three worlds.
50. Oh, *avadhūt*, he, who closes the path of the nine passages,  
 Does business with the wind at sixty-four shops.  
 He renews the body in a steady manner.  
 Discarding the shadow, he becomes a *siddha*.

[Barṭhvāl’s edition lists two *sabads* under the number 50 and we have followed this numerical oddity. The “nine passages” refer to nine orifices in the body. The mercantile metaphor of “doing business with the wind” alludes to the control of breath, the *prāṇāyāma*. It is believed that the accomplished adepts of yoga, the *siddhas*, cast no shadow.]

51. Oh, *avadhūt*, control the breath and remain in the *unmanī*.  
 In the same way, sound the horn of the unstruck sound.  
 In the circle of the sky, brilliant light shines.  
 But there is neither the Moon nor the Sun there.

[The content of this *sabad* describes the transcendence of ordinary, *saṃsāric* conditions through the practice of yoga. Barṭhvāl (1946: 19) glosses the “brilliant light” as the light of *brahman*. That this light exists independent of the Moon and the Sun on the one hand suggests that it is uncreated and not of this world, while on the other hand it implies that it exists beyond the condition of duality, often symbolized by this pair of luminaries. Another allusion concerns the esoteric mapping of the subtle body: two of the three main conduits of the vital force are associated with the Moon (*iṛā*) and the Sun (*piṅgalā*); accordingly, this photic event occurs above and

beyond their level (they merge together with *suṣumṇā* at the confluence of the “three rivers” in the region of the “third eye”).]

52. Breathing the incoming and outgoing air should be your food.  
 Close the nine gates.  
 From time to time renew the body.  
 Then you will master the *unmanī* yoga.

[“Air should be your food”—it is a traditional assumption that the yogis are able to feed on the air (or rather, the vital breath, *prāṇ*) only. The “nine gates” refer to the nine corporal apertures. To “renew the body” implies its alchemical transformation or regeneration.]

53. O *avadhūt*, the breath should go to the *sahasra nāḍī*.  
 Then the myriad sounds shall ring.  
 The breath will drink the rays of seventy-two Moons,  
 When the primal light shines.
54. In the house of the moonless night, the Moon sparkles,  
 And in the house of the full Moon, there’s the Sun.  
 In the house of the *nād*, the *bindu* thunders,  
 And sounds the silent horn.
55. In the reversed *nād* is the transformed *bindu*.  
 In the house of the breath, recognize life!  
 It flows down from the empty circle.  
 Join the Moon and the Sun and remain in the *unmanī*.

[To “join the Moon and the Sun” is arguably the basic tenet of the *haṭha* yoga. As already remarked, these two heavenly luminaries in the context of yogic *sādhanā* refer to the conduits of breath and vital energy (*prāṇ*) positioned to the left and right of the *suṣumṇā* that eventually lead to the left and right nostril. More philosophically understood, to join these two opposites simultaneously implies a mastery over them and, by the same token, it connotes the ability to transcend them. See also the following note.]

56. O *avadhūt*, in the first *nāṛī* the *nād* jangles,  
 And in the fiery *nāṛī* is the wind.  
 In the cold *nāṛī*, the *bindu* dwells.  
 Few yogis know its goings.

[The “first *nārī*” refers to the median channel (*suṣumṇā*) of the subtle body; the “fiery *nārī*” is the *piṅgalā*, associated with the Sun; and the “cold *nārī*” is *īṛā*, which corresponds with the Moon. See Barṭhvāl (1946: 20–21).]

57. In the rising breath the Sun burns.  
 In the setting breath is the Moon.  
 The yogi always delays them both.  
 Where the *bindu* dwells, there is life.

[The Sun and the Moon are correlated with the two opposing conduits of subtle energy, associated with the inhaling (rising) and exhaling (setting) breath. The yogi, however, focuses attention on the middle channel, the *suṣumṇā*, which is also the locus of the source of immortality.]

58. So many come, so many go,  
 So many beg, so many eat,  
 So many sit beneath a tree—  
 But with whom may Gorakh speak about his experience?
59. Oh scholar, you who see [only] after reading—live, and behold  
 the essence!  
 Cross to the other side by your own deeds!  
 Gorakh says, to whom should I give the proof [of experience]?  
 There is a light in every heart that animals do not see with their  
 eyes.

[This *sabad* reiterates the supremacy of spiritual practice over mere intellectual familiarity with the matter. The “animals” in this context is a derogatory term referring to noninitiates, the worldly people.]

60. O *avadhūt*, pierce the diamond by the *sabad*  
 In the mint of the tongue.  
 Do well in the midst of bad.  
 Then the whole world becomes your disciple.

[The first part of this verse could be rephrased as: “By the device of the *sabad* (here probably in the sense of *mantra*) attain to the truth (symbolized by the diamond).” It is noteworthy that there is a parallelism between

ontological level, indicated by obtaining (“piercing”) the pure diamond in the mint, and the ethical level, indicated by the injunction to do well in the midst of bad.]

61. What was incomplete became full,  
 And what did not flow, now flows.  
 [But] sharper than a sword or razor is the road  
 About which the true guru has spoken.

[The difficulties inherent in pursuing the path to spiritual liberation have already in the *Upaniṣads* been compared to a walk over the razor’s edge; for a *locus classicus*, see *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 3: 14.]

62. If it is in the body, then have hope in this station.  
 If in the forest, then [have hope] in the animals that come from it.  
 If it is in the milk, hope for the butter.  
 Only activity is the essence of achievement.

[This translation is rather tentative. The gist of the *sabad* seems to be that it is futile to place one’s hope in finding spiritual essence within the phenomenal world. The esoteric reality permeates exoteric phenomena but it cannot be considered as identical with them.]

63. Remaining within the mind, not disclosing the secret,  
 The words of nectar should be spoken.  
 If anybody in front of you is the fire,  
 O *avadhūt*, you should be the water.

[The injunction not to disclose the secrets concomitant to one’s spiritual path is a standard precept in yogic and tantric literature, which is also one of the principal reasons that these traditions are safely defined as esoteric. There is an apparent paradox expressed by the immediate next statement, suggesting that one should speak “the words of nectar.” The assumption is that the obtainment of the nectar through the means of yoga finds its expression in the outward behavior, including one’s discourse; such discourse, however, should not disclose the technical paraphernalia, the minutiae of the practice, that is the sole prerogative of the initiates in a particular tradition.]



64. Remaining within the *unman*, not disclosing the secret,  
 The nectar water should be drunk.  
 Leaving Laṅkā, going to Palaṅkā,  
 You should hear the speech from the guru's mouth.

[Baṛthvāl (1946: 23) interprets the phrase “leaving Laṅkā, going to Palaṅkā” as suggesting that one should renounce the false and search for the true reality (Laṅkā is, in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, a city of illusion built by the demons, *rākṣasas*; Palaṅkā is a city that is “beyond Laṅkā,” hence, beyond the world of *māyā*). Callewaert (2009, s.v. “Palaṅkā”) notes that the “expression “leave Laṅkā and arrive in Palaṅkā” may suggest that someone abandons his duty to start something else.” Contextually, such reading of the phrase does not fit the import of the *sabad*; hence our preference to Baṛthvāl's rendition.]

65. A city is graced by many waters, roots, and trees;  
 An assembly is graced by learned elders;  
 A king is graced by a loyal army;  
 And a *siddha* is graced by a pure and wise speech.
66. Very few know the secret of non-duality,  
 Very few know how to cut through duality.  
 Very few know the untold story,  
 Very few know the pure and wise speech.
67. Going to the northern region, eating the fruit of emptiness,  
 One should put on the clothes of *brahman*'s fire.  
 Having drunk the stream of flowing nectar,  
 The mind becomes settled.

[This *sabad* references the esoteric topology of the human subtle body accessible through the practice of yoga. The “northern region” refers to the *brahmarandhra* (see Callewaert 2009, s.v. “uttar-khaṇḍ”), while the fruit of emptiness is the concomitant experience of the reality of *brahman* (Baṛthvāl 1946: 24). The “fire of *brahman*” is the Nāths' typical term for *kuṇḍalīnī*. In his comments, Baṛthvāl (24) underscores the Gorakhnāth's preference to esoteric pilgrimage (along the axis of the subtle body) as opposed to literal travels to the northern, mountainous regions of India in order to practice yoga. For a perceptive analysis

of the interiorized sacred geography in Śaiva tantric traditions, see Dyczkowski (2001).]

68. The Hindu worships in the temple,  
 The Muslim in the mosque;  
 The yogi worships at the highest station,  
 Where there is neither temple nor mosque.

[This *sabad* is very similar to the typical tenor of Kabīr’s poetry and his “interior religion” (Vaudeville 1964). Sociologically, the power and prestige associated with the established, external religion is being rejected while simultaneously and by the same gesture, the preeminence of the esoteric path is confirmed. “The highest station,” *parampad*, could also be translated as the “supreme reality,” but a spatial designation fit the context more suitably.]

69. [Incomplete *sabad*.]

70. If it is in the body then no one should die,  
 But everyone looks for it in the outside world.  
 The body is always in the world,  
 Says Gorakh, Matsyendra’s devotee.

[This is another tentative translation. Baṛthvāl (1946: 25) understands the closing lines as Gorakh’s declaration to be above both the body and the world.]

71. A sitting *avadhūt* is like an iron peg,  
 A moving *avadhūt* is like a fist of wind.  
 A sleeping *avadhūt* is a living corpse,  
 A talking *avadhūt* is a parrot in a cage.
72. Gorakh says, Oh *avadhūt*, listen:  
 Be like this in the world:  
 Look with your eyes; listen with your ears;  
 But don’t say anything with your mouth.
73. The *nāth* says, take care of your soul,  
 Don’t stubbornly engage in disputes!  
 This world is a thorny bush.  
 Look carefully, watch your step!

74. Gorakh says, Hey *avadhūt*,  
Beware of the God of Death!  
If he strikes the person on the head with his mace,  
He vanishes before his time.

[We have corrected the obvious typo in Barṭhvāl's edition, which misspells the *avadhūt* as *vadhū*, the "bride." We have accepted Barṭhvāl's interpretation of the original's Śīsupāl (Susūpāl) as a reference to the God of Death (or simply Death/Time, Hindi "kāl," in his interpretation of the text). Śīsupāl was Kṛṣṇa's cousin and enemy, who opposed his worship and met his end by having his head chopped off by Kṛṣṇa's discus (see Monier-Williams, s.v. "Śīsupāla"). An alternative and equally tentative translation would be: "Gorakh says, O *avadhūt*, be afraid [as if you were] Śīsupāl! The mace can strike the head [at any time] and without it, you will end up dying!"]

75. Discard the vision in front of the eyes,  
Stop listening with the ears.  
Disregard the air in front of the nose.  
Then, what remains is the place of bliss [*nirvāṇ pad*].
76. Hey *avadhūt*, the mind should be called our ball,  
And remembrance our polo stick.  
With the unstruck sound, the game begins.  
Then you may call the heaven our playing field.
77. When the *siddhas* make the five elements their disciples,  
Then the colourless meets the formless.  
Catch the mad elephant of the mind, oh *avadhūt*,  
And then loot the eternal treasure.

[The first line in the original Hindi literally states, "When the *siddhas* shave the heads of the five elements," referring to the ceremonial removal of the hair as a token of discipleship. Both the "colourless" (*nirañjan*) and the "formless" (*nirākar*) are the attributes of the Supreme Being, but in this context, they probably refer to the "meeting" between the individual *ātman* and the universal *brahman*. Lawrence (2008: 144, n. 23) notes that "in South Asian traditions elephants are associated with pride and other physical, psychological, and spiritual tendencies that need to be controlled."]

78. It is risen between up and down,  
 And sits in the middle of emptiness.  
 There is the meeting with the intoxicated.  
 Gorakhnāth says, thus I reached the essence.

[“Up and down” (*aradh-uradh*) is a polysemous expression that can also, *inter alia*, refer to the heaven and earth, this world and the next world, as well as the highest and lowest *cakras* in the body (see Callewaert 2009, s.v. “aradh-uradh”). Baṛthvāl interprets it as a reference to the in- and out-breath, and “the intoxicated” as indicating the god Śiva.]

79. The real ascetic is the one who controls himself,  
 And who stops the coming and going of the mind.  
 He kills the pride of the five sense organs.  
 Such an ascetic is equal to Truth.
80. Oh, I have found it, I have found this good.  
 By *sabad*, I reached the stable place.  
 I had a vision of it [embodied in] form.  
 Then everything became true knowledge.
81. In between the lower lotus and the upper lotus  
 Is the place of the *prāṇ puruṣ*.  
 The twelve *haṃsas* will reverse their movement,  
 And only then the light will shine.

[“A person whose consciousness moves between the navel and the nostrils is a *prana purusha*” (Jain 2010: 89). Callewaert (2009) defines *prāṇ puruṣ* as a “physical soul.” It literally means, “the man of breath.” The reversal of the *haṃsas* [lit. “swans”] refers to a technique of breath control.]

82. Sitting in the posture, stopping the breath,  
 All these stations of pride are just worldly business.  
 Gorakhnāth says: Thinking about the self  
 Is like watching the moon in water.
83. Gorakh says, listen *avadhūt*,  
 The five senses should be restrained.  
 Know your own self,  
 Then the five senses will sleep.

[This *sabad* in the original Hindi employs the metaphor of “grazing,” which the Indian culture associates with the activities of the senses, which are constantly oriented outward and “feeding” upon sensual impressions. The *sabad* urges that such activities of the senses be discontinued.]

84. Food and sleep are [our] deadly enemies.  
 How to protect the guru’s treasure [while eating and sleeping]?  
 Reduce eating, cut down on sleep,  
 And make Śiva unite with Śakti!
85. When you know the *anāhad-bandh*  
 You do not fall back into three worlds, you do not fall back into the  
 body.  
 Do not discharge semen [made] of blood from the body!  
 The yogi says, do not crush the diamond!
86. I will ask one *sabad*, please answer, merciful teacher.  
 How can an old one become a child?  
 How can an open flower become a bud?  
 Whoever can answer what has been asked, he is a Gorakh.
87. Please listen, give up the formalities of the temple.  
 Having drunk nectar, you will become a child.  
 Water the root with the fire of *brahman*,  
 And then the open flower will again become a bud.

[This whole *sabad* is structured on the principle of reversal. Ordinarily, people focus on the temple worship, the children grow old, and the buds, with their roots irrigated by water, turn to flowers. Gorakh suggest to quit the temple, in other words to replace the exterior worship with the interior one, to irrigate the “root” (*mūlādhār cakra*) with the “fire” of *brahman*, and the end result will be the reversal of the *samsāric* predicament: the old person will become a child, and the flower a bud.]

88. Join the reversed breath with the sky.  
 Then the child’s form will become visible.  
 When the breath joins the setting Sun with the Moon,  
 Then the bound elephant will enter the hall.

[In this *sabad*, we again encounter the symbol of the child as a visible form of *brahman*—or *ātman*, which amounts to the same. Barṭhvāl (1946: 31) glosses the Sun as a reference to the root *cakra* and the Moon as a reference to *brahmarandhra*—a plausible interpretation, although the Moon more probably refers to the *ājñā cakra*. He further suggests that the elephant is a metaphor for the mind. To enter the hall would then imply the necessary precondition for a vision, *darśan*, of one’s essential self, the *ātman*.]

89. The twelve digits make dry, and the sixteen digits nourish.  
 Whoever obtains the four digits [of the nectar] lives the endless life.  
 Light and fire are on the sea and on the earth.  
 [The yogi] obtains the *siddhis* and drinks the four digits [of nectar].

[The “twelve digits” (“*bārā kalā*”) refer to the Sun (and the related *cakra* or the conduit of subtle energy within the body), and the “sixteen digits” (“*solā kalā*”) to the Moon (and the related *cakra* or the conduit of subtle energy).]

90. Those who accomplish the impossible, like a thunder in the  
 [clear] sky,  
 Who unlock the [state of] *unmanī*,  
 Those who reverse the breath, say reversed things,  
 Who drink the undrinkable: they are the ones who know *brahman*.
91. They write the unwritten, they see the unseen.  
 Through physical contact, they achieve vision.  
 Thundering in emptiness, striking the *nād*,  
 Those who write the unwritten, they are their own authority.
92. You should sit in a stable body and restrain the breath,  
 And then, there will never be any illness.  
 In twelve days, transform the body three times,  
 Like a yogi [who works with] *nāg*, *baṅg*, and *banāspatī*.

[The first verse could also be translated as, “You should sit in a stable house.” In this *sabad* we again encounter the notion of the (alchemical) transformation of the body, indicated by the semantic range of the verb *palatṇā*. Barṭhvāl (1946: 32) interprets the *nāg* as the leaden cinders, the

*bang* as the tin cinders, while *banāspati* refers to plants. McGregor glosses the *bang* as “oxide of tin (taken as an aphrodisiac)” (1997, s.v. “bang”). The implication seems to be that an application of chemical and herbal substances, alongside with the practice of yoga, leads to the rejuvenation, or transformation, of the body. See also GBS 33.]

93. The light of the Moon is in the sixteen *nārīs*,  
And the Sun is in the twelve *nārīs*.  
The *prāṇas* gather in the thousand *nārīs*,  
Where Śiva dwells within countless *kalās*.

[This *sabad* explores the metaphysical correlations involving three main channels of the subtle breath within the body: the number 16 and the Moon refer to the left channel, *iṛā*; the number 12 and the Sun correlate with the right channel, *piṅgalā*; while the number 1,000 refers to the central channel, *suṣumnā*. See Barṭhvāl (1946: 33). From another point of view, the 1,000 could as well refer to the “thousand-petaled” lotus, the *sahasrār cakra*, in particular since this is typically assumed to be Śiva’s dwelling place within human’s subtle body.]

94. Oh *avadhūt*, the path of *iṛā* is called the Moon,  
And the path of *piṅgalā*, the Sun.  
They say that the path of *suṣumṇā* is [the goddess of] Speech,  
The residence of the three roots.

[Barṭhvāl (1946: 33) glosses the “speech” in the third verse as a reference to the goddess Sarasvatī, hence our added clarification in square brackets: the original simply states that “the path of *suṣumṇā* is called speech.” Sarasvatī is associated with speech since the Vedic times. Sarasvatī is also a river that, according to Hindu mythology meets with Gaṅgā and Yamunā at Allahabad [Prayāg], a famous place of pilgrimage. Esoterically, these three also flow through the human subtle body and meet at the *triveṇī*, typically assumed to be located within the region of the “third eye.”]

95. Oh *avadhūt*, they say that our body is a rifle;  
The breath is called gunpowder,  
Agni is the match, *anāhad* the bang;  
*Bindu* is a shot towards the sky.

[This *sabad*, incorporating the metaphor of gunpowder weaponry as applied to both the human body and the practice of yoga, is clearly several centuries removed from the assumed life frame of the historical Gorakhnāth.]

96. *Kāzīs* and *mullas* are set on the *Kur'an*,  
 And *brahmins* on the *Vedas*.  
 Pilgrims and renouncers are lost on pilgrimages.  
 None has found the secret of the *nirvāṇ pad*.

97. A journey to the temples is a journey in vain.  
 Journeying to the *tīrths*, one finds only water.  
 A journey to the Beyond is a fruitful journey,  
 Where the immortal words are spoken.

[The *tīrths* are fords, places of crossing over (understood both literally and metaphorically), and pilgrimage centers at the banks of river.]

98. Contemplating the higher in the lower,  
 It is, even in the lower.  
 Having known the lower and the higher,  
 Nothing is out *there*.

[The text in Barṭhvāl (1946) appears corrupt; Callewaert and Beeck's edition (1991) is consulted instead.]

99. I kill those who stand, I kill those who sit,  
 I kill those who are awake and those who sleep.  
 My net is spread out in the wombs of the three worlds.  
 So where will you go, son?

[The speaker in this *sabad* is a personified *māyā*, the force of illusion, or rather, false reality.]

100. I destroy you standing, I destroy you sitting,  
 I destroy you while awake and while sleeping.  
 I remain eternal in the three worlds.  
 Thus says Gorakh *avadhūt*.



101. Sleep says, I am wretched,  
 [Although] I've deceived Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva.  
 Sleep says, I am totally ruined:  
 Gorakh is awake, and I lie sleeping.
102. The yogi is the one who disciplines the mind.  
 Without a realm, he still enjoys the kingdom.  
 Giving up both wealth and sex,  
 He is the lord of yoga, without fear.

[To give up “wealth and sex” (literally “gold and women”) is a stock phrase, which refers to giving up delusions and attachments associated with sensual enjoyments.]

103. He who gives up everything is a renouncer [*saṃnyāsī*],  
 The one who maintains hope in the circle of the sky.  
 Hearing the unstruck sound, keeping the mind in the *unman*—  
 The *saṃnyāsī* is the one who speaks of the unreachable.
104. Lāl says: I have crossed over.  
 The fools stay on this side.  
 But the yogi who lacks stability is a false one.  
 He is neither on this side nor across.
105. The reversed breath has pierced the six *cakras*,  
 The hot iron has sucked up the water.  
 Both the Moon and the Sun are kept in one's own house—  
 Such is the knower of the supreme reality.

[The Hindi term, which we have translated as the “supreme reality,” is *alakh*. It literally refers to something that is without perceptible attributes or forms. It is also a word used as a standard greeting among the Nāth yogis.]

106. Who is sounding our *nād*?  
 The resounding *nād* disrupts the breath.  
 The unstruck *sabad* keeps resounding.  
 This is the sign of accomplishment, says Śrī Gorakh.

107. Listen, oh virtuous one! Listen, oh wise!  
 [Listen to] the words of the countless *siddhas*.  
 Bowing the head, after having met the true guru,  
 The night passes while being awake.
108. Know that alms is our Cow of Plenty,  
 And that *saṃsār* is our garden.  
 I will eat the begged food, due to the kindness of the guru,  
 And at the time of death, there will be no burden.
109. With the big buttocks and a fat belly,  
 Oh son, you have not met your guru.  
 When the body is upright and the eyes clear,  
 Then, oh son, you have met your guru.
110. There is neither *nirati* nor *surati* [at that state], neither yoga nor  
 enjoyment;  
 There is neither old age nor death,  
 And there is no illness there.  
 Gorakh proclaims the oneness [*ekaṃkār*], where there is no sound  
 of *oṃ* [*oamkār*].

[Vaudeville (1974: 135) provides an eloquent definition of the technical terms *nirati* and *surati*, employed in this *sabad*: “*Nirati* appears to have been formed after *surati*, according to the coupling system typical of the Tāntric way of thinking: as *nivṛtti* is deemed superior to *pravṛtti*, so *nirati* is conceived as superior even to *surati* and equivalent to *nirālambha sthiti*, the ‘supportless condition,’ which is another way of referring to the Sahaja state. In the *Gorakh-Bānīs*, it is said that *surati* is the *sādhaka* whereas *nirati* is *siddhi*, accomplishment, i.e. salvation.” Lorenzen (2011: 40–41) points out the distinction between two other technical terms, *ekaṃkār* and *oamkār*: the mantra “ek” (one) and the famous mantra “oṃ” and suggests that in “this direct contrast between the mantras *EK* and *OM* [as evidenced in the *sabad* above], Gorakh clearly prefers *ek-amkār* over *o-amkār*. . . . What seems to be implicit in this contrast is a distinction between a traditional Vedic mantra, namely *OM*, and a more explicitly monotheistic mantra associated with the Nirgunis (and possibly the Muslims), namely the mantra *EK* (One).”]

111. There is neither rising nor setting [there], neither night nor day.  
The whole universe is a being without separation.  
Nirañjan is without branch and without root,  
All pervading, neither subtle nor gross.
112. The universe will burst open and the city will be plundered.  
No one will understand the secret.  
Gorakhnāth says, When the doors of the body are closed,  
You may catch the five gods.

[The five gods here refer to the five senses. The assumption is that by closing the “doors of the body” one is able to achieve the mastery over the five senses. Such withdrawal from the attention given to the senses constitutes what is in Pātañjala yoga defined as *pratyāhāra*, a preliminary stage that makes possible the concentration of the mind, *dhāraṇā*.]

113. The ego has to be broken, the formless has to burst open,  
The Gaṅgā’s and Yamunā’s water has to dry out.  
The Moon and the Sun have to be fixed facing each other.  
Oh *avadhūt*, explain their union there!

[The Gaṅgā and Yamunā rivers refer to *īṛā* and *piṅgalā nāḍīs*; the Sun is associated with either *piṅgalā* or the *maṇipūr cakra* (in the region of the “solar” plexus), and the Moon with either *īṛā* or the *ājñā cakra* in the subtle body. See Barṭhvāl (1946: 40).]

114. Oh my mind! Be alert!  
The ego should not be polished!  
The confidence in the five [senses] should be given up!  
Gorakh says: They are truly wise, whose mind dwells in the *unmani*.
115. Oh brave one, understand the signs of the accomplishment!  
A horn resounds in the sky,  
The Sun lays in the path of the fish,  
And the reversed flower turns into a bud.
116. Where the scent is fragrant, there the play is revealed.  
There is a meeting in the house of the sky at the distance of twelve fingers.  
Gorakh says, Son, you will live a long life.  
The body will not fall; you will not go into the house of Death.

[We have emended Baṛthvāl's "bāl basant" ("the scent of the child") to "bās basant" ("the scent of the fragrance" or "fragrant scent"). Callewaert and Beeck (1991: 493) also accept the latter reading.]

117. Flesh [comes] from food, bones from the air.  
 To coat them with essence, you should eat breath.  
 Gorakh says, Son, you will live a long life.  
 The body will not fall; you will not go into the realm of Death.

[In this *sabad*, the word for body, "ghaṭ," also carries a secondary meaning of "(clay) pot." The metaphorical correlation between these two is common in Indian devotional poetry, both Islamic and Hindu.]

118. Om! The *pīr* is the iron; his instruction is the copper.  
 Muhammad is silver; God is gold. In between them, the world is  
 drowning.  
 Only we sit and watch, like this, without support.  
 This is the true saying of *bābā* Ratanhājī.

[The Sufi saint Hājji Ratan is also known as Ratan-nāth yogi. In an important article, Bouillier and Khan (2009) consider him an exemplar of a fluid identity of the Nāth yogis in general, able to inhabit both Hindu and Islamic cultural universes, while at the same time being a relatively distinct religious group. See also Bouillier (2017: 171–89). We meet him again in GBS 21.]

119. Talking is easy; doing is difficult.  
 Talking without doing is worthless.  
 A cat eats an educated parrot,  
 And in the scholar's hands [only] a book remains.
120. Talking is easy; doing is difficult.  
 Without eating, [you say] "Sugar is sweet."  
 You eat asafetida, but say it is camphor.  
 Gorakh says: All that is false.

[Both Baṛthvāl as well as Callewaert and Beeck read "kasūr" ("fault") in the third line, but the former refers to "kapūr" ("camphor") in his comments: we have adopted this reading as being contextually more appropriate. The basic gist of this and the previous *sabad* is that the discourse that is not based on experience is useless or false.]

121. Oh *avadhūt*, do not sit in an assembly of fools;  
Do not engage in discussions with scholars;  
Do not fight a battle against a king;  
Do not disclose the *nād* to a careless person!
122. Know the disposition of the heart by [the work of] the hands.  
This is the evil *kali* age.  
Gorakh says: Listen, oh *avadhūt*,  
What is in the pot goes out through the spout.
123. Through the restrain of water, the sky becomes immobile;  
Through the restrain of food, the light becomes brilliant;  
Through the restrain of breath, the closure begins;  
Through the restrain of the *bindu*, the body became stable.

[Barthvāl (1946: 43–44) glosses the “sky” as *brahmarandhra* and the “closure” as referring to closing the “nine doors,” i.e., openings in the body (two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth, the genital and anal orifice, and the *brahmarandhra*). The final verse could alternatively read as “Through the restrain of the *bindu*, the root became stable,” in which case the “root” would refer to *mūlādhār cakra*.]

124. Get hold of the *sabad*, oh *avadhūt*, get hold of the *sabad*!  
Status and pride are all [based on] duality.  
In the midst of the *ātmā* see the *paramatmā*,  
Like the Moon in the midst of water.
125. The posture should be firm;  
The food should be solid and the sleep as well.  
Gorakh says, Listen, oh son!  
[This way] you will not die nor grow old.
126. Some blame us, some praise us,  
Some have faith in us.  
Gorakh says, Listen, oh *avadhūt*!  
This path is truly without attachments.
127. There are 100,000 bows and 900,000 arrows.  
They have pierced the fish that dwells in the sky.

The fish is pierced together with the sky.  
It is true, it is true, says Śrī Gorakhnāth.

[Barṭhvāl (1946: 45) glosses the fish as *brahmarandhra*, and understands it as a target of yogic *sādhanā*.]

128. When the concentration is broken, how can the nectar flow?  
[When the mind is] Fixed in the *unmani*, the stability [of the flow] remains.  
Fixed in the *unmani*, there is bliss.  
If the concentration is broken, the root decays.
129. Take hold of the *sabad*, oh *avadhūt*, take hold of the *sabad*!  
The *sabad* makes the body perfect.  
Ninety-nine *crores* of kings have shaved their heads for this,  
And their countless subjects have done the same.

[What we translate as “The *sabad* makes the body perfect” more literally means, “The *sabad* cooks the body.” As already indicated, the metaphor of “cooking” as an expression of spiritual maturing has its root in the ancient Indian concept of *tapas*, the spiritual “heat” generated by the practice of asceticism. To shave the head is an act that indicates becoming a disciple of a spiritual teacher. A *crore* is a number indicating 10 million.]

130. The subtle breath remains continuous.  
Inside, the great nectar perfects the body.  
Gorakh says, I have caught the unstable.  
Joining Śiva and Śakti, I remained within my own house.
131. Rejecting the fire of the stomach,  
I ate with the fire of the eyes.  
The wisdom of the *guru* was right in front,  
But only a rare *avadhūt* has found it.

[According to Indian tradition, the fire dwells inside the stomach and digests the food. The *sabad* suggests the employment of the eyes, of the insight, instead. Barṭhvāl (1946: 46) interprets the metaphor of digestion as a reference to the destruction of *māyā* by the power of wisdom.

(We have accepted Callewaert and Beeck's reading of "diṣṭi kī agani" over Barṭhvāl's "diṣṭi ko agani.")

132. The inaccessible and the unseen remain beyond passion.  
But there is no rest in a cave with a bee.  
They are awake at night yet they don't know the method.  
None of them holds the mind in control.

[The "cave with a bee" is *brahmarandhra*. Callewaert (2009) provides an alternative translation of the Hindi expression "bhaṃvar gupha" as "whirlpool cave." The sound of a bee is one of the inner sounds that a yogi hears in the course of yogic *sādhana*. For a description of such sounds, see the fourth chapter of the *Haṭhapradīpikā*.]

133. There are nine veins and seventy-two rooms.  
All *aṣṭāṅga* is a lie.  
Use the *suṣumnā* as the key and the lock.  
Reverse the tongue and touch the palate.
134. Oh scholar, why do you die struggling for knowledge?  
Know the highest place in some other way!  
You are creating commotion with *āsan* and *prāṇāyāma*.  
Day and night, you work yourself to death, [always] beginning.
135. The *unman* yogi is in the tenth opening.  
[He hears] the roaring sound of the union of the *nāḍ* and *bindu*.  
Closing the door of the tenth opening,  
Gorakh has investigated [it] by other means.

[The "tenth opening" or the "tenth door" is a reference to the cranial subtle opening, the *brahmarandhra* (the other nine being the natural openings in the body: two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth, and the anal and genital apertures).]

136. They call the beginner yogi the one who is  
Just like the yogi who is always mindful of the body.  
The moving *bindu* should be balanced in one place.  
Then you will know what it means to be the beginner yogi.

[This translation is somewhat tentative. This and the following three *sabads* describe the four stages of yoga, and the reciprocal four types of yogis, who we translate as “the beginner,” “[within] the body,” “the experienced,” and “the perfected.” As Mallinson and Singleton (2017: 7) remark, these stages (which they translate as “inception,” “action,” “accumulation,” and “completion”) are for the first time described in *Amṛtasiddhi* and *Dattātreya-Yogaśāstra*. For the translation of *Dattātreya-Yogaśāstra*, see Mallinson (2013).]

137. Remaining within the body, the mind never goes far.  
 The yogi drinks the wine like a hero, day and night.  
 When the breath takes away both what’s pleasant and what’s  
 unpleasant,  
 You will know the quality of the yogi’s body.

[What we translate here as the “body” (*ghaṭ*, Skt. *ghaṭa*) is a polysemous word that could equally well be translated as a “jar” or a “clay pot.” The human body is often compared to a clay pot in the devotional literature of India. Somewhat loosely translated the third verse implies that the practice of breath control will lead to the transcendence of the dualities inherent in the phenomenal world.]

138. The experienced yogi plays in the *unman*.  
 Day and night, he meets the gods, as is his will.  
 At any moment he can take various forms.  
 Know then the essential form of the experienced yogi!
139. How to recognize a perfected yogi?  
 He is like an iron, [remaining the same] in fire and water.  
 He looks upon the king and his subjects as equal.  
 Thus you will know the form of the perfected yogi.
140. Oh *avadhūt*, the salty food causes the loss of weight,  
 And acidic food causes the water to fall.  
 The sweets produce diseases. Gorakh says, Listen, oh *avadhūt*:  
 Yoga consists of grains and water.



[The “fall of water” is here a code phrase for the loss of semen.]

141. Those who, while performing the *vajrolī*, take care of the *amarolī*,  
 And, while performing the *amarolī*, take care of the breath;  
 Those who in the sexual intercourse preserve the *bindu*,  
 They are Gorakh’s guru-brothers.

[The *vajrolī* and *amarolī* are two *mudrās* often encountered in the *haṭha* yoga literature. “Some of the *mudras* of Haṭha Yoga involve peculiar exercises such as sucking the seminal fluids back up the urethra after ejaculation (*vajrolīmudrā*), drinking urine using the fluid as a nasal douche (*amarolīmudrā*) and so forth” (Larson 2008: 141). According to Mallinson (2018: 194), however, “rather than the ability to resorb semen, it is this ability to prevent it from falling in the first place with which *vajrolī* is most commonly associated in our textual sources.” This position seems to be confirmed by the third line of the *sabad*, which similarly emphasizes the retention of semen in the sexual activity. Mallinson (2018: 195) draws attention to the connection between the practice of *vajrolī mudra* and *rāja* yoga, and points out the eighteenth-century text *Jogapradīpakā* [or, *Jogapradīpyakā*], in which “*vajrolīmudrā*, taught under the name of *vīrya mudra*, i.e., the semen *mudrā*, is said to bring about *rājayoga*, which is the ability to enjoy oneself with women without losing one’s seed.” Mallinson (2018: 201–202) believes that “it was, as it still is, a technique practised by a very small number of ascetic yogis which their householder disciples know of and might aspire to practising, but will never actually accomplish.”

142. The *Bindu* in the mouth of the vagina is [like] the mercury in the mouth of fire.  
 Whosoever preserves it, he is my *guru*.

[This is apparently a saying, rather than *sabad*, since it formally does not fit the category (its length, instead of two, is only one line in the Hindi original). Thematically, it is yet another indication of, probably rare, the practice of a sexual intercourse without ejaculation.]

143. Those who seek the essence of pleasure in the body  
 Make light of the *guru*’s words.  
 Without fire there is no control,  
 And the uncooked juice spills out.

[The Hindi original literally states: “Those who with the tongue seek the essence of the sweetness in the body” and so on. The “fire” refers to the practice of yoga, without which “the uncooked juice,” i.e., the semen, spills out. In all the above three instances it is not the sexual activity as such but only the ejaculation of the semen that is being censored.]

144. Oh *avadhūt*, the Lord should be called my disciple,  
 And Matsyendra the grand disciple.  
 But that the Earth should not be destroyed for the lack of guru,  
 I have reversed my rank.

[The gist of this *sabad* seems to be that the disciple (Gorakhnāth) has overpassed both his immediate teacher (Matsyendranāth), as well as his teacher’s teacher (Śiva). By right, these two should be called Gorakh’s disciples. However, this would imply that Gorakh himself is without a teacher, which could set an unwarranted precedent. Thus, to uphold the proper tradition, Gorakh “reverses” his own rank and continues to call himself a disciple.]

145. Eating till full, there is spilling [of the semen].  
 This is not yoga, my son, but a great misfortune.  
 During the *saṁyam*, gather the breath!  
 In this way, the Eternal Person should be caught.

[In the Pātañjala yoga, the *saṁyama* refers to the three highest “limbs” of the practice: *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi*. The word itself simply means “self-control.” “The Eternal Person” translates the Hindi “akal puris.”]

146. Eating you die; not eating you die.  
 Gorakh says, Oh son, by *saṁyam* you can cross over.  
 Remain always in the middle.  
 When the mind is fixed, the breath becomes stable.
147. Breath is verily yoga, breath is verily pleasure.  
 Breath verily takes away the thirty-six diseases.  
 The one who knows the mystery of the breath  
 Is himself the Creator, himself the God.

148. *Bindu* is verily yoga, *bindu* is verily pleasure.  
*Bindu* verily takes away the sixty-four diseases.  
 The one who knows the mystery of the *bindu*  
 Is himself the creator, himself the God.

[The implication of the current and the previous *sabad*, which both attribute the highest prerogative to those who know the mystery of the breath and the *bindu*, is that there is an equivalence between the two. To put it somewhat differently, there can be no mastery over the sexual function unless the person has already become proficient in *prāṇāyāma*, which paradigmatically stands for the mastery in yoga as such.]

149. The true *sabad* is like a line of gold. To those without guru it is false.  
 To those who have a guru it is an instruction.  
 Guru's disciples remain virtuous.  
 Those without guru stray and turn wicked.
150. O *avadhūt*, those who understand don't forget.  
 Those without understanding are lost on the road.  
 They roam in the desolate jungle  
 Where they will be killed by the highwaymen.
151. An egotist takes care only of himself;  
 He does not search for the guru's word.  
 Those who search for the guru are living,  
 While the egotist's body perishes.
152. They are of unrestrained senses and an obscene tongue:  
 Gorakh says, They are obviously low persons.  
 A robed ascetic with a mouth that speaks truth—  
 Such a true man I call the highest.

["A robed ascetic" translates the Hindi phrase "kāch kā jatī." "Kāch" is an end part of a dhoti, a traditional male white garment worn around the waist and between the legs. Barṭhvāl (1946: 52) understands its purity as an indication of the supreme status of the person wearing it: the implication is that it indicates the abstinence from sexual activity.]

153. O *avadhūt*, if the heart is pure, then even [water] in a wooden pot becomes the Ganges.  
 If all ties are severed, the whole world is your disciple.  
 Gorakh explains the form of truth.  
 Consider the essence: it has neither representation nor form.
154. Searching for the evidence is a bad barter.  
 It is like finding the treasure in a dream.  
 We keep inquiring and gathering.  
 The *nāth* says: Oh son, that is neither false nor true.

[The above translation is rather tentative.]

155. Oh Goddess, come and take a seat!  
 Enter [the space] of the twelve fingers' breadth [above the head].  
 When you enter there, there will be happiness.  
 Then the sorrow of birth and death will go away.

[The space that is twelve fingers' breadth above the head denotes the *sahasrār cakra*. The expression "birth and death" refers to the essential attributes of the conditioned realm of existence, the *samsār*.]

156. Oh master, the breath is uncooked, life-energy is uncooked,  
 Uncooked is the body, the *bindu* is uncooked.  
 How to cook it? How to perfect it?  
 If the fire is insufficient, the water will not boil.
157. Oh Goddess: If the breath is cooked and life-energy is cooked,  
 If body is cooked and the *bindu* is cooked,  
 Then the fire of *brahman* burns continuously.  
 If the fire is sufficient, the water will boil.
158. Sleeping slanted, standing erect,  
 Neither the *bindu* nor the breath is on fire.  
 When the posture, breath and meditation are fixed,  
 The fire of *bindu* will not be extinguished.

159. The rising Sun; the full plate.  
 The sting of death is far away.  
 The *nāth*'s storage is completely full.  
 His daily food is always present.

[Barthvāl (1946: 54) interprets the “rising Sun” as a vision of *brahman*.]

160. [The real] rank and honour is the wisdom of a guru.  
 Reaching understanding, travel with the *siddhas*.  
 An intelligent child does not wander and stray away.  
 The mercy of the lord remains complete.

[Somewhat speculatively, Barthvāl glosses “reaching (or, more literally, piercing) understanding” as an allusion to penetrating the *kuṇḍalinī*. “An intelligent child” is perhaps better translated as “a child of the soul” or even, “a child that is the soul” and it here metaphorically refers to the inner guru, and perhaps even to Gorakh in the form of a child.]

161. Those who possess the superior truth should be called gurus,  
 And those who have less of the truth should be called disciples.  
 If you like it, travel in company;  
 Otherwise, wander alone.
162. Traveling on the path, one's robe is torn apart,  
 Dust rises, body perishes,  
 Concentration breaks,  
 God is abandoned.
163. Traveling on the path, the breath is disturbed,  
 As well as the *nād*, *bindu*, and wind.  
 The 68 *tīrths* are inside the body:  
 Hey brother, where are you traveling to?
164. If someone, having become a yogi,  
 Scorns other people and consumes wine, meat and *bhāṅg*,  
 He causes 71,000 of his ancestors to go to Hell.  
 It is true, it is true, says Śrī Gorakh-raī.

[*Bhāng* is an intoxicating drink or cake that contains cannabis as the psychoactive ingredient. In general, cannabis (*gāñjā*) is associated with, and sacred to, Śiva and it is not uncommon that Śaiva ascetics and devotees partake in eating, drinking, or smoking substances that contain it. While its use is quite common among the Nāth yogis, the practice is condemned on several occasions in *Gorakh Bānī*. See GBS 165, 208, 213, 232, and 241. For a contemporary prohibition against the use of cannabis by the Yogi Mahāsabhā, “the purpose of which is to unify, control, and promote the Nāth *sampradāya* across the entire Indian territory,” see Bouillier (2017: 62). She comments that the “prohibition against cannabis has little effect, at least on the roaming sadhus, and contradicts Śiva’s tastes” (62).]

165. Oh *avadhūt*, eating meat violates the law of compassion;  
 Drinking wine, life becomes hopeless;  
 Eating *bhāng* destroys wisdom and meditation:  
 People who do so weep in the court of the God of Death.
166. You should travel on the road or stitch the robe.  
 You should maintain meditation or speak wisdom.  
 You may be either alone or amongst others.  
 Gorakh says, Oh son, this way the mind will not be disturbed.
167. Oh scholar, study and consider the wisdom of *brahman!*  
 Upon death one is released in the heaven of Viṣṇu?  
 He goes to 84 burning pits!  
 It is true, it is true, says Gorakh-rāī.
168. Know Sadā-Śiva in the *ākāś-tattva!*  
 Inside it is the place of bliss [*nirvāṇ-pad*].  
 Whoever becomes intimate with the [true] body through initiation,  
 For him there is no more coming and going.

[Sadā-Śiva is one of the forms of the Great God. *Ākāś-tattva* is the element of space or heaven; it may also refer to the highest *cakra* in the subtle body. “Coming and going” is a metaphor for a cycle of life and death, which Indian tradition considers a realm that needs to be transcended in order to attain spiritual liberation. It is, however, indicative of the Nāth

worldview that such liberation from the realm of conditioned existence implies the “intimacy” (or, alternatively translated, “experience”) of a kind of a body: immortal and unsoiled by the limitations of *samsār*.]

169. The light of fire spreads through water and land.  
 The digits of the Sun are always pure.  
 The rays are touching the golden lotus.  
 They are drying out all the bad smells of dirty water.
170. By listening to everyone no wisdom will come.  
 The sandal tree does not grow in every forest.  
 Who will get the wealth and power?  
 Only a few understand the essence of this.
171. Having drunk the downward flowing nectar of immortality  
 I have pierced the six petals.  
 There I, king Gorakh,  
 Saw the moonlight without the Moon.

[Piercing “six petals” refers to the opening of the *cakras*. To see the moonlight without the Moon implies an experience that transcends the causal nature of things associated with the ordinary reality.]

172. Either the mind continues to hope,  
 Or it dwells in ultimate detachment.  
 Either the mind rests in the shelter of a guru,  
 Or it is set on a woman.
173. Suppressed, it does not have to be destroyed, or kept empty.  
 You should know the mystery of the fire.  
 Even the old one may become the speech of the guru.  
 It is true, it is true, says Śrī Gorakh-dev.

[We have accepted Barṭhvāl’s (1946: 59) inference that the first verse refers to the mind, which needs to be suppressed, or rather controlled, through the practice of yoga, but which does not need to be either “destroyed” or “kept empty.” The “fire” stands for the “fire of *brahman*,” or *kuṇḍalinī*. The “old one” is *māyā*, but the guru can transform even the false reality into truth.]

174. It is neither outside nor inside. It is neither near nor far.  
 Both Brahmā and the Sun searched for it.  
 The white crystal is pierced by the diamond jewel.  
 This highest truth was reached by Śrī Gorakh Siddha.

[We have emended Baṛthvāl's reading of "horaiṃ" by "hīraiṃ" ("diamond"); our reading thus conforms with Callewaert and Beeck (1991: 495).]

175. When it comes, it enchants the five elements,  
 And when it goes, the consciousness awakes.  
 Where does this sleep come from?  
 Gorakh asks his father Machindra.

[We have emended Baṛthvāl's "tat kūṃ mo hai" by "tat kūṃ mohai" ("it enchants the elements"); Callewaert and Beeck give "tat kūmohai," of which the latter word is an unattested form. "Five elements" contextually refers to the constituents of the human body, although the expression as such may equally refer to the constituents of the macrocosmos. Machindra (Matsyendranāth) is Gorakh's "father" not only metaphorically as his teacher and initiator, but also functionally, given that Gorakh took his birth from Machindra's magical ashes.]

176. In the circle of the sky is an empty hole.  
 There, the lightning flashes in terrible darkness.  
 From there, sleep comes and goes.  
 It is contained within the five elements.
177. Whether standing, sitting or sleeping, you should stick to it.  
 Never break your concentration.  
 The unstruck word thunders in the sky.  
 If your body falls, you will dishonour the true guru.
178. One alone is a hero.  
 Two are bold.  
 With a third, there will be quarrel. With a fourth, a turmoil.  
 With five to ten [people], there must be a quarrel.



179. Who is alone, his name is *siddha*.  
Two wandering together are *sādhus*.  
Four and five, their name is family.  
Ten to twenty, they are an army.
180. Oh you, acting as the mind pleases, take initiation from the guru.  
Give up flesh and blood into the mouth of fire.  
Cast off the primary substance [inherited] from mother and father.  
One who is like that is able to summon God.

[The original Hindi contains a wordplay based on the expression “mukhi,” which denotes an orientation toward a particular object, but which also means “face” or “mouth.” Thus, those who are oriented toward their own mind’s pleasures, in other words, those oriented outward, need to reorient themselves inward, toward guru (and to take initiation in “guru’s mouth”), as well as to give up their flesh and blood into the “mouth of fire” (in other words, they need to give up the attachment to their material bodies). “The primary substance” translates the Old Hindi “dhāt” (“dhātu” in Modern Hindi and Sanskrit), an important and polysemous technical term. Here, contextually, it alludes to the physiological parental components that are, according to the Indian system of *ayur veda*, causal material factors in one’s birth: mother’s *rajas* (menstrual blood) and father’s *bindu* (semen).]

181. Everybody says “*nāḍ*, *nāḍ*,”  
But few remain immersed in the *nāḍ*.  
The *nāḍ* and the *bindu* are [as pure] as a crystal.  
Those who have mastered them have achieved success.
182. A dervish is the one who knows the way in.  
He revolves the five breaths.  
He is mindful day and night.  
Such a dervish is of Allah’s caste.
183. The adept is sitting and the hero is roaming  
To maintain the body unchanging.  
But what is unchanging is on the inside—  
Thus considers Gorakh-rāyā.
184. You should master both *nāḍ* and *bindu*,  
And then play the unstruck sound.

Search for a solitary place, oh Bharthari!  
Thus says Gorakh, Machindra's devotee.

[The original literally states that one should “play” or “strike” both the *nād* and *bindu*, and then finish by “playing” the “unstruck (anāhad) sound”—we sacrificed some of the word play for the sake of clarity. Bharthari (Skt. Bharṭhari) is a legendary king of Ujjain who turned to yoga subsequent to his disenchantment with the world after he witnessed his wife's infidelity. See the note to GBS 15.]

185. The Moon is within the Sun, the Sun within the Moon.  
The three triads are suppressed, and the horn blows.  
Gorakhnāth speaks one full *pad*.  
The fool avoids this, while the hero accomplishes it.

[As already commented on several occasions, the joining of the opposites is one of the typical goals in the practice of yoga. The “Moon” and the “Sun” may refer either to the two main *nāṛīs* (*īṛā* and *piṅgalā*, respectively) or to the higher and lower *cakras* within the subtle body. See Barṭhval (1946: 62) and Junejā (1989: 218). The “triads,” as Barṭhvāl comments, refer to the three *guṇas*.]

186. The protected breath remains continuous.  
The wasted body remains a skeleton.  
Take hold of your own unsteady mind and breath,  
Says the *nāth* that lives eternally.
187. When the first and the second are joined with the third,  
Check the breath at the western gate.  
The oil is not spent, the flame is not extinguished,  
Says the *nāth* who has become immortal.

[Barṭhvāl (1946: 63) interprets “the first,” “second,” and “third” as the three main channels of subtle energy, *nāṛīs*.]

188. As long as the snake comes and goes,  
And as long as Garuṣ does not dwell in the house of the cow,  
That long it is hard to achieve success in yoga.  
Taking meals without water, the illness spreads.

[According to Bārṭhvāl, this rather enigmatic *sabad* refers to the control of breath (the “snake”) and the necessity of virility (“water”) in order to achieve success in yoga. Garuṣ is the king of birds and enemy of snakes.]

189. There is no guru such as wisdom,  
 No disciple as the heart;  
 There is no friend such as the mind:  
 For that reason, Gorakh roams alone.
190. Imitation is complete, knowledge incomplete.  
 The belly is about to burst—this is a pretend hero.  
 Gorakh says: He could not master yoga.  
 Being a hypocrite, he just pleases others.
191. Fire is verily yoga, fire is verily pleasure.  
 Fire takes away the sixty-four diseases.  
 If someone knows the mystery of this fire,  
 Then he is the creator, he is God.
192. The living yogi drinks day and night  
 The continually flowing nectar of immortality.  
 In the midst of the visible, you should consider the invisible,  
 As well as the inaccessible and the infinite.
193. Life should be laid down; death should be spread over.  
 Then, there will be no illness.  
 Within a year, the body should be transformed.  
 But only a rare yogi can do this.
194. When the Sun is up, eat; when the Moon is up, sleep.  
 Don't drink water while doing either.  
 Death should be the bedrock of life.  
 This is a saying uttered by Gorakh.
195. Wherever is Gorakh, there is wisdom and humility,  
 And there is no duality or arguments.  
 Whosoever is beyond desires and sports without pretensions—  
 Call him a Gorakh.

[This is yet another *sabad* in which Gorakh is understood not as a particular person but as a designation for an ideal yogi.]

196. In the circle of the sky a cow gave birth,  
 And the books coagulated into curds.  
 The scholars have drunk the buttermilk,  
 The *siddhas* have eaten the butter.

[Ostensibly, the *sabad* makes a distinction between those who are sticking to the letter of the religious teaching (buttermilk) versus those who are understanding its spirit (butter). However, it is equally possible to understand the distinction as the one that obtains between the exoteric versus esoteric approach to religion. Baṛthvāl (1946: 66) takes the “books” as a reference to the *Upaniṣads*.]

197. The patched robe has come from the beginning of time.  
 It was spread thanks to the *siddhas* and female ascetics.  
 The patched robe is a dwelling for an ascetic.  
 Thus says Gorakh, Machindra’s devotee.
198. Only few can conquer the wicked lust.  
 It has overpowered gods and men, Bāli and his brother Sugrīv.  
 Lust has entered the God Brahmā,  
 And Indra has got a thousand vaginas.

[We translate as “lust” what is in the original the name of the God of Love, Kandarp, or Kām. Bāli and Sugrīv are the characters from the *Rāmāyaṇa*—the two brothers turned enemies through the force jealousy. God Brahmā was sexually infatuated by his own daughter. God Indra was cursed to have his body covered with vaginas after he, employing deception, slept with the wife of a hermit.]

199. Lust has entered 88,000 great sages.  
 Viṣṇu’s *māyā* cannot be overcome.  
 This God of lust has danced upon Śiva,  
 The great God who originated dance.

200. Viṣṇu descended into ten *avatārs*,  
 But they were overcome by lust.  
 The invincible lust was conquered by the ascetic Gorakh.  
 He preserved what [otherwise] trickles downward.
201. There were six orthodox pundits and no heretics.  
 They had fearless faith in themselves.  
 Searching for knowledge, they found the science [of nectar].  
 It is true, it is true, says the *siddha*, the true king of the *nāths*.
202. Our mind should be called mother,  
 And the formless Nirañjaṇ our father.  
 Our guru who saved us from the body  
 Should be called a supreme being.
203. The ego should be cast off, the true guru should be searched for,  
 The path of the yogis should not be avoided.  
 Then there will be no more human births.  
 One should join the company of the *siddhas*.

[Both Barthvāl (1946) and Callewaert and Beeck (1991) provide the reading, in the first line, as “satguru bojibā.” We have emended this to “satguru khojiba” (“the true guru should be searched for”).]

204. As the sky that is held up without pillars,  
 And the lamp that burns without oil,  
 If the words of the guru Gorakh are trusted,  
 There will be neither day nor night.

[This translation is somewhat tentative. My interpretation is as follows: the words of the guru Gorakhnāth are in and of themselves sufficient source of “light”—they do not require anything external (just as the sky is propped up without pillars), and are equally enduring (as the lamp that burns without oil—i.e., without externals). Neither daylight nor the light of the lamp at night are needed: the light (of wisdom) has become internalized and permanent. At the same time, the day and the night exemplify duality, hence the final verse may also be read as a suggestion that the wisdom of Gorakhnāth goes beyond the oppositions inherent in the nature of everyday, and thus inauthentic, reality.]

205. The learned scholar speaks arrogantly  
 And destroys the words of truth.  
 He speaks arrogantly of the sacrifice of the body.  
 He does not penetrate to the inner essence.
206. Whosoever possesses greatness but does not show off his greatness,  
 And who, considering the *sabad* true, being modest,  
 Searches for a true guru—  
 The burden from his head will be lifted.

[The “burden” in this context refers to *karma*. See Baṛthvāl (1946: 68) and Callewaert (2009: s.v. “poṭ”).]

207. A wish-fulfilling cow, at the gate of achievement,  
 Should be tied at the summit of the sky.  
 The individual soul will reach the upper gate,  
 And successfully merge with Nirañjan.

[Baṛthvāl glosses the “wish-fulfilling cow” (“*kāmadhyeni*,” Skt. “*kāmadhenu*”) as a reference to *samādhi*. Accepting that interpretation, the import of the *sabad* is that a concentration on the highest *cakra* (“summit of the sky”) will lead to the ultimate achievement of merging one’s individual soul (*jīva*) with God (Nirañjan). (It is to be noted that this merging is indicative of the devotional (*bhakti*) strand within the Nāth worldview.) However, Kaviraj (1987: 50) notes that “*Kāmadhenu*” is a name for a region within the *amṛta cakra*, closely related to the *candra cakra* (“Moon *cakra*”) in the forehead, and adds: “It is from here [*kāmadhenu*] that nectar is constantly flowing.” See also Mallinson (2007: 207, n. 250).]

208. How could those who consume opium and eat *bhāṅg*  
 Achieve wisdom?  
 The bile increases, the breath gets shorter:  
 For these reasons, Gorakh does not eat *bhāṅg*.
209. They leave their houses but then build thatched huts;  
 They abandon *māyā* but then send others to collect alms.  
 They leave their wives but then live with shameless women.  
 This is why Gorakh roams alone.

210. There is no peace with a woman; there is no illness with a doctor.  
The alchemist does not need to beg for his food.  
The yogi is never old; the hero does not have wounds on his back—  
So says king Gorakh.
211. In my opinion,  
The whole world depends on the food of the whore.  
Very few are saved.  
Thus says Ratan-nāth.

[The “whore” (or, prostitute, “besyā [Skt. “veśyā”]) refers to *māyā*. For Ratan-nāth, see note to GBS 118.]

212. In sleeping and dreaming, the *bindu* is lost.  
Traveling on the road, the soul is distressed.  
Sitting, there is a quarrel; standing, there is trouble.  
Gorakh says: Oh son, [remain in] *sahaj-samādhī*.
213. Dry throat, suffering from hunger;  
One’s body neglected, overcome by sleep;  
Speech without wisdom, restlessness—  
For these reasons, Gorakh does not eat *bhāṅg*.
214. The sulking and the quarrelsome; the one who suffers from a  
bloating stomach;  
The foolish glutton, the one who craves pleasure—  
Gorakh, the yogi with a matted hair, says:  
The real yogi does not exert himself.
215. Oh *avadhūt*, food should be reduced,  
The breath should be reversed,  
And then there will be no illness.  
From time to time the body should be transformed.
216. The path is for a brave one; after laughter comes the rest.  
Oh you who are mindful, consider this:  
The unexamined body is a useless pit.  
In the end, it will be a burden.

217. The reversed *śakti* rises to the skull.  
 The breath plays throughout the body, from the toes to the topknot.  
 The reversed Moon eclipses Rāhu.  
 This is a sign of success, says Gorakh the sage.

[The original Hindi states that the reversed (or, rather, uplifted) *śakti* rises through *brahmāṇḍa*—lit. “the egg of Brahmā,” i.e., the “world.” However, as Mallinson (2007: 208, n. 257) notes, this word may also mean skull, as is the case contextually in this *sabad*. He adds (2007: 209) that “later Sanskrit and haṭhayogic works have a system of 21 *brahmāṇḍas* in (and above) the head.” In Hindu mysthology, Rahu is a demon that causes lunar eclipses: here, however, due to the “upside-down” logic occasioned by the reversal of the (*kuṇḍalinī*) *śakti*, it is the Moon that eclipses Rahu!]

218. Considering the upper in the lower:  
 It is indeed in the lower.  
 When the upper is experienced in the lower,  
 There will be no more duality.

[What we here translate as “the upper” (“adhar”) is more literally “the ungraspable,” and is as such an “epithet of the divine Reality” (Callewaert 2009, s.v. “adhar”). Similarly, what we translate as “lower” (“dharā”) is more commonly simply “the earth.” Our choice of vocabulary intends to maintain some of the wordplay that obtains in the original between “adhar” and “dharā.”]

219. The tongue and the penis are one channel;  
 The one who keeps it cheats the death.  
 Oh learned scholars, don’t be arrogant!  
 The one who has conquered the tongue has conquered everything.

[As Mallinson (2007: 204, n. 236) notes, the *Jogapradīpyakā* by Jayatarāma identifies the “one channel” as *suṣumṇā*.]

220. Gorakh says, Ours is a difficult path.  
 Keep the tongue and the penis under control!  
 People who are absorbed in this discipline  
 Are not eaten by Time.



221. Oh scholar, watch for one year!  
Understand one truth,  
While absorbed in the listening to the *sabad*.  
Gorakhnāth says, O brother, don't be lost in doubt!

[What we here translate as the “listening” is in the original Hindi an important technical term, *surati*. Vaudeville (1974: 135) explains that “the word *surati* (*su-rati*) is used by the Vajrayāna *siddhas* with a clear meaning of ‘sexual enjoyment,’ ‘voluptuousness,’ in connection with the *vāmamārgī* practice of *maithuna*, which is part of their *sādhanā*. With the Nāth-panthīs, however, the word *surati* assumes a new meaning which is not easy to define. It is possible, and it has been suggested, that the word is actually taken as an equivalent of *śruti*, ‘audition,’ so that its meaning would come near to that of *śabda* or *nādā*.”]

222. Oh scholar, understand the incomprehensible,  
And tell the unutterable story!  
Bow your head, and after you've met the true guru,  
Stay awake at night until dawn.
223. The wise speak after learning wisdom,  
While the ignorant speak out of ignorance.  
They do not understand the higher truth.  
Gorakh says, they are great sinners.
224. Marching constantly on the road, the breath is lost,  
The body wastes away, and the essence is gone.  
Those who can say something about the inaccessible within their  
bodies,  
They shave their heads, oh lord!

[The translation of the second part of this *sabad* is very tentative, but the gist seems to be that the reality or truth (“the inaccessible”) is to be found within, and not separate from, our bodies. See Baṛthvāl (1946: 72).]

225. Oh *kāzī*, stop saying: “Muhammad, Muhammad.”  
Muhammad's thought is deep.  
There are one hundred and eighty thousand  
Perfect prophets with Muhammad.

226. Life soul dwells with Śiva.  
 One should not eat the blood and meat of the slaughtered [animals].  
 You should not cut the breath of your relations.  
 Gorakh says, Consider our children.

[Barthvāl omitted the *sabad* 226, because “it could be construed to cause communal strife.” He assigned to this *sabad* the number 227. What he counts as the *sabad* 228, contains four (instead of two) lines of text. We followed Callewaert and Beeck’s (1991) numeration for the sake of simplicity and consistency. The two editions coincide again starting from the *sabad* 229.]

227. Why do you destroy life, oh you who also possess the body?  
 You kill the deer of the five elements,  
 Grazing the grass in the garden of intelligence.  
 The root of yoga is compassion and generosity.

[According to Junejā (1989: 218), the “deer” (“mrg”) is a code word for soul, heart, or mind (all possible translations of the Hindi word “man,” Skt. “manas”). In Barthvāl (1946), this *sabad* does not carry numerical designation. We follow Callewaert and Beeck (1991).]

228. Gorakh says, Those who strive for liberation  
 Should kill this treacherous mind  
 That has no body, colour, flesh or blood.

[This *sabad* is metrically incomplete.]

229. He whose mind has devoured  
 Both Gods and demons  
 Should also kill the mind  
 By taking hold of the arrow of guru’s wisdom.

[Another metrically incomplete *sabad* in the original text. It is, in theme and imagery, similar to a *sākhī* by Kabīr: “The Satguru is the true Hero, / who loosed up a single Arrow: / The moment it struck, I fell to the ground / and a wound opened in my breast” (Vaudeville 1993: 168).]

230. A yogi is the one who upholds yoga.  
 He is not seeking pleasure through the tongue and penis.  
 He abandons illusion and stays within reality.  
 Such is the one whom Gorakh calls a yogi.

[The original Hindi contains a wordplay through the employment of terms “añjan” and “nirañjan” and which we, for the purpose of clarity, translate as “illusion” and “reality” respectively. The two original terms possess more semantic richness than the translation suggests. “Stain” and “stainless” would be more appropriate choices of words, if understood in their metaphysical underpinnings. “Stain” (“añjan”) would then denote “any substance that affects the soul, which in its primordial state is *nirañjana*, or ‘without stain’” (Callewaert 2009, s.v. “añjana”).]

231. Emptiness is mother, emptiness is father,  
 Emptiness is Nirañjan, your own self.  
 Having known the emptiness remain still.  
 The motionless yogi is profoundly deep.
232. Give up bad habits, ignore *bhāṅg*;  
 Keep the body disciplined day and night.  
 The union with all will become possible,  
 And the guru will establish you in the *nirvāṇ samādhi*.
233. Dispersed seeds gather together and the cotton blossoms.  
 The smoke of the burning *siddhis* is rising up.  
 Gorakhnāth says, the smoke is the *prāṇ*.  
 Thus, to become intimate with the body is to know the *prāṇ*.

[This is yet another *sabad* that engages the imagery of “burning” as a metaphor for the maturation in spiritual practice.]

234. Oh *avadhūt*, the mind is wandering.  
 You should know everything through it.  
 The mind should move back,  
 Just like a spider up its thread.
235. Where there is hope, there is disappointment;  
 And where there is doubt, there is sorrow.  
 These cannot be avoided without initiation.  
 Both [the hope and the doubt] are great ills.

236. Immerse yourself in the body.  
 Use your brain for thinking.  
 There are five daggers inside.  
 Use them to cut off what's useless.

[This translation is quite tentative. Its probable import is that the impressions of the five senses need to be obliterated during the process of meditation. In the Pātañjala yoga, this would be accomplished during the practice of the “withdrawal” of the senses from the external objects, the *pratyāhāra*.]

237. Everybody says “*bindu, bindu.*”  
 But only few acquire the *mahābindu*.  
 Have confidence in the *bindu*  
 And then the *skandhas* will be stable.

238. The upside-down root has no branches.  
 [Semen] flows out through a torn undergarment nightly.  
 Do not lose it; do not waste it!  
 Let not the *bindu* fall into the mouth of the vagina!

[According to Bārṥhvāl's exegesis (1946: 75), “in this *sabad* it is spoken about the necessity to both preserve the semen and experience *brahman*.” The metaphorical description of *brahman* as an upside-down tree, to which arguably the opening line of the *sabad* refers to, is already found in the Vedic *Upaniṣads*, where we find (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 6.1) the following account: “Its roots above, its branches below, / this is the eternal banyan tree. / That alone is the Bright! That is *brahman*! / That alone is called the Immortal! / On it all the worlds rest; / beyond it no one can ever pass” (in Olivelle 1996: 244). For the purpose of clarity, we translated the second part of the *sabad* in the imperative mode (as opposed to the original present tense).]

239. The light is shining without fire.  
 I saw it through the guru's grace.  
 Oh master, they say that the rock is tasteless.  
 Those who've seen it, recognize it.

[This translation, in particular the second part of the *sabad*, is very tentative.]

240. The bright fish always lives in water  
 And the boar is always dirty.

Without the knowledge of *ātman* and mercy  
What is the use of wasting the body?

241. Do not drink datura, oh *avadhūt*,  
Do not eat *bhāng*, o brother!  
Gorakh says, Listen oh *avadhūt*,  
Or your body will not be yours.

[The final line in the original literally states: “Or your body will be another’s.”]

242. Master, female friend, son, husband:  
All were born through one gate.  
They enter it as men and exit like sons.  
For that reason, Gorakh is an *avadhūt*.
243. One who keeps it, remains; if it is lost, you are gone.  
It is true, it is true, says Śrī Gorakh-rāy:  
If one declares it and other accepts it—  
Gorakh says, he has a great wisdom.
244. Thinking arises from the unthinkable;  
Thinking destroys the whole world.  
A yogi forgets about the thinking,  
And immerses himself into the unthinkable.
245. Wisdom of the householder, meditation of the opium addict,  
Ears of the deaf, honour of the prostitute,  
Pleasures of the world to the renouncer—  
These five are all one company.
246. A householder who talks about wisdom,  
An opium addict who tries to meditate,  
A renouncer who maintains desire—  
The *nāth* says: They are all in a nice trap.
247. The one who becomes ascetic after his wife has died,  
The *sādhu* who runs after food,  
And the one who becomes renouncer after losing his wealth—  
The *nāth* says, All three are wretched.

248. Reading, reading, reading—so many died;  
Speaking, speaking, speaking—what was accomplished?  
Going on, and on, and on—so many bodies have gone,  
Without realizing *parabrahman*.
249. It is true, it is true, says Gorakh-rāṇā:  
Avoid the company of these three:  
The noiseless, the earless,  
And the one-eyed.
250. The company of woman is not proper to the ascetics.  
When you touch the charcoaled pot  
It will leave a stain  
On the hand.

[We translate as the “ascetics” the original Hindi phrase “Sanaka and others.” Sanaka was a son of Brahmā and the first ascetic.]

251. It is improper to sit in the company of woman  
Even if her head is shaved.  
Gorakh says, What woman is upright?  
What woman is an ascetic?
252. Mature yogi lives from aeon to aeon.  
The one [whose *bindu*] leaks is constantly dying.  
[The one who] investigates the body, and finds the indestructible,  
Attains the unreachable immortal rank.
253. Self-control is the essence of the *yogi* who does *jap* and *tapas*.  
Eros is trouble even if burnt to ashes.  
Such a yogi is to be seen in the world.  
Everyone else is just filling the belly.
254. This is the test of the Lord of Yoga:  
To play with *sabad* after proper consideration.  
The pot should be filled  
In accordance with its capacity.
255. Press and overflow it—the pot breaks.  
Leave it outside—it gets damaged.

The pot is too small and there is too much filling—  
Say, Oh guru, what shall you do?

256. Oh *avadhūt*, freely take, freely give,  
Freely love and be devoted.  
Freely, freely go ahead, oh *avadhūt*,  
And then the pot will accept plenty.

[What we translate as “freely” could be more literally rendered as “with *sahaj*.” As Barthvāl (1946: 78–79) comments, the real subject of these last two *sabads* is the capacity of a disciple to absorb the teachings of the guru.]

257. In the gourd are thrown together  
The three worlds, the three rivers, the Sun and the Moon.  
Be aware, oh you knowers of *brahman*,  
The unstruck sound is unbreakable!
258. Truth and virtuous conduct are the [first] two baths,  
The third is [listening to] the guru’s speech.  
The fourth bath is instructing [the disciples]. The fifth bath is  
compassion.  
The child Gorakh performs these five pure baths every day.

[This *sabad* is a good example of the esoteric interpretation of the exoteric religious observances (in this case, the ritual baths incumbent upon the higher social classes and in particular the priests, *brahmins*).]

259. The people who win women are gone;  
The people who divide community are gone;  
The treacherous people are gone;  
The people afraid of Reality are gone.
260. People who eat prohibited food are gone;  
People without *sabad* are gone;  
People who preserve virility are gone;  
People who enjoy the wives of others are gone.  
It is true, it is true, says the child Gorakh.  
Renouncing these, remain apart!

261. A scholar that is confused and vile;  
 A scattered company; a distressed woman;  
 An illiterate *brahmin*; a householder yogi—  
 The *nāth* says, Oh son, avoid their company!

[We have made two corrections to Barṭhvāl's readings, and changed "joṇī" to "jogī," as well as "sāth" to "nāth." Our reading is in accord with Callewaert and Beeck (1991). The relationship between the celibate and married (householder) yogis is complex. While the celibate yogis often refer to their married counterparts as "fallen" yogis, some scholars, such as Mallinson (2011: 426) propose that "It is quite possible that the householder Nāths are in fact heirs of the oldest [i.e., tantric] *Nāth* traditions." See also Gold (1992), Bouillier (1997), and Bouillier (2017: 301–19).]

262. The night is passing; the half night is gone.  
 One child is crying:  
 Is there a hero in the city,  
 Who can end the sorrow of the child?

[Barṭhvāl (1946: 80) interprets the "night" as the darkness of ignorance, the "child" as one's essential self (*ātmā*), and the "hero" as the teacher of yoga (*yogī guru*).]

263. Wherever the gaze falls, everything is precious.  
 Precious is the sound of the *sabad*.  
 The *nāth* is saying imperceptible utterances  
 That are without limits.

264. My *sabad* is a sharp sword  
 And my way of life is truthful.  
 I read that letter that is written without words  
 On an unmade paper.

265. I will tie the mind with the breath and I will tie the breath with  
 the mind.  
 Then I will speak powerfully.  
 I will make the mind into my disciple; I will push out the breath.  
 There, where the mind and the breath cannot go, I will remain  
 absorbed.



266. From which country are you coming, yogi,  
And where are you heading?  
Who is your sister and sister's daughter?  
Where will you rest your feet?
267. I, yogi, come from the western country,  
I am heading north.  
Earth is my sister and my sister's sister.  
My feet are upon the head of a sinner.
268. The power [*śakti*] is hunting disguised as stores of wealth,  
Run away as fast as you can!  
Gorakh says, I will conquer it just by walking,  
And then I will take a guru.
269. The *nāth* says, Both of my paths are pure.  
Without restraint and truth, there is no hero.  
My way of life is to practice restraint and to be true,  
And yours is the sacrifice of goats, oh Devī!
270. The one who tells stories should be called the disciple,  
And the one who reads the Vedas the grandson.  
The one who endures, he is my guru,  
And I am his follower.
271. My guru should be called: the one who endures.  
I am a disciple of the one who endures.  
If it is acceptable, travel in company;  
Otherwise, travel alone!
272. *Darśan* is the mother, *darśan* is the father;  
*Darśan* dwells within the soul.  
If somebody knows the mystery of this *darśan*.  
He is the creator, he is God.

[*Darśan*, literally “seeing,” refers both to the visual encounter with metaphysical entities and to the “eye-to-eye” contact with the main icon of a divinity installed in the temple, which is in itself the principal objective in visiting a temple.]

273. The one who knows and has a real experience—  
Hold fast onto him!  
Gorakh says, oh brother:  
What my ears have heard, my eyes have seen.
274. When sitting, the twelve; when moving, the eighteen;  
When sleeping, the thirty are broken.  
When speaking, the sixty-four are broken.  
Why should I sing praises to God?
275. Above the nose, in between the eyebrows,  
I remain fixed day and night.  
I will not return to birth in mother's womb,  
I will not suck on milk again!

# *Pads*

[PAD]

(*Rāg Rāmgrī*)

## **Pad 1:**

Half the time spent in embrace and sleep;  
Life is squandered in worldly affairs.  
With raised hands, Gorakhnāth is calling out:  
My brother, don't destroy the root! (Refrain)

[“Half the time” translates the phrase “cāri pahar” in the original, which denotes four (“cāri”) three-hour periods (“pahar”), in other words, the period of twelve hours. “The root” is the semen, or more specifically the *bindu*.]

1. On *amāvas* and *parivā*, the mind and body should be emptied,  
And they are to be empty on Thursdays.  
While the devoted and virtuous *brahmin* is considering the *Vedas*,  
On the tenth day [*daśamī*] the afflictions should be destroyed.

[“Amāvas” and “parivā” are the last and the first nights of the lunar fortnight, respectively. “Afflictions” translates the “doṣ” in the original: the bodily diseases and afflictions. The gist of the stanza is that the traditional auspicious days should be devoted to the practice of yoga, in particular purifications (“emptying”) of both the mind and the body, rather than to more orthodox religious observances (such as the recitation of the *Vedas*).]

2. On the first day of the Moon there is bliss;  
On the second, the Moon should be grasped by the five [senses] and protected.

On the eighth, fourteenth and eleventh, the vow should be taken:  
 “I will not touch the body of a woman.”

3. Seen from the outside, sleep in the evening, but inside remain awake.  
 The watch should be kept during the three three-hour periods  
 [of the night].  
 After three periods and two hours  
 There comes the watch of Death.

[What we somewhat loosely translate as the “watch of Death” refers to the period before the sunrise, the *brahmanuhūrt*. As Baṛṭhvāl (1946: 86) comments, it is believed that this is the time when Death snatches those who are asleep. For that reason, yogis wake up at this period. Baṛṭhvāl quotes a saying attributed to Deval Nāth: “In the first [three-hour] period [after the sunset], everyone is awake; in the second period, the hedonists [are awake and make love]; in the third period, the thieves [are awake]; in the fourth, yogis.”]

4. Sleeping next to the woman’s body you will suffer death;  
 In [her] company don’t even drink the water!  
 In this way, Machindar became immortal.  
 This saying was spoken by Gorakh.

[“You will suffer death”—in the original, the meaning is more literally expressed as “Death will enjoy you” [“jamcā bhogbā”], highlighting the contrast from the assumed enjoyment from sex.]

**Pad 2:**

Oh dear, cut off and give up, cut off and give up,  
 Give up greed, attachments, and false reality!  
 Having known *ātman*, oh *gurudev*,  
 Protect the beautiful body! (Refrain)

1. In Vidyānagar I met the guru Kānhi-pāv.  
 From him I received your message.

[This *pad* engages a well-known theme: Gorakh’s admonitions to his guru Macchindar, who has forgotten about his yogic identity in the “land of women,” married to their queen, and having two sons with her. Kānhi-pāv (or Kānha-pā, Kānipā, Kānipāo, and other spellings) was a disciple of a prominent yogi, Jālandhār Nāth. Gorakh’s quest to rescue his guru from

the entanglement in “greed, attachments, and false reality” (“lobh, moh, māyā”—a refrain often used in Bhakti and Sant literature) is initiated after Kānhi-pāv informs him (or mocks him, depending on the version of the story) regarding his teacher’s fate (see, *inter alia*, Gold 1992: 265 and White 1996: 236).]

2. Therefore I say, oh guru,  
Everything was your mistake.  
You lost all the juice, oh guru,  
In the snare of the tigress.
3. Gorakhnāth is dancing,  
Playing with the ankle-bells.  
You have lost all that you’ve accomplished, oh guru,  
Falling in love with the tigress.

[“Gorakhnāth is dancing”—in order to rescue Matsyendranāth from his amorous infatuation, Gorakhnāth enters the land of women disguised as a female dancer; he sings while dancing, incorporating into his songs the messages intended to call the guru back to his senses, reminding him of his true identity as a yogi. See a summary of this narrative in Muñoz (2011).]

4. All the juice is gone,  
Only refuse has remained.  
Oh dear devotee Machindranāth,  
Yoga is thus not possible!

[“Only refuse has remained”—what we translate as refuse is the Hindi word “choī,” which refers to “crushed, and tasteless sugar cane” (see Callewaert 2009: s.v. “choī”). Barṭhvāl (1946: 87) speculates, rather unconvincingly, that the word may allude to “ashes.”]

5. All the juice has gone,  
But the essence still remains.  
Gorakhnāth says: Oh guru,  
Yoga is limitless.

[Barṭhvāl (1946: 88) provides an interesting gloss of this stanza and argues that “according to some views, if the essential substance [sār vastu] is not

taken hold of, it is necessary to take hold of the outward flowing matter, while according to others, it is necessary only to take hold of the essential substance, and not of the outward flowing matter. The position of yoga is in accordance with this second view.” The suggestion here is that the *bindu* can be preserved even if the material semen is ejaculated. Doctrinally, this view would be closer to the ideology of either the householder, married, yogis, or of the earlier Kaula-related strands of Nāthism, and would not be typical of the celibate yogis such as Gorakhnāth. However, contextually it makes sense, since Gorakh is trying to “wake up” his teacher from his delusions, so the message is one of optimism: “although you have squandered the juice, yoga is still possible, since the essence remains.”]

6. Ādināth’s grandson,  
Machindranāth’s son.  
Gorakh *avadhūt*  
Speaks a poem in six stanzas.

[This translation could be challenged, and the alternative could be “Ādināth is grandson, Machindranāth is son / etc.” This would here contextually fit with the “upside-down” logic, intending to “wake up” Matsyendra by provoking an interest through its surprising content, just as it would be grammatically justifiable.]

**Pad 3:**

Listen Machindra, Gorakh is speaking.  
He speaks of reaching the unreachable.  
Achieve *nirati* and listen well:  
You are the true guru and I am your disciple. (Refrain)

[On *nirati* as an equivalent to *sahaj* state, see the comments to GBS 110.]

1. Losing senses among women there is no yoga.  
How many were destroyed in the mouth of the vagina!  
From whence they emerged, there they entered again.  
This is a magic jewel to remind you of that!
2. Leaving the twelve, you are supporting the sixteen.  
But there is neither the soul nor Śiva there.  
Fourteen worlds and nine [planets] are only one breath.  
This way is truly hopeless.

[The “twelve” and the “sixteen” may refer to the Sun and the Moon as symbols of either the two major conduits of energy or the two main *cakras*. See note to GBS 185. The gist of this rather enigmatic stanza seems to be that Matsyendra is erring in his orientation toward material things and their associated sensual joys. We have substituted “ṣoṛi” for “choṛi” in the first line of the stanza.]

3. Using the water from Palaṅkā, wash the sky.  
It comes breathing in and out.  
Gorakhnāth says, It has always been like this:  
The banyan tree is contained in its seed.

[On Palaṅkā as a reference to the realm of truth, see note to GBS 64. That the banyan tree is contained in its seed is a statement famously expressed in the *Chandogya Upaniṣad*, where it functions as a metaphor for the presence of spiritual reality (*ātman*, *brahman*) within the phenomenological world, which emanates from this reality that is its *fontes et origo*.]

**Pad 4:**

Looking at the house, Gorakh said:  
Only a few understand these truths, my dear! (Refrain)

[The “house” (*ghar*) in this context may refer either to the human body or the human condition, the embodied existence, in general.]

1. Whoever searched for anything in the forest  
Should protect the essence to be saved!  
Whoever brings his posture and senses under control,  
Always gets everything, my dear!
2. Through his mind, he saved the body.  
Through faith in mind, he found [God].  
The water-pot is filled with nectar within mind.  
By this mind the unseen is seen, my dear!
3. Thus, who sets out for this *puruṣ*,  
He gets to know the *puruṣ*.  
Finding the *puruṣ*, he protected the nectar of the *puruṣ*.  
The *puruṣ* was made visible by the *puruṣ*, my dear!

[The “puruṣ” means “man” or “person.” It can also mean the “self” or the “essential self.” Stated somewhat loosely and generally, the point seems to be that the path of yoga entails the process of self-discovery, by which process the individual essential “person” (*ātman*) discovers one’s identity with the cosmic “person” (*brahman*).]

4. The house that is without the Sun or Moon,  
In that house there is a light.  
Whosoever completes the *āsan*,  
His cup of *sahaj* is filled, my dear!

[To “complete the *āsan*” in this context may be a synonym for the accomplishment of the goal of yoga. See Callewaert (2009), s.v. “*āsan karnā*.”]

5. The jewel is pierced in the mind. That was accomplished by the  
searcher.  
This is the food, this is the drink.  
The ascetic Gorakh spoke through the kindness of Machindra:  
The pure nectar is found through searching and searching, my  
dear!

**Pad 5:**

Yogi Gorakh, measuring the right measure & coming closer  
and closer,  
Has collected the precious jewel. [Refrain]

1. If the *bindu* is truly well,  
The body will not perish.  
One wasted *bindu* is worth  
One hundred thousand *tolās*.

[A “*tolā*” is a weight “equal to twelve *māsās*, or 12 × 13 grams” (Callewaert 2009, s.v. “*tolā*”).]

2. What originates in the mind  
Is performed in action.  
Who embraces lust, anger and greed  
Dies in the emptiness of the *samsār*.



3. At the summit of the sky,  
There is a fine celestial water.  
Stupid people are dying  
Not knowing the essence of the world.
4. Remaining in a company of women  
Is like [the fate] of the full Moon.  
The gem of wisdom  
Will be lost.

[Based on Bārthvāl's (1946: 91) gloss, the gist of the stanza is that the men staying with women gradually lose their full storage of the nectar of immortality, in the same manner that the full Moon wanes.]

5. Ādināth's grandson,  
Machindra's son,  
Gorakh *avadhūt* has preserved  
And balanced the *bindu*!

**Pad 6:**

Take the gold, take the golden nectar,  
My profession is a goldsmith!  
When the bellows are blown  
And the golden nectar has become solid gold  
Then a great nectar  
Is found in the sky. [Refrain]

1. The self is the gold, the self is the goldsmith.  
The root *cakra* is the furnace.  
On the anvil of *nāḍ* I hammered the *bindu*  
And the sky was present in the body.
2. When the poison of the endless forest is turned into charcoal  
Then blow upon the two tubes with *sahaj*.  
When the Moon and the Sun are balanced and protected  
You have met your own Self.
3. The work of *raṭī* is stolen from *māsā*,  
*Māsā* takes away from *raṭī*.  
What is stolen from *māsā* remains in *māsā*.  
In this way, the wealth is saved.

["Ratī," "rattī," or "ratiyo" is "the seed of a climbing shrub: a very small quantity" (Callewaert 2009: s.v. "ratiyo"). "Māsā is "a jeweler's weight (= one twelfth of a *tolā*)" (Callewaert 2009: s.v. "2. māsā"). For *tolā*, see note to GBP 5: 1. Barṭhvāl (1946: 92) interprets *ratī* as a synonym for what is small, i.e., *māyā*, and *māsā* as a synonym for what is great, i.e., *brahman*.]

4. Gold is below, gold is above.  
In the middle of gold is gold.  
Whosoever knows how to live in the three voids,  
In his body there is neither sin nor virtue.
5. *Unmani* is the prop and mind is the scales.  
The air measured six *māsās*.  
Gorakh himself sat for weighing,  
And the gold equaled *sahaj*.

**Pad 7:**

Oh wise astrologer, take a look and consider:  
Whether the man was the first, or the woman? [Refrain]

[Barṭhvāl (1946: 93) glosses the "man" as "parameśvar" (the supreme god), and the "woman" as "māyā."]

1. There was no wind there, and no cloud.  
The grandfather [Brahmā] made a temple without pillars.  
There she [Māyā] emerged  
By herself.
2. No father was sitting there.  
The mother was a young unmarried girl.  
The husband was put to sleep in the cradle.  
Even there, she was rocking the cradle.
3. I gave birth to Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Ādi Maheśvar.  
And I am also their housewife.  
My power of illusion  
Is thus twofold.
4. Gaṅgā and Yamunā are my bed,  
The movement of breath is my blanket.  
The earth, the stones and the water are my followers  
But I am not limited by them.

5. My whole life passed in the crusher  
But I could not clear the rice from the paddy grain.  
The ascetic Gorakh spoke through the mercy of Machindra:  
See these truths and think about them!

**Pad 8:**

Let us go, my five brothers,  
Let us go into the forest  
Where sorrow and pleasure and fame  
Are not known! [Refrain]

[It is obvious that these five “brothers” refer to the five senses.]

1. If I work in the field, it dries without rain.  
If I engage in a trade, the capital is lost.
2. If I take wife, then the house breaks apart.  
If I have a friend, he turns into a snake.
3. If I gamble, I suffer the loss.  
If I steal, it burdens my body.
4. If I go to the forest, the trees bear no fruit.  
If I go to the city, I get no alms.
5. Thus spoke Gorakhnāth, Machindra’s son.  
Give up *māyā*, brother *avadhūt*!

**Pad 9:**

*Gurudev Śambhu* is the God within the body.  
*Ātman* is the highest God.  
I do not know how to worship Him.  
Doing constant *pūjās* to other gods  
We die in vain. [Refrain]

[Śambhu, the “benevolent,” is one of the names of Śiva.]

1. At the nine gates there are nine Nāths.  
Jagannāth is at the confluence of the three rivers.  
And Kedārnāth is at the tenth gate.

[Jagannāth, the “lord of the world,” is a name associated with either Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa. The “confluence of three rivers” (“triveṇī”) refers esoterically to the meeting place of the three main channels of energy within the subtle body. Kedārñāth is one of the names of Śiva. The “tenth” door is *brahmarandhra* aperture on the top of the head; it is a “door” of liberation.]

2. When the essence is joined through yoga,  
Then one crosses on the other shore of fear.  
Says Gorakhnāth  
After due thinking.

**Pad 10:**

Oh my mind, close your business.  
The man of breath is born.  
Oh yogi, wake up! Turn towards the supreme spirit,  
And enter the city of the body! [Refrain]

1. The man of breath repeats the string of *jap*  
21,600 times.  
*Prāṇ* flows through *iṛa*, *piṅgalā*, and *suṣumṇā*  
Day and night.
2. In the six- and sixteen-petalled lotus  
The *brahmacāri* lives.  
The *haṃṣ* breath has entered the flower.  
The water-carrier comes from the nine rivers.

[The “water-carrier” refers to “the *kuṇḍalinī śakti* (which originally dwells in the *pātāla* or underworld, symbolizing the *mūlādhāra cakra*, and rises along the *suṣumṇā nāḍī* in order to drink the ‘water’ flowing from the well of the *sahasrāra*)” (Callewaert 2009: s.v. “panihāri”). Bārthvāl (1946: 96) glosses the original’s phrase “*nau sai nadi*” (“from nine rivers”) as “*nau-sau nadiyā*” (“nine hundred rivers”), taking it as a reference to the “water from the full subtle channels.”]

3. Oh *avadhūt*, there’s a watermelon at the bank of Gaṅgā,  
That needs to be traded again and again.  
What goes down should be brought up,  
And the Moon and the Sun should meet.

[Barṭhvāl glosses the original's "matīrā" (with a variant "matore") as "watermelon" ("tarbūj/tarbūz"), which we accepted, although the word is not listed in any dictionary we consulted. "Gaṅgā" is typically associated with the main subtle channel on the left side, *īṛā*. "What goes down" is the elixir, *amṛt*. The "meeting" of the Sun and Moon refers to the joining of the left and right channels for the conduit of energy within the subtle body.]

4. When both the Moon and the Sun disappear in the sky  
A frightening darkness appears.  
When the five watchmen have fallen asleep  
The gate of the city wall comes into view.
5. The body is a robe and the mind is the yogi—  
The true guru revealed this to me.  
Gorakhnāth says, protect it well—  
The city thief is at large.

**Pad II:**

*Avadhūt* spoke, thinking about truth:  
There is too much idle talk on the earth.  
I swam over eight mountains without water:  
And that is a great and wonderful miracle. [Refrain]

["Eight mountains"—in the original, this is phrased as "aṣṭakul parbat": "the eight families of mountains." The reference is to the "eight families (of snakes from which eight mountains originated)" according to *Matsya Purāṇa*: 113. See Callewaert (2009): s.v. "aṣṭa kula."]

1. The mind and the breath [reach] the unreachable light.  
The Sun and Moon and stars are gone.  
There is no more the three kingdoms of the three families.  
The breath of the *siddhi* is from the four eons.
2. The five [senses] have entered into six.  
There are seven islands and eight women.  
The nine parts of earth have [merged] within twenty-one  
And the eleventh has [merged] into the highest point.

3. In the twelfth, *iṛā* and *piṅgalā* are in the triangle;  
In the fourteenth, the mind has been met.  
In sixteen lotuses with sixteen petals there are thirty-two things,  
And the fear of old age and death has vanished.
4. In the tenth gate dwells Nirañjan, beyond mind [*unman*],  
And there the *sabad* is met through [the practice of] reversal.  
Thus spoke Gorakhnāth, Machindra's son.  
I remained unmoved and firm.

**Pad 12:**

Oṃ Namo Śivai, my dear, Oṃ Namo Śivai!  
How to use this *mantra* day and night?  
The one who can explain the separate letters [A.U.M.] to me,  
He is my teacher and I his disciple, Oh dear! [Refrain]

1. *Oṃkāṛ* is a root *mantra*, concentrate on it well, my dear.  
*Oṃkāṛ* pervades the whole world.  
*Oṃkāṛ* is at the navel and in the heart. It is both God and the guru.  
Without mastering the *oṃkāṛ* there is no *siddhi*.
2. Brahmā is immersed in the *nād*. Viṣṇu is immersed in the *nād*.  
Śiva is immersed in the *nād*. Take up yoga and be resolute.  
*Nād* is indeed the treasure-house of everything.  
The supreme *nirvāṇ* is found through the *nād*, oh dear!
3. The breath resounds, the breath thunders, the breath sings.  
The breath pierces the six *cakras* and roams up and down and in  
the middle.  
Breath is flowing through the body in the form of *sohaṃ* and  
*haṃsa* mantras.  
Through the grace of breath, the *bindu* dwells in the mouth of the  
guru.

[For *sohaṃ* and *haṃsa* mantras, see note to GBS 46.]

4. Mind kills and mind dies. Mind saves and mind gets saved.  
If the mind is steady, it permeates the three worlds.

Mind is the beginning, mind is the end, and mind is the essence  
of what's  
between.  
Mind saves from the vicious lust.

5. Śakti has the form of menstrual blood, Śiva has the form of  
semen [*bindu*].  
The Sun has twelve digits, and the Moon has sixteen digits.  
If the moving digits of the Sun arrive into the house of the  
Moon  
Then Śiva and Śakti become coequal, and nobody can know their  
limit.
6. The king Rām dwells in all the limbs.  
The five elements naturally emanate light.  
In these five elements, oh dear, *samādhi* is contained.  
Gorakhnāth says, I realized God in this manner.

**Pad 13:**

Oh *avadhūt*, chant the *jap* and understand the [mystery of]  
rosary.

Chanting the *jap* leads to success.

Gorakh chants the unfathomable *jap*,

Which only a few understand. [Refrain]

1. While the lotuses turn into the eyes, make the body gold!  
Turn the awareness into rosary!  
The sins of many births are thus destroyed,  
Thus says Gorakh chanting.
2. I chant the *jap* of one syllable—*om*.  
Empty and gross are two words.  
The body and the universe are of equal weight.  
I received initiation with one syllable.
3. With the *jap* of two syllables, I remove two opposites.  
I chant the *jap* of the formless one.  
The chant that gave rise to all of creation  
Is the chant that Śrī Gorakh uttered.

4. I chant the three-syllable *jap* in the *trikuṭi*,  
The true place of the pool of *brahman*.  
Gorakh chants the *ajapā-jāp*,  
The unparalleled and highest wisdom.
5. With the four syllables I have established the four *Vedas*,  
The four sources of life, the four voices.  
The ascetic Gorakh spoke through the grace of Machindra:  
I chant the *ajapā-jāp* and remain firm.

**Pad 14:**

Play the polo engrossed in the game!  
Why are you lost in pride?  
There is no difference between the earth and sky.  
[There is] only the field of liberation. [Refrain]

1. Within the one there is the infinite, and within the infinite there  
is the one.  
Through the one the infinite is born.  
When the one is experienced within,  
Then the infinite is contained within the one.

[This verse illustrates one of the fundamental tenets of esoteric through: the analogical correlation between the microcosm (“one”) and macrocosm (“infinite”). The specifically Indic formulation of this tenet is originally found in the *Upaniṣads*, in the teachings of the coessential reciprocity between the individual immortal principle of selfhood (*ātman*) and the universal ground of being (*brahman*). This notion is famously expressed through the formula, a “great saying” (*mahāvākya*), “tat tvam asi,” “you are that,” in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6:12:3 and passim.]

2. The *nāḍ* is the anvil, the *bindu* is the hammer.  
The Sun and the Moon are the bellows of the breath.  
When you press the root [*cakra*], seated firmly in the *āsan*,  
Then birth and death disappear.

[“The Sun and the Moon” refer to the two principal side-conduits of energy within the subtle body.]



3. Make *sahaj* the saddle and breath the horse.  
Take the reins and whip the mind!  
The rider is consciousness; make knowledge the *guru*,  
And give up all devices.
4. Three worlds are found within the sesame seed.  
The Creator has made this possible.  
Thus the one I was searching for  
Was my own self.
5. If I say that this exists, nobody will believe.  
But if it is not, why the effort?  
Gorakh says, Listen Machindra:  
The diamond is pierced by a diamond.

**Pad 15:**

Trade with the truth, trade with the truth,  
So that my mind can trust that! [Refrain]

1. Gorakhnāth trades with the *sahaj*.  
There are five bullocks and nine cows.  
I made a nice place with the *sahaj*,  
And my mind soared upwards.
2. I am doing commerce on the steep steps.  
I have spread out the emptiness.  
I am unaware of taking and unaware of giving:  
This is how I trade.
3. Says Gorakhnāth, Machindra's son:  
There is no profit from such a trade!  
I got across to the other side by my own deeds,  
Taking the *guru's* words as my companions.

**Pad 16:**

Our yogi the "renouncer" enjoys pleasures day and night,  
And does not leave the company of the *yoginī*.  
His mind comes swinging to Mānasarovar lake  
And builds a monastery in the circle of the sky. [Refrain]

[The Mānasarovar [lit. “the lake of the mind”] near the Kailash mountain is considered sacred, a symbol of purity; it is also a pilgrimage site. Esoterically, it symbolizes “the *śūnya* or *sahaja-śūnya* within the *sahasrāra cakra*” (Callewaert 2009: s.v. “Mānasarovar”).]

1. Where do your father-in-law and mother-in-law dwell?  
Where do you dwell?  
Where have you met the *yoginī*?  
Where did you find your home?

[The “father in-law” and “mother in-law” are references to two types of breath utilized in yoga practice; see Kværne (1986 [1977]: 51) and Junejā (1989: 199). The Old Hindi words for “mother in-law” and “breath” are the same (“*sās*”).]

2. My father-in-law and mother-in-law reside in the navel.  
I dwell at the place of *brahman*.  
I have met the *yoginī* where *īṛā* and *piṅgalā* meet.  
I have found my home in the *suṣumṇā*.
3. I burnt the desire and anger, and made a powder,  
And by burning the God of love I made the camphor.  
The mind and the breath are the astringent extract and betel-nut.  
The *unmanī* is vermilion *tilak*.
4. Wisdom and the *guru* are my water-gourd,  
And the awake will is the gourd’s handle.  
The strings of *unmani* begin to play,  
And my greed is destroyed.
5. In this way, the true guru has married me  
To a delicate young maiden.  
Śrī Gorakh spoke through Machindra’s grace:  
The fear of *māyā*’s name is gone

**Pad 17:**

Take hold of the vine of truth, oh *avadhūt*, take hold of the vine  
of truth!

Gorakhnāth knows how.

It has no leaves or root, it has no flower and casts no shadow,  
And it grows without water. [Refrain]

1. The grove of the body is your garden, oh *avadhūt*,  
And the true guru is in the form of the vine of truth.  
A man waters it often,  
And the beautiful leaves reached the house.
3. The root is the Moon, oh *avadhūt*,  
And the leaves are the Sun.  
The fruit is the full Moon.  
Its soul is the knowledge of the saints.
4. The vine is on fire, oh *avadhūt*,  
The fire reaches the sky.  
As soon as the vine starts burning,  
The new shoots emerge.
5. From the cut vine, the new shoots spring up;  
If watered, it withers.  
Ascetic Gorakh spoke through the mercy of Machindra:  
It always remains new.

**Pad 18:**

O scholar, understand the wisdom of *brahman*,  
Says the learned and saintly Gorakh. [Refrain]

1. It is a plant without seed, a tree without root;  
Without leaves and flowers, it gives fruit.  
It is a barren woman's child,  
The legless and armless climbing on a tree.
2. It is the Moon without sky, the Sun without universe,  
The battlefield without war.  
The man who knows this highest truth—  
In his heart is the highest wisdom.

[We have emended Barṭhvāl's reading of "ghīṭi" to "ghaṭi" ("in the heart").]

3. It is neither empty nor substantial, it has no symbol nor method of worship.  
Unstruck, it resounds without a sound.  
It is a flower without garden, a fragrance without flower,  
A bee charmed without [scent in] the air.
4. It is [like the Moon] swallowed without Rahu; it burns without fire.  
It is a pond filled without water.  
Explain this highest truth, oh scholar,  
[Who] read *Rg*, *Yajur*, *Sāma*, and *Atharva Veda*.
5. Self-knowledge is the light [of the *mantra*] "*soham*" ["I am He"].  
It belongs to neither earth, nor sky, nor sea.  
Gorakh plays between Gaṅgā and Yamunā  
By the grace of the guru Machindra.

**Pad 19:**

Gorakhnāth says, through the tenth door  
I reached the heaven of Śiva.  
From the summit of twenty-one worlds  
I proclaimed the self-knowledge. [Refrain]

["Śiva"—in the original, the name was Kedār; we changed it to a more popular form.]

1. Śakti is inside the twelve petals of the Sun,  
And Śiva's place is inside the sixteen [petals] of the Moon.  
Mūla[dhar] and Sahasrār are the houses of the soul and of Śiva.  
*Unmani* lies [in] a steady meditation.
2. The unstruck sound plays music,  
The Sun has risen in the West.  
The southern Goddess dances in the North,  
The hell's place is in the East.

3. I performed the *mudrā* of the Sun and Moon.  
The ash of the earth was mixed with water.  
Nādī, Bindī, Sīṃgī and Ākāśī [yogis]  
Are the disciples of the formless guru.

[Baṛthvāl (1946: 111) interprets the four types of yogis mentioned in the third line as: being focused on the investigation of the *nād*; preserving the *bindu*; blowing the horn (*śṛṅgī*) as a symbol of the unstruck sound; and being focused on the “space” (*ākāś*) at the junction of the three subtle channels.]

4. The [yogī’s] garb is made of 360 patches,  
And of 21,600 strings;  
It has 72 rivers.  
It was sewn by 52 heroes with 89 needles.

[The “patches” refer to the bones in the body; “21,600” is the assumed number of breaths per day; there are seventy-two main conduits of energy within the subtle body. See Baṛthvāl (1946: 111).]

5. I searched in *īṛā*, I filled the *piṅgalā*,  
And through *suṣumṇā*, I reached the sky.  
Ascetic Gorakh spoke through the mercy of Machindra  
About the place of the *nirāñjan siddhi*.

**Pad 20:**

A tamarind tree flowered on the dry ground.  
Up, the seed of the *nīm* tree gave fruit.  
This fruit tastes sweet when eaten.  
Those, to whom their guru gave insight, know this. [Refrain]

[The rest of this *pad* provides an excellent example of the “upside-down” poem.]

1. A hawk caught a camel  
And sat on a little branch.  
A barren woman gave birth to a child,  
Though she never laid eyes on a man.

2. The wood sinks, the stone floats.  
The world is passing away while watching.  
A camel floated on a rivulet,  
And the rabbit could not go through a hole.
3. A fish climbed to a mountain. The rabbit is in the water.  
Fire burns in the water.  
A water wheel carries the thirsty.  
A thorn is taken out by a spike.
4. There is one cow, nine calves,  
And five milkmen.  
One flower, sixteen buckets.  
There is no joy in the heart of gardener's wife.
5. An outcast without hands and legs performed a robbery  
And by thieving returned a cow.  
The ascetic Gorakh spoke through the mercy of Machindra:  
Milking water, she did not give birth.

**Pad 21:**

Gorakh is a cowherd, oh boy!  
He drinks the milk of the cow in the sky, oh boy!  
Churning the curd, he drinks the juice of immortality,  
And lives without fear, oh boy! [Refrain]

1. With no attachments, the mother died.  
With no father, children died, oh boy!  
A cowherd, without family,  
Takes the cows to pasture, day and night, oh boy!
2. He sounded the unstruck sound on his conch  
And crushed the great army of Death, oh boy!  
Inside the body, within the circle of the sky,  
He met the lord through *sahaj*, oh boy!
3. This *gāyatṛī* cow, which I brought from the circle of the sky,  
Is at the door of my house, oh boy!  
My family is affectionate towards it,  
And I have tied it permanently, oh boy!

4. This cow is without ears, tail and horns  
And without colour, oh boy!  
The ascetic Gorakh spoke through the mercy of Machindra:  
There I remain absorbed [in meditation], oh boy!

**Pad 22:**

O *avadhūt*, think of such wisdom  
In which brilliant light shines. [Refrain]

1. Where yoga is practiced, there is no illness;  
The guru should make this a test.  
If there is no intimate knowledge of the mind and the body,  
Why are you working so hard uselessly?
2. Without conquering death, without abandoning the snares of the  
world,  
Even by practicing *tapas* one does not become a sage.  
Let no one destroy his family's honour  
By failing to find the perfected guru.
3. The body is a cage made of seven elements  
Where the parrot is caged without ties.  
Salvation comes [only] after meeting the true teacher,  
Otherwise there comes the ruin.
4. Your body is an ornament as beautiful as the God of Love:  
Why are you coating glaze powder on it uselessly?  
Gorakh says, Listen oh fool:  
Why do you water a castor-oil plant with nectar?

**Pad 23:**

Nirañjan-nāth is proclaiming:  
“My comings and goings are over!  
“Searching the body and the universe,  
I've gained all the *siddhis*.” [Refrain]

1. In the fortress of the body  
There are 900,000 moats.  
At the tenth door  
The *avadhūt* has undone the lock.

2. In the fortress of the body  
Are the gods, the temples, and [holy city] Benares.  
There I have through *sahaj*  
Met the Indestructible.
3. Says Gorakhnāth,  
Listen O people:  
Only a few can conquer  
The fortress of the body.

**Pad 24:**

Oh air, which way will you go?  
The yogi is muttering *ajapā* chant  
At the bank  
Of the three rivers. [Refrain]

1. The Moon made the wooden plank and the soap,  
And the Sun made the slab of stone for washing.  
A sage washes clothes  
At the banks of Gaṅgā and Yamunā.
2. Apply the key up and down,  
Where the mind is still, there the breath is settled.  
Recognize the tenth door,  
So that your comings and goings cease.
3. Says Gorakhnāth, Machindar's son:  
My profession is the oil-miller.  
I press out the oil from the ball inside the body,  
And with the breath throw out the dry remains.

[Barṭhāl (1946: 117) understands “oil” as a reference to “ātma tattva” (“the essence of the soul”), but it would make more sense to simply take it as a metaphor for the elixir, the *amṛt*.]

**Pad 25:**

Oh *avadhūt*, the earthen pot carries the water-bearer,  
And the sparrow [carries] the fair-skinned woman.  
The master of the house wants to see the show,  
So why not make the Death perform it? [Refrain]



[The last line of the refrain literally states: “Why not tie the Strong One?” The “strong one” is the Lord of Death, Yama. Bārthvāl (1946: 117) explains that the suggestion is to tie the Death in order to perform a show for the “Lord of the House” (*ātman*) in the same manner that a street performer ties a trained dancing monkey.]

1. Salt says, I am not salty.  
Ghee says, I am dry.  
Flame says, I am dying from thirst.  
Food says, I am hungry.
2. Fire says, I am dying from cold.  
Cloth says, I am naked.  
The unstruck drum is playing,  
And the lame started to dance.
3. Ādināth is the father, Machindar is the son.  
The yogi has penetrated  
The impenetrable mystery,  
Says Gorakh *avadhūt*.

**Pad 26:**

O *avadhūt*, a vine is spread around the mountain inside,  
Three-and-a-half cubit long.  
The vine is the flower, the vine is the fruit,  
The vine is the precious pearl. [Refrain]

1. This vine shines since the beginning of creation.  
It had no root, but it reached the sky.  
It spread its legs upwards.  
The astrologer does not understand this, but only guesses.
2. Just like this, a Bhīl [tribal] hunter is without hands.  
He has crippled legs and there are no teeth anywhere in his mouth.  
He is shouting “Ho, ho!” but he has no bow;  
The ringing of his bell is without sound.
3. This Bhīl aimed the arrow,  
And pierced a deer in the heart.  
“Ho, ho!” the deer was pierced by the arrow,  
But there was no bow, nor arrow, nor aiming.

4. A Bhīl woman, the outcast lady, brought the deer home.  
The deer was without legs.  
Its head, horns and mouth  
Could not be known.
5. Says Gorakhnāth, Machindar's son:  
He who killed the deer, he is an *avadhūt*.  
If someone understands this in his heart,  
He is a yogi who can comprehend the three worlds.

**Pad 27:**

Oh *avadhūt*, this is our city.  
Look at its ablution gate!  
Up and down, the market is decorated,  
Says the wise Gorakh.

1. The master the vital air is the *bādsāh* [king] here,  
The thinking is the *kāzī* [judge], the five elements are the *vazīrs*  
[petitioners],  
The mind and the breath are the elephant and the horse,  
Wisdom is the permanent treasure.
2. Our body should be called a city,  
The mind should be called the magistrate.  
Intelligence should be called the chief policeman,  
So that the thief cannot spy through the door.
3. The fortress is built  
With three hundred and sixty walls,  
Sixteen canals are dug.  
Nine gates are visible, the tenth cannot be seen.
4. Collecting all types of wood for the castle,  
Seventy-two rooms were built.  
Upon nine chains the locks are attached,  
So that the fortress of the body cannot be taken over.
5. The unstruck bell resounds the time;  
Two lights give the supreme illumination.  
The heads of lust and anger are cut off.  
In this way father Adam enacts the justice of the *bādsāh* [king].

6. There, the truth is the wife, contentment is the prince.  
 Forgiving and devotion are the two nurses.  
 Ādināth's grandson, Machindranāth's son,  
 Gorakhnāth is the founder of the city of the body.

[We have replaced Baṛthvāl's reading of "hār" with "dār" ("nurses").]

**Pad 28:**

In twenty-one universes  
 The furnaces are dripping with liquor.  
 Whosoever drinks from them is always intoxicated.  
 The innkeeper mind is offering full cups of excellent wine.  
 [Refrain]

[The reference here is to "a type of furnace equipped with a still to make liquor; the liquor shop is . . . often also a metaphor for the tenth door . . . from which the nectar of mystical experience drips" (Callewaert 2009: s.v. "bhātī").]

1. Grapes of nectar have filled the furnace,  
 In their midst, some sugar was thrown.  
 The mind is *mahuā* flower, the body is yeast;  
 Eighteen kinds of plants were mixed.

[Mahuā flower is used to make intoxicating drink; see Callewaert (2009): s.v. "mahuvā."]

2. In the cave of bees, the mind is fixed in meditation  
 After [the yogi] sat in the posture.  
 The consciousness of the yogi is completely drunk,  
 And remains concentrated, from age to age.

[The "cave of bees" is a reference to *brahmarandhra*; see note to GBS 132.]

3. The small cup at the *trikuṭī saṅgam* got filled;  
 A sumptuous drink is prepared.  
 Whatever was sinful was discarded,  
 What remained was the pure essence.

[“*Trikūṭī saṅgam*” is the confluence of the three main channels of subtle energy located between the eyebrows.]

4. With such a wine Śrī Gorakh went to the other shore,  
Says the son of Machindra.  
Whoever went to the other shore drank this fully,  
And became an immortal *avadhūt*.

**Pad 29:**

It is true, it is true, says Śrī Gorakh yogi.  
I will remain devoted.  
I will stay in the company of the one  
Who has met the Invisible Person through guru’s initiation.  
[Refrain]

1. In the middle of the *satya yug* [the age of truth], when the first age was created,  
One snake fell down.  
Devoid of wisdom, oh *avadhūt*,  
Many *gandharvas* [celestial musicians] were bitten.
2. In the middle of the *tret yug*, when the second age was created,  
Rām did the *Rāmāyaṇ*.  
The men and monkeys all died fighting,  
They did not attain wisdom.

[The *Rāmāyaṇa* (the “goings,” i.e., the “deeds” of prince Rām) is a classical Indian epic, originally, according to Indian tradition, composed by the sage Vālmīki, and later retold in many regional varieties. One of the famous episodes involves the fight of the monkey-like creatures led by Rāma’s great devotee Hanumān against the demonic armies of *rākṣasas* in the service of Rāma’s opponent, the ten-headed king of Laṅkā, Rāvaṇa.]

3. In the middle of *dvāpar yug*, when the third age was created,  
There was much hypocrisy, much oppression.  
The Kauravs and Pāṇḍavs died fighting,  
[The sage] Nārada caused the destruction [of the world].

[The war between the related families of Kauravas and Pāṇdavās forms the nucleus of the great Indian epic *Mahābhārata*, whose authorship is traditionally ascribed to the sage Vyāsa.]

4. In the middle of *kali yug*, when the fourth age was created,  
Proper conduct came to an end.  
In every house was a quarrel, in every house was arguing,  
Every house was destroyed by talking.
5. In the middle of the four *yugs*, when the four ages were established,  
Wisdom was destitute.  
The ascetic Gorakh spoke through the grace of Machindar:  
Only a few managed to get across.

**Pad 30:**

Chant this chant, having fixed your mind:

“So’ham, So’ham,” sing the *ajapā* chant! [Refrain]

1. Assume a steady posture and maintain meditation.  
Remember the wisdom of *brahman* day and night.  
Be lucid when sleeping, eat moderately,  
Get rid of lust, anger and egotism.
2. Keep the breath in front of the nose,  
*Iṛā* and *piṅgalā* should be harmonized.

[This verse is metrically imperfect, consisting of only one, instead of two lines of Hindi text.]

3. After 600,000 chants, the unstruck [sound, *anāhad*]  
Will arise of its own.  
In the curved duct the Sun will rise, and in every pore  
The sound of the trumpet will be heard.

[The “curved duct” translates an important technical term, *baṅk nāl*. “There is a curved duct from the Moon below the Sahasrāra up to the hollow in the palatal region; it is well known in yoga physiology as the *Śaṅkhiṇī*. This is the *baṅka nāla* (i.e., the curved duct) frequently mentioned in the vernaculars through which the *mahā-rasa* (i.e., *Soma rasa*)

passes. This curved duct *Śankhinī* is described in the [Bengali text] *Goraḡṡa-vijaya* as the serpent with mouths at both ends” (Dasgupta 1995 [1969]: 240–41).

4. This is the place of the reversed lotus with a thousand petals.  
In the cave of bees is a brilliant light.  
In the sweet emptiness Śiva Gorakh says:  
The *sādhus* attain the supreme truth.

**Pad 31:**

Yogi Kanak Rāval woke up  
Immersed in gurudev’s rain.  
After searching and searching he found the true guru  
And naturally became satisfied. [Refrain]

[Rāval is a sub-sect of the Nāth yogis; see Briggs (1973 [1938]), Chart A; Barṡhvāl (1946: 125); and Bouillier (2017: 55). Barṡhvāl speculates that the yogi’s name (Kanak means gold) indicates an alchemical motif.]

1. In the North country a cloud thundered,  
In the South region is the shade.  
In the East country rain is released,  
In the West, it reached the fields.

[Barṡhvāl (1946: 125) glosses the geographical descriptions as metaphors for the regions of the subtle body: the “North” as *trikuṡi* or *brahmarandhra*; the “South” as *svādhishṡān cakra*; the “East” as *iṡā* and *piṡgalā nāṡis*; and the “West” as *suṡumṡā*.]

2. Yoke the mind to the horse breath,  
And use the True Name as the reins.  
Grow the seed of the *dharma* of compassion,  
And reap the supreme harvest.
3. It does not run out of supply by eating it, it does not diminish by  
giving it,  
It does not go to the gate of death.  
The ascetic Gorakh spoke through the mercy of Machindar:  
It always remains fresh.

**Pad 32:**

Life soul dwells with Śiva.

One should not eat the blood and meat of the slaughtered  
[animals]. [Refrain]

[The refrain and the first verse of this *pad* are almost identical to the GBS 226.]

1. You should not cut the breath of your relations,  
Gorakh says, Consider our children
2. Oh man, you should kill the mind, the enemy,  
Which does not have  
Either father or race,  
Either flesh or blood.

[This verse is almost identical to GBS 228.]

3. It has devoured the whole world,  
The gods and the demons.  
This mind should be killed  
By seizing the arrow of the guru's wisdom.

[This verse is almost identical to GBS 229.]

4. Oh you who kill the animals that possess the body,  
You kill the deer of the five elements that grazes in the garden of  
wisdom.  
The root of yoga is compassion and generosity.  
Gorakhnāth says, This is the wisdom of *brahman*.

[This verse is almost identical to GBS 227.]

[RĀG ASĀVRĪ]

**Pad 33:**

This is the initiation sermon given by Śrī Gorakh king,  
Who has reformed the four worldly classes. [Refrain]

1. Study yourself!  
Distinguish between what's proper and what's prohibited!

Know the mystery of mysteries!  
Fulfill hopes and expectations!

2. In the middle of a difficult juncture  
Perform five *sandhya* prayers at the proper times.  
You should remain at the tenth door  
And serve the feet of the Formless One.
3. Chant the *ajapā* chant,  
Consider your own self.  
Let go of all crutches;  
There is neither virtue nor sin there.
4. Fix yourself in meditation day and night.  
You should rejoice in the eternal Lord.  
Gorakhnāth speaks this wisdom:  
I have found the supreme treasure.

**Pad 34:**

Find a profound guru!  
Don't remain without a guru.  
Without a guru wisdom can not be found,  
Oh brother! [Refrain]

1. Even when washed in milk, the coal does not become white.  
A crow does not become a swan  
Even [by wearing] a flower garland  
Around its neck.
2. A crow flies off  
With a loaf of bread.  
I ask my guru,  
Where does it sit and eat?
3. It comes from the northern region.  
It is going to the western region;  
I asked my true guru,  
There it sits and eats.
4. The elephant is contained  
In the eye of an ant.



In the mouth of a cow  
A tiger is born.

5. The barren woman is giving birth  
For twelve years;  
She has broken her hands and legs.  
Thus speaks Gorakhnāth, Machindra's son.

[Barṭhvāl (1946: 129) glosses the “barren woman” as a metaphor for *māyā*, given that the life under her influence is fruitless. The “twelve years” of yogic practice will make her impotent, with “broken hands and legs.”]

**Pad 35:**

Oh *rājā avadhūt*, guess what this is:  
Neither the sky nor the earth,  
Neither the moon nor the sun,  
Neither the day nor the night? [Refrain]

1. It is *omkār*, *nirākār* [formless].  
It is neither subtle nor gross.  
It is neither tree nor leaf,  
It does not flower, nor does it give fruit.
2. It is neither branches nor root,  
It is neither tree nor creeper,  
It is neither *sākhī* nor *sabad*,  
Neither guru nor disciple.
3. It is neither in wisdom nor in meditation,  
It is neither in yoga nor in the yogi,  
Neither in sin nor in virtue,  
Neither in liberation nor in the liberated.
4. It is neither born nor destroyed,  
It neither comes nor goes,  
It does not get old nor die,  
It has neither father nor mother.
5. Says Gorakhnāth,  
Devotee of Machindar:

It is neither a state of devotion,  
Nor is it entangled in hope.

**Pad 36:**

Come on Mother, let's go from house to house!  
Child Gorakh, eat your food till full! [Refrain]

1. Semen is not spilling,  
The *nād* is sounding,  
There is neither the Moon nor the Sun,  
Neither talks nor arguments.
2. Through the magic pill of the breath  
Your dwelling becomes  
From the earth—the ether [*ākāś*].  
Inside you is the heaven and [the mountain] Kailās.
3. The *śakti* from the netherworld climbs up into emptiness,  
Says Gorakhnāth, as Machindar told him.

**Pad 37:**

What would you say, oh scholar,  
Where does god live?  
Take a look at the true reality:  
There is neither “I” nor “you.” [Refrain]

1. In the stone temple  
There is a god of stone.  
Worshipping the stone,  
How can love bloom?
2. You are destroying what is alive  
To worship what is dead.  
How will you get across that which is difficult to cross  
With your wicked deeds?
3. You bathe  
In *tīrth* after *tīrth*.  
Washing the outside,  
How will you reach the inside?

4. Ādināth's grandson,  
Matsyendranāth's son,  
Gorakh *avadhūt*  
Has seen the true reality.

**Pad 38:**

Oh scholar, enough of learned discussions.  
He who does not talk, he is the *avadhūt*. [Refrain]

1. Brahmā is in the leaf, Viṣṇu in the bud,  
And the god Rudra [Śiva] is in the fruit.  
Having destroyed the three gods [through ritual offerings],  
Whom do you serve?
2. The renouncers with one, two, and three staffs  
Became *bhāgavats*.  
Not having found Viṣṇu,  
They died wandering at the *tīrths*.

[The “renouncer with staff” translates the *ḍaṇḍī*—an ascetic carrying a staff, *ḍaṇḍa*. The *bhāgavats* are a division of the worshippers of Viṣṇu; for more information, see Hudson (2008; 2010). The *kālāmukhi* [“black-faced”] is a member of an early Śaiva ascetic community; see Lorenzen (1972).]

3. One *kālāmukhī* ascetic with matted hair  
Performed the worship of the *liṅgam*.  
Not having found Mahādev [Śiva],  
He died rubbing ashes [on his body].
4. The four great teachers and the twelve great disciples  
Became monotheist.  
Not finding the certainty,  
Burning lights again and again, they all died.

[The “monotheist” translates the Hindi term *yekāṃkār*. Lorenzen (2011: 38–41) speculates on the possible identity of this religious group, discussing but ultimately rejecting their Sikh or even Christian affiliation, and suggests, with Aditya Behl, that the most likely candidates are the Muslim Sufis.]

5. On the nights of *caudas* and *pūrṇimā*  
The Jains observed the vows.  
Not becoming the *arahants*,  
They died plucking the hair.

[The *caudas* is the fourteenth day of the lunar calendar; the *pūrṇimā* is the night of the full Moon. The *arahant* is a saint in Jain and Buddhist traditions. Plucking the hair, rather than shaving the head, is a customary ritual act in becoming a Jain monk.]

6. There was one priest, two Qurans, eleven prophets.  
Not having found Allah,  
They died  
Performing call to prayer.
7. There were nine *nāths* and eighty-four *siddhas*  
Performing *āsans*.  
Having not found yoga,  
They died wandering in the jungle.
8. The body woven from five elements,  
No one was able to preserve.  
Death is destroyed when wisdom shines,  
Thus says Gorakh.

**Pad 39:**

Gorakhnāth says, The fortress of the body should be taken.  
The fortress of the body should be taken  
And life continued  
From aeon to aeon. [Refrain]

1. Inside the fortress of the body  
There are 900,000 canals.  
The moving *yantras*  
Do not allow the fort to be taken.
2. Up and down there are mountains  
And the dazzling canals.  
Water from the reservoir  
Fills the fortress.

3. There is no 'here'  
And no 'there'  
In the middle of *trikuṭī*.  
We live naturally in the emptiness.
4. Ādināth's grandson,  
Machindar's son,  
Gorakh *avadhūt*  
Has conquered the fortress of the body.

**Pad 40:**

Gorakh Rāi says, visit the place of Kedar!  
Oh son, drink its water, the essence of the three worlds! [Refrain]

1. There are many high mountains and difficult steps [*ghāṭs*].  
Gorakhnāth has made them smooth.
2. The black Gaṅgā and the white Gaṅgā  
Are seen sparkling.  
The water collected in buckets [at the foot of the mountain]  
Again reaches the [top of the] mountain.

[The "black" and "white" Gaṅgās refer to *piṅgalā* and *īrā* subtle channels. The "water" that reaches the back of the top of the mountain is a reference to the elixir, *amṛt*. See Barthvāl (1946: 135).]

3. Yogeśvar below,  
Kedar above;  
Foolish people do not know  
The door to liberation.
4. Ādināth's grandson,  
Machindarnāth's son,  
Gorakh *avadhūt* has achieved a mastery  
Over the body and Kedar.

**Pad 41:**

With whom do you fight, Rāi *avadhūt*?  
No opponent is in sight.  
The one you are fighting with  
Is your own self, Rām. [Refrain]

1. Self is indeed the fish and the tortoise,  
And self is the net.  
Self is the fisherman,  
And self is the death.
2. Self is indeed the lion and the tiger,  
And self is the cow.  
Self is the one that kills  
And self is the one that eats.
3. Self is the scaffolding,  
Self is the rung, self is the knot.  
Self is the corpse,  
Self is the shoulder [on which it is carried].
4. There is no other pilgrimage site,  
And no other god to worship.  
Gorakhnāth says,  
It is formless and undivided.

**Pad 42:**

My guru sings three songs.

I don't know

Where my guru went;

I cannot sleep now. [Refrain]

1. The pot is in the potter's house,  
The cream is in the milkman's house.  
The woman is in the brahmin's house.  
Woman, cream, pot.
2. The spear is in the king's house,  
The creeper is in the jungle.  
The oil is in the oil maker's house.  
Oil, creeper, spear.
3. The buffalo is in the herdsman's house,  
The *liṅgam* is in the temple.  
Asafoetida is on the market.  
Asafoetida, *liṅgam*, buffalo.

## 4. From one thread

Many things that look different are made

Gorakh says, *māyā* has three *guṇas*.

*Satguru* is the one who can explain it.

[The gist of the *pad* is that the apparent multiplicity of the phenomenal existence consists of only one thing (“one thread”), which is the false reality, *māyā*. Here, *maṃyā* is made implicitly equivalent with the concept of *prakṛtī* from Sāṅkhya philosophy, which is assumed to consist of three “qualities” (*guṇas*): *sattva* (associated with purity, calm, and spirituality), *rajas* (associated with passion, anger, and activity), and *tamas* (associated with inertia, torpor, passivity, and so on).]

**Pad 43:**

Oh guru-jī, don’t do such a thing.

Because of that, you are wasting the great juice of *amṛt*. [Refrain]

[This is another *pad* that addresses the subject of Gorakhnāth’s efforts to “wake up” his guru Matsyendranāth from his infatuations with sensual pleasures in the “land of women.”]

1. The tigress enchants the mind during the day, and at night sucks up the Sarovar Lake.

Although they know it, foolish people keep tigresses in their houses.

Just like a tree on the bank of a river, a man in company of a woman has a little hope of surviving.

What springs up from the mind falls down from the top of [the mount] Meru and there is no hope for the body.

2. The legs become shaky, the stomach loose  
And the head [white] like heron’s wings  
The eyes are rolling, unable to see  
When the tigress has sucked up the great juice of *amṛt*.
3. Curse the tigress, turn the tigress into a slave.  
The tigress is our body.  
The tigress swallowed prowling the men and the gods  
Said Gorakh-king.

[We have emended Barthvāl's reading of "sundar" (beautiful) with the compound "surnar" ("the gods and the men").]

**Pad 44:**

Pleasure seekers are asleep.  
 Even today they are not awake.  
 Oh misfortunate people,  
 It is not a pleasure, it's a sickness! [Refrain]

1. The pleasure seekers say,  
 Our pleasure is good.  
 Desiring women,  
 Their bodies turned into ashes.
2. For one drop of semen  
 Men and women burn,  
 But those who control it  
 Thereby achieve success.
3. The true hedonist is the one  
 Who keeps away from the vaginas.  
*Rajas* and *tamas*  
 Do not cross his door.

[For *rajas* and *tamas*, see note to the verse 4 of GBP 44.]

4. Gorakhnāth says,  
 Listen, oh men-folk!  
 There is no yoga  
 In empty talks and discussions.

**Pad 45:**

Kill, kill the serpent!  
 Enter the pure water!  
 Gorakhnāth saw  
 The three worlds bitten [by the snake].

1. Kill the serpent,  
 Wake up the bee;



What can the Death do  
To the one who has killed the snake?

[“Wake up the bee!” is a reference to waking up one’s mind (which like a bee wanders from one object of sensual attention to another).]

2. The serpent says,  
I am a powerful woman,  
I have deluded Brahmā,  
Viṣṇu and Mahādev [Śiva].
3. Intoxicated serpent  
Runs in ten directions,  
Gorakhnāth rushes [after her]  
Singing [the *mantra* of] the snake-charmer.
4. Ādināth’s grandson,  
Machindar’s son,  
Gorakh *avadhūt*  
Has killed the snake.

**Pad 46:**

Oh pretty one, provide a place for the child Gorakh.  
Mother, I have drunk without a cup.  
Wisdom has arranged the palanquin  
On which the child Gorakh is sleeping. [Refrain]

1. The divine daughters of the world of gods,  
The women of the world of mortals,  
The snake daughters of the netherworld—  
The child Gorakh is mighty [against all of you]!
2. He has killed *māyā*,  
Given up shelter, given up family and relations.  
Gorakh, the child, is in the thousand-petalled lotus  
Where there is the Mansarovar Lake of the mind.

[We have changed Baṛthvāl’s reading of “manasā sur” into “mansarovar”—  
a decision that can be contested. The alternative reading of the last line,

following Baṛthvāl, would be: “where there is the ocean of the Sun of the mind,” which sounds problematic in its content and imagery.]

3. Oh Mother, he gave up hope, gave up desire,  
Gave up his will.  
Although he wandered about the nine regions of Earth,  
Gorakh stayed in the house of Machindar.

**Pad 47:**

Nāth is saying immortal words:

The blanket will rain, water will get wet! [Refrain]

1. The buffalo calf is fixed [in the ground]  
And the stick is tied to it.  
The big drum walks,  
The camel sounds.
2. The Pīpal tree sits  
On the branch of a crow,  
The cat runs away  
At the sound of a mouse.

[We changed Baṛthvāl’s reading of “bhūsā” into “mūsā” (“mouse”).]

3. The traveler is walking,  
The road is tired;  
The bed is sleeping  
On the woman.
4. The dog is hiding,  
The thief is barking.  
The cowherd is coming,  
The cattle is calling.
5. In the middle of the city  
Is a deserted village;  
The pot is below,  
The pot-carrier above.

6. The stove burns  
Inside the wood,  
The bread is  
Eating the baker.
7. The amorous woman burns,  
The furnace gets warm.  
In the middle of the fire  
The fire shivers [from cold].
8. One barren woman  
Became barren.  
The daughter-in law gave birth  
To her mother-in-law.
9. The water from the pot  
Goes to the well.  
Gorakh sings  
The upside-down song.

**Pad 48:**

The vagina is a vampire. The vagina is a vampire.  
Without teeth, she devoured the whole world.  
The wise have saved their head with wisdom;  
The ordinary people have lost their own selves. [Refrain]

[The “vampire” translates the original Hindi “rākasi” (Skt. “rākṣasī”), a class of female demons. The equivalence between the two is not exact but at least in this context a “vampire” describes well an imagined opponent who sucks the life essence (here, of course, *bindu* rather than the blood is meant) out of the victim.]

1. During the day, the tigress sleeps,  
And at night she sucks from the body.  
Those addicted to lust don’t know the truth,  
So they nurture the tigress in their own house
2. Gorakhnāth says, joining two hands [as in prayer]:  
Fight in the future, tear the rope!  
People who rub skin against skin

Waste the body day by day.  
 They don't seek self-knowledge at the guru's mouth,  
 So the tigress tears them apart and devours them.

3. The tigress gives birth, the tigress kills,  
 The tigress rears the body.  
 The tigress roars at the side of the king of death:  
 Gorakh Rāyā knows this for sure.

**Pad 49:**

Oh *gurudev*, the tigress lies in  
 The beautiful, in the ugly, and in the innocent looking woman.  
 People are sleeping with those  
 Who by giving birth introduced them to the *samsār*. [Refrain]

[This is yet another *pad* involving Gorakh's attempt to "wake up" his guru Matsyendra.]

1. Search for the guru, *gurudev*,  
 Search for the guru! Gorakh is saying so.  
 After achieving liberation, you fell into chains.  
 How can that be yoga?
2. Oh *gurudev*, rubbing skin against skin day after day,  
 The body wastes away.  
 The lips, the throat and the palate get dry.  
 The marrow of the bone sucked up and eaten.
3. The moth burns in the flame, *gurudev*:  
 Such is the shadow of vagina.  
 You become old and then earned the kingdom.  
 Give up lust and illusion!
4. Gorakhnāth says,  
 Listen, oh Machindar, you are the son of god.  
 The people who keep  
 Semen from spilling, they are called *avadhūts*.

[We have accepted Baṛthvāl's interpretation of the original Hindi "brahma" as "bindu." An alternative translation would be: "Brahmins, people who keep [semen] from spilling, they are called *avadhūts*."]

**Pad 50:**

It is heavier than anything,  
 Anything in the three worlds;  
 It is more liquid than water,  
 Softer than a flower. [Refrain]

1. The mind cannot be known through the body.  
 Day and night, turn inward.  
 The *mudrā* of the mind is without form.  
 The mind in the form of the world is seen only in the mind.
2. When the breath is reversed, then it will conquer the body.  
 The captured glass will turn into gold and remain such.  
 This body is a house of truth.  
 The transformed blood fills with the juice of immortality.

[The “glass will turn into gold”: in Indian culture, glass is often opposed to gold. See Callewaert (2009), s.v. “kāc.” The theme of transformation is alchemical in its character; its gist is that by its process, the ordinary things (“glass”) become perfected (“gold”).]

3. The supreme person reaches the place of wisdom.  
 Achieving stability, he observes the body.  
 He devours old age, death and time.  
 The perfected yogi signifies the real yogi.

[The “perfected (‘nispatī’) yogi” refers to the highest class of yogis within the fourfold hierarchical scheme. See note to GBS 136.]

4. Oh son, harmonize the Garūṛ and the serpent,  
 Oh son, rub the nectar at the door of god.  
 Rubbing and rubbing, it will become soaked.  
 Gorakh has seen these things clearly.

[The mythological bird Garūṛ and the serpents are sworn enemies; to “harmonize” them could be one way of indicating *coincidentio oppositorum*, characteristic of the yogic achievement described in the *pad*.

More specifically, however, the two may refer to the breath (Garūr) and *kunḍalinī* (the serpent). See Baṛthvāl (1946: 147).]

**Pad 51:**

Tie, tie the calf;

Drink the milk.

In the *kali yug*,

The body will become immortal. [Refrain]

1. The cow in the sky gave birth to a calf.  
This cow had neither tail nor legs.
2. There are twelve calves, and sixteen cows.  
The night has passed in milking the cow.
3. The cow does not move; it doesn't eat the fodder.  
She runs to kill the five cowherds.
4. The milk of this cow is sweet.  
Gorakhnāth is sitting in the heaven and drinking it.

**Pad 52:**

It comes in company, it goes alone.

That is why Gorakh takes pleasure in Rām. [Refrain]

1. The swan came in union with the body,  
But the yogis on pilgrimages don't know it.
2. The living are in the world; the dead, in cremation grounds;  
But where did the person of the breath go?

[For the “person of breath” (“prāṇ puris”), see note to GBS 81.]

3. Birth, [then] death, and separation again:  
That is why Gorakh became a yogi.

**Pad 53:**

All the pupils have fallen asleep.

The *nāth satguru* is awake.

At the tenth door  
The *avadhūt* is collecting alms of honey. [Refrain]

1. The begging bowl is the *sahaj*,  
The staff is the *suṣumṇā*.  
Meeting five companions  
[The yogi] plays at nine places.
2. In the middle of Gaṅgā and Yamunā  
Light the fire at your seat.  
Drive away the fear of death  
By the *anāhad* sound.
3. I take pleasure alone  
At the circle of the sky.  
I drink the juice of immortality  
At the upper curved duct of the river.

[For the “curved duct,” see note to GBP 33, v.3.]

4. Gorakhnāth speaks  
The instruction of a guru:  
Having met the *sant* folks,  
All worries are gone.

[Unlike Callewaert and Beeck (1991), Baṛthvāl (1946) does not provide numerical designation for the verses in this *pad*.]

**Pad 54:**

Oh mind, when the diamond pierces diamond,  
Where does the body go?  
At the summit of the sky,  
The Moon will remain contained. [Refrain]

1. Employ seven, five, three, and nine methods.  
Employ the reverse posture  
To make the breath steady.  
When the breath becomes steady,  
The great juice becomes ready.  
Oh *gurudev*, one among the myriad knows this magic pill.

[The “reverse posture” translates an important technical term, “biparati karaṇī” (Skt. “viparītakaraṇī”), often referred to as a *mudrā*, consisting of a headstand position. The rationale for the posture is that it facilitates the imbibing of the nectar, which is otherwise tricking down toward its demise in the gastric “fire.” See White (1996: 482, n. 170) for a list of its occurrences in yogic literature (omitting, however, the mention of this *pad*), and Mallinson (2007: 188, n. 139). For “magic pill,” see note to GBS 49.]

2. Earrings in the ear, and the bundle of strings:  
 Oh *mīr*, what’s the reason for that?  
 Yogi always remains practicing  
 At the banks of Gaṅgā and Yamunā.  
 Having entered Gaṅgā and Yamunā,  
 Take your bath.  
 Pressing at the root, oh *avadhūt*,  
 Keep the meditation.

[“Pressing at the root”—we have emended Barṭhvāl’s reading of “bhūle” to “mule” (“at the root”). The “root” is of course the *mūlādhar cakra*.]

3. Having fixed the staff of Meru,  
 Join Śiva and Śakti.  
 Perform the worship of the guru  
 Who has untied the knot of Brahmā.  
 When the knot of Brahmā gets untied,  
 The channel of Meru grows big.  
 The five [companions] are crushed easily,  
 And the Moon became full.

[The Meru is a mythical mountain at the center of the world, the *axis mundi*. Esoterically, it is correlated with the central channel of subtle energy, the *suṣumṇā*. The “knot of Brahmā” translates “brahma gāṃṭhi” (Skt. “brahmagranthi”). “The median channel [i.e., *suṣumṇā*], when opened, becomes “the Eater of Death,” and the upward surge of energy that courses through it cuts through the three knots (called *granthis*) which are the sole remaining obstacles to yogin’s immortality and freedom” (White 1996: 279). “Crushed easily” = “with *sahaj*.” We have emended Barṭhvāl’s reading of “sahacaiṃ” to “sahajaiṃ.”]



4. Making the Moon the wooden shaft [for beating cloths],  
 And making the Sun the washing surface,  
 The washerman washes clothes, day and night,  
 At the bank of the three rivers.  
 Below, one Moon is the washing shaft,  
 And the surface is also the washing shaft.  
 The *siddha* Gorakh says,  
 I have crossed over the river of existence.

[The translation of the first half of this verse is highly tentative. In the final line, we have emended the Baṛthvāl's reading of "bhāchai" into "bhāṣai."]

**Pad 55:**

Oh Yogi, wake up! Turn towards spirit!  
 Do not lose the root of wakefulness, my brother!  
 Your master is sitting inside,  
 Watching and judging all your deeds. [Refrain]

1. Don't take a concubine, wife, or house-keeper.  
 Don't do the job of a prostitute.  
 If you keep company with widows  
 You will completely fall into hell.

For one drop of selfish pleasure  
 You will get the same result  
 [As if you committed] infanticide.  
 Both men and women will fall into hell,  
 They will be thrown down and crushed.

Deceived by women, forgetting god,  
 Don't throw your harvest into fire!  
 The ascetic Gorakh spoke  
 Through the mercy of Machindar:  
 Don't lose a winning game!

**Pad 56:**

Oh mango, let us go: the cuckoo is flowering.  
 The earth is turned upward and runs to the heavens. [Refrain]

1. The wretched cows have ambushed the lions.  
The dead animal is skinning the servant [*śūdra*].  
Weapons are injured, the god is worshipping.  
The king is serving the ploughmen.  
The pot is below, the fire above.  
If you do not waste the great juice [*mahāras*],  
You will cheat death.  
Burning candle  
Spreads the light.  
At the head of Gorakh  
There is a mountain.

**Pad 57:**

*Avadhūt* said to the king, Listen!  
Hear the excellent speech!  
Making love to a bad woman,  
You spend your nights asleep. [Refrain]

1. It has no branch or root, no leaves and no shadow.  
The lame person is watering it without water.  
The drum without skin is sounding.  
Many people are enjoying it.
2. An ant is carrying the mountain, oh *avadhūt*!  
The cow tore the tiger.  
The rabbit prevails over the waves of the ocean.  
The deer killed the leopard.
3. Walking on the uneven path, oh *avadhūt*,  
There is no light without a *guru*.  
The winning Gorakh no longer loses,  
He has figured out the game.

**Pad 58:**

I am your devotee,  
Oh, formless god!  
Everybody [else] serves the made-up image:  
They don't know your secret. [Refrain]

1. It is said, you are immortal and first.  
I have realized it.  
The whole world is made by you;  
You are not made by anyone.
2. The ten incarnations came and went,  
But they were not Rām.  
Even though they got their earnings,  
The creator was some other one.
3. You are the complete *brahman*,  
And the [only] male person on the Earth.  
You are the essence of all that are embodied.  
I never heard nor saw your own creator.
4. You are you and have created yourself,  
And you are the light to be seen.  
Gorakh speaks the words of the guru:  
You have created all.

**Pad 59:**

[Rāg Rāmgarī]

O mind, having become the king Rām,

Be without duality!

In the root lotus,

Prepare a place for the Sun and the Moon! [Refrain]

1. The *anāhad* bee is roaming  
At the bank of three rivers.  
It is drinking the great juice [*mahāras*]  
And opens wide the door.
2. Having made the Moon the wooden shaft,  
And the Sun the washing board,  
The washerman is constantly  
Washing clothes at the bank of three rivers.
3. Fill the narrow tube,  
Fill the curved duct!  
Gorakhnāth says, oh *avadhūt*:  
Thus shall you cross over!

**Pad 6o:**

The child Gorakh is saying  
 The words of the true guru:  
 One does not marry while living  
 The one who is neither fire nor water. [Refrain]

1. The milk is milking,  
 The buffalo is churning it.  
 The mother-in-law is rocked in the cradle,  
 The daughter-in-law is swinging it.
2. The cuckoo is flowering  
 The mango is scattering perfume.  
 The fish in the sky  
 Swallows the heron.
3. Farmer is cooked,  
 The caretaker is eating.  
 The grazing deer  
 Captured the hunter.
4. Yogi is made complete  
 With the sound of the horn [*śiṅg nād*].  
 Gorakhnāth is married  
 Where there is no Moon and no Sun.

**Pad 6i:**

[Āratī]  
 I shall sing the āratī of the Nirañjan nāth,  
 If my merciful guru permits. [Refrain]

[“Āratī” or “ārtī” is a ritual consisting of circulating a lamp or some other source of light around the object of devotion, performed either in temple or as a domestic worship.]

1. Where the endless *siddhas* meet,  
 The *āratī* is sung;  
 There, not even a word  
 Of the Death is heard.  
 Where the lord Yogeśvar [Śiva] meditates,

There the Moon and the Sun bow their heads.  
 The ascetic Gorakh sings the *āratī* through the mercy of  
 Machindar:  
 He has shown the brilliant light where nothing else is present.

**Pad 62:**

The *āratī* for the Nirañjan *nāth* is prepared:  
 Cymbals are sounding the words of the guru. [Refrain]

The unstruck sound thunders in the sky.  
 There, there is the supreme light of the luminous self.  
 The light in the lamp is of unbroken light.  
 The supreme light is burning day and night.

The whole place became luminous.  
 Nirañjan is the god, and no other.  
 His age is limitless,  
 His end cannot be found.

There the conches, the drums, the flutes and tunes are playing.  
 I fill the jar with the raindrops of pearls.  
 I offer the flowers of both form and formlessness.  
 The true reality is his name; his form is without form.

He is above all gods, his form is astonishing.  
 Ādināth's grandson,  
 Machendra's son,  
 Gorakh *avadhūt* performs *āratī*.

# *The Overview of Teaching*

[*Śiṣyā Darsan*]

OM. OUT OF the eternal, OM emerges. From OM, the space [*ākāś*] emerges. From the space, the air emerges. From the air, the fire emerges. From the fire, the water emerges. From the water, the earth emerges. The form of the earth is the beauty of the Goddess. The form of the water is the aspect of Brahṃā. The form of the fire is the *māyā* of Viṣṇu. The form of the air is the body of God. The form of the space is the shadow of sound [*nāḍ*]. The form of the sound emerged from the eternal. Nirañjan of the emptiness is the God-that-moves-on-the-earth. Nobody knows the mystery of the God-that-moves-on-the-earth. [It is] unreachable and secret. [It is] the Tree without end, [with] branches without end. Self-knowledge is the highest mystery. [It is] a revealed mystery. Contemplating the Self [*ātman*] is the wisdom of *brahman*. *Khecarī mudrā*. *Bhūcarī siddhi*. Wealth is transient. Knowledge of the unseen. The state of no-mind. A real magician is fearless. God is beyond. Worship of the eternal. The air is the *āśram*. The spirit is wisdom. The sky is the sitting posture. The drink is nectar. The mind is the mother. The five elements are the disciples. The mind is the king; the air is the minister. Yogi is the master of the vital breath at the tenth door. Easy come [i.e., with *sahaj*], oh *avadhūt*, and depart with disciplined control. The *susumṇa* is the riverbed, [where] detachment is the water. The bath at the confluence of three rivers [*triveṇī*]. Three times are *saṃdhyas*. The silent [*ajap*] Gayatrī [*mantra*] is the best *mantra*.

The rosary [is for] Nirañjan; the fire is formless. It thunders in the lotus. *Sabad* is the light. [There] the 21.600 breaths gather.<sup>1</sup> The breath is fixed and unified from head to toes. The unstruck sound is in the silent speech

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1. This number refers to the supposed number of inhalations per day.

[*bāṃṇī*]. The soul and Śiva will make a living creature. The soul without body is motionless and fixed. Restrained and reversed, [it] becomes milk. The eyes observe the view and the shadow. The vital breath and that which is formless [*nirañjan*] are expressed in the speech. *Sabad* without *sabad* will then become concrete. The beginning of beginning becomes the root. The *nād* and *bindu* should tie [like] the wind and space. Then, [even if] the body falls, it will not die. There is no cloud above the earth and heaven. While the body moves, there is no death. Where the temple is whole, meditation is radiant. Constantly in trance, one will be able to speak wisdom. The life is revealed in the *mūlādhār cakra*. Transforming the body, the constitutive elements [*skandhas*] become steady. The *mūl bandh* should make the *vajra*-robe [i.e., control of sex] steady. The true *uḍḍiyāna* [*bandh*] should arrest the semen. If the yogic posture is accomplished, the nectar held in the lotus becomes the Sun.<sup>2</sup> You should drink the water from the mouth of the pot—the power of consciousness will then enter the limbs of the body.

The immortal story is not in the arguments and discussions. The silent horn resounds the *nād*. Where there is the sign of happiness, there is *nirvāṇ*. The cap of Brahmā's lotus will protect you. A detached mind: such is the form of the *mudrā*. Gorakh says, This is the highest truth. Where the compassion is the support, meditation [is possible] at the *trikuṭi*. Mercy, as the prop, should support the mind. The Moon and the Sun as the furnace heat the stream [of nectar]. It cascades in the sky and intoxicates. He is the lord of yoga whose essence is unmoved while in the yogic union. He is free and liberated from fear and doubt. The world has two aspects: [either] the wisdom of *brahman* or suffering. The words of the *guru* are the unstruck [sound] that should be taken as the basis.

Where the countless *siddhas* are, there is the essence of essence. [When you are] unmoving and steady, you become unique. Begging while rich is a place of shelter. Guru Machindranāth's teachings should be kept in the ears. The *śakti* is beyond imagining. The yogi's bag [i.e., the body] is hopeless. Preservation of the semen is the only life-giving medicine. You need to remain in oneness, Oh *avadhūt*, and to penetrate through the solid matter. The root of birth and death will become nothing. The Goddess has twelve aspects, the God sixteen aspects. The secret should be grasped in the *suṣumṇa* vein. You should walk with nine *yoginīs*. The *nāth* will sing of abandoning the seventy-two [i.e., the *māyā*]. You should beg in the nine

2. In this context, the "Sun" may refer to a spiritual experience; see Callewaert (2009), s.v. "sūra."

regions of the earth. There will be no obstruction in the three worlds. Then you should look at the gates of fourteen worlds. This path is the essence of the six *darśanas*.<sup>3</sup>

The secret of the fire is [hidden] in the wood. The countless petals in the sky should be taken care of. Gorakh speaks the steady prayer. Neither sin nor virtue can be there. Meditating in emptiness, the full rosary consists of sixteen parts. Gorakh the child is his own and self-created.

Thus, Śrī Gorakh's disciples recite the praises and act, not smeared by sin, not overcome by virtue, *Om namaḥ Śivāya*, *Om namaḥ Śivāya*, hail to the sandals of the guru Machindranāth!

Thus is the book of yogic instruction, *The Doctrine of Learning*, fully completed.

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3. We have emended Baṛthvāl's reading of "ghaṭ" to "ṣaṭ" ("six").



# *The String of Breaths*

[*Prāṃṇ Saṅklī*]

1. I first bow to the feet of the guru  
Who revealed to me *ātman* and *brahman*.  
The true guru spoke the *sabad* and I understood.  
I saw the three worlds by the light of the jewel.
2. The sin and the virtue are the house of *karma*.  
Remember that freedom and liberation are close to the Lord.  
Find the wisdom while in the yogic union.  
Search for the state of *nirvāṇ* within the body.
3. There are seven islands and nine regions of the universe.  
[There is] the earth, the space, the gods, the Sun and the Moon.  
The abodes of the three worlds should be renounced.  
[Then] the flame of Nirañjan shines forth.
4. There is neither day nor night, neither year nor months.  
In the sky of Kailaś the cloud is thundering.  
The wise one easily creates the inaccessible fort,  
Mixing the fire, the air, the earth and the water.
5. [There are] thirty gates, thirteen roofs,  
Three secret and ten revealed knowledges.  
[There are] nine nerves, seventy-two rooms;  
Fifty [lotus petals], twenty-five [natures] and five [elements] are  
hidden in the house.

[Barṭhvāl (1946: 165) comments that the number 50 refers to the combined number of lotus-petals in the six *cakras* (from *mūlādhār* to *ājñā*); 25

refers to the number of “natures” (*prakīrtī*) as explained in the text “The Conversation between Gorakh and Gaṇeś” (“Gorakh Gaṇeś Guṣṭī”), where Gorakh relates that each of the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, space) is further associated with five “natures” or aspects (thus the earth microcosmically consists of bones, flesh, skin, blood-vessels, and hair: see Barthvāl 1946: 223); while 5 refers to the five above-listed elements (*tattvas*). These cosmological notions are ultimately *sāṃkhyān* in origin.]

6. [There are hidden] three-hundred-and-sixty [bones]  
 And nine hundred drains tied to the veins.  
 Seventy-two rivers are flowing.  
 The crocodile is swimming in the river.

[The translation of this stanza is rather tentative and based on Barthvāl’s (1946: 165) glosses.]

7. The floral garland is curved three-and-a-half times.  
 The petals of the lotus of *sahaj* are on the stalk of the female lotus.  
 Here dwells the female serpent that pierced the six *cakras*.  
 The curved one [guards] the truth with the [snake’s] hood of delusion.

[The “female serpent” and the “curved one” are the references to *kuṇḍalinī*.]

8. The one who is a true guru will make clear  
 What I reveal in one *sabad*.  
 The elixir of immortality is sweet, but its name is secret.  
 The one who [truly] searches for it, finds it.
9. Gaṅgā and Yamunā meet at the *trivenī*.  
 Chant the silent mantra and base it on *gayatrī*.  
 The water at the bottom has its abode up.  
 It remains contained in the lotus of the heart.
10. The *nād* and the *bindu* are truly united.  
 In whose body is the light? Where is its place?  
 Where is the home of Nirañjan?  
 Where does the black snake grab the frog?

[The “black snake” is a reference to *māyā*, and the “frog” to the individual soul. See Barthvāl (1946: 166).]

11. Where is the gathering of the cloud-breaths?  
Where does the cat surround the mouse?  
Where does the yogi complete the sound of horn?  
The man became a hero having won the battle.
12. How did the full Moon decay?  
The Sun and the Moon revolve in the house of breath.  
Contented senses do not grab after desires.  
For that reason, the Lord of Yoga brings down the dissolution [of  
the world].
13. There are seven knots in the veins of the body.  
Enter the *samādhi* both above and below.  
The nine buds are growing inside.  
There are eight lotuses with thirty-two petals.
14. Everywhere the *nād* remains full.  
Oh *avadhūt*, search for the place of the inaccessible root in the circle  
of the sky  
There are many roads to the fortress of the city.  
One beauty stands at the royal gate.

[The “beauty” is the *kuṇḍalinī*. See Barthvāl (1946: 167).]

15. Five great seers [*r̥ṣis*] are the chief policemen there.  
Their wives are great warriors.  
Whoever kills them will enter inside,  
And win the beauty, together with the world and the body.
16. [He will also conquer] the veins *iṛā*, *piṅgalā*, and *suṣumṇā*.  
[He will] cease wandering and meet the creator.  
The nectar replaces the poison of the five elements.  
He drinks the nectar of the guru’s speech.

This is *The String of Breaths*, composed by Śrī Gorakhnāth. Considering the body and the related science of breaths, you will not be smeared by sin nor overcome by virtue.

Though living in the mortal world, you will reach the realms of immortals. *Oṃ namo Śivāya. Oṃ namo Śivāya.* Hail to the sandals of the guru Machindranāth. The book of yogic instruction, *The String of Breaths*, is completed.

# *Instruction to a King*

[*Narvai Bodh*]

1. Listen, O king, these thoughts of awareness and wisdom!  
The whole world has emerged out of five elements.  
The perfected yogi first has to perform [the stages] of the beginner,  
in the body, and experienced [yogi].  
The ascetic Gorakh speaks instruction to a king.

[For these four classes of yogis (beginner, in the body, experienced, and perfected), associated with the four stages of yoga, see note to GBS 136.]

2. First of all, give up lust, anger, and ego,  
Illusions of the mind, sex, and evil things!  
Control the breath, do not kill!  
Give up desire, abandon greed!
3. Abandon duality, remain in non-duality!  
Give up sensual attachments, remain free!  
With natural ease [*sahaj*], assume your posture!  
Keep the body, mind, and vital air in control!

[We have emended, in the first line, Barthvāl's reading of "rahī" into "raho" ("remain!").]

4. Being self-controlled, pay heed to your diet!  
Restrain sleep, the destroyer of life!  
Abandon *tantra*, *mantra*, and *āyurveda*,  
*Yantras*, magic pills, and the pretense about "primary substance"!

[The "primary substance" (*dhāt*, *dhātu*) may refer either to metals or the semen, but in this context the connotation is probably related to alchemy.]

5. Don't praise the medicinal herbs,  
Don't set your foot on the king's gate!  
Give up paralyzing, confusing, subjugating, and driving away [the  
enemies]!  
Listen, the road to the beginning of yoga is the road of life!

["Paralyzing, subjugating, and driving away" ("tham̐ban, vasikaran, aucāṭ") are three (out of six) traditional "acts of magic." The *Śāradā Tilaka* (23: 121–25) defines them as follows: "121. I will now explain the correct attributes of the six acts [of magic] in this tantra, in accordance with all the tantras, the practice of which gives the fruit of the *siddhi*. 122. The wise celebrate as six acts of magic: pacification, subjugating, paralyzing, exciting hatred, driving away, and finally killing [an enemy]. 123. It is said that pacification is the removal of diseases, evil spirits, 'seizers,' etc. It is declared that subjugation is subjugating of all people. 124. It is said that paralyzing is blocking everything that is moving. Producing the mutual hatred between [former] friends is considered as exciting the hatred. 125. Causing [someone] to stray from his home to another place is called driving away. It is said that killing refers to taking away the breath from the living creatures."]

6. Renounce also the thirty-six [Zodiacal] decans,  
The whole astrology, and worship the Lord of the universe!  
Avoid showing off,  
Burn the lust, anger, and ego!
7. The great pleasure is in the eyes: do not wander across the country!  
The matted hair is just a burden: do not tie the hair!  
Don't plant the garden with dry trees!  
Don't toil to dig a shallow pond!
8. When the breath becomes weak, the body perishes.  
Oh king, sit firm in your posture!  
Never go to pilgrimages or perform fasts!  
Don't lose life climbing up the mountain!
9. Don't chant incantations and adorations!  
Involve yourself in yoga!  
Give up medicine, trade, and occupation!  
Reading and praising is the worldly behavior.

10. Avoid the company of many disciples!  
The status is a cremation ground,  
Discussions are a poison.  
Say thus all the time: remain a solitary king!
11. When you see a gathering, don't show off your knowledge!  
Be [as someone] dumb and a madman, and remain unknown!  
Don't rely on [the notions of] rich and poor!  
Be utterly detached while begging for food!
12. Sound the horn and start the journey!  
Develop divine qualities!  
Don't meditate like a heron!  
Sleep like a dog-ascetic!

[To meditate “like a heron” is a reference to a hypocritical yogi, who only pretends to meditate while in fact he only thinks of food, similar to the heron who appears to be “meditating” while in fact he is watching for a fish to catch; see Callewaert (2009): s.v. “bag.”]

13. Avoid mercury, alchemy, and magic pills!  
Avoid riches! Achieve success after due thinking!  
Abandon alcohol and marijuana!  
From this will emerge many joys.
14. The true *guru* leaves these three:  
Women, gambling, and music instruments!  
The ascetic Śrī Gorakh speaks instruction to a king,  
For the beginner, in the body, experienced, and perfected [yogis].

This is the book *Instruction to a King*, composed by Śrī Gorakhnāth, which needs to be read, remembered, and told; it is not smeared by sin, nor overcome by virtue, *Oṃ namo Śivāya*, *Oṃ namo Śivāya*. Hail to the sandals of the guru Machindranāth. Thus is the book of yogic instruction, *Instruction to a King*, fully completed.

# *Self-Understanding*

[*Ātma Bodh*]

1. OṢ. Having sat, maintain the lotus posture [*padmāsan*].  
In the firm posture is the union of vital breaths [possible].  
When the mind becomes unconscious, it enters into true  
meditation.  
At the summit of the sky, there is a light.
2. Having sat, first take control of the breath at the entrance.  
The breath plays at the sixty-four junctures.  
The nine doors are locked.  
The light is in the midst of the tenth [door].
3. This way acts the yoginī-cobra.  
She soaks dry the earth and fills the sky.  
The sound of breath merges into the sound in the sky.  
The water of the earth reaches the sky.

[The “yoginī-cobra” is a somewhat liberal translation of the original’s “bhuvamgam jogī,” which simply means the “cobra yogi.” Our choice of vocabulary is based on the conviction that the phrase refers to *kuṇḍalinī*, which is feminine in gender. We have also emended Baṛthvāl’s reading of “sur” to “svar” (“sound”). Alternatively, accepting his reading, the third verse could be translated as: “The sun of the breath merges with the sun in the heaven.”]

4. Then the yogi understands the method.  
The mind and the breath reach the *unmani*,  
The mind and the breath remain in the *unmani*.  
Thus he conquers the body, says Gorakh.

5. The great elixir, rising up, fills the unfilled.  
Thus acts the beginner yogi.  
The reversed *śakti* climbs to the top of the skull.  
The breath plays along nine regions, from head to toe.

[For the “beginner yogi,” see note to GBS 136. For “skull” as a translation of “brahmāṇḍa” (commonly, “universe”), see note to GBS 217. The second part of this stanza is almost identical to the first half of GBS 217.]

6. The reversed Moon grabs [the lunar eclipse-causing demon] Rāhu.  
The reversed Sun takes [the solar eclipse-causing demon] Ketu.  
The Sun remains steady at the gate of the Moon.  
The Lord of Yoga explains the essence of the body.

[Typically, the eclipse-causing demons Rahu and Ketu are “grabbing” or “seizing” the Moon and the Sun, respectively; however, in the context of *uṭṭā sādhanā*, the situation is reversed. We have emended, in our third verse, Baṛthvāl’s reading of “saraj” into “suraj” (the “Sun”). Alternatively, “saraj” could be a misspelling of “sahaj,” which would then yield “the gate of the Moon remains steady naturally.” Finally, and somewhat debatably, we have in the last line of the stanza emended the reading of “bhām” to “bhāmṛ,” which literally means “vessel, pot” and is a common poetic metaphor for the human body.]

7. What goes down is brought up.  
The twelve breaths remain in the *unman*.  
Day and night, the wind resounds the melodies.  
The breath thunders at the back door.
8. Inside, the fire of *brahman* is burning.  
[The yogi] catches the five thieves assisted by the wisdom.  
Yogi lights the lamp in his house.  
The death cannot make such yogi’s body disappear.
9. The breath trembles and thunders in the body.  
Becoming a warrior [the yogi] fights within himself.  
Taking the sword of wisdom, he should fight at the door [of the senses].  
Catching the essence of the five [elements], the unconquered should be conquered.



10. The eight wild mountains need to be tamed.  
The nine doors should be closed firmly.  
In the tenth door is the essence of light.  
The mad elephant [of the mind] should be tied at the gate.
11. The warrior king is inside.  
He protects with gusto that which is going in all four directions.  
The king fights with heavy wounds.  
Taking hold of the mind and the breath, he remains absorbed.
12. To join the mind and the breath is difficult.  
The Moon and the Sun—these two should be equally balanced.  
[The yogi] drinks nine hundred and eighty-nine oceans.  
The yogi always drinks and fills the empty.
13. Without a book, he reads the *Purānas*.  
The Goddess of Knowledge explains the wisdom of *brahman* to him.  
He drinks what does not flow and makes it a diamond.  
This takes away all bodily ills.
14. He investigates the flow [of semen] and controls it.  
Then the body becomes young, immortal, and firm.  
He sucks, feeds, burns, and lights it [i.e., the semen].  
Thus the fire of *brahman* burns day and night.
15. Day and night, this fire devours the sin.  
The breath hides in every pore.  
When the mind becomes calm, the breath flows steadily.  
Who can stop the one who has conquered Śiva's city?

[The “city of Śiva” is, esoterically, the highest *cakra* in the subtle body.]

16. The fettered soul sucks the sea of *brahman*,  
Drinking the ocean of milk, the body becomes young and immortal.  
[Yogi] sits in the *āsan* in the *vajra*-robe.  
This destroys all diseases and desires.

[An alternative translation of the third verse could be: “he sits in *vajrāsan* in the robe.”]

17. Nobody should forget [the value of] roots and medicinal herbs.  
 [Otherwise] the doctor's wife becomes widow.  
 Herbal medicine makes one immortal.  
 Why then does Dhanvantari the doctor die?

[Dhanvantari is the physician of the gods.]

18. If the purpose could be achieved with gold and silver,  
 Why then do the kings give up their kingdoms?  
 Those who are beastly do not chant the *jap*.  
 How can those beasts achieve liberation?
19. He who collects the wealth and keeps a *yogini*,  
 He does not seek a guru, and dies like a fool.  
 He who sits full of pride in front of the *yogini*:  
 He has forgotten guru's lessons.
20. The accomplished person is entirely just.  
 Sweet words are essentially lies.  
 The one who is truthful speaks truth.  
 The one who speaks lies is a great sinner.
21. We see a fool eating the poison.  
 He speaks lies and dies again and again.  
 As he does, so he gets:  
 He goes to hell taking [with him] one hundred and one persons.
22. Man is one, women of many kinds.  
 The essence of *ātman* is always eternal.  
 Always completely full, it remains whole.  
 The sayings of *Self-understanding* are complete.  
 Neither sin nor virtue smear the [true] body.  
 Śrī Gorakh-rāyā explains *Self-understanding*.

This is Śrī Gorakh's *Self-understanding*, which is to be read, done, multiplied, and told. The sin is not smearing, the virtue is not overcoming. *Om namo Śivāya, Om namo Śivāya*. Hail to the sandals of guru Machindranāth. Thus is the book of yogic instruction, *Self-understanding*, fully completed.

## “Measure of Fearlessness” Yoga

[*Abhai Māātrā Jog*]

OM. THE PERFECT *panth*, the way of wisdom, the true earth, the natural [*sahaḥ*] posture and breath, the magic pill of the yogic breath, the cave of self-control, self-restraint as the loincloth [that covers the sex organ] and the decorum as the chastity belt, transcending oneness as the meditational shawl, the union, *uḍḍīyan* [*bandh*, i.e., abdominal contraction], the true *mūdra*, virtue as the robe, forgiveness as the hat, burning as the support, introspection as the begging sack, patience as the walking staff, discrimination as the spade, ascetic practice as the wheel, the root [*cakra*] as the water-pot, the mind as the water, the great elixir as the food, compassion, thinking of the secret, discerning as the book, the tongue as the alchemy, a part as the whole body, wisdom as the cheater of death, the royal place, the forest as the limitless, detachment as the temple, what is beyond as the deity, wisdom as the light, living in reality, begging without begging, the *sabad* as the yogic whistle, *anahad* as the stringed *kingarī*, a cup of nectar as Śiva’s [or, dark] lake, stillness as the treasure, truth as the miracle, liberation as the achievement [*siddhi*], the indescribable meditation, permanent *samādhi*, the tree of formlessness, the leaves of the world, the fruit of immortality.

Thus is the “Measure of Fearlessness” completed.

# *Fifteen Days*

[*Pandrah Tithi*]

Gorakh praises *ekaṃkāṛ*.  
Consider the fifteen days! (Refrain)

[For *ekaṃkāṛ*, see note to GBS 110.]

1. On the night with no Moon, sit in a firm posture!  
Realizing the Self, nobody dies.  
When the breath flows from the root [*cakra*, i.e., *mūlādhar*]  
To the thousand [petaled *cakra*, i.e., *sahasrār*],  
Then the curved duct overflows.
2. On the *parivā*, the first day of the two [lunar fortnights] starts.  
Through the word [*sabad*] of the true guru  
Natural [*sahaj*] *samādhi* [is achieved].  
If you remain in the temple of the sky  
You may cross over the four ages of the world.
3. On the second day, two families are delivered [from *samsār*].  
When the mind becomes no-mind, the body becomes perfect.  
The outside and the inside are one [*ekaṃkāṛ*].  
By the grace of the guru, the ocean of existence is crossed.
4. On the third day, take a bath at [the confluence of] the three rivers.  
Give both sin and virtue as an offering.  
Then find the faith in the yogic union.  
The old age and death will not destroy the body.

5. On the fourth day, fix the restless.  
Discard both time and timelessness.  
Crush the pride of the God of Death.  
The true guru has explained the place of *nirvāṇ*.

[The “restless” denotes the mind.]

6. On the fifth day is the union of the five elements.  
Tie fast the elephant in rut.  
Drink continuously the great nectar.  
By the grace of the guru,  
Live from an age to an age.

[The “elephant in rut” denotes the unruly mind. We have emended “guru parkhā dai” to “guru parsā dai” (“by the grace of the guru”).]

7. On the sixth day, consider the essence of the six *cakras*:  
The complete storehouse of prosperity,  
Power, wisdom, and intelligence.  
Renounce the hope in riches and possessions,  
In the body, women, pleasure and sex.
8. On the seventh day, having controlled the *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas guṇa*,  
Realize the union of life and death  
Obtain the rank, which is indestructible, un-ageing, and undying.  
Controlling the mind and breath,  
Stay in the *unman*.
9. The eighth day [belongs to] eight Bhairavas and nine *nāths*.  
Meet together with the countless *siddhas*.  
Wondrous teachings can’t be told.  
The down-cascading great juice is contained in the sky.
10. The ninth day [refers to] the nine treasures in the body.  
See the equivalence of sin and virtue!  
The sin drowns you, the true *dharma* carries you across.  
Beyond the body, there is neither birth nor caste.
11. On the tenth day, ten directions are fixed.  
Through the true control, the body becomes steady.

The guru has saved you from both *dharma* and *karma*.  
The *vīṇa* plays [the music] of splendid wisdom.

12. The eleventh is [the day] of eleven Rudras.  
Find the jewel in the ocean of the body.  
The guru has explained the invisible treasure.  
The eleventh is the king of days.
13. On the twelfth day, the Sun blazes in the sky.  
The Sun-beams are shining.  
The buzzing bee has entered the inside.  
The true guru has explained the means for [proper] life.

[We have emended Baṛthvāl's reading of "cīvan" to "jīvan" ("life").]

14. On the thirteenth day is the meeting in the *trikuṭī*.  
The Moon and the Sun have become equal.  
One ocean is restrained by nine banks [*ghāṭs*].  
The true guru searches for the superior path.
15. On the fourteenth [day], the fourteen jewels should be considered.  
The cure is coming any moment.  
See your own self unveiled!  
See your own self unveiled!  
[Both] the creation and the destruction are within the body.
16. On the night of the full Moon, the hope of the mind is fulfilled.  
Abandoning illusion and attachment, you have become indifferent.  
The full Moon has sixteen digits.  
The body has become steady through the mercy of the guru.
17. The fifteenth day is of the *sandhi* [juncture].  
Through the mercy of Machindar, the body has become steady.  
Having become steady, it becomes calm.  
To the countless *siddhas*, Śrī Gorakh is the pīr.

# Seven Days

[*Saptvār*]

I grasp the root of yoga constantly.  
I think of guru's *sabad* in the *sahaj* [state]. [Refrain]

1. On Sunday, you should investigate the life and death!  
Keep the breath firmly within the body!  
Perform the worship of Śiva at the tenth gate!  
Thus, find the guru in the day of the Sun.

[The “life and death” translates the original Hindi phrase “coming and going” (“*āvā gaman*”). We have emended Barthvāl's reading of “*basvaiṃ dvāri*” to “*dasvaiṃ dvāri*” (“at the tenth gate”—a reference to *brahmarandhra*).]

2. On Monday, the mind should be kept in emptiness.  
The immovable body is beyond sin and virtue.  
The Moon [releases] the rain and fills the sky.  
Practice the virtue of Monday this way!
3. On Tuesday, the tough *māyā* should be controlled.  
The Moon and the Sun—the two, made equal, should unite.  
Trick the old age and death, the mortality!  
Thus, find the guru on Tuesday.
4. On Wednesday, the guru gave the wisdom.  
Understand the body! Obtain the *siddhi*!  
Śakti fills Śiva's house with water.  
Practice the virtue of Wednesday this way!

5. On Thursday, concentrate the difficult mind!  
 Restrain the five senses!  
 Control the nine doors immersed in *śaṅkhiṇī*!  
 Thus, find the guru on Thursday.

[For *śaṅkhiṇī*, see note to GBP 30: 3.]

6. On Friday, the body must be considered.  
 Where dwells the elixir? Where dwells the semen?  
 The nine [veins] and seventy-two [knots] are washed away by the  
 breath.  
 Thus, only a few obtain the virtue of Friday.

[“The seven threads allude to the seven *dhātus* or ‘materials’ out of which the human body is made; the seventy knots allude to the seventy-two articulations of the same” (Vaudeville 1993: 237, n. 69). For “nine veins” see also GBS 133. Alternatively, the reference could be to the nine openings in the body.]

7. Assume a firm and immovable posture!  
 Constantly count twelve and sixteen!  
 The Sun enters the Moon’s house.  
 Thus, take a bath, day after day, in the immovable sky!

[The number twelve alludes to the Sun and sixteen to the Moon.]

8. Seven days have one taste.  
 Kālā Bhairav breaks the ties.  
 To the living being who experienced this in the body,  
 Gorakh has spoken *Seven Days*.



# *Machindra's Instruction to Gorakh*

[*Machindra Gorakh Bodh*]

1. Gorakh said: Master, you are a teacher of yogis; I am your disciple. (Asking a question.) Be merciful and respond, without anger. How shall a student comport himself at the beginning [of practice]? You are a true teacher, so tell me that I can understand.
2. Machindra said: *Avadhūt*, [the student] should live away from the roads, or in a shadow of the tree, renouncing lust, anger, and the thirst for the worldly illusion. He should cut down on sleep, and eat little.
3. Gorakh: Master, what should he be looking at, what should he be considering, what taking as the essence? Seeing what<sup>1</sup> should he shave his head, with what should he be getting across [to the other shore]?
4. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, he should be looking into his own Self, considering the limitless. He should be taking truth as the essence. Taking guru's word [*sabad*], he should shave his head. Grasping the wisdom of *brahman* [or, divine knowledge], he should get across [to the other shore].
5. Gorakh: Master, what is the spiritual instruction in giving orders? Where does the emptiness dwell? Who is the guru of the *sabad*? That's what Gorakhnāth asks.
6. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the instruction in giving orders is incomparable.<sup>2</sup> Emptiness dwells in eternity. Experience is the guru of the *sabad*. Thus says Machindra-nāth.
7. Gorakh: Master, what is the form of the mind? What is the support of the wind? What is the condition of the breath? What is the gate of practice?

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1. Reading "doṣ" as "dekhi."

2. Reading "anūṣam" as "anūpam."

8. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the form of the mind is emptiness. The wind is without support. The condition of breath is indescribable. Tenth is the gate of practice.
9. Gorakh: Master, what is a branch without a tree? What is a parrot without wings? What is the water with no dam? What is death with no death?
10. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, wind is a branch without a tree. Mind is a parrot without wings. Patience is the water with no dam. Sleep is death with no death.
11. Gorakh: Master, what is the seed, what is the field? What is the ear,<sup>3</sup> what is the eye? What is yoga, what is the union [through yoga]? What is liberation, what is liberated?
12. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, mantra is the seed, mind is the field. Ear is the remembrance; immersion is the eye. Water [*ūram*] is yoga, earth [*dhūram*] is the union. Light is liberation, the flame is liberated.
13. Gorakh: Master, what is the root, what the creeper? Who is the teacher, who the disciple? What is the field, what the fair? After grasping which truth, one is happy alone?
14. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, mind is the root, breath is the creeper. *Sabad* is the guru, remembrance the disciple. *Trikuti* is the field, reversal is the fair. After grasping the truth of *nirvāṇ*, one is happy alone.
15. Gorakh: Master, what is the house of the Moon, what the house of the Sun? In which house the Time [Death] sounds the trumpet? In which house the five elements are balanced. You are a true guru, instruct me!
16. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, mind is the house of the Moon, breath the house of the Sun. In the house of Emptiness, the Time [Death] sounds the trumpet. In the House of wisdom, the five elements are balanced. You are a true guru, instruct me! [Thus says Machindra after consideration.]<sup>4</sup>
17. Gorakh: Master, what is the last day of the lunar fortnight, what is the first day of the lunar fortnight? Where is the great elixir, from where does it arise? At which place mind becomes no-mind? You are a true guru, instruct me!
18. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the Sun is the last day of lunar fortnight, the Moon the first day of the lunar fortnight. The elixir is taken from below

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3. Accepting the reading of “sarcaṃṇ” as “śravaṇ.”

4. At the end of Machindra's response, Gorakh's question is mistakenly repeated. The anticipated closing formula is here given in square brackets.

- to high. In heaven, the mind turns to no-mind. Thus says Machindra after consideration.
19. Gorakh: Master, what devours the bad *sabad*? Where does the good *sabad* dwell? In which mouth does the twelve-finger breath remain? You are a true guru, instruct me!
  20. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the good *sabad* devours the bad *sabad*. The good *sabad* dwells in eternity. The twelve-finger breath remains in guru's mouth. Thus says Machindra after consideration.
  21. Gorakh: Master, who is the first guru? Who is the lord of the Earth? Where is the place of wisdom? What is the gate to emptiness?
  22. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, beginning-less is the first guru. The shy is the lord of the Earth. The consciousness is the place of wisdom. Experience is the gate to emptiness.
  23. Gorakh: Master, which experience breaks the charm of illusion? Which experience burst opens the house of the Moon? Which experience applies the *bandh*? Which experience makes the body firm?
  24. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the experience of the mind breaks the charm of illusion. The experience of breath bursts open the house of the Moon. Experience of wisdom applies the *bandh*. Experience of the guru makes the body changeless and immortal.
  25. Gorakh: Master, where does the mind dwell, where the breath? Where does the *sabad* dwell, where the Moon? At which place does the truth remain. You are a true teacher, please answer my questions.
  26. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the mind dwells in the heart, the breath in the navel. *Sabad* dwells in [true?] form, the Moon in the sky. The truth remains on high. Thus says Machindra after consideration.
  27. Gorakh: Master, if there is no heart, where does [then] dwell the mind; if no navel, [then] where the breath? If there is no form, where does [then] dwell the *sabad*, if no sky, [then] where the Moon?
  28. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, if there is no heart, then the mind dwells in emptiness, if no navel, then the breath dwells in the formless. If there is no form, then the *sabad* dwells in the *akula* [i.e., Śiva]. If there is no sky, the Moon dwells in the interior [space].
  29. Gorakh: Master, if there were no night, from where would the day arrive? After the day spreads, where does the night go? Where does the light go once the lamp is put out? If there was no body, where would the breath dwell?
  30. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, if there were no night, the day would come spontaneously. After the day spreads, the night goes to spontaneity. After

the lamp is put out, the light goes to the inside. If there was no body, the breath would dwell in emptiness.

31. Gorakh: Master, how many hundreds of thousands of Moons are in the body? How does the scent dwell in the flower? Where does the butter dwell in the milk? Where in the body dwells the soul?
32. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, there are two hundred thousand Moons in the body. The scent in the flower is [its] consciousness. The butter dwells throughout the milk. The soul pervades the entire body.
33. Gorakh: Master, where dwells the Moon, where the Sun? Where dwells the *nād*, where the root [source]? Where does the swan drink the water? The reverse *śakti* arrives into the house of *ātman*.
34. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the Moon dwells above, the Sun below. The *nād* dwells in the heart, the root [source] in the *bindu*. The reverse *śakti* arrives into the house of *ātman*. [Sic.]
35. Gorakh: Master, where does the *nād* arise from? Where is the *nād* born? Where is the *nād* established? Where does the *nād* disappear?
36. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the *nād* arises from the Om. The *nād* is born from emptiness. The *nād* is established in listening. The *nād* disappears in *Nirañjan*.
37. Gorakh: Master, when the *nād* is not sounding, when the *bindu* is not dripping, when there is no hope in Heaven, when there is neither *nād* nor *bindu*—where does then reside the vital breath?
38. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the *nād* still sounds, the *bindu* still drips, there is still hope in Heaven. If there is neither *nād* nor *bindu*, the vital breath resides in eternity.
39. Gorakh: Master, when the form disappears and there is [only] the formless, when there is no air and no water; when there is neither the Sun nor the Moon, where does then the swan [i.e., breath] reside?
40. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the *sahaj* is the play-field where the swan [breath] speaks, and the swan [breath] dwells in emptiness. Both form and formless exist through *sahaj*. The supreme light is the dwelling place of the swan [breath].
41. Gorakh: Master, what is the root of the rootless? Where does the root dwell? Who is the guru of the *pad*? This is what Gorakhnāth asks.
42. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the root of the rootless is emptiness. The root dwells in the eternal. *Nirvāṇ* is the guru of the *pad*. Thus says Machindranāth.

43. Gorakh: Master, from where arises the vital breath? From where arises the mind? From where arises the speech? Where does the speech dissolve into?
44. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the vital breath arises from awareness. The mind arises from the vital breath. The speech arises from the mind. The speech dissolves into mind.
45. Gorakh: Master, what is the lake and who is the lotus?<sup>5</sup> From which gate can one escape Death? How to find the world of mystery? How<sup>6</sup> to harmonize the mind with the breath?
46. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the mind is the lake and the breath is the lotus. From the upper gate, one escapes the Death. Joining the upper and the lower one finds the world of mystery: this is how the mind harmonizes with the breath.
47. Gorakh: Master, what is a difficult juncture? At which *cakra* to apply the *bandh*? How does the consciousness remain in the *unman*? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
48. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the difficult juncture is in the pure fire. One should apply the *bandh* to the upper *cakra[s]*. The consciousness remains in the *unman* perpetually. Thus says Machindra upon reflection.
49. Gorakh: Master, where does the space originate from? Where is the origin contained? O master teacher, from which one element are we born?
50. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, just as there is oil in the sesame seed, fire in the timber, fragrance in the flower, so there is god within the body.
51. Gorakh: Master, who appears in the dream? Where resides the curved duct? When people dream, where is their vital breath?
52. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, what appears in the dream is the natural state [*sahaj subhāi* = *sahaj svabhāva*]. The curved duct resides in the navel. When people<sup>7</sup> dream, their vital breath resides unknown<sup>8</sup> in the midst of the body [*piṇḍ*].

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5. "Sanāl" (Skt, "sanāla") means "having a stalk" ("furnished with a stalk" according to Monier-Williams [1963: s.v. "sanāla"]). I have accepted Mohan Singh's (1937: 56) rendering of the word as the "lotus."

6. Reading "aisaiṃ" as "kaisaiṃ."

7. Reading "pāṇī" as "prāṇī."

8. Reading "aparachan" as "aparicay."

53. Gorakh: Master, at which *cakra* is the Moon fixed? At which *cakra* to apply the *bandh*? At which *cakra* the breath stops?<sup>9</sup> At which *cakra* the mind delights? At which *cakra* should one hold the attention? At which *cakra* lies tranquility?
54. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the Moon is fixed at the lower *cakra*. The *bandh* is applied at the higher *cakra*. The breath stops at the rear *cakra*. The mind delights at the heart *cakra*. One should hold the attention at the throat *cakra*. Tranquility lies at the wisdom [*ājñā*] *cakra*.
55. Gorakh: Master, how does *māyā* arise in the emptiness? How come the nine planets are neither sin nor virtue? Which planet to grasp in order to stay in the *unman*? You are a true teacher, please answer the questions!
56. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, *māyā* [emerges from] emptiness as soon as there is talking. Considering thoughtfully the nine planets they do not cause either sin or virtue. One stays in the *unman* by grasping Śiva and Śakti. Thus says Machindra after consideration.
57. Gorakh: Master, what is the house and what the dwelling? Who stays ten [lunar] months in the womb? How does the helpless creature<sup>10</sup> [eat] the milk, from which hand and by which mouth? From which sides of the world the body is born?
58. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the air is the house, the existence is the dwelling. The Lord stays ten months in the womb. The mind is the mouth and the hand, and the breath<sup>11</sup> the mouth for the milk. The body is born from the direction of the Oṃ sound.
59. Gorakh: Master, through which vein Śiva communicates? Through which mouth [opening] enters the soul? In which womb it dwells? Through which vein it drinks the nectar?
60. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, Śiva communicates through the Conch Vein [*śankhinī*]. The soul enters through the *suṣumṇā*. It dwells in the womb of the mother. It drinks the nectar through the Curved Duct [*baṅk nālī*].
61. Gorakh: What is born in the emptiness? What does a true guru explain in the emptiness? Who is contained in the emptiness? Which essence does a guru explain?

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9. Accepting “pavan nirodhai” reading (manuscript ऋ).

10. Reading “astūti” as “asatti.”

11. Reading “pasan” as “pavan.”

62. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, *sahaj* is born in the emptiness. A true guru explains all in the emptiness. God is contained in the emptiness. A guru explains this essence.
63. Gorakh: Master, how to attain *samādhi*? How to escape appearances [illusion]? How to obtain the fourth state [of consciousness]? How can the body become changeless and immortal?
64. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, by the force of the mind one attains *samādhi*. By the force of the breath one escapes appearances [illusion]. By the force of remembrance, one obtains the fourth state. By the force of the guru, the body becomes changeless and immortal.
65. Gorakh: Master, what sleeps, what wakes? What goes into ten directions? From where does [the breath] arise? How does it make the sound at the lips, throat, and the palate?
66. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the mind sleeps, the breath wakes. Imagination goes into ten directions. The breath arises from the navel, and by passing it makes the sound at the lips, throat, and the palate.
67. Gorakh: Master, from where does the mind attain many qualities? From where does the breath come and go? In which mouth the Moon showers the rain of nectar? At which mouth the Time [Death] goes to sleep?
68. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the mind attains many qualities from the heart. The breath comes and goes from the navel. In your own mouth the Moon showers the rain of nectar. The Time [Death] goes to sleep in the mouth of the mind.
69. Gorakh: Master, by which force the light changes? Who utters the words from the emptiness? From which emptiness comes the essence of the three worlds? Who crosses to the other side from the emptiness?
70. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, by the fierce force the light changes. The fearless one utters the words from the emptiness. The essence of the three worlds is from the supreme emptiness. The Supreme Being [*atī*] crosses to the other side from the emptiness.
71. Gorakh: Master, from where comes the hunger? From where comes the food? From where comes the sleep? From where comes the death?
72. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the hunger comes from the mind. The food comes from hunger. The sleep comes from food. The death comes from sleep.
73. Gorakh: Master, it is true, it is true! You speak like a learned teacher. What is the direction of the mind and breath? What is the view, what is the manner of wisdom? How is it possible to cross over without books?

74. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, from a view the divine view becomes. From the wisdom, a wise man becomes. Just as the teacher and the disciple are one body, after the experience, there is no more separation.
75. Gorakh: Master, from where does arise the breath? Where is the home of the supreme spirit [*param haṃs*]? At which place the mind dwells after it becomes steady? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
76. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the breath arises from below. The home of the supreme spirit is above. The steady mind dwells in the natural emptiness [*sahaj sunni*]. So says Machindra after consideration.
77. Gorakh: Master, where do we come from, where do we go to? Where does the collected mind dwell? Where do the steady body and mind always dwell? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
78. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, we come from emptiness and go to emptiness. The collected mind dwells in emptiness. The steady body and mind dwell in natural emptiness. So says Machindra after consideration.
79. Gorakh: Master, where dwells Śakti, where dwells Śiva? Where dwells the breath, where dwells the soul [*jīva*]? Where are they experienced? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
80. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, Śakti dwells below, Śiva dwells above. The breath dwells inside, the soul dwells in the heart.<sup>12</sup> They are experienced in eternity. So says Machindra after consideration.
81. Gorakh: Master, who sits in the mouth, who moves in the mouth? Who speaks in the mouth, who meets in the mouth? What is it that fearlessly exists, master? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
82. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, *surati* [i.e., remembering, or meditation] sits in the mouth, *surati* moves in the mouth. *Surati* speaks in the mouth, *surati* meets in the mouth. *Surati* exists fearlessly in the *nirati* [i.e., salvation].<sup>13</sup> So says Machindra after consideration.

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12. "Inside" and "in the heart" are somewhat provisional translations of the original terms "bhītari" and "antari," which both refer to the interior place.

13. "Surati" and "nirati" are polysemous technical terms in the vocabulary of the Nāths and the *nirgunī* poets in general; one possible interpretation would take them as allusions to Śakti [*surati*] and Śiva [*nirati*]. See Callewaert (2009), s.v. "nirati."



83. Gorakh: Master, what is *sabad*, what is *surati*? What is *bandh*, what is *nirati*? Where does one dwell after destroying duality?<sup>14</sup> You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
84. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, *sabad* is *anāhad* [i.e., the ‘unstruck sound’], *surati* is thinking. *Nirati* is self-existing, *bandh* is a fastening. After destroying duality, one dwells in the *sahaj*. So says Machindra after consideration.
85. Gorakh: Master, what is the posture [*āsan*], what is wisdom? In what manner shall the youngster perform meditation? How is the eternal enjoyed? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
86. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the [true] posture is contentment. Thinking is wisdom. Meditation should be performed by giving up the body. The eternal is enjoyed in the mouth of the guru. So says Machindra after consideration.
87. Gorakh: Master, what is contentment, what is thinking? How come meditation is beyond the body? How is it contained within the mind? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
88. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, contentment means to be fearless, thinking means to have mystical experience. Meditation is beyond the body in both cases. In the guru’s mouth it is contained within the mind. So says Machindra after consideration.
89. Gorakh: Master, what is the footless path? What is the eyeless sight? What is the earless listening? What is the mouthless *sabad*?
90. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, thinking is the footless path. *Nirati* is eyeless sight. *Surati* is earless listening. The mystical absorption [*lay*] is the mouthless *sabad*.
91. Gorakh: Master, what is washing, what is proper conduct? With what chant can the mind give up evil things? In what state [*bhāv*] can fearlessness remain? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
92. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, meditation is the proper conduct [*brahmā ācār*]. With the silent chant [*ajapā jāp*] the mind can give up evil things. In the state of one’s true self the fearlessness remains. So says Machindra after consideration.

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14. Gorakh’s question about duality contains the verb “bheṭaim,” while Machindra answers using the verb “meṭi.” The latter is assumed to be the correct form and is translated as such in both instances.

93. Gorakh: Master, what is OM, what is the self? Who is the mother, who is the father? How can the sea be contained in the mind? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
94. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, *sabad* is OM, light is the self. Emptiness is the mother, consciousness is the father. The sea is contained in a steady mind. So says Machindra after consideration.
95. Gorakh: Master, what is consciousness, what is the essence? What is sleep, what is time? Where are the five elements contained? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
96. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, Light is consciousness, fearlessness is the essence. Sleep and time arise from wakefulness. The five elements are contained within light. So says Machindra after consideration.
97. Gorakh: Master, who speaks, who sleeps? In what form is the self seen? Who remains in the form, aeon after aeon? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
98. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, *sabad* speaks, *śakti* sleeps. The self is seen in the invisible form. The formless remains in the form, aeon after aeon. So says Machindra after consideration.
99. Gorakh: Master, in which mouth is existence, in which mouth is meditation? In which mouth is the elixir, in which mouth is water? Cutting off which mouth the bodiless remains? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
100. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, existence is in the mouth of the *sahaj*, meditation is in the mouth of *śakti*. The elixir is in the mouth of heaven, water is in the mouth of the mind. Cutting off the mouth of hope, the bodiless remains. So says Machindra after consideration.
101. Gorakh: Master, in which mouth is the birth, in which mouth is the death?<sup>15</sup> In which mouth is the moat of Time? In which mouth the light remains? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
102. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the birth is in the mouth of *sahaj*, the death is in the mouth of *śakti*. The moat of Time is impartial. The light remains in the mouth of dispassion. So says Machindra after consideration.
103. Gorakh: Master, what is the body, what is the vital breath? Which person performs meditation? Maintaining which position, the Time is contained? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.

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15. "Birth" and "death" translates the original phrases "coming" ("āvai") and "going" ("jāi").

104. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the body is air, the vital breath is the mind. The supreme person performs meditation. Maintaining the natural [*sahaj*] position, the Time is contained. So says Machindra after consideration.
105. Gorakh: Master, what is the key, what is the lock? Who is the old one, who is the child? In which place the mind remains awake? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
106. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the wordless [*nihsabad*] is the key, the word [*sabad*] is the lock. The old one is not awake, the awake one is the child. In the place of wisdom, the mind remains awake. So says Machindra after consideration.
107. Gorakh: Master, who is the practitioner [*sādhik*], and what is the achievement [*siddhi*]? What is illusion [*māyā*], and what is prosperity? How does the mind stop wandering? You are a true teacher, *gosvāmi*, tell me so I can understand.
108. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the practitioner is *surati*, *sabad* is the achievement. The ego is illusion, the beyond is prosperity. *Nirati* remains after ignoring them both. So says Machindra after consideration.
109. Gorakh: Master, what is true, what is passionate? What is beautiful after adornment? What remains unmoved? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
110. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, wisdom is true, the vital breath is passionate. Anything is beautiful after adornment. The no-mind [*unman*] remains unmoved. So says Machindra after consideration.
111. Gorakh: Master, what is the temple, and who is the god? Where does [the officiant] sit while performing the service? Who is the master and what are the rules? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
112. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the emptiness is the temple, and the mind is the god. [The officiant] sits in eternity while performing the service. The five masters remain within no-mind [*unmani*]. So says Machindra after consideration.
113. Gorakh: Master, what is the temple, and what is its door? What is the icon [*mūrati*], and what is the other? In which for the mind remains within no-mind [*unmani*]? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
114. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the emptiness is the temple, *sabad* is its door. The light is the icon, the flame is the other. The mind remains within no-mind in the formless form. So says Machindra after consideration.

115. Gorakh: Master, what is the lamp, and what is its splendor? Where do the wick and oil dwell? How does the lamp remain steady? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
116. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, wisdom is the lamp, and *sabad* is its splendor. The wick and oil dwell in contentment. It remains unbroken by eradicating the doubt. So says Machindra after consideration.
117. Gorakh: Master, who is sitting, who is going? Who is moving around, who is met? Who remains fearless within the house? You are a true teacher, tell me so I can understand.
118. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the patience is sitting, the wickedness is going. *Surati* is moving around, the essence is met. The Supreme Being [atī] is always sitting fearless within the house.
119. Gorakh: Master, who is the yogi, where does he dwell? Who is the one that enjoys [*bhogi*] and how does he gain? How does the pain arise within pleasure? Who manages to be steadfast in the midst of them?
120. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the mind is the yogi and he dwells in the *unmani*. All the pleasure is obtained by the birth of the great elixir. In the midst of passion is the continuous pain. The true teacher *sabad* manages to be steadfast in the midst of them.
121. Gorakh: Master, how does the true self [*ātmā*] come and go? How does the true self remain the same? How does the true self go beyond the three worlds? Experiencing what is the one a true hero?
122. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the true self is the air that comes and goes. The true self as the mind remains the same in the emptiness. The true self as the wisdom goes beyond the three worlds. One is a true hero by experiencing the *sabad*.
123. Gorakh: Master, what is the soul [*jīv*] of the mind? What is the trust of the soul? What is the foundation of the trust? What is the form of the foundation?
124. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the air [or, breath, *pavan*] is the soul of the mind, the emptiness is the trust of the air. *Brahman* is the foundation of the trust. The form of the *brahman* is inconceivable.
125. Gorakh: Master, in which *cakra* the body becomes steady? In which *cakra* is the imperceptible lock [*bandh*]? In which *cakra* the breath stops? In which *cakra* the mind enlightens? In which *cakra* is the enjoyment? In which *cakra* is *samādhi*?
126. Machindra: *Avadhūt*, the body is steady in the root [*mūlādhār*] *cakra*. In the anal [*svādhīsthān*] *cakra* is the inconceivable lock. In the jewel

[*maṇipur*] *cakra*, the breath stops. In the unstruck [*anāhat*] *cakra*, the mind enlightens. In the clear [*viśuddha*] *cakra* is the enjoyment. In the Moon *cakra* is *samādhi*.

127. Gorakh: The one who knows the mystery of these six *cakras*, he is the creator, he is the god. Those yogis who have mastered the mind and breath, they transform the old age, and their bodies are without diseases.

Sins are not smearing, virtues are not captivating.  
 OṂ *namo Śivāya*, OṂ *namo Śivāya*, hail to the book  
 by Śrī Machindranāth

# *A Line of Hair*

[*Romāvalī*]

*Sattva* is the father, *rajas* the mother, *tamas* the mortality.  
The blood, flesh, skin and veins—these four are said to be the  
mother.

Semen, bones, and marrow—these are said to be the father.<sup>1</sup>  
The combination of these seven is said to be the body.

Two hands, two feet, [two] breasts, torso and [the front and the  
back of] the head—this is said to be the combination of the  
eight limbs.

*Bandh*, *bhed*, *mudrā*—those who master these three, they should  
be called the *siddhas*.

Which tie [*bandh*] needs to be tied? Which secret [*bhed*] needs to be  
penetrated? Which seal [*mudrā*] needs to be sealed?

The mind is the tie that needs to be tied. The breath is the secret  
that needs to be penetrated. The *bindu* is the seal that needs to  
be sealed.

Who is the pure one who thinks? Who destroys? Who sends  
the rain?

The mind is the pure one who thinks. The Sun destroys. The  
Moon sends the rain.

Hindu *pīr*, Muslim *pīr*—these are said to be hidden in the body.  
Who are they?

The mind should be called the Hindu *pīr*. The breath should be  
called the Muslim *pīr*.

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1. We have emended Barthvāl's reading of "dhīraj" ("patience") into "bīraj" ("semen").

*Khecarī* [i.e., the one who moves in the air] and *bhūcarī* [i.e., the one who moves on Earth], the secret and the revealed—what are they?

The mind should be called *khecarī*, the breath should be called *bhūcarī*.

The wisdom should be called the hidden, the body should be called the revealed.

The truth of the body, the highest truth, and the hidden truth—what are they?

The truth of the body should be called the secret of the body. The highest truth should be called the secret of the breath. The hidden truth should be called the thought.

Please talk about the four *pīrs* hidden in the body—who are they?

The mind is Machindranāth, the breath is Īśvaranāth, the intelligence is Cauraṅgināth, the wisdom is Śrī Gorakhnāth.

Please talk about the four devices hidden in the body—what are they?

The sight, which gives and takes; the memory, based on which we talk and listen; the nose, which smells the fragrant scents; the tongue, which eats the sweet food.

Please talk about four directions hidden in the body. What are they?

The *sabad* should be called north, the breath should be called west, the sight should be called south, the memory should be called east.

Please talk about the four divisions of the self, hidden in the body—what are they?

The wave, the dust, the light and the fire.

The mind should be called the wave; the breath should be called the dust.

The eyes should be called the light; the listening should be called the fire.

Please talk about the four forms hidden in the body—what are they?

Those born from sweat, from egg, from womb, and from the seed.

The bones are said to be born from sweat. The semen is said to be born from the womb. The eyes are said to be born from the eggs. The hair is said to be born from the seed.

Please talk about four names hidden in the body. What are they?

[They are] *sahaj* [natural or ‘born together’]; *saṃyam* [control];  
*svayambhū* [self-born], and the beyond.

The body should be called *sahaj*. The air should be called *saṃyam*.

The highest station should be called the beyond. The great seal  
 [mahā mudrā], the Great City Without Beggars [Ujjaini], [and]  
 the great *yoginī* should be called *svayambhū*.

Those who think about these forms and names should be called  
 the formless.

You should know the light in the midst of *om*. The wave, the dust,  
 the light, the flame. Penetrate the four aspects of the Sun!

The elephant of the mind drinks the pure water. Recognize both  
 aspects in the sixteen parts of life!

The Sun has twelve divisions, the Moon sixteen divisions.

If the guru shows nothing, his disciple is blind.

The Sun has twelve divisions and their qualities pervade the body  
 inside. What are they? Worry [thinking], mood of vanity, being  
 caught in illusion, five senses, lust, anger, greed, opinions: these  
 twelve aspects of the Sun should be called “the twelve.”

There are sixteen divisions of the Moon, whose qualities preserve  
 the body inside. What are they? Peace, detachment, patience,  
 purity, stability, wisdom, the true form, position, *nirvāṇ*,  
 fearlessness, *nirañjan*, nourishment, sleep, intercourse, breath,  
 elixir: these should be called the sixteen aspects of the Moon.

Those who master the twelve divisions of the Sun, they obtain the  
 sixteen divisions of the Moon.

Śrī Gorakhnāth has spoken the book of yoga [called] “The Line of Hair.”



# *The Ornament of Wisdom*

[*Gyān Tilak*]

1. OM. *Sabad* is truly the lock, *sabad* is truly the key.  
*Sabad* is truly enlighten by *sabad*.  
The thorn is removed by the thorn, the lock opened by the key.  
When you obtain the *siddhis*, you become accomplished [*sādhik*],  
And the light is in your body.
2. The invisible person is held in my view,  
And the breath is reversed.  
Unless that person is born in the body and mind,  
All talk is just a lie.

[We have emended Baṛthvāl's reading of "sōsā" to "svāṃsā" ("breath"). The "body and mind" translates the original phrase "tan man," which signifies the whole person, comparable to our idiom "body and soul."]

3. Through the essence of the *sahaj*, my thirst has ended.  
I am merged with the sound of the horn.  
I avoid the poison and drink the elixir,  
With [the help of] the guru snake-charmer, alone.

[Baṛthvāl understands the adjective "alone" ("akelā") as a reference to the state of "isolation" or "aleness" ("kaivalya"), considered as the ultimate spiritual achievement and roughly identical with the yogic notion of *samādhi*.]

4. The snake dies and the snake-hole dances.  
The *ḍamaru* [drum] plays without hands.

The *nāth* says, Whoever conquers this way and then falls back into  
the body,  
He puts the guru to shame.

5. Having seen the view in the mirror,  
Or reflection in the water,  
Having seen oneself in one's own self,  
There is no need to look further.
6. Just as the fire emerges out of the flint stone,  
Or as the ghee is extracted out of the churning curd,  
When the self is revealed in one's own self:  
*That* is the message of the guru.
7. Engage yourself in the *surati* [remembrance],  
Do not doubt!  
This treasure cannot be destroyed.  
Born this way from one essence, it can never end.
8. From assurance comes the intimacy,  
And the confidence grows.  
From experience comes the immediacy.  
Then the *sahaj* emerges soon.
9. Those who were cheated, because they did not take the good advice,  
They forcibly chastised their senses.  
Those who did not pay heed to their body and mind—  
They lost the true enjoyment.
10. The *bindu* is different from the vagina, the tigress:  
Without teeth, she has swallowed the world.  
They did not find the secret of the 'man of breath.'  
Abandoned, they were destroyed by *māyā*.
11. Just as the worms are found in a good wood,  
And just as the rust attaches to the metal,  
When there is no faith, what can a guru do?  
Death devours such a person.
12. Abandoning the female, the male cannot live.  
Abandoning the man, the woman cannot [live].

The *nāth* says, They are both lost  
On the road of deceit.

13. If there is Brahmā in the mouth of fire,  
Then I will teach the *bānī* to a *śudra*.  
Just as the universe is born in a mysterious way,  
The water becomes firm through union.

[Baṛthvāl (1946: 210) understands the reference to the “water [that] becomes firm” as an allusion to making steady (in the *brahmarandhra*) the otherwise unstable and downward-flowing semen.]

14. The bachelor Lord of yoga is married.  
Śiva moves around Śakti.  
In whichever place *puruṣ* sits in the temple,  
That temple is my home.

[The term “*puruṣ*,” literally “man,” indicates here the essential self, *ātman*.]

15. Living this way, I dwell everywhere.  
I have succeeded in yoga through union.  
Where the five houses meet in the perfect *samādhi*,  
There Gorakh has entered.

[The “five houses” refer to five sensual faculties; see Baṛthvāl (1946: 211).]

16. The field works in the ploughman.  
The pond is in the heron.  
The peacock sends rain and the month of *Śravan* cries,  
While the *nādī* is reversed.
17. The pond ripples within a cow-hoof.  
The lake fills the frog.  
The season speaks in the bird—  
I am myself like this.
18. The hope and desires, becoming still, are resting.  
Obtaining this position, the happiness is found.  
The green leaves shoot on a dry tree.  
This way the body is born.

19. The east is the place of origin, the passage to it in the west.  
 Our yoga is ordained by birth.  
 Our guru should be called a boatman  
 Who delivers us from errors and troubles.

[The first line could be translated differently, due to the polysemous nature of the key words. The “east” (“pūrab”) can also mean “the past,” “the eternal,” “the former birth,” and so on. Baṛthvāl (1946: 212) glosses it as the vital breath, *prāṇ*. The “place of origin” is “deś,” which can also refer to this world, the “saṃsār.” The “west” is “pachāṃ” (or, “pachim”), which as a place of “Sunset” has a specific meaning in yoga physiology, referring to the station of the inner “Sun” in the subtle body, which is down and opposite from the “Moon” on top, in the head. (It has to be kept in mind that in traditional Indian cartography, the East is “on top” and the West on the “bottom” of the chart.) What we translate as “passage” is “ghāṭī,” which can also mean the river bank as a site of cremation (and thus the “end,” contrasting the “east” as “origin”). It can also mean, and in this context most probably is, “suṣumṇā,” a “difficult passage” toward “origin” or the “eternal” or the “Moon” in the “East.”]

20. I killed the nine planets and threw them into the mouth of fire.  
 The *māyā* was tied into a knot.  
 The supreme person stayed in the body  
 And I reached the unreachable.

[The “nine planets” refer to the five classical planets (visible by the naked eye), the Sun, the Moon, and the two eclipse-causing demons Rāhu and Ketu (caput draconis and cauda draconis, respectively, in Western astrology).]

21. Having told what can’t be told and having read what was not in  
 the letters  
 I reached the unreachable.  
 The breath remained,  
 The semen did not spill, the lake was confined.

[The “breath” translates the “haṃs” in the original.]

22. The *nāth* says: The sky is my dwelling house.  
 I live inside it.  
 The highest person gave me a confirmation,  
 And my art increases day by day.

23. I happily roam inside, from head to toe,  
With body free from fear.  
Coming and going, I remain in this state,  
Free from the fear of the old age and death.
24. Constantly perishing in doubt,  
Nobody has found the secret of the body.  
If they only understood, they would have found the other way,  
While the deceived lost their life.
25. It is difficult to obtain this state.  
Where the person who considers *kaivalyā* stays.  
Remaining there, the stone of the philosophers is found,  
Which turns metal into gold just by touch.
26. The cascading water rains into the mouth of fire,  
Watering thus my garden.  
If it remains there, the prophet will be born,  
While the world dies from thirst.
27. Meeting with Indra, the earth gives birth,  
And the senses nourish the body.  
My guru has spoken the *bānīs*,  
And I gather the pearls [from them].
28. The eternal stone of the philosophers is in the [ordinary] stone,  
Just as the gold is in the eight elements.  
Whoever recognizes the eternal in the whole world,  
His body is beyond sin and virtue.

[The “eight metals” are “gold, silver, copper, tin, zinc, lead, iron [and] mercury” (Callewaert 2009: s.v. “aṣṭ-dhā [aṣṭa-dhātu]).]

29. The flowing river full of devotion is under control,  
After seeing the Sun in the West.  
The temple is difficult to reach, the mind is mysterious:  
Eat the fruit of its vine!
30. Nine hundred thousand sunbeams are being reflected,  
Ten million sunbeams burn in the mouth.  
The *nāth* speaks about the path to truth  
Without a shade of doubt.

[The “truth” translates the original “dharm” (“dharma”), a polysemous and fundamental concept in Indian culture.]

31. I am born in the house of the householder.  
The remembrance grows strong in the company [of yogis].  
The *nāth* says, The personal soul and the *brahman* become one  
When Śakti enters the house of Śiva.
32. My home is in the unstruck sound.  
The mind is concentrated and sees the truth.  
The self emerges within the self  
When the falsity disappears.
33. Whoever in the *yoni* [i.e., vagina] finds Śiva, not born from *yoni*;  
And [whoever finds there] the perfect person;  
And to whom the existence is the home;  
In his body is the unique person.
34. Whoever drinks, after making it steady, what is full and flows up,  
He can nourish the body at ease.  
Blind in the eyes [i.e., without looking], he sees the whole world;  
The one whose eyes are full [i.e., looking outward]—he is totally blind.
35. In the gourd, the three worlds are contained.  
The Sun and the Moon are at the confluence of the three rivers.  
The knower of *brahman* knows this.  
The unstruck sound is eternal.

[The “gourd” is here an obvious metaphor for the human body.]

36. The birth and death are the paths of straying.  
The [true] person has explained the path.  
The *sabad* voices the supreme unstruck sound,  
And penetrates inside.

[The “birth and death” translates the original phrase “coming and going” (“āvā gavaṇ”).]

37. The pure path shines like a lightning.  
It thunders like a heavy cloud.  
Being there is the home of the yogi,  
Who plays the unstruck [sound] as an instrument.

38. Whoever raises the banner on the temple of this rank,  
 You should bow to him, oh disciple!  
 The silent speech [*bānī*] of a million arts is there,  
 And the unique person sings [there].
39. Nine hundred thousand dancing girls are dancing in front,  
 And the arena of *sahaj* is behind.  
 If after taming his mind the yogi plays,  
 Then he will find a treasure inside.
40. If the wisdom is spoken, then the desire ends.  
 See the Sun in the West.  
 After the guru is found, the doubt vanishes.  
 The root of thinking is inside.
41. Just as the non-ointment pervades the ointment,  
 The oil pervades the sesame seed.  
 If the formless is recognized in the form,  
 Then the inner joy increases.

[The first line contains a wordplay in the original Hindi: it states that “nirañjan” pervades the “añjan.” While it could be possible to translate the verse metaphorically (stating that the formless god, Nirañjan, is present in what possesses form), we decided to provide the literal translation.]

42. Where there is nothing, I have seen everything.  
 Nobody believes it bare words.  
 When the doubt has disappeared,  
 I arrived at a unique station.
43. My *śakti* matures in the south.  
 The fire burns at the region of the root.  
 Thus, I became the skilled master of yoga  
 And the place of *nirvāṇ* became manifest.
44. The steam does not go out, the semen does not spill.  
 It cooks completely on the furnace of *sahaj*.  
 The achievement of the *samādhi* lies in the practice of yoga.  
 Then the guru is successfully met.

45. The [supporting] pillar of patience and rope of diligence  
Were assumed into the sky.  
The immovable seat is the eternal station:  
There is Gorakh's court.

This was "The Ornament of Wisdom."



# *The Five Measures*

[*Pañc Mātrā*]

1. OM. It is said that the good *panth* is eternal.  
The tongue and the sex organ need to be restrained.  
Immersed in the system of yoga,  
The yogi is the one who shaves his head.
2. Śiva's place is in the house of the twelve.  
There lies the highest wisdom of *brahman*.  
The twelve stay fixed in the one.  
The yogi is the one who wears a headdress on his head.

[We have emended Bārthvāl's reading of "khogī" to "jogī" ("yogi").]

3. [The yogi] sees the essence in the empty space.  
The Great Person dwells within five elements.  
Immersed in the five elements, [the yogi] remains in the *unmani*.  
Becoming immortal, he should be called the Lord of Yoga.
4. The five elements should be considered.  
The outside and the inside are one.  
The alms should be begged at the gate of the city.  
Illusion, attachment, and snares of the world should be abandoned.
5. In the midst of the low and the high is the pleasure of the Goddess.  
Listen, oh *avadhūt*, about the spiritual yoga!  
Control the mind, and then shave the head!  
Otherwise, you will fall into the pit of Hell.

6. Oh *avadhūt*, this is the one measure of the five elements to consider.  
Gorakh speaks from the tenth door.  
The original number is the measure of air.  
The countless *siddhas* are being honoured.
7. The guru gave initiation in the hollow of the ear.  
You should beg for food in the nine regions.  
After begging, remain aloof.  
The yogi is the one who wears rings in his ears.
8. [Yogī's] robe is from neck to foot.  
The Moon and the Sun are both brought to the neck.  
The ten threads are used 350,000 [times].  
By the grace of the guru, cross what is difficult to cross.

[The translation of this verse is very tentative.]

9. With the body firm in the posture, and the mind as the robe,  
Make the five senses your *dhotī*.  
Concentrate in the proper way.  
Obtain the staff, wand, and *śakti*.
10. West, North, South, East:  
The yogis go there wearing their robes.  
Matted hair on the head is a dreadful sight.  
Oh *avadhūt*, the yogi should trick the Death.
11. The horn, the necklace and the rosary.  
Reverse the wind in the midst of the sky.  
Nine, seventy-two, the root of the air.  
Six *cakras*, Gaṅgā, Gaurī, and trident.

[We emended Barṭhvāl's reading of "sīm̐mī" to "sīm̐gī" ([yogī's] "horn").]

12. The formless person is worshipped there.  
The top of the city came down.  
Hold the breath in the *cakra* of the mind.  
The fire of *brahman* burns constantly.

13. Everybody is saying, “Viṣṇu, Viṣṇu.”  
 [But] there is no salvation without Nirañjan.  
 The road [leads] from the root *cakra* to the 1,000 petals.  
 Taking hold of the mind and breath, open the door!
14. Gorakh and Viṣṇu had an argument.  
 Gorakh took and sounded the horn.  
 Viṣṇu took the form of a deer.  
 Killing the deer, the *avadhūt* meditated.

[We have emended (in the third verse in our translation) Barṭhvāl’s reading of “mugh” to “mṛgh” (“deer”).]

15. The swan [or, breath] of the West goes to the East.  
 He killed the deer of the mind and ate its meat.  
 The veins are pressed and thus the horn resounds the *nād*.  
 The sound of this horn goes to the sky.
16. [The *nād*] remains immersed in the circle of the sky.  
 The countless *siddhas* are found in the yogic breath.  
 The sound of the horn goes to the sky.  
 Day and night, the Moon remains in the sky.
17. The five senses are filled with pleasure.  
 The *avadhūt* makes the horn resound the *nād*.  
 The root of the unstruck sound is above.  
 The Moon and the Sun are in the *susumṇā* subtly.
18. The near Gaṅgā and the far Gaṅgā  
 Are in the midst of the meditation shawl.  
 After Gaṅgā and Yamunā, climb the [mount] Meru!  
 There the wisdom of *brahman* arises.

[We have emended Barṭhvāl’s reading of “bāri” to “āri” (“nearby,” “near”).]

19. The horn, the necklace, and the six postures.  
 The endless *siddhas* are immersed [in meditation].  
 The twelve *śaktis* meet above.  
 The invisible temple is there in the sky.

20. The gold and silver belong to the householder.  
 The first leaf belongs to the god.  
 The beginning of yoga is there, well accomplished.  
 The heaven emerged from the original religion.
21. Twelve years are like death.  
 Śrī Gorakhnāth has awakened.  
 Sixty-four yoginīs have completed begging.  
 The countless *siddhas* have found the first leaf [i.e., the god].
22. The original leaf, the original absolute.  
 Religion without beginning, Śiva's presence.  
 Those without guru are confused.  
 Those who have guru are instructed.

[We have emended Barṭhvāl's reading of "āṭī" to "ādī" ("first," "original").]

23. Such is the one declaration of the five measures.  
 The endless *siddhas* are listening to these thoughts.  
 By the grace of Macchindra, the ascetic Gorakh speaks.  
 The *avadhūt* gains the self in the five worlds.
24. If the yogi knows the mystery of the five measures,  
 He is his own master, his own god.  
 Those yogis who understand the five measures  
 Are worshipped by all the gods in the three worlds.

This is the [holy text] *The Five Measures*.  
 Whoever reads it, copies it, teaches it, and does according to it  
 is not smeared by sin nor overcome by virtue.  
 He is free from birth and death and attains  
 the world of immortality.  
 Om namaḥ Śivāya.  
 Hail to the sandals of the guru Macchindranāth.  
 Thus is the yogic book of instruction *The Five Measures*  
 by Śrī Gorakhnāth  
 fully completed.



## APPENDIX

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# *The Victory of Gorakṣa*

by the “Poet-Nightingale” Vidyāpati

### SONG 1

*He, whom Lord Viṣṇu Himself worships with discipline [yoga] and pleasure [bhoga], [and] with equal measure of the essence of these emotions; who is a refuge for the suffering [people] and who removes [their] troubles; who is immersed in the joys of the body but who is even more absorbed in the samādhi; who pacifies the mind from excessive anger; who revived the God of Love after killing Him; who became an ascetic for the cause of yoga, and who became half woman for the cause of pleasure—Vidyāpati says, may the Naked God [Śiva] be propitious to us and may He fulfill our hopes!<sup>1</sup>*

ACTOR: What is the reason to elaborate any further? I will call for the actress and present the song.

ACTRESS (COMES IN): Sir, here I stand. What is your command?

ACTOR: The King of Kings, Śrīmān Śivaniṅghadeva, out of his own concern, for the reason of devotion to the Lord Bhairava [i.e., Śiva], gave me an order to perform the play *The Victory of Gorakṣa* by the master poet Vidyāpati.

ACTRESS: Sir! What is the seasonal background for this play? Is it the Autumn?

ACTOR: The Autumn indeed! The Autumn is when:

Moonbeams are destroying the darkness,

Lotuses are blooming and water-lilies smiling.

Having become small, the stars look lovely,

But the clouds, having grown, do not look so pleasant.

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1. This play, originally written in Maithili by the celebrated fifteenth-century poet Vidyāpati, is included here due to its importance as one of the earliest literary documents describing Gorakhnāth's efforts to “wake up” his own guru Maysyendranāth from his entanglements into the affairs of the sensuous lifestyle. The play was edited and translated into Hindi by Harimohan Miśra (see Vidyāpati and Miśra 1984). My translation, twice removed from the original, is from the Hindi rendition.

Lusting after the scent of the blooming earth  
 And infatuated by the scent of lotuses that open at dawn  
 (Bees, attracted by both, here and there)  
 Are coming and going.

ACTRESS: In that case, the play should be started:

The sky is not overcast by clouds and the earth is not rocky.  
 In the council, too, there are not many wicked persons.  
 So then, hey actor! Why don't I dance [something]?

(A commotion behind the curtain.)

#### SONG 2

There is a king Matsyendranāth. Abandoning yoga, he started lusting after young women. Gorakhnāth, searching for the guru, arrives. Who is able to praise the glory of his feet? The Lord should bring salvation to this world. . . . The good and wise people will be pleased (with my work) and the evil ones will also attain wisdom. The good and the wicked are easily distinguished. My fame lies on both sides. Vidyāpati says . . . :

#### SONG 3

. . . The pollen of the flowers is spreading through the forest. Very gently, the breeze is blowing. . . . The swans are intoxicated and partridges are calling [each other]. . . . Covered in ashes, wearing earrings and [sectarian] ornaments on his hands, Gorakhnāth has arrived. With him is Kānanipā (Kaṇhapā) of the pleasant appearance. . . . Vidyāpati says, everyone should understand this. May the Lord Bhairava bestow good fortune!

(End of the Prologue.)

(Arriving in the company of Kaṇhapā, Gorakhnāth says:)

GORAKHNĀTH: What should I do? Again, I have to search for the guru.

(Saying so, he acts thus.)

#### SONG 4

The two of us possess the real character of the yogi. Nothing can stand on our chosen path! I will speak thus so that the guru's name is heard. I will beg for food and make my home beneath a tree. Vidyāpati says, hope is far away.

#### SONG 5

I wandered through fifty lands in search of the guru. I know the connections between the three worlds. Hey, gatekeeper! (Come and) tell the news from the gate! . . . Do your job!

GATEKEEPER: Hey, yogis! The two of you cannot enter here!

TWO YOGIS: Hey, gatekeeper! The two of us are yogis who travel and dwell everywhere according to our will. Who can stop us?

## SONG 6

Stay outside and do (the people) a favour! Take the staff in your hand and make the announcement before the king. Hey, cruel gatekeeper! Let us go! . . . Don't block the path! We are free yogis. Who can restrain us? The poet of the charming voice, the master of poetic relish (Vidyāpati) says so.

Hey, foolish gatekeeper! Listen, I am talking to you! . . . Listen again!

GORAKHNĀTH: I can create panic in the city. I am able to travel through the air. I can go to the king's private harem. [But] I am afraid that the [female] residents may become enamored (by me) and that guru will be angry.

## SONG 7

We know [the magical arts of] immobilization and fascination. [But] from the fear of guru (we will not use them). We will do nothing of the sort. Hey, Kaṇhapā! Come on now, think of something! Vidyāpati advises that it is possible to enter in the disguise of the dancers.

## SONG 8

GATEKEEPER: This is Kodalīpur-Pāṭan city, where there are hundreds of thousands of horses and thousands . . . of elephants (and) where the glorious king Matsyendranāth is reigning, whose fatherly resolve was that he should increase his rule. His ministers show anger at immoral deeds. They punish the breach of the [king's] command. Vidyāpati gives a charming account of this.

## SONG 9

GORAKHNĀTH: It is pleasant to see the country but there is nowhere else such a difficult city. Go and tell this, go and tell this, that dancers want to enter. The poets of Sarasvatī are giving this good instruction. The king Rūpa Nārāyaṇa understands this especially well.

(The curtain is removed and . . . a minister by the name Mahāpati enters.)

## SONG 10

Walking heavily under the weight of his function (the minister is coming). Being discerning, he is able to separate milk from the water. He favours nobody and thinks



only of proper conduct. He is wholeheartedly given to the concerns of the state. Thus enters the great minister Mahāpati. Prepare the place for his seat! His bright glory is spread in all quarters. . . . Having protected the *dharmā*, he fills the treasury with wealth. The poet Vidyāpati says this.

MINISTER: Hey, gatekeeper! Tell the news to the king!

(Then the gatekeeper bows and tells the news.)

#### SONG 11

Each district (and everybody in the city), obeying you, refrain from embarking on the evil ways. Oh, best of ministers! Please, listen, I am telling you. Your command is spreading quickly ahead [of you]. Even the one who was from his birth in the habit of stealing is giving it up. Two yogis came and returned. From fear of you they could not enter inside. This is so in accordance with the wishes of the king Matsyendranāth. Vidyāpati says . . .

#### SONG 12

MINISTER: Formerly a yogi, Matsyendranāth became a king, and he gave into my hands the custody of the kingdom. Without the approval of the 18 Great Queens, no one (is allowed to bring in) the yogis. It is known in the city that yogis are not allowed to enter the king's palace. This proclamation is made public, with the drums, in all quarters. Who can disregard the minister's order? Vidyāpati says . . .

(The minister turns again and gives order to the gatekeeper.)

MINISTER: Hey, gatekeeper! The king, who was once a yogi, (will be pleased) in the company of yogis.

Naturally, from the power of yoga and from the contact . . . being enchanted, even a parrot dwelling among humans starts to speak (human language), (and) even a monkey, becoming fearless, starts to dance.

Hey, gatekeeper! What is the time? What? . . . The other people speak only after giving orders.

(Minister goes away.)

(Then, thusly designated king makes entrance in the company of the queens, pulling the curtain.)

## SONG 13

From all quarters, the women are waving the yak-tail fans. The king sits and the [game of] *caupaṛ* starts. The light of the jewels is glittering [so it seems] as if they tremble at the call from the eyes of the God of Love. Dressed in the clothes of silk, the king Matsyendranāth [sits] in a beautiful attire on the throne. “Having performed the chantings and austerities, yoga and meditation, what shall I do? I gave the gifts and achieved wisdom, but what shall I do? Vidyāpati says that even from the young-ones and from the company of girls a great merit is obtained.”

(Stricken by love, the king caresses some of the girls with the lotus-like eyes, looks at some, and embraces some.)

## SONG 14

The smile is on the lips. The pleasant scent of the flowers is spreading. An offended woman is satisfied. Her scattered hair resembles night. The eyes on the lotus-like faces of the dancers are like wagtails. A supreme pleasure comes from watching their faces. The great king plays. . . . The great king plays with the girls, embraces some of them, and looks at some. He is “fighting” with some with garlands of blue lotuses, and lovingly punishes the others. His whole body glistens in ecstasy. There is only one husband, but many lovers. The husband lies on the bed like Kṛṣṇa. With his gallant form he is a manifestation of the erotic mood. The poet of the charming voice, Vidyāpati, sings about these love-sports.

(After this, the curtain is pulled and the chamberlain enters.)

CHAMBERLAIN: Oh, maharaja! The two dancers came from Telinga (country). What is your order?

## SONG 15

On the occasion of the chamberlain’s coming, after he bowed his head to the ground, he said (to the king): The talented dancers came from the country of Telinga and would like to represent an erotic pleasure in (their) dance. . . . You will now see a dance from the South region. . . . The poet of the charming voice, Vidyāpati says that play is the essence of *saṃsāra* and (with it) every day is spent happily.

KING: Quick, bring those dancers in!

(This being done, the two previously mentioned dancers come in. The dancers greet the king. He gives the order with enthusiasm:)

KING: Hey, dancers! Where do the two of you come from?

DANCERS say, We both come from the South region.

KING: Then, dance!

(The two do so.)

SONG 16

KING: Harmonizing the four limbs, the men's and women's dance should be danced properly. What is sung about, that should also be represented [by dance]. What emotion should be produced, this also should be expressed. With your quality . . . Hey, dancers! Both of you, stay in my service! Whatever the two of you shall want, I will give it [to you]. The child Bauddhanāth is very dear to me. He is playing and dancing and sporting in various ways. His eight limbs are covered with dust. When found, he came running. The king embraced the son. . . . The good poet Vidyāpati sings about this event.

(Everybody stands.)

KING: Hey, gatekeeper! Having taken away the life of my son, these two dancers are the messengers of Death in the form of human beings. Take them and execute them!

DANCERS say, Oh, king! Why are the two of us to be killed?

(The king replies angrily:) Hey, you two evil oxen! Speak! After all, who are you? And what can be done? A murder of a child has happened. Therefore, you two should be executed.

DANCERS: Oh, lord! It is not proper for a king to order an execution without an improper act (being done). The lord himself has said: "Sip the water and make him clean and consecrate him!" But, as long as the entrails are not cleansed, how can one be clean?

(The king threatens again:) Hey sinners! Get out of the way! Hey, gatekeeper! Take (them) and kill them!

(The gatekeeper takes them and does so, [i.e.,] (wants to do so)).

DANCERS: Oh, king! If the boy lives . . .

(The king smiles in distress.)

KING: Who will easily believe that the one who has died will be able to live again?

DANCERS: But if he lives?

KING (HAPPILY): Then, revive him!

(After circumambulating . . . Having looked a bit at all sides, Bauddhanāth rises alive and renewed. The king, astonished and pleased, embraces the two [dancers] and says:)

## SONG 17

. . . The dead [boy] has been revived. Joy has spread. Having set, the full Moon has risen again. Say, say, it seems to me . . . You could really be my disciple Gorakhnāth and you might have come to my service. I give you my blessing. The poet of the charming voice, Vidyāpati says that (Gorakhnāth) has revived the dear (son), the essence of the two families.

(After that, Gorakhnāth says thus:)

## SONG 18

GORAKHNĀTH: Hey, guru! Understand that what used to be a mountain is now a deep river. What was milk is now indeed a yogurt. Who was young became old. . . . Give me a blessing so that I may stay as your servant. The poet Vidyāpati knows as much that between this and that there is a great opposition.

## SONG 19

The entire world is a burden, [but even] knowing this, you are not done with the world. Some good (people) are gone. But you are my teacher. After learning everything, you still became miserable. Having crossed, you still returned back and sunk. Having wings (you) still could not rise up with your wings. In the company of young women you have forgotten about the Moon. The poet Vidyāpati says that now the snare should be untied.

Hey, guru Matsyendranāth! Today again you could not remember! So, in the midst of bows and scepters, oh king, leave the kingdom (alive). Think of the light (of *brahman*) that is like the light of a thousand Suns.

MATSYENDRANĀTH: In the *samādhi* it is not proper to bind yourself to darkness and it is not prudent only to renounce the will to enjoyment. Thus, because of the women with the faces like the full Moon, the inner spirit fights with desire.

[GORAKHNĀTH:] My guru is a disciple of the one who holds the Moon on his head and who is the teacher of the three worlds (Śiva) and he [i.e., my guru] is honoured as the supreme king among yogis. Due to the obstruction of the wisdom . . . Matsyendranāth (at this time) suffers, being bound in the snare of the eyelids of the girls with beautiful eyes.

(The seven Queens greet the king and say:)

## SONG 20

The elephants, the horses, and the foot (soldiers) are marching every day in thousands. Women are invited from far away. Women spend their nights serving you everywhere. The lord Śiva himself protects you. The task of ruling (the kingdom) only the king can perform. It is through the power of yoga that king manages to rule the kingdom. (Without a king) there is a great confusion and there is no reliance anywhere. As long as there is a cloud, there is a lightning. Women can hardly live without a master. Hey, master! You are the only light in my darkness. On all sides, women are waving the yak-tail fans for you and four hundred women stand ready to serve your feet. The food is served according to your wish and [your] family is very large. Who can give up such kingdom? Some women have [already] become [your] lovers and some want to become [your] lovers. Even so, the beautiful flowers wait awake every day. The perceptive Vidyāpati says: Where will the water dwell if it abandons the ocean?

GREAT QUEEN: Hey, maharaja! . . . Please, make us all happy . . . by your speech.

KING (LAUGHING): Hey, woman! . . . Go away! How could women infatuate us yogis?

Wood, stone and diamond are tough. The mind of the yogis is even tougher.

(They) stand in the water like the leaves of a lotus and they are not smeared by compassion or by the passion of others.

## SONG 21

The practice of yoga is reawakened. The hope of the elixir is fulfilled and I have renounced all dreadful infatuations, sloth, and quarrels. The Moon of wisdom has risen and ended the darkness. The teacher has learned from a disciple. The upside-down tree has grown. The king has again obtained wisdom. The new Jayadeva, Vidyāpati, says that the wisdom has awakened. The king Rūpanārāyaṇa Śivasiṅha, since you understood this, please make the others understand it too.

## SONG 22

The beauty (of women) lasts only a short time. The (wisdom) that has arisen now—(I) was not able to hold to it. Hey you, mad woman! You are so foolish. Stop plotting my ruin now. In the world, everyone is bound by illusion and the wisdom of *brahman* has become twisted. The poet Vidyāpati sings that this wealth and the young women are (as ephemeral) as the shadows.

(All the great queens scold the yogis again): Hey, maharaja! Let us not . . . about these lies.

KING (LAUGHS AGAIN): Hey, queens! Give up your folly and return to your house!

## SONG 23

The path of good deeds is strange indeed. For how long have women been my enemies? Now I [will] keep away from all of them. Why are your eyebrows crooked and angry? Go, go to your house on foot! A yogi is not supposed to love women. A man is free only if he renounces hope. Driving away the clouds, the Moon has risen. Vidyāpati says:

## SONG 24

Hey, Bauddhanāth! Sleep happily now. Even your sleep has become an enemy. Fate has released me from the paternal love towards you. (My love) towards you is again (awakened). I can not control it. The poet Vidyāpati knows that between this and that there is a big conflict.

(After this, Gorakhnāth is angry at the king): Damn you! Even now, (you) cannot give up love and women. What to say? Listen!

## SONG 25

You have forgotten the words from the mouth of the guru. What can be more true than this? Confronted by the eyes of women you even forgot the pearls and rubies (of wisdom). You have forgotten everything. Is it possible that you are still deluded? Hey, Matsyendranāth! . . . The poet Vidyāpati knows that there is a great conflict between this and that (between yoga and pleasure). Rūpanārāyaṇa knows this, and having understood it, please make the others understand it too.

(The king) in an already mentioned manner admonishes the child. The king embraces him and praises him.

## SONG 26

Hey, Gorakhnāth! You are my foremost disciple. You came [here] to serve [me]. I give you my blessing. I know your devotion to the guru. Hey, Gorakhnāth! You are to me like the life itself. The great queens and those many wives, they should find hospitality in all country and among all citizens. What can I say after I have met

you? . . . The poet Vidyāpati says that Matsyendranāth (and Gorakhnāth) are united with joined hands.

B E N E D I C T I O N

Just as the Gaṅgā that originates in the Himalayan mountains joins the sea, I am joined with the teacher of wisdom. In the thick darkness of passionate love I have obtained the light from you. . . . Hey, Gorakhnāth! May you live long in the world and may your fame spread everywhere!

(Everybody leaves.)

THUS ENDS THE PLAY *THE VICTORY OF GORAKṢA*  
COMPOSED IN A PROPER MANNER BY THE BEST PANDIT OF  
THE GREAT KING, THE VENERABLE POET VIDYĀPATI.

## *Glossary of Hindi Technical Terms*

- ajapā-jap** “chanting without chanting”; the reference is typically to the activity of breathing, where the inhaling and exhaling breaths produce a “chant without chant.”
- ājñā** “command”; *ājñā cakra* is one of the most important centers of the subtle energy within the body, located between the eyebrows; the “third eye.”
- amṛt** elixir of immortality, which the Nāth yogis attempt to gain by redirecting the flow of the bindu.
- anāhad** “unstruck”; *anāhad nād* is the “unstruck sound,” a subtle sound heard internally, which typically signals a major accomplishment in the practice of yoga.
- avadhūt** a type of an ascetic who has “shaken off” the ties that bind one to the phenomenal existence; in the *Gorakh Bānī*, an avadhūt is often the addressee of Gorakh’s instructions, while, on several occasions, he himself is called an *avadhūt*.
- bandh** a “lock”; a muscular contraction enacted in the course of yoga practice.
- bānī** words, sayings; in *nirguṇ* texts, the term has a connotation of “wise sayings” that ensue as a result of spiritual illumination.
- bindu** a “drop”; semen; vehicle of immortality within the human body.
- brahmāgni** the “fire of *brahman*”; a typical Nāth designation for what is otherwise better known as *kuṇḍalinī*.
- brahman** ontological ground of being; true reality, conceived of either as personal or as impersonal; ontologically equivalent with the spiritual essence of a human being, the *ātman*.
- brahmarandhra** the “aperture of *brahman*”; the aperture on top of the skull, of great importance in the yoga of the Nāths.
- cakra** “circle, wheel”; one of the several centers of the subtle energy within the body, the unlocking or “piercing” of which provides the yogi with powers and gnosis.



- haṭha** “intense”; a style of yoga often associated with the Naths, which focuses on both the physical and subtle body and their liberating potentials.
- idā/īṛā** one of the three main channels of subtle energy within the body, situated on the left side of the spinal column and associated with the Moon.
- nād** “sound”; an inner sound heard through and as a result of the practice of yoga, often referred to as the “unstruck sound” (*anāhad nād*).
- nāḍī/nārī** “channel,” or “vein” within the subtle body.
- nāth** “lord,” “master,” “god.” A member of an Order (*sampradāy*) of yogis, claiming Śiva as the “original *nāth*,” as well as two main human teachers: Matsyendranāth, and his disciple Gorakhnāth.
- nirañjan** “without collyrium,” or “without embellishment”; formless; one of the Nāth names for the highest god.
- nirguṇ** “without (describable) qualities”; formless.
- nirvāṇ** in Buddhism, it denotes the extinction of existence, but in the Nāth parlance, it may refer to spiritual bliss.
- pad** “rank,” “position,” “state.” A type of poetical composition meant to be sung.
- piṅgalā** one of the three main channels of subtle energy within the body, situated on the right side of the spinal column and associated with the Sun.
- prakṛti** “nature”; ontological realm of transitory material world, which also includes the human body, emotions, and mind, as distinct from the pure “spirit” (*puruṣ*).
- prāṇāyām** control of breathing; yogic breathing; yoga practice focusing on breath.
- puruṣ** “[true] person”; spirit; pure consciousness, ontologically distinct from any of the permutations of “nature” (*prakṛti*).
- sabad** “word”; “true word”; in some aspects comparable to the Western notion of logos; a type of short poetical composition (a distich), presenting a wise saying.
- sādhana** “praxis”; practice of yoga.
- sahaj** “natural”; “easy”; an enlightened spontaneous activity done in accordance with the truth.
- śakti** “energy”; “power”; Śiva’s spouse.
- samādhi** “concentration”; the ultimate achievement in the classical yoga.
- saṃsār** the “world”; realm of conditioned existence.
- siddha** “perfected”; an adept of yoga; also, a class of mythological semidivine beings.
- siddhi** “accomplishment”; “attainment”; magical power (there are traditionally eight of them).
- śūnya** “empty”; “void”; “emptiness”; associated with the metaphysical level of true reality; it can also denote the highest *cakra* in the subtle body.
- suṣumṇā** one of the three main channels of subtle energy within the body, situated along the spinal column and associated with fire.
- tīrth** “crossing”; a pilgrimage site, typically on the bank of a river; bathing at the *tīrths* is considered spiritually meritorious.

- triveṇī** the “confluence of the three rivers” (Gaṅgā, Yamunā, and Sarasvatī); esoterically, the place where the three main channels of subtle energy meet (at the root of the nose).
- ulta bāmsī** the “upside-down” speech; a type of poem in which the ordinary logic and order of things is reversed.
- ulṭā sādhanā** the “practice of reversal”; among the Nāths, it typically refers to the redirecting of the flow of the *bindu*.
- unman/unmani** “no-mind”; “beyond the mind”; suprarational level of pure awareness transcending the limitations of the discursive mind. Equivalent to the state of *samādhi*.



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