



# PERSO-INDICA

*An Analytical Survey of Persian Works  
on Indian Learned Traditions*

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## AN ANALYTICAL SURVEY OF PERSIAN WORKS ON INDIAN LEARNED TRADITIONS

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## '*Ayn al-ḥayāt*

Of Muḥammad 'Abd al-Razzāq Mūsā Salīmḡānwānī (?), nothing is known aside from this text. The place-name (*nisba*) is itself uncertain, having been read as “Shalam Kayavānī (?)” or as Salīm Kānwānī in the Bodleian manuscript, and as Kārzānī [sic] in Salar Jung manuscript (see Ethé 1930, col. 1334, Ashraf 1983, p. 277). In the '*Ayn al-ḥayāt* (Ahmadnagar version) the translator's name is read as Salīm Kānūn. It could denote a place-name, Salīmḡānw or Salīmḡānōn, joining the name Salīm to the common Hindi word for village (*ḡānw*, *ḡānōn*), but no such location has been identified. The date is presumably prior to 1550, by which time the more comprehensive *Baḥr al-ḥayāt* was composed by Muḥammad Ġawṭ.

The translator introduces himself as having been commissioned by an otherwise unknown noble named Abū Bakr ibn Mas'ūd to translate the Arabic version of an unnamed Indian text written by Kāmakh into Persian (the text does not comment on the fact that this is the goddess Kāmakhya). The work in question is evidently the Arabic version of the *Amṛtakunḡa* (The Pool of Nectar), entitled *Mir'āt al-ma`ānī fī idrāk al-`ālam al-insānī* (The Mirror of Meanings for the Comprehension of the Human World) (Ernst 2003). Although it might be supposed that the text was adapted from an existing Persian translation of the *Mir'āt al-ma`ānī*, such as the *Ḥawz al-ḥayāt*, there is practically no verbal similarity between the two versions. This translation, the '*Ayn al-ḥayāt*, should therefore be considered an independent version of the Arabic text. The opening section of the introduction to the latter (Ernst unpublished, Introduction, paragraphs 2-4) is recapitulated here, depicting the conversion to Islam in Lakhnauti (or Lucknow) by a yogi named Bhūjū, who loses a disputation with Qāzī Rukn al-Dīn Samarqandī, becomes a scholar of Islamic law, and writes the text in an Indian language, in ten chapters. One manuscript adds, “The Qāzī introduced this word, which is its text, in Arabic pronunciation, and explained it from Arabic to Persian” (Ms.

Hyderabad, Salar Jung tasawwuf 233/2). While this version lacks any mention of the second translation (Ernst unpublished, Introduction, paragraphs 5-6), or either of the two frame stories (Ernst unpublished, Introduction, paragraphs 7-13) of the Arabic text, it contains the brief ending of the second frame story. The title '*Ayn al-ḥayāt* (The Source of Life) only occurs in one copy (Ms. Hyderabad, Salar Jung tasawwuf 233/2), but it may conveniently be used to distinguish this early Persian translation of the Arabic version of the *Amṛtakunḍa* from other translations, such as the *Ḥawẓ al-ḥayāt*. A critical reader, unsatisfied with this text, produced a new and improved version, the '*Ayn al-ḥayāt* (Ahmadnagar version).

The text of '*Ayn al-ḥayāt*, following the introduction, consists of ten chapters (*bāb*), somewhat differently entitled in the Bodleian and the Salar Jung manuscripts: (i) on the knowledge of the microcosm (*'ālam-i ḥwurd*) / the microcosm and the macrocosm (*'ālam-i ṣaḡīr wa kabīr*); (ii) on the influences of the microcosm / on the knowledge of great secrets; (iii) on the quality of the heart / on the knowledge of the heart, which is existent; (iv) on the quality of discipline (*riyāzat*) of the self; (v) on the knowledge of the breath / on the knowledge of the quality of the breath; (vi) on the preservation of semen; (vii) on the imagination / on the imagination and thought; (viii) on the signs of death, and averting it; (ix) on spirit subjugation / on subjugating all spirits; (x) on destructive factors, and averting them / on the knowledge of the story of the soul, and the end of the book.

This work, along with other Persian translations of the Arabic *Mir'āt al-ma'ānī*, also makes reference to obscure Indic terminology not found in the source text, which must have come from local informants or the editors' own Indian background. As an example, in the descriptions of yoga postures in chapter 4, the Bodleian manuscript refers to them as *tapak*, "heat," perhaps (following suggestions of Pranav Prakash) intending Hindi *tāpaka*, "ascetic practice," or alternatively *sthāpaka*, "standing, positioning." The Salar Jung manuscript calls the postures *bayḥak*, "seated position," while the '*Ayn al-ḥayāt* (Ahmadnagar recension) uses both Persian *jalsa*, "seated posture," and *sapak*, possibly *sthāpaka* as just mentioned, or Sanskrit *sapakḥa*, "the same position." Such additions indicate that there were continuing efforts to clarify the practices in the *Amṛtakunḍa* translations with research outside the text.

There are noteworthy discrepancies between the manuscripts. The Bodleian manuscript renders the initial description of the work as follows: "In the land of India,

there is a respected book, known among their religious scholars and philosophers, which they call the “medicine” (*tibb*) and “the desire of the helpless ones” (*kām-i bī-čāragān*). It was written by Kāmakh, who is famous for knowledge of philosophy and secrecy.” The same passage is rendered thus in the Salar Jung manuscript: “In the Indian language, there is a respected book, known and famed among their religious scholars and philosophers. It is the object in the story of the body (*murād-ast bi-ḥikāyat-i kālbūd*), told by the ascetic (*zāhid*) Kāmsāl [i.e., Kāmakh], who is famous for knowledge.” This recension not only mentions Kāmakh as the author of this teaching, but also records the name of the yogi as Bhūjū.

Another noteworthy anomaly is that nearly all the copies of '*Ayn al-ḥayāt*, like the *Ḥawz al-ḥayāt*, have truncated the ninth chapter, on summoning and subjugating spirits, into a single short paragraph. The names of the goddesses and the spells for summoning them have been eliminated. The only exception that has come to light is the Salar Jung manuscript, which describes three yogini goddesses and their formulas. Once this omission occurred, whether from sensitivity over polytheistic themes or some other circumstance, later copies would necessarily lack this section. The '*Ayn al-ḥayāt* is significant primarily as an example of the decentralized and independent character of the rendering of certain Indic texts into Persian, in this case via a rare Arabic intermediary. The multiple versions of this translation demonstrate an enduring interest in the subjects of yoga and divination, and a willingness to edit the text with reference to independently gathered Indic materials.

**Manuscripts:** **New Delhi**, Jamia Hamdard Library 23, ff. 23, **ii**) 13 *jumādī al-ākhir* 1022/31 July 1613, **iii**) Ibrāhīm Miyānjī, **vii**) identified in the catalog as the *Baḥr al-ḥayāt* of Muḥammad Ġawṭ. Incipit: حمد بيحد و ثنای بيعد مر خدای را که وحده لا شری **viii**) Jamia Hamdard 1999, p. 417. **Oxford**, Bodleian Library, Persian Ethé 2392/12, ff. 7, **vii**) it contains only chapters 1-3 and part of chapter 4, plus the end of the frame story; this manuscript formed part of a collection of loose papers, including English renderings of Arabic and Persian words, Arabic grammar, the dialog of Dārā Šikoh and Bābā Lāl, and Persian letters to an Englishman; from the library of James Fraser (d. 1754), which he collected in Gujarat, **viii**) Ethé 1930, col. 1334.

**Illustrated manuscript:** **Hyderabad**, Salar Jung, tasawwuf 233/2, ff. 9b-23b, **ii**) late 11th/17th century, **vi**) the diagrams that usually accompany the text are in this

copy rendered skilfully with gold illumination, **vii**) the translator's name is given as Muḥammad ibn [‘Abd] al-Razzāq Mūsā Kārzānī [sic]; this is the only copy of this text bearing the title, *ʿAyn al-ḥayāt*; the manuscript is written in a pretty hand, but is filled with mistakes, skipping entire words and phrases and making the argument incomprehensible; several pages from chapter 4 are placed in the middle of chapter 2, which suggests that a disordered manuscript was the source of this copy; seal of Muḥammad ‘Alī Khān Bahādur, dated 1225/1810-1. Incipit: بیشتر دانش و عزت و علم مشرف شدند پیغمبر فرمود صلی الله وآله و سلم میگوید مرجمه را که این کتاب تصنیف کرده شدند **viii**) Ashraf 1983, p. 277.

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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