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Breathing in India, c. 1890

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And so to the physical exercises. When the Englishman comes to this stage in Yoga he is completely and entirely disarmed.[1]

Abstract

This essay examines a series of 'Hindustani' meditation manuals from the high colonial period against a sample of etiquette and medicinal works from the same era. In doing so, the essay has two principal aims, one specific to the Indian past and one pertaining to more general historical enquiry. The first aim is to subvert a longstanding trend in the 'history' of religions which has understood meditational practices through a paradigm of the mystical and transcendent. In its place, the essay examines such practices—and in particular their written, and printed, formulation—within the ideological and technological contexts in which they were written. In short, meditation is historicised, and its 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' expressions, compared in the process. The second aim is more ambitious: to test the limits of historical knowledge by asking whether it is possible to recount a history of breathing. In reassembling a political economy of respiration from a range of colonial writings, the essay thus hopes to form a listening device for the intimate rhythms of corporeal history. In doing so, it may suggest ways to recount a connected and necessarily political history of the body, the spirit and the world.

From Breathing to Writing: Meditation in the Colonial Public Sphere

As one of the last bastions of the universal, breathing appears to have withstood the assault of relativism over the past century.[2] With the

*I am extremely grateful to Francis Robinson, David Arnold, Elizabeth de Michelis, Anindita Ghosh, Joseph S. Alter, David Gilmartin, Ali Abbas and my anonymous readers for their engagement with this essay.

[1] Yogini Sunita, *Pranayama Yoga: The Art of Relaxation* (Walsall: West Midlands Press, 1968), p. 22.

[2] I have been heartened in undertaking this historiographical venture through the studies in which Alain Corbin has attempted to map a 'history of the senses'. See in particular his *Les Cloches de la terre: paysage sonore et culture sensible dans les campagnes au XIXe siècle* (Paris: A. Michel, 1994).

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cultures of its variously modified forms regarded as separable from, and even irrelevant to, the universal essence of breath, respiration has been widely accepted as an ideologically neutral sphere of human activity. In the course of the twentieth century this assumed universality enabled distinctive Asian cultures of breathing (Yoga, Tai Chi) to be translated into European and American environments that proved otherwise less hospitable to the moral and political structures that had sustained these practices in their original contexts (ascetic renunciation, Chinese warfare). In short, breathing has seemed neither to require nor reflect a context. Yet like any other human activity, breathing always has a context and is indeed in its various forms (fast, shallow, hard, weak) perhaps the most subtly contingent of all human activities.[3] This contingency is still more the case with regard to the deliberate modifications of breathing found in systems of meditation, for breath control and meditation are no less shaped by history than any other form of physical culture. Given that contingency forms the traditional basis of historical analysis, it is from these initial observations that we may begin to recover a sense for the physical intimacy of a past whose body politics have constituted the history of breathing.

The contexts and cultures of breathing with which we are concerned in this essay are those of the forms of meditation promoted in colonial South Asia, a period which witnessed the formulation of a novel discourse on breathing, meditation and the body whose historicity is rarely recognised. Having their intellectual origins in theological notions of the universal, studies of Indian 'mysticism' have generally failed to recognise the political dimensions to the physical and psychological acts of conditioning and control that comprise the full variety of Indian meditation systems.[4] Discussions of religion in South Asia have often failed to historicise these practices, in many cases assuming a simple continuity over long periods of time between, for example, Vedic references to Yoga and the famous Yoga practitioners

[3] On the history of medical understandings of breathing, see Donald F. Proctor, *A History of Breathing Physiology* (New York: Dekker, 1995).

[4] The most influential example is Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958). However, universalist assumptions about the means and ends of meditation have been most influentially reflected in twentieth century definitions of *zen* as universal *a priori* experience, standing outside the usual ideological trappings of 'religion'. The political genealogy of these formulations is unearthed in Robert Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism", *History of Religions* 33, 1 (1993), pp. 1–43.

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of the colonial period and beyond.[5] In contrast to this tendency, this essay attempts to contextualise Indian meditation by examining the place of its components of breath control and physical conditioning in the wider Indian ecumene of late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Since Yoga has often been seen as the pre-eminent Indian form of meditation, we also draw attention to comparable Indo-Muslim traditions of meditation from the same period. In India's increasingly communalised colonial public sphere, it is argued that Yogis and Sufis articulated rival forms of physical culture and religious identity in response to the wider crisis facing precolonial Indian lifeworlds.[6] The promotion of these distinctly Hindu and Muslim body practices is seen to represent a shared movement towards the indigenisation of physical culture in the face of colonial British modes of personal conditioning, from table manners to military service and cricket. 'Reform' was in this sense not merely an intellectual process of doctrinal dispute, but a means of reconditioning the physical body into atavistically new ways of being, both private and public. In deportment as in appearance, the Yogi and Sufi symbolised an Indian authenticity at the very moment that they absorbed elements of a colonial discourse on the essentially traditional character of the 'authentic' Indian. Here we see the complexity of the oppositional stance to imperial cultural hegemony that Francis Robinson identifies as characteristic of Indo-Islamic reform in his article in this volume.

For all this, the Yogi and Sufi ideologues of the colonial era were in no sense the silent and passive statuary of an India construed as the House of Wonders. In contrast, we aim to show that through their participation in the new vernacular public sphere of print, Sufis and Yogis formed important agents of social change whose connections to modernity were disguised through the widespread colonial figuration of the 'fakir' as the embodiment of tradition. Since the public nature of the politicising of breathing techniques and other methods of control of the body is evident from the large number of printed manuals addressing such practices, vernacular print culture plays a central role in our analysis. Yet as an exploratory essay in the history of

[5] Recent exceptions are Joseph S. Alter, *Yoga in Modern India: The Body between Science and Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) and Elizabeth De Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga: Patañjali and Western Esotericism* (London: Continuum, 2004).

[6] Cf. Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere 1920–1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

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breathing, we also hope to demonstrate something of the multiple and changing meanings of breath and their connection to wider debates about identity, politics and the proper behaviour of the body in South Asia.[7]

Older scholarly paradigms interpreting meditation primarily in terms of 'mysticism' have been largely incapable of recognising the rhetoric of meditation. For Sufi and Yogi meditation form not only a practice of the body but also a discourse on physical culture. Rather than 'liberating' the practitioner into the solipsism of pure private experience, in colonial India both Sufi and Yogi modes of meditation formed attempts to connect the physical person to new ideologies promoted by a series of 'reformist' groups. In stressing the association between meditation and unmediated 'spiritual' experience, the mystical paradigm fails to recognise that in Yogi or Sufi contexts experience was in fact highly mediated, either through the authority of the living *shaykh* or *guru* or else through the mediation of writing. From meditation manuals through etiquette guides and other apparently innocuous genres of instrumental writing, textual practices help us not only map changes in physical culture but also reckon with the agency of such constitutive texts in the new printed ecumene. For the new ideologies of the body that emerged during the high colonial era within which meditation must be located were so effective due to the normalisation of writing through the mass medium of print.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, previously occult spheres of Sufi and Yogi knowledge that had been based on traditions of face-to-face initiation and instruction were gradually re-constituted as traditionalist and indeed indigenist wings of the growing colonial public sphere. Throughout the following pages this meditational discourse on the body is placed among a wider series of printed vernacular works on Muslim and Hindu physical culture. Given the sense of timelessness in which scholarly discussions of meditation have often taken place, it is important to recognise the transformations of Indian physical culture initiated by the technology of printing through shifting the primary context of meditation from the realm of personal

[7] My formulation of this project has been helped by a number of works on the 'history of manners', in particular Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978). With regard to theoretical discussion of the religious body, I have especially benefited from the essays in Sarah Coakley (ed.), *Religion and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and Catherine Bell, "The Ritual Body", in *idem*., *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 94–117.

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mediation to the textual realm of the mediation of writing. For in both Sufi and Yogi domains, precolonial traditions of meditation were based on oral forms of instruction that also encompassed the spoken commentaries that mediated admission to written works.[8] Here access to the knowledge and power granted by manipulation of the physical (and subtle) body was based upon the relationship between master and disciple (*guru/shishya*, *murshid/murid*). In the printed marketplace, what was once mediated by living teachers and surrounded by the empowering rhetoric of secrecy that had long underwritten the association between meditation and magic suddenly became public property. From the closely guarded meditation of personal initiation, here were forms of meditational practice that were accessible to the vernacular-reading general public and its companion listening groups. Although still described as such, Sufi doctrines were no longer 'secrets' (*asrar*) in any socially meaningful sense, not least due to the publication and translation projects of European Orientalists.[9] Whether with regard to Sufi manuals, Yoga treatises, Tantras or even works on magic, the arrival of print transformed the nature of this knowledge as social capital. The most fitting examples are to be found in the new Indian genre of the printed 'do-it-yourself' guide to meditation, which in contrast to more traditional works on either Sufi or Yoga practice effectively replaced the living master with the book. Print, then, stood at the centre of the transformation of an earlier ecumene in which the symbolic capital of certain forms of knowledge had been guarded through the social barriers presented by traditions of secrecy and controlled initiation. Here, then, is the emphasis on self-transformation and the individual will that is described in Francis Robinson's contribution to this volume.

While the nature of this knowledge was transformed by its entry into print, and while a case can be made for the profiteering instincts of print capitalism undermining social institutions whose guarded knowledge was heedlessly disseminated, this was also a situation that a new generation of Muslim and Hindu public preceptors sought to

[8] In the words of one precolonial Tantric work, 'The fool who, overpowered by greed, acts after having looked up [the matter] in a written book, without having obtained it from the guru's mouth, he also will be certainly destroyed.' Cited in Peter Heehs (ed.), *Indian Religions: A Historical Reader of Spiritual Expression and Experience* (London: Hurst, 2002), p. 194.

[9] For a discussion of the social ramifications of 'secret' religious knowledge in colonial India, see Hugh Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

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mould to their advantage. For at the same time that inexpensive print technology undermined the need for a living master's presence, it also opened up the possibility of large-scale publicity for those religious ideologues willing to embrace it. Given the fact of colonial censorship, it is perhaps also worth considering the role of such 'mystical' texts as a form of concealed politics operating in the unrestricted colonial sphere of 'religious affairs'. And as is well known, the circles of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Swami Vivekananda and the Christian missionary organisations that surrounded them took to printing on a hugely ambitious scale.

The following pages examine the roles of a series of lesser-known lithographic men in the cultural politics of colonial meditation.

Print Culture and the Meditational Marketplace

With the final dissolution of Muslim power in nineteenth century North India had come a re-evaluation of Muslim norms of comportment that placed Islamicate *tahzib* ('etiquette') and *adab* ('propriety') into a new set of relations with neo-Hindu as well as British systems of physical comportment and bodily conditioning. In spite of the intransigent and repetitive rhetoric of Indian meditation manuals, this changing context would radically shift their meaning; as, correspondingly, did their relation as books in the marketplace to other books offering instruction in alternative ways of controlling the body. Although Muslim writers had been producing works on meditational practice for centuries, works either printed or produced during the late colonial period had special significance due to their attempts to access a public sphere in which the behaviour of Indian bodies was increasingly contested.[10] The radical potential of print—homogenising, proselytising, entering domestic space—was quickly

[10] Several earlier Indian manuals have been studied in detail. See Craig Davis, "The Yogic Exercises of the 17th Century Sufis", in Knut A. Jacobsen (ed.), *Theory and Practice of Yoga: Essays in Honour of Gerald James Larson* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Carl W. Ernst, "Chishtī Meditation Practices of the Later Mughal Period", in Leonard Lewisohn and David Morgan (eds), *The Heritage of Sufism, Vol. 3, Late Classical Persianate Sufism (1501–1750)* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999); Marcia K. Hermansen, "Shah Wali Allah's Model of the Subtle Spiritual Centers (*Lata'if*): A Sufi Model of Personhood and Self-Transformation", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 47 (1988), pp. 1–25. For a study of an important colonial-era text, see Scott A. Kugle, "The Heart of Ritual is the Body: the Ritual Manual of an Early-Modern Sufi Master", *Journal of Ritual Studies* 17, 1 (2003).

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recognised by Sufi writers of the period who regarded themselves as sources of public authority. Print was able to transform the teachings of these often obscure and provincial holy men into models of emulation for not only their direct initiates but also for a far larger fellowship of unseen readers. In the same way that colonial India witnessed Sufi meditation move from the more closed sphere of manuscript and oral instruction to the open access of the printed and purchasable text, the doctrines of Yoga similarly shifted from a circumscribed realm of initiatic and caste membership to the printed public sphere. Yoga practices thus mirrored their Sufi counterparts in being offered to a much wider public than had previously been the case, partly in reflection of the missionary impetus of Hindu and Muslim reform movements. The emphasis placed on Yoga by a whole series of Hindu public preceptors—particularly Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) and Aurobindo Ghose (1872–1950)—brought Yoga a prominence that it had never before enjoyed, a prominence that was closely connected to the colonial experience in its early export overseas no less than in its Bengali epicentre. The neglected vernacular works discussed in this essay further disseminated this new Yoga in the print marketplace of small town North India.

Like their Muslim counterparts, colonial Yogi writings posited transcendent moral and ethereal goals for the bodily practices they promoted. In this way they connected physical discipline and bodily purity to a wider vision of social progress and political independence based on an indigenous physical culture sanctioned through reference to antique 'scriptural' precedents. As time passed and as European scientific knowledge increasingly encroached on the Yogi *Gedankenwelt*, the physical benefits of Yoga came increasingly to the fore, with a whole range of scientific and pseudo-scientific evaluations of Yoga eventually marginalising most of what Yoga had meant to its classical proponents writing centuries earlier in Sanskrit.[11] Whatever the antiquating rhetoric of its proponents, the physicalist and 'scientific' neo-Yoga of modern times is a direct product of the cultural negotiations of late colonial India. But at the same time, there continued an older discourse in which Yoga and other forms of meditation were articulated primarily in terms of practical (albeit none the less physical) ends whose realisation stood in stark contrast to the more limited modernist goals of the neo-Yogis. Seen in such vernacular

[11] Alter (2004).

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works as Jagannath Prashad's *Yogriti ba taswir* ('Yoga with Illustrations', 1910), here the ultimate goal of breath control was seen as rendering the physical body capable of surviving for thousands of years.[12]

Many common features may be observed across the range of early Sufi and Yogi printed works on meditation practice, whose composition seems in many cases to have been inspired by commercial as much as ideological reasons. The fact that such works as Shiv Brit Lal Varman's *Yog ke 'amali sabaq* ('Practical Lessons in Yoga') were printed in the Perso-Arabic rather than the Devanagari script is a reminder of the continuity of 'Hindustani' cosmopolitanism through the early decades of the twentieth century.[13] Indeed, as knowledge of a range of meditation techniques moved into the public sphere from their older location within specialised subcultures, a whole series of Urdu works on Yoga were published during this period. A work such as Jagannath Prashad's Urdu *Yogriti ba taswir* offered its purchasers practical instruction in Yoga, its etchings demonstrating correct posture alongside instructions on the mastery of respiration and carefully tabulated programmes of the correct number of minutes to hold the breath.[14] In a lithographic equivalent of small print, its section of qualifications and exceptions provides glimpses of the changing contexts of meditation: readers were warned not to practise breath control while suffering from headaches or feeling physically unwell, and under no circumstances to practise Yoga in moving train carriages.[15]

In their practical orientation, eschewing the old ways of face-to-face initiation and learning, works such as the *Yogriti ba taswir* had numerous Sufi counterparts. In the literary expression of the religiously plural readership that made up the North Indian marketplace, some of these Sufi works included sections on the techniques of Yoga. Among the most interesting of the colonial Sufi works that discuss Yoga practices is the *Asrar-e-darwesh* ('The Dervish's Secrets') of Sufi Sa'adat 'Ali.[16] In addition to describing a number of familiar Sufi meditational

[12] Jagannāth Prashād, *Yogritī bā taswīr* (Meerut, 1910), p. 120: 'This is the final level of meditation (*yē ākhirī daraja samādhī kā hai*)'. Such ideas clearly drew on older traditions associated with Nath and Siddha Yogis. See George Weston Briggs, *Gorakhnāth and the Kānphata Yogīs* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938).

[13] Shīv Brit Lāl Varman, *Yōg kē 'amalī sabaq* (Lahore: Bharat Literature Company, n.d. [1910?]).

[14] Jagannāth Prashād (1910), pp. 90–96, 111–120.

[15] *Idem*., pp. 101–102.

[16] Sūfī Sa'ādat 'Alī, *Asrār-e-darwēsh mūsūma ba bahr al-ma'rifat* (Muradabad, 1898).

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practices (*zikr*, *riyazat*), the author also included a section devoted to a respectful elucidation of the techniques of the Yogis and the purpose of their various postures.[17] Like the more instrumentalist sections of licit magic that made Muhammad Ghaws's sixteenth century *Jawahir-e-khamsa* so popular in print during this period, the *Asrar-e-darwesh* was a deeply pragmatic work whose position in the marketplace was analogous to that of the new practical Yoga manuals discussed below that promised to yield vast powers from correct breathing. Printed in pocket-size format, the *Asrar-e-darwesh* seems to have been written as a guidebook for those wishing to set themselves up as Sufi masters in their own right, but who wished to avoid the trouble of initiation and gradual training at a pace dictated by a living master. Consequently, the *Asrar-e-darwesh* consists of descriptions of a series of practices—largely prayers, visualisation techniques and breathing exercises—that could be employed for specific and for the most part worldly ends. This was not a Sufism of metaphysical theory, but rather its social expression as medicine, prognostication and amulet-making, all of which could of course be adapted for profit-making enterprises. However, for present purposes what is most interesting about the *Asrar-e-darwesh* is the section it contains on breathing techniques, a section underpinned (as in the Yoga works of the period) by a short theoretical excursus on the connections between breath and the wider universe. Much more minimal and convenient than the often complex and time-consuming exercises of traditional Sufi and Yogi practice, these were a series of simple breathing techniques that could accompany very specific circumstances. In effect, dangerous or otherwise risky activities should be met by breathing through different nostrils or towards different parts of the body. The many and varied situations in which the power of breath could be so employed included the purchase of a horse, elephant or camel; the receipt of a gift gold jewellery or of new clothes (presumably to avoid *mal de ojo*); and the search for lost property. Accompanied by simple instructions to breathe in certain directions or through one or the other nostril, the numerous other eventualities in which the reader was advised to resort to the power of breath ranged from the quotidian (learning whether one was pregnant with a boy-child, ensuring a safe journey in given directions of the compass) to the extraordinary (meeting a king, anticipating an armed invasion).[18]

[17] *Ibid*., pp. 44–66, 186–192.
[18] *Idem*., pp. 18–27.

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Further undermining transcendentalist conceptions of Sufism and Yoga, such works were forthright in their orientation towards physical as much as spiritual ends.

Colonised Bodies and Indigenous Alternatives

Far from creating a sense of universal solidarity with the common facts of the human condition, the embedding of Sufism and Yoga in the pragmatic minutiae of daily life in colonial India echoed the shift towards sectarianism in public debates over the nature of community. This politics of meditation is most clearly discernible when meditation practices are placed into the wider discourse on physical culture that from the later decades of the nineteenth century increasingly sought to control—and indeed define—Muslim and Hindu bodies. While inter-Muslim polemic over the legitimacy of Sufi practice and authority is already well known, it is important to situate this Muslim controversy within a wider contest for the control of Indian bodies in which Muslims played only a part. For Sufi and other discourses that propounded an expressly Islamic physical culture were competing with alternative formulations of Hindu and British modes of bodily comportment. If this polemical triangle had a point of origin, this was the presence of a British colonial elite and their own consciously distinctive physical culture. For with its pomp, its prestige and its literal embodiment of power, the colonial etiquette of the British ruling class provoked a crisis of confidence in the old Indian ways of physical being in the world. One set of responses—an inevitable outcome of the cultural encounter of the politically unequal—was for Indians to adopt 'British' forms of behaviour, from dress, pastimes and mannerisms to the occasional extremes of English food habits. Another set of responses—the responses explored in this essay—sought to develop homegrown alternatives to this imperial culture of the body.

The impact of this imperial physical culture was variously seen in the (self-) suppression of aspects of the customary physical cultures of India; in the promotion of self-consciously indigenous alternatives; and in the minutiae of everyday personal encounters underwritten by the unequal distribution of power. Yet in the fraught intellectual and social climate of the era, such indigenising turns towards legitimate alternatives frequently articulated themselves as self-consciously 'Muslim' or 'Hindu' forms of behaviour. Indo-British cultural relations therefore emerged out of a series of debates that may be simplified

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into the pattern of a 'trialogue' of Christian, Hindu and Muslim, a polemical geometry that came to lay out the possibilities of definition for the self as for others. Of course, between these three discursive voices in the trialogue more ambiguous formulations of physical culture remained possible. Attempts to formulate a non-sectarian 'national' alternative may be plotted between Muslim and Hindu in the communicative triangle (as in Nehru's Islamicate dress), with the position of the Muslim modernists lying between Muslim and British points of reference. But despite these variant possibilities, the three main markers of identity nonetheless plotted the discursive parameters of definition.

We suggest, therefore, that the promotion of Sufi and Yogi meditation in the public sphere represented an important aspect of the colonial debate over the ownership and control of the body that sought to formulate the public display of personal identity. The proponents of Sufi and Yogi discipline were competing with the imperial Anglo-Saxon mode of physical culture in its broadest sense. As numerous studies have emphasised, in its innumerable manifestations this vigorous imperial culture of the body combined sporting prowess and military drill with a sense of missionary 'action', so encompassing an originally Protestant discipline of the flesh with an imperial culture of socially hierarchical personal etiquette. As with the rival systems of physical culture offered by those speaking in the name of Muslim and Hindu tradition, proper bodily restraint and physical endeavour for the British in India were underwritten by a strong ideological and moral code—'*the* code'—that drew on ascetic strands of Protestant Christianity and public school sports adapted to the muscular contexts of empire.[19] For those willing to emulate imperial bodies, printed books in Indian languages provided written initiation into the mysteries of Victorian physical culture. In his *Ma'dan-e-tahzib* ('The Mine of Manners'), published in 1901 in Lucknow, the old capital of Islamicate etiquette, the headmaster of the city's Hosainabad High School sought to instruct his boyish readers in proper English behaviour through a series of practical lessons upheld by admonitions no less forceful than those of his Sufi contemporaries.[20]

[19] On 'the code', see J. R. de S. Honey, *Tom Brown's Universe: The Development of the Victorian Public School* (London: Millington, 1977). On the reflection of these themes in colonial architectural projects, see William J. Glover, "Objects, Models, and Exemplary Works: Educating Sentiment in Colonial India", *Journal of Asian Studies* 64, 3 (2005).

[20] Mīrzā Habīb Husayn, *Ma'dan-e-tahzīb* (Lucknow, 1901).

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In this guidebook to the new mode of colonised being in the world, Mirza Habib Husayn detailed an enormous range of practices that the young Indian should endeavour to learn. These ranged from sitting correctly and playing appropriate sports (*khel aur varzesh*) to behaving properly at balls and even learning to dress in the fashion of the famous metropolitan dandy, Beau Brummel.[21] The *Ma'dan-e-tahzib* in this way aimed to self-consciously train its readers in modifications of bodily behaviour appropriate to India's new colonial society. Yet such works also bore an obvious political dimension, made explicit in the *Ma'dan-e-tahzib* through an appendix on the benefits of British rule.[22]

Neither this work nor its contemporary Sufi and Yogi manuals can be understood in isolation from the much larger body of Urdu books, pamphlets and journals devoted to manners and etiquette published in colonial India. These ranged from Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's hugely influential journal *Tahzib al-akhlaq* ('The Purifying of Manners', founded c. 1870) to the well-known book of the same name by the North Indian *'alim* 'Abd al-Hayy al-Hasani (d. 1923) and the similarly famous manual of female behaviour, the *Bihishti zewar* ('The Heavenly Adornments') of Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi (d. 1943). Besides these better-known works, scores of less successful etiquette manuals filled the shelves of India's booksellers. Among these cheap print works, many were still more practical and specialist in character, such as the short guides to the rules of cricket—that most successful component of the physical culture of empire—written by Muhammad 'Abd al-Rahman of Bareilly and Nanak Chand.[23]

Such colonial modifications of physical culture were echoed elsewhere in Urdu print through the distribution of works delineating 'Islamic' alternatives to colonial comportment. The *Adat al-tanabbuh fi bayan ma'ni al-tashabbuh* ('Tools of Awakening for Clarifying the Meaning of Imitation') of Mawlwi 'Abd al-Hayy, published in Delhi around 1910, sought to prove that copying the physical appearance of Englishmen was contrary to the Sunna of the Prophet. The legitimately 'Muslim' style of moustache was of particular concern, as was the

[21] *Ibid*., pp. 33–34, 47, 75–76, 93–95.
[22] *Ibid*., pp. 194–195.
[23] See Muhammad 'Abd al-Rahmān, *Kriket gā'id* (Lucknow, 1898) and Nānak Chānd, *Gā'id tū kriket ya'nī rāhnumā-e-kriket* (Sialkot, 1891). As clerk to the Municipal Committee in Sialkot, Chānd was close to the wider colonial re-conditioning of Indian behaviour articulated through notions of public property and its accompanying behaviour.

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length of beards and hair, with male Muslim readers warned to also attend to the hair of their womenfolk.[24] The alternative offered to imperial mannequins was a system of etiquette based on a neo-classical model of Prophetic 'custom' (*sunnat*).

Although widespread, such attitudes were by no means uncontested. In an early twentieth century magazine article entitled *Taj aur kulah-e-darweshi* ('The Crown and the Dervish Cap'), the well-known Sufi publicist Khwaja Hasan Nizami (1878–1955) offered a less antagonistic attitude towards the sartorial symbolism of British rule by relegating all such signs of power to an older Sufi discourse of the rejection of worldliness (*tark-e-dunya*). Although the wearing of the crown makes people (by implication, the British) appear different, advised Khwaja Hasan, without the crown, in reality all people are equal and share the same eyes, tongue, heart and indeed breath.[25] Such sentiments notwithstanding, in other articles Khwaja Hasan was no less insistent than many of his contemporaries that the habits and attributes (*khasa'il aur awsaf*) of the Prophet Muhammad should be held up as the best behavioural example for his community, making repeated use of hadith to stress the importance of good manners and of Muhammad as their ideal model.[26] Other printed works sprang to the defence of 'Muslim' physical culture by taking on single issues, as in the case of Babu Muhammad Husayn's *Risala-e-goshtkhori* ('Treatise on Meat-Eating'), a tract in praise of the benefits to Muslims of the regular consumption of meat.[27] As in other such works written amid the polemical triangle identified earlier, here Indian behaviour was being shaped through debate with Hindu antagonists, with bodily praxis used to quite literally incorporate symbolisms of community difference. Consequently, frequent references to the Arya Samaj appear in the *Risala-e-goshtkhori*.[28]

Print culture played a central role in publicising these re-formulations of the practice of daily life. It is here that colonial writings on meditation are also to be situated.

[24] Mawlwī 'Abd al-Hayy, *Adāt al-tanabbuh fī bayān ma'nī al-tashabbuh* (Delhi: Tuhfa-e-Hind, 1326/1909), pp. 4–25.

[25] Khwāja Hasan Nizāmī, *Tāj aūr kulāh-e-darwēshī* in *idem*., *Māzāmīn-e-Khwāja Hasan Niẓāmī* (Delhi: Ghulām Nizām al-dīn, 1912), pp. 170–172.

[26] Khwāja Hasan Nizāmī, *Sāhib-e-bazm-e-milād kē akhlāq* in *ibid*., pp. 177–179.

[27] Bābū Muhammad Husayn, *Risāla-e-gōshtkhōrī* (Delhi: Muhammad Qasīm 'Alī, 1910).

[28] Husayn (1910), pp. 12–13, 37.

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The Athletics of Sufi Rebellion

As we have noted, to emphasise the transcendent aims of meditation practices is to miss their central concern with the body and, through its medium, with the wider social world. As scholars of Mediterranean late antiquity have long recognised, the founders of the Christian monastic movement performed their feats of self-discipline in vivid and direct competition with the athletes of Rome. Indeed, in the prototypical *Vita Antonii* of Athanasius (d. 373), the physicality of Saint Antony's struggles was dramatically emphasised in order to compare the saint with the representatives of the alternative (and still at this point dominant) model of physical endeavour represented by the athlete.[29] Just as the new physical culture represented by the early Christian ascetics was understood in counterpoint to wider social assumptions about the body, so was a similar set of cultural and historical references to be found in the writings on Sufi and Yogi techniques that entered India's printed public sphere. Even more than their earlier models, Indian Sufi manuals of the colonial period gave central emphasis to control of the body. Such works promoted a form of physical conditioning that, in accordance with longstanding tradition, was described in terms of '[physical] training' (*riyazat*) and 'work' (*shughl*). Indeed, in the *Ziya al-qulub* ('The Brilliance of the Hearts') of Hajji Imdad Allah (d. 1899), the author went so far as to term the breathing practices he was describing as *varzesh* ('athletic exercise, sport') in their own right.[30] In its account of the practice of breath control (*pas-e-anfas*), the *Ziya al-qulub* even described a technique that enabled the initiate to mystically breathe the living breath of his spiritual guide: to breathe as a Sufi was to be quite literally inspired by one's master.[31] Breath had now become a way of articulating authority.

Attempts to respond to polemical attacks on Sufi legitimacy are also seen in the writings of the Hyderabadi Sufi Iftikhar 'Ali Shah Watan (d. 1906). There instructions on meditation practices—such as *zikr-e-jali* or *zikr-e-kalima-e-tayiba*—appeared only in the midst of this defence of Sufi legitimacy that stressed the primacy of an unambiguously

[29] See Athanasius, *The Life of Saint Antony*, trans. Robert T. Meyer (Westminster: Newman Press, 1950). On these themes more generally, see Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

[30] Imdād Allāh Farūqī, *Ziyā al-qulūb* in *idem.*, *Kulliyat-e-Imdādiyya* (Kanpur, 1898), p. 137.

[31] Imdād Allāh Farūqī (Kanpur, 1898), p. 137.

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Islamic bodily praxis of normative rituals and obedience to the *shari'a*.[32] Meditation practices by no means hovered in serene isolation above the ideological affray that surrounded them, but in such ways participated inexorably in the controversies of the age—through the books devoted to their elucidation and correct performance.

Without positing any kind of facile causality, this culture of self-discipline nevertheless cannot be disentangled from colonial efforts towards taming the violence of the holy man. For Sufi training manuals also need to be situated in relation to the failure of the jihad movements of the nineteenth century. These movements encompassed not only the unsuccessful jihad of Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi (d. 1831) but also the widespread sentiment among many Indian Muslims that the revolt of 1857 had also been a jihad. Here it is important to stress that from declaring holy war to formulating modes of legal and cultural separatism from Indo-British society, the most stringent rejections of colonial rule by Indian Muslims in the nineteenth century had come from Sufi circles.[33]

An illuminating example of the inverse relationship between armed struggle and meditation is seen in the life and works of Hajji Imdad Allah (d. 1899), whose involvement in the jihad of 1857 led him to seek exile after the revolt's suppression in the Hijaz, from where he continued to write and teach. In addition to the oral dissemination of his teaching through the network of Indian students emanating from his charismatic presence in Mecca, Imdad Allah's collected writings were also printed in Kanpur in 1898. Written in Persian and Urdu, his works included one of the most significant manuals on Sufi meditation of the nineteenth century, the *Ziya-al-qulub*. However, Imdad Allah also composed a lengthy Urdu *masnawi* poem, the *Jihad-e-akbar* ('The Greater Jihad'), on the moral struggle against the self; it was in many ways the poetic companion to his prose guidebook on meditation. What is interesting about the poem is its adaptation of the language of jihad for the disciplining of the self. Of course, the notion of the struggle against the self as the 'greater jihad' goes back to a famous hadith of the Prophet Muhammad and Imdad Allah was by no means the first Sufi to expand the theme. But given his involvement in the events of 1857, Imdad Allah's subsequent decision to promote

[32] Iftikhār 'Alī Shāh Watan, *Irshādāt-e-Watan* (Hyderabad, repr. 1384/1964), pp. 2–3, 5, 72–74.

[33] See Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz: Puritanism, Sectarian, Polemics and Jihād* (Canberra: Ma'rifat Publishing, 1982).

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the internalisation of this rejection of British power had a particular salience. The language and poetic imagery of the *Jihad-e-akbar* made its reference to contemporary physical warfare quite clear, describing the struggles with the various elements of the self in terms of a series of skirmishes and sorties involving battalions (*lashkar*) armed with rifles (*tufang*), swords (*tigh*) and daggers (*khanjar*).[34] Manifest here was the intimate relationship between meditation and rebellion as resistance alternatively externalised through armed struggle or internalised through the discipline and purification of the self. In either case of inward or outward aggression, the body became the focus of political struggle against external influence in which firm boundaries were constructed between Indian Muslims and their British overlords.

A Yoga of Silent Resistance

Having seen the connection of Sufi works to a wider Muslim discourse on the body, it is now necessary to place colonial Yoga writings within the same colonial transformation of Indian physical culture. As we have already hinted, we suggest that the entry of the previously initiatory traditions of Yogi no less than Sufi forms of bodily training into the public sphere of print represented a self-consciously indigenous alternative to the physical culture of the Raj. This may be most vividly demonstrated in connection with the major publicists of the new Yoga of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, for several of these figures were also connected to the nationalist and proto-nationalist movements.[35] The most obvious example is Gandhi, with his notions of the connections between (bodily) *swaraj* and Yoga. However, a more interesting figure is Aurobindo Ghose, for whom the practice of Yoga formed part of a wider re-discovery of Indian knowledge concomitant with the rejection of the colonial learning

[34] Hājjī Imdād Allāh, *Risāla-e-jihād-e-akbar*, in *idem*, *Kulliyat-e-Imdādiyya* (Kanpur, 1898), pp.182–203. Drawing on well-established tradition, such imagery was by no means unknown to Yoga works of the period; the *Yogritī bā taswīr* contains a section describing Yoga ascesis in terms of a battle (pp. 50–52). However, perhaps Imdad Allah's closest Hindu counterpart was the Maratha woman Tapasvini Mataji (b. 1835), who fought alongside the Rani of Jhansi in 1857 before escaping to Nepal and spending three decades engaged in meditation. Returning to India, she established a neo-orthodox Hindu girls' school in Calcutta in 1893 (Taylor 2001: 82).

[35] See Indira Chowdhury-Sengupta, "Reconstructuring Spiritual Heroism: The Evolution of the Swadeshi Sannyasi in Bengal", in Julia Leslie (ed.), *Myth and Mythmaking* (Richmond: Curzon, 1996).

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he had acquired at public school in London and at university in Cambridge.[36] Ghose's shift from nationalist violence to nationalist asceticism occurred during his imprisonment in Calcutta during the Alipore Bomb Case of 1908–09. It was only after his acquittal that Aurobindo passed through the final stage of his metamorphosis from political agitator to Yogi, rejecting the trappings of his colonial education in favour of a dress act of indigenist self-definition. Once again print played a central part in this reclamation of identity, with Aurobindo furiously publishing his ideas on Yoga between 1914 and 1921 in the journal *Arya* that was issued from his refuge in French Pondicherry as the counterpart to his earlier political daily, *Bande Mataram*.[37] The position we have argued for Yoga within the indigenising politics of the period is made quite explicit in a number of Ghose's writings in *Bande Mataram*. For as he declared in an article entitled 'Religion and Politics' published in 1907, 'There cannot be a more mischievous delusion than to suppose that we can advance our soul by committing our bodies to the care of others'.[38]

In many ways, the politics of Aurobindo's choice of the ascetic yogi as the authentic Indian was an echo of the confrontational politics of the previous century. The East India Company's military expansion in Bengal had earlier been met with fierce resistance from the ascetic armies of the Sadhu orders (*akharas*), while memories of the uprisings of 1857 continued to be enriched with tales of the conspiratorial communications network run by fakirs and Sadhus.[39] But Aurobindo's circle also contained other figures who represented this juncture between revolutionary politics and Yoga, such as the Irish-born supporter of Indian independence Margaret Noble, better known as Sister Nivedita (1867–1911). A follower of Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita had also been strongly influenced by the political writings of

[36] On Ghose and nationalist politics, see Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee, *Sri Aurobindo and the New Thought in Indian Politics* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1997). On Ghose's Yoga, see especially Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Madras: Sri Aurobindo Library, 1948).

[37] The title of Aurobindo's newspaper was borrowed from the famous Bengali nationalist song of the same name, which first appeared in Bankim Chandra Chatterji's nineteenth century novel, *Ānandamath* ('Abode of Bliss', 1882), which itself dealt with a group of politicised nationalist *sannyasis*.

[38] 'Religion and Politics', published in *Bande Mataram Daily* on 2 August 1907 and reprinted in Mukherjee and Mukherjee (1997).

[39] See Atis K. Dasgupta, *The Fakir and Sannyasi Uprisings* (Calcutta: K. P. Bagchi, 1992) and Dirk Kolff, "Sanyasi Trader-Soldiers", *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 8, 2 (1971), pp. 213–218.

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such figures of the great Russian anarchist, Pyotr Kropotkin (1842–1921).[40] Other nationalist groups in Bengal established *anuśilan samitis* ('self-culture clubs'), while in other regions of India militant *akharas* posing as centres of Yogic instruction attracted the attention of the British authorities.

Although few other Yogis had such expressly political careers as Aurobindo, the place of Yoga in Aurobindo's indigenous turn was nonetheless clearly linked to the wider Yoga revival of the late nineteenth century.[41] For despite its presentation as an antique and so 'purely' Indian tradition, the colonial Yoga of Aurobindo's direct predecessors had not remained unchanged by its imperial passage and had already begun to blend with Anglo-Saxon notions of physical culture.

It is important to stress here the hybrid genealogy of the neo-Yoga of the nineteenth century and its connections to the occult subculture of the Victorian empire, a situation also reflected in the colonial rehabilitation of a bowdlerised Tantrism.[42] As early as the 1860s, the practice of breath control was beginning to be promoted in Britain, with the earliest notable example being George Catlin. A blend of ethnology and quackery led Catlin to promote the 'natural' method of nostril breathing, as summed up in his motto *shut your mouth*. Although he had no links with India, Catlin's ideas were nonetheless founded on the exoticism of foreign climes: he claimed to base his theories on the observation of the Indians of Brazil, Peru and the United States.[43] By the 1870s and 1880s, breath was beginning to feature in several of the New Religious Movements emerging from the suppressed cosmopolitanism of Victorian Britain. Of these, the Sympneumata movement of Laurence Oliphant (1829–88), that 'mystic in lavender kid gloves', is perhaps the most interesting through its attempts to link breathing to individualist self-discovery and the sexual liberation of the country women of Palestine.[44] A few decades later, by now in the context of 'meditation' per se, breath control further infiltrated British

[40] See Peter Heehs, "Foreign Influences on Bengali Revolutionary Terrorism 1902–1908", *Modern Asian Studies* 28, 3 (1994), pp. 533–556.

[41] See G. N. Sarma, *Sri Aurobindo and the Indian Renaissance* (Bangalore: Ultra Publications, 1997).

[42] See De Michelis (2004) and Kathleen Taylor, *Sir John Woodroffe, Tantra and Bengal* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001).

[43] See George Catlin, *The Breath of Life; or Mal-respiration and its Effects upon the Enjoyments & Life of Man* (London: Trübner, 1862).

[44] See Laurence and Alice Oliphant, *Sympneumata: or, Evolutionary Forces Now Active in Man* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1885). On Oliphant himself, see Philip

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reading circles via the Theosophical movement.[45] Popular printed works further extended the adaptation of Yoga to scientific notions of physiology and health, as in *Health and Right Breathing*, published in London in 1912 as part of Cassell's 'Health Handbook' series. This book anonymously quoted Vivekananda as well as George Catlin in its physiological exposition of breath control.[46] Interestingly, the Cassell handbook espoused the same appeal to scripture as Sufi and Yoga works did in India, with precedent sought in the Old and New Testaments to support the link between right breathing and moral rectitude.[47]

With the growing interest in Yoga in the imperial centre in Britain, and beyond it in America, Yoga would subsequently be further reconstituted through still greater appeals to modern medicine and science.[48] Here, however, we are principally concerned with an earlier stage in this colonial transformation of the means and ends of meditation. For despite Aurobindo's exemplification of a Yoga of colonial resistance, his own turn from violent to meditational resistance had been influenced by Vivekananda, whom Aurobindo considered as his absent mentor, having only met him through the vicarious medium of a vision he experienced in gaol in Calcutta.

It was ultimately Vivekananda who was the most influential player in this transformation of Yoga from minoritarian ascesis into the global physical culture it would become over the course of the next century. Despite its repeated appeals to Vedic authenticity, it is in Vivekananda's *Raja-Yoga* ('Royal Yoga', 1896) that we must locate the single most important colonial hybrid of Indian and European notions of physical culture as pertains to meditation. In reflection of the bourgeois parapsychologists of late Victorian Britain, Vivekananda was the first of a long line of neo-Yogis to elicit comparison between Yoga and European systems of knowledge, so making the first steps towards the detachment of Yoga from the subtle bodies of classical Sanskritic physiology to the mechanical human body of modern

Henderson, *The Life of Laurence Oliphant: Traveller, Diplomat, and Mystic* (London: R. Hale, 1956).

[45] See C. R. Srinivasa Ayangar and Narrainasawmy Iyer, *Occult Physiology: Notes on Hata Yoga* (London: Theosophical Publication Society, 1893).

[46] See Anon., *Health and Right Breathing* (London: Cassell, 1912), pp. 28–29 on Catlin and pp. 48–49, 58 on Vivekananda.

[47] Anon (1912), pp. 66–68.

[48] Alter (2004).

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science.[49] Vivekananda was by no means the only figure involved in the colonial transformation of pre-modern Indian meditation and physical culture through missionary work overseas. The Indian Sufi missionary 'Inayat Khan (1882–1927) offers another important example of the new centrality that the body and its optimal health came to occupy in articulating the new purposes of meditation. In the years after his departure from India in 1910 'Inayat Khan's presentation of Sufi practice in Britain and subsequently America wrought a similar shift towards modernist notions of the body and its health.[50] Here, as in the physical culture of the Victorian public school, physical vigour became an important frame of reference for Sufi meditation. Breath control also played an important part in 'Inayat's message, with the legacy of an earlier holistic Islamic paradigm of the physical and subtle bodies adapted or discarded to fit modern Western notions of physiology.

Vivekananda was not only instrumental in the gradual mechanisation of Yoga, for he also passed on an older political discourse on Yoga breathing that, in precolonial Indian society, had served as the ideological underpinning of the activities of the Sadhu orders as warriors, merchants and bankers.[51] It is here that a discourse on breathing re-enters our analysis, since for Vivekananda the physical exercises of Yoga were primarily concerned with control of *prana* (literally 'breath'), the *élan vital* that he described as 'the infinite, omnipresent manifesting power of this universe' and whose force could only be mastered through the practice of breath control (*pranayama*).[52]

[49] See Swami Vivekananda, *Raja-Yoga, or Conquering the Internal Nature* (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1930), pp. 38–39 with reference to the laughing gas experiments of Sir Humphrey Davy (1778–1829). The text was originally published in English in 1896 in London and New York, with an Indian edition appearing in Calcutta shortly afterwards. Several translations of Vivekananda's *Raja-Yoga* into Indian languages were made during the first years of the twentieth century, including Bengali editions and an Urdu translation (Swāmī Vivekānand, *Rāj Yūg* (Delhi: Sādhū Prēs, 1916)).

[50] See in particular the chapters on 'Physical Control' and 'Health' in Hazrat Inayat Khan, *Sufi Teachings*, *Vol. 8, The Sufi Message* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), pp. 49–56. On his life and teachings, see Elisabeth Keesing, *Hazrat Inayat Khan: A Biography* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1981).

[51] Cf. Peter van der Veer, "Taming the Ascetic: Devotionalism in an Indian Monastic Order", *Man* 22, 4 (1987), p. 693: "Till the nineteenth century asceticism was a most rewarding and promising option. Especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, when ascetic orders dominated major parts of trade and soldiery... With the Pax Britannica this world of opportunity gradually disappeared...." See also Dasgupta (1992) and Kolff (1971).

[52] Vivekananda (1930), pp. 33–34. In the Urdu edition of *Raja-Yoga* (Swāmī Vivekānand, 1916, pp. 36–65), the sections on *prāna* describe the power of breath through the vocabulary of *qudrat* and *tāqat*.

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In his promised transformation of the colonial subject into the puissant Yogi, Vivekananda unveiled the centrality of power to his worldview by describing the vast cosmic forces accessible to the masters of this indigenous practice of breath control that 'opens to us the door to almost unlimited power'.[53] Indeed, Vivekananda's vision of *pranayama* went as far as to offer an explicit political sociology:

> The gigantic will-powers of the world, the world-movers, can bring their *Prana* into a high state of vibration, and it is so great and powerful that it catches others in a moment, and thousands are drawn towards them, and half the world think as they do. Great prophets of the world had the most wonderful control of the *Prana*, which gave them tremendous will-power . . . and this is what gave them power to sway the world. All manifestations of power arise from this control.[54]

Here Vivekananda finally turned India's political reality upon its head to provide an indigenous key to political empowerment capable of undermining a colonial discourse explaining power in terms of moral supremacy, technological advancement and political maturity.

The relationship that Vivekananda framed between breath and power was also evident in vernacular works on meditation from the period. An example is found in Shiv Brit Lal Varman's *Yog ke 'amali sabaq* ('Practical Lessons in Yoga'), one of the numerous autodidactic meditation manuals fostered in India by the emergence of print capitalism. Having discussed the uses of different types of Yoga, like Vivekananda (whom his ideas reflect), Varman devoted several chapters to discussing the importance of breath (*pran*) and breath control (*pranayam*).[55] Varman began this account with a discussion of the etymology of the word *pran*. While this appeal to linguistic origins was possibly a reflection of the relative unfamiliarity of the term *vis-à-vis* more common spoken Hindustani terms for breath (*sans*, *dam*), it also demonstrated the same orientation to words' 'original' meanings and antique precedents shared by proponents of neo-Hinduism and colonial scholars alike.[56] But for all its ideological subtext, like other contemporary works on physical culture, Varman's work bore a forthright practical orientation towards

[53] Vivekananda (1930), pp. 33–34.
[54] *Ibid*, p. 43.
[55] Shīv Brit Lāl Varman (n.d. [1910?]), pp. 67–95.
[56] In reflection of this neo-classical swing in colonial India, Vivekananda had included a rendering of Patanjali's Yoga Sutra as a legitimising appendix to his own *Raja-Yoga*.

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the supernatural empowerment of his vernacular readership. His etymological conclusions were therefore that, among its several layered meanings, *pran* signified breath (*sans*), life-power (*zind ki taqat*) and more simply power itself (*taqat*).[57] Having established that the entire universe—from planetary to human bodies—is composed of a fusion of *pran* and *akash* ('ether'), Varman then continued to extol the might of this 'breath power'. Since *pran* is limitless (*la-mahdud*), he noted, so also are its works, such that all that people see in the world is merely a manifestation (*zahur*) of *pran*, from the physical realm right through to the imaginings of the inner life.

Capable of being mastered by ordinary Indians through the Yoga practices of breath-control described in Varman's book, once again *pran* was here explicitly portrayed as the source of all power (*qudrat*).[58] In a printed ecumene in which vernacular works on Yoga shared shelf space with accounts of the new British sciences, formulated here in cheap print was an indigenist theory of power as *prana*. Like the parapsychologists of the imperial metropolis, India's colonial Yogis thus made comparisons between their 'antique' Yoga and the *arriviste* findings of European science. As Vivekananda grandly declaimed, 'What moves the steam engine? *Prana*, acting through the steam. What are all these phenomena of electricity and so forth but *Prana*? What is physical science? The science of *Pranayama* [breath control], by external means'.[59] If breathing was related to power, then here we see rather the relationship between Indian cultures of breathing and the discursive power of the scientific knowledge and physical culture of the British Empire. In this vision of Indian breath as Indian empowerment, we see meditation as a form of politics.

As we have noted in connection with the Sadhu armies of the eighteenth century, this does not mean that precolonial notions of meditation had borne any fewer connections with politics and power. This may be seen in the various popular legends concerning breath control (*habs-e-dam*, *pranayama*) that associated respiration and meditation more generally with the acquisition of supernatural powers. We are fortunate in possessing a number of ethnographic accounts from the nineteenth century that provide considerable insight into the means and ends of meditation as represented by

[57] Varman (n.d.), p. 67. A few pages later Varman re-emphasised the point by describing *pran* as 'in essence a kind of special power (*khas taqat*)'. *Idem*., p. 70.
[58] *Idem*., pp. 71–72.
[59] Vivekananda (1930), pp. 48–49.

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perhaps the most significant precolonial representatives of Yoga, the Kanphata Yogis.[60] The importance of the followers of Gorakhnath was not simply commensurate with their limited number but measurable rather in terms of their place in the popular imagination. Like the legends of Gorakhnath himself, the 'split-eared' Yogis who followed him were widely celebrated in the folklore of precolonial and colonial India, and it is their central place, lingering in this 'unreformed' folk discourse on meditation, that renders the Kanphata Yogis of interest.

In the 1830s, the Kanphatas of Kuchh in Gujarat were visited by the British soldier Lieutenant Postans and again in the mid-1870s by the local educational inspector, Dalpatram Khakhar. Khakhar was able to visit several Kanphata *maths* and both his and Postans' accounts record the oral traditions associated with the Kuchh Yogis and their illustrious forbears. What is most striking about the legends is the place of supernatural power as their principal theme. However, like similar tales of meditational power from other parts of India, the legends collected by Khakhar and Postans were more deeply embedded in the local landscape than in the written ideological formulations of their colonial equivalents.[61] The most famous of these narratives described the formation of the arid landscape of the Rann of Kuchh as taking shape when the Yogi Dharmanath opened his eyes after twelve years of meditation and gazed from his hilltop towards the sea, whose waves were immediately burned up to leave the desolation of the Rann.[62] Khakhar also recorded a legend (noting its adaptation to refer to all the ruined towns of Gujarat) in which Dharamnath, upset when someone spilled his begging bowl as he emerged from meditation, cursed the town of Pattan—'*Pattan sab dāttan*!'—which then immediately sank beneath the ground.[63] Other folktales connected the Yogis to more explicitly political applications

[60] See Dalpatrâm Prânjivan Khakhar, "History of the Kânphâtâs of Kachh", *The Indian Antiquary* 7 (1878), pp. 47–53; G. S. Leonard, "Notes on the Kanphâtâ Yogîs", *The Indian Antiquary* 7 (1878) and T. Postans, "An Account of the Kânphatîs of Danodhâr, in Cutch, with the Legend of Dharamnâth, their Founder", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 5 (1839), pp. 268–271. For translations from mid-twentieth century Hindi versions of the Gorakhnath cycle, see Simon Digby, *Wonder Tales of South Asia* (Jersey: Orient Monographs, 2000), pp. 140–220.

[61] On similar legends from the nineteenth century Deccan, see Nile Green, "Who's the King of the Castle? Brahmins, Sufis and the Narrative Landscape of Daulatabad", *Contemporary South Asia* 13, 3 (2004), pp. 21–37.

[62] Khakhar (1878), pp. 48–49; Postans (1839), pp. 268–269.

[63] Khakhar (1878), p. 49.

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of supernatural power.[64] Gharibnath of Kachh was thus held to have miraculously intervened in the elevation or extermination of a whole series of figures at the Jadeja court in Kachh, as well as to have expelled the Jats from Kachh after one of their children disturbed his meditational repose.[65]

Such folktales, making explicit homologies between meditational power and political supremacy, were also recounted in connection with Sufis, whose own decade-long sessions of breath control (*habs-e-dam*, *pas-e-anfas*) often paralleled those of the Yogis in their political application.[66] The presentation expounded in the writings of Vivekananda and his vernacular contemporaries of breath as power and of meditation as the route to its acquisition was thus by no means a discourse limited to a learned coterie of Yogi authors in Bengal, but rather the adaptation of an older and popular discourse of supernatural politics for the new colonial era. Although undoubtedly shaped by their imperial climate, the indigenising meditational politics of colonial India's masters of breath control had deep roots in the soil of Indian tradition.

Categorising Meditation: From Universal Respiration to Hindu and Muslim Breaths

We have already noted the increased role of bodily health in underwriting the value of meditation at the turn of the twentieth century. Yet the connections we have seen in Vivekananda's *Raja-Yoga* between physical culture, health, inner purity and material success were shared by other Hindu writers of the period, not least those connected to the Arya Samaj. In the writings connected with such figures, the physical condition of the body was seen to parallel the

[64] See also Veronique Bouillier, "Des prêtres du pouvoir: les Yogi et la fonction royale", in V. Bouillier and G. Tofffin (eds), *Prêtrise, pouvoirs et autorité en Himalaya* (*Purusartha* 12, 1989) and Daniel Gold, "The Instability of the King: Magical Insanity and the Yogis' Power in the Politics of Jodhpur, 1803–1943", in David N. Lorenzen (ed.), *Bhakti Religion in North India* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

[65] Khakhar (1878), pp. 49–50.

[66] See Veronique Bouillier, "The King and his Yogi: Prithvi Narayan Śah, Bhagavantanath and the Unification of Nepal in the 18th Century", in J. P. Neelsen (ed.), *Gender, Caste and Power in South Asia: Social Status and Mobility in Transitional Society* (Delhi: Manohar, 1992) and Nile Green, "Stories of Saints and Sultans: Remembering History at the Sufi Shrines of Aurangabad", *Modern Asian Studies* 38, 2 (2004), pp. 419–446.

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moral state of society at large.[67] These themes were expounded in numerous publications, such as the early twentieth century chapbook entitled *Akhlaqi wa Ruhani Sihhat* ('Moral and Spiritual Health') written by Mahashah Kashi Ram.[68] The central theme of this work was that physical well-being (*tandorosti*, *sihhat*) was the outcome of spiritual and moral purification. Here, in reflection of the new physiological orientation of Yoga, the achievement of mental purity (*pak*) and peace (*shant*) was directed not primarily towards spiritual ends but towards the physical health of the body.[69] As in Yoga works of the same period, through the connection made between health and morality a continuum was posited not only between mind and body but also between the private and the social body. Ethical behaviour in the social world was seen to reflect the level of purity achieved by individual minds and bodies. This was not least the case with regard to the practical ends to which such purification and the physical strength that derived from it were to be directed in the world of work. In a strong encouragement towards social utility, unemployment (*bikari*) was said to lead to disquietude (*biqarari*), illness (*bimari*) and suffering (*ranj*).[70]

Other Hindu texts notwithstanding, close parallels may also be found in works on Sufi meditation printed in North India during the same period. Once again, chapbooks formed the most important means by which this discourse entered the public realm. *Ayina-e-khod-shinasi* ('The Mirror of Self-Knowledge'), a short Urdu work on the doctrine and practice of Sufi meditation printed in Lucknow in 1890, is a case in point.[71] Its author, Muhammad Najm al-din, similarly placed the body and its travails at the centre of his presentation of meditational practice. Once again, the body was regarded as impure, with the author reminding his readers that all of our bodies come from

[67] Cf. Peter Gaeffke's remarks on the main writers of Hindi essayist prose in the early twentieth century: "All of them believed in the glories of the Hindu past, and all were convinced that only the reform of Hindu society on the basis of *tyāg* (asceticism) and patriotism could bring about self-government." See Peter Gaeffke, *Hindi Literature in the Twentieth Century* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1978), p. 21.

[68] Mahāshāh Kāshī Rām, *Akhlāqī wa rūhānī sihhat* (Lahore: Āryā Pritī Nidhū Sabhā, 1904).

[69] *Ibid.*, pp. 2–5.

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 6. Cf. the words of Aurobindo: "Subjection makes a people wholly *tamasik*, a sort of physical, intellectual and moral palsy seizes them . . .". 'Politics and Spirituality', published in *Bande Mataram Daily* (9 November 1907) and reprinted in Mukherjee and Mukherjee (1997), pp. 189–192.

[71] Muhammad Najm al-dīn, *Āyina-e-khōd-shināsī* (Lucknow, 1890).

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the unclean stomachs of our mothers.[72] The physical body provided Najm al-din with the frame of reference with which to conceive the means and ends of meditation: the body suffers from heat and cold, requires perpetual nourishment, and causes misery and distress throughout life that can only be alleviated through the liberation of spiritual 'passing away' (*fana*).[73] As in Kashi Ram's *Akhlaqi wa Ruhani Sihhat*, physical illness also played a central role in the rationale of meditation, with a rhetoric of physical suffering counterbalanced with instructions on the restorative 'exercise' (*mashq*) of the chanting of pious formulae (*zikr*).[74] Here in the form of a provincial chapbook was a subtle reconfiguration of Sufi doctrine that placed new emphasis on the physical body, how to understand it and, in turn, relate to it. The colonial transformation of Sufism seen earlier in the overseas missionary career of 'Inayat Khan can also be traced here in the vernacular sphere of the book markets of the United Provinces.

This heightened Sufi emphasis on bodily purity was echoed in many other Urdu publications of the period, such as Mawlwi Muhammad Salih's *Silsila-e-Islam* ('The Tradition of Islam'). Framed in the format of a series of questions and answers between a disciple (*shagird*) and his master (*ustad*), in addition to emphasising the benefits of formal prayer (*namaz*) like many Sufi works from this period, the *Silsila-e-Islam* was largely devoted to the question of ritual impurity (*najasat*) and its avoidance. The purity of the body thus played an important role in the text, with an entire section devoted to cleansing the body; subsections discussed ways to purify the mouth if it had touched alcohol and the hair if it had been dyed.[75] Even beyond the arid terrain inhabited by such works, the same concern for purity was central to the language and ethos of the works on Muslim meditation discussed earlier. In this context too we witness the importance of a discourse on breathing that sought to Islamise even the most quotidian of corporeal activities. In the descriptions of techniques of breath control in his *Ziya al-qulub*, Hajji Imdad Allah described one breathing technique as a 'sweeping brush for the heart' (*jarub-e-qalb*) capable of cleansing the heart of all dust and dirt.[76] For the influential Sufi Habib 'Ali Shah (d. 1905), the

[72] *Ibid*., p. 7.
[73] *Ibid*., pp. 6–16.
[74] *Ibid*., pp. 12–17.
[75] Mawlwī Muhammad Sālih, *Silsila-e-Islām* (Lahore: Munshī Dīn Muhammad, 1328/1910), pp. 103–109.
[76] Imdād Allāh Farūqī, *Ziyā al-qulūb* in *idem*., *Kulliyat-e-Imdādiyya* (Kanpur, 1898), p. 137.

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discipline of Sufi etiquette (*adab*) was a hermetically closed system, a physical culture complete and self-sufficient in its own right. To the east of Habib 'Ali's centre in Bombay, in the opening decades of the twentieth century, Sufi meditation stood at the centre of a new purification movement aimed at islamising the 'lapse' Muslims of the Deccan countryside in the hands of the Hyderabadi Sufi reformer, Mu'in Allah Shah (d. 1926). Like many of his contemporaries in other parts of India, Mu'in Allah aimed to achieve this through the promotion of an unambiguously Islamic life praxis based on conformity to the *shari'a* and the regular performance of Sufi meditation.[77]

We have argued that the meditation practices promoted by the Hindu and Muslim ideologues of nineteenth and early twentieth century India were indigenising forms of private physical resistance to colonial rule that sited the body as the locus of cultural resistance. Yet in their intellectual orientation many of the proponents of meditation were also communalist in character, looking *back* at legitimate textual authorities (the Veda, Patanjali; the Prophetic Sunna) rather than *sideways* at the contemporay social facts of shared Muslim and Hindu traditions of meditational endeavour. For despite the fact that caste groups comprising tens of thousands of Muslim Yogis still existed in India at this time, Yoga was instead being defined in terms of the social and intellectual categories suggested in 'classical' Vedic and Vedantic writings which perforce excluded Islam as a frame of reference.[78] While colonial Yogis discussed breath in terms of the Sanskritic vocabulary of *prana*, for Sufi writers breath was correspondingly described through the Perso-Arabic terminology of *dam* or *nafas*. In this way, breath itself came to acquire a communalist dimension that shirked the everyday vernacular of the 'Hindustani' term *sans*. A consequence of the colonial anxiety over the authenticity offered by textual precedent in 'scriptural' languages was therefore the rejection of the middle ground of history that had comprised the complex series of encounters between Sufis and Yogis.[79] The quest for unambiguous categorical purity therefore also extended to the social body, with

[77] See Nile Green, "Mystical Missionaries in Hyderabad State: Mu'īn Allāh Shāh and his Sufi Reform Movement", *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 41, 2 (2005), pp. 187–212.

[78] The 1891 Census recorded the existence of 38,137 Muslim Yogis in Punjab alone. By the time of the 1921 Census, only 31,158 Muslim Yogis were recorded in the whole of India (figures cited in Briggs (1938), pp. 4–6).

[79] Of course, these appeals to antique scripture were part of a wider neo-classical ethos that evolved through the interaction of Indian scholars with European

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the result that the largely unwritten traditions of Muslim Yoga were marginalised in favour of more transparently Hindu or Muslim forms of meditation.

Breath control was by no means the exclusive domain of these religious ideologues, but as we have seen, also played a central part in the nineteenth century in folk traditions centring on the supernatural powers attainable by mastery of the breath. Unlike the colonial Yoga and Sufi texts that placed their respective forms of meditation within closely defined systems of religious identification, this folk tradition was often less sectarian in nature, which is to say, it employed a different set of categories than those of the communalising public sphere of print. If popular legends of Yogis and Sufis competing in the longevity of their breaths and the ostentation of their miracles remind us that there was no precolonial idyll in which religious rivalries did not exist, what did nonetheless evolve at times was a shared popular understanding that Sufis and Yogis were doing much the same thing.[80] In contrast to the abstract technical discourse of written Sufi and Yoga theory, this world of narrative was much more open to the subversive *bricolage* of Sufi Yoga. Numerous precolonial examples may be found in Hindwi romance literature, as for example in Shaykh Qutban's well-known *Mirgavati* (1503) and in such lesser-known works as the *Citravali* (1613) of 'Usman of Ghazipur.[81] Meditation techniques were by no means the sole exchange between precolonial Yogis and Sufis. Nath Yogis referred to their masters as *pirs* using the same Persianate terminology as the Sufis and also wore the same patchwork cloaks, carried the same *coco-de-mer* begging bowls (*kashkul*, *khappar*) and buried their dead in mausolea that were often architecturally indistinguishable from those of the Sufis.[82] While printed practical guidebooks on meditation did offer important possibilities of self-definition and transgressive meditational praxis, such voices were often lost in the clamour of calls to purify the social body. Traditions of Muslim Yoga certainly continued to exist throughout the twentieth

Orientalists, a movement whose invention of a 'classical' era involved no less a denigration of a marginalised 'middle' ages than its European counterpart.

[80] See Nile Green, "Oral Competition Narratives of Muslim and Hindu Saints in the Deccan", *Asian Folklore Studies* 63, 2 (2004), pp. 222–242.

[81] On these Sufi Yoga romances, see R. S. McGregor, *Hindi Literature from its Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1984), pp. 21–24, 66–71, 107, 148, 151, 188.

[82] See Briggs (1938), plates v and viii and Khakhar (1878), pp. 48–51.

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century.[83] But such formulations appeared increasingly oxymoronic as modernist paradigms of religious definitions came to replace the *bricolage* of religious practices born through centuries of *ad hoc* negotiations on local ground rather than through reference to the unambiguous written world of doctrine.

Belonging to textual genealogies drawing ultimately on Sanskrit and Arabic models, both Yogi and Sufi writings on meditation were more entrenched in cycles of inter-textuality than in the actual practices of the societies that produced them. As Carl Ernst has demonstrated in a series of recent studies of the Arabo-Persian literature of Yoga, textual precedent played a far more important role in Indo-Muslim meditation manuals than the observation of local practice.[84] In the written sphere of Indo-Arabic and Indo-Persian at least, such practices were generally ignored in favour of more clearly 'Islamic' modes of practice.[85] Yet the sudden appearance of lithographic printing in India was able to transform such handwritten manuals, previously passed between relatively small numbers of learned and so likened minds, into a far more pervasive literature of socio-religious norms. Print, then, was able to relegate custom to the defensive margins in a way that (whatever the logocentric orientations of historians) the manuscript ecumene had never previously managed to do.

This turning away from ambiguous social complexity towards the uncompromising clarity of written doctrine may be seen in many Hindu writings from the nineteenth century. Like the religious sobriety of Indo-Islamic reform, temperance formed an important part of the neo-Hindu movements of the colonial period. In their search for 'classical' authenticity, figures like Vivekananda and Aurobindo ignored the living practice of large numbers of Yogi practitioners to create a sober and restrained Yoga based instead on what they presented as scriptural precedents, ignoring the widespread use of

[83] See Thomas Dahnhardt, *Change and Continuity in Indian Sūfism: A Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī Branch in the Hindu Environment* (Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 2002). On Yoga and Sufi synthesis beyond India, see Richard Winstedt, *The Malay Magician: Being Shaman, Saiva and Sufi* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1961).

[84] See Carl W. Ernst, "The Islamization of Yoga in the Amrtakunda Translations", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 13, 2 (2003), pp. 199–226 and "Situating Sufism and Yoga", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 15, 1 (2005), pp. 15–43.

[85] Cf. the Persian and Arabic texts studied in Ernst (2003, 2005) with the Bengali works of Sufi Yoga studied in David Cashin, *The Ocean of Love: Middle Bengali Sufi Literature and the Fakirs of Bengal* (Stockholm: Association of Oriental Studies, Stockholm University, 1995), pp. 116–157.

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cannabis and opium among the existing traditions of Yoga.[86] The suppression of the intoxicated breaths of the Kanphata Yogis and other precolonial traditions of Yoga was in this sense concomitant with the suppression of the categorically transgressive praxis of the Muslim Yogis, for these logocentric movements were axiomatic in their disregarding of living practice in favour of antique writing. The pure *pranayama* breathing of the Yoga revivalists was in this way coterminous with a wider process of social and cultural purification. The inward focus on the person and the purification of bodily behaviour represented by so many of India's colonial masters of meditation thus involved a rejection of the cross-traditions that had over the previous centuries emerged from India's pluralistic societies.

As a discipline based on the purification and control of the body, the ascetic physical culture envisaged by the Sufi and Yogi writers we have discussed was the analogue of a wider discourse of social purification. Just as the female body became subject to ideological control of its social and sexual interaction beyond the boundaries of the community, so the disciplines of Yogi and Sufi practice sought to instil an ascetic self-discipline that would constrain the bodies of both men and women.[87] From the regular performance of ritual Muslim prayer to the careful control of all the fluids and foodstuffs that entered the body, the purity instilled in the meditational body was in this sense the mirror of the wider ideological obsession with the purification of Islam and Hinduism as criteria for community in colonial India. This quest for purity prevented the transgressive praxis of the Muslim Yogis from entering the new public sphere just as it suppressed the traditional use of cannabis and opium in meditation to deflect disrepute from its Indian reformulation of Victorian moral puritanism.

Yet while print offered broad outlets for religious polemic and new formulations of collective identity, it also opened up possibilities for more individualistic forms of self-definition. The North Indian 'Hindustani' book market encouraged readers to choose liberally

[86] Both Khakhar (1878) and Postans (1839) remarked on the extensive use of opium at the Yoga *maths* they visited in Kuchch.

[87] See Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) and *idem*., "Procreation and Pleasure: Writings of a Woman Ayurvedic Practitioner in Colonial North India", *Studies in History* 21, 1 (2005), pp. 17–44. On semen retention as an assertion of political control over the self, see Sanjay Srivastava, "Introduction: Semen, History, Desire and Theory" in *ibid.* (ed.), *Sexual Sites, Seminal Attitudes: Sexualities, Masculinities and Culture in South Asia* (London: Sage, 2004).

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between works on Yogi or Sufi practice and, in doing so, to exercise a degree of choice between the different programmes described and the distinct benefits such books offered. Alongside the possibility for public disputation and polemic that the printed sphere offered, such possibilities for individual self-conditioning coined the other face of print. For it is important to distinguish writings of a more collectivist kind from those of a more individualist orientation. Alongside Urdu manuals on cricket, table manners and other forms of the physical culture of empire, such works offered their readers a range of indigenous alternatives to imperial medicine, science and physical culture, not least in their appeal to the worldly benefits of breath control. Meditation manuals held open to their readers the promise of self-transformation and the possibility of self-definition. It is this print-mediated appeal to a new individualism that makes them important, if wholly neglected, way-markers of South Asia's road to modernity.

Conclusions

According to the memoirs of the Iranian Sufi Safi 'Ali Shah (1835–99), dictated in Tehran during the last years of his life, before departing India for Mecca around 1866 he spent a few days wandering around the port of Surat. Although his travel arrangements had gone drastically wrong, Safi claimed that he encountered a Yogi who calmly assured him that he would make his *hajj* after all. Shortly after the meeting, Safi ran into a wealthy friend who informed him of a ship departing for Mecca and saw to it that the expenses for his journey were taken care of. Looking back on this episode, Safi chose not to praise the generosity of his friend but to praise instead the Yogi, whose supernatural power he described as his *nafas* or 'breath'.[88] Before the emergence of the large-scale attempts to purify the physical and social body in colonial India that were brokered by the public sphere of vernacular print, this sense of breathing as universal praxis and cosmic principle had for centuries allowed both practices and legends concerning breath control to be shared between Hindus and Muslims. While encounters between the worlds of Yoga and Sufism continued

[88] See Mas'ūd Homāyūnī, *Tārīkh-e-silsilahā-ye-tarīqa-ye-ni'matullāhiyya dar īrān* (London: Bonyād-e-'Irfān-e-Mawlānā, 1371/1992), pp. 258–262. On Safī's travels more generally, see Nile Green, "A Persian Sufi in British India: The Travels of Mīrzā Hasan Safī 'Alī Shāh", *Iran* 42 (2004).

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throughout the colonial period and beyond it—in the 'Sufi Vedanta' of the Hyderabadi aristocrat Sir Ahmad Husayn Amin Jang or in the provincial North Indian Hindu Sufism of Ananda Yoga—the legacy of the colonial purification of Indian meditation was a narrowing of the spectrum of legitimate physical culture.[89] Through the publication of a series of writings on the body and its proper training, here was a collective attempt to print upon the body boundaries between Hindu, Muslim and Christian physical culture, whether in terms of meditation, hygiene, sexuality or table manners. Re-formed doctrines and practices of breathing were only one part of this wider process. But from the promotion of Vedic *pranayama* to the survival of a folk discourse of miraculous *habs-e-dam*, as the epitome of the life of the body breath remained the focus of a wider discourse on the human body as the microcosm of society.

Yet for all the allure of unmediated experience, the proponents of colonial meditation wrote themselves into nets of inter-textuality that conversely detached them from the experience of the social world around them. As we have seen, in colonial India the transgressive category of the Muslim Yogi did not appeal to either the Hindu or Muslim public masters of meditation. Nor was there any appeal to the similarly composite meditational culture of the Nath Yogis, with their *pirs* and dervish robes; nor to the cosmopolitan folk traditions describing the breath-control of non-sectarian *babas*. The social facts of living practice were rejected in favour of the more simplistic realm of written traditions, drawing on Sanskritic and Arabo-Persian learning which had by its nature always remained closed and self-perpetuating. In this sense, there was something deeply fraudulent about the written discourse of meditation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for this was less the high road to real experience than the disguised pathway to its concealment.

So the ambiguity of the world was rejected in favour of the clarity of writing. Much of this change can be traced to the massive expansion in the mediation of writing that was brought about by the spread of cheap print in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Colonial Yoga cannot be understood apart from the *shuddhi* rituals of the Arya Samaj any more than the nineteenth century publication of Sufi meditation manuals can be seen apart from the explosion of printed manuals on conformity to the *shari'a*. As participants in the

[89] See Sir Ahmad Husayn Amīn Jang, *Falsafa-e-fuqarā* (Hyderabad: Dār al-taba'-e-sarkār-e-'ālī, n.d. [c. 1932]) and Dahnhardt (2002).

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same public sphere, both the Yoga and Sufi practices promoted in writing during this period turned their practitioners away from members of what were increasingly seen as *other* 'religious' communities. Instead, practitioners were to be transformed into the physical embodiments of textually-mediated religious ideals that would ultimately narrow the choice of physical role models into the virile post-colonial masculinity of the Prophet Muhammad and Lord Ram. When the expression of the politics of the body once again shifted from the self to others, from inner to outer violence, the offspring would be the ideological armies of Ram and Muhammad that haunt the new urban and mountain battlegrounds of South Asia today.[90] Yet it is perhaps not too fanciful to suggest a connection, however metaphorical, between the Sufism and Yoga of the colonial era and the psychological oppression of empire. For control of the breath is an assertion of proprietorial control over a body whose rhythms are no longer contingent on the clamour of the outside world. Perhaps here—between the shallow and frightened breaths of the subaltern and the deep and liberating breaths of the meditation master—lie the intimate sounds of the history of colonialism.

Looking further afield, we can now trace the similarly human contours of the relations of politics and the body between the revolutionary alpine breaths of Rousseau's *promeneur solitaire* and the Yoga of white collar angst that so characterises late American capitalism.

[90] We refer of course to the likes of the *Ram Sena* and *Lakshman Sena* or the *Jaish-e-Muhammad* and *Lashkar-e-Tayyiba*.

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