

JAIN PERCEPTIONS OF NĀTH AND HAṬHA YOGĪS IN PRE-COLONIAL NORTH INDIA

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Religious intellectuals in India have long been aware of the on-the-ground reality of religious diversity in the subcontinent. In contrast to some other regions of the world, where in various periods one religious community or another was able to establish significant, and in some cases total, numerical hegemony, South Asia has always seen multiple religious communities living side-by-side. As a result, religious intellectuals have had to respond to other truth claims, other practices and other ethical systems. One result of these responses to diversity has been the generation of systematic texts that try to account for this diversity. Another result has been that some more adventuresome religious seekers have found in this diversity an attractive range of alternative ideas and practices to experiment with and incorporate into their own lives.

For the Jains, as a community that everywhere has always been in a minority, the fact of diversity has been particularly unavoidable. From early in their history, Jains have written texts that explore and often try to account for such diversity. Scholars have found the classical Prakrit and Sanskrit texts written by Jain intellectuals to be valuable sources for understanding classical and medieval Indian religion.² Jains have continued to produce such texts into the pre-colonial, colonial and now post-colonial periods. In this short essay, I discuss two texts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries written by Digambar intellectuals of north India: the *Gorakhnāth ke Vacan* of Banārsīdās, and the *Mokṣamārg Prakāśak* of Ṭoḍarmal. These texts discuss contemporaneous “Hindu” yogic practices. An analysis of these texts provides information that should be of interest to scholars of yoga and tantra more broadly. It also shows how intellectuals from more-or-less the same tradition can demonstrate strikingly different responses to the religious diversity within which they lived.

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² Folkert 1993: 215-409, Qvarnström 1999.

While Banārsīdās illustrates an irenic, inquisitive approach to diversity, Ṭoḍarmal demonstrates a strident criticism of this same diversity.

Banārsīdās on Gorakhnāth

Banārsīdās, who lived in north India from 1587 to 1643, is a foundational figure for contemporary north Indian Digambar Jainism.³ His story is well-known, in large part because his autobiography, *Ardhakathānak*, has been mined extensively for information about seventeenth-century north India, and has been translated into English and French four times. From a Digambar perspective, however, he is better known, and more important, for his other two texts. One is his *Samaysār Nāṭak*, a Braj Bhasha version of Amṛtacandra's Sanskrit *Samayasāra Kalaśa*, itself a verse commentary and extension of Kundakunda's Prakrit *Samayasāra*. The other is what we can call his "collected other works," the *Banārsī Vilās*. This was compiled in 1644, shortly after Banārsīdās's death, by his friend and his colleague Jagjīvanrām, who was the son of a minor official in the Mughal court.⁴ The *Samaysār Nāṭak* has also been the subject of extensive scholarship, albeit most of it in Hindi, and has been published multiple times. There are hundreds of manuscript copies of it in Digambar libraries in north India. There are also many manuscript copies of the *Banārsī Vilās*, and many of the some eighty individual compositions⁵ collected in it are also found in scores of *guṭkās*, notebooks in which Jains have copied texts for their own edification. This text, however, has received less scholarly attention than the *Samaysār Nāṭak*, and has been published only twice, in editions that are long out of print.⁶

Toward the end of the *Banārsī Vilās*, there is a curious seven-*caupāī* composition entitled *Gorakhnāth ke Vacan*, or "The Sayings of Gorakhnāth."⁷ This text gives a favorable overview of Gorakhnāth's teachings. To the best of my knowledge, no scholarly attention has

³ While Banārsīdās's dates are usually given as 1586-1642, Jérôme Petit has shown that he was actually born on Tuesday, January 20, 1587. E-mail to the author, January 12, 2015.

⁴ I discuss the circle of spiritual seekers of which Banārsīdās was a prominent leader in Cort 2002.

⁵ The two printed editions of the text contain forty-eight separate "texts," but several of these are in turn collections of shorter *kavitās* and *pads*. Premī added three *pads* that he found in other collections. Bhaṇvarlāl and Kāślīvāl also added two *pads* they found in *guṭkās* in Jaipur libraries that were not in Jagjīvanrām's text, but did not include the *pads* that Premī had found. Several other independent *pads* have surfaced in the intervening decades.

⁶ The one exception to the general neglect of the *Banārsī Vilās* is the ongoing work of Jérôme Petit; see especially Petit 2013.

⁷ A *caupāī* is a verse quatrain consisting of four feet, each of sixteen *mātrās* or metrical measures. The poem employs an a-a b-b rhyme scheme.

been focused on it. Scholars of Gorakhnāth and the Nāths seem to be ignorant of the text. Scholars of Banārsīdās at best simply mention it in passing. In his extensive introduction to his edition of the *Ardhakathānak* - and what is still the foundational scholarly study of Banārsīdās - Nāthūrām Premī (1957: 77) simply says that it contains a disjointed set of Sant topics. Ravīndra Kumār Jain (1966: 177), in his study of Banārsīdās's life and writings, basically repeats Premī when he says that it contains "some Sant sayings," and that it is evidence that Banārsīdās was favorably influenced by the Gorakh Panth.

We cannot be sure if this short text was actually written by Banārsīdās. Six of the seven verses conclude with "Gorakh says" (*gorakha kaha, gorakha bolai*). The seventh and final verse slightly alters this to "the true guru says" (*sataguru kahai*). While this might be Banārsīdās's way of simply saying that he is reporting the sayings of Gorakhnāth, this formula usually is the *bhaṇitā* or signature of a verse, in which the author refers to himself in the third person. Jagjīvandās included at least one text by an author other than Banārsīdās in the *Banārsī Vilās*, the *Jñān Bāvnī* of their colleague Pītambar, composed in 1630. The *Jñān Bāvnī*, however, is in part about Banārsīdās, so its inclusion makes sense. The lack of a *bhaṇitā* referring to Banārsīdās by name is not unusual, as only about half of the texts in the *Banārsī Vilās* include this device. I have not been able to find the *Gorakhnāth ke Vacan* among the published extant works of Gorakhnāth. In his 1942 edition of the collected shorter works attributed to Gorakhnāth, P. D. Barṭhvāl omitted a text entitled *Gorakh Vacan*. It was included in only one of the nine manuscripts he used. Even though this manuscript, then in the possession of a Brahman in Jaipur, was copied in 1684, Barṭhvāl omitted the *Gorakh Vacan* on the grounds that it was in only this one manuscript, and he judged the language to be too modern (*Gorakh-bānī, bhūmikā*, p. 18).

Many of the texts found in the *Banārsī Vilās* also appear as independent texts, usually contained in larger personal anthologies copied into notebooks (*guṭkā*) for private study and recitation. The *Gorakhnāth ke Vacan*, however, rarely appears outside the setting of the *Banārsī Vilās*. In the five catalogue volumes of manuscripts from Jaipur and other parts of Rajasthan compiled by Kastūrcand Kāslīvāl and Anūpcand Nyāyīrth, there appears to be only one such occurrence. This is a large notebook in the collection of the library at the Ṭholiyā temple in Jaipur, which includes the *Gorakhnāth ke Vacan* as well as seven other texts by Banārsīdās. While the notebook as a whole is undated, it includes a copy of the *Madhumālātī* that was copied in 1768.⁸ In other words, the *Gorakhnāth ke Vacan* has not had as robust an existence within Banārsīdās's *oeuvre* as have many of his other shorter compositions.

⁸ Ms. No. 574 (Guṭkā 73) in the collection of the Ṭholiyā Bhaṇḍār, Jaipur. Kāslīvāl and Nyāyīrth 1949-71: 3, 281-83.

The *Gorakhnāth ke Vacan* is in “smooth Sant Bhasha,”⁹ which might indicate a Sant author, and not Banārsīdās. Banārsīdās, however, was a trained and skilled poet, who took obvious delight in experimenting with new styles and genres, so it is conceivable that he wrote the *Gorakhnāth ke Vacan* as an experiment in Sant Bhasha.

In my estimation, the *Gorakhnāth ke Vacan* is probably not by Banārsīdās, but was incorporated into the *Banārsī Vilās* by Jagjīvandās because it was a text enjoyed by Banārsīdās himself, and studied by Banārsīdās and the Adhyātma seminar of Agra that Banārsīdās led. This is only an informed opinion, and one informed by evidence that is at best very circumstantial. We therefore must leave the question of its authorship unanswered. Nonetheless, its inclusion in the *Banārsī Vilās* allows us to see how one group of Jains in Agra in the first half of the seventeenth century who were interested in spiritual pursuits perceived the teachings of Gorakhnāth.

The *Gorakhnāth ke Vacan* fits easily within the more or less contemporaneous vernacular compositions attributed to Gorakhnāth. As Hazārīprasād Dvivedī and other scholars have observed, there are differences between the Sanskrit and vernacular texts attributed to Gorakhnāth. The Sanskrit texts tend to focus more on the technical details of yogic practices, whereas the vernacular texts provide more insight into the “religious beliefs, philosophical doctrines and moral sayings of the *yogīs*” (Dvivedī 1966: 221). Whereas the Sanskrit texts present a somewhat more bounded sectarian perspective, many of the vernacular texts fit easily into the broader Sant tradition. Dvivedī (1966: 222) notes that *pads* to which Gorakhnāth’s name is attached are also found under the names of Dādū, Kabīr and Nānak.

While the precise meaning of the *Gorakhnāth ke Vacan* is in places ambiguous and even obscure, as a whole the seven verses focus on three basic Nāth and Sant teachings. First, the spiritual seeker must abandon all worldly definitions and concerns in favor of the supreme, transcendent and innate truth. Second, the path to this understanding does not come through the performance of rituals, but instead from the cultivation of spiritual wisdom. Third, one enters into and follows this path by hearing the word from the true guru.

In the first verse, the poem says that whereas people in the world are defined according to the three genders of male, female, and the third gender, the truth transcends such distinctions and so the seeker should abandon them.

In the second verse, it repeats the age-old Indic distinction between the *yogī*, the spiritual renouncer, and the *bhogī*, the foolish person who remains in the world and is

⁹ E-mail to the author from Imre Bangha, January 15, 2015.

ignorant in his consuming of it. Understanding the difference between these two ways of being is crucial for spiritual success.¹⁰

In the third verse, it points to two positive spiritual paths: textual study and controlling the breath. These two lead to the supreme truth (*paramārath*). A person who does not seek the supreme truth is unrighteous (*adharmī*). This is the only reference in the poem to the breathing practices (here called *pavan*) that are one of the hallmarks of yoga, especially Haṭha Yoga. It should not come as a surprise, however, that breathing exercises are downplayed in this text, for the Nāths have long exhibited what James Mallinson (2011: 423) has called an “apathy” toward the various bodily practices associated with Haṭha Yoga.

The fourth verse introduces the concept of *māyā*, illusion. It is likely that *māyā* here is actually money, since *yogīs* still today use *māyā* as a kind of “*yogī* slang” for money.¹¹ People in the world think that money is something real and important; but Sants and economists will say that it is just an idea, a social construct that functions only as long as everyone participates in the shared illusion.¹² Someone under the illusion that he has money thinks that he is a “master,” and when he loses all his money he thinks that he is now a “servant.” Even someone who thinks that becoming a big patron and engaging in religious gifting (*dān*) will allow him to overcome the power of illusion, and to renounce the power of money to entangle him in the world, is still ignorant of the truth.

In the fifth verse, the poem turns to understandings of the body, using the term *pinḍ*, the term most often used for the body in the texts attributed to Gorakhnāth (White 2011). It distinguishes three forms of embodiment: as a “tender” young student, a “hard” middle-aged cart-puller, and an “old” man. The poem concludes that people of all three ages who allow themselves to be defined by their bodies are stupid.

In the penultimate verse, the poem stresses the need to investigate matters, to employ the fire of meditation, and to become absorbed in knowledge. Without these, one remains a childish simpleton.

¹⁰ See Dvivedī’s 1966: 225f. discussion of the *yogī-bhogī* distinction (here termed *bairāgī* and *girhī*) in one *pad* from the *Gorakh-Bānī*, p. 77.

¹¹ E-mail to the author from James Mallinson, 15 January 2015.

¹² This is illustrated clearly by Bitcoin. In his on-line Wonkblog post, the journalist Neil Irwin 2013 wrote, “money has almost nothing to do with physical form. [...] money is an idea rather than a thing.” In support of his argument, Irwin cited an article by the economist Narayana R. Kocherlakota 1996, who argued that money is just collective memory. On a lighter note, Irwin also cited a wonderful piece in *The Onion* from 2010, in which supposedly Ben Bernanke, then chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve, “shocked Americans into realizing that money is, in fact, just a meaningless and intangible social construct,” leading to the collapse of the American economy.

James Mallinson (2011: 423) has said of the Nāths, “Rather than engaging in complicated spiritual practice, liberation is achieved through *sahaja-yoga* (natural *yoga*), whose only real practice (if any at all) is the repetition of the name of the divine.”¹³ We see this clearly in the last verse, in which the poet introduces the concept of the word (here *bācā*). While the grammar of the first foot is unclear, it appears that the poem says that even birds can pierce through ignorance by hearing the word, and thereby reverse their path of worldly engagement. One learns the word, and the true path to liberation, only from the guru.¹⁴ In place of worldly matters, Gorakh as the true guru (*sataguru*) teaches the “business” (*dhandhā*) of *sahaj*, the innate. While this reference to spiritual pursuit as a “business” is found widely in Sant literature, it would be particularly poignant for well-to-do merchants such as Banārsīdās and many of his colleagues in his spiritual circle in Agra. Finally, the poem ends with a widespread Sant admonition that all who engage in ideology (*vād*) and dispute (*vivād*) are blind.¹⁵

As both Premī and R. K. Jain noted, there is much in this short poem that is simply the common coin of the Saints. As with many *pads* attributed to Gorakhnāth, one could replace the signature of Gorakh with that of any of a number of other *sant*-poets. Nonetheless, the poem presents an accurate *précis* of the basic vernacular teachings of Gorakhnāth and the Nāth Sampradāy. If the poem was composed by a Nāth, it gives us some sense of how an insider would present the teachings of Gorakhnāth in the first half of the seventeenth century. On the other hand, if it was composed by Banārsīdās, then it provides evidence of how an informed outsider understood those teachings.

Ṭoḍarmal and the Haṭha Yogīs

While Banārsīdās’s reception of the Nāth teachings was positive, this was not the only way Jains perceived the Nāths and other Saints and *yogīs*. A century after Banārsīdās, the Jaipur-based Terāpanth ideologue Ṭoḍarmal (ca. 1719/20-1766/67) included a discussion of yogic practices in his magnum opus, the *Mokṣamārg Prakāśak (Illumination of the Path to Liberation)*, a prose text he left unfinished at his death.¹⁶ After the classical texts attributed to

¹³ On *sahaj*, see also Barthwal 1978: 56-60 and Bouillier 2008: 220-22.

¹⁴ Dvivedī 1966: 222 cites a verse from the *Gorakh-Bānī* (p. 128) that makes precisely this point: “Brother, without the guru, you will not attain knowledge” (*guru binam gyāna na pālā re bhālā*).

¹⁵ See again the *Gorakh-Bānī* (p. 5), as quoted by Dvivedī 1966: 223: “Some are ideologues, some are disputants, but the *jogī* must not engage in ideology” (*koī bādī koī vivādī jogī kau bāda na karanān*).

¹⁶ On Ṭoḍarmal, see Bhārill 1973.

Kundakunda, the *Mokṣamārg Prakāśak* is probably the single most important book in the Terāpanth. It has been published more than half-a-dozen times in the original, and translated into Modern Standard Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Marathi and English.¹⁷ More than anyone else Ṭoḍarmal was responsible for laying the intellectual foundations of the Digambar Terāpanth. To do this, in the *Mokṣamārg Prakāśak* he both presented the Terāpanth perspective on true religion, and engaged in lengthy refutations of other spiritual paths. Much of his criticism was aimed at the long-standing mainstream of north Indian Digambar Jainism, what became known as the Bīspanth as the divisions between the two streams grew wider and more institutionalized. But he also devoted the fifth chapter to a case-by-case refutation of numerous non-Digambar forms of religion (*anya-mat*). He detailed the ritual, intellectual and cosmological faults of Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, Vedic ritual, Mīmāṃsā, Islam, Sāṃkhya, Nyāya, Vaiśaṣika, Buddhism, Cārvāka, and both the Mūrtipūjak and Dhūṇḍhak branches of Śvetāmbar Jainism. In this wide-ranging attack on all other forms of religion, he turned his attention to the practice of yoga.

Ṭoḍarmal presumably based many of his criticisms of the “Hindu” and Buddhist schools on various widely available compendia of philosophies. His criticism of Islam was fairly simple, and did not require any great knowledge of it beyond what was common currency at the time: on the one hand it was a devotional theism focused on an all-powerful creator deity (and so open to similar criticisms as those he directed at Vaiṣṇava theologies), and on the other the rise of Muslim power in society was merely a sign of the dark era in which he lived.

In his description of the practitioners of yoga, Ṭoḍarmal did not cite any texts, but rather appears to base his discussion on both common knowledge and what he encountered in Jaipur. He did not name any specific yogic tradition or community, and the distinctions among them may have escaped his notice. In many ways he described stereotypical *yogīs* of the time. His brief depiction of their practices does evince knowledge of the practices and principles of Haṭha Yoga. Given that he was writing in mid-eighteenth century Jaipur, it is likely that most *yogīs* he encountered were Rāmānandīs, since there were especially close relations between this order and the Kacchwaha rulers of the state.¹⁸

My discussion, therefore, is not an analysis of two receptions of the same “Hindu” order or practices. Banārsīdās and Ṭoḍarmal addressed different Hindu yogic traditions. Nonetheless, I think that bringing Ṭoḍarmal into the picture enhances our understanding of the reception of these groups by urban pre-colonial Jain intellectuals.

¹⁷ See the list of publications given by Hukamcand Bhārill in his introduction (MP-B, p. 25) to his 1992 edition of the text.

¹⁸ Monika Horstmann in a number of publications has shown the close connections between the Kacchwaha rulers and the Rāmānandīs. See in particular Horstmann 2002 and 2013: 48-51.

It is not surprising, given his agenda, that Ṭoḍarmal was very critical in his treatment of the practitioners of Haṭha Yoga, whom he termed “practitioners of the breath and related practices” (*pavanādi sādhan dvārā jñānī*). He acknowledged that the practice of breathing exercises through the subtle veins or *nāḍīs* generates seemingly supernormal powers of prognostication.¹⁹ These powers, however, are merely worldly activities. Because they stimulate the two great poisons of passion (*rāg*) and aversion (*dveṣ*), they only increase pride (*mān*) and greed (*lobh*) rather than leading to liberation.

The practice of *prāṇāyām* or breath control does not lead to *samādhi*, as proponents of yoga claimed. Ṭoḍarmal compared the feats of stopping the breath to those of acrobats (*naṭ*). It may be an impressive performance, but it is of no spiritual benefit.

Ṭoḍarmal dismissed the claims of stopping the fluctuations of the mind as being no different from sleep. It does not lead to the cessation of desire. He also dismissed claims of attaining immortality, saying the body of such a claimant burns just like any other body.

One depiction of the attainment of a transcendent state found in the writings of many Sants is that one attains the ability to hear the “unstruck sound” (*anahad nāḍ*).²⁰ These claims also left Ṭoḍarmal unimpressed. He compared them to the pleasures of listening to a musical instrument. While enjoyable, this is just a sensory experience that has nothing to do with liberation.

Another Sant practice is that of silent repetition (*ajapā jāp*), in which the practitioner comes to realize the unity of his own soul with the entire universe, as he silently recites the phrase “*soham*” (“I am that”) as he inhales and exhales. Ṭoḍarmal dismissed this as mere word-play. A partridge makes the sound “*tū hī*,” which one might mistakenly hear as words meaning the equally mystical phrase “you are just that,” but in fact it is meaningless.²¹

The next yogic practice he discussed was rolling the eyes to meditate upon the *trikuṭī*, the *cakra* that lies between the eyebrows and the nose, and focusing the eyes on the tip of the nose. Yes, one can see things through such distortion of the eyes, Ṭoḍarmal acknowledged. But what does that prove?

He returned to the claims of supernormal powers, such as telling of the past and future, using words for magical effect, flying through the air, and healing disease. The unliberated

¹⁹ The many extraordinary powers that are said to result from yogic practice are discussed at length in Jacobsen 2012.

²⁰ While this concept does not appear in the *Gorakhnāth ke Vacan*, it is found often in the *Gorakh-Bānī* and other texts attributed to Gorakhnāth (Djurdjevic 2008: 92-94).

²¹ Ṭoḍarmal’s denunciation of these particular yogic practices is in striking contrast to the way that a generation before him the Agra-based Bīspanth Digambar poet Dyānatrāy incorporated these practices into his poems. See Cort 2003 and 2013.

gods have such powers as well, but they are of no use to the soul. They merely stir up the passions (*kaṣāy*), and so lead to suffering.

Finally, Ṭoḍarmal accused the yogic (and bhakti) practitioners of being inconsistent in their claims, as he investigated the hagiographical claims of liberation. On the one hand are the stories of the great feats of asceticism undertaken by some *yogīs* in order to attain liberation. At the next moment, one hears that attaining liberation through the repetition of the Name is so easy that even prostitutes can do it. Ṭoḍarmal concluded that one cannot have any faith that such contradictory and inconsistent people can be relied upon to explain the path to liberation correctly.

Concluding Observations

As I indicated earlier, Banārsīdās and Ṭoḍarmal described different groups of practitioners within the broader Sant-yogī stream of early modern north Indian religiosity. Banārsīdās described the tradition of Gorakhnāth and the subsequent Nāths, whereas Ṭoḍarmal described an unnamed group or groups who practiced Haṭha Yoga. In both cases they were reasonably accurate in their depictions, although neither of these texts provides us with anything resembling a thorough description.

Banārsīdās presented the perspective of the *avadhūt*, one who rejects the world, and who goes so far that he “pours scorn on all worldly activity, including religious practice” (Mallinson 2011: 423). In one verse Banārsīdās did praise scriptural study and breath control, but in the main his short text stressed the need to reject worldly distinctions and practices. He concluded that the path to liberation involves hearing the word of the true guru, whereby one can reverse the human tendency to be defined by the material world.

Ṭoḍarmal, on the other hand, described the practitioners of Haṭha Yoga, who engaged in practices of breath-control and meditation to activate the subtle spiritual energies of the body and thereby generate an inner spiritual awakening. Ṭoḍarmal showed a good familiarity with many of the technical terms of Haṭha Yoga and the related Sant traditions. He referred to the *nāḍīs* and the *cakras*, to the practice of harmonizing the breath with the silent repetition (*ajapā jāp*) of the mystical phrase “*soham*” (“I am that”), and to the experience of the “unstruck sound” (*anahad nāḍ*) that is the experience of enlightenment itself.

Where our two authors differ most strikingly is in their evaluation of these non-Jain practices. The inclusion of the *Gorakhnāth ke Vacan* within Banārsīdās’s collected short works, whether the text was by Banārsīdās, Gorakhnāth or some third poet, tells us that Banārsīdās and his fellow spiritual seekers in the Adhyātma seminar of Agra perceived Gorakhnāth to be saying something similar to what they themselves were studying and practicing. The *avadhūt* criticism and rejection of worldly distinctions, and the practice of

religious rituals, in favor of a salvific form of spiritual *gnosis*, bears many similarities to Kundakunda's emphasis on the absolute (*niścay*) perspective on reality that was at the heart of *adhyātma*.²²

Ṭoḍarmal, however, had nothing good to say about the practitioners of Haṭha Yoga. He compared them to acrobats (*naṭ*), and stated that even prostitutes (*veśya*) can attain similar spiritual results to those of which they boast. He was especially critical of the special powers that result from these practices. He did not deny the existence of these powers, but said there is no difference between these yogic powers and those of acrobats and unliberated deities. Far from demonstrating spiritual advancement, the powers exacerbate the two great poisons of passion (*rāg*) and aversion (*dveṣ*), and thereby merely generate more karmic bondage and suffering for both the practitioners themselves and those who are duped by them. In Ṭoḍarmal's dismissal of these *yogīs* as frauds and charlatans, one is reminded of the many negative portrayals of *yogīs* from throughout the ages that David White documents in his recent *Sinister Yogis*.

As I indicated earlier, these two texts perhaps tell us more about their authors than they do about the Nāth and yogic subjects they describe. Ṭoḍarmal's criticism of Haṭha Yoga came in a chapter in which he engaged in sweeping criticisms of all the other spiritual possibilities. He was a staunch ideologue. He was convinced of the correctness of his own position, and argued that to think otherwise is to be a fool. In the terms of Diana Eck (1993: 166-99), Ṭoḍarmal was a classic example of an exclusivist, one who believes that there is only one way to attain spiritual perfection, and that all other religious traditions are therefore inherently wrong.

The *Gorakhnāth ke Vacan*, however, presents us with a strikingly different Jain response to these broadly yogic and renunciatory Hindu practices. We see in this poem in a Jain collection a very favorable response to the teachings of Gorakhnāth. The fact that the poem could as easily be by a Nāth author as by Banārsīdās indicates that the Jain author was favorably influenced by the Nāth teachings of the need to renounce worldly concerns in pursuit of the transcendent truth. We see here a similarity to the emphasis in Banārsīdās's later writings, especially the *Samaysār Nāṭak*, which he completed in 1636, on the need to move beyond the everyday (*vyavahār*) religion of rituals and follow the ultimate (*niścay*) path of transcendent truth.

The inclusion of the *Gorakhnāth ke Vacan* within the *Banārsī Vilās* also gives us insight into Banārsīdās himself. In large part because he left us the first autobiography written in South Asia, we know more about him than we do about most pre-modern Indians. It is clear from his autobiography that he was a restless soul. In his youth he wanted to be a

²² On Kundakunda's two-truth system, and emphasis on the absolute perspective on reality, see Bhatt 1974 and Dundas 2002: 107-10.

worldly poet, one “who loved with the steadfastness / and yearning of a Sufi fakir.”²³ He studied the craft of writing poetry in Braj Bhasha, and composed a long poem of 1,000 verses that in theory was on all nine of the aesthetic emotions (*nav ras*), but by his own admission “was mainly on love.”²⁴ He later became ashamed of this text, and threw the manuscript into the Gomti River at Jaunpur, where he then lived. During this youthful time he came under the influence of a “crooked sanyasi,”²⁵ who taught him a *mantra*, the recitation of which for a year would supposedly result in the magical appearance of a gold dinar. He was fooled by a second Hindu renouncer, a *jogī*, who taught him to worship Śiva daily in the form of a conch shell.²⁶ He gave up this practice at the same time that he threw away his manuscript of erotic poetry.²⁷ For several years he became an orthoprax Śvetāmbar Mūrtipūjak Jain, attending the temple daily to perform *pūjā*, going on pilgrimages, observing various dietary and other ascetic restrictions, and engaging in the regular practice of *sāmāyik* and *pratikramaṇ*.²⁸ In midlife he was introduced to Kundakunda’s two-truth teachings on *vyavahār* and *niścay*, or relative and absolute truth, which resulted in a severe crisis of faith.²⁹ He abandoned the performance of all rituals, and he developed a yearning for renunciation (*vairāg*). He and some friends even went so far as to mock all the forms of orthoprax Jainism.³⁰ It may well have been during this time that he encountered the teachings of Gorakhnāth. He eventually settled into the Digambar form of spirituality known as Adhyātma, with which his name has been associated ever since. In Adhyātma, the person understands that while he should follow all the Jain rituals out of respect for the relative truth of the material world, he should also cultivate a deeper understanding that in truth nothing other than soul or self (*ātmā*) has any ultimate reality. It is not surprising, therefore, that we find a short text on the teachings of Gorakhnāth included in his collected works.

Banārsīdās was certainly capable of passing judgment on other religious traditions as well. I noted how he regretted that twice he had been fooled by Hindu renouncers. Later for a

²³ AK-C v. 171.

²⁴ AK-C v. 179.

²⁵ AK-C v. 209.

²⁶ AK-C vv. 219-23, 235-37.

²⁷ AK-C vv. 262-68.

²⁸ AK-C vv. 273-76, 586-89.

²⁹ AK-C vv. 592-98.

³⁰ AK-C vv. 600-605.

while he rejected the orthoprax ritual culture of Jainism, and even mocked the iconic practice of Digambar monasticism when he and three friends would strip naked and dance about the room, laughingly proclaiming “We have become munis! / We have no material possessions!”³¹ The text that immediately follows the *Gorakhnāth ke Vacan* in the *Banārsī Vilās* is also an investigation of different spiritual paths, entitled *Vaidya ādi ke Bhed*, “The Differences among Various Healers.” In forty-one verses he addressed a range of “healers,” both medical and spiritual. In order, he discussed Vaidyas (practitioners of Vedic medicine), astrologers (*jyotiṣī*), Vaiṣṇavs, and Muslims. Much of the text was dedicated to a lengthy critique of Islam. He argued that only Jainism has the proper understanding of the four principles upon which any religion (*mat*) should be based: god (*dev*), teacher (*guru*), ethics (*dharm*) and scripture (*granth*). He concluded,

Listen to the Jain teachings,
accept that the Jain tradition is correct.
The soul without the Jain dharm
cannot ascertain the truth.³²

Banārsīdās was no exclusivist ideologue, however. Yes, he saw Jainism as the best of all spiritual paths. But he could learn from other traditions as well, and even concluded that in the end there was no significant difference between the teachings of the Jina and the teachings of Gorakhnāth.

³¹ AK-C v. 603.

³² *Vaidya ādi ke Bhed*, v. 40.

Appendix 1

गोरखनाथ के वचन

जो भग देख भामिनी मानै । लिंग देख जो पुरुष प्रमानै ॥
जो विन चिह्न नपुंसक जोवा । कह गोरख तीनों घर खोवा ॥ १ ॥

जो घर त्याग कहावे जोगी । घरवासीको कहै जु भोगी ॥
अन्तरभाव न परखै जोई । गोरख बोलै मूरख सोई ॥ २ ॥

पढ़ ग्रन्थहिं जो ज्ञान बरखानै । पवन साध परमारथ मानै ॥
परम तत्त्वके होहिं न मर्मी । कह गोरख सो महाअधर्मी ॥ ३ ॥

माया जोर कहै मैं ठाकर । माया गये कहावै चाकर ॥
माया त्याग होय जो दानी । कह गोरख तीनों अज्ञानी ॥ ४ ॥

कोमल पिंड कहावै चेल । कठिन पिंडसों ठेला पेला ॥
जूना पिंड कहावै बूढा । कह गोरख ए तीनों मूढा ॥ ५ ॥

विन परिचय जो वस्तु विचारै । ध्यान अग्नि विन तन परजारै ॥
ज्ञानमगन विन रहै अबोला । कह गोरख सो बाला भोला ॥ ६ ॥

सुनरे बाचा चुनियाँ मुनियाँ । उलट बेधसों उलटी दुनियाँ ॥
सतगुरु कहै सहजका धंधा । वाद विवाद करै सो अंधा ॥ ७ ॥

jo bhaga dekha³⁴ bhāminī mānai / liṅga dekha jo puruṣa pramānai //
jo vīna cihna napuṁsaka jovā / kaha gorakha tīnoṁ ghara khovā //1//

jo ghara tyāga kahāve jogī / gharavāsīko kahai ju bhogī //
antarabhāva na parakhai joī / gorakha bolai mūrakha soī //2//

paṛha granthahim jo jñāna barakhānai / pavana sādha paramāratha mānai //
parama tattvake hohim na maramī / kaha gorakha so mahā adharmī //3//

māyā jora kahai maiṁ ṭhākara / māyā gaye kahāvai cākara //
māyā tyāga hoyā jo dānī / kaha gorakha tīnoṁ ajñānī //4//

komala piṇḍa kahāvai celā / kaṭhina piṇḍasom ṭhelā pelā //
jūnā piṇḍa kahāvai būḍhā / kaha gorakha e tīnoṁ mūḍhā //5//

vīna paricaya jo vastu vicārai / dhyāna agni vīna tana³⁵ parajārai //
jñānamagana vīna rahai abolā / kaha gorakha so bālā bholā //6//

sunare bācā cuniyām muniyām / ulaṭa bedhasom ulaṭī duniyām //
sataguru kahai sahajakā dhandhā / vāda vivāda karai so andhā //7//

³³ I have followed Premī's text (BV-P, pp. 209f.), and noted the sole orthographic difference found in the text as edited by Kāslīvāl and Bhaṇvarlāl (BV-BK, pp. 202f.).

³⁴ BV-BK *dekham*.

³⁵ Both editions read *vinatana*. However, it is clear that *vīna* refers to the preceding word *agni*, not to *tana*.

The Sayings of Gorakhnāth

Who shows a womb is considered a woman.
Who shows a penis is proven to be a man.
Who lacks any mark is seen as genderless.
Gorakh says, all three have carelessly lost their homes. (1)

Who abandons the home is called a renouncer (*jogī*).
Who resides in a home is called a consumer (*bhogī*).
Who doesn't perceive the hidden sense -
Gorakh says, he is a fool. (2)

Who reads texts expounds knowledge.
Who performs the breath accepts the supreme truth.
Who is not versed in the supreme principle -
Gorakh says, he is the most unrighteous. (3)

One under the spell of the illusion of money says, "I am a master."
When the money is gone, they call him a "servant."
One who thinks to abandon money is a "donor."
Gorakh says, these three are ignorant. (4)

One with a tender body is called a student.
One with a tough body pushes a cart.
One with an old body is called a geezer.
Gorakh says, these three are stupid. (5)

One studies matters without investigation,
and burns his body without the fire of meditation.
One who is not suffused by knowledge keeps silent.
Gorakh says, he is an ignorant child. (6)

Listen to the words finches and sparrows
by piercing by means of reversal, the material world is reversed.
The true guru teaches the work of the innate.
Those who engage in ideology and debate are blind. (7)

Appendix 2

Ṭoḍarmal, *Illumination of the Path to Liberation*³⁶

Many souls believe that they have become wise (*jñānī*) by means of breath (*pavan*) and similar practices. When the breath is expelled through the gate of the nose, in the form of *idā*, *piṅgalā* and *suṣumṇā*,³⁷ because the breath is different colors, they imagine that it consists of the elements such as earth. By this practice one attains some knowledge of instrumental causes (*nimitt*), and one can speak of desirable and undesirable things in the world. For this they are called “great,” but this is just a worldly activity (*laukik kārya*), not of the path to liberation (*mokṣamārg*). To tell souls of the desirable and undesirable just increases their passion (*rāg*) and aversion (*dveṣ*), and gives rise to things like pride (*mān*) and greed (*lobh*). What does this accomplish?

Next, they engage in practices such as *prāṇāyām*.³⁸ They say they have attained liberation (*samādhi*) by stopping the breath. This ritual control of the breath, however, is no different than the way that acrobats (*naṭ*) can control their hands and other limbs through practice. Hands and the breath are just limbs of the body. How does control of them benefit the soul?

Next, you say that happiness arises when you stop the fluttering of the mind, and death has no influence. This is false. In sleep, the fluctuations of consciousness stop. In the same way, the practice of the breath stops the fluctuations of consciousness. You have stilled the mind, but not ended desire. One cannot really say that the fluttering of the mind has been stopped, for who can experience pleasure without consciousness? Therefore one can’t say that happiness has arisen. There have been many practitioners in this field, but none has been seen

³⁶ I have consulted three vernacular editions: MP-S, pp. 115-16; MP-H, pp. 93-94; and MP-B, pp. 120-22. There are no differences among the texts, as all printed versions of the *Mokṣamārg Prakāśak* are based on Ṭoḍarmal’s author’s copy in the manuscript collection of the Digambar Jain temple Dīvān Badhīcandjī in Jaipur. According to tradition, this is also the temple where Ṭoḍarmal composed the text. This is manuscript number 214 and *veṣṭan* number 711 in the catalogue of Kāślīvāl and Anūpcand Nyāyīrth 1949:71: 3: 34. I have also consulted the one English translation, by Hem Chand Jain (MP-J). The poor quality of the English, however, renders it of extremely limited use. In the printed vernacular editions, this entire section reads as a single paragraph. I have broken it into shorter paragraphs, starting a new paragraph each time Ṭoḍarmal introduced a new criticism by his use of the adverb *bahuri* (“next”).

³⁷ These are the three *nāḍīs*, the veins running along the spinal column through which the *prāṇ* or subtle breath flows. See Barthwal 1978: 136-38.

³⁸ On *prāṇāyām* (regulation of the breath), see Barthwal 1978: 138.

to be immortal. When the fire is lit, one sees that they are dead. It is a lie and an imaginary thing to say they are not under the influence of death.

Next, when one is practicing, and there is some consciousness remaining, and in the practice one hears a word, they say it is the unstruck sound (*anahad nād*).³⁹ One experiences pleasure at hearing this in the same way that one experiences pleasure in listening to the sound of a *vīṇā* or other musical instrument. Here only sensory perception is nourished, and it has nothing to do with the transcendent (*paramārth*).

Next, one imagines the word “*soham*” (“I am that”) in the exhalations and inhalations of the breath. This is called “silent repetition” (*ajapā jāp*).⁴⁰ The partridge makes the sound “*tū hī*” (“you are that”), and one imagines this is a word, but one cannot say that there is any meaning in the sound of a partridge. One imagines *soham* in the same manner; one cannot say that there is any meaning in the sound of the breath. If the meaning of *soham* is “I am that,” one must give some consideration. Who is “that”? One must ascertain what it is. There is always a connection between one word and another word. One can ascertain the essence of the matter. One has an awareness of I-ness (*aham-buddhi*), and from this comes the word *soham*. It is not possible that he experiences his self only when there is the word *soham*. One can use the word *soham* only when there is something else that is one’s self. If a man knows himself as his self, why should he say, “I am that”? A soul does not recognize its self, and doesn’t recognize its own characteristics, but is told, “I am as it is.” You must understand this.

Next, one who practices by focusing on the forehead, eyebrows and the tip of the nose, says that he is meditating on *trikuṭī* and the like.⁴¹ He believes he has experienced the transcendent. By rotating the pupil of the eye, he sees a physical form. What does this prove?

Next, if through practice the knowledge of past and future arises, or the magical power of words, or the ability to travel on earth and through the sky, or the ability to heal the body of disease - all these are simply worldly actions. The gods themselves attain such powers. There is no benefit in these for one’s self. Benefit comes from eliminating the desires arising from passion for sense-objects. These [powers] are merely means to nourish passion for sense-objects. There is no spiritual benefit from all these practices. In these there is merely much

³⁹ The *anahad* (also *anāhat*) *nād*, or *anahad śabd*, is the cosmic sound that lies at the heart of existence, and can be heard through the practice of meditation. In the words of Barthwal 1978:128, in experiencing it “the aspirant enters into the deepest recesses of his soul, where the recognition of his own-self makes him transcend all these conditions and he becomes the Unconditioned.” He also describes it as “the Word of God” (p. 138).

⁴⁰ On *ajapā jāp* see Barthwal 1978: 126, 128.

⁴¹ The *trikuṭī*, located between the eyebrows and the nose, is the site of the *ājñā-cakra*, one of the six subtle energy-centers in the body (Barthwal 1978:139).

affliction such as death, and no benefit. Therefore wise people don't regret [not engaging in] these pointless things. Only passionate souls practice such things.

Next, they say that some people have attained liberation with great difficulty through the practice of austerities. Then they say that others have attained liberation easily. Great devotees such as Uddhav⁴² were instructed to practice austerities, whereas prostitutes and others are said to have crossed over merely by chanting the Name. There is nothing reliable here. In this way, these people explain the path to liberation incorrectly.

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⁴² Uddhav was Krishna's companion, who engaged in strenuous asceticism in pursuit of liberation. He was instructed by the *gopīs* that single-pointed devotion to Krishna was superior, and easier, than austerities. His dialogue with the *gopīs* was the subject of many vernacular Krishna texts. See, for examples, the *Bhramargīt* by the sixteenth-century Vallabhite poet Nanddās, and some of the *pads* by the sixteenth-century Vaiṣṇava poet Sūrdās (*Memory of Love*, pp. 127-47, 234-46).

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