

ABSTRACT

The theses addresses the question of the character of immortality in yogic texts (primarily composed in Sanskrit, but also in other Indian languages). It aims to demonstrate that the numerous references to immortality in yogic works are indicative of immortality in a given biophysical body, and not immortality in some transformed, immaterial, spiritual body, as the vast majority of scholars believe.

After introducing the primary sources and reviewing the current state of research, the various conceptions of immortality in the Indian religious milieu are laid out. From this description, it is evident that the dominant concept in India has been that of the immortal soul. Since an investigation into the character of immortality in yoga is really an enquiry into the body in which immortality is achieved, the exposition then proceeds to introduce Indian concepts of the body and to analyse the different types of bodies in yogic texts. Here it is shown that the generally negative attitude towards the body has radically changed in the tantric traditions, which yoga follows in this respect.

The core of the thesis are three chapters that analyze the different techniques of achieving physical immortality. In the chapter devoted to the management of the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*), there are two special yogic techniques (*vajrolīmudrā* and *khecarīmudrā*) that can prevent the loss of this life-giving substance. The following chapter discusses the technique of mastering the elements, through which the yogi acquires an indestructible and immortal body. Finally, the last chapter deals with the cheating of death, which consists in the ability to recognize the exact moment of death and then to take some step by which death is cheated. This cunning action may be flooding the body with the nectar of immortality, entering a state of *samādhi*, or temporarily passing into another body.

Analysis of the internal mechanisms of each technique proves that the resulting immortality means immortality of the biophysical body. Thus, the yogis sought to achieve immortality in their existing material body.

Keywords

Hinduism; yoga; haṭhayoga; body; corporality; immortality