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on Indian Learned Traditions*

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Ruṣd-nāma

‘Abd al-Quddūs Gangohī (860/1456-945/1537) was a pivotal Ṣābirī Čiṣṭī Sufi in North India, best known for his zealous practice of spiritual self-mortification, his endorsement of the Sufi doctrine of the “unity of being” (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), (Schimmel 1975, p. 357; Askari 1957, pp. 10-12), and his extensive familiarity with Nāth yoga, about which he seems to have known more than any of his contemporaries in the Čiṣṭī order (Ernst 2005, p. 28). In the city of Rudawlī (Uttar Pradesh), he joined the local Sufi lodge (*ḥānaqāh*) of Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq (d. 837/1434), whose spiritual pedigree traces back to Šayḥ Ṣābir (d. 690/1291), a disciple of Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-i Šakkar (d. 664/1265). While ‘Abd al-Quddūs pledged his allegiance (*bay`a*) to Muḥammad ibn ‘Ārif, he claimed to receive spiritual grace (*fayz*) directly from Šayḥ ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq (Rukn al-Dīn 1311/1894, pp. 6, 9-10, 29; Muḥaddiṭ Dihlawī 2005, p. 445). He developed social connections with two Mughal emperors (Bābur and Humāyūn), and his exchanges with both Lodi and Mughal royalty are recorded in his letters (Gangohī 2010, pp. 34, 142, 761-768; on his political engagement, see Alam 2009, pp. 137-141; for a detailed biography, see Quddūsī 1961, Digby 1975, pp. 1-15, and Lawrence 1985, pp. 138-140). ‘Abd al-Quddūs was a prolific author and wrote around seventeen compositions, the most significant of which include *Anwār al-‘uyūn*, a biography of his teacher Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq; a commentary on the Sufi treatise *‘Awārif al-ma‘ārif* of Šihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d. 631-632/1234); and lastly *Ruṣd-nāma*.

Ruṣd-nāma (“The Book of Guidance”) is a Sufi treatise that, according to Rukn al-Dīn (the author’s son, in his commentary on the text), was composed by ‘Abd al-Quddūs early in his career (*dar ibtidā-yi ḥāl*; Nizami 1980, p. 275, note 3). Digby suggests that it was written around 884-885/1480 while the author lived in Rudawlī, the surrounding countryside of which was likely home to centers of yoga practitioners at that time, including Nāth yogis (Digby 1975, p. 57 and p. 37; Alam 2013, pp.

164-165). ‘Abd al-Quddūs grew up in a multilingual society where the open secrets of tantric yoga were well known through popular texts such as the poetry of Kabīr (15th century) (Vaudeville 1974); indeed, the poetry of ‘Abd al-Quddūs has much in common with the Hindi verses of Kabīr. He was, moreover, acquainted with a version of the *Amṛtakuṇḍa*, a text on yoga known to have had a significant impact on Sufism; since Rukn al-Dīn refers to it by the title *Ḥawẓ al-ḥayāt*, it is presumably the anonymous Persian translation bearing that title, based upon the Arabic version known as *Mir’āt al-ma`ānī*, which itself was translated from Sanskrit sources, probably in the fifteenth century (Ernst 2019). And, sometime after his move to Shahabad in 1491, ‘Abd al-Quddūs in fact taught this work to his disciple Sulaymān Maḍawī in exchange for instruction in reciting the Qur’ān (Rukn al-Dīn 1311/1894, p. 41, no. 55; Rizvi 1978, p. 335; for a detailed analysis of translations of *Amṛtakuṇḍa*, see Ernst 2003, pp. 199-226). ‘Abd al-Quddūs was also well-acquainted with, and even translated into Persian, Mullā Dāwūd’s romantic epic *Āndāyan*, the original Hindi version of which was probably compiled in 781/1397 (Behl 2016, pp. 59-108).

In addition to engaging with the yogic practices found in such texts as the *Amṛtakuṇḍa*, ‘Abd al-Quddūs employed the literary forms of Hindi poetry; he included 150 Hindi couplets in *Ruṣd-nāma*, many of which he had composed himself under the pen-name ‘Alakhdās’, meaning “servant of the Absolute” (Ernst 2005, p. 28; for an analysis of the Hindi poetry in *Ruṣd-nāma*, see Orsini 2014, pp. 403-437). The Hindi poems that appear in *Ruṣd-nāma* cite Sufī concepts and practical instruction along with the terms and practices of the Nāth yogis (*Ruṣd-nāma*, Ms. Berlin Sprenger 827; for Alakhdās, see ff. 2b, 4b, 5a, 10a, 18a, 20a, 27a, 37b, 43a; on Gorakhnāth, ff. 10a, 15a, 18a, 24b; on yogis, ff. 13b, 18a, 35a; on *muladwāra*, f. 56; on Shiva and Shakti, f. 28b; on Brahma, ff. 27a, 37b, 44b). The discussion of breath control presents a description of three breaths – one ascending, one descending, and one pervading the body (Digby 1975, pp. 46-7) – that echoes the account found in the *Ḥawẓ al-ḥayāt* (Anonymous, f. 6a). The sentiments and philosophical approaches articulated in *Ruṣd-nāma* may be compared to the *Ḥaqā’iq-i Hindī* of Mīr ‘Abd al-Wāḥid Bilgramī (d. 1608), in which Bilgramī adapted Vaishnava symbols and ideas to Muslim beliefs (Alam 2013, p. 165; for the adaptation of yoga to Sufism, see Ernst 2005, pp. 15-43; Ernst 2013, pp. 59-68).

Ruṣd-nāma is normally viewed as a treatise on mystical unity, and almost all the instructions it provides for the initiate are directly or indirectly related to this theme. Unity has been the basic meeting point of Indian mystical traditions and Sufi

metaphysics, and the frequent juxtaposition of Persian and Hindi poetry by ‘Abd al-Quddūs is itself an affirmation of this intersection (for examples, see *Ruṣd-nāma*, Ms. Berlin, Sprenger 827, p. 3b). In this sense it may be considered as an application of the Sufi concept of unity in an Indian idiom (Khodamoradi 2012, pp. 1-19), although ‘Abd al-Quddūs remained quite critical of Hinduism from a theological and legal perspective. *Ruṣd-nāma* aims primarily to instruct the spiritual seeker (*tālib*) on the method of reaching the mystical stage of unity. As its title “The Book of Guidance” implies, this work presents a pragmatic approach in giving instructions to seekers (see Ernst 2005, p. 28). The educational goal of the text is supported by its rhetoric and style. It addresses each topic in Persian prose highlighted with quotations in Arabic (generally Qur’ān and hadith), followed by Persian and Hindi verses on the same theme. In the introduction, ‘Abd al-Quddūs states that he aims to write about *tawḥīd* (unity), *samā’* (listening to music), and love, and to record some words on *sulūk* (spiritual wayfaring) that he had heard from his master (most likely referring to ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq), to help initiates achieve tranquillity and knowledge of the beginning of the world and the origin of the human being (*Ruṣd-nāma*, Ms. Berlin, Sprenger 827, p. 2a).

In conclusion, the *Ruṣd-nāma* is not a translation of an Indic text; rather, it is a wide-ranging summary of Sufi teaching, which includes numerous Hindi quotations on yogic themes, which the author considered to be suitable ways to present Sufi pedagogy. Despite his theological disapproval of Hindu beliefs, ‘Abd al-Quddūs demonstrated a detailed knowledge of yoga in his Hindi verses. The technical difficulty of this achievement is evident from the fact that most copies of the text needed to include a commentary in Persian. But the interpretation of Indian ascetic practice was thoroughly subordinated to the principles of Sufism, which remained central to the teachings of ‘Abd al-Quddūs.

Manuscripts: **Lahore**, Punjab University Library, Šīrānī collection, 4484/1434, 34 ff, **ii**) rajab 1058/August 1648, **iii**) ‘Abd Allāh Ḥabir Muḥammad ibn Kabīr Qannawjī, **vii**) contains interlinear glosses most probably by ‘Abd al-Quddūs' son, Rukn al-Dīn, **viii**) Ḥusayn 1969, vol. 2, p. 226; Munzawī 1363š./1984, vol. 3, p. 1520. **Princeton**, Princeton University Library, Islamic Manuscripts, Garrett no. 7W-15W, ff. 36b-51bq,

ii) 1673, **viii)** Moghadam — Armajani 1939, no. 113. **Aligarh**, Aligarh Muslim University, Subhanullah 29767/45, **ii)** 1676, **viii)** Ḥusayn 1348/1930, p. 16. **Karachi**, Anjuman-i Taraqqī-i Urdū Pākistān, 309FQ3, **ii)** 8 ǧu al-qī`da 1137/16 July 1725, **iii)** `Alā` al-Dīn Quddūsī `Uṭmānī, **viii)** Riṣvī 1967, p. 86. **Lahore**, Punjab University Library, Šīrānī collection, 4481/1431, 52 ff., **vii)** contains interlinear glosses, **viii)** Ḥusayn 1969, vol. 2, p. 226; Munzawī 1363š./1984, vol. 3, p. 1520. **Berlin**, Staatsbibliothek, Or. Sprenger 827, 53 ff. **Alwar**, Government Museum, no. 491, **viii)** Government Museum, Alwar 1967, p. 109. **Aligarh**, Library of Professor K. A. Nizami`, **viii)** Nizami 1980, p. 275, note 3. **Tonk**, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Arabic Persian Research Institute, handlist 3717/1, **viii)** Khan 2012, p. 34.

Legend: i) Place of copying; ii) Period of copying; iii) Copyist; iv) Commissioner; v) Information on colophon; vi) Description of miniatures/illustrations; vii) Other remarks; viii) Information on catalogue(s)

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Hindi translation: *Alakḥbānī*, 1971, S. A. A. Rizvi – S. Zaidī, eds., Aligarh, Badri Prasad Sharma

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