

Sufic Perception of Yoga

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Yoga belongs to the traditional stratum of Indian religious traditions traced back to the Vedic scriptures and is the core essence of Indian philosophy and religions. In parallel to literary and historical sources of the close contact of Islamic Sufis with yogis, we have sufficient textual evidences of speculative content of yoga system beginning with Al-Bīrūnī's Arabic translation of Patanjali's *Yogasūtra* in terms of Greek philosophy and Abu'l Faḥl's detailed description of the contents in Persian gazetteer of Akbar's empire. In addition to the texts on classical yoga, Persian translations cover *Goraḥṣaśataka* and other Natha literatures.

Among a large body of secular and religious Sanskrit texts rendered into Arabic and Persian, the most widely circulated group of texts on yoga are the *Amṛta Kuṇḍa* and adapted literary texts. Detailed studies reveal that they follow the yogico-tantric doctrines and disciplines of the Natha tradition. For an adequate understanding of these texts, we found a unique manuscript entitled (*Khulāṣa al-Khulāṣa (Sāra Tattva)*). It is a compendium of the extracts of previous Persian translations of Sanskrit classics on various subjects and Islamic works adapted by Indian scientific and religio-philosophical works by Muslim court writers and Sufi writers. This compendium provides comprehensive explanation for the textual ambiguities present in the *Amṛtakūṇḍa* and represents how the yogico-tantric disciplines and theological ideas are shared by Sufis.

Rather than the dominant tendency to evaluate the interaction between Sufis and yogis in the context of ascetic practices, our concern is how speculation-oriented Natha yoga has been recognized as religio-philosophical tradition among them. More specifically, we focus on the ritual internalization through visualization as an imaginative representation of universe within the practitioner's body. Formulating spiritual practices, Natha yogis, as an outshoot of Śākta Kaulamata, share contemplative worship of transcendent reality within consciousness with Sufi's inner transformation and closeness with God through spiritual journey. Sufic perception of yoga reveals that a means for crossing the boundaries of otherness consists in the internalization of the ritual worship.