

## Article

# Yoga and the “Pure Muhammadi Path” of Muhammad Nasir ‘Andalib

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**Abstract:** This article addresses the question of how early modern Sufis dealt with yoga. Some scholars have argued that a movement of Sufi reform occurred in South Asia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, representing a shift towards legal Islam, which would call for the rejection of non-Islamic practices. This explanation overlooks the rhetorical construction of Sufi claims of spiritual status and *shari’a* legitimacy, and it fails to distinguish eighteenth-century examples from the very different reform movements created in the nineteenth century in response to European colonialism. This article considers as a case study *Nala-yi ‘Andalib* (“The Nightingale’s Lament”), the central text produced by the pre-colonial founder of the “pure Muhammadi path”, Muhammad Nasir ‘Andalib (d. 1758), with the help of intertextual references to the masterpiece of his son, Khwaja Mir Dard (d. 1785), *‘Ilm al-Kitab* (“Knowledge of the Book”). The consequence of their evaluation of yoga was not the systematic rejection of non-Islamic practices, but a guarded acknowledgement of their efficacy within a framework that used Indic references as a straw man for intra-Islamic debates.

**Keywords:** Sufism; yoga; Mujaddidiyya; pure Muhammadi path; India; Indo-Muslim culture

## 1. Introduction: Muslim Interest in Yoga

One of the most distinctive features of religion in the modern world has been the attempt to unfold the essential nature of one’s religion and to draw clear boundaries separating religions from one another. This may be considered a successful export of the dominant European concept of religion to the rest of the world. No more challenging laboratory for such projects of identity politics exists than South Asia, where religious nationalism has led to the formation of Islamic states and the ongoing effort to make India a Hindu nation. Yet the premodern history of this region is full of counterexamples, in which members of one faith community take unexpected interest in beliefs and practices associated with other religions. One particularly striking instance of such porous boundaries is the appropriation of yogic practices in Sufism.<sup>1</sup>

The most productive and significant encounters of Muslim Sufis with yogis happened in the Indian environment. Islamic mysticism arrived in India during the period of the eleventh to twelfth centuries, at the same time when a version of Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* was translated into Arabic by the well-known Muslim scholar and scientist, Al-Biruni (d. 1048; Pines and Gelblum 1966, 1977, 1983, 1989; Al-Biruni 2022). While that philosophical yoga text had a limited impact on Muslim thinkers, the practices of yoga were far more visible. At that time the highly specialized tradition of hatha yoga (literally, “the yoga of force”), associated with charismatic figures of the tenth to twelfth centuries, especially Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath, assumed importance on the scene of Indian religions (Ernst 2016, p. 272; White 1996; Burley 2000). From this time onwards, Muslim Sufis adapted an extensive repertoire of yogic practices and ideas into an Islamic framework and continuously produced a considerable number of texts with yoga themes. An example of such texts is the sixteenth-century Arabic version of the *Amrtakunda* (“The Pool of Nectar”),



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often known as *Hawd al-Hayat* or *The Pool of Life*, which became the most widely known treatment of hatha yoga. It was translated into Persian, under the title of *Bahr al-Hayat* (“The Ocean of Life”), by an eminent leader of the Shattariyya Sufi order, Muhammad Ghawth Gwaliyari (d. 1563; Khodamoradi and Ernst 2019). Another significant Shattari treatise in this connection is *Risala-yi Shattariyya* by the Qadiri-Shattari Sufi, Baha’ al-Din al-Ansari (d. 1515–16). He very explicitly appropriated yoga teachings, including those related to chakras, yoga postures, pranayama (breath control), and mantras, presenting them in a highly organized way in chapter four of this treatise (Ernst and Khodamoradi 2018). In this work, Ansari suggested a practice of visualization that should be carried out along with a certain posture that, in his point of view, has the benefit and quality of all of the eighty-four postures of yoga. In addition, an earlier Persian treatise known as *Wujudiyya* or the *Treatise on the Human Body*, which is ascribed to the founder of the Chishti order, Mu’in al-Din Chishti (d. 1236), utilizes the standard Hindi terms of yogic physiology and tackles the yogic idea of subtle nerves and the practice of breath exercises. This text also used the strategy of attributing these yogic teachings to the Prophet Muhammad to make them acceptable in a Muslim milieu (Ernst and Kugle 2012).

There are also other Sufi sources related to different orders, such as the Suhrawardiyya, that contain yoga themes. An intriguing example is *Risala-yi Haft Ahbab* (“The Treatise on the Seven Friends”), attributed to the celebrated representative of the Suhrawardiyya in India, Hamid al-Din Nagawri (d. 1244). The third chapter of this treatise, entitled “The Seven Stars”, is ascribed to Sulayman Mandawi (d. 1538–39), a Sufi disciple who studied the *Amrtakunda* with the Chishti Sabiri, ‘Abd al-Quddus Gangohi (Quddusi 1894, p. 41; Ernst 2013, pp. 64–65; Ernst 2005, p. 35). Gangohi himself produced the Persian Sufi treatise *Rushd Nama* in 1480,<sup>2</sup> in which, besides many other yoga themes, he attempted to adapt the yogic idea of physical immortality into Islam (Khodamoradi 2019, pp. 64–70). The *Rushd Nama*’s Hindi poetry complements Sufi ideas and techniques with the philosophy and practices of Gorakhnath, one of the most important figures of hatha yoga.<sup>3</sup> The *Rushd Nama* contains verses that refer to personalities and terminology associated with hatha yoga, such as the poet’s pen name Alakhdas (“servant of the Absolute”), Gorakhnath, jogi (“yogi”), *muladwara* (“crown of the head”), Shiva and Shakti, and Brahma (Khodamoradi and Ernst 2019).

A variety of strategies characterized the interpretation of yoga among Sufis, ranging from enthusiastic adoption to caution and suspicion. To avoid overly broad generalizations, studies of particular texts and interpreters are required. The following remarks examine the writings of an Indian Sufi, Muhammad Nasir ‘Andalib (d. 1758), on the cusp of the transition from the late Mughal empire to colonial rule. His attempt to articulate a revision of Sufi teachings and institutions under the banner of the “pure Muhammadi path” led him to adopt a guarded attitude toward yoga, which he regarded as physically and spiritually beneficial, even as he attempted to create a Sufi pedagogy that would be authentically connected to the Prophet Muhammad. While the resulting presentation of yoga may appear inconsistent, it reflects the complexities and ambiguities faced by South Asian Muslims in the early modern era.

## 2. Sufism and Reform

South Asian Sufism has often been depicted as participating in a hybrid culture and shared tradition, through interaction with and adaptation of Indian culture and religious traditions, including yoga. Some scholars have argued that Indian Sufism went through a rejection of that hybridity, through a kind of revival (*ihya’*) and rejuvenation (*tajdid*) that is observable from the seventeenth century onwards. This historical shift has been reflected in contemporary academic discussions under the rubric of Sufi reform or the concept of “Neo-Sufism”,<sup>4</sup> thought to be a sober and pietist Sufi movement that was searching for a more *shari’a*-based and ethically oriented Sufism. It is said to have placed a special emphasis on the character of the Prophet and his tradition as a pillar that gives Islam an independent and distinct identity. Sufi reformists, in this view, aimed to make major

changes in Sufism, by focusing on the Prophet and his tradition as well as conforming Sufism to the *shari'a*, which meant struggling to emancipate Muslims from beliefs and practices that they considered objectionable. As one scholar asserts, "The opposition between the open text of the *shari'a* and hidden mystical knowledge was posited by the eponymous Sufi reformist of South Asia, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhind" (Werbner 2013, p. 53). Yet the concept of a coherent movement of Sufi reform over the centuries is problematic. The use of the term "reform" is one more example of a term from the history of Christianity being applied to Islam uncritically as if it were natural and inevitable to expect Muslims to go through something such as the Protestant Reformation (Browsers and Kurzman 2004). Orientalist depictions of Islam as defined by classical legal texts replicated the new ideological versions of Muslim fundamentalism, which drew upon Salafi and Wahhabi currents of thought that were violently opposed to a variety of opponents, including Sufism, and adopted new concepts of religious identity that owed much to colonial and Orientalist models. Misapplied notions of "orthodoxy", which failed to acknowledge the ambiguities characteristic of Islamic thought, created a misleading picture of a rigid and authoritarian Islam in opposition to Sufis who could only survive by eliminating all questionable practices and accepting the hegemony of the jurists (Bauer 2021).

One could draw up a nineteenth-century Muslim reformist charge sheet listing the offenses of Sufis. The targets of this critique are often said to include the belief in divine immanence in the world, summarized by the slogan *wahdat al-wujud* ("existential unity") or *hama ust* ("everything is He"); extreme behaviors connected to the master-disciple relationship, such as the prostration of disciples and devotees before Sufi masters (Dard 1890, pp. 98, 120, 151–52, 183); adopting a language other than the language of Qur'an and hadith for communicating Sufi and Islamic ideas; being influenced by the language of Greek philosophy and its expressions (Dard 1890, pp. 90, 223, 333, 410); practicing magic and astrology (Bahraichi 1858–1859, pp. 37–44); superstition (*khurafa*) and religious innovation (*bid'a*); and being dominated by loose and irregular ecstasy, intoxication, and *sama'* (listening to spiritual music and dancing). All of these, according to this view of Sufi reform, had been leading to ease, laziness, and irresponsibility among Muslims (Zelkina 2000, p. 87), adaptation of non-Islamic practices and beliefs,<sup>5</sup> and many other features that were blamed as being examples of deviation from the *shari'a* and sunna of the Prophet (Dard 1890, pp. 72–75; Schimmel 1985, p. 218).

A more nuanced view of Sufism and Islamic reform in the eighteenth century has been proposed by Ahmad Dallal. In a study of five major Muslim scholars of that period, he has offered an analysis of the application of independent juristic reasoning (*ijtihad*) for sociopolitical projects as the defining feature of these thinkers, though they had different goals and different attitudes toward Sufism. Nonetheless, these reformists shared a critical attitude toward the concept of saintly intercession and an intermediary authority within the Islamic religious framework. Unlike nineteenth-century reformers, however, Muslim scholars in the precolonial period did not reject Sufi practices out of hand or oppose Sufism as incompatible with the *shari'a*. But the debates that arose over Sufism in the colonial era were formulated in a very different context. "There is a fundamental rupture between the legacies of the long eighteenth century and those of the twentieth century.... The problems that informed the reform ideas of the eighteenth century bear no resemblance whatsoever to those that inspired and drove later reforms" (Dallal 2018, pp. 6, 15).

From the earliest phases of Sufism in the eighth century, there was a tension between the annihilation of the individual ego and the proclamation of experiences of union with God. If the ego is annihilated, it is difficult to tell who is talking. Ecstatic utterances might appear to claim status as a prophet or even as God, but they could also be seen as proofs of proximity to God. Ahmad Sirhindi's claims pushed some to say he had gone too far; the Mughal emperor Jahangir had him imprisoned for claiming to be superior to the caliph 'Uthman. His title as Mujaddid (renewer) was based on his claim of a spiritual status that was perilously close to claiming to be a Prophet himself (Friedmann 1971, pp. 13–21). A Sufi of the Qadiri order, 'Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith, sharply criticized the

astonishing claims of Ahmad Sirhindi as an attempt to fashion himself as the source or religious authenticity (Kugle 2022, pp. 224–37). Sirhindi's four successors were given the title of *qayyum*, or sustainers of the universe, a concept that modern fundamentalists would abhor. The inflation of cosmic titles applied to eminent Sufi saints ironically devalued their significance. If more than one saint is known as the “pole” or “axis” (*qutb*) around whom the universe revolves, inevitably hyperbole makes the term plural, as a favorite saint is called “the pole of poles” (*qutb al-aqtab*). When these writers described others with terms such as polytheism (*shirk*), deviation (*zalal*), innovation (*bid'a*), infidelity of the path (*kufr-i tariqa*), or heresy (*ilhad*), this was not a straightforward definition of borders between Islam and non-Islam or Muslim and non-Muslim, or even between true Islam or Muslim and false ones. It was part of a rhetoric of transcendental hyperbole, in which the authority of the speaker was made unchallengeable by ever increasing claims of spiritual status. So the use of the language of exclusion and denunciation needs to be understood, at least in part, in terms of the claim to authority that it presumes.

The role of the Sufi orders as social institutions was closely tied to the construction of lineages of masters and disciples that could be traced in ostensibly historical chains of transmission going all of the way back to the Prophet Muhammad. These chains (*silsila*), or trees (*shajara*), were initially constructed in the eleventh century and proliferated, through communities focused on the physical locations of tombs of eminent early Sufi masters. Those institutions overlapped with the path or method (*tariqa*) practiced within each order. This was an essentially mediatory form of spiritual connection expressed diachronically over generations. But there were always internal tensions within this temporal model. As the chain becomes longer, there is a consequent sense of distance from the crucial mediation by the Prophet. One way to overcome this was through Uwaysi initiation, modeled on the intimate relationship of discipleship attained by Uways al-Qarani, a contemporary of Muhammad who never met him in person. Thus Sufis could be initiated by a master who had died centuries earlier, as in the case of Abu al-Hasan Kharraqani (d. 1034) as a disciple of Bayazid Bistami (d. 874; Schimmel 2011, pp. 23, 105). In other cases, Sufis claimed initiation by the deathless prophet Khizr, or by the Prophet Muhammad himself. Another way of overcoming the inevitable decline from the golden age of the Prophet was by claiming the messianic role of the Mahdi and inaugurating an apocalyptic renewal of the faith; as the period of one thousand years after the Prophet Muhammad drew near (in the late sixteenth century), this option gained popularity. That was essentially the claim made by Ahmad Sirhindi to be the renewer of the second millennium. It was also possible to claim to replicate the status of the Prophet by accomplishing an ascension into the presence of God, as in the case of Muhammad Ghawth Gwaliyari, who was put on trial for making such claims in Gujarat in the mid sixteenth century. Meanwhile, mediatory piety expanded to cover all possibilities, as many Sufis collected multiple initiations in different Sufi orders, to maximize the possibilities of connecting to the Prophet. At the same time, the widespread use of the occult sciences, divination, and the summoning of jinn and other spiritual beings provided access to other forms of mediation to approach the transcendent presence of God.

Polytheism is the greatest sin in Islam and the only sin that would not be forgiven by God. Invoking this powerful symbol, Sufi polemicists went so far as to categorize the beliefs and behaviors of other Sufis, and also non-Sufi Muslims, under the title of polytheism. To save Muslims from descending into polytheism, they initiated discourses regarding the process of the perversion of Indians from monotheism to polytheism over the course of time and warned Muslims not to succumb to the same pitfall of becoming polytheistic such as the Hindus. In this way, Shah Wali Allah (d. 1762) set forth an elaborate discussion of the subject of idolatry (Wali Allah 1996, pp. 185–89, 361–62). Opposing the Hindu-Muslim shared tradition, he criticized compromises with non-Islamic practices and accused Sufi masters of encouraging idolatry among Muslims (Wali Allah 1973, p. 145). Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan (d. 1781), another significant Mujaddidi of early modern Delhi, asserted that some behaviors of Sufis in relation to saints lead to idolatry, and that Sufi meditation which involves “visualizing the form of shaykh” (*rabita*) resembles certain polytheistic Hindu

practices (Ghulam 'Ali 1892, p. 99). The founders of the Deoband seminary attacked the practice of pilgrimage to Sufi shrines on the grounds that to their eyes it looked like a Hindu ritual, despite their recognition that spiritual grace was available at those sites. The characterization of traditional Muslim practices as effectively polytheistic was a devastating attack. It was also the case that denunciation of Hindu idolatry could be an effective straw man for carrying out intra-Islamic polemics.

### 3. The Pure Muhammadi Path

Another result of the internal tensions within the mediatory role of the Sufi orders was the formulation of the "Muhammadi path", in the place of the traditional Sufi orders. From a purely rhetorical point of view, it might appear superfluous to describe a Sufi path as Muhammadi, since each order was designed to connect an unbroken chain of masters and disciples to the Prophet. The addition of the name of Muhammad to the path signaled a sense of something missing, as the name "Muhammadi path" asserted that all other paths were insufficiently connected to the Prophet. The many different applications of the phrase "Muhammadi path" show widely varying approaches to Sufi thought and practice. The term "Tariqa Muhammadiyya" was developed from the earlier thought of such Sufis as Ahmad 'Imad al-Din al-Wasiti (d. 1311), an Iraqi living in Damascus who was a Shadhili Sufi as well as a student of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), renowned for his attacks on Sufi thought and practice. It was also later used by the Moroccan Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad Jazuli (d. 1465) (Buehler 1998, p. 72), a highly influential organizer of Sufi groups. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, various Islamic movements claiming the name Tariqa Muhammadiyya emerged not only in India, but also in Africa and across the Arab world, such as the Idrisiyya, Sann'aniyya, and Tijaniyya. Popular manuals such as *Al-Ibriz* ("The Extrication of Gold", ca. 1717) by Ahmad ibn Mubarak al-Lam'ati (d. 1743), on the life and teachings of the Moroccan Sufi 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Dabbagh (d. 1720), and *Al-Tariqa al-Muhammadiyya* (1572) of the anti-Sufi campaigner Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Birgawi (d. 1573), were important in disseminating the notion of a Muhammadi path. Al-Dabbagh's thought was later spread by such Sufis as Ahmad ibn Idris (d. 1837; Sedgwick 2005, pp. 27, 33–39; Böwering et al. 2013, p. 292). Some of these figures were embedded in powerful Sufi networks, while others were militantly hostile to the concept of saints as intercessors with God and rejected the rituals of sainthood as idolatry. So it would be a mistake to assume that the presence of this phrase invariably denotes an outlook that is hostile to Sufism.

The particular concept of the "pure Muhammadi path" that we are concerned with here was introduced by Muhammad Nasir 'Andalib,<sup>6</sup> a disciple of Muhammad Zubair (d. 1774), the fourth spiritual successor of Ahmad Sirhindi to be given the title of *qayyum*,<sup>7</sup> and the grandson of Ahmad Sirhindi as well. While this might be assumed to be simply another branch of the Mujaddidi order, the pure Muhammadi path raised the stakes of authenticity, by claiming to be the "pure" Muhammadi path. It dropped its identification with the Mujaddidiyya, relegating its Mujaddidi predecessors to the secondary position of the people of the book (*ahl al-kitab*, i.e., Jews and Christians) in comparison with Islam. The use of this phrase "pure Muhammadi path" implies a claim to be the most authentic transmission of the teachings of Muhammad, in contrast to the many paths or Sufi orders that have arisen over the centuries. All of those are judged to be deficient in comparison, although 'Andalib was free to draw on the practices of different traditional orders as needed. The widespread and independent use of such phrases in many later contexts of Muslim societies does not indicate a single monolithic concept or doctrine. Rather, it points to the inherent limitations of the mediatory institutions of the Sufi orders, and a desire to establish an authentic teaching that is identified with the Prophet Muhammad rather than any local historical tradition.

This rhetoric of discrediting rival schools of thought was also effectively employed by 'Andalib's son, Mir Dard, as the theoretician of this new kind of Sufi order, the Pure Muhammadi Path. This was a formulation of unique authority, decreeing that all other Muslims, except the pure followers of Muhammad, suffer from "hidden idolatry" (*shirk-i khafi*),

while non-Muslims suffer from “obvious idolatry” (*shirk-i jali*). The first type is equivalent to his notion of the “infidelity of the path” (*kufr-i tariqa*), which refers to the mingling of one’s ego with faith and religion, while the second one denotes the real infidelity of the belief in other gods and the association of partners with God. In his *Sham’-i Mahfil*, Dard stated that the meaning which is erroneously given to the concept of unity (*tawhid*) by some people leads to heresy and fruitless controversy (Dard 1892, p. 283).

The new version of the Pure Muhammadi Path according to ‘Andalib and Dard was notable for its strong intra-religious inclusivism and a mild inter-religious exclusivism. Dard concentrated largely and extensively on uniting a variety of teachings, ideologies, Islamic sciences and *tariqas* within Islam, and attempted to propound a solution for such divisions through the concept of a “Comprehensive Way” (*tariqa jami’a*). Dard, the theoretician of this *tariqa*, dealt with the subject of non-Muslims only marginally. According to him, in approaching the followers of obvious idolatry—which refers to non-Muslim polytheists—there is no way for Muslims except fighting and killing (*jidat wa qital*) (Dard 1890, p. 88), yet such fighting requires several conditions (Dard 1890, p. 204). Dard asserts that humiliation of infidels is only a matter of formality and for the sake of making the differentiation between salvation and deviation (*hidaya wa zalala*) clear. Such an act is also conditioned to the extent that it must be beneficial for society. According to him, Muhammadis are not allowed to be excessive in humiliation of non-Muslims or behave in a way that damages and hurts society (Dard 1890, p. 204). They are not allowed to mix egoism in this act, and it should be carried out only and purely for God’s sake. Dard warns Muhammadis and ordinary Muslims against being cruel and lacking compassion in fighting against the infidels. He emphasizes that for a Muslim, killing an infidel should be as painful as severing one’s own limbs, and a real Muhammadi is reluctant to do so, except when it is for the greater good. He reminds his followers that the fighting and opposition of prophets originates in their compassion, not in any sort of antagonism, and Muhammadis should follow the Prophet, embody great character (*khulq-i ‘azim*), consider all animate existents as their own selves, not harm anything, and be especially sensitive and concerned about the hearts of their fellow human beings (Dard 1890, pp. 205, 223–25). Dard shows his compassion toward non-Muslims and even enemies with assertions such as the following: “O my God, I, who think good, have never cast the arrow of evil prayer [i.e., curse] towards an enemy and I do not open my lips except for well-wishing for the creatures of God. And the bird of the arrow of my prayer does not fly in the air to shed anybody’s blood” (Dard 1892, p. 99).

The pressing problem remained of how to deal with vulgar simplifications of mystical thought, which allowed any fool to claim that he was filled with God. The solution that Dard proposed for avoiding the deification of the world and returning to real Qur’anic and Prophetic monotheism was also expressed in brief pedagogical formulas, such as the idea of “absolute unity” (*tawhid-i mutlaq*), or unity in multiplicity. This aimed to resolve the conflict between Wujudis, those who believed in “everything is He” (*hama ust*), that is, the proponents of the existential unity of God and creatures, and Shuhudis, who believed in “everything comes from Him” (*hama az ust*), that is, the advocators of testimonial unity. “He is He” means that existence (*wujud*) is one and nothing associates with it. The one reality has been manifested into multiple manifestations (*tajalliyat*) that constitute the created world. These things are in themselves non-real, non-existent, and distinct from existence. Neither does the contingent non-existent step out of its non-existent modality nor does the one existence unite with contingent reality, even though it manifests in every existent (Dard 1890, p. 185; 1892, p. 19). In this way, though he was well aware of the complexity of considering the idea of unity through manifestation, Dard used simple slogans to accentuate the separation of the cosmos from God, and he considered the extreme utterances of Sufis as blasphemy. In his *‘Ilm al-Kitab*, he writes: “They [Sufis] are not reluctant to utter words of infidelity” (Dard 1890, pp. 411–12).

#### 4. The Description of Yoga in *The Nightingale's Lament*

In this context, a question arises regarding the place of yoga in this eighteenth-century Indian Sufi teaching. Does the pure Muhammadi path consider adaptation of yoga a non-Islamic innovation from which Muslims and Islam must be purified? Or due to its mild approach to the ethic of Muslims' encounter with non-Muslims, does it show any compromises regarding yoga? To answer this question, we have consulted the first volume of *The Nightingale's Lament* (*Nala-yi 'Andalib*), a voluminous eighteenth-century Persian Sufi romance of approximately two thousand pages, which is, besides *'Ilm al-Kitab*, one of the two main literary expressions of the pure Muhammadi path. The *Lament* was written by the founder of the *tariqa*, Muhammad Nasir 'Andalib, who illustrated his Sufi ideology in the form of stories and parables in this highly informative and valuable literary text. It is an interpretation of a story that was originally narrated by 'Andalib in Hindi over a period of three nights in memory of his master, Pir Muhammad Zubair, who had just died. 'Andalib expanded upon this story, adding a number of subplots within the framework of the main narrative, and used the now massive tale as a way to elaborate his Muhammadi Path (Dard 1890, p. 85; Schimmel 1976, p. 44; Saghaeearaj 2018). Written in elegant Persian prose and often interspersed with poetry, the *Lament's* main plot revolves around the allegorical story of two lovers who are transformed by a curse into a rose and a nightingale, representing beauty and love. However, every allegory in the book is meant to explain a certain aspect of the pure Muhammadi path and the behavior of its followers. The stories are interspersed with detailed theological discussions and debates about various schools of Sufism. In some instances, 'Andalib inserts Hindi *dohas* (a genre of Hindi poetry) into the story, refers to Hindu philosophy and customs, and meticulously discusses yoga practices ('Andalib 1890, pp. 789–805).

Yoga in the *Lament* is discussed in the course of a story in which 'Andalib provides a kind of categorization of Muslim sciences, including those adapted by Muslims, such as Greek philosophy. The story is in the form of a dialogue that occurs in a series of private retreats (*khalwa*) between a king named High Ambitions (*shah-i buland-himam*), a Muhammadi aspirant who abandoned his throne in search of the truth, and a perfect mystic ('arif, "knower") who plays the role of the former's guide or Muhammadi master. These are, however, not static representations. Sometimes, 'Andalib seems to play the role of both the King and the Mystic. Through that conversation, trying to evaluate different types of Islamic sciences in detail, 'Andalib clarifies the approach of the pure Muhammadi path to each of these sciences, as well as to religious, Sufi, and philosophical teachings.

The story begins with the King's longing for truth and perfection. One day, the hero of the story, King High Ambitions addresses his ministers: "Be sure that there are some [types] of knowledge and perfection that cannot be achieved with ruling and sovereignty....Therefore, my high ambition dictates that I leave all property and kingdom for the purpose of the acquisition of knowledge and perfection" ('Andalib 1890, p. 759). He thus leaves the monarchy to learn various sciences including rational, traditional, and spiritual ones ('Andalib 1890, pp. 759–805). Through the discussion of the King with his ministers, 'Andalib clarifies what he means by Islamic sciences. According to him, Islamic sciences include traditional sciences such as hadith and *shari'a*; rational sciences comprising divine wisdom or Muslim philosophy, mathematics, natural science, geometry, divination, astronomy, medicine, and the occult sciences, as well as spiritual knowledge. The latter category comprises the knowledge of Sufis and yogis (*jugiyya*), which in 'Andalib's viewpoint belongs to the external and internal voyages of Sufism (*sayr-i afaqi wa anfansu*)<sup>8</sup> and spiritual wayfaring ('Andalib 1890, p. 759).

In the story, 'Andalib relates that the King took off his royal clothes and set out on a journey ('Andalib 1890, p. 764). As he arrived in Mecca, it came to his attention that a perfect mystic with such and such name and emblem was resident in Mecca. With full enthusiasm, he rushed towards the Mystic ('Andalib 1890, p. 770). After many adventures that took place in relation to the King's meeting with the mystic, the two hold a series of private retreats, each of which reflects the standpoint of the pure Muhammadi path

towards a certain field of Islamic sciences. Here we briefly point to the subject of the first four retreats, reserving the fifth session for a more detailed discussion.

The first retreat features a discussion of Greek philosophy. The King explains to the Mystic that as he left his homeland in search of knowledge and perfection, he first arrived in Greece where he studied all of the sciences of the philosophers and understood their basics and methods. In reaction to the King's elaborations, the Mystic starts criticizing Greek philosophy in detail for several pages in the *Lament* ('Andalib 1890, pp. 777–87).<sup>9</sup> 'Andalib avoids giving priority to Greek philosophy as a knowledge that can give the initiate absolute salvation and spiritual perfection. In this dialogue between the King and the Mystic, it seems that the main target of 'Andalib is a certain subset of the rational sciences, i.e., the metaphysics of Greek philosophy, and not rational sciences in general.

The second retreat is about the knowledge of alchemy and the way the King learned it. Elsewhere in the *Lament*, the Mystic criticizes alchemy as well ('Andalib 1890, pp. 777–87). By that sharp critique, 'Andalib reminds the reader that rational and *shari'a*-based Sufism of the pure Muhammadi path considers the knowledge of alchemy as an obstacle to the way of purifying Islam.

The third retreat includes details on traditional sciences (*'ilm-i manqulat*). The King explains to the mystic that he encountered a variety of different Islamic teachings (*madhhabs*) and attitudes (*mashrabs*), got acquainted with various leading scholars, and became familiar with polemics between Sunnis and Shi'is. He adds that although he searched a lot, he could not finally find out where the truth is. The Mystic advises the King to leave imitation and stop constantly speaking about or following this or that scholar or school, and start instead his own research and his personal understanding. Criticizing imitation is a significant characteristic of the pure Muhammadi path, on which both Dard and 'Andalib focus throughout their works. After describing various Islamic groups such as Sufis, Sunnis, Mujassima (corporealists), Mu'tazila (rationalists), and Rafizis (heretics), each with negative features, the mystic describes the followers of the pure Muhammadi path with a variety of excellent attributes ('Andalib 1890, p. 787). In a poem he maintains: "O King, the world is not limited to one religion, here there are thousands of religions and infidelities" ('Andalib 1890, p. 787). Here again in relation to criticizing imitation, in a poem the mystic states, "everybody searches for his religion and way from others, except mystics, who learn their way from themselves" ('Andalib 1890, p. 789).

The fourth retreat is on Sufism. In this session the King explains to the Mystic that after learning the knowledge related to the external (*'ulum-i zahiri*), he referred to Sufism (*tasawwuf*), and the devotions, techniques, and practices related to the realm of the internal (*ashghal-i batini*). Surprised, he mentions that he found that even in Sufism there were a lot of different and contrasting sects and attitudes (*masharib*)<sup>10</sup> with many different and contradicting methods and paths ('Andalib 1890, p. 789). The Mystic comments to the King, "Oh High Ambitions! if you are interested in asking about the way and the method, there is no end of roads....The initiate must arrive at the goal through whatever way that he finds, either through desert or sea, by whatever way that includes refinement of the body and purification of the heart (*tazkiya-yi badani*, *tasfiya-yi qalbi*). I find both ways to be correct". Then the Mystic in detail describes the reasons for, and judges between, all of the different ideas, practices, and methods among Sufis mentioned by the King from the viewpoint of the pure Muhammadi path ('Andalib 1890, p. 791).

The fifth retreat is on yoga. It contains, in 'Andalib's parlance, a description of the "reality of the yogis' attainments or powers" (*haqiqat-i aksab-i jugiyan*), and an evaluation of yoga and a description of its advantages and disadvantages. In this meeting, the Mystic asks the King about other sciences that the latter has acquired in his first step after achieving Sufi knowledge. The King replies politely that he, in the course of his journey, finally arrived in Hindustan, and there he became busy with the forms of devotion of yogis and their attainments ('Andalib 1890, p. 798). This narration of the King is interspersed with a line of poetry by 'Andalib: "The place of that face that became the subject of the angels'

prostration is not the Ka'ba. I made an effort; maybe it will be found in an idol temple" ('Andalib 1890, p. 798).

The King maintains that just as in Sufism and in the traditional and rational sciences of Islam, there are many differences and various teachings and schools among yogis. He adds some information related to the sources of the yogis' knowledge, and mentions that they have adopted the knowledge of metaphysics and natural sciences (*'ilm-i hikmat-i ilahiyyat wa tabi'iyat*) from the Greek philosophers. In making that assertion, he follows a widely held opinion, maintained by scholars such as Al-Biruni and Shahrastani, that the Indians had learned much from the philosopher Pythagoras. He also compares yogis with Sufi practices in relation to the Sufis' "external and internal voyages" and asserts that yogis have worked with much more detail and in a more comprehensive way than Sufis in the "journey to the interior" (*sayr-i batin*) and the "purification of the body" (*tasfiya-yi badan*). To justify his viewpoint, High Ambitions, representing a pure Muhammadi initiate (much in the same way as Baha' al-Din Ansari in his *Risala-i Shattariyya*),<sup>11</sup> mentions a variety of yogic powers ('Andalib 1890, p. 798).

According to High Ambitions, yogis can perform the following feats: control all of their limbs, and their external and internal faculties; hold their breath as long as they want; avoid looking at anything, even though they keep their eyes open; are so affected by the power of their "unstruck" (*anahada*, Sanskrit *anahita*) "sound" that they do not hear anything despite their open ears;<sup>12</sup> produce semen, urine and feces at their own discretion; control their sleep and wakefulness; are able to produce heat and cold in their body and expel mucus from the lung (*akhlāt-i riyā*) without medication, through yoga postures (*jalsa*), or devotions (*ashghal*); make their bodies so smooth and subtle that they do not sink in water, and due to the subtlety of their body, they are close to a state of rising into the air. Some of yogis, the King adds, even relate that their leaders fly into the air. However, since the King has not seen this conduct with his own eyes and has not personally acquired such power, he does not dare to give his opinion in this regard. They also are able to live as long as they wish, when they convey the breath to the highest point of the brain (*umm al-dimagh*),<sup>13</sup> and lock their windpipe with their tongue. The King adds that this last power is very strange, and he has heard many other strange things that are not in accord with reason ('Andalib 1890, p. 798).

It is not only the yogis' great powers that have been mentioned in the story of High Ambitions. Unlike *Risala-yi Shattariyya* and *Rushd Nama*, which were composed some centuries before the *Lament* and concentrated on yoga almost exclusively in terms of powers, practices, and the functions of exercises on the body and soul of practitioner, the *Lament* pays attention to the yogis' thought and philosophy as well. In general, an emphasis on theology, theosophy, and thought is characteristic of both the *Lament* and *'Ilm al-Kitab*. In the story, High Ambitions maintains that just as in Islam there exist theologians (*mutakalliman*) and theology, one can find different schools of thought among yogis.

Here a cursory account of three schools of Indian philosophy is provided. First is Nyaya, a group that considers God and the cosmos as separate from each other. They use the example of jar and potter; unlike monistic thinkers, they maintain that, just as a potter who creates a jar is separate and totally other than his or her art, so God is totally separate from his creatures. Nyaya philosophers therefore believe in difference (Sanskrit *bheda*) ('Andalib 1890, p. 798). Second is Vedanta. Contrary to Nyaya, this group believes that God and the cosmos are one ('Andalib 1890, p. 798). Third is the Bhedabhedā school, which he identifies with the followers of Patanjali yoga. This community holds that God is one with the cosmos from one aspect and separate from it from another aspect. These brief comments are not very accurate; Bhedabhedā is not a separate school among the six philosophies based on the Vedas, but is rather an argument found in several branches of Vedanta, while the non-dual approach assigned to Vedanta is only the specialty of Advaita Vedanta. The Patanjali teaching is normally associated with the Yoga darshana or school. The text does not mention the remaining philosophical schools of Mimamsa, Samkhya, and Vaisheshika, or the non-Vedic schools of the Buddhists and materialistic Carvakas. The

Islamic emphasis is also evident in presenting the argument as the relation between God and the creation, whereas the Indian thinkers pose it as the relation between the impersonal Brahman and the self (*atman*).

High Ambitions proceeds by describing the view that the creation is an illusion or a dream, the well-known theory of *maya*. He considers the holders of this theory as similar to certain theologians and Sufis in Islam, and he also compares them to the Sophists. He also mentions the Seora or Jain philosophy;<sup>14</sup> those who belong to this group, whose religion he calls Jainism or Jaina *math*, do not believe in any creator. They think that all creatures, such as plants, appear each season by the vapors of heat, water, stars, and planets, and as a result of the eternal rotation of the planets, and disappear again at other times. High Ambitions asserts that the belief of the Jains is exactly like that of materialists (*tabi'iyān*) and atheists (*dahriyyā*) in Islamic heresiography ('Andalib 1890, p. 799). Returning briefly to the Nyaya school, he comments that they narrate fantastic stories and myths about the origin and end (*mabda' wa ma'ad*) of the universe ('Andalib 1890, p. 799). Through the ideas of avatar and revelation (*nuzul*), Vedantists define the qualities of the unique God who is without quality and without equivalent in his essence. As a summary of Indian philosophy, this account is so meagre as to be misleading. It seems that the four positions that have been briefly mentioned (God is different from creation, the same as creation, both the same and different; there is no God) are designed as a pedagogical tool that sets out a symmetrical list of the main possible positions, but they are mainly used to illustrate the errors found among Muslims. The Islamic framing of these arguments is obvious in the use of the Arabic term *haqq* ("the Truth") as the preferred name of God among the Sufis.

If 'Andalib had wished to provide a more complete view of Indian religious thought, he could have drawn upon Abu al-Fazl's detailed account in Persian of the nine Indian philosophical schools in the *A'in-i Akbari*, which summarized the views of the six Hindu schools claiming inspiration from the Vedas as sacred texts (Nyaya, Vaishesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta) and the three schools that reject the Vedas (Buddhist, Jain, and Carvaka).<sup>15</sup> His omission of several of these major schools, and his sketchy descriptions of the ones that he mentions, indicate that he has no intention of providing a thorough inquiry. Instead, these fragmentary references serve only as a background for considering the relationship between yogic practice and Sufism.

At this point, by way of summary, High Ambitions outlines the belief of the Hindus that the whole creation is a large human or macroanthropos (*insan-i kabir*) and the human being a small world or microcosm (*'alam-i saghir*). That means that in the human being there exists a counterpart for everything that is found in the cosmos. So the navel is like the center (*markaz*) [of the world]; the skin is like the throne [of God] (*'arsh*); the brain is like the footstool (*kursi*) of God; the heart is like the universal intellect (*'aql-i kull*) or universal soul (*nafs-i kull*) or universal nature (*tabi'at-i kull*) or universal form (*shakl-i kull*) or the substance of matter (*jawhar-i hayula*), among other equivalents; the seven limbs are like the seven climes (*iqlim*); the seven curtains of the brain (*haft parda-yi dimagh*) are like the seven heavens; the seven attributes (*sifat*) are like the seven planets (*karwakib*); the bones are like mountains; flesh is like earth; blood is like the sea; the veins are like streams; hairs are like trees; the forehead is like prosperity; the back is like ruin; hunger is like fire and steam; thirst is like air; death and life are like the interior and exterior; the two nostrils are like the sun and moon; the two eyes are like Saturn and Jupiter; the two ears are like Mars and Venus; the mouth is like Mercury; wakefulness is day; sleep is like night; happiness is like spring; sorrow is like fall; heat is like summer; cold is like winter; humidity is like the rainy season; crying is like rain; laughing is like lightning; the heart is like a king; the intellect related to affairs of hereafter (*'aql-i ma'ad*) is like a messenger and prophet; the intellect related to the affairs of the world (*'aql-i ma'ash*) is like a minister; delusion (*wahm*) is like Satan; thought is like a book; imagination is like a tablet (*lawh*); anger is like the watchman; the external and internal senses are reporters, informers, and spies; the retentive faculty is like a treasurer; the digestive faculty is like a cook; the attractive faculty is like a tax man; the expulsive faculty is like a sweeper; and the other faculties have similar equivalents.

High Ambitions concludes that in Vedanta thought, the human being is a microcosm, and the universe is a macroanthropos ('Andalib 1890, p. 799).

We must pause here to point out several surprising features of the account just mentioned of the microcosm and macrocosm. This is presented as a doctrine of Indian philosophy, but most of the details of this passage, which are rich in Islamic references, are actually to be found in the comprehensive cosmology of the Brothers of Purity, who flourished in Basra in the tenth century. Their Arabic epistles contain a cosmology developed from Neoplatonic philosophers. In addition to the list of correspondences between the human body and the cosmos, the end of this passage also includes allegorical depictions of the internal and external senses, based on the philosophical writings of Ibn Sina as interpreted by the Persian philosopher Suhrawardi. Moreover, the wording of this account makes it clear that it is quoted, not directly from those sources, but from the preface and first chapter of the Arabic translation of the *Amrtakunda* or *The Pool of Nectar*, the important account of yoga mentioned above (Ernst 2003). By lifting this summary of the microcosm-macrocosm out of that yoga treatise, 'Andalib demonstrates that he did not recognize it as a product of the Muslim intellectual encounter with Greek philosophies.<sup>16</sup> This also indicates that 'Andalib is addressing the Muslim interest in yoga insofar as it was made possible by translations into Arabic and Persian; there is no indication that he had any independent access to Sanskrit texts on philosophy or yoga. 'Andalib expresses his sympathy with yogic ideas of the comparability of world and human being in a poem with tender sentiments: "In the eyes of those who know the eternal world, the world is a person with its own fears and hopes, its blood is the sea, its bones are mountains. The skin of its body is heaven, and the sun is its intellect" ('Andalib 1890, pp. 799–800). High Ambitions closes his account by adding that yogis have interesting postures (*jalsa*), wonderful devotions (*ashghal*), and rare practices that have many physical benefits that require lengthy explanation ('Andalib 1890, p. 800).

In response to this disquisition, the Mystic smiles and declares that under the guidance of the true guide that is the Prophet Muhammad, he has also gone through the route of yoga exercises. The Mystic mentions that these practices include eighty-four postures (*asana*), sixteen of which, according to him, are particularly beneficial. Providing the names of the postures without descriptions, he lists them as *swastika*, *gomukh*, *virasana*, *kurmasana*, *kukut*, *uttanakarma*, *dhangagarkhana*, *machhindarpith*, *paschimottana*, *mayurasana*, *shivasana*, *kapaliasana*, *siddhasana*, *padmasana*, *singhasana*, and *bhadrāsana*. Again, the Mystic adds that the most essential of these postures are four: *siddhasana*, *padmasana*, *singhasana*, and *bhadrāsana* ('Andalib 1890, p. 800). Selecting certain yoga postures as the most important postures has had its own tradition. Before 'Andalib, the Qadiri-Shattari Sufi Baha' al-Din Ansari in his *Risala-yi Shattariyya* suggested a certain posture that, in his point of view, has the benefit and quality of all of the eighty-four postures of yoga (Ansari, 149a). Like 'Andalib and Ansari, the hatha yoga text called *Goraksa Sataka* highlights the two postures of *padmasana* and *siddhasana* as the most important among the eighty-four asanas.<sup>17</sup>

Then the Mystic goes on to mention more yoga exercises that he claims to have performed. There are six purifications (known as *satkriya*) that are used to cleanse different parts of the body (*dhauti*, *neti*, *basti*, *nuli*, *bhanti*, and *tratak*); the eight kinds of breath control (*pranayama*) that are achieved through inhalation, retention, and exhalation (*suryabhedana*, *ujjayi sitkari*, *sitali*, *bhastrika*, *bhramari/bhramumi*, *murchhana*, *purakha*, and *recaka*); and the eight key seals (*mudra*) (*mahamudra*, *mahabandha*, *mahabedha*, *khechari*, *uddiyanabandha*, *mulabandha*, *jalandhara bandha*, and *viparitarani*), plus three additional *mudras*, which are gestures for manipulating the breath and other energies (*vajroli*, *amaroli* and *sahajoli*). The Sanskrit names for all of these practices are simply listed with no further explanation.

Here the Mystic pauses and invites High Ambitions to express his doubts and questions about each of those practices just mentioned. so that he can understand the truth and knowledge in that subject. He recites this line of poetry: "His love took me to the door of each mosque and monastery. He made me wander so that I become aware of all doors". High Ambitions becomes silent and waits for the mystic's grace and guidance ('Andalib 1890, p. 800).

## 5. Evaluation of Yoga from the Viewpoint of the Pure Muhammadi Path

As the story continues, the Mystic presents an account of the spiritual path that permits him to provide an overall interpretation of yoga in terms of its benefits and shortcomings. The Mystic begins his response by articulating a theory of revelation in which the teachings of earlier religious leaders become abrogated by the most current revelation. This allows him to extend a qualified recognition to the founding teachers of yoga while at the same time asserting the superiority of Muhammad as the spiritual authority of this age. In this way, he acknowledges that, in all times, mystics and knowers of God have appeared, to whom God has given the knowledge of the divine, based on their aspiration and capacity, and he has made them the leaders and guides of the world. When their era came to an end, however, he brought forth new leaders and showed them how to present metaphysical and ethical truths to humanity. But now it is the turn of the Prophet Muhammad, who is the rightful guide (*hadi-yi bar-haqq*) and absolute vicegerent (*na'ib-i mutlaq*), so all ways and doors that were previously open have become blocked. Therefore those who seek the truth, seek to ascend to the subtle world, and long to understand their origin, must bow at the only door that remains open. If people bow before closed doors, they will get no benefit from them. In the same way, the yogis of our time, even if they practice the same exercises and do the same devotions as their early masters did, will never reach the results achieved by their guides ('Andalib 1890, pp. 800–1). Thus, the followers of previous prophets, mystics, or knowers of God, no matter how much they worship and what austerities they undertake, will never attain the rank of nearness (*qurb*) or intimacy (*ma'iyat*) with God.

But yoga is ultimately characterized by serious limitations. The Mystic confirms from his own experience that yoga produces physical benefits as well as cosmic unveilings and illumination. His perceptions were enhanced, and he beheld the transcendent God. But then, by the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad, he was freed from those theological limitations, he reached the stage of devotion to the God who is beyond vision and intellect, and went from the faith of vision to the station of "those who have faith in the hidden" (Qur'an 2:3). He realized that the God of others (i.e., the yogis), whom he had thought was transcendent according to their claims and teachings, he now saw and understood and witnessed; so he rejected that and turned to the transcendent God who is beyond all quality and attained real faith, reciting from the Qur'an: "I have turned my face to the one who created the heavens and the earth as a true believer, and I am not one of the idolaters" (Qur'an 6:79). He counsels High Ambitions to take great care, due to the many dangers of the path.

The Mystic then shifts to consider the physical benefits of yoga, which he concedes are real, but he points out that the basis for these practices is breath control, fasting, vigil, and seclusion, which are all quite difficult. This means that very few seekers will have any success by these methods. Moreover, such efforts presuppose a focus on oneself, but the act of renunciation begins with forgetfulness of self, so quick results cannot be expected from it. But ultimately the basis of yoga is flawed. "The state of emptiness (Hindi *sun* = Sanskrit *sunya*), which is the goal of their efforts, is meaningless and useless. The experiences that they call annihilation (*fana'*) and liberation (*mukti*) don't work, and we do not recognize them. That is something in which the practitioner imagines and thinks so well of himself that he believes he is the essence of God. When he conceives this, it becomes powerful, and he makes the claim that he has attained liberation, which is pure fancy, imagination, and a dream" ('Andalib 1890, p. 801). The intrusion of the Arabic word *fana'* or annihilation into this diatribe, alongside the Indic concept of *mukti* or liberation, betrays again that the true opponents of 'Andalib's argument are misguided Sufis.

The Mystic then explicitly connects yoga to the views of heretical Sufis. "By this explanation you will understand the nearness and unity with God of the *wujudi* Sufis, for they also are satisfied with the approach of these Vedantists and their own dream and imagination" ('Andalib 1890, p. 802). Those Sufis think that perfection lies in the correction of imagination, but the mystic proclaims that it consists rather in the increase of

certainty. So while those deluded Sufis are in the state of fancied identity with God, the pure Muhammadi path is intimacy with God in the station of affirming duality. This duality is vastly superior to that union, and while it is easy to imagine the latter, the former is only possible by divine favor. In this argument, the critique of yoga has been subsumed into the slogans summarizing the intra-Sufi debate between the advocates of “existential unity” (*wahdat al-wujud*) associated with Ibn ‘Arabi and the “testimonial unity” (*wahdat al-shuhud*) supported by Ahmad Sirhindi and the Naqshbandi order. Sirhindi had claimed to travel beyond the apparent manifestation of God to achieve the higher stages of adumbration (*zilliyya*) of God and the station of servanthood (*‘abdiyya*) (Sirhindi 1964, pp. 31, 102). This is metaphysics based on attaining a higher spiritual experience, not theory.

The Mystic now addresses the proper way to deal with the body’s needs from the perspective of the pure Muhammadi path.

O Friend, know that for the traveler on the spiritual path (*salik*), physical health is necessary, because without it neither the affairs of this world nor the next will come to fulfilment. So, it was for this purpose that some [Muslim] leaders and guides, seeing the physical and other benefits of most of the practices of yogis, have introduced them into their path. But since this faqir [i.e., the Mystic] has renounced all paths and adopted only the path of Muhammad (*tariqa-yi Muhammadi*), he does not like any speech and practice except that of his prophet. So he has extracted useful and beneficial things related to both this world and next from the Prophet’s noble hadiths, which are the comprehensive texts, and he acts upon those. (‘Andalib 1890, p. 802)

This announcement appears to acknowledge that yogic practices have indeed been incorporated into Sufism in the past. But he explains that the pure Muhammadi path requires the renunciation of all of the traditional Sufi orders and an exclusive focus on the sayings of the Prophet in all matters.

Therefore if a Sufi is to practice breath control, he will do so by command of his guide (i.e., Muhammad), not due to the nature of the actions of others. Now the Prophet has declared that the belly has three parts: one third for food, one third for drink, and one third for breath. This is a clear statement about breath control. The many places where the Prophet commands the use of a wooden toothbrush (*miswak*) provide Muslims with a pure practice that obviates the impure cleansing methods of the yogis (*dhuti, neti*). But at the same time that one comprehends the method and manner of the Muhammadi dentifrice, by that he also accomplishes the useful and beneficial actions of others.

The Mystic then provides an example of a hadith narrated by Aisha, which is found in the *Mishkat*, an important collection of prophetic sayings. There it is said that he overused the toothbrush to such an extent that his voice sounded like that of a magpie, expelling much phlegm in the process and cleansing his chest and head. So the Muhammadi should persevere in this effort and clean the teeth thoroughly. When internal impurities are removed, the mouth and teeth are clean and pure. This is an esoteric truth that has not previously been revealed publicly. “To know and comprehend the reality and quality of this Muhammadi practice, all of this is useful and profitable. Despite the fact that all of this is public, until this time the essence of this has been veiled and concealed, but that [secrecy] has been ended by this Muhammadi faqir’s publicizing it. That which is found in reports in other places, namely, that the toothbrush is the cure of seventy destructive diseases, is on account of the same wisdom” (‘Andalib 1890, p. 802). The Mystic says that he calls this purification, and that the Prophet ordained reducing one’s food and drink, which is a Muhammadi practice that achieves all of the results of yogic activity. He also forbade excessive speech and idle talk, which necessarily implies restraint of breath. When the Muhammadi wayfarer performs ritual prayer with lengthened recitation and limbs adjusted, the benefits and results of all of the (yogic) postures of others are produced together by this very action. If the practicing wayfarer persists in a single Muhammadi posture which is Adamic and very measured, he attains the benefits of all of the postures of the others, which are totally noncompulsory and wholly ill-mannered, or rather, animalistic.

That is the kneeling posture, on the condition that he holds the *sukhumna* nerve and sits alternately on one foot or the other, or that he holds the shin on the thigh and keeps the spinal column straight and unbent, so it is not weakened or injured.

To keep the Muhammadi disciple awake, at the time of prayer and Qur'an recitation, rosary prayers, and litanies, he should draw the breath within, and not release it out until necessary, for this produces many physical and spiritual benefits, leaving no weakness or laxity in the body. Internal monologue and random thoughts will not confuse his state of mind. This practice is much superior to the jogis' act of pranayama, and from this practice extended health is produced. ('Andalib 1890, p. 803)

The argument just presented has the appearance of wanting both to have a cake and eat it too, as the pure Muhammadi disciple is advised only to follow the practice of the Prophet, while at the same time he is assured that the goals of yoga practice should be achieved. Whether in breath control, dental hygiene, or postures for prayer, these practices are seen as fulfilling the demands of both Islam and yoga. The casual ease with which a seated posture is described as holding the *sukhumna* nerve (the Hindi form of Sanskrit *susumna*) scarcely permits the reader to notice that a key term from hatha yoga has been normalized.

The next practices described in the text, relating to athletics and bathroom hygiene, are presented without any indication of their origin, leaving their acceptance in the pure Muhammadi path as an unspoken assumption. According to the mystic, both spiritual wayfarers and soldiers have to commit to do athletics and physical exercise, such as archery, riding horses, swordsmanship, and military activities. Like yoga postures, these practices remove the problem of fatigue and laziness and lead to bodily health and strength. They cause the breath to move through the practitioner's muscles and veins. So, the result of holding the breath and postures of yoga is the same as the results of these athletic exercises ('Andalib 1890, p. 804). Regarding personal hygiene, the conversation briefly covers defecation, urination, sex, and flatulence. Recommended practices are described as preserving health, but no particulars are supplied concerning their origins.

At this point, attention shifts to a practice of unmistakably Indic character, divination by monitoring the sun and moon breaths, which are the breaths originating in the left and right nostrils. The mystic recommends that aspirants observe the flow of the breath of the sun and moon, by day and night. With this practice, one will overcome temperature imbalance. If one finds hotness in his nature, he must grind the teeth together and draw the breath inside through mouth. This practice produces cold in the body. So from the breath of sun comes warmth and from the breath of moon comes balance. At the time of eating food or washing (*ghusl*) and while doing noble acts, a voyager must use the sun breath. The same is true when one encounters an enemy. Also, if one observes this practice during sexual intercourse, one may hope that God, the cause of all causes, will allow a male child to be born. If one observes the breath (*muhafizat-i dam*) properly, strange things, which cannot be expressed, will happen to him. These results include a concentrated mind, a heart without obsession, a breath with effect, persuasive speech, a luminous face, black hair, a praiseworthy temperament, and fragrant sweat and body ('Andalib 1890, p. 804). All of these procedures are found in the practice of breath control called *svarodaya* in Sanskrit. This "science of breath", which was widely known in yoga teachings, received prominent treatment in works like *The Pool of Life*, as 'Andalib knew (Ernst and d'Silva 2024).

In the closing section of this dialog, the Mystic advises aspirants to perform a practice of twelve beneficial exercises that he calls the choice of Muhammadis. By doing these exercises, he adds, one can dispense with not only all of the exercises and postures of yogis, but also with all of the philosophy of the Greeks. These twelve practices, which are neither described nor explained, are all given Persian designations and listed in pairs, as follows: "opening and closing" (*gushudan wa bastan*), "getting up and sitting down" (*bar-khastan wa nishistan*), "accumulating and removing" (*bar-awardan wa dar-awardan*), "taking and putting down" (*giriftan va guzashtan*), "measuring and distributing" (*sanjidan va paymudan*), and "digging up and joining" (*kandan va payvastan*). Evidently this list of terms is meant to be

supplemented by oral commentary, as ‘Andalib asks readers to learn the meaning of these words and the way to employ them from “my old friends”, who have already traveled the inner path step by step. He ends by confidently proclaiming that High Ambitions will succeed in “seeing” and “hearing”, which is based on the vision (*mushahada*) of the Sufis, apart from the “unstruck sound” of the jogis (‘Andalib 1890, p. 804). Presumably these old friends will be thoroughly familiar with both sets of teachings. The subject of yoga having been closed, the text proceeds to the next retreat, which is devoted to a discussion of free will and destiny.

## 6. Conclusions

Looking over ‘Andalib’s presentation of this overview of yoga, it is hard to avoid concluding that it is ambiguous. From his insistence that the pure Muhammadi path requires basing all action on the practices and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, one might assume that approved practices must be connected to accepted hadith collections in order to be acceptable. While he does give examples of that procedure, as in the case of the toothbrush, there are plenty of other cases where he does not. So what is his actual procedure?

‘Andalib does not make any attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of Hindu thought and yoga practice. His brief remarks on Hindu theology are only used to demonstrate the errors of deviant Sufis. But the Mystic proclaims that the Prophet Muhammad guided him to the practices of yoga in the first place. Furthermore, the teachings and practices of the yogis are implicitly recognized as a revelation provided by God to earlier ages of humanity. To be sure, it is considered to be out of date or abrogated by the appearance of the prophet Muhammad. The path of yoga is difficult, and its goal is surpassed by the pure Muhammadi path. But Muslim teachers have clearly introduced yoga practice into their teaching. Yet the Mystic maintains that practices such as breath control can only be performed if ordered by the Prophet. This logically implies that the continuing practice of yoga has been authorized by Muhammad. This, in a sense, is the argument that is put forward. The Prophet’s use of the toothbrush and recommendations regarding air in the belly are considered to accomplish the same results as yoga. Likewise, restriction of diet and conversation, and kneeling in ritual prayer, achieve the results of yogic breath control and divination by breath. Redefining the exercises of the pure Muhammadi path make yoga postures and Greek philosophy superfluous. In other words, yoga supplies the criteria by which Sufi practices are judged to be successful or not.

For modern readers who are used to evaluating cultural traditions in terms of their origins, it may seem paradoxical for a Sufi to declare that yogic practice is authorized by the Prophet Muhammad. But as noted previously, that is precisely what occurred in the *Treatise on the Human Body* attributed to the Sufi saint Mu’in al-Din Chishti. We have already discussed the passage where ‘Andalib quoted a lengthy text on the microcosm and the macrocosm as a typical example of Hindu thought, although in fact it was adapted from Islamic sources in an earlier Arabic treatise on yoga. The argument of ‘Andalib simply reverses that interpretive move. From the time of Al-Biruni onward, aside from Abu al-Fazl it is almost impossible to find a Muslim commentator on Indian thought who regards it as an autonomous cosmopolis unconnected to the Greeks; hence the belief that Pythagoras was the source of Indian philosophy. The long history of Persian translations of Sanskrit texts and original Persian writings on India familiarized generations of readers (Hindus, Muslims, and others) with Islamic terminologies that were considered appropriate for the description of Indian culture. So there was considerable leeway, from this perspective, for extending Islamic credentials to the practice of yoga. The teacher who was initiated into the pure Muhammadi path had the authority to reveal previously esoteric teachings, just as the Mystic does in this dialogue. So performing yoga under these conditions, while avoiding the errors of wayward Sufis, offered the prospect of improvement over yoga itself. In short, the pure Muhammadi path of Muhammad Nasir ‘Andalib, far from rejecting yoga

as un-Islamic, offered compelling reasons for seeking the benefits of yoga in a suitably disciplined Sufi practice.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *In memoriam* Soraya Khodamoradi (1978–2023). The late Dr. Khodamoradi began writing this article but was ultimately unable to complete it, due to an untimely and fatal illness. Realizing this, before her passing she requested Carl W. Ernst to edit and revise the article for publication.
- <sup>2</sup> Ernst (2003, pp. 199–226; 2013, pp. 64–65; 2005, p. 35). For the manuscripts of *Rushd Nama*, see Munzawi (1984, vol. 3: pp. 1520–21); Gilmartin and Lawrence (2000, p. 195). For a lithograph edition, see Gangohi (1896–1897).
- <sup>3</sup> Francesca Orsini provides an analysis of some parts of the Hindi poetry of the *Rushd Nama* (Orsini 2014, pp. 403–37).
- <sup>4</sup> Fazlur Rahman (1979, pp. 194–95 and 206). For the debate regarding “Neo-Sufism”, see Lawrence (2010); Voll (2008, p. 318); Radtke (1994, 1996, 2000).
- <sup>5</sup> Bahraichi (1858–1859, pp. 37–44), cited in Umar (1993, pp. 72–74). About the adaptation of Hindu life and worship styles by Muslims see Bahraichi (1858–1859, p. 38), quoted in Singh (1996, p. 96).
- <sup>6</sup> ‘Andalib, who had served in the army before turning toward sufism, was of sayyid ancestry and a descendant of Baha’ al-Din Naqshband (d. 1390), the founder of the Naqshbandiyya. His forefathers had emigrated from Bukhara to India during the seventeenth century and had become affiliated with the Mughal court (Schimmel 1976, p. 33).
- <sup>7</sup> The *qayyum* (or *qutb al-aqtab*) is the successor of Sirhindi that is considered to have the highest spiritual rank of all Sufis on earth. Through the mediation of the *qayyum*, God grants existence to all people, thus the *qayyum* supports creation (Buehler 1998, pp. 68–69; Ter Haar 1992, pp. 153–55).
- <sup>8</sup> This phrase derives from Qur’an 41:53, “We shall show them our signs on the horizons (*afaq*) and in their souls (*anfus*)”. The external or cosmic journey consists of the observation of the lights of manifestations outside, and the inner or psychic journey is the wayfarer’s internal observation of the lights of manifestations in one’s own self.
- <sup>9</sup> Critique of the rational sciences and philosophy was a legacy of al-Ghazali (d. 1111), the author of *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, whose approach influenced Sufi tradition for centuries.
- <sup>10</sup> *Mashrab* literally means a place for drinking, and by extension came to mean a wellspring. In Sufi context, it refers to the individual’s spiritual inclination or his theosophical doctrine.
- <sup>11</sup> Ansari promises that those who succeed in attaining the imagination of *hansa* will gain eight powers that evidently refer to the eight major *siddhis* or occult powers of the yoga tradition: (i) The aspirant will achieve the ability to transform himself into sun or air and can appear and disappear whenever he likes; (ii) he can enlarge himself so that the whole world becomes like a pearl in his eyes; (iii) for him, far and near, hidden and apparent become the same; (iv) whatever he wishes be it water, food, or fruit of different seasons will be instantly provided for him; (v) whatever he asks from people they will provide it for him, and if someone tries to disobey him they will perish; (vi) whoever sees him confirms that he is unique in the entire world; (vii) he never experiences sexual ejaculation; and (viii) he achieves long life, becomes aware of the signs of death and knows at what time and in which hour he will die (Gangohi n.d., ff. 151a–151b).
- <sup>12</sup> ‘Abd al-Quddus used to express his experiences such as hearing the supernatural voices from the invisible world (*‘alam-i ghayb*) and the powerful dhikr (*sultan-i dhikr*). See Gangohi (1878, pp. 107–9); Gangohi (2010, pp. 29–30, 442); and Quddusi (1894, pp. 16–18, 64–65). These references seem to be connected with the Nath yogic experience of “unstruck sound” (*anahada sabda*), to which ‘Abd al-Quddus refers by mentioning flashes of lightning (Sprengrer, 18b), which suggests the presence of the thunder that describes the yogic mystical experience. See Digby (1975, p. 45).
- <sup>13</sup> Moreover, ‘Abd al-Quddus’ reference to a particular mystical experience of “the state of the brain (*maghz*) or purity (*safa*)” (Gangohi n.d., ff. 24a–24b) suggests his concern about certain mystical experiences that are consistent with and corresponding to his perception of Sufi states such as eternity (*baqa*) and “the perfect man” (*insan-i kamil*). According to the glosses, the stage of *khwab* happens in the brain or at the top of the head (*tark-i sar*) in which there exists prosperity (*abadani*), much darkness is dominant, flashes of lightning come and go, and the five senses stop (Gangohi n.d., f. 13a).
- <sup>14</sup> In the writings of Muslim writers and historians, Jains are also mentioned by the name of Seora (see ‘Allami 1994, 1:88).

- <sup>15</sup> 'Allami (1978, pp. 139–228). For an overview of these Indian philosophical schools, see Ranganathan (2022).
- <sup>16</sup> The failure of 'Andalib to recognize the text of Suhrawadi makes it highly unlikely that he was trained in the Ishraqi school of Illuminationism (Ziad 2008).
- <sup>17</sup> Gorakṣanatha, no. 11 and 12 in Briggs (1973, pp. 286–87).

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