

A Study of Supernatural Powers  
in Discourses of Yoga, Tantra and Bhakti



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*Thanks to everyone who believed in me and supported me  
You helped me focus the target*

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Introduction

Going into the project of writing a master thesis I there was one topic that had piqued my interest during my earlier studies, which I resolved to write about. This was the topic supernatural powers popping up in different aspects of Indian religion, culture and philosophy, variously called *siddhis*, *yoga powers*, *aiśvaryas* etc. Seeing as I am more familiar with Hinduism than other Indic religions, I tried to get a slight overview of which traditions and texts contain mentions of these sorts of supernatural powers, so I could focus on some or one of them and work out a relevant research question. I discovered that even ruling out other religions, descriptions of individuals with supernatural powers permeate various Hindu traditions and texts. They can be found in the Vedas, the major epics *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *purāṇas* and in the texts of various philosophical schools and religious traditions. Individuals with supernatural powers are mentioned in different types of text from different times and they are ascribed to widely varied personas, beings, and awarded various states of acclaim or criticism. This discovery of the massive field that supernatural powers inhabit in Indian culture led me to the belief I would have an abundance of choices when narrowing down the field of my study for an appropriate theme. However, I was to be disappointed. At first I decided to narrow down my scope to various Śaiva and tantric traditions, since I read that these were the traditions with the most focus on gaining supernatural powers for various purposes. Gavin Flood for example, claims that the *māntramarga* Śaiva traditions are based on tantric texts of which the majority are “concerned with ritual of some kind [...] for the purpose of attaining liberation and above all, magical power and pleasure in higher worlds” (Flood, 2005, p. 209) (see also (Sanderson, 1988, p. 667) and (Smith, 2010, p. 170)). What I found, was that in most cases this was the extent of comment I would find about supernatural powers in these traditions.

This also clearly became apparent at the beginning of this project, when I was trying to read up on the subject as much as I could. I started with articles in overview works like *Brill’s encyclopedia of Hinduism* (2009) edited by Knut Jacobsen et al. and *The Blackwell*

*companion to Hinduism* (2005) edited by Gavin Flood, reading entries on different sectarian traditions in Hinduism, especially Śaiva tantric ones. What I found was that many of these articles mentioned the division of practitioners and practices into *mukti/mumukṣu* and *bhukti/bubhukṣu*, the attainment of liberation on the one hand and worldly enjoyment on the other, which includes attainment of supernatural powers (Flood, 2005, p. 206). Even though supernatural powers were mentioned in most of such articles, they usually only got a few lines notice, maximally half a page. This is not to say that there are no works on such powers, but it showed quite clearly that they are not considered only important enough for a slight mention by most scholars. What spoke of the neglect even more clearly than this fact was the bibliography usually referred to in the mention of the *mumukṣu* and *bubhukṣu* division. Most of these were to three works, the article *Le Sādhaka, personnage oublié du Śivaïsme du Sud* (1975) by Hélène Brunner, the article *Meaning in Tantric Ritual* (1995), and the monography *Māyā Human and Divine* (1978) by Teun Goudriaan. The first one I can sadly not use since I don't know French, and nobody has considered the topic important enough to translate it. The second one, *Māyā divine and human* by Goudriaan is constructed around a translation and comment upon the *Mahāmāyā*, a Sanskrit fragment in a collection of Balinese hymns describing “the supranormal effects of a meditation upon Viṣṇu's Māyā” (Goudriaan, 1978 p. ix). In addition to this, it refers to a large variety of text mentioning the topics of *māyā* ‘illusion’, the six “dark magics” *ṣaṭkarman*, divine power as an example for human supernatural power, and color symbolism. This book is a good starting point for understanding the large place ideas about supernatural powers inhabit in Indian culture. But even though it refers to a vast number of different texts, it is not an extensive presentation of supernatural powers in Hinduism, as Goudriaan self admits, rather a general discussion of various topics that occur in the specific text he has analyzed. That this book is likely still the most elucidating publication on the topic of supernatural powers in Hindu traditions, speaks for the neglect of the topic by scholars in general.

The third article mentioned is the article by Alexis Sanderson, and it showed to me the height of the problem I was facing. Sanderson explains that the goal of this article is to “consider the theories of the purpose and meaning of ritual of right and left” (Sanderson, 1995, p. 22) i.e. different traditions of Kashmir Śaivism. In other words, Sanderson in this article discusses the reasons, given in the religious texts, for initiates in different Śaiva traditions to perform the daily and yearly rituals of worship to a god. However, he only

comments on supernatural instance twice. In the first instance, he explains how worshippers of the Śaiva cult were split between the ones seeking *mumukṣu* ‘liberation’, and those seeking *bubhukṣu*, which he explains as supernatural powers and effects, and the enjoyments of rewards in a paradise like world, either in this life or the next. Furthermore he explains that his article will discuss the ritual of the seekers of *mumukṣu* because

The seekers of rewards, more precisely titled *sādhakas* (“masterers [of powers]”), inflected the basic rituals of the cults for the attainment of specific and concrete objectives such as the quelling of dangerous powers (*śāntiḥ*), the subjugation of desired women (*vaśīkaraṇam*), or the liquidation of enemies. In such cases the purpose of the ritual is self-evident (Sanderson, 1995, p. 24).

After this Sanderson mentions how the path to reward was the more time-consuming one of the two, and that the majority of the Śaivites in Kashmir aspired towards the path of liberation. Later on, he briefly explains how both the seeker of liberation and the seeker of rewards must become Śiva through the ritual, and that the seeker of rewards then directs the power of Śiva to achieve whichever ends he wants, while for the seeker of liberation “it must be the end itself” (Sanderson, 1995, p. 43). These two brief comments of *bubhukṣu* (which the acquirement of supernatural powers is a part of) shows that Sanderson is not particularly interested in them. This is not necessarily a problem in itself since the article is not really about the seekers of *bubhukṣu* at all. However, I would argue that it shows how little literature and studies there have been on this field, when overview articles to an article like this for the idea of supernatural powers. What is more, Sanderson’s comment that the meaning of rituals for the attainment of supernatural powers is self-evident seems to be symptomatic of the whole field. Most texts authors I’ve read just briefly remark that some people wanted to achieve supernatural powers, but that that was a lower form of rewards compared to liberation if they mention them at all. A good example is scholarly writing on the *Yogasūtra*, which has a section dedicated to the acquirement of supernatural powers, there called *vibhūti*.<sup>1</sup> The term has a variety of meanings, one of which is “superhuman power” (Pflueger, 2005, p. 46, note 32), and is often associated with what Lloyd Pflueger calls “the eight classical supernormal powers” (Pflueger, 2005, p. 50) of

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<sup>1</sup> This is arguably the most important text for yoga traditions, more on this in chapter 2.

miniaturization, magnification, levitation, extension, irresistible desire, lordship, sovereign command and wish realization. The topic of *vibhūti*, which in the *Yogasūtra* includes a lot of other supernatural powers, is the one topic given the most space in the whole text (Pflueger, 2005, p. 51). Yet, scholars have largely ignored them or written them off as a residue of archaic magical practices, and Pflueger states that their inclusion in the *Yogasūtra* “proves an embarrassment for many modern scholars’ enlightenment prejudices about what Indian philosophy ought to be” (Pflueger, 2005, p. 54).

My point with this example is to show, through a one of the most researched texts of Indian religion that the topic of supernatural powers has been given too little attention and research. After this discovery, I wanted to try and find a research question which allows me to shed a small amount of light on the importance supernatural powers. I do not believe that it is good academic practice to deem any aspect of what you are trying to study as unimportant or irrelevant without critical study to show that they in fact are. This is what many scholars of Indian culture have done in relation to supernatural powers (and which often has been the case in relation to anything labeled magic by academics). Are they interrelated with other aspects of Indian culture in ways that justify further delving research? Do scholars have to take notions about supernatural powers and individuals who are said to use/have them into account as a part of the context of the facet of Indian culture they are studying? This is of course a very broad question that I have no chance to answer in a masters thesis. What I decided to do to contribute to this question however, was to analyze a few cases of studies on supernatural powers with the tools of critical discourse theory to see if in these cases, ideas about supernatural powers have any impact, or are tied in with, other aspects of the text/traditions they appear in. My claim is that if supernatural powers can be shown to be part of claims made by certain social groups in a discourse of power, they cannot be discarded as unimportant or irrelevant without being properly studied. Therefore, I have chosen three articles which discuss ideas of supernatural powers found in texts from different times, featuring different religious traditions with struggles in different types of discourses. This is not to say that they are representative or that the findings on these cases can be transferred to all other cases where supernatural powers are mentioned; I am merely trying to figure out if supernatural powers can be a factor in discourse affecting other aspects of culture, with the claim that if they can, they should not



be discarded without proper study. Below I will try to give a more detailed description of what these supernatural powers are, and thereafter present some of the research history on the topic. After this there will follow an outline of the thesis, and a presentation of the articles that I have based this study on.

### What are supernatural powers in Indian context?

The powers I am going to write about in my thesis are aptly described by Jacobsen in *Yoga Powers – Extraordinary Capacities Attained Through Meditation and Concentration* (2012), a collection of articles about powers attained through meditation and concentration:

“Yoga powers are forms of extraordinary knowledge, such as awareness of previous rebirths, knowing the minds of others, seeing distant and hidden things, and remarkable abilities such as the power to become invisible, enter other’s bodies, fly through the air, and to become disembodied for a period of time, which are traditionally thought to be attained as yogins progress in their practice.” (Jacobsen, 2012 p. 1)

The articles in Jacobsen’s book all deal with these powers as they are described in the context of Yoga traditions, and this is why he calls them yoga powers. However, later on he remarks that these powers are not exclusive to the yoga tradition, they are also believed to be available through other means like asceticism, herbs, mantras or even as inborn abilities, and also feature in other religious traditions (Jacobsen, 2012 p. 4f). Accordingly, this thesis will therefore include texts who deal with supernatural powers outside of any yoga traditions, most notably the tantric tradition, although most of my source material deals with yoga traditions in one form or another. Yoga and Tantra traditions are the context where it will be most heavily situated. Jacobsen goes on to list the terms used to describe these yoga powers, in different traditions and texts, among them *jñāna*, *aiśvarya*, *siddhi* and *vibhūti* in the *Yogasūtra*, *bala* in the *Mahābhārata*, *guṇa* in *hathayoga* works, *guṇāṣṭaka* and more often *siddhi* in Śaiva Tantric contexts, *iddhi*, *abhiññā*, *adhiṣṭhāna* and *vikurvaṇa* in Buddhist Pāli texts and *ṛddhi* and *labdhi* in Jain texts. This clearly shows that the idea of these kinds of power is widely spread throughout Indian culture. It also emphasize the problematic nature of trying to delimit what should count, and not count, as supernatural, or any other term one might choose, as Jacobsen later on also states that these

terms not necessarily always mean exactly the same thing. Jacobsen further notes that the term most commonly used by scholars to denote the conglomerate of superhuman powers mentioned above, both gained through yoga and other means, is *siddhi* (Jacobsen, 2012 p. 2f). The three authors that this thesis focuses on however use other terms. Malinar, like Jacobsen, calls them “yoga powers” because the instances she discusses all describe powers acquired through the practice of yoga. Rastelli mostly uses the term “*mantrasiddhi*” following the text she is using, but also sometimes uses the designation “magic”. Burchett categorizes the use of powers into “magic” and “miracle” on account of the texts he is studying, and other sources I have used use these or different terms, like sorcery, *siddhi*, *vibhūti* etc. Because of the variety in descriptions I have chosen to use the term “supernatural power” when referring to the powers described by Jacobsen above. This is to avoid the term magic, or similar ones, with all its negative connotations (see e.g. (Stratton, 2007)) . When referring to a specific instance, for example the description of power gained by the *sādhaka* described in chapter 5, I will however use the term the authors of my sources have chosen, and this is another reason why I chose to use an English designation for the idea as a whole in Indian culture.

### Research history

As I have shown above, research on the topic of supernatural powers in Indian history has been neglected. Teun Goudriaan in his book from 1978 *Māyā divine and human* points out “the absence of a badly needed general history of Sanskritized magic” (Goudriaan, 1978 p. xi), and, as far as I know, this kind of work has not been written in the time since either. Jacobsen opens the introduction in his book claiming that yoga powers is a “neglected topic in the research on yoga and South Asian meditation traditions”(Jacobsen, 2012 p. 1), and he later notes that the treatment of yoga powers often is, and has been, avoided in favor of scholars’ desire to emphasize the rationality and philosophy in Indian traditions. (Jacobsen, 2012 p. 14) This also applies to the study of siddhis outside of yoga traditions. There are, however, some works Jacobsen recommends for introduction to the topic of siddhis: the aforementioned *Māyā divine and human* by Goudriaan, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (White, 1996) and *Understanding Mantra* (Alper, 1989) (Jacobsen, 2012 p. 4f). The work by Goudriaan has already been mentioned, and will be

used for background information. The book, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* by White discusses the topics of Alchemy, sexual rites and Haṭhayoga, which he claims are related and all have the purpose of acquiring immortality and supernatural powers. This book will also be used.

The last book Jacobsen refers to once again shows the scholarly neglect of the topic of supernatural powers. *Understanding Mantra* (1989) is a collection of articles about *mantras*. However, even though André Padoux in the article “Mantras-What are they?” referring to supernatural powers and magical effects, states that mantras “are clearly used much more often to gain such powers or to produce such effects than for redemptive purposes” (Padoux, 1989, p. 310), none of the article focuses on these powers and effects. In the article “The *Pāñcarātra* attitude to mantra”, Sanjukta Gupta briefly explains that “All tantric practice is said to have the two goals of *mukti* and *bhukti*, liberation and enjoyment (won by the use of power)” (Gupta, 1989, p. 233) but only states that the *mantras* granting *bhukti* are seen as a lower class, later to be superseded by the practitioner so he can use the higher class of *mantras*, which lead to *mukti*. I therefore have chosen to not use this work in my study, and rely instead on the two books mentioned above, in addition to works referred to in the articles my study revolves around.

#### Presentation of each case

The three different cases I have chosen to present and build my thesis on represent different times and different religious traditions in India. They can all be described as “Hindu traditions”, but as this term is widely discussed (see e.g. Viswanathan, 2005), and as such a discussion is not relevant for this thesis, I will not go into it. It suffices to say that the traditions presented are all part of a larger Indian culture, and therefore have a lot of shared ideas and reference points. Each case is described in an article which discusses supernatural powers in relations to a particular religious tradition. These are Angelika Malinar’s discussion about how supernormal powers were central to discussions of liberation as claimed by the Yoga/Sāṃkhya traditions in the *Mahābhārata*; a discussion about the supernormal powers gained through the mastering of the *mantrasiddhi* by the *sādhaka* of the *Pañcarātra* tradition in Marion Rastelli’s article about the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*; and a discussion by Patton Burchett about *bhakti* texts from the 16<sup>th</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> century, which

claim the miracle powers of the *bhakti* saints trump the supernormal powers of the Nāth yogins. The common denominator of these articles, and the reason I chose them for this thesis is that they all portray struggles within or between traditions where supernatural powers play a significant part. In Malinar's article the struggle is for the issue of what is the "right" or "highest" liberation and how to obtain it. In Marion Rastelli the struggle is less obvious, but I will make the claim that the way the *mantrasiddhi* and the mastering of them are portrayed could well have been part of a larger struggle between different religious groups for both patrons or "clients" and for the extraordinary individuals which served as the religious elite in the same traditions. In Patton's article, the struggle is more explicit, here it is a clear case of "my power is stronger than yours, therefore my tradition is better". Another reason why I chose these articles to base my study around, is that their discussions have a relatively small scope and are based on not too big of a text material. Malinar discusses four different parts of the *Mahābhārata*, Rastelli bases her work on one of the Pāñcarātra texts, while Burchett analyzes several Sufi and bhakti Hagiographical stories from early modern time North India. Other works like Goudriaan's *Māyā Human and Divine* (1978) and David White's *The Alchemical Body* (1996) and *Sinister Yogis* (2009) extensively treat the topic of supernatural powers, but their source material is so vast and spread out both considering time and different religious traditions, that it would be difficult to discuss them with the tools of discourse analysis. The cases I have chosen all rely on a smaller selection of text, and this means they can more reliably be said to be part of the same, or at least related discourses.

### Outline of the thesis

Chapter two of this thesis is a background chapter where I try to give a short overview over topics that will be discussed more in later chapters, namely the Śamkhya tradition, yoga traditions, the Bhakti tradition and the Tantra tradition. The presentation I give of them is in no way exhaustive, but is meant to be a general introduction making it possible to discuss certain more detailed topics in later chapter. I also have to note that I do not discuss the modern versions of any of these traditions, as the discourses I will be studying all are situated several centuries in the past. Chapter three will be a theory and method chapter where I present the discourse theory (which is both a method and a theory) I will use in

this study. In chapters 4-6 I will present the discourses mentioned above as described by the authors of the articles I have chosen. The analysis of each discourse will start in the end of each of the respecting chapters, before I do a summary and general discussion in chapter 7, where I present my findings.

## Chapter 2: Background

### Introduction

In the later analysis chapters I will present material from various times and traditions of Indian Hinduism, which all treat supernatural powers in different ways. In this chapter I will try to give a general description of some of the traditions that form the contexts of the material I will be analyzing, which are the traditions of Yoga, Sāṃkhya, Bhakti, and Tantra. Each of these consist of a multitude of various traditions, movements, texts etc., and they all constitute large discourses which frequently overlap. The treatment of them below is therefore to be understood as a general description to make it easier to place and understand the material I will present later in a wider context.

### Yoga

As done by Jacobsen I will use the capital, ‘Yoga’, when talking about the specific philosophic *darśana* (school), and ‘yoga’ for the “movement” in general, or specific schools/traditions that are not part of the *darśana*. (See more on this later in the chapter). Below I will present the views of Jacobsen and David Gordon White on what yoga is.

### Jacobsen

Knut Jacobsen, Professor in Studies of Religion at the university of Bergen, has written a lot on Indian religions in general, and about yoga in particular, and I will use his introduction to the anthology *Theory and Practice of Yoga: Essays in the Honour of Gerald James Larson* (2005) to try to give a tentative overview of the vast theme of yoga<sup>2</sup>, before introducing a different view on what yoga was, as it is presented by David Gordon White, Professor of Comparative Religion at the university of Chicago.

According to Jacobsen yoga refers to “traditions of mental and physical discipline and the goal to be achieved by those disciplines” (Jacobsen, 2005, p. 4). Jacobsen explains

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<sup>2</sup> I will not go into the topic of modern yoga since that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

what he calls yoga in its classical form, i.e. as it is found in the *Yogasūtra* by Patañjali, as the cessation of the mind's activity, which will lead to salvation through the realization of the duality of the consciousness and the material body (more on this below). He stresses the fact that yoga does not mean 'unity' in its classical form, but rather denotes separation (Jacobsen, 2005, p. 4). In this statement, we can already glimpse the complexity of the term yoga, because it is both a technique and a goal, and these can both be vastly different depending on which traditions and which times you refer to. The definition above stems from the text that has generally been considered the root text of what is called the classical yoga, both by scholars and later yoga traditions, but as we will see, some argue that there is no such thing as 'classical yoga' because the multitude of traditions and interpretations of the term is just too vast. Yoga as it is presented in the *Yogasūtra* relies heavily on the philosophical system called *Sāṃkhya* (I will present this below) and Jacobsen refers to it as the *Yoga-Sāṃkhya darśana* (philosophical school) which later split into two different *darśanas*. In the yoga traditions that rely on the *Sāṃkhya* framework, defining yoga as 'union' would make little sense, but as we will see later, this definition may have been closer to the original meaning of the word, and it also describes the goal of other types of yoga. The picture is muddled even more by the fact that the word 'yoga' can be used in more general terms without referring to any of the abovementioned, but with the meaning of 'method', 'technique' or 'goal' (Jacobsen, 2005p. 4). Jacobsen traces the origins of yoga to several elements from different texts and traditions. He mentions ideas about mental concentration leading to liberation and yogic ideas like the internal sound of the body, and the vital breaths and veins found in the *Upaniṣads*, regulation of breath in the later Vedic texts, bodily postures and other ascetic practices (*tapas*) for the Vedic sacrificial priest, and the ecstatic's ascetic vows (*vrātya*) in the Vedas. He also notes that especially the performing of *tapas* was thought to bestow the practitioner supernatural powers. The forerunners to the *Yoga darśana* therefore had two goals, liberation on the one hand, and supernatural powers on the other (as we will see, they sometimes also coincided). The idea of supernatural powers being a goal of yoga was denounced in the later *Yoga darśana*, but stayed prevalent in other yoga traditions and some of the Tantra traditions which incorporated yoga practices (Jacobsen, 2005, p. 6-7).

## White

David Gordon White on the other hand construes a different narrative of yoga, presented in the book *Sinister Yogis* (2009). He starts with the question of why yoga, which derives from the verbal root *yuj* meaning “to yoke” and “means “union,” “joining,” “junction” – is interpreted to mean its opposite” (White, 2009, p. 38). The opposite would be separation, with the meaning that he who practices yoga separates himself from the senses, from emotions, from the outside world etc. through meditation. This is often described as the core of yoga, so much that yoga has often been equated with meditation or contemplation (White, 2009, p. 42). White is trying to trace the process in which the primary meaning of the word yoga shifted from union to separateness for some groups. Here he also criticizes many earlier works on the history of yoga, because he claims scholars have *only* paid attention to these groups, and constructed their view as “the classical yoga”, while ignoring the groups that kept what he claims is the original meaning of the term yoga. (White, 2009, p.38) His presentations of some of these groups will have an important part of the analysis in later chapters, especially when dealing with the chapter on yoga powers in the *Mahābhārata*. I will therefore give a short overview on his presentation of the history of yoga, with special focus on the parts that will be important later.

He claims that the works which have been described as capstones of the “classical yoga” were the culmination of a 500 year period in which a “new synthesis of theory and practice, sometimes referred to as “yoga”, was very much in vogue throughout South Asia”. (White, 2009, p.39) This led to these works themselves showing a wide variety of topics and interpretations related to the term “yoga”. What is more, White claims the idea that these texts, and the system of “classical yoga” contrary to earlier scholars assumptions were not the culmination of long traditions going back to the time of the Vedas, but a product of this new synthesis. The major continuity with those earlier traditions he claims, was the importance of *vibhūthi*, which White translates as “omni-presencing” (White, 2009, p. 39) and which is the title of the chapter in the *Yoga Sūtra* describing how to attain supernatural powers. He goes on to describe the various early meanings of the verb root *yuj\**, and its derivatives, including yoga. The two primary early meanings were the yoking of people to chariots, mainly the warrior to his rig of war, and the sacrificial patron to the chariot of sacrifice, in addition to the “poetic yokings of thought to word” (White, 2009, p. 63) which allowed the Vedic priest to yoke his mind to both this world and the heavenly



world through poetic inspiration during the sacrifice. Throughout the book he describes how these to meanings of the word “coalesced, from the time of the Vedas onward, into a unified body of practice in which yoga involved yoking oneself to other beings from a distance [...] either in order to control them or in order to merge one’s consciousness with theirs.” (White, 2009, p. 44). Most relevant for this thesis is White’s discussion about yoga as the practice of piercing the sun and thereby gaining entrance into heaven, and how this was expanded on, and subsumed beneath other kinds of yoga emerging in the time of the epics. I will come back to this in chapter 4.

### Yoking

White claims that before the epic period, which he states to be ca 200BC – 400CE (White, 2009, p. 60), the root *yuj* and its derivate yoga had two specific meaning: “the yoking of a wheeled conveyance to a draft animal and, by extension, the linkage between a visionary thinker’s mind or consciousness to some transcendent object” (White, 2009, p. 60) In both cases the yoking enabled travels outwards or upwards. Closely tied to the concept of yoking in the first meaning is the idea of traveling to the sun. This was since in the Vedas, where “the afterlife was attained by “traveling to or through the sun on a ritually constructed chariot”. (White, 2009, p. 61) The chariot, or sometimes boat, was the sacrifice itself, and the patron of the sacrifice was yoked to it, every timed he sacrificed. This enabled him (his initiation body that is, while his mundane body stayed behind) to ascend up to the heavenly world, its gate being the disk of the sun, before descending to this world again once the sacrifice was over. This was repeated daily, so that when he died, the sacrifice of his cremated body would be the chariot that carried him to heaven where he would now stay permanently. In addition to the patron being yoked to the sacrifice, (White, 2009, p.61f) White notes that “the most common rigvedic meaning of the verb \*yuj [...] was “to yoke one’s self to a chariot” and by extension, “to prepare for battle.”” (White, 2009, p. 63) The yoga was here the rig of the warrior who went to, or prepared for war. In later texts the chariot of the warrior could take on the same meaning of piercing the disk of the sun as the chariot of sacrifice for the patron. This is seen in the epics, where there are several accounts of warrior dying on the battlefield, who are then yoked to the sacrifice of their own death, which enables them to pierce the disk of the sun and enter the realms of the gods. The

chariot is sometimes also said to be the sun's rays, which descend and the warrior is yoked to. (White, 2009, p. 67)

The other meaning points to the practice of Vedic priest who were said to yoke their mind to poetic inspiration, which allowed them to join the world of sacrifice to the heavenly realm they were trying to reach through it. (White, 2009, p. 63) In this way they linked the human and divine worlds, and were able to undertake “visionary expeditions to the furthest reaches of the imaginable universe” during the sacrifice. (White, 2009, p. 63)

### Sāṃkhya

The philosophical system of yoga is related to the Sāṃkhya school, and draws on Sāṃkhya ideas and terminology, also when referring to supernatural powers. I will therefore give a short introduction on Sāṃkhya in this chapter, because it will be necessary for understanding some of the points made in later chapters. This especially applies to chapter 4, because Malinar explains how a Sāṃkhya framework enables explanation for why yoga powers are deemed necessary for attaining liberation. To give this short introduction I will rely on the entry on ‘Sāṃkhya’ in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism* written by Jacobsen.

Jacobsen describes Sāṃkhya as a “system of religious thought [...] which traces its origin to the sage Kapila” (Jacobsen, 2011, p. 685). The Sāṃkhya became an organized system of religious thought in the first centuries CE, but its constituting terminology and ideas go back several hundred years before. Jacobsen stresses the plurality of various Sāṃkhya traditions with “more or less parallel doctrines” both before and after the creation of the Sāṃkhya *darśana*, and of the fact that some Sāṃkhya traditions were non-philosophical but theological and/or mythological. Sāṃkhya as a *darśana* (one of six traditional *philosophical* schools of Indian thought) was based on the *Śaṣṭitantra* (100-200 CE), this was however lost, so Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā* (350-400) and its commentaries, is considered the schools foundational text (Jacobsen, 2011, p. 685). Below I give a short presentation of the principles that according to the Sāṃkhya view constitute both the persons and the cosmos, as listed in classical Sāṃkhya *darśana* as presented by Jacobsen.

The Sāṃkhya way of categorizing the world, with or without the specific Sāṃkhya terminology, has according to Jacobsen had an enormous impact on Indian philosophy and theology (Jacobsen, 2011, p. 688).

### Principles of reality

Sāṃkhya is a philosophy of dualism and explains the existence and workings of the human self and its way to liberation, in addition to the creation and ontological status of cosmos. According to the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* the cosmos and everything in it consists of 25 different *tattvas* (principle). The first *tattva*, and one of two ultimate principles, is *puruṣa*, the self, both of the universe, and of each individual. *Puruṣa* is pure consciousness, and is characterized as inactive, irreducible, without parts, eternal, independent, uncaused, unable of creation, (the subject). Its counterpart is the second *tattva*, *prakṛti*, sometimes also referred to as *pradhāna*. *Prakṛti* is the material source of everything in the universe, and is active, nonconscious, productive, the object. Like *puruṣa*, it is an ultimate principle/matter and is therefore eternal, uncaused, independent and irreducible. Another important difference between the two principles is that there is only one *prakṛti* which is the cause of everything material, while there are multiple *puruṣas*, with each being's self consisting of a separate *puruṣa*. *Prakṛti* possesses three *guṇas* 'qualities', *sattva* *rajas* and *tamas*, which Jacobsen describes as "lightweight and illuminating (*sattva*), stimulating and moving (*rajas*), and heavy and enveloping (*tamas*)" (Jacobsen, 2011, p. 692). Since *prakṛti* is the source of everything material, all things (except *puruṣa*) consist of these three *guṇas*, indeed it is the ratio of the three properties who lead to infinite variation. The remaining 23 *tattvas* are products of *prakṛti*, and are: *buddhi* (intellect), *ahaṃkāra* (ego), *manas* (mind), 5 *buddhīndriyas* (sense capacities), 5 *karmendriyas* (action capacities), 5 *tanmātras* (subtle material principles) and 5 *mahābhūtas* (gross elements). Furthermore when talking about *prakṛti* one has to distinguish between its *avyakta* (unmanifest) form, which is the 24<sup>th</sup> principle, and its *vyakta* (manifest) form, which is *prakṛti* as constituting the remaining 23 *tattvas* (Jacobsen, 2011, p. 691).

Not only the cosmos, but also every human consists of the 25 *tattvas*. Each human possesses an individual *puruṣa*, which is that persons self, or consciousness. To end the suffering of endless rebirths, the *saṃsāra* is the goal of all the Sāṃkhya traditions, and this

is attained through discriminate knowledge of the different *tattvas*. Once the mind understands that the *puruṣa*, which is the self and the consciousness is not identical to the subtle body and the gross body, the *puruṣa*, who is only bound to *saṃsāra* through its association with *prakṛti*, will be liberated.

According to Jacobsen other non-philosophical Sāṃkhya traditions had similar enumerations of *tattvas*, however in some of them the number of *tattvas* are different. The order of enumeration is also different. The *tattvas* enlisted in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* begin with *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* as *tattva* one and two, while in non-philosophical Sāṃkhya the enumeration starts with the earth *mahābhūta* as the first *tattva* and ends with *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* as the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> *tattva*. Jacobsen explains the reason for this being that Sāṃkhya traditions were mainly ways of attaining *mokṣa* through a realization of ever ‘higher’ constituents of being, were the practitioner worked himself up from the first *tattva* until the 25<sup>th</sup> and only *puruṣa* remained. This was then turned around in classical Sāṃkhya, and Jacobsen theorizes this was because of the emphasis on cosmogony in Indian philosophy in general at that time (Jacobsen, 2011, p. 686). Similar for all Sāṃkhya traditions is idea of the dualistic nature between consciousness and matter, and that one has to understand this difference to attain salvation. In early Sāṃkhya traditions, also in some parts of the *Mahābhārata*, this difference is not always described in the terms of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, but still refers to the view that

the self is different from the body-and-mind complex, which humans usually identify as themselves, that ignorance of this difference is the cause of suffering, and that the realization of the fundamental difference of self and matter is the salvific knowledge (Jacobsen, 2011, p. 689).

This view is also found in the *Mahābhārata*, and will more closely described in chapter 4. For now it suffices to highlight that on *Sāṃkhya* found in the *Mahābhārata* Jacobsen states that it “is not always a system of philosophy, but seems more to refer to a way of thinking about the world by the means of certain concepts and a particular method for the sake of salvific liberation”, and that both monistic, dualist and theistic interpretations are found in the *Mahābhārata* (Jacobsen, 2011, p. 685). In Chapter 4 I will discuss how these different interpretations of the Sāṃkhya framework contribute to a different status to supernatural power particularly in relation to liberation.

Jacobsen also notes the shared origins of the Sāṃkhya and Yoga *darśanas*, and claims that “ the Yoga system is also a part of Sāṃkhya pluralism” (Jacobsen, 2011, p. 687). By Yoga system he here means the Yoga *darśana*, the systematic school of Yoga founded on Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra* and *Vyāsabhāṣya* (Vyāsa’s commentary on it), systematized by Vindhyavāsin (350-400) into the *Yogaśāstra*. Jacobsen claims this school, often known as Patañjala Yoga, originated as a Sāṃkhya school of thought, and only became a separate *darśana* several hundred years later.

## Bhakti

*Bhakti* is a concept, also sometimes referred to as a Hindu tradition, which will be relevant for the discussion in chapter 4 and chapter 6. Here, I will give a short presentation on the concept its and history, based on Professor at the Department of Religions at the University of Florida, Vasudha Narayan’s entrance “Bhakti” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism*. Narayan translates *bhakti* as devotion, and claims that it “has probably been the most visible, palpable part of the Hindu traditions in the last two millennia” (Narayanan, 2010, p. 710). She describes it as the practice of worshipping a deity, teacher or other devotees, often with song and dance. This devotional worship is conducted both in private and public places, like the home or the temple. There is a rich literature of bhakti poetry, songs and prose texts, and the “Epic and puranic stories in all Indian languages are part of the *bhakti* literature” (Narayanan, 2010, p. 710). *Bhakti* can take many forms, it can be exclaimed through mental or physical worship, disciplined or excessively emotional, but it “is almost always used in a religious sense and involves an acceptance of the supremacy of the object of worship” (Narayanan, 2010 p. 710). Narayan exclaims that many Hindus see *bhakti* as being a tradition of reverent worship and devotion to the deity starting already in the Vedic period, with the Vedic hymns and sacrificial rites, but that it is from the time of the Epics the “articulation of the mental, intellectual, and emotional intensity of devotion is appreciably evident” (Narayanan, 2010, p. 710). In this period *bhakti* becomes an important concept also in philosophical speculation, as is evident e.g. in the *Bhagavadgītā*. The general idea in *bhakti* traditions is that *mokṣa* is not realized through the individuals own effort, like in other traditions of the time whether it be through ascetic practices, meditation or knowledge, but through divine grace. The *bhakta* should surrender completely to the

deity, which in turn grants him or her deliverance from the *saṃsāra*, indifferent of the individual's karma. *Mokṣa* in the *bhakti* traditions is also often thought of as being in the deity's presence, or become one with the deity. Another difference with other traditions at the time, was that, at least in theory, everyone could receive the divine grace for their devotion, in spite of gender and caste. This meant that *bhakti* offered a way to salvation also to women and low caste members, unlike most other traditions, which only saw salvation as obtainable for high caste men. (Narayanan, 2010, p. 711)

An important ritual context for *bhakti* is the *pūjā* in temples and homes, which emerged in its current form throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium CE, along with devotional songs and poetry. The composers of these became known as poet-saints, and the earliest important groups of these were the *Ālvārs* which sang Viṣṇu's praise, and the *Nāyanārs* who were devoted to Śiva (Narayanan, 2010, p. 713). This was the beginning of a vast tradition of devotional songs and poetry, which were expressed through dance and music, being composed by *bhakti* devotees in their vernacular languages. Narayan explains how the conventional narrative depicts a *bhakti* movement with poet-saints as the leading figures, as beginning in the south, and then sweeping all over India. The *Ālvārs* and the *Nāyanārs* composed in Tamil and lived in the 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century CE, while the famous *bhakti* poets from further north in India lived in the 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century. Narayan however explains that the idea that *bhakti* emerged in the South and then was brought to the north through the travels and veneration of different poet-saints is only a partial picture, there are also examples of devotion to deities like Rāma and Kṛṣṇa who began in the north and then spread southwards (Narayanan, 2010, p. 712).

## Tantra

Gavin Flood, Professor of Hindu Studies and Comparative Religion gives a short introduction to the topic of Tantrism in the monography *The tantric body* (2006). In this book Flood argues that the specific tantric ritual is the internalizing of the tradition through an inscription of the tantric text onto the body (Flood, 2006, p.100), and he uses the description of the *bhūtaśuddhi* 'purification of the elements' ritual from the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* for his analysis. This is one of the most important texts in the Pañcarātra

tradition, and the same text Marion Rastelli uses for her discussion of the attainment of supernatural powers by the *sādhaka* which will be discussed in chapter 5.

He explains that the “term ‘tantric tradition’ refers to those religions [...] that claimed to develop from textual sources referring to themselves as ‘tantras’, regarded as revelation, the word of God, by their followers” (Flood, 2006, p. 8). These traditions arose in Jainism, Hinduism and Buddhism during the first centuries CE. The Hindu tantras were seen revealed by either Viṣṇu, Śiva, Devī (the Goddess) or Sūryā, and their respective traditions called Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Śākta and Saura. Flood claims that these stood in opposition to the orthodox Brahmanism, as they either rejected or claimed to be superior to the revelation of the Vedas. The followers of the orthodox Brahmanism are sometimes referred to as *vaidika*, while the followers of tantric traditions are named *tāntrika*. This distinction however, Flood claims, is not a definite one, since some of the former observe tantric rites, and some late Vedic texts being “clearly tantric in character” (Flood, 2006, p. 8). Flood points out that defining tantrism is difficult, but that a salient feature is the practitioners quest for power. This could be both the power to transcend the world, or to rule over it, i.e. to attain both *bubhukṣu* and *mumukṣu*. He further claims that this is usually done by a divinization of the body through ritual. David White, who claims that “Tantra has been the predominant religious paradigm, for over a millennium, of the great majority of the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent” (White, 2003, p. 3), lists ritual techniques of *mantras*, possession and sacrificial offerings, for the purpose of controlling various beings as being essential tantric practices. He further distinguishes between “soft core” and “hard core” tantric traditions (White, 2003, p. 13). The former consists of “mainstream” practices like using *maṇḍalas* ‘diagrams’, *mantras* and *mūdras* ‘handsigns’ etc. in a ritual practice to appease a deity or other supernatural being, and corresponds to the view of tantrism presented above by Flood, and the Pāñcarātra, at least as it is presented in the *Jayākhyasamhitā* is an example of such a “soft core” tradition. The characteristic feature that is emphasized in “hard core” tantrism, and in contrast to the features listed above is specific for only tantric traditions are sexualized ritual practices centered around sexual fluids as a divine power substance. The Nāth tradition described in chapter 6 is a reformed version of one of these hard-core traditions.

## Chapter 3: Discourse theory and analysis

### Introduction

This chapter is about the theory and method I will use to discuss supernatural powers in the upcoming chapters. Since this thesis is about how ideas about supernatural power are related to other aspects of Indian culture, I have chosen to use discourse analysis as both method and theory. The premise of discourse analysis is to study how the way reality is represented also shapes and changes it (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 9), therefore it gives access to tools that are useful for my analysis. Since there is no systematic method of discourse analysis developed specifically for the study of religions, it is necessary to find a theory and method that gives access to the specific field of study in a meaningful way (Hjelm, 2014, (2011), p. 134f). I do not have access to individual utterances, or even original texts, only translations and other academics interpretations of the meaning of these original texts, and can therefore not use theories or method that focus on the details of conversation or text interpretation. I have chosen to use theories that focus on the creation and representation of meaning and how it can change society on a more general and abstract level. With inspiration from historian of Religion Eva Hellman<sup>3</sup>, I am going to use Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe's discourse theory, and Norman Fairclough's discourse analysis. Before I presents those, I will give a general introduction of discourse analysis as described in Marianna Winther Jørgensen and Louise Phillips introductory book *Diskurs analyse som teori og metode* (1999), who also discuss both theories mentioned at length. Lastly, I will explain how I plan to use some of the terms from these theories as tools in my analysis of supernatural powers in discourses of power.

### Discourse analysis

Jørgensen & Phillips have written their introductory book with the purpose of giving readers access to “det store tværfaglige felt, som diskursanalysen i de sidste tiår har

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<sup>3</sup> In the book *Vad är religion* (2011) Eva Hellman uses parts of Laclau & Mouffe's and Fairclough's theories of discourse to analyze the way the category of religion has been shaped and created throughout the history of European scholarship and academics.



utviklet seg til”<sup>4</sup> (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 7). They stress the fact that the term “discourse” is often either used as a rather vague general term for the idea that language is structured in different patterns, or is precisely but variously defined in different theories according to what one wants to study. They therefore give a presentation of three different varieties of discourse analysis. These all share the assumption that the way we talk about the world shapes our understanding of it, in other words: that discourse not only represents but also creates and changes reality. The three different views on discourse they present are Laclau & Mouffe’s discourse theory, critical discourse analysis, mainly by Norman Fairclough, and discourse psychology (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 9). These theories all aim “at udforske og kortlægge magtrelationer I samfundet”<sup>5</sup> and are therefore viable tools to use to try to answer the research questions of this thesis. The discourse psychology they present deals with how individuals draw on different discourses strategically in different situations, and will not be used in this paper. Both Laclau & Mouffe’s and Fairclough’s theories however give useful tools and insights, and, as Jørgensen & Phillips suggests, I will use both of them to create a method for my project (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 16).

Jørgensen & Phillips give some general premises for all the perspectives on discourse analysis they present. Firstly, discourse analysis has to be seen as both a theory and a method. They present it as a “package deal” with certain theoretical premises about language, and how it constructs society, and certain theoretical models and methodological guidelines for how to gain access to the field of study (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p.12). The discourse analyses they present relay on certain presumptions from the field of social constructivism. As mentioned earlier, they view reality not as something external and objective that humans can then sense, but as “et product af vore måder at kategorisere verden på”<sup>6</sup> (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 13) This also means that the ways people understand the world are always culturally and historically bound, and is shaped through social interactions. Further, this socially constructed worldview leads to concrete actions (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 14). In addition, the perspectives on discourse analysis Winther Jørgensen & Phillips present all share the idea

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<sup>4</sup> “the large interdisciplinary field, which discourse analysis has develop into over the last decades” In this thesis I am referring to this one Danish and several German works. When I site them I will give the English translation in footnotes, and all translations are my own.

<sup>5</sup> “studying and mapping power relations in society”.

<sup>6</sup> “a product of our ways of categorizing the world”.

from language philosophy that we always access reality through language, and that we only have access to the “external” material world through discourse. In other words, also the “external” world, or at least our understanding of it, relies on how it is given meaning through language. (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 16)

### The discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe

The main theoretical and methodic framework I will use is found in Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe’s book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy – Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (1985). Laclau & Mouffe construe a theory of discourse dealing particularly with conflict, power-relations between discourses, and hegemony, by deconstructing earlier Marxist and structuralist theories. Their theory is devised with contemporary politics in mind, but my claim is that it works in any scenario where one is trying to grasp the importance of certain symbols or semantic clusters in the conflict of discourses. It focuses on the ways in which changing the meaning of, or configurations of, key points of a discourse, can change, subvert, or establish a new discourse. Thus it gives me tools to examine how changing the meaning or the associations of semantic field of supernatural power can change discourses and power relations. The theory is also situated at a more abstract level, and never specifically deals with discourse as one specific text or conversation, but treats it as process of fixation and subversion of meaning in general. The theory has some lacking points however, which I will come back to, so on the suggestion of Jørgensen & Phillips, I will draw on some of Fairclough’s discourse analysis to try to bridge the gaps.

The base for all of Laclau & Mouffe’s discourse theory, is that every part of society is “understood as a weave of meaning making processes” (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999 p. 35). There are no non-discursive practices because “every object is constituted as an object of discourse” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 107). The discursive formations are made up of objects in a system of differential positions, where the objects are given meaning through their relative positions to each other. These objects can be institutions, organization etc., in other words, every aspect of society gets its meaning by being part of a structure of relative positions. A concrete discourse occurs when *elements*, which can

have a variety of meaning, are given a specific meaning in a specific context, through relating them to each other in specific ways. This process they call *articulation*: “we will call articulation any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call *discourse*” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 105). The elements gain meaning through the process of articulation, which relates them to other elements in such a way that they become a structured totality, and by this process of articulation, the elements become *moments* of the discourse. The moments are elements that have their meaning fixed through the process of articulation, which locks all the elements in place in one particular discourse. However, Laclau & Mouffe already stated that meaning is never fixed, so one specific discourse is also never fixed. This is because of something they call *overdetermination*. This key concept they take from Althusser, which again borrowed it from the disciplines of linguistics and psychoanalysis (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 97). The idea of overdetermination relies on linguistic theories who proclaim that signs get their meaning through being related to other signs. Because there is an abundance of signs one particular sign can be related to, there is always the possibility to give signs a new meaning. Since society according to Laclau & Mouffe’s consist of elements in the process of meaning making, the concept also applies to these elements, and thereby to all of society. This means that the fixation of elements into moments through articulation is never fully possible, “because the presence of some [objects] in the others hinders the suturing of the identity of any of them” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 104). In other words it is never possible for an element to have only one specific meaning, because it’s meaning will always be determined by what it is related to. There will always be “a ‘surplus of meaning’ which subverts it” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 111) in every element, in other words, it is overdetermined. This overdetermination comes about because every discursive practice is situated in the field of discursivity. The field of discursivity is the field of all possible meanings an element could have, which are excluded when they are articulated as moments in a discourse (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 37). The field of discursivity is in other words a field of multiple practices of articulation, which all try to fixate the meaning of elements, and thereby simultaneously subvert their meaning (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 111). In the process where different discourses try to establish themselves in the field of discursivity there are some privileged signs which Laclau and

Mouffe call *nodal points*. Nodal points are points of meaning which construct the center of a discourse, by being the moment that all other moments are related to. They constitute partially fixed points in the field of discursivity, because different discourses constitute them “as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 112). There is a second reason why meaning is never fully fixed. The articulation from elements into fully fixed moments is never possible because in the field of discursivity, every element is given meaning through its relations to other elements. Because elements never get their meaning in and of themselves, there will always be the meaning of the ‘Other’, which in turn can subvert it (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 125). This implies that moments, at least partially, get their meaning through a relation to everything they are not. This negation is the second reason that moments in a discourse, and therefore the discourse as such, can never be fully fixed: the meaning of the moments emerges from them being constituted against something outside of the discourse. This limit of a discourse to ever establish fully fixed moments without relating them to something external to itself, is captured by Laclau & Mouffe’s term *antagonism*, which is “the ‘experience’ of the limit of all objectivity” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 122). Antagonism is in their theory closely tied to the idea of relations of equivalence, and chains of equivalence. In a chain of equivalence, differential moments are identified with each other as being different that something else. The example Laclau & Mouffe give is of the colonizer: The colonizers difference in dress, language, habit etc. each stand in a differential position to the same elements of the colonized, and they become a chain of equivalence in all being signs of the colonizer. This way they lose their differential relations to each other – dress, language and habits all become a sign of being “not colonized”, in other words they get their meaning through a negation, and this is exactly what an antagonism is (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 127-130). This leads to Laclau & Mouffe’s definition of hegemony. For there to be a hegemonic practice, which is a certain sort of articulatory practice, there needs to be an antagonism between two opposing forces, with unstable frontiers between them. The process of hegemonization is the process wherein there is an articulation of elements across several discursive formations, in such a way that the discourse is “expelling outside itself any surplus of meaning subverting it”. (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 137) As already explained, moments in a discourse can never be totally fixed, but hegemony is successful when the discursive formation, and the

opposing force which it is in an antagonistic relation to, take the fixed moment as a given. In Winter Jørgensen and Phillips words: “Den hegemoniske interventionen er lykkedes, hvis én diskurs igen alene dominerer dér, hvor der før var konflikt, og antagonismen dermed er opløst”<sup>7</sup> (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 61).

Laclau & Mouffe’s theory has been criticized for the fact that they claim everything is discourse, and this is a criticism I agree with. I will however use their ideas and terms about signs getting their meaning through being set in differential positions to each other, and some of their other ideas about meaning making, like nodal points, articulation, overdetermination, antagonism and hegemony. The question I still need to answer then, is how to change the meaning of signs, which are what I have access to through the articles on Sanskrit text I will be analyzing, can be part of, and shape power relations. To answer this, I will turn to Norman Fairclough’s discourse theory.

#### Fairclough’s theory and method of discourse

Norman Fairclough’s theory of and method for discourse analysis is found in the book *Discourse and Social Change* (1992). In the context of this thesis the most important parts of his theory are the theory of how discursive change can lead to change in relations of power, and the concept of interdiscursivity. These will be explained after I have given a general outline of the theory. Fairclough’s concept of discourse is informed both by linguistic discourse theory, and discourse theory from the social sciences, especially of Michel Foucault. He combines insights from both fields to create a theory of discourse, with emphasis on how discursive change relates to social and cultural change, and a method for discourse analysis to use on texts. He does this by developing a framework for discourse analysis with three dimensions; discourse as text, discursive practice and social practice. For the first dimension he uses Halliday’s definition of text, according to which text is every instance of spoken or written language, meaning discourse is always “manifested in linguistic form” (Fairclough, 1992 p. 71). The second dimension focuses on discursive practice, meaning the production, distribution and consumption of text. Discursive practice as social practice is the last dimension; discursive practice is always social, although there

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<sup>7</sup> “The hegemonic intervention is successful, if one discourse once more dominates, where there earlier was a conflict, and thereby dissolving the antagonism”.

are also social practices which are not discursive. This makes his theory and method suitable for analyzing which impact texts have on society and how they can contribute to social change.

The mediated nature of my sources implies that I can only draw an exploratory picture of the first layer of analysis. The second dimension will be discussed by putting the Sanskrit texts into context and asking, who wrote them, for which purpose, and what kind of impact the texts have had in the traditions they have been used. My analysis focuses on how ideas about supernatural powers were used in power conflicts, and for that task, insight gained from Laclau & Mouffe's theory give concrete tools for analyzing how ideas about supernatural powers were part of the conflict in the text, while the framework of Fairclough third dimension, shows how discourse works as a social practice, and therefore, how it can change social practices, culture and power relations.

#### Fairclough's definition of discourse

Fairclough proposes to use the term discourse to describe language as a form of social practice, and in this way both a way to act on the world and other people, and a mode of representation. He postulates a "dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure" where discourse constitutes and constructs social structure, while at the same time being shaped and constrained by it (Fairclough, 1992 p. 64). Discourse does this by constructing social identities, social relations between people, and systems of knowledge and belief. These three aspects correspond to what he calls the 'identity', 'relational' and 'ideational functions of language'. Together they form society, and through conventional and creative discursive practice, society can be reproduced or transformed (Fairclough, 1992 p. 63f).

#### Orders of discourse

Fairclough follows French discourse analysts in claiming discursive events (any instance of discourse) rely on interdiscourse, rather than individual codes or conventions. "Interdiscourse is [...] the structural entity which underlies discursive events, rather than the individual formation or code" (Fairclough, 1992 p. 68). This means that discursive

events are formed based on configurations of interdependent elements, e.g. by combining elements from two genres. This complexity also means that discursive events are not predictable, as is supposed when using the structuralist view where the discursive event is just an instantiation of the underlying codes and conventions. Fairclough uses Foucault's term 'order of discourse' for this configuration of interdependent elements (codes or formations). He assumes that the relation between different elements in an order of discourse need not be complementary, but can also be contradictory. The character of the relations depends on social circumstances; boundaries between elements might seem complimentary or non-contradictory in some instances, but "become a focus of contestation and struggle, and the subject positions and the discursive practices associated with them might be experienced as contradictory" (Fairclough, 1992 p. 69). This not only applies to boundaries between elements of one order of discourse (e.g. classroom behavior and school yard behavior) but also between different orders of discourse (e.g. school and home). Contradictory relations might lead to a struggle for redefining boundaries or relations and/or extending properties between elements or orders of discourse, and such to a rearticulation of elements in an order of discourse or relations between orders of discourse in a society. The redrawing of boundaries can also constitute new elements (Fairclough, 1992 p. 70). In this way the articulation and rearticulation of discursive elements can be a factor in social change.

Fairclough's concept of "order of discourse" is not only a viable theoretical framework for how discursive practice can change society, but can also be used as an analytical category in combination with some of the terms from Laclau & Mouffe's theory. Winter-Jørgensen & Phillips point out the shortcomings of the term "field of discursivity", which Laclau & Mouffe use for all the meanings of an element that are excluded when they are articulated in a discourse. It is unclear however, if this means all the meanings an elements could theoretically have, or all the meanings that are ascribed to it by opposing discourses. They therefore suggest using Laclau & Mouffe's term "field of discursivity" for the first instance, and Fairclough's term "Order of discourse" for the second one, something I will do in the my analyses (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 37f).

### Discursive change as power struggles

As explained above, social change might occur through change of discursive elements which again change the order of discourse and with it identities and social realities which are constituted by discourse. This change can come about, or effect changes in power relations between different groups, especially if the discourse is politically or ideologically invested. Fairclough defines ideologies as constructions of reality built into discursive practices, which “contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination” (Fairclough, 1992 p. 87). Changing this type of ‘ideologically invested’ discursive practices can be a part of a restructuring of power relations, and this is often the case in instances where contradictory elements are found. Ideology can be part of codes and conventions which structure society, and through it discursive practice, but also of discursive practices who sustain or change the same structure. In other words, both social structure and discursive events can be ideologically invested through language. The ideological investment is most successful when naturalized, when the codes and conventions are an established part of social structures (Fairclough, 1992 p. 87-89). Since ideology is a part of shaping relations of power, ideologically invested discursive practice is also political. “Discourse as a political practice establishes, sustains and changes power relations, and the collective entities [...] between which power relations obtain” (Fairclough, 1992 s. 67). By naturalizing ideologically invested practices and invents, one also naturalizes power relations and make them more stable. Conversely, by changing or ‘reinvesting’ ideologically discursive events or structures power relations are altered. This way discourse becomes a site of power struggles.

### Interdiscursivity

Fairclough bases his concept of interdiscursivity on Kristeva’s concept of intertextuality. Intertextuality describes how a text is always written and understood in the context of earlier, contemporary and later (by anticipation) texts, by describing, opposing, incorporating, modifying etc. them. Fairclough describes how French discourse analysts distinguish between ‘manifest’ and ‘constitutive’ intertextuality: Manifest intertextuality is when a text, explicitly or implicitly refers directly to another text, while constitutive intertextuality is how the text is shaped by discursive conventions (Fairclough, 1992 p.



104). Fairclough chooses, when distinguishing between the two types of intertextuality, to call the constitutive intertextuality ‘interdiscursivity’, and it is this term and concept I will use in my analysis. What is important for my analysis is that through drawing on different discursive conventions a text can be shaped by various elements or orders of discourses. If these elements or orders of discourse are in a contradictory relation, it leads to a text with contradictory or ambivalent meaning. In other words, a text can become a part of a power struggle if being shaped by politically invested discourse conventions.

## Method

In this section, I will explain which of the terms and insights gained from the two theories presented above I will use as the basis for the analyses in the next chapters. The theoretical framework on how changing discourse can bring about concrete changes in society is mainly based on Fairclough’s theory presented above, and I will come back to it in chapter 7.

## Terms from Laclau & Mouffe

Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory is primarily exactly that, a theory and not a method. Winther Jørgensen & Phillips therefore give some suggestion of how to use insight gained from said theory as tools for use in a concrete discourse analysis (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 63), some of which I will use. The notion of discourses as processes of articulation that try to fix a meaning by using nodal points as centers of meaning, seem useful. Winther Jørgensen & Phillips present Laclau’s later term of “floating signifiers” together with the idea of using nodal points for analysis. Floating signifiers are “elementer, der i særlig høj grad er åbne for forskellige betydningstilskrivninger”<sup>8</sup> (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 39). Nodal points are a type of floating signifiers; they serve as fixing points for a large variety of other elements, and are therefore easy to ascribe new meanings through relations to new elements. Here Winther Jørgensen & Phillips introduce another term coined by Lacan, which Laclau & Mouffe also reference in their theory (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 112). The nodal point serves as the fixing point of a “signifying chain”. The different elements in the signifying chain establish the meaning of the nodal point, but

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<sup>8</sup> “elements, which to a particularly high degree are open for different ascriptions of meaning”.

at the same time it delimits the meanings possible for the elements in it. To give an example, a nodal point in a discursive field about healthy living is “eating healthy”. This nodal point is a floating signifier, because only on itself, it does not have meaning. Only when put into a signifying chain with other elements, like low fat, low carb, organic food etc. does it get its meaning. Winther Jørgensen & Phillips also suggest using the terms of antagonism and hegemony to analyze conflicts. “Antagonisme oppstår, når forskjellige identiteter gensidigt forhindrer hinanden”<sup>9</sup> (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p. 60). They therefore suggest studying how different perceptions of reality can become antagonistic in ascribing different meaning to the same elements, how the ‘Other’ is constructed as a response to an antagonism, and how and if there are hegemonic intervention which try to lock the elements into certain positions across the field of antagonism. (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999, p.64). All these different ways elements can be given meaning, and discourses can be constructed or changed, is something I will keep in mind when studying the articles who are my primary source material. E.g., I can try to ascertain if supernatural powers are nodal points in the discourses I am studying, if not,, what are the nodal points they are related to, how do those nodal points change their meaning when they are related to new elements, which other discourses are drawn into the order of discourse to implement an hegemonic intervention etc. In addition to these terms from Laclau & Mouffe, I will also use the concepts of interdiscursivity and wording from Fairclough.

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<sup>9</sup> “Antagonism occurs, when different identities mutually prevent each other”.

## Chapter 4: Yoga Powers in the *Mahābhārata*

### Introduction

In this chapter, I am going to present use Malinar’s work on yoga powers in the *Mahābhārata*. She argues that yoga powers were an integral part of the ongoing discussion in the same work of how liberation works, and what liberation is. I will first present the four parts of the text she discusses, including her arguments and views about what they say on the relation between yoga powers and liberation. Then follows a description of some different conceptualizations of liberation found in the text Malinar discusses. In the last part of the chapter I will discuss the presented material in accordance with the method of discourse analysis presented in chapter 3.

Angelika Malinar, Indologist with a special focus on *Sāṃkhya*, yoga powers, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhagavadgītā* has made the argument that yoga powers are fundamental to the understanding of liberation in certain parts of the *Mahābhārata*. In the article “Yoga Powers in the *Mahābhārata*” (2012) she discusses different depictions of yoga powers in some sections of the *Mahābhārata*. She has the same understanding of the term yoga powers as Jacobsen (see chapter one); she describes them as “extraordinary activities” [...] which indicate successful yoga practice” (Malinar, 2012, p. 33) Furthermore she notes that there are numerous mentions of different types of beings who wield ‘yogic powers’ and they are “treated by the epic’s composers as ‘common knowledge’ on the part of the audience” (Malinar, 2012 p. 33). The supernatural powers gained through yoga practice are described by various terms like *bala*, *aiśvarya*, *vibhūti*, *vīrya*, *prabhāva* and *yoga*. Her article looks at different parts of the *Mahābhārata* that deal with the exposition of these types of power in relation to yoga practice to reach liberation. The purpose of her article is to show that the depictions of yoga powers are not “remnants of ‘archaic magical thinking’ ”, but, at least in the part of the text here described, were an integral part of the exposition on how liberation was achievable through yogic practice (Malinar, 2012 p. 34). The parts of the text she discusses is the story about Śuka, two didactic chapters on yoga (chapters 12.289 and 12.228) and the treatment of yoga in the *Bhagavadgītā*. These sections show a differing view on how yoga powers were acquired,

and for what, if at all, they should be used. Malinar ascribes this to the emergence of the theistic Hindu traditions and the philosophical system of Yoga and Sāṃkhya in the time of the *Mahābhārata* was written. These sought to give a logical/metaphysical explanation for the yoga powers and incorporated them into their soteriology. In the last part of the chapter I want to show that it is possible, on the background of Malinar's discussion, to identify the yoga powers as being part of a discourse about the right means to salvation, and how salvation works.

### The *Mahābhārata*

The *Mahābhārata* is an Indian epic, originally a collection of bardic poems about heroic feats, which later incorporated other types of texts, like philosophical and theological expositions and didactic parts. The epic is reckoned as being assembled between the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE – 4<sup>th</sup> century CE. The bardic poems were originally composed for use in the royal courts of the Kṣatriyas and transmitted orally, but were written down by Brahmins around the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. The frame story of the book is about two branches of a royal family, the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas, and their battle for the Kuru kingdom. The most known part of the epic, the *Bhagavadgītā*, depicts the Pāṇḍavas' foremost warrior, Arjuna and his charioteer, who is Kṛṣṇa in disguise, standing on the field of battle right before it begins. At this moment Arjuna has doubts about participating in the war. Kṛṣṇa reveals himself to Arjuna, and they have a long conversation about dharma, how to live life the right way, and the best ways to achieve salvation. In short, Kṛṣṇa shows himself to be the supreme deity, ruler and creator of cosmos, and states that the best way to achieve liberation is performing your duties according to *varṇāśramadharmā* as worship to Kṛṣṇa, even though he does not disclaim that other methods also have a possibility of leading to salvation. The *Bhagavadgītā* ends with Arjuna appeased that it is his duty to go to war with his cousins, and that it therefore will have no karmic repercussions for him (Brockington, 2005 p. 116f).

### A note on primary sources

Finding an English translation of the *Bhagavadgītā* was no problem and I will use the translation by Gavin Flood and Charles Martin *The Bhagavad Gita* (2012). When trying to find a translated version of book 12 of the *Mahābhārata* however, proved to be more problematic. There have been recent publications of the translated version of the *Mahābhārata*, most notably University of Chicago Press' series *The Mahābhārata* (1973) begun by Jan van Buitenen, and the translations by various scholars in the Clay Sanskrit Library series *Mahābhārata* published by New York University Press and begun in 2005. None of these however, have published part two of book 12 of the *Mahābhārata*, which is where Malinar gets the rest of her material. The only translated version of this part accessible to me is the translation by Kesari Mohan Ganguli (under the name of P. C. Roy) published 1883-96 in Calcutta by Bhārata Press. This is a translation of the full work, and is easily accessible as an open source file on the Internet. Van Buitenen notes that this was the latest full English translation when he started his work (Buitenen, 1973, p. xxxvi). He further comments that "The reader [...] may protest many renderings, but still recognize that the attempt was a scholarly one. I have consulted it often" (Buitenen, 1973, p. xxxvii). I understand this to mean that there are faults in it, but not so many as to make it worthless, so I have decided to use it, with caution. In addition to being a possibly faulty translation, Ganguli's version is also based on a different recension of manuscripts than Malinar uses; Ganguli's translation being based on the Bombay edition from 1863, while Malinar uses the critical edition by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute at Poona completed in 1970 (Buitenen, 1973, s. xxxf) Since I cannot know how correct this rendering is, and how different it is from the critical edition, this chapter is mostly based on Malinar's understanding of the different instances in the *Mahābhārata*, while I have consulted the translation of Ganguli as much as possible.

### The story of Śuka

Malinar explains that the story about the miraculously born sage Śuka and his quest to attain liberation is a well-studied story of the *Mahābhārata*. Her aim however, is to shine a light on the role of Śuka's yoga powers in attaining this goal, which she states have been given little notice to by earlier scholars. The story begins when the epic's supposed

composer Vyāsa, wishing for a son with extraordinary capabilities, having “the puissance of Fire and Earth an Water and Wind and Space” (Roy, 1891, p. 693) (i. e. mastering all the elements) practices *tapas* (austerities), and Śiva grants him his wish.<sup>10</sup> Vyāsa, having seen a beautiful *apsarā* (a heavenly female being in Indian tradition) spills his seed on the sticks he is using to light is fire, and “it was thus that that great ascetic, that foremost of Rishis and highest of Yogins, took his birth from the two sticks” (Roy, 1891, p. 695). Śuka expresses his wish to learn more about the attainment of liberation, and his father tells him to travel to king Janaka for instruction Śuka comes before Janaka as a Brahmin pupil seeking instruction. After getting this he returns to his father where he practices Vedic recitations and “is lectured by Nārada on the misery of life” (Malinar, 2012 p. 36). Following this he decides to attain the final liberation, which is going to “the place of non-return”, in this story identified as the sun: “Hence, I desire to go into the Sun of blazing effulgence. There I shall live, invincible by all, and in my inner soul freed from all fear, having cast of this body of mine in the solar region” (Roy, 1891, p. 732) Śuka states that the only way to reach this place requires the practice of yoga. Setting upon the part for the place of non-return, he first leaves his father and travels to a mountaintop where he practices yoga and becomes “a ‘mighty lord among yogins’” (Malinar, 2012 p. 37)<sup>11</sup>. Having become a master of yoga he flies upwards into the sky to the sage Nārada and performs a circumambulation of him in the air as a sign of respect. Thereafter he “once more set himself to Yoga and entered the element of space. Ascending then from the breast of the Kailāsa mountain, he soared into the sky” (Roy, 1891, p. 734) and through ever higher levels of the cosmos and casts of the three *guṇas tamas, rajas, and sattva*, and reaches the realm of brahma. Malinar states that it in this text means the realm of the nonmanifest prakṛti, the final realm from where the yogin reaches final liberation (Malinar, 2012 p. 39). Here he displays his yogic powers for the last time, before traveling beyond

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<sup>10</sup> Malinar refers to Mhb 12.309-320 when referring to the story of Suka. Because the translation of the work I am using is based on a different edition, the chapter numbers in it are not the same as the ones Malinar uses. E.g. the story of Śuka is here relied in chapters 324-334. The concordance between the critical edition and the Bomaby edition can be found in Buitenen’s *The Mahābhārata -I: The Beginning* (1973, p. 475-478) and i have used this to find the corresponding chapters in Ganguli’s translation. To avoid confusion, i will refer to the citations from Ganguli with page numbers.

<sup>11</sup> Malinar in this article uses the designation «yogin» for one who is accomplished in yoga practice. Other authors use various spellings for this term, e.g. Rastelli uses «yogin» and Burchett uses «yogī». Other spellings i have encountered are «yogi» and «yogīn». I will follow Malinar and use «yogin».

the final mountain range, and into the highest abode, which is the sun, the place of non-return.

In Malinar's analysis of the story of Śuka, the crucial point for this study is that Śuka uses the yoga powers on his quest for liberation, but is discouraged of using them at any other point. Malinar points out that it is mentioned twice how Śuka traveled to Janaka by foot because using his yogic powers to fly would have been an indulgence of pleasure and pride. Malinar further points out that this shows how having these powers and being a *mahāyogin* 'mighty yogin' is not enough for being a 'true' yogin (she is here probably alluding to the idea that a 'true' yogin is one who can reach liberation), and that not indulging in these powers is a sign of being on the way to becoming one. Śuka is born as a mighty yogin with powers over the element that gives him the ability to fly etc. Malinar notes that this still does not qualify him as what she calls a "true" yogin, because he still seeks instruction from both king Janaka and the renowned sage Nārada (Malinar, 2012 p. 36). When he arrives at the final destination before liberation, the world of brahma, he is also said to attain new powers, being omnipresent, facing all directions and being the All (Malinar, 2012 p. 39). The point when Śuka uses his powers first comes on his quest to liberation, when they "serve their purpose in providing strength and mastery over the elements that are deemed necessary in order to leave the world and the body behind" (Malinar, 2012 p. 37).

#### [Chapter 12.289 in the Mahābhārata](#)

Malinar explains Chapter 12.289, (along with 12.290) in the *Mahābharata* as being about the differences between Yoga and Sāṃkhya which are described as "philosophical or metaphysical doctrines" (Malinar, 2012 p. 41) concerned with the question of how to attain liberation. She emphasizes that this portion of the text states that while they have many similarities, the main difference is that the Sāṃkhya doctrine was attained through transmitted knowledge while the yogins come by the truth through (extraordinary) perception. The outcome is that those who practice Sāṃkhya attain liberation through the realization that the self is not identical to matter, while yogins control said matter through powers acquired through their yogic practice. She also points out that the latter would be the case in Śuka's liberation. Malinar explains that the Sāṃkhya doctrine teaches how to

attain liberation through detachment from the sense-objects while the yogin gains control over sense/objects and as such can “turn to the realms of objects as he pleases or turn away from them forever” (Malinar, 2012 p. 43). The Ganguli translations on this questions reads “The evidences of Yoga are addressed by the ken of the senses; those of the Sāṅkhya are based on the scriptures” (Roy, 1891, p. 570). Scriptures here refers to the transmitted knowledge that is necessary for liberation in the Sāṅkhya system, while the “ken of the senses” refers to the learned mastery of the senses the yogin has to develop to reach the same goal. Malinar further explains how the yogin, through being in control of all objects, attains various supernatural abilities, like multiplying himself and taking control of other beings bodies. He is immortal, “in control of his own liberation” (Malinar, 2012 p. 43) and rules the forces of creativity. In the Ganguli translation we can read that

The Yogin, when grown in strength, burning with energy, and possessed of might, is capable of scorching the entire Universe like the Sun that rises at the time of universal dissolution. [...] Independent of all things, Yogins, endued with Yoga-puissance and invested with lordship, enter into (the hearts of) the very lords of creation, the Rishis, the deities, and the great Beings in the universe. Neither Yama, nor the Destroyer, nor Death himself of terrible prowess, when angry, ever succeeds in prevailing over the Yogin, O king, who is possessed of immeasurable energy. The Yogin, acquiring Yoga-puissance, can create thousands of bodies and with them wandereth over the Earth. [...] The Yogin, who is possessed of strength, and whom bonds bind not, certainly succeeds in attaining to Emancipation. (Roy, 1891, p. 572)

Malinar points out that the yogin here is equated to a god, and that it is this status of being and *īśvara* (lord, powerful master) which gives him the power over his own liberation. The yoga powers which in this chapter are described as being acquired through yoga practice are therefore necessary if one wishes to attain liberation, and Malinar claims they are the goal of yoga (unlike Sāṅkhya) as presented in chapter 12.289 (Malinar, 2012 p. 41). In this chapter, no Sāṅkhya terminology is used, and Malinar claims this is probably done deliberately, since the topic of the chapter (and the next one) is the difference between Sāṅkhya and yoga. (Malinar, 2012, p. 44) In this, and in the assertion that the yoga powers help attain liberation, it is similar to the story of Śuka. A difference however, is that Śuka only uses his powers once, and then leaves them behind, while the yogis in this chapter can



use them as they please, and this is the state of liberation. He controls all objects, and can enter, create or leave bodies as he pleases, and is free from bodily restriction. This power allows him to exist without a physical body, yet at the same time create or control as many as he pleases, and he is equated to a god, because he “is active and inactive at the same time, [...] he is liberated from physical existence, yet assumes all kinds of bodies” (Malinar, 2012, p.44). This state, which is without death, birth, pain and pleasure, is the state of liberation.

#### Chapter 12.228 in the Mahābhārata

The topic of chapter 12.228 in the *Mahābhārata* is the acquirement of yoga powers, and these are explained within the Sāṃkhya framework of the *tattvas*. The method for doing this Malinar explains, is through a fixation of the mind, which gives control over the senses (Malinar, 2012 p. 45). Through this practice the yogin gradually gains control over the different *tattvas*, beginning with the five elements, then the ego-consciousness and the *buddhi*, and at last the nonmanifest matter, *avyakta* (See chapter 2). This mastery bestows upon him many supernatural abilities, like creating creatures from his own body, making the earth tremble, disappear at will, omnipotence, and perfect knowledge. (Roy, 1891, p. 259) We can read in Ganguli’s translation that “the Yogin gradually acquires mastery over Earth, Wind, Space, Water, Fire, Consciousness, and Understanding. After this he gradually acquires mastery over the Unmanifest” (Roy, 1891, p. 258). This “Unmanifest” is the *avyakta prakṛti*, and upon reaching this the yogin can cast away his gross body. Malinar expounds on this saying that the yogin, having reached the state where he can control *avyakta*, the nonmanifest state of all creation, is liberated from his body. He exists only in a subtle form, can control the unmanifest matter as it is before creation, and is therefore likened to the creator god Prajāpati. Yogic power is in this chapter conceptualized as controlling the *avyakta prakṛti*. Even though the yogin in this state no longer needs a body, he still has not reached the final liberation. To do this he has to leave the realm of *avyakta prakṛti* behind. (Malinar, 2012 p. 46) We see here yet another function of the yoga powers in the quest for liberation. In chapter 12.289, liberation is the state of having yogic power, in the story of Śuka, he has to use yoga powers to reach the place of liberation, while in this chapter, the powers are something that the yogin will inevitably acquire when

he reaches the realm of the unmanifest. That place is, similar as in the story of Śuka, the final stepping-stone to liberation, however, in this instance no yogic powers are needed to take that final step. Malinar points out that this idea of the yogic powers being something that has to be overcome rather than used, is in alignment with the commentarial traditions of the *Yogasūtra* and the *Sāṃhkhārikā* (Malinar, 2012, p. 47). She also points out that the word used to describe this state of control of the *avyakta* is *aiśvarya*, “which suggests its terminological use as attested in later systematized presentations in commentaries on *YS* and *SK*” (Malinar, 2012 p. 45). This is significant because these commentaries try to explain away or overlook the fact that the *Yogasūtra* gives a great amount of space to the treatment of the 8 *aiśvaryas*<sup>12</sup> and treat them as mere unwanted byproducts.

#### Yoga Powers in the *Bhagavadgītā*

Malinar also writes about how the idea about Yoga Powers in a Sāṃkhya framework is used to explain Kṛṣṇa’s power as the supreme deity in the *Bhagavadgītā*. In this part of the *Mahābhārata* he reveals himself to be the all-transcendent being, who at the same time appears as a human manifestation on earth. He also teaches Arjuna that there are several ways to liberation. The easiest of these, and the one he urges Arjuna to pursue, he explains, is the way of bhakti: “But those who yield all acts to me, intent on me as the highest, and worship me [...] I will redeem” Kṛṣṇa explains that if one surrenders to him as the supreme deity, and does every action as a sacrifice to him, he will grace one with the gift of deliverance from the never-ending cycle of rebirths. Malinar points out two functions that yoga powers have in the discussions in this part of the *Mahābhārata*. The first of these explain how yogins in general, and Kṛṣṇa specifically, can perform actions without karmic repercussion, and the second how Kṛṣṇa is conceptualized as a transcendent being superior to all the other gods.

In the first case, there is a discussion in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* about how yogins can attain the state where they have achieved the yogic powers, and can use them without generating new karma, and thereby be in a state of semi-liberation, which turns into a full liberation when they die. The explanation of this in the *Bhagavadgītā* comes about by using the framework of Sāṃkhya. The text states that the yogin attains yogic

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<sup>12</sup> These are the powers listed in the *vibhūti* section of the *Yogasūtra*, see chapter 1.

power by reaching a state where he has “conquered creation” through the realm of the unmanifested matter (*avyakta prakṛti*) and freely controls it (Malinar, 2012, p. 48) Because he has given up his body and his sense faculties, and is in the knowledge that it is not him who acts, but the *guṇas*, the power of creation itself, which he can direct as he pleases, he does not gain karmic repercussions. This is because only the self acting through the sense objects acquires karma, while *prakṛti* does not. This realm of the unmanifest that one can reach is also called *prakṛtilaya*, and this state was in some yoga and Sāṃkhya traditions seen as the final place of liberation (more on this later), but here it is explained as the final place in life, from where liberation is attained when the yogin dies. The state of the conquered realm of creation is here to be seen as a transitional stage (Malinar, 2012, p. 50). Malinar points out how similar ideas are also shown in the story of Śuka.

The second thing Malinar discusses is how this aforementioned idea about yogic powers being the power to control the *avyakta prakṛti* without acquiring karma, is the basis for the exposition of Kṛṣṇa as the supreme being, because his powers are explained as yoga powers. In the *Bhagavadgītā* Kṛṣṇa is said to be a being both transcendent and immanent in the world at the same time, all of the universe resides in him, but he is more than the universe. As Kṛṣṇa explains to Arjuna in *Bhg* 9:4 “This universe is filled with me, with my unmanifested form; all beings here abide in me, but I do not abide in them” (Flood and Martin, 2012, p. 45) Malinar shows how this apparent paradox can be explained through the idea of yogic powers as manipulating the unmanifest *prakṛti*: because everything is made of *prakṛti*, which Kṛṣṇa controls, everything is part of him, but at the same time his self is outside of the realm of *prakṛti*. This also lets him manifest himself as a human, which is his role in the rest of the *Mahābhārata*, and act in the world without gaining karma, it is because the manifestations are not his true self, they are bodies created out of the *avyakta prakṛti* (Malinar, 2012, p. 50f). In this way Kṛṣṇa is conceptualized as the supreme God, and the supreme yogin, because he not only controls, but is the source of the *prakṛti*.

## Liberation

Before analyzing the different ways of reaching salvation in the parts of the *Mahābhārata* Malinar has discussed, and how yoga powers relate to them, I will give an overview of the different types of salvation that are described or hinted at in the different texts. These are:

The doctrine of classical Sāṃkhya and classical Yoga that liberation occurs when *puruṣa* is realized as different from the mind-body-complex, the “proto-Sāṃkhya” practice of reaching the realm of the unmanifest (*avyakta prakṛti*) which equals salvation, and lastly the depiction of the sun as the final place one had to reach to gain salvation. These different ideas about what constitutes salvation will be relevant in the later analysis. The notion of liberation in *bhakti* traditions, which claim that liberation is achieved through complete devotion to the supreme deity, in the *Bhagavadgītā* identified as Kṛṣṇa, has already been mentioned in chapter 2.

### Liberation in classical Sāṃkhya and classical Yoga

As explained in chapter 2 the way to attain liberation according to the teachings of classical Sāṃkhya and classical Yoga, is by realizing *puruṣa*, the self, as independent from the body-mind-complex, which is a product of *prakṛti*. This was to be done by a series of meditations and other practices which enhanced the *sattvic* property of the *buddhi*, so that the *buddhi* could see clearly and see the difference between *ahamkara*, *buddhi* and *puruṣa*. If this was achieved, the individual would realize the mistaken belief that *puruṣa* is bound to the *prakṛti* (i.e. the body and mind) to be false, and the *puruṣa*, and the body and mind would fall away from the *puruṣa* and such liberation was attained. In other Sāṃkhya traditions, this was done through meditation starting on the lowest (or highest) *tattva*,, gross matter, until gaining control over it (through realization?). This was subsequently done with all the *tattvas*, until the point where you could control the *buddhi*, and discriminate between *puruṣa* and the other *tattvas*.

### Prakṛtilaya

In the monography *Prakṛti in Sāṃkhya-Yoga – Material Principle, Religious Experience, Ethical Implications* (1999) Knut A. Jacobsen traces the different meanings and development of the category of *prakṛti* in Indian thought through various textual sources. In this endeavor, he also discusses the concept of *prakṛtilaya*, which he translates as “merging with *prakṛti*” (Jacobsen, 1999 p. 374). This concept is discussed in both the schools of classical Sāṃkhya and classical Yoga, where it is treated as a different, although

impermanent type of *mokṣa* (liberation) (Jacobsen, 1999 p. 274). As told before, the preferred way to liberation in these systems is to realize *puruṣa* as different from *prakṛti*, which is done through meditational practices which give knowledge of the *tattvas*. The state of *prakṛtilaya* happens if a yogin or *sāṃkhya* ‘one who adheres to Sāṃkhya’ manages to realize the 24<sup>th</sup> principle, the *avyakta prakṛti* and dissolve the *buddhi* into it, without gaining the discerning knowledge of *puruṣa* as different from *prakṛti* (Jacobsen, 1999 p. 274f). “The attainment of the dissolution of the products of *prakṛti* into *prakṛti* without knowledge of the *puruṣa* principle leads to *prakṛtilaya*” (Jacobsen, 1999 p. 275). This brings the yogin/*sāṃkhya* to a state where he merges with the *avyakta*, and gains control over it, and the body and mind, including the *buddhi* are dissolved into the unmanifest material principle. This leads to liberation from *saṃsāra*, which according to these systems also is a manifestation of *prakṛti*, and this way *mokṣa* is attained (Jacobsen, 1999 p. 287). However, the *puruṣa* is still not free, because it is still bound to the *avyakta prakṛti*, as long as there has been no realization of the second ultimate principle, which is *puruṣa*. This leads to an impermanent *mokṣa*, where the yogin/*sāṃkhya* will reside in *avyakta prakṛti*, a state which is described as *mokṣa*, until the destruction of cosmos and creation of the new one, where he will be reborn once again, as a god according to some commentaries (Jacobsen, 1999 p. 277).

Jacobsen argues that this description of *prakṛtilaya* as an impermanent, and therefore not as good, kind of liberation was a way of assimilating different views of liberation into one system, while still maintaining the view of one tradition as the ultimate one. This practice of incorporating claims of rival groups while still subsuming them is “comparable to the common pattern of interpretation of religious claims of competing groups in South Asia” (Jacobsen, 1999 p. 301). This was to create a hierarchy of more or less valid doctrines, with the emic doctrine always at the top as the most valid. However, Jacobsen also claims that there are in the Sāṃkhya and Yoga texts “references to some who believed *prakṛti* to be the final goal of their practice and the state they attained” (Jacobsen, 1999 p. 273). Jacobsen relays how *prakṛtilaya* is described as a state which is desired, and that also this desire has to be renounced if the yogin wants to achieve complete detachment which is necessary for the realization of the separateness of *puruṣa*. He also cites a statement for Vācaspatiśrī commenting on the *Vyāsaśāstra*, which refers to persons who are resolved into primary-matter and worship it, and how one has to rid

himself of this desire. Jacobsen suggests that “This denouncement of *prakṛtilaya* means probably that the experience of merging in materiality was something some individuals were attached to and attempted to achieve” (Jacobsen, 1999 p. 279), and that these held *prakṛti* as the ultimate principle and *prakṛtilaya* as the ultimate experience. He further argues that *prakṛtilaya* probably was the ultimate goal for the Yoga and Sāṃkhya traditions which divided the world into 24 *tattvas*, excluding *puruṣa*, and such had only *prakṛti* as an ultimate principle. He further notes that such a belief is attested in the *Mahābhārata*, where there are references to Sāṃkhya school accepting 24, 25 and 26 principles of reality (Jacobsen, 1999 p. 279f). This schools had different views of the ultimate principle, and “The final goal of those who believed the twenty-fourth principle to be the ultimate, seems to have been the realization of the dissolution of the mind into *prakṛti*, annihilation of individuality, and freedom from rebirth” (Jacobsen, 1999 p. 280). As is made clear, there was a belief interpreted in Sāṃkhya terms, in *prakṛti* as the ultimate principle and source of liberation, and traces of this belief are found in some parts of the *Mahābhārata*.

#### Yoking the chariot to pierce the disk of the sun

White states that before the epic period, which he sets at ca. 200BC – 400CE (White, 2009, p. 60), the root *yuj* and its derivate yoga had two specific meanings: “the yoking of a wheeled conveyance to a draft animal and, by extension, the linkage between a visionary thinker’s mind or consciousness to some transcendent object” (White, 2009, p. 60) In both cases the yoking enables travels outwards or upwards. Closely tied to the concept of yoking in the first meaning is the idea of traveling to the sun. This idea appeared already in the Vedas, where the afterlife was attained by “traveling to or through the sun on a ritually constructed chariot” (White, 2009, p. 61). The chariot, or sometimes boat, was the sacrifice itself, and the patron of the sacrifice was yoked to it, every timed he sacrificed. This enabled him (his initiation body that is, while his mundane body stayed behind) to ascend to the heavenly world, its gate being the disk of the sun, before descending to this world again once the sacrifice was over. This was repeated daily, so that when he died, the sacrifice of his cremated body would be the chariot that carried him to heaven where he would now stay permanently. In addition to the patron being yoked to the sacrifice, (White, 2009, p.61f) White notes that “the most common rigvedic meaning of the verb \*yuj [...] was “to

yoke one's self to a chariot" and by extension, "to prepare for battle." (White, 2009, p. 63). The yoga was here the rig of the warrior who went to, or prepared for war. In later texts the chariot of the warrior could take on the same meaning of piercing the disk of the sun as the chariot of sacrifice for the patron. This is seen in the epics, where there are several accounts of warrior dying on the battlefield, who are then yoked to the sacrifice of their own death, which enables them to pierce the disk of the sun and enter the realms of the gods. The chariot is sometimes also said to be the sun's rays, which descend and the warrior is yoked to (White, 2009, p. 67).

The other meaning points to the practice of Vedic priests who were said to yoke their mind to poetic inspiration, which allowed them to join the world of sacrifice to the heavenly realm they were trying to reach through it (White, 2009, p. 63). In this way they linked the human and divine worlds, and were able to undertake "visionary expeditions to the furthest reaches of the imaginable universe" during the sacrifice (White, 2009, p. 63).

### Analysis

When analyzing how the yoga powers may change power relations in the instances mentioned by Malinar, I aim to identify the nodal points in the discourse and how yoga powers are related to them. There are 4 different ways in which a change in yoga powers and its relation to a nodal point can lead to a change in the discourse, and I will list these here before trying to identify what is the case in each of the parts of the *Mahābhārata* Malinar has studied. The four different ways are: to

1. Change the meaning of the yoga powers as a nodal point
2. Change the meaning of the yoga powers to or from a nodal point
3. Change the meaning of a nodal point to which yoga powers stand in a chain of meaning
4. Change the meaning of a key concept by relating it to or from yoga power in a chain of meaning.

When trying to analyze the cases, I first have to try and identify the nodal points of the discourse, the meaning chains, and how they have changed or differ from other instances of discourse.

### Śuka's story analysis

Malinar identifies “the overall theme” (Malinar, 2012, p. 35) of the story of Śuka as being the quest for liberation. This is what Śuka strives for from the moment he is born, it is what the story leads to, and it is also explained and expounded on in the story. In other words, it is fair to say that in the instance of discourse this story makes, liberation is a nodal point, which the other discursive elements are related to. In the story, liberation is presented as the act of piercing the disk of the sun, by flying through it, and here we can see the older idea of liberation from Vedic times. In those instances, the sun was reached through sacrifice, battle or poetic inspiration, but in this story Śuka reaches the sun through various yogic means, not least among them the powers he has from birth, and the powers he gains from doing yoga. The nodal point which is liberation, here linked to traveling to the sun, is related to yogic practice and yogic power, both of the inborn and of the acquired variety. Even though Śuka in the end uses the yoga powers to gain liberation, it is also stressed that they are not to be used for anything else than this. In this way, the story both correlates and contradicts the commentaries on the *Yogasūtra* where it is stated that the yogin will acquire yoga powers but is not to use them since they will lead him away from the path of liberation. Śuka is told by his father to not use these powers since they will lead him away from his path, however at the moment he sets out for the “final push” for liberation, it is the yoga powers that help him attain it. In this story, we can therefore see elements of various discourses, all tied to the nodal point of liberation, which attest to the many various traditions which all claimed the superior way to liberation.

### Chapter 12.289 analysis

As described above, this chapter is about the differences between how practitioners of Yoga and Sāṃkhya realize the goal of liberation, and Malinar emphasizes how important yoga powers are for that goal. She points out that it is probably deliberately described



without relying on the Sāṃkhya metaphysical framework, to highlight the differences between the two systems. In this chapter of the *Mahābhārata*, the nodal point, or at least a nodal point, is still liberation, only here liberation gets another meaning than in the story of Śuka. Liberation in the story of Śuka is going to a point in or through the sun, while in this chapter it is described as living as one wishes in the immediate world, without any bonds, with incredible powers, in a godlike state of being. One could say that the yoga powers in this chapter are not just given meaning as an element in the meaning chain of liberation, rather that yoga powers are equated with liberation, such giving this nodal point a new meaning. This idea that a godlike state they give is considered the goal of religious practice can also be seen in certain early Śaiva traditions like the Pāśupatas and early Śaiva Siddhānta (more on this in chapter 7).

In this chapter, we can also see what Laclau & Mouffe have called an antagonistic border, and an attempt at hegemonization. The author(s) of chapter 12.289 draw a clear line between Sāṃkhya and Yoga (even while acknowledging their similarities), and thus create an antagonism between the two; Yoga is explained through its difference from Sāṃkhya. This is even more clear with the statement from Malinar that it is carefully not explained with a Sāṃkhya terminology. All together it seems that attaining liberation through Yoga is not only described as different, but also as better than attaining it through the Sāṃkhya method. It is a total achievement of liberation, like one would get through the Sāṃkhya method as well, but in addition the yogin would get immense powers, and the ability to turn to or away from the material world as he pleases. The author(s) therefore try to establish the Yoga method as superior by using a hegemonic intervention and try to establish the meaning of elements of the discourse of both Yoga and Sāṃkhya in a way that favors the Yoga system.

#### Chapter 12.228 analysis

This chapter, unlike the last one, explains yoga powers within a Sāṃkhya framework. The nodal point is again liberation, and yoga powers are again attained on the way to it, but here they have to be given up, not used, to gain liberation. The element of yoga powers is in other words related to the nodal point almost as a negation, and is devalued through its relation to the nodal point. In this instance of the *Mahābhārata* we also see elements from

other discourses drawn in, namely the notion of *prakṛtilaya* and the idea of yoga powers as an unwanted side effect gained on the way to liberation. The latter idea is found in the commentaries on the *Yogasūtra* “which denies that attaining such powers is the goal of yoga, describing them instead as simple signs that certain yoga practices have been perfected and warning that they can distract from the ultimate salvific goal of yoga” (Jacobsen, 2005, p. 7). In the same textual instance the authors also denounce the state of *prakṛtilaya*, which as stated above was considered the ultimate goal and state of liberation by some Sāṃkhya traditions.

As I see it, this is again an example of a process of hegemonization. The author(s) of the text here use the Sāṃkhya framework to denounce both the ideas of *prakṛtilaya* and the state as a powerful yogin who is a master of yoga powers as being a state of liberation. This they do by appropriating those discourses and relating their elements to their own key nodal point (that liberation is the disassociation of *puruṣa* with *prakṛti*) and in that way negating those discourse’s innate claims to liberation.

### Bhagavadgītā analysis

In the Bhagavadgītā we see the yoga powers in a Bhakti discourse, more specifically in relation to the idea of karma and liberation, and in relation to Kṛṣṇa as the supreme being. In the first case, liberation is still the nodal point of the discourse, however this is the only one of the abovementioned instances where karma is an element of the discourse, and the yoga powers are used as a counterforce to the element of karma which otherwise undermines the idea of a yogin being able to act without karmic retribution. Here the element of karma has entered the discourse of the yogin living while controlling the sense objects. To hinder this idea of karma to negate the key element of liberation-in-life, karma is related to the idea of *avyakta prakṛti* in such a way that it does not end up unbalancing the whole discourse.

In the second part of the *Bhagavadgītā* Malinar discusses, the yoga powers, and the idea of controlling *avyakta prakṛti* through them have become part of a Bhakti discourse that has the supreme being, which in this instance is Kṛṣṇa, as its nodal point. The element of yoga powers are here related to the nodal point in such a way that Kṛṣṇa can be explained as superior to all other gods and beings, and we here once again see them as a part of

process of hegemonization where one tradition, namely Vaiṣṇava Bhakti, claims superiority over other traditions. The difference here is that the yoga powers are used to explain a god's superiority instead of being directly related to the idea of liberation or denounced as an inferior state to true liberation.

## Chapter 5: The Sādhaka in the Jayākhyasaṃhitā

### Introduction

In the article “The religious practice of the sādḥaka according to the Jayākhyasaṃhitā” (2000) Marion Rastelli describes the religious duties of the *sādḥaka* prescribed by the Jayākhyasaṃhitā, which was an important text in the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra tradition. Rastelli is an Indologist, currently working at the Institut für Kultur- und Gesitesgeschichte Asiens at the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaft. Her special field is the Pāñcarātra tradition, and especially the Pāñcarātra text Jayākhyasaṃhitā. In the monography *Philosophisch-theologische Grundanschauungen der Jayākhyasaṃhitā* (1999) she describes the lack of study on the Pāñcarātra tradition, highlighting how out of the traditions’ many texts, only the *Lakṣmītantra* and small excerpts of a few others have been translated and systematically studied. Her own monography is described as an attempt to start rectifying this, as it is an extensive summary and analysis of the Jayākhyasaṃhitā, her focus being a description of the philosophical and theological base of the text, with a full translation of some of the earlier chapters of it. In addition, she has also written the aforementioned article about the ritual practices of the sādḥaka in *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*, and it is this text that will be the basis for this chapter, I will also use her monography, an entrance on the Pāñcarātra by her in *Brill’s encyclopedia of Hinduism*, and the already mentioned work *The Tantric Body* by Flood.

The religious goals of the Pāñcarātra (like many other religious traditions’) were split into two different categories, (*mukti* or *mokṣa*) *mumukṣu* meaning liberation, and (*bhukti* or *bhoga*) *bubhukṣu* meaning enjoyment of worldly pleasures and the acquirement of supernatural powers (Flood, 2006, p. 26). Liberation means ending the endless transmigration of the souls called *saṃsāra*, and through it the termination of suffering. In the context of this thesis I will focus on *bhukti*, “the fulfillment of any wish that one can imagine”, including material wealth, good health and attainment of supernatural powers is what I will be focusing on. I will return to the description of how one could attain these powers, and how they were perceived to work later in this chapter. Both of the religious goals were attained by performing rituals worshipping god. The different rituals could

only be performed after the *pañcarātrin* had gone through the appropriate ritual initiation (*dīkṣā*), and so gained the correct status. The four stages of initiation described in the *Jayākhyaśaṃhitā* are the *samayin*, the *putraka*, the *sādhaka*, and the *ācārya* (Rastelli, 2000, p. 320). The *sādhaka* is the one who has gone through the third *dīkṣā*. This *dīkṣā* gave access to both liberation and supernatural powers, but Rastelli underscores that this third initiation seems to have been characterized as being for the attainment of *bubhukṣu*.

“Generally [...] the *sādhaka* desires the fulfilment of his wishes and the achievement of *siddhis* before he attains emancipation. His main goals are powers and dominion over the world; only after having enjoyed these does he wish to achieve liberation from mundane existence” (Rastelli, 2000, p. 345).

Before I can give a description of the *sādhaka* and the ideas about how and why he<sup>13</sup> acquired supernatural powers, I will give a short survey of the Pāñcarātra tradition in general, and the *Jayākhyaśaṃhitā* in particular. At the end of the chapter I will discuss some aspects of the *sādhakas* practice, namely his ability to perform supernatural feats for other people, the *ṣaṭkarmans* ‘six acts’ known from other sources, and his similarity to the *tapasvin* and the *yogin* based on a comparison by Rastelli. Lastly I will use the tools from chapter 3 to shed light to some on these instances.

### The Pāñcarātra and its origins

The *Jayākhyaśaṃhitā* is a Vaiṣṇava Śaṃhitā, a type of text that includes rules for both domestic and temple worship in addition to theological doctrines and guides to meditation. It was an important text in the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra tradition. Marion Rastelli describes the Pāñcarātra tradition as a “Hindu tradition that worships Viṣṇu as the supreme god” (Rastelli, 2011 p. 444) which has roots in various earlier traditions from before the Common Era. This is visible in that the highest deity in the Pāñcarātra is worshipped by a lot of different names like Vāsudeva, Bhagavat, Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu, which at some point were distinct gods in different traditions. The earliest known forerunners to the Pāñcarātra are the traditions of worship to Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, who are mentioned in a 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE

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<sup>13</sup> Rastelli notes that women were not able to undergo the initiation to become a *sādhaka* (Rastelli, 2000, p. 372).

text by Pāṇini. Another early important Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa text is the Bhagavadgītā section of the Mahābhārata, dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and onwards, which places Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa as the supreme ruler and foundation of the universe, and is an important text for Vaiṣṇava traditions in general. Rastelli also mentions the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE cult of the Bhāgavata which worshipped Vāsudeva along with his brother Saṃkarṣaṇa. The worship of these two god-heroes has been related to the Vṛṣṇi clan who worshipped five heroes from at least the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE and were widespread in India by the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE. These five heroes are in some textual sources named as Saṃskarṣaṇa, Vāsudeva, Vāsudeva's sons Pradyumna and Sāmba, and grandson Aniruddha. These are probably the origins of the group of *vyūhas* (see below) who hold an important place in the Pāñcarātra tradition (Rastelli, 2011 p. 444f).

#### The Jayākhyasaṃhitā

The Jayākhyasaṃhitā is one of “three gems” (*ratnatraya*), the three most authoritative Saṃhitās of the Pāñcarātra-tradition, along with the *Sātvatasāṃhitā* and the *Pauṣkarasaṃhitā*. (Rastelli, 2011 p. 448) The Saṃhitās are texts with anonymous authors which were often compiled of other texts, revised and added to at different times, so dating them is difficult. Rastelli tentatively describes the Jayākhyasaṃhitā as dated not earlier than 850 CE (Rastelli, 1999, p.26), while Flood dates it before the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Flood, 2006, p. 55). The “three gems” texts have strong connections with three south Indian temples respectively, the *Jāyakhyaṣaṃhitā* to the Varadarāja temple in Kanchipuram. Rastelli however claims this only means they were “probably used there in certain periods of time” (Rastelli, 2011 p. 448), and that they are generally believed to have originated in North India as there exist early mentions of them in Kashmir and Nepal (Rastelli, 1999, p. 27). Flood also states that “the *Jayākhyā* is probably from the Kashmir region (Flood, 2006, p. 120).

The Saṃhitā texts are written in meter, as a dialogue usually between Viṣṇu and someone wanting to learn his teachings. They generally consists of ritual prescription but also include rules of behavior, yoga instructions, cosmologies and philosophical and theological teachings (Rastelli, 2011 p. 447). Of the different Saṃhitās the Jayākhyasaṃhitā belongs to one of four who have more theoretical teachings than the

others. The theoretical teaching in each of them are not the same, and “one cannot speak of “Pāñcarātra teachings” in general, but rather of teachings of this and that Saṃhitā” (Rastelli, 2011 p. 451) The Jayākhyasaṃhitā teaches that the supreme being *brahman* is Vāsudeva. He emits all other deities and beings from himself, in the process called “the pure creation.” Vāsudeva first emits the deity Acutya, who emits Satya, who again emits Puruṣa. Puruṣa emits the individual souls, *jīvas* of humans and the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu. The group of the four foremost deities, Vāsudeva, Acutya, Satya and Puruṣa are called the *vyūhas*. The *vyūhas* are in the Pāñcarātra more commonly known as Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. In them one can see the probable influence of the Viṣṇu cult of the five heroes from the first centuries CE. The *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* however also teaches two other creations of the world. One, borrowed from the Sāṃkhya philosophical school, says the ultimate source of the creation is *prakṛti*, the primary matter, which divides into 24 different constituents, *tattvas*, which make out the material world. The 25th *tattva* is the individual soul, *puruṣa* or *ātman* which experiences the world. The third concept of creation is a mythological account where Brahmā, while being dependent on Viṣṇu, creates the world (Rastelli, 2011 p. 451f). These different accounts of creation from one text shows that it was comprised of teachings from different traditions, and that the name of the supreme deity varied, although it was a Vaiṣṇava god in every instance.

### Revelation of the texts

As mentioned the Saṃhitā texts in the Pāñcarātra tradition, including the Jayākhyasaṃhitā, claim to originate from Viṣṇu. The stages of transmission from Viṣṇu through generations of more or less legendary figures to the immediate past of the religious tradition, makes them seem especially true and authoritative for the practitioners. These kind of transmission chains (*Śāstrāvatāra*) for texts which are supposedly revealed are common in texts of other traditions than the Pāñcarātra too. What is interesting in the *Śāstrāvatāra* of the Jayākhyasaṃhitā, is that the text claims that the teachings of the Vedas alone cannot lead a person to revelation. According to this text the *ṛṣis* (legendary sages to which the Vedas were revealed) could not reach their goal of liberation from the saṃsāra, and went to Śāṅḍilya “who had attained all objectives in this world” (Rastelli, 2011 p. 449) to learn how to attain liberation. Śāṅḍilya, through stages of transmission, had been taught by Viṣṇu

that the usual religious means taught in the Veda alone are not enough to attain liberation, one also has to recognize Nārāyaṇa as the supreme being (Rastelli, 2011 p. 449). Rastelli suggests that this means that the Pāñcarātra tradition saw itself as a better alternative to the Vedic orthopraxy, and that the Pāñcarātrins probably were thought by this orthopraxy to stand “outside of the Veda” although the Pāñcarātra practices were based on and similar to the Vedic ones (Rastelli, 2011 p. 450).

### Mantras

In the Pāñcarātra tradition “A *mantra* is a manifestation of god or one of his aspects” (Rastelli, 2011 p. 453), and has two forms, the visual and the linguistic form. Since it is a manifestation of god, or his consort, limbs, attendant, weapon etc. it is also a manifestation of his or her divine power. E. g. the basic *mantra* (*mūlamantra*) of the Jayākhyasamhitā represents Viṣṇu with his various attributes and as different *avatāras* of himself. By visualizing or reciting the *mantra* in specific rituals, the practitioner can control the divine power for both the purpose of liberation (*mukti*) and to attain worldly pleasures (*bhukti*), including supernatural powers. The *mantras* were secret and given by the gurus after initiation, and are only incorporated in the Samhitās via codes (Rastelli, 2011 p. 453).

### The *sādhaka*

In the article “The religious practice of the *sādhaka* according to the Jayākhyasamhitā” (Rastelli, 2000) describes the religious duties of the *sādhaka*, which include practices to become a master of the *mantrasiddhi*, which gives access to supernatural powers. To become a *sādhaka*, one had to undergo a third initiation (*dīkṣā*) after first having been initiated into the stages of *samayin* and *putraka*. The *samayin* was supposed to live in chastity at his guru’s house, venerate him, learn the scriptures and with the help of the guru conduct the daily rituals. We learn of the *putraka* that he “muß im wesentlichen nach den gleichen Vorschriften wie der *samayin* leben, jedoch muß er die tägliche Verehrung des Gottes, ausgenommen das Feueropfer, vornehmen” (Rastelli, 1999, p. 156).<sup>14</sup> The

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<sup>14</sup> “Must essentially live after the same prescriptions as the *samayin*, however he has to carry out the daily worship of the God, except for the fire sacrifice”



initiation to *sādhaka* is the third of four stages on the path to emancipation and Rastelli claims “The main characteristic of a *sādhaka* is that he desires the attainment of enjoyment (*bhukti*, *bhoga*), such as the dominion over the worlds or the fulfilment of all his wishes, and of emancipation (*mukti*, *mokṣa*) from the world” (Rastelli, 2000 p. 320). The initiation to *sādhaka* and the mastering of the *mantra* in the prescribed rituals are necessary for the attainment of both *mukti* and *bhukti*. Although according to Rastelli the text can give the impression that the initiation is more for the purpose of *mukti* and the ritual obligations more for the attainment of *bhukti*

...both aspects are interdependent and therefore indispensable for the attainment of both goals, because on the one hand the initiation bestows the authority (*adhikāra*) to worship the *mantra* and on the other the *dīkṣā* alone can not give *bhukti* or *mukti* if the prescribed worship is not performed in the right way (Rastelli, 2000 s. 320).

For the purpose of *bhukti* the *sādhaka* has to achieve the means mastering of the *mantra* which is also called *mantrasiddhi*. Rastelli notes that the word *siddhi* has several meanings in the *Jayākhyasamhitā*: it can mean “success”, “attainment”, “supernatural power”, “mastering”, and can also occur as a synonym for *bhukti*. In addition she says it seems that several of these are meant in at the same time, and that the text often does not distinguish between them (Rastelli, 2000, see note 12, p. 373).

The different parts of the *Jayākhyasamhitā* moreover have a different attitude on attainment of *siddhis*. Rastelli explains that the *Jayākhyasamhitā* is made of different currents of teachings, with the greatest contrast seen between chapter 3-5 on the one hand and the rest of the text on the other. In these chapters the worshipping of the *mantra* is aimed at getting the *mantra*'s favor instead of controlling it. This does not lead to any supernatural powers, and in that part of the text it is also stated that supernatural powers or worldly enjoyment should not be desired at all (Rastelli, 2000 see note 11 p. 372). Rastelli explains that the practice of the *sādhaka* is described in three different parts of the *Jayākhyasamhitā*: in chapter 17, chapter 19 and chapters 26-32. Chapter 17 is a description of the four stages of initiation mentioned, and describes the duties and daily routine of the *sādhaka*, chapter 19 describes the rituals to achieve the mastering of the *mantra* along with the signs of its achievement, while chapters 26-32 describe in various details how to master each of the different *mantras* specifically, and in which rituals they can be used. Rastelli

claims these former two sections give general descriptions of the *sādhaka*, while the chapters 26-32 contain instructions for people who are already *sādhakas*, but wish to master a specific *mantra* to use it in certain rituals. The three chapters mostly agree on the topic of worship, although there are a few differences. Namely, the description of place of worship is different in chapters 26-32 where the place corresponds to the *mantra*, the *mantra* is worshipped as a *maṇḍala* ‘diagram’ instead of as an idol, and the description of the rituals are more detailed. This further strengthens Rastelli’s notion that chapters 26-32 are a sort of manual for *sādhakas* who have already mastered a *mantra*, but who want to master a specific other one to use for a specific purpose (Rastelli, 2000, p. 320-323). Rastelli also notes that the depictions of the achievement of the *mantrasiddhi* that in chapter 19 are laid out as “one of the main events in his [the *sādhaka*’s] religious career”, while in chapters 26-32 they are means to achieve specific goals (Rastelli, 2000, p. 338).

#### The practices of the *sādhaka*

After the *sādhaka* is initiated he should go to a secluded and appropriate place i. e. a place that is auspicious and free of negative influences, or stay at home if the home is appropriate, and stay there for twelve years while he worships the *mantra*. The *mantra* should be worshipped either in a mental representation or as an idol made out of metal or on cloth, not of stone, clay or wood, since these materials are only appropriate for the achievement of *mokṣa* and not *siddhi*. (Rastelli, 2000 p. 321 and note 19 p. 373). He also has to follow dietary descriptions, and a precise “protocol” of daily rituals including ritual bathing, recitation of *mantras* and the daily ritual also required of lower level initiates, including the fire ritual. Doing this every day he is supposed to “become equal to the *mantra*” (Rastelli, 2000 p. 322). After nine years of doing this he will have acquired the *mantrasiddhi*, and thereby its power, and the prescribed duration of this worship is twelve years. This general description of the duties of the *sādhaka* is found in chapters 17 and 19 of the *Jayākhyasamhitā*, while chapters 26-32 give a more detailed prescription of the *mantra* worship; this consists of two parts, how to achieve the mastering of the different *mantras*, and then how to use them in “magical rituals of varying purposes” (Rastelli, 2000 p. 322).

### Worshipping the *mantra*

As explained, both the details of, and the level details prescribing the worship of the *mantra* in the different chapters of the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* vary, but in both the worship of a *mantra* to attain its *siddhi* is structured similarly as the daily worship prescribed other places in the text (Rastelli, 2000 p. 323). The ritual of worshipping the *mantra* starts with the *mantranyāsa*, in which the *sādhaka* ritually applies *mantras* to different parts of his body, presumably after the ritual bath (*snāsa*) and the purification of the elements (*bhūtaśuddhi*) (Rastelli, 2000 p. 323). In this way he gets a *mantra* body, and by being similar to the *mantra* he is deemed fit to worship it. After this the *mantra* is worshipped first mentally (Rastelli, 2000 p. 324) and then externally (Rastelli, 2000 p. 325) with the help of a *maṇḍala* onto which the *mantra* is imposed. This is followed by the construction of the throne, worship of varying gods, gurus, ancestors and perfected beings (*siddhas*). After this the *sādhaka* imposes the *mantra* on his body (from the *mantranyāsa*) onto the *maṇḍala*. He then mentally visualizes the *mantra* to be worshipped and the *mantras* belonging to it, and in that way makes them present. These visualizations are then worshipped with incense, offerings of foods and flowers etc. while the *hrdayamantra* ‘heart mantra’ of the *mantra* is recited. Then a bell is rung before the *mūdras* of all the *mantras* in the *maṇḍala* are shown and then the *mantra* to be mastered is recited. (Rastelli, 2000 p. 328). After the mental and external worship oblations are made to the fire as a final worship of the deity.

Rastelli at this point makes clear that the ritual proceedings described up until now is “a kind of general worship of the *mantra* that serves as a preliminary for the process of mastering the *mantra*” (Rastelli, 2000 p. 329) similar to the daily worship performed by other stages of initiates. The rituals characteristic of a *sādhaka* start after the *homa* ritual. The first of these are the taking of an observance or vow, (*vrata*) by the *sādhaka* which includes worshipping the *mantra* and specifications of place, garments and diet. The worshipper then “assumes the form of the worshipped *mantra* or deity” (Rastelli, 2000 p. 329). This is done in two steps. First the *sādhaka* puts on garments, ornaments and other requisites to make himself look like the deity in question. He then mentally visualizes or realizes that his form, or the form of his *ātman* (the self) is the *mantra*. This way the *sādhaka* becomes equal to the *mantra* both in outward appearance and in nature (Rastelli, 2000 p. 330). After having likened himself to the *mantra*, the *sādhaka* should «go to a another place» (Rastelli, 2000 p. 331), where he is to follow the observances he has

inflicted upon himself, and continue to worship the *mantra*. The place should be secluded and deserted, and be appropriate for the *mantra* that is to be worshipped (e. g. in the forest for the forest-*mantra*). There are also some indications that even if he is to live there alone, he is in part accompanied by someone, possibly a student (Rastelli, 2000 p. 332). To master the *mantra*, it has to be recited by him a certain number of times. The quantity for the recitation (*japa*) of each specific *mantra* varies from 100,000 to 830,000 times, and Rastelli takes this to mean that the recitation is to be interrupted after a certain amount and continued the next day. The prescription is for the *sādhaka* to recite for approximately 6 hours each day (Rastelli, 2000 p. 332). While reciting, the *sādhaka* should also visualize the *mantra*. After the recitation, the *sādhaka* should satisfy the *mantra*, and the *mantras* belonging to it, with another *homa*–ritual (fire-ritual). This time the offerings made to the fire are not the same as in the preliminary worship of the *mantra*, but are supposed to be particular to the specific *mantra*. Again there are great numbers of offering required, e.g. “200,000 units of candied sugar” (Rastelli, 2000 p. 333), which have to be offered over a span of several days and not all at the same time (Rastelli, 2000p. 334).

#### The mastering of the *mantrasiddhi*

Because of the many repetitions of reciting, visualizing and giving oblations to the *mantra* made over time by the *sādhaka* “the *mantra* is forced to appear in front of the *sādhaka* [...] to admit that it has been mastered by him, and will be at his disposal from this time on” (Rastelli, 2000 p. 335). The manner of appearance is different for each *mantra*, but similar to all of them is that the *sādhaka* now has mastered the *mantra* and is able to use its powers as he pleases, as he has achieved the *mantrasiddhi*. In Rastelli’s words, this means he will “be able to do whatever he desires from this time on” (Rastelli, 2000 p. 336). What is interesting is that the *sādhaka* is not only able to use the *mantrasiddhi* for his own gain, he may also use it for others. This enables him to have clients and acquire fame, something I will discuss further below. First however, I will give a description of some of the things the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* list as achievable by the *sādhaka*, for although he is said to be able to achieve everything he desires, there are also very detailed descriptions of what he can achieve by which *mantra* once it is mastered.

### The aims of the *mantrasiddhis*

According to Rastelli, the Jayākhyasaṃhitā prescribes many rites in which the *mantras* mastered through the *mantrasiddhi* can be used, while also stating that the master of the *mantrasiddhi* can do whatever he wishes, so these are only examples (Rastelli, 2000 p. 340). The *mantra* can be used in various ways to achieve the goals of the *sādhaka*, most notably by recitation, visualization, imposition, writing, the use of *yantras* or *mūrtis* ‘idols’ or a combination of these (Rastelli, 2000, p. 346-351) The amount of things the *sādhaka* may achieve listed by Rastelli is a lot, so I will only give a partial list, to give an idea of the details the text provides. Some of the things achievable the *sādhaka* through using the mastered *mantra* are general wishes such as good health, longevity, agelessness, strength, prosperity, and happiness. The *sādhaka* can also attain material goods like gold, jewels, riches, and “the rain of fruits and flowers”. He can gain protection against dangers like poisons, injury, and disease, and the destruction of evil beings. He has access to nefarious powers that lets him control, subjugate or kill other humans (more on this below) and he has various options for conjuring or conquering human or other females to fulfill his sexual wishes. Other powers include success in fights, mentally creating an army, victory in gambling, the ability to see past, present and future, not being conquered by any deity, and the ability to travel wherever he likes in this and other worlds are just some of the things achievable by the *sādhaka* (Rastelli, 2000 p. 340-344). The same thing can also be achieved in various ways e.g. for prolonging life and agelessness, the *sādhaka* can be given an elixir of life (*rasāyana*) by Nāgas or Garudas, or he can prepare it himself, or find it in the earth, or he can prepare herbs or other elixirs for the same purpose, or these lastly mentioned can be given him by a Yakṣiṇī (Rastelli, 2000, p. 341). As is easy to see, the possibilities the mastering of the *mantra* open are endless. The things acquired often correlate the *mantras* that are prescribed to achieve them. For example, the *kapilamantra*, through its relation to the founder of *Sāṃkhya* is used for the acquirement of knowledge and intelligence, while the *lakṣmīmantra*, associated with the goddess of wealth, prosperity and fortune, is used give or take away wealth. Rastelli notes that this is “probably the reason why a *sādhaka* chooses to master a particular *mantra*” (Rastelli, 2000, p. 352).

### Satkarman

Rastelli takes particular note of the acts she calls “malevolent” (Rastelli, 2000 p. 342) and which often are known as part of the *ṣaṭkarmans* ‘the six acts’. The powers she describes as malevolent are: *ākaraṣaṇa* (drawing towards oneself) and *vaśīkaraṇa* (subjugation) which are used to control people and beings (Rastelli, 2000 p. 341), *stambhana* which immobilizes humans and beings, *uccāṭana* expulses human or being from their home, *vidveṣana* causes dissension and *māraṇa* which is the killing of a being (Rastelli, 2000 p. 342). She states that the term *ṣaṭkarman* is not used for this power in the *Jayākhyaṣaṃhitā* (Rastelli, 2000 p. 383 note 220), but that the powers enumerated usually are known under this term and refers to Goudriaan for a discussion of them. Goudriaan explains that the *ṣaṭkarmans* were among standard acts of magic discussed in tantric work, and describes them as “a theoretical body of doctrine found in Tantric Literature” (Goudriaan, 1978, p. 254). Further he notes that the treatment and description of these was not homologous, and that it is difficult to delimit them as the same ability sometimes is treated under different headings. A good indication of this is the list he has made of “technical terms for those magical action which usually or often come under the head of *ṣaṭkarman*” (Goudriaan, 1978, p. 259). This consists of the terms *śantiḥ* ‘pacification’, *vaśīkaraṇam* ‘subjugation’, *stambhanam* ‘immobilization’, *vidveṣaṇam* ‘causing dissension’, *uccāṭanam* ‘eradication’, *māraṇam* ‘liquidation’, *mohanam* ‘delusion’ *ākaraṣaṇam* ‘attraction’, and *puṣṭiḥ* ‘acquisition’.

The point of this is to show that the authors of the *Jayākhyaṣaṃhitā* were drawing on an established practice of incorporating the mention of these supernatural feats into the texts. As Rastelli describes the practices however, it seems that there was some conflict within the tradition concerning if these powers could be used or not. Rastelli describes how the *sādhaka* was prescribed to be “cruel” while doing one of these acts (Rastelli, 2000 p. 342). She also explains how these malevolent acts are treated differently in the different parts of the *Jayākhyaṣaṃhitā*, chapters 26-32 treating them like the other powers, while chapter 19 forbids killing by use of the *mantrasiddhis*, and prescribes expiation rites for having performed the other (Rastelli, 2000 p. 342). This shows that even though the authors of the text are vary of the them, the *sādhaka* was still expected to perform these acts.

### Using the *mantrasiddhi* for others

What is interesting to note is that the *sādhaka* can use these powers not only for himself, but the *Jayākhyasamhitā* also says the rites prescribes can be performed “for the purpose of another person” in addition to the purpose of the *sādhaka* (Rastelli, 2000p. 340). Rastelli states that “the *sādhaka* can give this person everything he/she likes, be it happiness, health, property, dominion over other beings, or supernatural powers such as the eight *siddhis*, invisibility, or the ability to see everything” (Rastelli, 2000p. 340).<sup>15</sup> She also states that this person has to be another follower of Viṣṇu who is not themselves able of mastering a *mantra* (Rastelli, 2000p. 340). She further claims this means that everyone can achieve supernatural powers, but that these other persons would be dependent on the *sādhaka*, while the *sādhaka* is omnipotent on his own. Rastelli also mentions in her description of the *sādhaka*’s ability to control other people that he can make people, she mentions women and kings, ask him for anything. She states that this make them “dependent on his favour – a practice that obviously provides the *sādhaka* with new clients” (Rastelli, 2000 p. 342).<sup>16</sup> This statement is of great interest to me, and underneath will follow a discussion of things or services mentioned in Rastelli’s article which are part of what I have chosen to call the ‘client discourse’ in the *Jayākhyasamhitā*, after the discussion of the *ṣaṭkarman*.

### Client discourse

Among the many uses of the *mantrasiddhi* by the *sādhaka* Rastelli lists, there are numerous of them that can be used for the purposes of helping others. Some are explicitly stated to be for the use of others, and some are abilities that seem more suited in a situation where the *sādhaka* is doing them on the behalf of someone else. Rastelli explains that there are a plethora of material goods which can be acquired through supernatural means by the *sādhaka* either for himself or for “another person to whom he wants to give these things” (Rastelli, 2000, p. 340). Notably she states that he has the ability to help others by providing them with food, bring water to a desert, make it rain, and clothe a naked person (Rastelli, 2000, p. 343). She relates how the *sādhaka* may recite *mantras* to multiply food to feed

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<sup>15</sup> Rastelli here refers to the eight *siddhis* enumerated in the *Yogasūtra*

<sup>16</sup> Here she refers to two places in the *Jayākhyasamhitā*, but her formulation does not make it clear if this is explicitly stated in the *Jayākhyasamhitā* that the *sādhaka* could do this to gain clients, or if this is her conclusion.

many people, or gold to distribute. He has the ability to make a human being become “well-fed forever” and “make all the activities in a house prosper” (Rastelli, 2000, p. 349). In addition to bestow prosperity there are also various other things the *sādhaka* can do for others. He can dispel fever, destroy diseases, protect people against enemies, thieves, wild animals, snakes, and poison, and remove poison from one who is affected by it, ward against destructive magic and evil beings, which he can also expulse or exorcise such beings. He can teach love spells, which can make anyone, even ascetics, attracted to the user. The *sādhaka* also has the ability to give other supernatural abilities, e.g. he can transform a pot of milk, water, or honey “into an elixir (*rasa*) that bestows eternal youth and health”(Rastelli, 2000, p. 347), or give someone the ability to see everything and become invisible. Rastelli also points out that the *sādhaka* can use some of *ṣaṭkarman* abilities to help others, e.g. he can use *puṣṭi* ‘acquisition’ to provide for others, and *śanti* ‘pacification’ to ward off evil beings. She states that the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* also “describes rites that are counterparts of *vidveṣaṇa* and *māraṇa*” (Rastelli, 2000, p. 343) through which the *sādhaka* can make enemies reconcile or restore a person who the *sādhaka* has killed to life. He can also help others with knowledge and learning, more specifically he has the ability make others into a poet or a sage, or bestow upon them emancipating knowledge. The *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* also states that anyone who hears him reciting the Vedas will know them by heart and prescribes practice which will make children and adults alike to become learned in the *śāstras*, and make scholars always speak in a very elaborate style (Rastelli, 2000, p. 345). Rastelli also mentions other specific means by which the *sādhaka* can help others. Notably he is said to be able to provide food and protection to caravans he travels with, while also never getting lost (Rastelli, 2000, p. 343). The text also describes in detail the creation of amulets for various purposes, some of them for general wishes such as health and happiness, but other amulets, depending on which mantra is used in making them, bestow effects like protection or fertility and aid in childbirth.

### Analysis

Turning to the tools of discourse analysis, I would say that the supernatural powers in this text are related to two different discourses, they are part of two different signifying chains. One is the discourse of the *sādhaka* as aspiring to supernatural powers for his own gain, so



he can do as he pleases. Here the element of supernatural powers is also related to the nodal point of emancipation, for as we have seen, the *sādhaka* is usually one who strives after these powers, but also that he is expected to use his powers to attain emancipation after having enjoyed his worldly powers. “The aim of the *sādhaka* is not only enjoyment, but also final emancipation (*mokṣa*, *apavarga*), and this goal can also be achieved after having mastered a *mantra*” (Rastelli, 2000, p. 345). In other words, the supernatural powers acquired through the mastering of the *mantra* are parts of a larger discourse about the *sādhaka* as an initiated person who ultimately reaches liberation.

The above listed uses of the supernatural powers for the help of others however, seem to suggest that the *sādhaka*, and the powers he attain through the *mantrasiddhi* were also part of a discourse which we can call I “client discourse”. My claim is that all of the abilities listed above show that the *sādhaka* was expected to attain to clients. As noted, the text describes how he could help various people like children, women, the sick, travelers etc. with issues of a wide range. Rastelli, as noted above, also explicitly states that he had abilities to control others which provided him with new clients. From this it seems to me that the *sādhaka* was not only one who sought out supernatural powers to use them for himself, but also to provide for clients, officiating and providing them with various services. Rastelli also points out that, after the practice which leads him to mastering the *mantra*, the *sādhaka* did not live in seclusion (Rastelli, 2000, p. 343). In this discourse, the element of supernatural powers is related to the nodal point of clients, or of service one could say, because what matters in this instance is how he can use them for the sake of others. This discourse was not restricted to the Pāñcarātra tradition either; Rastelli states about the rites for attaining the effect listed above, including the *ṣaṭkarman* rites, that they “are very popular ones is evident from the fact that they are given also in other Saṃhitās and even in texts from other traditions” (Rastelli, 2000, p. 355). This is also notable in Goudriaans treatment of the *ṣaṭkarman* rites who says they are featured in a larger number of Tantric works.

#### The *sādhaka*, the *tapasvin* and the *yogin*

In the last part of her article Rastelli compares the *sādhaka* with the *tapasvin* ‘one who performs *tapas*’, and the *yogin* concerning their access to and use of supernatural abilities.

This part of her discussion would seem to be of great interest to me, since it clearly delimits the religious specialist of the Pāñcarātra tradition against other similar figures.

Rastelli states that the designation ‘tapasvin’ here “means the ascetic who practices austerity for the purpose of acquiring supernatural, magical powers, as described in the narrative parts of the *Mahābhārata* and not the type of ascetic who renounces the world and strives for emancipation as described in the didactic parts of the *Mahābhārata* since the latter has hardly anything in common with the *sādhaka*” (Rastelli, 2000, p. 355). She refers to the book *tapas und tapasvin in den erzählenden Partien des Mahābhārata* (1986) by Monica Shee and the article *Tapo-Dhana* (1970) by Minoru Hara for the discussion of the *tapasvin* and the yogin. Hara’s article is a discussion on the adjectival compound “*tapo-dhana*” which meaning is “the man who ‘possesses tapas as his personal property,’ or ‘has a property in the form of tapas.’ He bases his article on “classical Sanskrit literature” like the *Mahābhārata*, the *Pañcatantra*, the *Hitopadeśa*, the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and others, but does not give dates for these texts. Hara states that *tapas* is a power-substance and enables the *tapasvin* “to attain his desired objects” (Hara, 1970, p. 66). What is more, the *tapasvin*, who is always an ascetic from the Brahmin class, can “rule over the three worlds, burn them down, and even control the course of the sun” (Hara, 1970, p. 66) and that he therefore is feared by ordinary people. *Tapas* is acquired by the ascetic Brahmin through various ascetic means, like fasting, self-torment and virtuous deeds (Hara, 1970, p. 65). Shee states that the effect of *tapas* is mainly described in the *Mahābhārata* as power, force, energy, and heat (Shee, 1986, p. 190) and moreover that this power is understood as being supernatural and forcefully effective, when trying to define it as “magical power” (Shee, 1986, p. 211)

Rastelli points two several differences between the *tapasvin* and the *sādhaka*. One of these regards the method of acquirement of the supernatural powers, since as she points out, even though the mastering of the *mantrasiddhi* is difficult and requires a long period of renunciation and practice, it does “not include self-tormenting practices and mortification” (Rastelli, 2000, p.356) like the practice of the *tapasvin*. She explains how both of these methods give the *sādhaka* and the *tapasvin* respectively the power to do whatever they please, with the difference that the *tapasvin*’s power can be lost. As Hara attests: “*tapas* is considered as a substance which is to be gained, but at the same time it is subject to decay and loss” (Hara, 1970, p. 62f). Accordingly, there are certain things the

*tapasvin* can not do without losing his powers, the most notable being succumbing to anger, partaking in sexual activity, or acquiring wealth or material goods, since these would be negation of his ascetic practice by which he acquires his powers. The *mantrasiddhi* however can use his powers for all of the above mentioned because his is of a different character and can not be exhausted (Rastelli, 2000, p. 356). Rastelli however also states that the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* describes a group of Vaiṣṇava *tapasvins*, but that the description of this group does not correspond to the picture of the *tapasvin* painted above: “the aim of this group is not the acquiring of magical powers, but the purification and the devotion of their life to Viṣṇu. According to the JS [*Jayākhyasaṃhitā*] *tapas* is a means that purifies and may also evoke the grace of God” (Rastelli, 2011, p. 356f).

Rastelli then proceeds to explain how the yogin is described in the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*, and states that he is described as an ambiguous figure.

On the one hand, his refuge (*gati*) is God; he always thinks of God as being present in his heart; [...] he does not even think of something that is harmful to other; and, when he attains emancipation, he achieves unity and identity with God. On the other hand, *yogins* are described as cruel beings that abide in the sky (Rastelli, 2011, p. 357).

She explains this ambivalence with the idea that the primary goal for the yogin is emancipation, but that he will acquire supernatural powers on the path towards this goal, and refers to the *vibhūti* chapter in the *Yogasūtra*. She then refers to a “later” text on yoga, the *Yogatattvopaniṣad*, which states that supernatural powers which resemble the ones attained through *mantrasiddhi* can be acquired by the yogin through the practices of *mantrayoga* and *haṭhayoga*, and that this power can be lost if the yogin engages in sexual practice. After this Rastelli concludes that the yogin is inferior the *sādhaka* in power because he can lose his powers, and because chapter 19 in the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* states that the *yogins* are afraid of the *sādhaka* who has mastered the *mantrasiddhi*. She also claims that “In contrast to the *sādhaka*, the main aim of the *yogin* is emancipation” (Rastelli, 2011, p. 359). She also again states that for the yogin, the supernatural powers are by-product of the practice that leads the yogin towards the goal of emancipation, and are seen as obstacles because they can divert him from this goal, while they are the main goal of the *sādhaka*.

I do not agree with Rastelli’s conclusion about the difference between the *sādhaka*, the *tapasvin* and the yogin. Referring to the discourse analysis from Laclau & Mouffe, it is

clear that the article constructs an antagonism between the *sādhaka* on the one hand, and the *tapasvin* and the *yogin* on the other hand. Regarding the *tapasvin*, Rastelli as explained tries to show him as a person with similar powers as the *sādhaka*, with the difference being that the *sādhaka* is more powerful since he can do whatever he pleases and never loses his power, something the *tapasvin* can not. Concerning the *yogin*, she states that he differs from the *sādhaka* in that he is not really concerned with the attainment of supernatural powers, as the *sādhaka*, but the attainment of supernatural powers. What is more, the powers of the *yogin* are also inferior to those of the *sādhaka*, because he can lose them and not do whatever he pleases with them. Looking at the descriptions of the *sādhaka*, the *tapasvin*, and the *yogin* she depicts in her article however, it seems clear to me that these three terms can not be constructed as clear cut categories like Rastelli does. I would rather propose to see these three terms as ‘floating elements’ which as explained in chapter 3 means nodal points which acquire a different meaning according to which discourse they are in, and which other elements they are related too. This can be said of every element of every discourse, but floating signifiers as earlier stated are elements who are particularly open for meaning ascriptions of different kinds. Even though using these terms as clear cut categories does not seem to work, it is worth noting that the discussion by Rastelli shows that there were other types of religious specialists which also were renown for having supernatural powers, and that these can be ascribed characteristics which sometimes are contrasted with those of the *sādhaka*, so he comes out as the “better” option.

## Chapter 6: Bhakti miracles vs. yogin magic?

### Introduction

In the article “My Miracle Trumps Your Magic: Encounters with *Yogīs* in Sufi and *Bhakti* Hagiographical Literature”, which also appears in the anthology *Yoga Powers – Extraordinary Capacities Attained Through Meditation and Concentration* (Jacobsen, 2012), assistant professor of religious studies at the New York University Patton Burchett discusses hagiographical texts which describe “contests” of supernatural powers between bhakti or Sufi saints and yogins, most often from the Nāth tradition. In this paper, I will concentrate on the depictions of how the supernatural powers of the bhakti devotees are described. First I will give a description of the aims of Burchett’s article and then give a short presentation of the Bhakti and Nāth traditions. Following this I will give account for the analytical categories of ‘miracle’ and ‘magic’ Burchett uses, before I go on to a presentation of the stories found in the texts Burchett discusses. Lastly follows my own analysis of some of these stories, which will be further expounded on in chapter 7.

### The aim of the article

Burchett states that the article has several aims. He wants to show that both Sufi and Bhakti traditions of 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century north India make a key distinction between the categories of miracle and magic by examining Sufi and Bhakti Hagiographical literature. Furthermore, he wants to use this discussion to show how north Indian bhakti was heavily influenced by the Sufi tradition, and that both played a role in the marginalization of the tantric movement, especially the Nāth yogins (Burchett, 2012, p. 345).

The scope of his article is large, and I will for the most part focus on his work on Bhakti hagiographic stories featuring displays of supernatural powers. I will however give a short presentation of the main points of the article, to situate the discourse I will be discussing later.

### Sufism, *bhakti* and the Nāth tradition

Burchett starts out by refuting the idea of a single Bhakti movement as it is often narrated by scholars and devotees alike. He claims that the narrative that the bhakti movement began in the south, and then swept upwards to northern India throughout the centuries is not correct. He argues that there was not necessarily a coherence and continuity in bhakti traditions of different regions, and that this narrative about one collective movement is a later construct. Instead he proposes to see the bhakti movement (he refers only to the north Indian one) as a “diverse set of communities linked” by emphasis on emotional personal devotion to a god, often expressed through song, production of literature based on the lives and poetry of some of their saints, and their opposition to a form of religiosity exemplified by the Nāth yogins, which focused on rituals, *tapas* (austerities), and the personal acquiring of power. He further refers to John Stratton Hawley and points out that the function of this narrative of the migration of the bhakti movement from the south to the north, was a way for the north Indian bhakti traditions to claim old age to their traditions. As seen Burchett sees this idea as a construct and claims the bhakti movement of north India has had much influence from Islam and the Sufi movement in particular. He points to the similarities between earlier Sufi and later Bhakti writings, both hagiographical and poetic (Burchett, 2012, p. 347-349). This debate, in which amount north Indian bhakti was influenced by Sufism, and if it was a continuity of the south Indian bhakti movement, is outside the scope of this study. What is more interesting is Burchett’s next statement, where he claims the tantric movements, especially “tantric *yogis* and ascetics, who often seem to have served as a crucial foil for emerging conceptions of *bhakti* self-identity” (Burchett, 2012, p. 349). This statement is a very interesting one regarding the topic of this study, and I will discuss it more later on. I will now give a short introduction of these yogins.

### The Nāth tradition

The yogins Burchett is referring to in the statement above, and the ones featuring in the hagiographic texts he discusses are “most clearly represented by the tantric asceticism and magic of the pervasive Nāth *yogis* of the day” (Burchett, 2012, p. 347). Burchett describes the Nāth tradition as “Not a monolithic order, but rather a confederation of ascetics groups claiming a similar body of Śaiva and Siddha tradition” (Burchett, 2012, p. 353), which first

emerged in the 13<sup>th</sup> century centering around the legendary founder Gorakhnāth. He states that they built on certain elements of earlier tantric cults, namely the *haṭhayogic* techniques of bodily posture and control known as ‘hydraulic dynamics’ along with alchemical practices. These were used and for the attainment of this-worldly goals like immortality and power. For further information, he refers to David Gordon White’s monography *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (1996).<sup>17</sup> I will use this and William Pinch’s study *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empires* (2006), on which Burchett’s article also relies, to give a short overview of the Nāth tradition.

White refers to this tradition as the Nāth *Siddhas*, and begins his tracing with an explanation of the term *Siddha*. He notes that the common noun *siddha*<sup>18</sup> means ‘realised’ or ‘perfected one’ and was used for a practitioner who had realized his goal of supernatural powers (*siddhi*) and immortality. Furthermore, the term *Siddha* became known as a designation for devotees in various religious groups, among them devotees of Śiva, alchemists, Buddhist follower of Tantra and “most especially, a mainly north Indian group known as the Nāth Siddhas” (White, 1996, p. 2). Followers of this tradition are variously designated as *Yogi* or *Jogi*, which is too broad a term in White’s eyes, *Kānphaṭa Yogi*, which is too narrow since it only applies to a specific order within the tradition, *Gorakhnāthi* in reference of the alleged founder of the order (even though he is not deemed so by all of the various orders) and Nāth *Siddha*. The latter term is the one preferred by White (White, 1996, p. 99f). Burchett variously calls them Nāth Siddhas, Nāth yogi or yogi, and I will use the term Nāth yogin.

The term *Siddha* is even more complicated because it was also a designation for a group of semi-divine “perfected human” who have been venerated since the beginning of the common Era. These beings were thought to live in an elevated world full of sensual bliss, which has also been the goal of various religious practices. They were venerated by followers of various traditions, including the Nāth tradition. Indeed, instead of merely worshipping them and hoping for their favor the Nāth yogins sought to develop means to

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<sup>17</sup> White also defines the Nāth *sampradaya* ‘school’ as “not a monolithic order, but rather a confederation of groups claiming a similar body of Śaiva and Siddha tradition” which emerged around the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and which claimed Goraknāth or one of nine other semi-divine Nāths as their founding figure” (White, 1996, p.90). In other words, it seems clear that Burchett relies heavily on White’s understanding of Nāth yogins.

<sup>18</sup> Which originates from the same verbal root *sādh/sadh* ‘to realize, succeed’ as the term *siddhi* (White, 1996, s.354 note 4).

become such a semi-divine being, and this of course included supernatural powers (White, 1996, p. 4).

William Pinch writes about the emerging conflict between yogins and *bhaktas* ‘one adhering to *bhakti*’ in the Mughal period in North India in his book *Warrior Ascetics and Indian Empires* (2006). He describes the medieval yogins as follows: “*Yogis* were concerned not with the niceties of group identity in relation to an external God, but with how to cultivate supernormal powers within and thereby attain immortality” (Pinch, 2006, p. 56). He furthermore points out how these were disdained by the *bhaktas* who lectured humble and loving devotion to a god. They saw the ideals of the yogins, who wanted to become gods and acquire supernatural powers through haṭhayogic and tantric practices, as repulsive. This disdain is expressed in an abundance of stories where yogins who are defeated by *bhaktas* in contests of supernatural nature (Pinch, 2006, p. 211). Furthermore, Pinch notes that the yogins of this tradition “emerge only as a negative imprint in devotional literature” (Pinch, 2006, p. 196), and that there is no literature describing similar encounters written by the Nāth yogins themselves. The discourse presented in the stories below is in other words only seen from one side of the conflict.

#### The distinction between miracle and magic

As explained the aim of Burchett’s article is to show that Bhakti religions made a distinction between the categories of miracle and magic, and that this distinction can be traced to the Sufi traditions in India. He notes that the word miracle stems from the Latin *mirari* ‘to wonder at’ and *mirus* ‘wonder-ful’, and that it has generally been used as an expression for divine intervention. Furthermore, Abrahamic religions have used this as a category for extraordinary powers which distinguishes it from ‘magic’, which is also a category of extraordinary powers without root in the divine. He claims that “the category of ‘miracle’ is not South Asian in origin and seems to have no exact counterpart in Indian sources prior to the thirteenth century (Burchett, 2012, p. 358). Rather than the distinctions between powers given by god and others, Indian culture has understood extraordinary powers as being acquirable by multiple sources. From this he concludes that the ultimately Abrahamic distinction between the categories of miracle and magic were introduced to Hinduism in the bhakti Hagiographies via their link to Sufism (Burchett, 2012, p. 358-



360). Discussing the claim that this distinction came to India from the Abrahamic religions is outside the scope of this story, however I will examine if this distinction is there in the stories Burchett mentions, and what function they might have.

#### Stories of Sufi and bhakti saints

Burchett presents several stories about Sufi and *bhakti* devotees performing miracles through the power of god. The stories he presents can be roughly categorized into two different forms. One being stories where the devotee performs a miracle that exceeds the supernatural deeds of a yogin. The others being stories where the devotees state that such ‘miracles’ are superfluous because what matter is the devotion to god. These latter ones still often feature the devotee performing a miracle of some sort, usually as response to a threat to their lives. I will give a short description of the instances he mentions, before discussing some of the stories from the *bhakti* hagiographical literature in more detail below.

#### Saints vs. yogins

Burchett relays several stories in which devotees are challenged by yogins to a contest of supernatural powers. The first one is a levitation contest, found in a 14<sup>th</sup> century text. In this story, the Sufi devotee, Shaykh Nizam ud-Din Auliya of Delhi, bests the nameless yogin through calling on the power of his god. After seeing this, the yogin admits defeated and states that the Shaykhs power, being bestowed by god, are greater than his own (Burchett, 2012, p. 355). We read about the *bhakta* Nāmdev who bests the Nāth yogin Jñāndev in aquiring water (more on this below), and then later a story about Jñāndev, now described as a *bhakti* saint. Here he is in a supernatural competition with another Nāth yogin, Chāngdev, who rides on a tiger and uses snakes as whips, but Jñāndev bests him by making a wall move forward to interfere (Burchett, 2012, 364-368). Burchett also discusses on story from the 1730’s about Guru Nānak from what he calls “the *bhakti* hagiographical literature of the Sikhs” (Burchett, 2012, p. 370), where Guru Nānak visits a Nāth location and has a hide-and-seek competition with the Nāth yogin Bhangarnāth. Guru Nānak merges into the four elements and becomes invisible, and not even the semi-

divine Siddhas Bhangarnāth has called upon to help him can find Guru Nānak. After the Siddhas admit defeat, Guru Nānak lectures them about how all supernatural prowess are fruitless and futile in comparison to the limitless powers of god's gifts.

In all the stories above, a *bhakta* devotee (Burchett does not explicitly state this, but it is clear that he reckons early Sikh texts to be a part of the North Indian *bhakti* tradition) willingly enters into a situation where his supernatural powers, bestowed by god, are measured against those of the yogins. The feats the *bhakti* devotees perform are not only better than the yogin's, they outclass them by far. For example, in the first story, the yogin is able to levitate a few meters into the Air, while the Shayk flies out of his palace in every direction he pleases. Burchett states how this shows the idea that "While *yogis* may obtain powers through their austerities and ascetic practice, they are hard earned and limited, unlike the infinite power of god for which the Sufi is a conduit" (Burchett, 2012, p. 356). Here, and in the other stories, we see that the ability of the yogins to perform supernatural feats is not disputed. However, the superiority of those who rely on god to help them perform such feat is shown clearly. In the next stories I will describe, we see a somewhat different pattern, in that the devotees here depicted do not wish to perform any supernatural feats to begin with.

#### The superfluosity of supernatural powers

Burchett refers to several stories of the second category, in which devotees mark supernatural powers as superfluous. The first one he relays is a story set in the year 1400, where the Shaykh Sayyid Muhammad Gesudaraz refuses the supernatural gifts offered by the Nāth yogin Bālgundāi. The yogin offers the Shaykh various supernatural gifts such as the secrets of alchemy, a substance which gives the ability to turn invisible, and a display of the yogin's ability by making the Shaykh's cot move by itself. The Shaykh rejects all these offers with the argument that such superfluities are of no use to one who has taken refuge in god (Burchett, 2012, p. 361). Most of the stories however, have the Sufi and *bhakti* saints proclaim supernatural feats as superfluous, but then performing them nonetheless. The first example of this Burchett mentions is a story about a yogin gifting a gold-producing philosopher's stone to a Sufi Shaykh, who considers it worthless and throws it into a stream. When the yogin goes to find the stone in the stream, he discovers there thousands

of philosopher's stones, and realizing the Shayks superiority ask to become his disciple and learn to overcome such worldly desires (Burchett, 2012, p. 362). In the *bhakti* hagiographical literature, we hear about several bhakti saints who upon threats to their lives, perform miracles through the help of god. Burchett relays a story about Tulsīdās who is requested to demonstrate his supernatural powers for the Mughal emperor. Tulsīdās refuses, and is sent to prison by the emperor. Upon this, Tulsīdās prays to Hanumān who answers by sending an army of monkeys to “wreak havoc upon the palace” (Burchett, 2012, p. 373). The story ends with the emperor bowing down to Tulsīdās in shame. Burchett also mentions a similar story about the Shah Sikander Lodi upon complaints from both Hindus and Muslims orders the 15<sup>th</sup> century *bhakti* saint Kabīr executed. Kabīr is consecutively bound by chains and thrown into the river, set on fire, and stood before a frenzied battle elephant, but each time emerges unscathed. After this Sikander admits the superiority of Kabīr's god. (Burchett, 2012, p. 374-375) Burchett states that these stories, in which the devotee refuses to perform supernatural feats show that both Sufis and *bhaktas* considered such feats “futile since they are done for man's ends, not out of love for God” (Burchett, 2012, p. 373). The only thing that matters for the authors of these stories are the devotion to god. This god then, out of mercy and compassion to their devotees, comes to their aid, and they perform miraculous feats. We will also see this trope clearly in the text I will be discussing in more detail below.

#### [Performing miracles with god's help](#)

In the work *Stories of Indian Saints: English translation of Mahipati's Marathi Bhaktavijaya* (1933) by Justin Abbott and Narhar Godbole we can find the story about Nāmdev and Jñāndev and having to acquire water by supernatural means. These two, the *bhakti* saint in this work under the name 'Nama' and the Nāth yogin Jñāndev under the name 'Dnyandev' are traveling together through the desert of Marwad. They are overcome with thirst and find a deep well, and need a method to get the water out of it. Jñāndev uses his yoga powers and reduces his own size, so he can climb down the well and drink the water. Nama can think of no way to obtain the water, so Jñāndev offers to bring him some through the same means he had used earlier. Nāmdev however refuses this and tells him “Have patience for a moment and see a miracle” (Abbott and Godbole, 1933, p. 188). He

then prays to Kṛṣṇa and cries for his help. It is related how Kṛṣṇa hears his prayer and rushes to Nāmdev's aid, filling the well and making it overflow. Seeing this Jñāndev admits that he does not understand how Nāmdev has made god his debtor, so he would come to his aid and perform "this seemingly impossible miracle" (Abbott and Godbole, 1933, p. 190). Burchett remarks that again in this story "the power of God, and of devotion to God, is shown as dramatically superior to the powers of yoga" (Burchett, 2012, p. 365).

Earlier on in the same work as quoted above, the author relates another story of Nāmdev performing a miracle, this time not in a competition with a yogin, but as a response to the threat on his life. This story takes place in Delhi, where Nāmdev gains a great assembly listening to his songs and prayers, all playing, singing and dancing along with him. Further the authors relate how news of Nāmdev and his gathering reached the ears of the "evil-minded" Muhammadan king who lived in the city. He goes to Nāmdev's gathering and amidst them kills a cow, requesting of Nāmdev: "What is it you are singing, you heretic? If you will raise this cow again to life I shall regard your songs as true. If you do not bring the cow to life, I shall kill you with my own hand" (Abbott and Godbole, 1933, p. 172). Nāmdev answers that it will take him four days to raise the cow to life, and sets about praying to Kṛṣṇa for help. After four days Kṛṣṇa come to him and raises the cow to life, even stating that he would have done so immediately had Nāmdev not said it would take him four days. After the king hears this, he pays obeisance to Nāmdev, who is praised by the assembly for his feat. (Abbott and Godbole, 1933, p. 171-175)

In the two stories above we see the supernatural abilities Nāmdev uses as explained as coming from god, whereas the powers of the Nāth yogin Jñāndev are described as powers acquired through his Yoga practice. As stated above, Burchett claims the texts clearly distinguish between the two, and establishes a category of 'miracle' being the supernatural powers originating in god and 'magic' being the supernatural powers acquired through the practice of the yogin. I concur with Burchett in that there is a clear-cut difference between these two categories, however I disagree with his construction of the two opposing terms 'miracle' and 'magic'. His use of the term 'miracle' for the supernatural powers attained by the *bhakti* saints through the grace of god is in my view an apt description. As we see above, this is the term used in the translation of the *Bhaktavijaya*. Furthermore, Burchett states that in contrast to the terms used for the yogin's supernatural power, the supernatural

powers of the devotees in the hagiographic literature is often described by the term *karāmāt*, which is used to denote miracles (Burchett, 2012, p. 356).

Using the term ‘magic’ as designation for the supernatural powers of the yogins in these stories however, is something I find problematic. In the book *Naming the witch : magic, ideology, & stereotype in the ancient world* (2007) Kimberly Stratton discusses the term ‘magic’. She claims that magic is not a given category of certain practices, but a way for people in specific cultures to label certain practices, individuals or groups. The idea of magic is in this way created, shaped, sustained and changed by social discourse in a specific culture. Furthermore, both the claim that someone else is using magic, and the claim that oneself uses, or has the ability to use magic, is tied to notions of power because magic is seen as an illicit, dangerous, and/or subversive power. Likewise, Otto & Stausberg, in the introduction to their book *Defining magic – A reader* (2013) state that throughout its history the term has been used to denounce certain practices as something negative, illicit, impure etc. on account of both representatives of religious groups as well as by scholars. The term and its uses have therefore been thoroughly criticized by scholars, both on the grounds that the term is used in a derogatory way, that it is not used in the correct way or that it should not be used at all (Otto and Stausberg, 2013 p. 1-5). The yogins supernatural powers are not described in this way in the hagiographical stories Burchett examines. Burchett states that they are described as futile, trivial, and superfluous, and inferior to the power of god, but not that they are seen as inherently illicit or dangerous (Burchett, 2012, p. 373).

### Analysis

In the two stories relayed in the *Bhaktavijaya* work, and in the other stories Burchett refers to, we can see the two different categories of miracle stories Burchett identifies in his article. In both of these the authors establish an antagonistic relation between the *bhakti* saint and the opponent. This opponent is either a yogin possessing supernatural powers, or someone skeptic of the *bhakti* tradition, usually a ruler, who the *bhakti* saint has to convince about the superiority of the *bhakti* tradition over others. In chapter 3 I explained how the identity of an element is established through its relation to something that is different of it, and that this difference constitutes the border of antagonism between the two elements. My claim is that the category of the miraculous powers of the *bhakti*, which is distinguished by

being bestowed by god and not attained through yogic or other ascetic practice, and by therefore being far superior to the supernatural power of the yogin, can only be constructed this way by relating it to ‘Other’ which in this case is the supernatural power of the yogin. Burchett’s statement that the yogins served as a foil for the emergence of the *bhakti* identity also clearly shows this. In the stories discussed above there are also several instances where the supernatural power of the *bhakti* saint is not showcased as part of a contest with a yogin, but after a disclamation from the *bhakta* where he states that such powers are superfluous and that all that matters is the devotion to god. These types of stories again serve to establish the element of “devotion to god” as better than anything else. The *bhakti* saints are constructed as different from the ones requesting the supernatural powers in that they give them no heed, and are then shown as being superior in that they still possess these kinds of power. Thus, they are given their meaning, and a superiority, by their negation of the yogin, who is shown to have the attainment of such supernatural powers as his ultimate goal.

## Chapter 7: Summary and conclusion

### Outline

In this chapter I will discuss the material presented in the preceding chapters according to the theory described in chapter 3 of this thesis. Before going into a discussion of the concept of interdiscursivity I will give a summary of the analysis done in the preceding chapters. Lastly, I will discuss how the notions of supernatural powers discussed in this thesis were parts of struggles for power.

### Summary of the preceding chapters

In the chapter presenting Malinar's discussion of supernatural powers in the *Mahābhārata* we saw the element of supernatural powers being given its meaning through relations to a variety of different nodal points. In the story of Śuka, we saw supernatural powers being related to the idea of nodal point of liberation, here conceptualized as piercing through the disc of the sun. The element of supernatural powers is again related to the nodal point of liberation in chapter 12.289 of the *Mahābhārata*, only here liberation is conceptualized as living in a state where one controls the unmanifest matter or the universe, otherwise known as *prakṛtilaya*. In chapter 12.228 supernatural powers are again related to the nodal point of liberation, this time conceptualized as the liberating knowledge of the distinction between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. In this case, the relation differs from those earlier mentioned, in that the relation is one of negation; supernatural powers are described as something that is attained on the path to liberation, but something that has to be given up to achieve emancipation. This is different from chapter 12.289 where the element of supernatural powers are equated to liberation, the state of liberation described in this chapter is defined by having access to such supernatural powers. In the last part of the *Mahābhārata* Malinar discusses, supernatural powers are not related to a nodal point of liberation, but to the idea of Kṛṣṇa as the supreme being. As related earlier, the idea of supernatural powers here become crucial to the conceptualization of Kṛṣṇa as a supreme being distinct from and

superior to any other god, which becomes crucial to the understanding of god for *bhakti* devotees.

In the chapter about the *sādhaka* as a *mantrasiddhi*, the element of supernatural powers gets its meaning through two different discourses. The first is the discourse of the *sādhaka*'s own personal goal, described as both *bhukti* and *mukti*, which both are achieved through the practice that lets him master the *mantra*. As discussed, my claim is that the supernatural powers described in this chapter are also part of a discourse about the *sādhaka* as an officiant who offered services to his clients, which can be seen by the described effects his supernatural powers can lead to.

In hagiographic literature discussed by Burchett we see the element of supernatural powers being split into two distinctive categories, i. e. into two different elements. One of these is the element of supernatural powers related to the yogins, and especially to the Nāth yogins. For them, supernatural powers, and especially immortality, are seen as the goal of their practice. This element of the supernatural powers as conceived by the yogins then acts as a foil to the element of supernatural powers as it is conceived by the *bhakti* saints. For them supernatural powers is not something acquired through practice but something bestowed by god, and rather than being their goal, supernatural powers are seen as unimportant, and only serve to show the *bhakti* saints' superiority over the yogins.

### Interdiscursivity

Before discussing the question of how the element of supernatural powers works in discourses of power, I will give a short comment on interdiscursivity, and especially interdiscursivity leading to ambivalence in the discourses discussed above. As mentioned in chapter 3, Fairclough describes the term interdiscursivity as being how a text is shaped through discursive conventions. In other words, how the elements in a specific text are given meaning through a relation to various discourses. If the elements are given their meaning by being related directly to another text, Fairclough terms it intertextuality. What is notable for the discourses I have discussed in this thesis, is that Fairclough states that if the various text or discourses elements of a given text are related to via interdiscursivity are contradictory, then it leads to a text with an ambivalent or contradictory meaning. Using the tools from Laclau & Mouffe one could say that the elements in such discourses, in a



higher degree than others, become overdetermined; they are given a surplus of meaning by being related to various different elements and discourses. As I have shown in this thesis, this seems to be the case in the texts I have discussed in preceding chapters.

As discussed, the element of supernatural powers is given a variety of meaning through different relations in the *Mahābhārata*. This, using the idea of interdiscursivity, can be stated to be symptomatic of the fact that the *Mahābhārata*, as stated earlier, is an incredibly long and complex text, composed by a plethora of authors through several centuries. Thus, it is shaped by a multitude of various discourses. We have seen that especially discourses concerning the systems of Yoga and Sāṃkhya have shaped the ideas about supernatural powers in the *Mahābhārata*. It is also here worth noting that these two systems at the time of the *Mahābhārata* were not yet clearly differentiated, and that the text also is shaped by conflicting discourses of what constitutes the system of Sāṃkhya and Yoga, and if they are two separate systems or not (see e.g. (Larson, 1979)). This ambivalence in those discourses also contributes to the overdetermination of the element of supernatural powers in the *Mahābhārata*.

In the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*, which as Rastelli states also is a compilation of texts written by various authors, we also see how interdiscursivity leads to overdetermination of certain elements. Most notable for this thesis are the expressed attitudes to the acquirement of supernatural powers through the *mantrasiddhi* by the *sādhaka*, and the usage of the *ṣaṭkarman* rites. As noted, chapters 3-5 of the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* describe the supernatural effects attainable by the *sādhaka* as hindrances to his goal of attaining emancipation, and express caution in regards to, and in one case forbids, the use of the *ṣaṭkarman* rites. The statements stand in contradiction to the treatment of supernatural powers in the rest of the text. Rastelli claims this part of the text is written by other authors than the rest of the text, and we can attest that also here interdiscursivity leads to an overdetermination of the element of supernatural powers.

There does not seem to be as much ambivalence concerning the element of supernatural powers in the hagiographical literature discussed by Burchett. Here the meaning of supernatural elements as something that can be achieved through various practices, but superior if achieved through the grace of god, and the same time not something to strive for in any case, seem to be fairly fixed. Using terms from Laclau and

Mouffe, one can say that the authors of these text have succeeded in a hegemonic intervention which has fixed the meaning of the element of supernatural powers.

### Power struggles

Now for the question of how the element of supernatural powers can be said to be a part of discourses of power. In chapter 3 I relayed Fairclough's theory of discourse. Fairclough states that discourse constitutes and constructs social structure, and thus also shapes social identities, social relations between people, and systems of knowledge and belief. On account of this, the meaning of an element in a discourse becomes instructive for the abovementioned, because changing discursive elements can lead to a change in one or several discourses, which again facilitates a change in identities, systems of knowledge and belief, or social relations. This way, discursive practice can both restructure or sustain power relations. Since the texts I have discussed in this thesis stem from a time several centuries to several millennia ago, it is difficult to know much about specific power relations in their time. Nevertheless, I will try to give an account of how the discourses I have discussed were parts of power struggles.

### Mahābhārata

As we have seen, the element of supernatural powers in the *Mahābhārata* is part of several texts where we see a conflict between and within the traditions of Yoga and Sāṃkhya about what constitutes liberation, and how it is to be achieved. In one of these texts, chapter 12.289, this conflict between Yoga and Sāṃkhya is even mentioned explicitly when Bhīṣma states: "The followers of Sāṃkhya praise the Sāṃkhya system and those regenerate persons that are Yogins praise the Yoga system. For establishing the superiority of their respective systems, each calls its own system to be better" (Roy, 1891, p. 570). More than attesting that there was a conflict, we can also see that certain meanings given to the element of supernatural powers have come out of the conflict as "victorious". In the story of Śuka we saw supernatural powers acquired through the means of yoga being related to the Vedic idea of liberation as piercing the disk of the sun. This is an idea that can be found several places in the *Mahābhārata*, but is not found in newer texts on yoga (see chapter 3

in White, 2009). The notion of *prakṛtilaya* as the final goal of liberation is also an idea one can find traces of in the *Mahābhārata*, but which by this time and this work also is seen as inferior to other notions of liberation in the Sāṃkhya system (Jacobsen, 1999, p. 273). An idea related to that of *prakṛtilaya* is the notion that liberation is perceived as a state in which the individual becomes a god through his supernatural powers. This idea can be found not only in traditions of Sāṃkhya, but also certain Śaiva sectarian traditions. According to Gavin Flood the Śaiva Siddhānta taught that the soul upon liberation “becomes equal to Śiva [...], possessing all of Śiva’s powers of omniscience and omnipotence” (Flood, 2005, p. 211) Alexis Sanderson states that the final goal of the Pāśupata tradition was liberation, meaning the end of suffering, but that this state also was “conceived positively as the assimilation of Rudra’s [Śiva’s] qualities of omniscience, omnipotence and so forth at the time of one’s death” (Sanderson, 1988, p. 664). Scholars seem to disagree however, on how much the both the Śaiva Siddhānta and Pāśupata traditions focused on the acquirement of supernatural powers, and if they indeed led to liberation. Sanderson does not mention the attainment of supernatural powers any further in his treatment on the *pāśupatas*. When writing about the *Māntramarga*, which the Śaiva Siddhānta was a part of, he states that it, though accommodating “the quest for liberation, is essentially concerned with the quest for supernatural experiences (bhoga)” (Sanderson, 1988, p. 667). He does however not mention either supernatural powers or the idea of liberation as becoming a godlike being in his short treatment on the tradition. Diwakar Acharya on the other hand in his essay on the *pāśupatas* in *Brill’s Encyclopaedia of Hinduism* states that “they acquired supernatural powers in their lifetime” with their practice (Acharya, 2011, p. 460), but does not mention the idea that they become godlike. Gavin Flood does not mention supernatural powers or a godlike liberation state at all in his short description of the *pāśupatas* (Flood, 2005, p. 206f). Geoffrey Samuel on the other hand, in his work *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra – Indic religions to the Thirteenth Century* (2008) relays that it is significant that the *pāśupata* was expected to gain what he calls ‘magical ritual powers’ and that “The powers achieved are essentially those of Śiva himself” (Samuel, 2008, p. 242). Looking at these different statements it might seem that the Pāśupata and Śaiva Siddhānta tradition held the same kind of conflict of tradition as the Sāṃkhya and yoga ones, with some strata of them focusing more on liberation and some of powers, even though both were achieved through becoming (like) Śiva.

All of the abovementioned discourses, where the element of supernatural powers either leads to or is equated with liberation, seem to have decreased in popularity in favor of the interpretation of this element as we saw it in chapter 12.228 in the *Mahābhārata*. This chapter states that supernatural powers are acquired on the path towards liberation, but that these powers are a distraction, they should not be used, and have to be given up before the final state of liberation. This conception of supernatural powers is seen in most later text on yoga and Sāṃkhya, as attested by Jacobsen (see Jacobsen, 1999) and Pflueger, who states that most of the commentaries on the *Yogasūtra* do not display any interest in the supernatural powers said to be attained by the yogin through his practice (Pflueger, 2005).

Lastly, the discourse of Kṛṣṇa as a supreme being in the *Bhagavadgītā*, which we have seen was conceptualized through him being a master of supernatural powers, is a notion that has had a large impact on Indian tradition. As Narayanan explains, the idea of Kṛṣṇa, or another Vaiṣṇava deity, as a supreme ruler who can bestow liberation upon devotees is a central part, a nodal point, of the *bhakti* tradition, which gained greatly in followers from the first centuries CE and throughout the millennia (Narayanan, 2010).

### *Jayākhyasamhitā*

In chapter 5 I explained how the element of supernatural powers in the *Jayākhyasamhitā* is part of a larger “client-discourse” where the *sādhaka* is expected to provide services for various people. For the discussion of the Pāñcarātra tradition in a discourse of power, it is notable that the *sādhaka* is said to be able to provide certain services that would seem of great interest to a ruler, or someone who wants to rule. For example, the *Jayākhyasamhitā* includes descriptions of the *sādhaka*’s ability to destroy enemy armies, make someone a king, ensure success and victory in fights, and the ability to ascertain victory at the royal court or in instance of law and disputations (Rastelli, 2000, p. 341). This implies that the *sādhaka* had noble and royal patronage, and this is attested by White, who states that Pāñcarātra initiation was “was administered to kings by Vaiṣṇava sectarians throughout medieval India” (White, 2003, p. 6). What is more, tantric practitioners like the *sādhaka* of the Pāñcarātra tradition were often becoming appointed as official chaplains for kings and

other royals, in addition to being “independent practitioners called upon at times of need” (Samuel, 2008, p. 299).

### Hagiographic *bhakti* literature

That the struggle between *bhakti* saints and Nāth yogins described in the hagiographic *bhakti* literature of north India was an outcome of real struggles for power between these two groups, is attested by Burchett who states that the hagiographic stories “seemingly illustrate just how clear to everyone this confrontation [i.e. the confrontation between adherents to the *bhakti* tradition and the tantric yogins] was becoming in the north Indian religious landscape of the time” (Burchett, 2012, p. 365). Pinch also points out that following the growing popularity of *bhakti* with both the ordinary people and the elite there emerged a conflict with the political power of the yogins of that region. He also explains that the *bhakti* condemnation of the yogins found in the *bhakti* literature was a product of a socio-political state where “Indian rulers were allying themselves [...] with the symbols, structures, and proponents of this devotional belief to shore up their claims to political legitimacy” and that this royal power stood in contrast to the political and military power that was made up of bands of itinerant yogins across northern India at the time (Pinch, 2006, p. 195f).

### Concluding remarks

As I stated in the first chapter of this thesis, the aim of my study is to show that supernatural powers are not unimportant, irrelevant or self-explanatory, but that they should be studied within the context of Indian culture, just as any other aspect of Indian traditions. Through my discussion of the supernatural powers described in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*, and the hagiographic *bhakti* literature, I have shown how supernatural powers are part of larger discourses of powers, that their inclusion in such discourses gives them various functions, and that they can be an important part of constructing those discourses, and through them, society. Thus, I stand by my claim that supernatural powers are worth studying for anyone wanting to understand the larger context of Indian religious and cultural traditions.

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## Abstract in Norwegian

Denne oppgaven begynte med oppdagelsen at det ikke er skrevet mye forskningslitteratur om oppnåelse av overnaturlige evner i Indisk religion, selv om det er mange tekster som nevner personer som innehar disse evnene. Dette er fordi forskere som regel ser på disse evnene som overtro eller levninger fra en svunnen arkaisk tid. Som respons på dette ønsket jeg å undersøke enkelte tekstinstanser der en kunne finne beskrivelser av individer med slike evner. Siden feltet av tekstene er så store, og mye ikke er oversatt, valgte jeg å basere meg hovedsakelig på sekundærlitteratur. I denne oppgaven tar jeg for meg tre artikler som handler om tekster fra 3 forskjellige indiske tradisjoner. Jeg ser på diskusjoner om beskrivelser av overnaturlige evner oppnådd gjennom yoga i *Mahābhārata*, gjennom praksisen av *mantrasiddhi* i Pāñcarātra-teksten *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*, samt en diskusjon om beskrivelser av kategoriene «magi» og «mirakel» i hagiografiske tekster om *bhakti*-helgener fra Nord India. Deretter diskuterer jeg disse ved hjelp av diskursanalyse og diskursteori, for å vise at de overnaturlige evnene beskrevet i disse tekstene er del av større diskurser som alle handler om makt.