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Seeing with the Heart

The Mysticism of an Islamic Sufi Lineage from India in the West

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“If mysticism is to be studied seriously, it should not merely be studied indirectly and from without, but also directly and from within.”
-Frits Staal

Dedication

For Andrea and for Sebastian

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."
-Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, in *The Little Prince*

Abstract

In 1976, the Indian Sufi *shaykh* Azad Rasool (1921-2006) began spreading the mystical teachings of his lineage to the Euro-American sphere. His two living successors, Hamid Hasan (b. 1961) of the School of Sufi Teaching and Ahmed Abdur Rashid (b. 1942) of the Circle Group, continue this line today, each in his own way. This study seeks to analyze the mysticism of this hitherto largely unstudied lineage and how its teachings have been introduced to the West, considering also the relationship of such mysticism to Islamic belief and practice as well as to social or political activism. Using a qualitative interpretivisitic research design, analysis of a broad range of textual sources is interwoven with ethnographic field data collected primarily in Germany and the US from 2015 to 2020. It is argued that this lineage expanded into two main markets in the West: those interested in non-traditional forms of spirituality as well as Muslims of various diasporic backgrounds, and that under Rasool, this transfer involved some changes in presentation to new audiences, but while retaining a mostly unmodified program of disciplined meditative practice. He additionally upheld its Islamicity, while also allowing non-Muslims to begin the practices, along with its quietist focus on Sufi practice over socio-political activism. Hasan has continued in much the same direction as Rasool and the *shaykh*s immediately preceding him, particularly their orientation toward practices. In contrast, Rasool's American heir, Abdur Rashid, while also preserving much from his 19th- and 20th-century Indian predecessors, has also drawn upon broader Sufi and Islamic tradition to take this mysticism in some new-old directions, especially a restored and reformulated emphasis on the application of its asserted results through active positive societal engagement. In contrast to how other studies of Eastern traditions being transferred to Western settings have primarily seen change and declared the emergence of "New Religious Movements," this study, through its emphasis on examining mysticism, also reveals remarkable continuity with both the immediate and distant past.

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Notes on Transliteration and Style

The transliteration of Arabic and Persian words and names is based on the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES). For Urdu, the IJMES standards for Persian are used. For the benefit of readers unfamiliar with Arabic grammar, plurals will only be used with major key terms being examined, for example *laṭā'if* (sg. *laṭīfa*), other terms will be made plural by adding an "s." Thus, for example, here the plural of *shaykh*, will be *shaykh*s, rather than *shuyūkh*. When names of 20th- to 21st-century personalities have commonly established spellings in Roman script, those are used instead of IJMES, such as Azad Rasool instead of Āzād Rasūl. Individuals are referred to by the best known or most distinctive part of their name, so Aḥmad Fārūqī Sirhindī is referred to with his *nisba*, Sirhindī, whereas Junayd al-Baghdādī is referred to as Junayd. Although there are many female spiritual teachers and *shaykha*s, when referring to spiritual guides, masculine gender pronouns will generally be used for readability since all three *shaykh*s in the case study lineage are male.

Introduction

In 1976, the Indian Sufi *shaykh* Azad Rasool (1921-2006), having noticed the large number of westerners coming to India in search of spiritual fulfillment, established the Institute of Search for Truth (IST) in Delhi as a way of introducing such seekers to Sufi practice. Thus began the spread of this Sufi lineage and its mystical teachings in the five *ṭarīqa*s taught by Rasool; the Naqshbandiyya, Mujaddidiyya,[1] Chishtiyya, Shādhiliyya, and Qādiriyya; beyond only South Asia to the Euro-American sphere and beyond. Rasool's two living successors, Hamid Hasan (b. 1961) of the School of Sufi Teaching (SOST) and Ahmed Abdur Rashid (b. 1942) of the Circle Group, each in their own way, continue this lineage today internationally. With this lineage as its main case study, the current volume seeks to explore the following four major lines of inquiry:

First and foremost, **what is the mysticism of Azad Rasool and of his heirs?** What are the goals of such mysticism(s) and how are they conceptualized? What are the means or practices used to pursue such goals? How and by what processes are these means held to operate? What are the understood results of such goals? Second, **how has such mysticism been introduced to the West?** What has its intended and actual audience been, including in terms of geography, demographics, and culture, but particularly in terms of religio-spiritual background? By what avenues or vehicles has such mysticism reached the West and continued there? What factors have shaped both its transmission, arrival, and development? What areas have been altered or remained the same, been emphasized or deemphasized, and been added or omitted in its new contexts? How has it changed after being passed from Rasool to his two heirs and why?

Third, **what is the relationship of such mysticism to Islamic belief and practice?** What are the positions of the *shaykh*s on whether it is necessary to be a pious believing and practicing Muslim to pursue the Sufi path? How do they approach the issues of adherence to *sharī'a* and the interpretation of the Quran and *ḥadīth*s? How is the issue of conversion dealt with? Fourth and lastly, the second supplementary question asks **to what extent, if at all, do Rasool and his heirs advocate social or political activism in connection with their mysticism?** What are the objectives of such activism? How are these pursued? How is such activism related to their mysticism?

The first line of inquiry informs Sufi studies more broadly, providing an in-depth look at the mysticism of a lineage that has largely escaped scholarly inquiry. The third and fourth are meant to contribute to the discussion in Naqshbandī studies on the issues of orthodoxy and activism, the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya being this lineage's foremost *ṭarīqa*-affiliation. Yet it is the second line of inquiry that is probably the most impactful for contemporary scholarship and is directly relevant to the growing study of Sufism in the West, not to mention the study of alternative spirituality, New Religious Movements (NRMs), and transferred religious traditions.

Key to this are the last two questions mentioned under Q2 and the question that will occupy much of our attention: whether or not something new has been created in this transfer, be it in the first generation with Rasool or in the second with his two heirs. The main hypothesis of this research is that the case study lineage was able to be transferred to the West without significant changes from the perspective of examining mystical doctrines and practices, and that this was possible because there were more areas of resonance than friction, and the latter were successfully negotiated and dealt with in a manner that did not require substantial change.

Overview of the Contents

This volume is divided into three main parts. Leading up to these are introductory sections for the discussion of some key concepts, like mysticism, orthodoxy, and activism, which form a repeating tripartite analytical framework that is found throughout all sections. Thus for each, in addition to background and contextual information, there is 1.) the main analytical category of mysticism; which is itself sub-divided into 1a.) cosmo-psychology, 1b.) practices, and 1c.) role of the *shaykh* and

[1] The Mujaddidiyya is the largest sub-branch of the Naqshbandiyya, but the label of Naqshbandiyya here refers to a lineage that is said to have been passed via non-physical (*uwaysī*) connection from the 14th-century Bukharan founder figure, Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband (d. 1389), to the 19th-century Indian *shaykh* Sayyid 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh (d. 1900).

community; along with the supplemental categories of 2.) orthodoxy and 3.) activism. The three sub-categories of mysticism; namely cosmo-psychology, practices, and role of the *shaykh* and community; were determined by deductively applying our definition of mysticism, described below, to a statement made by the main case study *shaykh*, Azad Rasool, to summarize his mysticism. From this, six key terms were identified (*nisbat*, *tawajjuh*, *laṭā'if*, *indirāj al-nihāyat fi'l-bidāyat* [*INfB*], *murāqaba*, and *dhikr*) and in turn, from these the three sub-categories of mysticism were inductively drawn, thus resulting in the following topical division: cosmo-psychology (*nisbat*, *laṭā'if*, and *INfB*), practices (*murāqaba* and *dhikr*), role of the *shaykh* and community (*tawajjuh* and *nisbat* again, but in a different sense). Following this discussion of definitions and major theoretical concepts in the research, the methodology, consisting primarily of textual analysis and ethnography, is outlined.

Next comes Part One, which provides the historical background and contextualization necessary to be able to determine, in parts two and three, to what extent change occurred in our case study as well as how and why. Part One is itself divided into three chapters, the first of which is an historical survey, divided into seven phases from the time of the Prophet Muḥammad up to 1975, the year before Rasool began his mission to spread the teachings to the West. Then, since the last six 19th-20th century *shaykh*s in this lineage are somewhat unique to this line and have not been dealt with extensively by current scholarship, they are given their own small chapter. The third chapter of Part One is a survey of contemporary Naqshbandī-connected articulations in the West, which provides further material for assessing change versus continuity and offers comparison partners to the left and right of the case study, partners which have also arrived in the West and thus undergone a similar type of transfer.

Parts Two and Three deal with the case study lineage. Part Two is divided into two chapters and addresses two of the case study figures, Rasool himself and his successor Hamid Hasan, who continues to lead SOST today. Since the latter relies largely on the same texts analyzed in the section on the former and very little could be detected in the way of change in SOST after leadership was passed from Rasool to Hasan, they have been placed together into one part. Part Three, however, has only one chapter and it addresses Abdur Rashid, the Circle Group, the World Community and Legacy International. More space is required here, in fact this chapter is larger than the two chapters on IST and SOST under Rasool and Hasan combined and this is for a few good reasons: First, a greater degree of change was detected between the teachings of Rasool and that of his American *khalīfa*, Abdur Rashid, including numerous concepts and practices that were not addressed in Part Two. Second, while Rasool only authored two major English-language books that SOST also relies on today, Abdur Rashid has produced a massive output of recorded, transcribed, and published lectures, which continued to increase by up to four hours of lectures each week throughout the course of the research. There was thus considerably more material to be analyzed. Third, while the societal engagement of Rasool and Hasan consists largely of spreading the teachings of their lineage, something which did not take significant space to explain and establish and was a continuation of a trend already observed starting in the preceding generations covered in the historical survey, matters were different in Part Three. Abdur Rashid has a much different manner of continuing the *ṭarīqa* and a more institutionalized approach to societal engagement, such as in his secular non-profit organization, which in itself required much space to cover. As will be argued, since he considers this organization a way to manifest the outcomes of his mysticism, it and its work are in fact crucial to the topic of mysticism, being part of the results portion of our definition of mysticism described below.

State of the Art

Despite how the case study lineage arrived in Europe and North America nearly half a century ago, it has until recently been largely unnoticed by scholarship, including in the broader study of Sufism in the West or of the Naqshbandiyya. Notable exceptions, in addition to articles summarizing aspects

of the present work,[2] include two doctoral dissertations by scholar-practitioners produced in the fields of architecture and design. These works involved conceptualizing the subtle centers of consciousness (*laṭā'if*) through visual geometry and designing Rasool's tomb[3] as well as SOST's Sufi Centre in London.[4] Earlier 19th- to 20th-century generations in this line in India are only mentioned in a handful of dissertations produced at Aligarh Muslim University and only briefly once by Hamid Algar in his "The Naqshbandī Order: A Preliminary Survey" (1976). Otherwise, they too have been unnoticed.

On top of bringing an understudied Sufi lineage to light, the present work also has broader implications for the study of contemporary religion, particularly "Eastern" traditions that have been transferred to "Western" settings. Such studies often focus on contextual or sociological aspects, only treating doctrine and practices tangentially, thus they unsurprisingly highlight differences and change, sometimes even declaring the emergence of "New Religious Movements" or "neo-Sufism[s]." It is self-evident that choosing to examine the *contextual* and *sociological* aspects of a tradition that has been transferred to new *contexts* and new *societies* will be more likely to reveal change over continuity. While still factoring in historical, social, and other contextual considerations, this study focuses its spotlight squarely on mystical teachings and practices, a vista which shows considerable continuity. Thus, in seeking to expand the state of the art, in addition to providing an in-depth look at one lineage that has hitherto largely eluded scholarly inquiry, this work interrogates how far we can call a religious or spiritual tradition something "new" simply because it has been transferred to new contexts and it does so through the analytical category of mysticism, placing mysticism at center stage.

In situating this study in the broader literature, certain groupings of major sources and relevant literature are outlined. First are historical surveys and introductory texts on Sufism, some of which the historical survey chapter makes extensive use of to contextualize the case study in the broader development of Sufism but with special attention to key doctrines and practices of the case study. Most notable include Alexander Knysh's *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (2000) as well as his more recent *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism* (2017), Nile Green's *Sufism: A Global History* (2012), Julian Baldick's *Mystical Islam* (2000), and for the early period in particular, Ahmet T. Karamustafa's *Sufism: The Formative Period* (2007). Moreover, Brill's *Encyclopedia of Islam*, both the second and third editions, henceforth *EI²* and *EI³* respectively, have been essential references throughout this research. The *Encyclopædia Iranica*, henceforth *EIr*, was also quite helpful, though it has probably been underutilized here. Some older classic works were also consulted and are occasionally referenced, like Annemarie Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (1975), J. Spencer Trimingham's *The Sufi Orders of Islam* (1971), Arberry, A.J. *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (1956), Massignon's *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane* (1922), and Reynold A. Nicholson's *The Mystics of Islam* (1914).

To string the historical narrative together in the Indian context, we have relied primarily upon Jamal Malik's recently revised, updated, and expanded second edition of *Islam in South Asia* (2020). Certain studies and translations of key individuals were employed when greater attention was required for particular developments, such as Jamal Elias' *Throne Carrier of God* (1995) on Simnānī or significantly, on Sirhindī, ter Haar's *Follower and Heir of the Prophet* (1992) and Arthur F. Buehler's *Revealed Grace* (2012). This brings us to the history of the Naqshbandiyya itself, for which we relied largely on Itzchak Weismann's *The Naqshbandiyya: Orthodoxy and Activism in a Worldwide Sufi Tradition* (2007) and different articles by Hamid Algar, including "A Brief History of the Naqshbandī

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[2] Michael E. Asbury and Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh, "Dynamics of Mystical Islam in the American Space: Ahmed Abdur Rashid's 'Applied Sufism'," in *Dynamics of Islam in the Modern World: Essays in Honor of Jamal Malik*, eds. Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh, Armina Omerika, Thomas K. Gugler, and Michael E. Asbury (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 292–322; Michael E. Asbury, "Naqshbandi Mujaddidi Mysticism in the West: The Case of Azad Rasool and His Heirs" *Religions* 13, no. 8 (2022): 690.

[3] Katya Nosyreva, "The Unknown Craftsman and the Invisible Guild: Exploring Spiritual Principles Underlying Traditional Visual Arts—The Design of the Tomb of a Sufi Master and the Making of a Mihrab," (PhD diss., Prince's School of Traditional Arts, University of Wales, 2014).

[4] Nevine Nasser, "Beyond the Veil of Form: Developing a Transformative Approach toward Islamic Sacred Architecture through Designing a Contemporary Sufi Centre," (PhD diss., Prince's School of Traditional Arts, University of Wales, 2019); idem, "Beyond the Veil of Form: Developing a Transformative Approach toward Islamic Sacred Architecture through Designing a Contemporary Sufi Centre," *Religions* 13, no. 3 (2022): 190.

Order" (1990), "Political Aspects of Naqshbandī History" (1990), and "The Naqshbandī Order" (1976), along with contributions in the other major general source on the Naqshbandiyya: Marc Gaborieau, Alexandre Popović, and Thierry Zarcone's edited volume, *Naqshbandis* (1990). These are incredibly valuable resources for the history and political involvement of the Naqshbandiyya, and they do consider its mysticism, but usually quite tangentially. For instance, of the thirty-seven contributions in *Naqshbandīs*, only three are actually devoted to the topic of mysticism. Moreover, in Weismann's *The Naqshbandiyya*, the doctrine of the *laṭā'if*, which is a crucial and indispensable feature for many Naqshbandīs today and throughout history, is mentioned just twice and then only briefly in passing with no elaboration. This is currently the definitive work on the subject, and quite rightfully so, but with little attention to Naqshbandī mysticism. On the topic of studies of particular *ṭarīqa*s, Bruce Lawrence and Carl W. Ernst's *Sufi Martyrs of Love* (2002) is an indispensable resource on the Chishtiyya, though it has been underutilized here because of our Naqshbandī-heavy focus, due to the Mujaddidiyya being the dominant lineage in our case study.

Yet the situation for the study of Naqshbandī mysticism is not as bleak as it may sound as presented thus far, for there are several monographs which give a greater deal of attention to mysticism in examining their respective case studies, though to different degrees. Some studies give center stage to topics we are including here under the label of mysticism, such as Asfa Widiyanto's *Ritual and Leadership in the Subud Brotherhood and the Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya* (2012) and Thomas Wolfgang Peter Dahnhardt's "Change and Continuity in Naqshbandi Sufism" (1998), revised and published as *Change and Continuity in Indian Sūfīsm* (2002). The latter also studies a transfer, but within the Indian setting from a Muslim to a Hindu context. Both Dahnhardt and Widiyanto cover lineages that are also addressed in our contemporary survey and both address similar key terms as are examined with our case study. Moreover, both followed a similar structure to the one used here: cosmo-psychology, practices, and role of the *shaykh* and community. This structure emerged independently and before these works were encountered, which speaks to the replicability and thus also supports the validity of these categories. Another example, but which pays greater attention to one aspect of such mysticism, is Fritz Meier's *Zwei Abhandlungen über die Naqšbandiyya* (1994), which was only briefly used since its main topic of *rābiṭa* was marginal in the literature of the case study lineage, not being one of the key words primarily examined here, and the associated practice of visualizing the *shaykh* to achieve this bond had ceased in this particular line in the early 19th century.

Other studies of different Naqshbandī lineages are more focused on contextual, social, or institutional aspects, but some do include a chapter or more on the topic of mysticism. Sometimes, however, such chapters offer an amalgamated picture drawn from different sources and time periods, thus presenting a composite ideal that may not exist or have ever existed in reality, as opposed to an in-depth study of a single mystic's teachings.[5] The most significant and useful work in this category is Buehler's *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet* (1998), which includes discoveries and insights not found anywhere else which were crucial in tracing the history of the lexicon of our case study. For a brief aside, another resource for making some key connections in this regard was Muhammad Bayraktar's selected translations from Necdet Tosun's *Bahâeddîn Nakşbend: Hayatı Görüşleri Tarîkatı*. Returning to other studies that treat mysticism in some detail in one part or another, but are mainly concerned with contextual aspects, these include Pnina Werbner's *Pilgrims of Love* (2003), Kenneth Paul Lizzio's "Saving Grace" (1998), and Warren Edward Fusfeld's "The Shaping of Sufi Leadership in Delhi" (1981), which all study related lineages that have also made their way to the West and are included in our contemporary survey. Significantly, Werbner's study includes a transfer from Pakistan to the UK and there have also been studies of other Naqshbandī lines in the West which likewise fall in this category of dealing with mysticism as a peripheral topic or just one among others, such as Tayfun Atay's "Naqshbandi Sufis in a Western Setting" (1994) and Daphne Habibis, "A Comparative Study of the Workings of a Branch of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order in Lebanon and the UK" (1985). Both of these

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[5] Dahnhardt's abovementioned *Change and Continuity in Indian Sūfīsm* sometimes employs such an amalgamative approach, but he does take variation into consideration and points out when the main sources are in agreement on particular issues. See, for example, pages 147, 164, and 167 fn. 136.

are early examples of studies on the Haqqaniyya, which have since multiplied substantially and could warrant a literature review of their own. Habibis' work also studies another lineage that has now been absorbed into the Haqqaniyya, but which is important in our contemporary survey below for the early reception of the Naqshbandiyya among non-Muslim spiritual seekers in the West.

On the historical development of alternative spiritualities in the West paving the way for our case study's arrival there, sources such as Robert S. Ellwood's *Alternative Altars: Unconventional and Eastern Spirituality in America* (1979) and Catherine L. Albanese's *A Republic of Mind and Spirit* (2007) were consulted, but by far, the two most important sources in this regard were Mark Sedgwick's *Western Sufism* (2017) and William Rory Dickson's *Living Sufism in North America* (2015). Not only were the latter two tremendously useful to this end, but Sedgwick has also informed the theoretical framework of this study. Moreover, both Sedgwick and Dickson also provided important information and insights on Naqshbandī-related groups in the West for our contemporary survey. Some other sources consulted on alternative spiritualities in the West, include Peter B. Clarke's *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements* (2006) as well as his *New Religious Movements in Global Perspective* (2006), Steven J. Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman's *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (2000) along with Sutcliffe's *Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices* (2003), Wouter J. Hanegraaff's *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (1996) and Wade Clark Roof's *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (1999).

Lastly and quite importantly here, a number of works, mostly edited volumes, deal with the subject of Sufism in the West, or with Sufism and related topics like modernity that touch upon its arrival in the West. Some have already been mentioned, namely, Habibis, Atay, Werbner, Dickson, and Sedgwick. Edited volumes include David Westerlund's *Sufism in Europe and North America* (2004), Jamal Malik and John Hinnells' *Sufism in the West* (2006), Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell's *Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam* (2007), Ron Geaves, Markus Dressler, and Gritt Klinkhammer's *Sufis in Western Society* (2009), Catharina Raudvere and Leif Stenberg's *Sufism Today* (2009), Ron Geaves and Theodore Gabriel's *Sufism in Britain* (2013), Meena Sharify-Funk, William Rory Dickson, and Merin Shobhana Xavier's *Contemporary Sufism* (2017), Francesco Piraino and Mark Sedgwick's *Global Sufism* (2019), Jamal Malik and Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh's *Sufism East and West* (2019), Elliott Bazzano and Marcia Hermansen's *Varieties of American Sufism* (2020), Marcia Hermansen and Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh's *Sufism in Western Contexts* (2022), and Saeed Zarrabi Zadeh, Armina Omerika, Thomas K. Gugler, and Michael E. Asbury's *Dynamics of Islam in the Modern World* (2022). Dissertations not yet mentioned include Celia Genn's "Exploration and Analysis of the Origins, Nature and Development of the Sufi Movement in Australia" (2004) and Julianne Hazen's "Contemporary Islamic Sufism in America: The Philosophy and Practices of the Alami Ṭarīqa in Waterport, New York" (2011). Monographs not mentioned so far include Ron Geaves' *The Sufis of Britain* (1999), Michael S. Pittman's *Classical Spirituality in Contemporary America* (2012), and Aziz El Kobaiti Idrissi's *Islamic Sufism in the West* (2013). There are also countless stand-alone articles.

Perhaps because of the very nature of the topic, most of these works largely place emphasis on contextual matters, especially when dealing with lineages that attract non-Muslim participants. Mystical doctrines and practices are addressed, but are rarely the main focus of discussion. The present study hopes to build on their foundation while also helping to further develop the picture by shifting the focus to mysticism. It should finally also be mentioned that the theoretical and methodological framework on which this research is based owes much to some key figures in the study of Sufism in the West, namely Jamal Malik, Mark Sedgwick, Marcia Hermansen, and especially Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh, as we will see below.

Theoretical Framework

Gauging Newness from the Perspective of Mysticism

Beginning around the turn of the 19th century, with the German Romantics and continuing in such forms as the New England Transcendentalists, the Theosophical Society, the Beat Generation, the larger 1960s counterculture and even larger still with the New Age Movement that followed, an ever-increasing number of people in the West have turned toward the mystic "East" for spiritual fulfillment. Here, "West" primarily signifies Europe and North America, but could also extend culturally to other

areas such as Australia and New Zealand. "East" is harder to define, but with regard to our case study here, as well as for many others, that East certainly includes India. Not only have there been increasing numbers of people in the West interested in non-western spiritual traditions, but such interest, which has often been associated with countercultural currents, has increasingly moved from the fringes of society to much closer to the mainstream. Still, such non-traditional forms of spirituality, including others who may look elsewhere other than to the East, have not supplanted the dominant form of religiosity in the West, namely Christianity in its varied forms, thus we will refer to them as alternative spiritualities, a term further unpacked below.

But as such spiritual traditions from the "East," like various Buddhist, Hindu, and more recently Islamic traditions among others, became increasingly commonplace in the "West," especially since the 1960s, these relatively recent arrivals have been studied by sociologists and scholars of religion under such rubrics as emergent religions or New Religious Movements (NRMs),[6] indicating that something new is in the making. The label of NRM is extremely broad, a massive umbrella term under which such diverse forms of religiosity/spirituality as Rastafarians, Hare Krishnas, Gurdjieffians, and Jamāʻat-i Islāmī all sit under the shade of the same tree.[7] It is by no means used exclusively or even mostly to designate transferred traditions, though when traditions have been transferred to new contexts and audiences, they are liable to be identified as such. Despite the label's broadness, there are several trends that have been identified among NRMs across the globe that we also find reflections of in our case study lineage, such as a propensity towards positive societal engagement, including "Engaged Buddhism," "Engaged Hinduism," and also "Engaged Sufism." Often discussed within the context of NRMs is the New Age Movement (NAM), which Clarke observes has served as "a vehicle for the globalization of various forms of spirituality and religions."[8] Also discussed in relation to NRMs are the Human Potential Movement (HPM) and the Holistic Healing Movement (HHM), which we will observe echoes of in our case study.

Nevertheless, whether or not we could classify our case study as an NRM is very much dependent upon our view of what constitutes new. To be sure, there are certain similarities and arguments to use such a designation for them, notably their new contexts from India to the Euro-American sphere, or the fact that many of its adherents also have backgrounds in other groups that have been classified as NRMs by other studies. Clarke argues that newness need not necessarily indicate the inclusion of entirely new innovations in doctrine and practice, but may refer to breaks from traditional understandings,[9] yet again we see new understandings continuously unfolding throughout the history of Sufism, notably through the spiritual insights of the saints, in analogue to the revelatory function of the Prophet. So the question must be asked, do these new understandings in new settings really deviate any more than the new understandings that have continuously evolved in their "original" settings over centuries (though these "original" settings have also continuously changed, e.g., from the Middle East to Central Asia to South Asia)? In our case study, we see the opposite: a crystallization of tradition and a hesitancy toward change in order to maintain authenticity.

Similarly, even without the label of NRM, there is a tendency in studies on Sufism and other Eastern spiritual traditions that have been transferred to the West to devote more attention to that which is seen as having changed rather than to what has remained the same. As Olav Hammer notes, "Yoga in London is not the same as yoga in Varanasi," and more importantly here, he asserts that it is possible to discern two distinct trends in Sufism in the West. He calls one "Islamic Sufis" as compared with a Sufism custom-tailored for western consumption which he has labelled "neo-Sufism" as well as "Sufism for Westerners." Yet of the five points he presents in a comparative chart, only one touches

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[6] I am very grateful to Carl W. Ernst for encouraging me to explore the concept of NRMs.

[7] Even a cursory glance through the table of contents to either of Clarke's encyclopedic works on NRMs will give the reader an understanding of the breadth with which this term is used. Peter B. Clarke, *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Peter B. Clarke, *New Religious Movements in Global Perspective: A Study of Religious Change in the Modern World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006). See also Nevill Drury, *The Elements of Human Potential* (Rockport, MA: Element, 1989).

[8] Clarke, *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements*, viii.

[9] Idem ix.

upon what we might call mysticism, while the others deal with more contextual aspects, namely: society, gender, culture, and modes of dissemination.[10]

If we apply the classic thought experiment of Theseus' ship or its later form of John Locke's sock, it becomes clear how subjective the application of relative labels like "new" or "neo-," or the reverse, "traditional," are dependent upon one's angle of approach and metrics for gauging newness or oldness. Because of its catchy ring and ease of relatability, we summarize John Locke's sock, which poses the question: if a sock develops a hole and is patched, is it the same sock? If yes, what if it develops another hole and is patched again, is it still the same sock? If yes, then what about another and another until no material from the original sock remains.[11] The point at which we declare that a new sock has been created is subjective and depends upon how and with what criteria one choses to measure newness versus oldness. Is the ratio of new material to old what is important (and if so, where do we place the changeover percentage, 51% new material?) or is it the ideal form and purpose of the original sock that is paramount? With the point having been made that the judgement of newness versus oldness is subjective and relies on one's perspective and chosen metrics, we now put Locke's sock away in its drawer, whether it is the same sock or not, and briefly consider our case study.

So if an Indian *shaykh* 1.) presents his teachings to a Western audience as a curriculum of spiritual training that awakens hidden inner potentials for personal transformation, and then 2.) proceeds to provide instruction in a series of contemplative intentions for daily *murāqaba* involving the awakening of inner subtleties (*laṭā'if*) with the aim of achieving *iḥsān*, what is really new other than a fairly standard set of Sufi practices having been repackaged for a new audience? Constructivists would rightly argue that the packaging shapes the experience, but the distinction is nevertheless important to make, that what is new is the framing whereas the assigned practices are fundamentally unchanged. We consider packaging as well as the constructivist position further below, but now we deal with perspective and how it is the angle of approach, scope of inquiry, and where one places one's emphasis that can most affect whether something appears new or old.

As discussed in the literature review, studies of contemporary Sufism, particularly on Sufism in the West, often approach their subject from a sociological or historical angle, only obliquely touching on the topic of mysticism. Although philological studies of classical era Sufi texts abound and do still continue to be produced, it is almost as if the mystical teachings of contemporary *shaykh*s are somehow not worth studying as the main object of inquiry. This may in part be attributed to the lingering legacy of proponents, like Arberry and Trimingham, of the notion of a Sufi golden age whose demise was heralded by the emergence of the *ṭarīqa*s and popular Sufism, thus a decreased interest in post-classical Sufi thought. We might also consider the effect that constructivist models of mystical experience, which present it as being primarily determined by contextual factors like culture and religious tradition, have had in religious studies more generally. Regardless of the reason for the current emphasis on context over mysticism itself, a significant byproduct of this is that when considering transfer, it is change rather than continuity that tends to come to the fore. By focusing on contextual factors, like the institutional, the political or gender ratios and other demographics, we are already setting ourselves up to see primarily change. Perhaps such an orientation is inherent in choosing to study a transfer from one context to another, but it is proposed here that this angle of approach is not the only option for studying transfer. Instead, the present hypothesis on this issue is that approaching the transfer of our case study lineage through the lens of mysticism will in fact reveal greater continuity than change.[12]

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[10] Olav Hammer, "Sufism for Westerners," in *Sufism in Europe and North America*, ed. David Westerlund (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 127–43, here 139.

[11] The discussion of socks does not come from Locke himself, but from a contemporary attempt to explain Locke's thought in Martin Cohen, *Philosophy for Dummies, UK Edition* (Chichester and West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd., 2010), 373-74.

[12] This idea of using the angle of mysticism over contextual factors to assess for change and continuity was inspired by Soraya Khodamoradi's *Sufi Reform in Eighteenth Century India: Khwaja Mir Dard of Delhi (1721–1785)* (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2019). Therein, she uses it to find change and support the idea that there was a substantial change taking place in Sufism during the late 18th century, sometimes called neo-Sufism, in a much different sense than that used by Hammer above.

There are undoubtedly limitations to seeing Sufism as merely mysticism, as we will consider below, and the idea that it is possible to entirely extricate any mysticism from its contexts to study it in isolation is doubtful, but this is not what is attempted here. In fact, the contextual and historical factors are, by design, crucial to the research questions. In a similar vein and with regard to the dynamics of ritual (*Ritualdynamik*), Robert Langer, Dorothea Lüddeckens, Kerstin Radde, and Jan Snoek have discussed the concept of "transfer of ritual" (*Ritualtransfer*) wherein they distinguish between "contextual aspects" and the "internal dimensions" of ritual. Among the contextual aspects they list are external factors like geography, culture, religion, politics, society, and gender; the very kinds of topics that studies of Sufism in the West tend to focus on. Of the internal dimensions that they list, some of those touched upon to different degrees in the present study include script, performance, structure, transmission of ritual contents, instrumentalization, symbolism, and ascribed meanings. They have posited that "when one or more of [a ritual's contextual] aspects is changed, changes in one or more of its internal dimensions can also be expected."[13] Their theory may initially seem to be the exact opposite of our present hypothesis. Yet what is posited here is not that no change at all will be found in the internal dimensions, but that a focus of inquiry on contextual aspects is predisposed from the outset to be more prone to reveal change, whereas if that focus is shifted to mystical doctrines and practices, this new vista is more likely to reveal any continuity that exists. It is self-evident that studying the contextual and societal aspects of a tradition that has been transferred to new contexts and societies will reveal change. But studying mysticism provides the opportunity to see continuity as well as change. There are certainly forces for change being exerted upon any form of mysticism that has been transferred to an entirely new context, and we will examine how those may be of greater or lesser magnitude, and also how there may be potential for resonance that reduces pressures for change as well as sources of friction which must be negotiated.

Resonance and Damping

As mentioned, a seemingly ever-present theme in transfer studies is that of change and continuity, and usually with a focus on the former. We are not simply reporting and describing change and continuity here, but seeking to understand the dynamics of how change and continuity are determined and shaped, and in this endeavor, the notions of resonance and damping can be helpful. The choice of employing these concepts was inspired by an auditory analogy employed in the introduction to Malik and Zarrabi-Zadeh's edited volume, *Sufism East and West*, wherein Sufism, in its varied forms, is seen as a sound emitted into the soundscape of "East and West," being shaped by innumerable factors encountered as it travels through that space; resonating, echoing, and reverberating within it or conversely it may be dampened, muffled, or distorted.[14]

While parallels to physics and the behavior of sound waves might be explored in much greater depth, we limit ourselves here to the ideas of resonance and damping. Of note, Malik and Zarrabi-Zadeh's sound analogy was inspired by earlier explorations, such as those by Hartmut Rosa,[15] on resonance as a sociological theory and concept, such as for dealing with "more fluid forms of belonging and affinity achieved in everyday life contexts."[16] While the present study, touches on some areas that could be relevant to sociologists, it is not primarily a sociological study. We take inspiration from the concept of resonance largely as it can be found in Malik and Zarrabi-Zadeh, but have then certainly gone in our own direction with it. The idea and label of "resonance" resonated with the researcher, if

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[13] Robert Langer, Dorothea Lüddeckens, Kerstin Radde, and Jan Snoek, "Transfer of Ritual," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 20, no. 1 (2006): 1-10, here 2-3. See also, Robert Langer, "Transfer Processes within Sufi Rituals: An Example from Istanbul," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* (2011): 1-15. I am grateful to Patrick Franke for pointing out Langer's work in *Ritualdynamik* and *Ritualtransfer* to me.

[14] See the introduction to Jamal Malik and Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh (eds.), *Sufism East and West: Mystical Islam and Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Modern World* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 1-29.

[15] See for example, Hartmut Rosa, "Dynamic Stabilization, the Triple A Approach to the Good Life, and the Resonance Conception," *Questions de communication* 31 (2017): 437-56.

[16] Vincent Miller, "Resonance as a Social Phenomenon," *Sociological Research Online* 20, no. 2 (2015): 1-9, here 1.

you will, and seemed to well represent what he was observing in the field. Here we find it useful as a means of getting beyond change versus continuity, and new versus old, to a more nuanced angle that focuses not simply on end results, but rather on multi-sided dynamics with complex actors. So to consider how we use these notions here, a sound resonates when it is reflected and prolonged by a nearby and synchronously vibrating object, or as our case study *shaykh*s might say, when there is a *nisbat* ("affinity"). In contrast, damping occurs when there is some form of resistance or friction. Unlike in Rosa's sociological theory, wherein resonance is "a condition between consonance and irrevocable dissonance,"[17] here we use consonance and resonance as basically synonymous terms from parallel analogies. In music theory there is the idea of *consonance* occurring when notes harmonize with each other and are understood to produce a pleasant sound, in contrast to *dissonance*, when notes clash and produce an unpleasant tension.

Applying this to transfer studies, such as in examining a Sufi lineage being passed from India to Europe and North America, it is argued that examining how, between the old and new contexts and audiences, areas of similarity may be capitalized upon and resonate as well as how areas of dissimilarity that may produce dissonance are dealt with and negotiated, provides a deeper understanding of the dynamics behind change and continuity. For instance, bracketing and setting aside issues of alleged past transfer or influence between traditions, touched on below, we could look to the resonance potential provided by structural similarities between Sufi cosmologies and those of Neoplatonism and Hermeticism, the latter two of which have played no small part in the shaping of what Catherine Albanese, in her *A Republic of Mind and Spirit*, considered American metaphysical religion, a third stream alongside the more dominant evangelical and liturgical streams.[18] Yet this could also apply to the field of alternative spiritualities in the broader Euro-American sphere as well. Conversely, trends toward unchurched spirituality, including the anti-dogmatism and anti-exotericism, the latter of which was noted as major defining characteristic of "Western Sufism" by Mark Sedgwick, produce tension, and thus damping or dissonance when spiritual seekers in the West consider a Sufi lineage that insists on the inseparability of Sufism and Islam. Understanding how such cases of harmony or tension, resonance or damping, consonance or dissonance, are dealt with and resolved is crucial to fully understanding as well as going beyond change and continuity, and new and old. Another term we might introduce here is "confluence," as in the convergence of two rivers, which was used by Michael S. Pittman in his *Classical Spirituality in Contemporary America: The Confluence and Contribution of G.I. Gurdjieff and Sufism*.[19] Some examples of what might be considered confluence in the case study could be the use of language such as personal transformation and awakening inner potential to frame traditional Sufi concepts, but also in Part Three in which lectures that were once universalistic Yoga *satsang*s became Islamic Sufi *dars* and what was once an *ashram* became a *khānaqāh*.

Mysticism in Modernity

The study of Sufism in the West also, if for no other reason than chronology, in many ways overlaps with the study of Sufism and modernity. We might consider the emergence of multiple and indigenous modernities converging with similar complementary tendencies from the West. While Western hegemony was felt across the Muslim world, particularly from the turn of the 19th century onwards, the South Asian subcontinent, which had seen Muslim rule to varying extents for nearly 1,000 years before British rule in India, has experienced an especially long and intimate period of interaction. Thus the encounter of this Sufi lineage with the West began long before Rasool's 1976 founding of the Institute of Search for Truth to introduce his lineage to Western spiritual seekers. Considering his Mujaddidī line alone, Shāh 'Abd al-Azīz (d. 1824) wrote *fatwa*s to help the Muslim community adaptively cope with the transition from Muslim to British rule, while the Ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya

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[17] Rosa, "Dynamic Stabilization," 451.

[18] Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 1-18. This source was noted and well-used by William Rory Dickson in his *Lived Sufism in North America: Between Tradition and Transformation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015).

[19] Michael S. Pittman, *Classical Spirituality in Contemporary America: The Confluence and Contribution of G.I. Gurdjieff and Sufism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

movement founded by his successor Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd (d. 1831) fought a *jihād* to restore Muslim rule in India. Just three links in the *silsila* later, however, Ghulām Salmānī (d. 1912) was honored for his service as a *madrasa* teacher and administrator at the third *durbar* ("court") in Delhi in 1911, an event which celebrated the coronation of King George V and recognized him as the Emperor of India.[20] Yet four links later, Rasool served as the principal of the primary school at Jamia Millia Islamia, a school that became associated with the Independence movement and which by his own description sought to steer a middle course between the traditional education of Deoband and the modern education of Aligarh.[21] Thus we see a colorful history with a variety of sometimes very different reactions to British colonialism, but more importantly, a lengthy period of exposure to and interaction with "the West" preceding the transfer of this lineage there.

Whether predating such contact as manifestations of an indigenously developing modernity (pre-1757), emerging during the course of such interaction (1757-present), or developing out of a deliberate presentation to Western spiritual seekers (1976-present), there are a number of aspects of this particular lineage that resonate strongly with modern *Weltanschauungen*. These reflect processes in the modernization of mysticism, such as the "*experientation*", de-mystification, rationalization, scientification, and to some extent psychologization,[22] which had already begun in the Indian context, sometimes centuries beforehand. We see similar developments in other religious traditions in the modern era, for instance Buddhism has been presented, such as by the Dalai Lama, as supremely compatible with reason and science.[23] Another area of resonance or perhaps better "confluence," pertains to what is probably the most defining characteristic of Abdur Rashid's Sufism, his focus on the return to the world after the mystical encounter, what is perhaps his hallmark: "Applied Sufism." Among scholars of New Religious Movements, again note the label of "new," societal engagement has been identified as a new trend within some religious traditions, such as "Engaged Buddhism."[24] Whether or not that is the case for a given Buddhist tradition, positive engagement in the world is one of the foundational principles and defining characteristics of the Naqshbandiyya,[25] not to mention its presence in Sufi tradition going back to the formative period.[26] So while its nature and scope must clearly evolve in new contexts and this tendency seems to have resonated with Abdur Rashid's own activist inclinations going back to the 1960s and his involvement in the civil rights movement and protesting the Vietnam War, these facts hardly make it an innovation. Likewise, the cultural and religious *plurality* of the Indian environment, and the *pluralism* among many, though not all, of the personalities in the five *silsila*s of the case study lineage, would prove especially well-adapted for transfer to the global stage as well as to Europe and the salad bowl of American society. Therefore, by the time the transfer of this lineage began, it was already quite compatible with modernity and the West, yet it continued to evolve in Abdur Rashid's hands, sometimes following the same trajectories it had been developing along in the subcontinent and sometimes in new directions.

There are of course, however, not only areas of resonance, and Mark Sedgwick offers four major characteristics of *Western Sufism* as being: emanationism, anti-exotericism, perennialism, and universalism. The latter three reveal a predominating relationship with religion showing a reluctance and even hostility toward religion, or at least the exclusive adoption of one religion. Similarly, one trend

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[20] These developments are discussed in the historical survey below.
[21] See the introductory portion on Rasool in Part Two below.
[22] Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh, "The 'Mystical' and the 'Modern': Mutual Entanglement and Multiple Interactions," *Studies in Religion* 20, no. 10 (2020): 1-21. See also Don Cupitt, *Mysticism after Modernity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998).
[23] Donald S. Lopez, *Buddhism and Science: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
[24] Clarke, *New Religions in Global Perspective*, xiv, 278-280.
[25] One of the eleven Naqshbandi principles is *khalwat dar anjuman* ("solitude in the crowd"). Accordingly, Itzchak Weismann, and others before him like Hamid Algar, considered "orthodoxy" and "activism" as the two main distinctive features of this *ṭarīqa*. See for instance, Itzchak Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya: Orthodoxy and Activism in a Worldwide Sufi Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).
[26] See phases one and two of the historical survey below.

that Clarke mentions among NRMs is that of "democratization," which he notes can have a number of causal factors but sees as especially common the process of individualization along with religion losing its place as the "social cement of community."[27] For our Islamic case study lineage, these issues present a potential source of damping which must be reconciled. Yet probably owing in no small part to the characteristic "orthodoxy" of the Naqshbandiyya and Mujaddidiyya, this lineage appears to have arrived in the West well-equipped to resist the forces of secularization and the emancipation of mysticism from religion.[28] Unlike, for example, in the Chishti *silsila* of Inayat Khan (1882-1927), which took on a universalist form upon its arrival in the West, Abdur Rashid affirms what his teacher Rasool called "the inseparability of the Sufi rose from its Islamic rosebush."[29] We will examine how he has negotiated potential conflict without actually having to have changed all that much. Furthermore, the case study lineage firmly upholds the necessity of submitting to the guidance of a *shaykh*. Yet Clarke holds that most NRMs, barring the exceptional cases of certain charismatic leaders, espouse a philosophy that "every individual is their own spiritual master."[30] Yet it is argued here that due to an already low-key approach to the role of the *shaykh* that focuses on his teaching role, though without losing his mediatory function, which already existed in the Indian context in response to the phenomenon of the mediating *shaykh* there, discussed below, substantial change to accommodate western students was unnecessary.

Resonant Frameworks

Despite aversion to exoteric religion and individualistic tendencies among Western spiritual seekers, it is argued here that the first of Sedgwick's four features characterizing the Western reception of Sufism, namely emanationism, in fact offers a major source of resonance in terms of doctrine. That is, since Sufism and alternative spiritualities in the West often rely on a similar framework or structure that might be characterized as emanationist, Sufi ideas have great potential for resonance among individuals with a background in alternative spiritualities in the West. Sedgwick describes emanationism as tracing back to the Hellenistic philosopher Plotinus (204-270 CE), who lived in Roman Egypt and is considered the founder of Neoplatonism, and explains the basic premise of emanationism as being "that human souls share in the divine and can and should return to the divine."[31] He furthermore summarizes Plotinus' system as consisting of four major elements "God, form, soul, matter,"[32] which actually fits well and helps in understanding many of the concepts we will discuss below under the category of "cosmo-psychology," namely the divine essence, the names and attributes of God, and the spiritual and physical realms within man, a cosmological structure that shapes the very curricula of meditative practices performed by not only our case study lineage, but also other Mujaddidī lines with a standardized curriculum of practice. While the term "emanationism" could be problematized on the grounds that for different thinkers, the relationship between the different stages may not be best described as one of emanation, the term is employed here out of convenience and will be used interchangeably with "entification." Sedgwick holds that emanationism, which he seems to use interchangeably with Neoplatonism, appears again and again, in one guise or another in various traditions up to the present, from the earliest emergence of Sufism in 9th-century Abbasid Baghdad, through medieval Jewish and Christian mysticism, and up to Gurdjieff and of course contemporary Sufism in the West. Yet this naturally brings up the problem of influence, a topic that two of our case study *shaykh*s, Rasool and Abdur Rashid, have in fact weighed in on, thus demonstrating their knowledge of and engagement with Western academic scholarship. We take advantage of this to also consider their views on the matter in our discussion below.

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[27] Clarke, *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements*, x.
[28] Zarrabi-Zadeh, "The 'Mystical' and the 'Modern'."
[29] Azad Rasool, *Turning Toward the Heart: Awakening to the Sufi Way, Forty Questions and Answers with Shaykh al- Tariqat Hazrat Azad Rasool*, (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2002), 3. Henceforth *TTH*.
[30] Clarke, *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements*, viii.
[31] Mark Sedgwick, *Western Sufism: From the Abbasids to the New Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 16.
[32] Ibid.

The Problem of Influence

Some scholars have ascribed elements of Sufism to a variety of sources external to Islam, including the influences of Greek philosophy (like Neoplatonism especially), early Christian ascetics, the vague notion of Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Vedanta, Buddhism, and Central Asian shamanism to name some commonly posited examples, sometimes all by the very same author.[33] If we are to accept this narrative, then Sufism becomes a gaudy patchwork quilt, copied and pasted together from various sources, one that is not only un-Islamic, but also unoriginal.[34] Such importance being placed on tracing influences is reminiscent of a character created by Canadian novelist Robertson Davies (d. 1995): "The Sniffer" is a theater critic nicknamed such for, among other things, his habit of "reduc[ing] to his common denominator" new Canadian playwrights by sniffing out "influences" in their works, as if they could not be "original in any important sense" and "must be leaning upon, and dipping into, the work of some playwright of established fame, most often an Englishman." The narrator explains that "The Sniffer" was among "a vanishing breed of Canadians for whom England is still The Great Good Place."[35]

This anecdote illustrates, first, how reductive the search for origins (*Quellenforschung*) can be, not to mention how sometimes in this process untenable assumptions are made on sparse evidence or facts are imagined, or worse fabricated, to support such conspiracy-theory style tracing of influences, as we will see an example of below in the discussion of Sirhindī in the sixth phase of the historical survey. On the reductive character of the search for origins, Rasool observes that it misses "the uniqueness of each monument of human discovery."[36] Davies' "Sniffer" also illustrates the lower level that is ascribed to the "influenced" and the position of superiority accorded to the originator. This can draw from and feed into some unsavory and even racist Orientalist ideas, such as the perception that the beautiful mystical rose of Sufism could never have blossomed from "the sandy desert of Islam,"[37] thus it must have been transplanted to its current dry legalistic and Semitic environs from its true Christian or Aryan origins. Nevertheless, although one may abhor the sentiment with which such assertions may at times be entangled, this is no basis for rejecting their ultimate conclusions. In this regard, Knysh warns that "by insisting on the 'autochthonous' Islamic/Qur'anic origins of such a complex and variegated phenomenon as Sufism, we run the risk of ignoring the obvious for the sake of a wrongly construed notion of political correctness."[38]

But aside from influence theories being reductionist and potentially rooted in racist ideas, there is also the issue of whether or not similarity proves influence. In questioning our ability to truly get at such origins, Ernst proffered the analogy of a banyan tree with so many trunks that it is impossible to determine which was the first.[39] Rasool, mentioning R.A. Nicholson by name, asserts that "similarities do not prove that one movement comes from another" and notes that Massignon concluded that Sufism's origins can be found within Islam. While accepting the possibility that some *shaykh*s "may have drawn on certain aspects of other religions or systems" he suggests that his audience "avoid reading too much into superficial similarities." He adds that "A Sufi aspirant sitting in meditation looks much like a yogi sitting in meditation."[40]

His last comment brings us to the idea of independent origination for explaining similarities, or what Dickson has called "polygenesis,"[41] which holds that similar doctrines and practices may have

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[33] See for instance Julian Baldick, *Mystical Islam: An Introduction to Sufism* (London: Tauris, 2012), 13-24.

[34] For an excellent problematization of the issue of influence, see Carl Ernst, "Situating Sufism and Yoga," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Third Series* 15, no. 1, (2005): 15-43.

[35] Robertson Davies, *Murther & Walking Spirits* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 8-9.

[36] *TTH* 63-4.

[37] Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 7-12.

[38] Knysh, *Sufism*, 23.

[39] Ernst, "Situating Sufism and Yoga," 42-43.

[40] *TTH* 63-4.

[41] Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 56.

emerged entirely independently of one another. This position can certainly be supported by seeing certain things as common to human experience; such as exerting control over basic bodily requirements like regulating breathing or denying oneself food, water, sleep, etc. This could also extend to the realm of doctrine. For instance, asserting that a thinker is influenced by Manichaeism simply because they place a strong emphasis on the dichotomy of good and evil is untenable. Rasool also supports this position by saying that "The mystic impulse exists within each human soul" and that shared ideas across religious traditions can be "legitimately claimed by all faiths, for they reflect the human condition."[42] Similarly, in the second interview with the researcher, Abdur Rashid supported the thesis of polygenesis or independent origination with the analogy that displacement already existed before Archimedes ever exclaimed "Eureka!" after noticing it at work when he stepped into a bathtub.

But when we start to get to more complex doctrines with specific structures and clusters of imagery, it becomes more difficult to argue this position. This is especially true when there is a major documented historical event that offers the possibility of a direct transfer which coincides with the emergence of a highly similar structure and cluster of imagery, as occurred with the translation of Plotinus' emanationist Neoplatonism into Arabic and the emergence of Sufism, both events taking place in Baghdad during the 9th century.[43] Sedgwick, however, offers a quite reasonable alternative somewhere in between the influence and polygenesis models, one that fits well with the idea of resonance used here. He explains the similarities between Ibn al-'Arabī and Meister Eckhart by listing three possibilities: 1.) both men based their teachings around emanationism (influence model), 2.) both men had the same mystical experience and described it in similar terms (polygenesis model), and 3.) a combination of 1 and 2, that both men "had similar experiences, and found that the conceptual framework of emanationism helped describe them most accurately."[44]

Sedgwick has also observed that ideas found earlier in Hellenistic thought have already been demonstrated in the Quran and that emanationist concepts might be traced in the Quran itself, such as, quite significantly, in referring to God as "the One" (*al-Āḥad*).[45] Thus, if God revealed the Quran to Muḥammad in the language and idiom of 7th-century Arabia, this language and idiom had developed prior to the advent of Islam and could certainly also include ideas, structures, and imagery that also existed prior to that time. Of note here, Plotinus was from Roman Egypt, not far from Arabia, and died some 340 years before the revelation of the Quran. Hence, if a form of emanationism is inherent in the Quran itself, though not as explicitly outlined as it was by Plotinus, perhaps what was required to unlock the hidden meaning potentially already implicit in the Quran and thus to spark the very emergence of Sufism in 9th-century Baghdad was the partial translation of the *Enneads*. Since then, centuries of Sufis, among them Quran exegetes, have agreed with the emanationist framework and produced varied interpretations and versions of their own. This would not be too dissimilar to how Muslim jurists adopted structures and aspects of Roman law in understanding the Quran and *sunna* to form Islamic law,[46] a process which was taking place in parallel with the development of Sufism.

To pre-emptively deal with potential accusations of reductionism, throughout *Western Sufism*, Sedgwick emphasizes how the different theologies he describes as emanationist are not only emanationism. He highlights how Sufism is not simply Islamic Neoplatonism and Kabbalah is not simply Jewish Neoplatonism, and that there are clearly other elements, but that among those emanationism is a significant one. Here too, the point is also not to reduce various systems to their common denominator, but rather to point out how they have some very real similarities, which constructivist approaches to mysticism minimalize, and that such similarities have significant resonating potential between different traditions and can facilitate smooth transfer (without significant change) from one context to another.

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[42] *TTH* 63-4.

[43] A summary of an earlier comparison of Junayd and Plotinus is included in the second phase of the historical survey below.

[44] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 16.

[45] Idem 32-35.

[46] Ayman Daher, "The Shari'a: Roman Law Wearing An Islamic Veil?," *The McGill Journal of Classical Studies* III (2005): 91-108.

Additionally, both Dickson and Sedwick have traced multiple cases of likely or proven influence travelling in the other direction than typically described by Orientalists, that is Islamic emanationism in turn influencing Western mysticism and philosophy from the Middle Ages up to the present. Sadly, there is insufficient space to fully address these transfers here, though some are briefly mentioned in the historical survey, such as with Eckhart and the emergence of the Kabbalah, for their importance in the eventual Western reception of the case study lineage.

Marketing Strategies

With the topic of emanationism, we have discussed how a deep underlying structure or framework can be a source of resonance, but here we deal with more surface level considerations, namely marketing strategies. In his "Sufism for Westerners," Hammer noted that "The success of a movement often has to do with its successful marketing strategies, and not least its ability to expand its membership by exploiting pre-existing social networks."[47] These facts were not lost upon Rasool or other *shaykh*s in our contemporary survey below who have sought to expand into the Euro-American sphere. In such a setting where the choices are manifold and we can speak of a "spiritual marketplace"[48] and the McDonaldization (*McDonaldisierung*) of religion,[49] an effective marketing strategy is essential. Yet the question is how far does that strategy go? Is it a matter of presentation only or are there changes in actual doctrine or practice? We consider a couple of examples before providing one from our case study. First, the Haqqaniyya of the late Nazim al-Haqqani (d. 2014) has been known for being highly adaptive to different settings and to use a range of strategies for appealing to new audiences. In a book by one Haqqani *shaykh* entitled *The Healing Power of Sufi Meditation*, the aromatherapy of the HHM is described as actually being "based on knowledge they took from the saints of God,"[50] and *jnana mudra*, a hand position used in Yogic meditation that is similar to the OK gesture, is shown to form the word "Allāh" in Arabic script with the fingers and is used in their Sufi meditation.[51] Moreover, Nazim sought to expand into the alternative spirituality scene in Glastonbury and as part of this, they introduced Mawlawī turning to draw a larger crowd.[52] Furthermore, as we will see in the contemporary survey, Nazim's representative in the US, Hisham Kabbani has claimed Gurdjieff's enneagram as an originally Naqshbandī teaching. Thus we find several examples of attempts to appeal to a new audience, some of which resulted in actual changes to doctrine and practice.

Somewhat in contrast, early on in this research, one Naqshbandī *shaykh* who was operating in southern California and who belongs to one of the lineages discussed in the contemporary survey below, had set up a MeetUp.com group to help spread his teachings among prospective non-Muslim students there. The profile explained their activities as including meeting to discuss "philosophy" from the collected letters of Sirhindī, which were described as "energy-infused scrolls," along with Sufi meditation involving the activation of certain "chakra-like" centers. Upon further research, it was discovered that they were indeed drawing their discussions directly from the *Maktūbāt*, the *shaykh* in fact being fluent in Persian, and teaching a standard set of daily practices including a detailed curriculum for *murāqaba*, traditional forms of *dhikr*, and other fairly typical recitations like the *hawqala*, *Sūrat al-*

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[47] Hammer, "Sufism for Westerners," 143.

[48] Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[49] See for example Milad Milani and Adam Possamai, "The Nimatullahiya and Naqshbandiya Sufi Orders on the Internet: The Cyber-construction of Tradition and the McDonaldisation of Spirituality," *Journal of Advanced Scientific Research* 26, no. 1 (2013): 51-75. For the originator of the concept of "McDonaldization," see George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society: Into the Digital Age*, 9th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2018). I am grateful to Thomas K. Gügler for introducing me to this concept.

[50] Nurjan Mirahmadi and Hedieh Mirahmadi, *The Healing Power of Sufi Meditation* (Fenton, MI: Naqshbandi Haqqani Sufi Order of America, 2005), 62. This work features a forward by Nazim al-Haqqani himself as well as an introduction by Hisham Kabbani.

[51] Idem 52.

[52] Ian K.B. Draper, "From Celts to Kaaba: Sufism in Glastonbury," in *Sufism in Europe and North America*, ed. David Westerlund, 144-56.

fātiḥa, *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*, the *khatm*, and *durūd*, very much like our case study as well as other lineages discussed in the contemporary survey below. Thus the question is whether or not anything really changed other than the *laṭā'if* being described as "*chakra*-like" and the *Maktūbāt* as "energy-infused scrolls." We cannot know in this case without further research, but the point here is that there is a substantial difference between changes in presentation and changes to actual doctrine and practice. We intend to interrogate this issue further with our case study.

It is certain that Rasool did make well-researched efforts to appeal to non-Muslim spiritual seekers in the West, but even in doing that, we find clear limits to how far he was willing to go. By way of preliminary illustration, we draw a comparison between three different objective statements by 1.) the Theosophical Society, from which many forms of alternative spirituality in the West emerged, another that was later set forth by 2.) Inayat Khan, the first universalist Sufi teacher in the West in or just before 1920, and then 3.) Rasool's 1975 proposal for the *Institute of Search for Truth*. Each of these objective statements is three-fold and revolve around: 1.) sources of knowledge, 2.) inner human potential or powers, and 3.) the universal brotherhood of humankind beyond distinctions like creed.

Although Theosophy's three aims have changed slightly and evolved particularly over the last three decades of the 19th century, the final form which they currently take is as follows:

> 1. To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color.
> 2. To encourage the comparative study of religion, philosophy, and science.
> 3. To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in humanity.[53]

In a series of lectures given from 1917 to 1920, Inayat Khan offered to his students in the West, who often had Theosophical connections and background, a somewhat similar set of three objectives, although changing the order to make knowledge the first topic discussed. His three aims were:

> 1. To realize and spread the knowledge of unity, the religion of love and wisdom, so that the variety of faiths and beliefs may of themselves cease to exist, the human heart may overflow with love, and all hatred caused by distinctions and differences may be rooted out.
> 2. To discover the light and power latent in man, the secret of all religion, the power of mysticism, and the essence of philosophy without interfering with customs or beliefs.
> 3. To help bring the world's two opposite poles, East and West, close together by the interchange of thoughts and ideas, that the universal brotherhood may form of itself, and man may meet man beyond the narrow national and racial boundaries.[54]

Rasool retains the sequence used by Khan, with knowledge shifted to the top, and expounds at greater length but essentially follows the same three-fold framework and set of topics, although making certain key adjustments to comply with his own worldview and mission in spreading his own decidedly Islamic Sufi lineage. Rasool, in seeking to appeal to a similar demographic, adopts quite similar aims and objectives, although modified to be congruent with his own Islamic perspective. These remain the aims and objectives on The School of Sufi Teachings website today.[55] Rasool states the first aim of the Institute as being 1.) "to investigate those areas of human nature and the hidden sources of human knowledge that have not yet been explored by science and reason." Like Theosophy, he is interested in engaging with philosophy and science, but not so much in a comparative sense as by making an appeal to the scientific method, to encourage prospective students to test out the practices for themselves. He

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[53] Josephine Ransom, *A Short History of the Theosophical Society* (Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1992). "Three Objects," *Theosophical.org*, accessed March 1, 2020, https://www.theosophical.org/publications/quest-magazine/9-about-us-sp-709/introduction/1043-three-objects.
[54] Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 76.
[55] Azad Rasool, *The Search for Truth: The Life & Teachings Methods of the Indian Sufi Shaykh Hazrat Maulvvi Muhammad Sa'id Khan (r)* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2010), 154, henceforth *SfT*. These are also available online: "Aims and Objectives," *SufiSchool.org*, accessed March 1, 2020, https://www.sufischool.org/school/aims.html.

also does not mention a comparative approach to religion or an exchange (and thus syncretic combination) of knowledge, since he already has "a specific program of practical exercises" to offer and comparative analysis of different traditions is not part of this program, much less a blending. Moreover, he certainly does not seek the elimination of religions by transcending difference as Khan sets forth. Yet like Khan, he emphasized love as a major part of this, in fact for him "the power of love" is none other than his second aim 2.) "the hidden power of the human self, which we are trying to tap and utilize." Such discussion of actualizing inner potentials offers considerable opportunity for resonance among people in the West with a background in alternative spiritualities, especially in light of the HPM.

Rasool finds that the awakening of such "hidden power of the human self" will help to 3.) "bring forth a creed of universal brotherhood and unbounded love." Unlike the anti-exotericism of Theosophy or Khan's statement that their objectives would be pursued "without interfering with customs or beliefs," Rasool takes a somewhat different stance by explaining that their program of practical exercises "will not be in conflict with those of other creeds," thus leaving room for the fact that this is a decidedly Islamic tradition. Although probably testing the waters and being less overtly Islamic in this initial first document, in fact not yet mentioning Islam or even God at all, thus demonstrating that he was well aware of the aversion among Western spiritual seekers to religious dogma and exoteric prescriptions, his later works are more overtly Islamic. From such a list of objectives, on first glance it would seem that we are indeed looking at something quite distinct and new, reflecting more Theosophy than the teachings of Sirhindī. Yet as will be argued in this monograph, when we look beyond this set of introductory aims or what we are referring to as presentational aspects, what we find is actually a rather standard set of Naqshbandī Mujaddidī practices, insofar as we can even speak of such a standard set, informed by understandings drawn directly from Sirhindī's *Maktūbāt*. Clarke also notes that one way NRMs differ from more established religious traditions is by "making greater use of more secular forms of management, administration, and assembly."[56] But we question here whether there is really a significant institutional change when our case study adopts names like "School" and "Institute" to describe themselves while operating within the basic traditional institutional framework of the *ṭarīqa*.

Re-Defining Mysticism (Again)

With regard to the study of Sufism, Nile Green enumerates some of the shortcomings of the category of mysticism, or at least 20th-century conceptions thereof. He describes these as rooted in "culturally Protestant, temporally modernist, and intellectually cosmopolitan" understandings of religion that situate religious authority, regardless of time or place, with the "solitary individual's direct unmediated experience" and hold that religion itself ought to ideally be aloof from politics. He also relates this construct of mysticism to the now outmoded decline model in the academic study of the history of Sufism, whereby it is asserted that following a medieval "golden age," characterized by the theosophical speculations of an esoteric elite, a degradation into "popular" Sufism ensued. He rightly points out that such a construct of mysticism, when applied to Sufism, not only fails to account for its widespread influence and erroneously places it as opposite to exoteric Islam, but it also excludes much of what it was intended to explain, including important aspects of Sufism that are collective, such as the *shaykh*-disciple relationship, or physical, like embodied rituals and the shrines of saints. To avoid such problems, he takes the route of emphasizing context and shifting the focus for his study of the history of Sufism from "mysticism" to "tradition," but also from "marginality" to "power." On the latter, he discusses how Sufis have in fact enjoyed various interdependent forms of power: discursive power, miraculous power that commoner and king alike sought to benefit from, as well as the economic power gained from such clientele, whether through humble donations or vast endowments.[57] While Green's approaching Sufi historiography from such an angle has clearly yielded valuable insights, some of the

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[56] Clarke, *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements*, ix.
[57] Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 1-14.

shortcomings of older conceptions of mysticism could be overcome by casting off some of their constraints, as is advocated here.

Earlier and prevailing definitions and understandings of mysticism, especially as found in Sufi Studies, tend to be either too restrictive, excluding things that most would agree are mysticism as just discussed, or conversely, too vague to be academically useful. On the latter for instance, Julian Baldick, in his *Mystical Islam*, felt comfortable declaring that one personality or another clearly was or was not a mystic, while at the same time, by his own admission, not offering any precise definition of mysticism.[58] The former situation of excessive restriction was what caused Green to argue for a shift away from considering Sufism as "mysticism." In addition to those limitations that he identified; such as excluding collective, physical, mediated, and socio-politically powerful aspects; more restrictive tendencies sometimes focus on what Sufis understand as higher levels of mystical achievement such as unitive states, while excluding the lower more quotidian and less dramatic levels leading up to such exalted states. Thus we have awkward apple versus orange situations like the dichotomy of asceticism versus mysticism in the development of Sufism. The researcher would argue, and as is the view expressed by Rasool as described below, that asceticism is a mystical technique rather than a separate trend in itself and that there are mystical trends emphasizing love, proximity, and unity and there are mystical trends emphasizing renunciation and distance, what might be called the *tanzīh-tashbīh* or "transcendence"-"immanence" spectrum. But rather than discard mysticism because of the restrictiveness of earlier definitions, we have chosen to broaden how we define it in a way that allows it to include aspects formerly excluded by older understandings, aspects such as the ones mentioned by Green but also others like the initial steps on the path as well as visions, auditory phenomena, miracles, and miraculous abilities among others.

Despite the limitations of the category of mysticism, as it has often been defined, for examining Sufism, the notion of mysticism ought not be abandoned, throwing the baby out with the bathwater so to speak. By analogy, it would certainly be possible to write a study on football and only consider its major personalities and institutions like teams, leagues, and so forth along with their social, cultural, economic, and even political impacts, all without ever touching upon or evening knowing the rules of the game or how it is played. But this would perhaps be more writing around the game rather than about it, much like the focus on context that predominates in Sufi Studies today. This study seeks to examine more the game itself, viz. mysticism. In doing so, it draws on a definition of mysticism used by Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh in his *Practical Mysticism in Islam and Christianity*, which he in turn had adopted from the Catholic theologian Bernard McGinn. This definition is tripartite: mysticism consists of a human-divine encounter at its core along with all that leads up to as well as all that results from such encounter.[59] In interpreting this definition, we have probably gone further than either Zarrabi-Zadeh or McGinn would have originally intended, such as by including visions and the like, but also, in a very Ghazālī-esque way, daily obligatory acts of worship have become mystical practices, when performed with sincerity. The touchstone for what constitutes a human-divine encounter as defined here lies in the interpretation of the individual as to whether or not what they experienced was an encounter with God (as opposed to a purely social act of going to mosque or church), whether that be directly or mediated through other sanctified humans, living or dead, intermediary beings like angels, or places and objects. Of course, this definition would have to be adapted for application to polytheistic or non-theistic belief systems. Yet this re-revised definition provides a much clearer criteria for what constitutes mysticism in monotheistic Abrahamic contexts, while also including previous aspects of Sufism that had previously been excluded, and had thus partially obscured the object of study.

Pertaining to the three elements of the above definition of Zarrabi-Zadeh and McGinn as reinterpreted here; 1.) the mystical encounter with the divine, 2.) that which leads to such encounter and 3.) that which follows from such encounter; we first mention the second. This may involve specific techniques to pursue or to prepare oneself for the encounter, but among those Sufi personalities discussed here, mystical experiences are generally understood to be bestowed by the grace of God,

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[58] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, 2, 49.

[59] Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh, "Defining Mysticism, A Survey of Main Definitions," *Transcendent Philosophy* 9 (2008): 77-92, here 86; Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh, *Practical Mysticism in Islam and Christianity: A Comparative Study of Jalal al-Din Rumi and Meister Eckhart* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

rather than as a result of the efforts of the mystic, hence William James' describing mystical states as passive.[60] Regarding results, or that which follows from such an encounter, we might consider certain Sufi technical terms like *baqā'*, or it could be as simple as being a pious Muslim, or as we will see explained by Rasool, being "a highly humane and moral person." The mystical encounter itself is experienced and described in innumerable ways, though certain themes are particularly common, such as in the Sufi distinction of intoxication (*sukr*) versus sobriety (*sahw*). Gilbert Rouget describes a similar dichotomy of trance versus ecstasy, wherein he also considers conditions and activities leading to such states. He describes trance as being characterized by "movement, noise, [being] in company, crisis, sensory overstimulation, amnesia, [and] no hallucinations" versus ecstasy being linked with "immobility, silence, solitude, no crisis, sensory deprivation, recollection, [and] hallucinations." Here, however, in the interest of following current common usage in English, we have reversed these labels so that "trance" corresponds with Rouget's second grouping of characteristics and thus also with Sufi sobriety, a category that well suits our case study.[61]

We might also mention how in *The Idea of the Holy*, Rudolph Otto writes of the "numinous experience" as having two types, the *mysterium tremendum* and *fascinans*,[62] which could be seen as analogous to what Sufis have described as lower and higher stages of the path, as will be discussed in phase two of the historical survey. In the definition of mysticism used here, fear of God and love of God both count equally as encounters. But perhaps most important is the notion of union with God, which is just one, though very important and oft recurring, way of describing particularly profound forms of mystical experience. Yet using unity as a necessary defining criteria for mystical experience establishes an all-or-nothing guideline and does not leave room for the non-unitive degrees leading up to such unity to be considered a mystical experience.

Furthermore, the ultimate goal may not always be to attain union with God. For Aḥmad Sirhindī, founder figure of the Mujaddidiyya, the union which other mystics speak of, is actually a lower stage on the path which is to be transcended. Although for him, the mystic experiencing a unitive state, that is perceiving him or herself to be in a state of union with the Divine, is in a more sublime state than the average person going about daily life, he or she is nevertheless deluded in thinking that they have reached union. That mystic must advance beyond the intoxicated stupor of the unitive perspective in order to re-realize God's transcendence. Thus, if we hold to definitions of mysticism which require the goal to be a unitive state, then Sirhindī's system would fall through the sieve and might even be considered an anti-mysticism. It is difficult to imagine, however, that anyone could seriously exclude his heirs, Naqshbandī Mujaddidī Sufis like those in our case study, spending hours on end in daily meditation and the performance of recitations in pursuit of nearness to God, from the label of mystics.

Certain existing definitions do provide some accommodation in this regard, such as Geoffrey Parrinder's division of theistic, monistic, and non-religious forms of mysticism which distinguishes between unity and identity. While the latter two forms (monistic and non-religious) respectively involve unification and identification with a universal ultimate reality which may or may not be considered divine, theistic mysticism involves unification but not identification, that is a union without being identical with, which he likens to marriage.[63] While such a definition does take a step closer toward allowing Sirhindī's thought to be placed under the label of mysticism, it still falls short since for him, the mystic does not even experience unification but only the perception thereof. Moreover, this occurs at a fairly early stage of the path, beyond which the distinction between Creator and creation is restored. Thus union is just one way of describing the mystical experience, one which has been contested in Sufi tradition, including within the case study lineage.

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[60] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1902), 380-82.
[61] Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 1-12.
[62] Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, transl. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1936).
[63] Geoffrey Parrinder, *Mysticism in the World's Religions* (London: Oneworld Publications, 1995).

Mysticism, Spirituality, Esotericism, and Religion

But now we consider the relationship of such a definition to the category of religion, and in particular Islam, which also brings us to the topic of Islamic "orthodoxy," held to be one of the main characteristics of the Naqshbandiyya. There are certainly more precise and accurate alternatives to the term "orthodoxy" in describing the predominant normative form of Islam in any given context. It should also be noted that what is the norm varies widely with time and place, and has developed over the course of the history of Islam all of the way up to the present, as we will discuss in the historical survey. But also related to such factors as the emphasis on correct practice as compared with that on belief, proposed alternatives to orthodoxy include orthopraxy and Islamic normativity,[64] yet we retain orthodoxy here in following with Weismann's pair of orthodoxy and activism as defining characteristics of the Naqshbandiyya, to which we add and place our focus on mysticism as what is felt to be an at least equally, if not more, defining characteristic of this tradition. But while using orthodoxy as a form of shorthand, here what we are really denoting is the "relationship to Islam," since now more than at any other point in history, it is possible to speak of Sufism without it being embedded in Islam.

Although there are earlier precedents for the possibility of conceiving of Sufism as something separate from Islam, even in the medieval era, as traced by Sedgwick,[65] or in early modern India, as we will discuss in the sixth phase of the historical survey, it is only from the beginning of the 20th century that it has been possible to conceive of such an idea on a global scale. This assertion does not, however, take into account claims of Sufism being an ancient perennial tradition predating Islam among some of the universalists discussed in the contemporary survey below. Whatever the case, our above definition of mysticism does not necessitate adherence to, belief in, or otherwise identification with any particular religious tradition. The only requirement for an experience to be considered mystical is belief in some kind of notion of God which one understands themselves to have had an encounter with. Thus mystical experience is not limited to religious experience.

Here we must also mention a pair of related terms, namely esotericism and spirituality. Perhaps we might think of esotericism as being a much larger category which includes but is not limited to mysticism, namely in the sense that God in the human-divine encounter could remain (thus the subset of esotericism called mysticism) or be replaced with someone or something else that is not of this material world which may be understood as good, evil or neutral, such as is the case with the ceremonial magic mentioned in phase seven of the historical survey below, wherein one may invoke angels or alternatively demons. The same three-fold definition of mysticism can be adapted for the broader category of esotericism by simply substituting God as the counterpart with which one has an encounter with anyone or anything that is not of this physical, material world. Just as with mysticism, there are expressions of esotericism with or without religion.[66]

But considering another term, that of spirituality, which usually has more exclusively positive and benevolent associations, we find another case of a word which may or may not entail identification with a particular religious tradition. Think of the expression "spiritual but not religious,"[67] though being spiritual or esoteric does not necessarily exclude being religious either. Thus we might think of spirituality as the benevolent subset within the larger category of esotericism and likewise of it being

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[64] See respectively Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1946), 305; and SherAli Tareen, "Normativity, Heresy, and the Politics of Authenticity in South Asian Islam," *The Muslim World,* 99 (2009): 521-552, here 526.

[65] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 56-58.

[66] For some introductory works on the field of Eestern esotericism, which also include various attempts to define what "esotericism" is, see Antoine Faivre, *Western Esotericism: A Concise History*, transl. Christine Rhone (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2010); Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994); Wouter Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2013); Arthur Versluis, *Magic and Mysticism: An Introduction to Western Esotericism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); Kocku von Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge*, transl. Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (Durham: Acumen, 2005). Specifically on the relationship, including overlap and interconnection, between Western and Islamic esotericism, see Mark Sedgwick, "Islamic and Western Esotericism," *Correspondences* 7, no. 1 (2019): 277-299.

[67] On alternative spirituality, see for instance the introduction to Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman, *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

similar to our three-fold definition of mysticism, but larger, including mysticism within it, yet also including the possibility of contact with benevolent entities other than God and that are not necessarily emissaries from God. Thus here, from the largest set to the smallest, esotericism, spirituality, and mysticism can all be either religious or non-religious, but all represent some kind of encounter with something that is beyond the physical world as well as what leads up to, and also that which results from such encounter. For esotericism, what is contacted may be good, evil, or neutral, while for spirituality it is benevolent or at least neutral, and for mysticism, the contact is with God or one of His[68] representative intermediaries, whether animate or inanimate and whether physical or non-physical. So on the term "alternative spirituality," which is so oft employed throughout the present research, this refers to forms of spirituality (including its subset of mysticism), which are not connected with the dominant form of spirituality for a given time or place. In the context of the Euro-American sphere in the 20th to 21st century, this entails belonging to a type of spirituality, whether religious or non-religious in nature, that is not part of the established and dominant Christian spirituality. Out of convenience, however, the terms spirituality and mysticism will be used more or less interchangeably throughout this research, though with alternative spirituality referring to a kind of primarily unchurched spirituality in the West.

But returning to where religion fits into all of this, while mystical experience is not limited to those who adhere to a particular religious tradition, a significant consequence of the expansion of the scope of mysticism in the definition used here is that mystical experience becomes a vastly larger subset within religious experience than it had previously been. Hence, Sufism is no longer equal to the main primarily Sunni form of Islamic mysticism, and instead it is only one current among a plurality of Islamic mysticisms. There are non-Sufi Sunni and Shiʿi mysticisms, there are Ahmadi and Alevi mysticisms, and indeed there are Salafī mysticisms. Thus, this study rejects equating Sufism exclusively with Islamic mysticism on the grounds that Islamic mysticism is not limited to only Sufism.

For a better idea of what is meant here by mystical experience, it is helpful to consider some experiences that by this definition would be considered religious experience though not mystical experience.[69] Non-mystical religious experiences take place within a religious context or involve people, places, or things associated with a religious tradition, but which are not understood by the person having the experience as any kind of encounter with God. If someone fasts during Ramadan only because they do not want to be ridiculed by others, that is a religious experience but not a mystical one. If they fast during Ramadan because they are trying to be right with God and follow his commands, then this counts as a mystical experience. Of course it can also be, and probably usually is, some combination of both. While religious experience can include encounters with people, places, and things that are other than God and not understood as representing God, such as interpersonal social pressure, mystical experience involves some kind of contact, mediated or direct, with God.

Both Friedrich von Hügel and James Bissett Pratt have viewed religion as consisting of three elements, which we shall enumerate here as: revelation, reason, and intuition.[70] These three ingredients are present in the Sufi tradition as well as among both the *ʿulamāʾ* and the philosophers, although in differing degrees. This might be compared with how the majority of coffee-based beverages consist of some combination, with different quantity ratios, of the same three ingredients: ground coffee beans, water, and milk. Revelation acts somewhat like the coffee grounds and is the basis of all three types of beverages, but it is impossible to make any sort of beverage from it without the application of a liquid, usually water (reason) and to most drinks is also added, in varying amounts, milk (intuition). So a café

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[68] Use of "His" here for expediency and not meant to exclude belief systems in which God is viewed as female or without gender.

[69] Ellwood provides some examples of what might be regarded as religious experience but not mystical experience, some of which, however, would be considered mystical by our definition. Robert S. Ellwood, *Mysticism and Religion* (Chappaqua, NY: Seven Bridges Press, LLC, 1999), 42-44.

[70] Zarrabi-Zadeh, "Defining Mysticism," 79. For the originals, see Friedrich von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and her Friends* (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1909); and James Bissett Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1920), 337, cited in Ellwood, *Mysticism and Religion*, 27.

macchiato consists of 60ml of espresso (made with coffee grounds and water) with just a small dot of foamed milk on top, while a café Americano (60ml of espresso with 90ml of hot water) taken with a bit of milk, and a café latte (60ml espresso with 300ml of steamed milk and 2ml of milk foam).[71] But unlike in our analogy, where one could have an espresso straight without any milk or even simply chew on the coffee grounds without adding water, intellect and intuition will always have a role to play in religion. It might be tempting to compare puritanical scripturalists to a dry espresso with no milk, but they too have mystical experiences, that is they include a subjective experiential dimension to their faith and the practice thereof in which there is an encounter with God. Think of the feeling of being right with God that must accompany the sincere and faithful performance of not only the obligatory prayers, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage, and testifying that there is no god but God and Muḥammad is his messenger, but also even the smallest daily actions of following the guidance of the Quran and *sunna*. But now we are left with the problem of if every believer has mystical experiences, then who are the mystics and what is mysticism. Here we move to another analogy, everyone must eat and most adults have cooked for themselves, but not everyone can be considered a connoisseur or a chef.

Resonance and Similarities Between Mysticisms

This brings us to another point, from a Durkheimian functionalist perspective, religion, and thus also here mysticism, fulfills certain functions. That may include fostering social cohesion, or at the individual level it might entail providing meaning and purpose in life as well as happiness, and perhaps even the self-actualization mentioned at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.[72] At the base of Maslow's hierarchy we find basic human needs, which can be met with things like food and water, which are fairly straightforward. Food is food, whether that be American cuisine, German cuisine, Mexican, Indian, Japanese, etc., we eat it because we are hungry and require nourishment. Just like different cultures have different ways of going about fulfilling these basic needs, they also have different approaches to addressing higher needs. Similarly, just like someone from the US can gain nourishment from a German, Mexican, Indian, or Japanese meal, a person from one religion (or without a religion at all) may also seek to benefit and gain fulfillment from taking part in the approaches of other religions or mystical systems.

Thus it is argued that the subjective experiential, intuitional, mystical aspect of religion cuts across all traditions, though in different quantities and ratios with respect to the other two major ingredients mentioned above. This position seems to echo older "perennialist" models, which posit sets of common characteristics between different mystical traditions or argue for a family resemblance model. This approach to the study of mysticism has been strongly criticized by "constructivists," most notable among them being Steven T. Katz, who argues against the existence of any core experience common to all mysticisms across religious traditions.[73] Constructivists tend to emphasize the role of context, particularly religious tradition and culture in the shaping, indeed the very determining and constructing of mystical experience, holding that context mediates the experience. The ascendancy of the constructivist view of mysticism, with its shift away from the perennialist focus on similarity and toward a focus on difference, may well have been instrumental in heralding a shift in religious studies away from studying mysticism itself, as found in phenomenologists like Schimmel and Corbin, to the current prevailing focus on context over mysticism itself.

This study, however, does not seek to apprehend an experience, much less argue that this experience is the same across traditions and cultures. It seeks to understand words that are used to describe such experience, as well as words that describe practices used to pursue such experience, and

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[71] "Espresso Field Guide: A Visual Reference for Ingredient Ratios," Orbit Visual Graphic Design Studio accessed October 30, 2018, http://orbitvisual.com/espresso_field_guide.jpg.

[72] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), originally published in French in 1912; A.H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (1943): 370-96.

[73] Steven T. Katz' *Mysticism and Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); and *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For summaries of the perennialist-constructivist debate, see most any current work on mysticism, but for example: Ellwood, *Mysticism and Religion*, 15-23.

also words that are used to describe what are understood to be the results of such experience. There is no fundamental disagreement with Katz's famous statement that there are "no unmediated experiences," and no assumption is being made here that it is possible to extricate an experience as it presents itself to immediate consciousness from the interpretation of that experience. In fact, in the definition of mysticism used here, such interpretation is crucial for defining whether or not an experience can be considered mystical.

Nevertheless, even if the constructivists emphasize difference in their speaking of multiple mysticisms and deny any common core to all mystical experiences, the fact that they describe them all with the same terms (mysticism and mystical) bespeaks to at least some degree of commonality, and it seems erroneous to say that we are looking at fundamentally different things. As different as a hotdog, schnitzel with knödel, a quesadilla, chicken korma, and sushi may be, they are all types of food and all offer some degree of nourishment. Furthermore, with their emphasis on difference determined by context, it is odd that constructivists tend to draw their boundaries around religious traditions, rather than around individual thinkers, which makes one wonder about motives. It is argued here that every subjective experience is mediated by each individual's previous experiences so not only can we not equate *fanā'* with nirvana, but likewise we cannot equate the *fanā'* described by one Sufi thinker with the *fanā'* of another Sufi, nor can we equate the nirvana of one Buddhist thinker with that of another. The differences within a single religious tradition can in some ways be as substantial as between religious traditions. But to close out this discussion, whether or not it is possible to have an experience of ultimate reality unmediated by cultural content, has nothing to do with what is of importance here: whether there are similarities between mystical doctrines and practices which can facilitate resonance during the transfer process, and thus reduce the need for appreciable modifications to the doctrines and practices of a particular transferred tradition.

Experience and Ineffability

One of William James' four defining features of mystical states is that they are ineffable,[74] something also found in Junayd as well as in Plotinus as discussed below. Perhaps it is this very feature that is behind the fact that when someone comes upon a good way of explaining it, finding words to describe and structure that which by its nature seems to defy expression, it catches on and spreads. It resonates over time, space, and cultural divides. Upon undertaking this study, the researcher was told by a long-time SOST practitioner that trying to describe the experience behind the practices was like trying to explain what colors are like to a person who was born blind. By way of further illustration, in Germany there is a common food flavoring known as *Waldmeister*, which comes from the plant of the same name in German (*galium odoratum*, also known in English as woodruff). The *Waldmeister* flavor is virtually unknown in the researcher's native US but in Germany it appears alongside more "conventional" flavors, from his biased perspective, like grape or cherry and it is a selection option in a variety of products such as ice cream, gummy bears, tea, and even beer. If he were to try to describe the taste of *Waldmeister* to his friends from the US who had never tried it, he would have to make use of words that would allow them to access something in their own experience for comparison so that they could somehow understand, however vaguely, what *Waldmeister* kind of tastes like. In describing the indescribable, one only has recourse to analogies that point to but cannot clearly demarcate, like fingers pointing to the moon. But of course, the words we use to describe things are representations of things and not the things themselves. Think of Alfred Korzybski's statement, "the map is not the territory" or René Magritte's painting entitled "The Treachery of Images" that features an image of a pipe under which is written: *"Ceci n'est pas une pipe."* ("This is not a pipe"). The difference between the above reports and the reports of mystics about their experiences of encounter with God are that in the former, the objects of experience are empirically verifiable while the latter is not.

Analogies like those above that refer to subjective sensory experiences, which may be termed qualia, to point toward an encounter with or experience of a higher reality like God have been severely criticized by Daniel Dennett. He holds that it is possible for such qualia to exist only in the mind without

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[74] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 380-82.

there being any actual external referent and thus they cannot serve as evidence of any non-physical encounter or experience of anything outside of one's own brain.[75] Moreover, Robert H. Sharf has also demonstrated how the "rhetoric of experience" can function to remove an experience and its purported object from public examination, making it private and inaccessible to anyone else and thus also rendering it inaccessible to the scrutiny of scholarship. Likening reports of religious or mystical experiences to the reports of alien abductees, he advises against considering different representations "as if they referred back to something other than themselves, to some numinous inner realm."[76] This leads us to a discussion of phenomenology, which seems to do just that.

Return of the Phenomenological Approach?

In the present study, we are not seeking to apprehend the phenomenon of the mystical experience itself, but the words that are used to describe it, whether or not the object of such experience actually exists outside of the experiencer's own mind, as well as the words used to describe the practices leading to and the understood results of such experience. Thus we are not collating various reports about a phenomenon to create a composite picture of something that may or may not exist in reality. Here we should consider the idea of phenomenology. Like mysticism, phenomenology has been defined in a multiplicity of ways. One specific version, for instance, involves doing precisely what we just described, such as studying the phenomenon of chi, by examining multiple reports about chi.[77] Such an approach is the exact opposite of what Sharf proposes in that it treats the reports as actually referring to something other than themselves. Another approach that has been advocated by Buehler seems to be a revised version of phenomenology, though without using the term itself. Therein, he relies, inter alia, on the theory and methods of transpersonal psychology, which operates on the assumption that there are higher levels of the human developmental process which can be scientifically explored, but which require the casting off of what he calls the scientific-materialist paradigm such as by accepting the use of post-rational data.[78] Of course, as we have seen, constructivists have called the very existence of post-rational data into question. While Buehler's efforts represent a well-formulated as well as courageous attempt to cast off what he feels are the limitations of the current prevailing paradigm, in doing so, he has abandoned certain fundamental scientific principles. The present research will not seek to overstep the boundaries, though it does push them a bit with the inclusion of experiential investigation described below. That said, the present researcher concurs with the constructivists that post-rational data does not and cannot exist and the experiential investigation advocated here is not intended to collect post-rational data. That is not what is meant by phenomenology here.

In contrast to the first example of phenomenology described above, there are other ways of defining this approach which are less constrained. For instance, phenomenology has also been succinctly described as basically "taking the insider perspective seriously."[79] Similarly, one inductive way of defining phenomenology is to identify common characteristics among scholars who have been described as phenomenologists, like Annemarie Schimmel and Henry Corbin. One major recurring

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[75] Daniel C. Dennett, "Quining Qualia," in *Consciousness in Modern Science*, eds. A.J. Marcel and E. Bisiach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 42-77; see also Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

[76] Robert H. Sharf, "The Rhetoric of Experience and the Study of Religion," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7, nos. 11-12 (2000): 267–87. See also his "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience," *Numen* 42, no. 3 (October 1995): 228-283.

[77] James V. Spickard, "Phenomenology," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, eds. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 333-45.

[78] See Arthur F. Buehler's "Researching Sufism in the Twenty-First Century: Expanding the Context of Inquiry," in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Islamic Studies*, ed. Clinton Bennett (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 93-118; "The Twenty-first-century Study of Collective Effervescence: Expanding the Context of Fieldwork," *Fieldwork in Religion* 7, no. 1 (2011): 70-97.

[79] The researcher's predisposition toward this approach may be related to his cultural background as an American. Hermansen observes how in the field of Religious Studies in American academia, "approaches are often sympathetic to the religious compartment of human life, consider it significant, take the insider categories seriously or, in other words, take a phenomenological stance." Marcia Hermansen, "What's American About American Sufi Movements?," in *Sufism in Europe and North America*, ed. Westerlund, 36-63, here 54-55.

characteristic that has been observed from such an endeavor is seeking to understand the insider perspective. While the first definition of phenomenology described above is not what is being pursued in this study, if seeking to understand the insider view—neither condemning nor advocating claims unsupported by empirical evidence, but understanding their internal logic—is what is meant by phenomenology, then the researcher would be happy to accept the label of phenomenology.

In this regard, the present study might be seen as an attempt to revive phenomenology. The conviction held here is that we must balance a hermeneutic of suspicion with one of empathy. The former and currently more popular approach is inherently hostile, viewing its subjects coldly from the outside and ever suspicious of ulterior motives, and this is itself a form of bias and failure/refusal to see a full half of the picture. While it may yield profound insights into the text's relationship with context as well as hidden motives, socially and politically, ones that the original author might never have consciously intended or realized but that may have nevertheless been true, still this approach, when taken alone, fails to apprehend the entire picture. In interpreting any text or act, especially mystical ones, it is crucial to also step inside the internal logic of the author or actor, see the world through their eyes, put ourselves in their shoes, so that we come close to understanding and seeing from their perspective, and thus come to somewhat understand why they think what they think and do what they do. Exclusive application of a hermeneutic of suspicion, without sufficiently balancing this with the insider perspective, renders its subjects into self-serving slaves to their own basic animal instincts, destined to pursuing their own interests and aims. Yet perhaps somewhat in cautious congruity with the transpersonal approach, this study holds that we, including the subjects of our studies, have the potential to be more than slaves to our own interests. The Sufis studied here would agree. Yet the insider perspective is not the only characteristic that has been ascribed to phenomenology, as some critique this approach as being ahistorical and acontextual.[80] Accordingly, the present study's attempt to revive phenomenology, in the very broad sense of the term used by Hermansen above as "taking the insider perspective seriously," has built into its very research questions and structure both historical and contextual aspects.

There is No Standard Naqshbandī or Mujaddidī System

Just as we will not be collating various reports to create a composite picture of the mystical experience and its reported object, we will also avoid collating multiple mysticisms to create a common unified ideal mysticism that may or may not exist in reality. In our contemporary survey, we will see a highly diverse array of groups and individuals, such that finding common threads might seem like an impossible task. Indeed, although one of the main arguments of this monograph is that Rasool was able to introduce a fairly typical branch of the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya more or less unchanged with respect to mystical doctrine and practices to the West, one of the main things the researcher would most like to refine upon with this study and particularly the contemporary survey is the idea that it is at all possible to speak of the Naqshandiyya or its main sub-branch of the Mujaddidiyya in such a monolithic sense, especially in the current era. Thus, it seeks to illuminate further how far we can even speak of typical. Even though this lineage takes its name from the Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thānī, there were many more actors at work since his time who have shaped its manifold articulations in varied contexts. Significantly, much of the diversity within these groups can be attributed to changes that took place well before their arrival in the West. There are of course certain recurring features, such as the eleven principles, or practices like silent *dhikr*, not to mention other potentially but not necessarily always mystical aspects like the tendency toward firm adherence to the *sharīʿa* and being socially and even politically engaged. Yet even these "defining features" are far from uniformly valid and, as noted by Weismann, this *ṭarīqa*'s history has been marked as much if not more by change and adaptation than by continuity.[81] There is no standard monolithic Naqshbandī or Mujaddidī system.

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[80] Mujiburrahman, "The Phenomenological Approach In Islamic Studies: An Overview of a Western Attempt to Understand Islam," *The Muslim World* 91 (2001): 425-49.
[81] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*.

Doing Things with Mysticism

As we will see examples of throughout this research, conceptualizations of the mystical path often entail not only an ascent, but also a return to this world somehow changed or different, even transformed, part of which can include a desire to make the world a better place and be of help to one's fellow man, whether that be sharing one's experience and helping others to achieve the same thing, encouraging them to morally upright behavior, or in other ways. The mystical experience itself inspires and strengthens the mystic in such endeavors, but as we will see throughout this research, whether in the historical or contemporary surveys or in examining the case study lineages, the exact form this takes differs from person to person and context to context. We might place such activity on a continuum ranging from quietism to activism. The terms quietism and activism (whether social or political) are used here to denote opposite ends of a spectrum which might be typified on one end by the ascetic-hermit who withdraws from society, and on the other end by the Sufi who goes out into the community to exhort pious living (social activism) or advises the ruler (political activism).

While mysticism is often seen as quietist and withdrawn from the outer world to engage with the inner, it can just as easily be rather activist and lead to different levels of involvement in the world societally, politically, and even militarily. Thus this desire to be of service in the world may even lead to *jihād* in the sense of armed struggle, for instance, if living under British colonial rule or facing Mongol invasions, two examples from the historical survey below (the latter of which is Kubrāwī, not Naqshbandī). Indeed, one of the defining characteristic of the Naqshbandiyya proposed by earlier scholarship is that of "activism," usually in the political sense, thus we adopt that term as a shorthand for the purposes of brevity and also to remain in dialogue with preceding scholarship on the Naqshbandiyya. Yet this usage needs to be qualified, and we tend to prefer the term "societal engagement" instead, since this seems to be more representative of the actual phenomenon, rather than defining the lineage by a handful of high profile but unusual cases in unique and sometimes turbulent circumstances.

In his survey of political aspects of Naqshbandī history, Hamid Algar outlines five forms of political involvement that have been observed: 1.) giving counsel to rulers, whether welcome or not, as the most common expression, while far less common is 2.) direct rule by a *shaykh*. Algar also lists 3.) armed *jihād* in the face of non-Muslim rule, using the examples of Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd from our case study below, as well as against the Russians in Central Asia and Afghanistan, to which we might add against the US in Iraq. He also mentions 4.) a "distaste for Shi 'ism" finding "armed expression on the fringes of Iran," and 5.) Naqshbandīs themselves being persecuted, as "a kind of involuntary political involvement."[82] These forms of political engagement are at one far end of the spectrum. In the broader survey of Naqshbandī-related presence in the West, we will find organizations with Naqshbandī roots seeking to represent Muslim interests as mediators between Muslims and the state as well as even forming political parties. In our case study, however, we only find sparse examples of giving advice to rulers, being limited to a few statements made in Abdur Rashid's writings advising proponents of Western democracy to actually live up to the values of democracy themselves. It is far more common for us to find what we might call social activism, or better, as mentioned, societal engagement which in our case study lineage consists basically of spreading their mystical teachings and practices and in the case of Abdur Rashid, the work of his secular non-profit organization which we treat at some length at the end of part three.

It has been held that the Naqshbandī principle of *khalwat dar anjuman* ("solitude in the crowd") has been directly responsible for the political activism of certain figures in Naqshbandī history.[83] Yet

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[82] Hamid Algar, "Political Aspects of Naqshbandī History," in *Naqshbandis: Cheminements et situation actuelle d'un ordre mystique musulman, Historical Developments and Present Situation of a Muslim Mystical Order*, eds. Marc Gaborieau, Alexandre Popovic and Thierry Zarcone (Istanbul: Institut francais d'etudes anatoliennes d'Istanbul, 1990), 123-152, here 149-50.

[83] For example, on page one of his *The Naqshbandiyya*, Weismann argues that "Most consequential among these principles in the public arena was *khalwat dar anjuman* (solitude in the crowd), a paradox implying that the spiritual master should involve himself in the social and political affairs of his community." Elsewhere, he states, "the activist attitude which the principle of 'solitude in the crowd' entails necessitated alertness to prevailing social and political circumstances." Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 1 and 11.

this needs to be qualified and interrogated further. This principle involves being aware of God while also being in the world, thus any political activism might at best be seen as an indirect result of the second aspect of the principle, being in the world, but not dictated by the principle itself. Thus, societal engagement, rather than activism, seems to better reflect the original principle and how it has been manifested historically in the broader view and currently.

In concluding the discussion of the main analytical category of mysticism and the supplementary ones of orthodoxy and activism, we might consider how they form an interrelated nexus, one wherein there is mutual overlap, interaction, and influence. For the groups discussed in the contemporary survey that embrace Islam, their mystical theory and practice rest upon an Islamic foundation which determines the nature of their mysticism, not only shaping the mystical experience itself, but also defining the boundaries of acceptable practices leading to such encounter and interpretations thereof. In turn, the mystical experience is held to not only facilitate the interpretation of divine revelation for those who reach its highest levels but also, even for the novice, to reinforce one's faith and sincerity in and commitment to fulfilling its requirements in how one lives, a tie-in to activism. There is also a two-way relationship between mysticism and activism, with the personal transformation and shift in perspective that are believed to result from the mystical encounter acting as a driving force and facilitating factor behind activist efforts to benefit society. Likewise, we will sometimes see such activism being described as a form of mysticism itself, serving God's creatures to become closer to God Himself, though not as a replacement for one's prescribed practices and obligatory religious observances. Lastly, there is also a two-way relationship between activism and orthodoxy, as the activist efforts described seek to actualize in society the prescriptions of the faith, which in turn shapes the nature of the activism by determining right belief and action.

In the universalist groups described below, the orthodoxy portion of this triad remains but is replaced by something other than Islam. This may include a combination of personal conscience and convictions determined by societal norms as well as one's existing belief system, whether that be in a more traditional codified religion, such as Christianity or Hinduism, or more often than not, a less static individualized secular humanist morality informed by a fluid metaphysics drawn from among the wide range of available alternative spiritualities. Obviously, the latitude for personal choice is far greater among the universalists, and the Islamic Sufis would assert, so is the opportunity for the lower soul to seize control. Yet this is not to say that there is no room for individualism among the Islamic groups who travel along the broad road of the *sharīʻa*, but we see this at its widest among those that welcome non-Muslim practitioners.

Refining the Concept of the Mediating Shaykh

Before proceeding from the realm of theory to more concrete aspects of the methodology, while some of the posited shaping factors during this lineage's transfer to the West, like Islamic revivalist reform and modernism, and also the expectations and understandings of prospective students in the West, have already been well studied elsewhere, we should devote some attention to another shaping factor: the concept of the mediating *shaykh*, first proffered by Arthur F. Buehler.[84] What follows is a problematization, or better a refinement, and certainly not an entire rejection, of Buehler's notion of the mediating *shaykh*. It is an attempt to further refine and build upon the impressive foundation he laid. Buehler convincingly argued that, with the rise of the mediating *shaykh*, late 19th-century British India saw a decline in Naqshbandī training, with fewer and fewer *shaykh*s actually guiding students through a disciplined curriculum of contemplative exercises in favor of mass initiation of disciples, collective activities, and love of the *shaykh*. In our contemporary survey of Naqshbandī-related presence in the West below, one can detect a bifurcation that seems to confirm Buehler's typology, and indeed, to extend it to the present day and even suggest that a similar development took place in the Ottoman lands. Such is especially true in terms of mass public initiations versus individual private ones, high deference to and distance from the *shaykh* versus a less remote and more accessible teacher, and perhaps

[84] Arthur F. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998).

most importantly, a curriculum of individual spiritual practices versus collective activities. But there also seem to be less obvious indicators, such as whether Sirhindī's expanded ten-fold *laṭīfa*-model is used or more basic standard ones are employed, discussed below. Similarly, Hermansen's observations on different occasions also seem to affirm his model, noting a preference for community activities over individual spiritual training, and speculating that this may be a continuation of the same process Buehler describes.[85]

Yet there have been some critics of the theory of the mediating *shaykh*, for example, Kenneth Lizzio, whose fieldwork was in fact among the Afghan Sayfiyya, one of the lineage's with just such a curriculum, the very same one used as an example in *Sufi Heirs*, although Buehler notes that he did not find their "assembly line approach" to be resulting in "any significant ego transformation or ethical improvement."[86] First, Lizzio asserts that such a typology precludes the possibility of both types of *shaykh* existing during the same time period. Yet Buehler does not at all exclude this possibility, and instead points to an overall shift. Lizzio's second point, however, seems more useful, in saying that the typology prevents the possibility of a single *shaykh* being both a mediating and a directing *shaykh* at the same time.[87]

Another critic of the rubric of the mediating *shaykh* is Pnina Werbner, who it should be highlighted has done extensive field research on a community where the *shaykh* might comfortably fit into Buehler's criteria of a mediating one.[88] For one, she says that the idea ignores the process of waxing and waning of power, and how certain *shaykh*s ascend to greatness while others do not, as well-outlined in her *Pilgrims of Love*. Her other argument, coming from an opposite angle to Lizzio's, is that it ignores the different reasons a student may come to a particular *shaykh*.[89] The first point is quite reasonable and offers valuable insight. The second helps by highlighting the need to consider students' motives, but her using it to refute the notion of the mediating *shaykh* is problematic. If one went to a hardware store expecting to buy fruit and vegetables, that does not mean that the hardware store could also be considered a grocery store. Though that does not prevent the storekeeper from attempting to sell one a wrench while saying that it is a banana.

The concept of the mediating *shaykh* is concerned with what the *shaykh* has to offer rather than what the student is looking for. In contrast to Lizzio or Werbner, whose critiques focus on either the *shaykh* or the student, our problematization of the idea of the mediating *shaykh* approaches from an entirely different angle, focusing on both what it is each *shaykh* has to offer and what it is their students are looking for. This is not a combination of both positions, rather it is concerned with what wares are being offered. In seeking to refine the idea of the mediating *shaykh*, we first consider its historicity and then its objectivity.

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[85] Marcia Hermansen, "South Asian Sufism in America," in *South Asian Sufis: Devotion, Deviation, and Destiny*, eds. Clinton Bennett and Charles M. Ramsey (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 247-68, here 264. She also accepts the possibility of this idea in Marcia K. Hermansen, "Mystical Paths and Authoritative Knowledge: A Semiotic Approach to Sufi Cosmological Diagrams," *Journal of Religious Studies and Theology*, 12, no. 1 (1992): 52-77, here 63-67.

[86] Arthur F. Buehler, *Recognizing Sufism: Contemplation in the Islamic Tradition* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016), x.

[87] Kenneth Paul Lizzio "Saving Grace: Naqshbandi Spiritual Transmission in the Asian Subcontinent, 1928–1997" (PhD Dissertation, University of Arizona, 1998), 35-37.

[88] For instance, the detailed cosmo-psychological graphics in Werbner's *Pilgrims of Love* are not based on the teachings of the *shaykh* being studied, but on the understandings of a disciple, Hajji Karim, resulting from his own independent exploration of Mujaddidī texts. His yearning to know more was never reciprocated by his own teacher. Pnina Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love: The Anthropology of a Global Sufi Cult* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 183-212.

[89] Pnina Werbner, "Intimate Disciples in the Modern World: The Creation of Translocal Amity Among South Asian Sufis in Britain," in *Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam*, eds. Bruinessen, Martin Van., and Julia Day Howell (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 195-216, here 197-98.

The Maʿmūlāt Genre: Preservation of Pre-Modern Oral Tradition or Cutting Edge 19th-Century Spiritual Technology?

On historicity, the theory of the mediating *shaykh* puts a great deal of stock in an assumption that prior to the emergence of the *maʿmūlāt* genre in the late 18th to early 19th century, the intentions listed in them for *murāqaba* already existed and had previously been passed along through oral tradition.[90] The current researcher would argue that without existing textual evidence from periods earlier than the late 18th century, this assumption cannot be taken as a given. Without such evidence, we cannot assume that these were passed through oral tradition and we must also consider the possibility that the first *maʿmūlāt* texts to be produced marked the very emergence of this practice.[91] Such, however, would require a radical rethinking of the mediating *shaykh* theory. It would mean that the use of such a curriculum was an 18th/19th-century development that never fully caught on, but persists among a minority of groups today. This would effectively remove individual practice in the Naqshbandī sphere from the pedestal on which Buehler and others placed it, and relegate it to being in the shadows of the more numerous trends toward collective activity.

Such evidence would not even have to be a full outline of a curriculum, e.g., an earlier dated work, but it must in some way reference a curriculum itself and not the cosmological doctrines that such a curriculum is based on (since it is not at all intended here to deny that these are rooted in previous Sufi cosmology). For example, we are not talking about assessments by the *shaykh* telling students which aspect of the cosmology they have progressed to, as can be readily found in the *Maktūbāt*. Such instances do not constitute proof of the existence of a planned curriculum. Furthermore, references to an oral tradition which might be found in documents contemporary with or after the first *maʿmūlāt* texts, if such hypothetical references exist, would not constitute incontrovertible proof since such hypothetical statements could be used to provide an older pedigree to a newer practice. Instead, the burden of proof could be met, for instance, by statements such as in correspondence from teacher to student that reference such a system itself from the outside (rather than speaking in terms of its contents from the inside). What is meant by this is statements that occur regularly today in lineages that use such curricula, such as dealing with receiving one's next intention. But now we turn from reconsidering the historicity of the directing versus mediating dichotomy to rethinking its objectivity.

Can and Should We Assess for Charlatanry?

Underlying the idea of the mediating *shaykh* is an implied inferiority to the directing *shaykh*, and thus the ability and prerogative of the academic scholar to define and judge authentic from inauthentic expressions of Sufism. For some important background, Buehler's doctoral dissertation, the source of the idea of the mediating *shaykh* and the origin of *Sufi Heirs*, was supervised by Anne-Marie Schimmel. Her phenomenological approach has been criticized for treating some expressions of Sufism as not being authentically Sufi.[92] It seems that Buehler shares her perspective that it is possible for an

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[90] See Appendix One of Buehler, *Sufi Heirs*, 234-40. The idea of these texts preserving an oral tradition was also mentioned before Buehler in an endnote in Warren Edward Fusfeld, "The Shaping of Sufi Leadership in Delhi: The Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya, 1750–1920" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1981), 109, endnote 10.

[91] To drag out an old conspiracy theory mainstay, the standardized and graded levels of progression in some ways resemble those of high-degree speculative freemasonry. Perhaps the circle around Ghulām ʿAlī, with his rejectionist stance toward British hegemony, absorbed some of the colonizers' critique of Indians as backwards and irrational by creating a rational and systematized means for spiritual training based on Sirhindī's teachings but also using the colonizers' own methodical approach, taking inspiration from the initiatic degrees of freemasonry. This theory, however, is sheer speculation based on resemblances and possible exposure due to shared time and place. Nevertheless, it might be worth looking into.

[92] For instance, Klinkhammer notes that "Annemarie Schimmel, a student of Friedrich Heiler, […] had become convinced that the real face of Sufism was the universal phenomenon of mysticism. She defended this perspective to such an extent that along with other scholars, she criticized some developments of Sufism as being non-Sufi-like." Gritt Klinkhammer, "The Emergence of Transethnic Sufism in Germany: From Mysticism to Authenticity," in *Sufis in Western Society: Global Networking and Locality*, eds. Ron Greaves, Markus Dressler and Gritt Klinkhammer (London: Routledge, 2009), 130-47, here 134.

academic scholar to discern authenticity from charlatanry. What appears to be the crucial defining difference between the directing *shaykh* and the mediating *shaykh* for Buehler as described in *Sufi Heirs* is that the latter type are not involved in "the individual spiritual development of their disciples in the context of a rigorous spiritual discipline."[93] Important key terms here are "individual" and "discipline," the latter of which can be understood in this context as the individual "practices" assigned to a student by their *shaykh*, the same sense it is used in the present research. In his later 2016 work, *Recognizing Sufism*, Buehler much more boldly and overtly proffers a "litmus test" for discerning authentic Sufism, namely, "the existence of a transformative practice that facilitates ethical development and/or furthers taming of the ego."[94] Again, the key element of a "practice" is notable. The title of the section this quote is drawn from is "*Quality control: Which sufi teachers are authentic?*."[95]

With that in mind, we return to *Sufi Heirs*, in which Buehler paints a picture of an ideal time for the Naqshbandiyya, before the rise of the mediating *shaykh*s, when directing *shaykh*s guided their disciples by assigning practices that followed a clearly defined set of intentions, but that such guided spiritual training fell into disuse. Similar to this thesis, however, is the now outmoded view of some earlier scholarship that saw the development of the *ṭarīqa*s as the beginning of a period of decay that followed a supposed golden age. Both are decline models that look to an idealized period of authentic individual-oriented mysticism that descended into inauthentic popular forms of mysticism. For Arberry and Trimingham, authenticity centered around speculative or poetic textual expressions of intimate contact with the divine, whereas for Buehler, it centers around personal transformation through disciplined practice. Both theories may tell us as much about their originator's outlook, values and expectations as about the objects of study.

By his own account, Buehler was somewhat of a spiritual seeker himself, having read Carlos Castaneda and first been introduced to Sufism through the works of Idries Shah,[96] two things among others that the present researcher must also admit to. In various places, Buehler reports constant disappointment in his search for Naqshbandī *shaykh*s that were actually guiding students through the contemplative exercises. See, for instance, Buehler, *Recognizing Sufism*, x-xi. He also tells us that he was taught by Sayfurrahman and also by a student of Rasool.[97] In an email to the researcher, Buehler likened the researcher's finding Rasool's lineage (which is highly practice-oriented) to being like finding a needle in a haystack, and in one article Buehler lists Rasool as one of the few Naqshbandī *shaykh*s still teaching the practices. Throughout the literature on Sufism in the West, oft-noted is a tendency among spiritual seekers in the West to be in search of concrete practices, techniques of personal transformation. It seems that Buehler, coming from the same era and milieu, was indeed in search of such techniques or practices over a relationship of love with a charismatic *shaykh*. In *Recognizing Sufism*, the chapter on the topic of "transformative practice" primarily describes Mujaddidī *murāqaba* and Mawlawī *samā'*. In the preceding chapter on the student-teacher relationship, he emphasizes the *shaykh*'s guiding role, through assigning practices, in helping the student to transform their "ego-self," but he decries charisma as being more a disqualifier for being a *shaykh*, and at least not very helpful.[98] But just as the earlier decline model, rooted in a Protestant and modernist worldview, led to a focus on speculative treatises and poetry, which excluded from the spotlight important aspects of Sufism, like the *ṭarīqa*s; a view of Sufism as primarily techniques of personal transformation, which may be rooted in a worldview that is post-modern and shaped by alternative spirituality, can lead to an underemphasis and devaluing of other important facets of Sufism, like collective activities and love of the *shaykh*.

Being fully aware that current norms and standards in the academic study of religion do not allow for the kind of assessments of authenticity and efficacy of personal practices that he saw as important to make; Buehler, refusing to be caged by the scientific-materialistic paradigm, turned to transpersonal psychology, which itself is quite near to the HPM and the alternative spirituality scene in

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[93] Buehler, *Sufi Heirs*, 199.
[94] Buehler, *Recognizing Sufism*, 20.
[95] Idem 18-22.
[96] Idem 23-24.
[97] Idem x-xi.
[98] Idem 152.

the West, as we will mention in the last phase of the historical survey. He sought to expand the possibilities of research as attested to by his lecturing on transpersonal psychology at Wellington and how such new scholarly vistas permeate *Recognizing Sufism* as well as his articles, “Researching Sufism in the Twenty-first Century” and “The Twenty-first-century Study of Collective Effervescence.” His arguments do make a great deal of sense, *if* one is willing to step outside of the currently dominant scientific-materialistic paradigm.

The researcher would argue that we ought to consider the implications of expanding the scope of the scholar’s role to include assessing authentic spiritual teachers from charlatans. As scholars, it seems necessary not only to avoid imposing our own normative expectations of what Sufism should be, rather than examining what it is; but there is also a responsibility to be cognizant of the dangers and implications of reproducing and thus reifying, or even creating, internal Sufi polemics through our scholarship. But on the level of personal preferences, the researcher feels much the same way as Buehler with regard to mediating versus directing styles of *shaykh*s. But then again, he approaches Sufism from much the same religo-/spirituo-cultural context and background as Buehler seems to have, if their early reading lists’ both sharing Castaneda and Idries Shah is any indicator. The current reseacher’s MA thesis dealt primarily with the Haqqaniyya, and it was his own perception of what he then viewed as charlatanry, namely in the cases of likely deception (like appropriating Gurdjieff’s the enneagram) or flexibility in doctrine and practices to appeal to new audiences, as described above, and a strong emphasis on the personality of the *shaykh*, that led him fleeing from this lineage in search of an “authentic” one for his PhD topic. Echoing Buehler’s search, he was looking for one that was actually teaching the kind of *practices* Buehler had described. This same search for an authentic Mujaddidī lineage truly teaching the practices described in *Sufi Heirs* was encountered during the course of this research among Muslim seekers living in the West, who also happened to be avid readers of Buehler, thus attesting to how scholarship can affect its object of study.

But just for a moment, let us consider attempting to assess for authenticity and effectiveness. It may seem that the more systematized and organized approach of training through a planned and detailed curriculum of contemplative practices under the direct supervision of a *shaykh* would be more effective than a distant relationship, supplemented with a daily litany and weekly group *dhikr*. But how do we measure effectiveness, and is it in any way possible to assess this from a secular academic perspective if operating even anywhere closely to accepted standards of objectivity. Such reflection brings to light the researcher’s own biases in approaching the contemporary survey below. Perhaps he was initially not as charitable in using the same empathetic approach accorded to his case study, failing to seek to genuinely understand groups that fail to conform to his own personal values and expectations of what constitutes authenticity, and too harsh with certain issues like mass initiations, the use of deception and a willingness to adopt new practices and doctrines and present them as one’s own to appeal to new audiences.

We may ask, even if certain groups do not pursue a planned curriculum of meditative exercises under the guidance of a *shaykh*, does this make them less legitimate or effective in helping students reach the goal? Reconsidering here some of those features that the researcher found unpalatable to his own personal tastes and values, we might see, for instance, mass initiations in a more positive light as a way to reach more people with one’s message. The strategy may be, rather than personalized direct guidance under a *shaykh*, to build a larger mass organization of individuals who are all striving to become closer to God and to follow the *sunna*, thus fostering the same transformation sought by other approaches through guided practice, but achieved instead through fellowship among disciples all gathered under a single *shaykh*.

As for making major adaptations to appeal to a new audience, most any group has limitations as to what they are willing to change and how far. These limits differ depending on what is important to them, and the inseparability of Sufism and Islam is a hard line that the vast majority of groups in our survey would not even consider compromising. Adding a few bells and whistles to attract more followers may be viewed as acceptable for accomplishing the greater end. In a similar vein, with regard to the use of deception, we might look at these instances as cases of “fibbing,” of a *shaykh* giving audiences what they want, so they will want what he has to give them. After such reconsideration, when looking again at the video of a mass initiation cited in the contemporary survey below, and seeing the

deep sincerity and sublime expressions on the faces of many of those gathered, it seems difficult to deny they too are feeling drawn closer to God. During the course of this research, the researcher came to know an individual who was a disciple of one such lineage. The researcher struggled to reconcile his own pre-existing notions of this lineage with the clear sincerity and deep love and respect with which she spoke of her *shaykh*. From a secular academic perspective, however, we are not in a position to assess which styles of Sufi pedagogy are superior in terms of helping students tame their egos and achieve closeness to God. The researcher holds that such an assessment should be left to each individual to decide for themselves. We might turn here to a statement many Sufis have attributed to the Prophet: "There are as many paths to God as there are souls on the Earth."

All of that being said, we do not propose an alternative to the mediating *shaykh* and will instead continue to use Buehler's concept, but in the revised sense that it simply refers to a particular style of Sufi pedagogy and leadership. Sadly, Prof. Buehler passed from this world before the researcher could even really begin to process what he was saying and formulate such questions and concerns. Perhaps solutions could be found by a closer reading and engagement with the recommendations and ideas he proffers in *Recognizing Sufism* and his articles advocating 21st-century approaches to fieldwork and Sufi studies. Perhaps some of his students at the University of Wellington or elsewhere have already thought of answers and will be able to take up the banner, and carry his legacy in their own direction, as he seems to have done in his own way with Schimmel's.

Methodological Framework

The largely subjective nature of mysticism, the main object of inquiry, makes it more amenable to an interpretivistic over a positivistic research philosophy. Accordingly, the methodology for the present study adopts a two-pronged approach of textual analysis and ethnography to study the mystical teachings of Azad Rasool, Hamid Hasan, and Ahmed Abdur Rashid, supplemented by historiographical and contemporary surveys which provide the background and context against which the data collected from the former two primary methods can be analyzed in search of answers to the research questions.

Let us first turn to the framework to be used for studying the mysticism of Rasool and his two heirs. From the outset, there are a limited number of possibilities for approaching the study of mysticism. These include, inter alia, taking observed behavior, measured physiological responses, personal experiences of the researcher, or the words used by the mystics themselves as the particular object of inquiry. The final possibility mentioned, examining words to study mysticism, seems at present to be the most feasible and objective method, thus it takes primacy in the research design. The actual words we turn to are those used to describe mystical practices, experiences and objectives and/or the pedagogical terminology employed in imparting systems of mysticism. This approach is not to be confused with phenomenology, unless by that one means taking the insider perspective seriously and striving to understand its internal logic, rather it seeks to study the words that individual Sufi teachers use to describe asserted phenomena. Looking to words to comprehend mysticism, however, has been noted as an imperfect method both by researchers and by the mystics themselves because of the supposed inefficacy of words for describing mystical experience and related ideas.

In striving to employ these allegedly inadequate but necessary tools, Sufis have selected a set of these implements and developed them into a collection of linguistic devices, a Sufi lexicon wherein each word is a signifier pointing toward the signified rather than clearly demarcating it, a technical vocabulary which can be used to obliquely describe and discuss the ineffable. These words serve as containers for esoteric concepts which are held to defy expression in conventional terminology; or as Rūzbihān Baqlī (d. 1209) says, such words are "vessels for secrets"; thus making the technical lexicon a cabinet of containers for holding the seemingly hidden teachings of the order.[99] It is this very cabinet, that is the technical lexicon which will be the primary object of investigation for the case study. Yet some kind of framework is needed to delimit, focus, and guide our exploration.

To set the boundaries of the lexicon as it is to be examined, the primary sources consulted were the two main English-language books written by Rasool, namely *Turning Toward the Heart* and *The Search for Truth*, henceforth *TTH* and *SfT* respectively, as well as ethnographic observations and

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[99] Katz, *Mysticism and Language*, 19-20.

website content. Several close readings of these sources have helped to identify a set of key technical terms to produce an overview of the mysticism of the case study. So in order to outline the mysticism of Rasool as he presents it to an English-speaking audience, one finds what he seems to see as the essential components densely packed into two succinct statements he makes which, taken together, cover the gamut of our definition of mysticism, from the practices leading up to mystical experience, through the experience itself and finally to the things which are to come forth from such an experience, the very objectives of engaging in mysticism. The first excerpt to be presented here primarily covers what we might call "practices" (performed by student, *shaykh* or both) or aspects thereof. The terms *nisbat*, awakening the *laṭā'if*, and *INfB*, however, could all be considered as not only describing practices but might also be seen as denoting parts of the mystical experience itself and in the cases of *nisbat* and the *laṭā'if* (when awakened), these also deal with the objectives of practicing Sufism.

> […] spiritual training is given through spiritual attention/transmission [*tawajjuh*], spiritual affinity [*nisbat*] and the awakening of the subtle centers of consciousness [*laṭā'if*]. The teaching is given in accordance with the principle of "the end is included in the beginning" [*indirāj al-nihāyat fi'l-bidāyat*]. For this training, remembrance of God [*dhikr*], recitation of the blessings on the Prophet (S) and his family [*durūd*], meditation [*murāqaba*], awareness of the heart [*wuqūf-i qalbi*], and spiritual friendship [*nisbat* or *rābiṭa*] with the shaykh are obligatory.[100]

Both of Rasool's English-language books focus more on detailing practices in very precise language, rather than discussing at length the nature of mystical experience or its goals, thereby showing that these texts are didactic in nature, geared toward instructing his disciples with regard to their practical pursuit of Sufism rather than serving as philosophical treatises on speculative mysticism. Nevertheless, elsewhere in the same text, he does outline the major goals of his path:

> The goal of Sufism is the development of certain noble qualities such as the purification of the self [*tazkiyat al-nafs*], purification of the heart [*taṣfiyat al-qalb*], moral etiquette [*adab* or *akhlāq*], doing what is beautiful (*ihsan*), nearness to God [*ma'iyyat*], inner knowledge (*ma'rifat*), annihilation in God (*fana'*), and subsistence in God (*baqa'*). In short, the true purpose of Sufism is to transform the seeker into a highly humane and moral person by building the seeker's character through spiritual training.[101]

Within these two excerpts are contained essentially an overview of the practices taught by Rasool, his conceptualization of mystical experience, and the goals of pursuing his path. We see that such a concise summary is only made possible through the use of technical terms, each of which serves as a vessel to contain a great deal more meaning than is immediately discernible from each word alone. Thus the main effort of this research is the unpacking this cabinet of words to see what each drawer contains, as well as what may be kept in other containers within them, as well as containers within those containers and so on like a matryoshka doll. This task involves not only collecting and cataloging the contents of these drawers and containers, but also examining their place in the system as a whole and the interrelation of all of its constitutive elements.

Yet such an endeavor could quickly spiral out of control, becoming quite unwieldy in scope. In fact, any one of the terms found in either of the above two quotations could on its own serve as the sole topic of an entire dissertation.[102] Were we to choose only a single term (or even two or three), however, it would be impossible to satisfactorily answer the research questions, failing to account for and touch upon the various elements of the mystical experience described above, namely that leading up to the

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[100] *SfT* 49-50.
[101] Idem 43.
[102] Take for instance, how the heart (*qalb*), which is one of the ten *laṭā'if*, serves as the topic of Mehmet Yavuz Seker's *A Map of the Divine Subtle Faculty: The Concept of the Heart in the Works of Ghazali, Said Nursi, and Fethullah Gulen* (Clifton, NJ: Tughra Books, 2015).

mystical encounter, the encounter itself, and that which proceeds from the encounter. Therefore, we must narrow the scope only somewhat further to find a manageable balance between: a.) a high-resolution examination of just one or two terms that fails to answer our questions and b.) an attempt to examine all of them, which would either only allow for superficial coverage of each or would result in a gargantuan end product. Consequently, in order to trim the list, but not too much, we have identified six of these terms which Rasool not only employs especially often, but has even devoted separate sections or chapters to in both *TTH* and *SfT*. Moreover, these six terms; namely *tawajjuh*, *nisbat*, *laṭā'if*, *INfB*, *dhikr*, and *murāqaba*; all also have their own individual pages on the website of the School of Sufi Teaching (SOST), which Rasool founded and is discussed below. For the purposes of analysis, these are re-ordered and arranged into three categories: 1.) cosmology, both macro- and micro-, or to use a term coined by Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh, cosmo-psychology (*nisbat*, *laṭā'if*, and *INfB*),[103] 2.) practices performed by the students (*murāqaba* and *dhikr*), and 3.) the role of the *shaykh* and community of practitioners (*tawajjuh* and *nisbat*).

These categories emerged rather naturally during the preparatory stage of this research and later on it was discovered that several other researchers into related mystical lineages had adopted similar structures while covering some of the very same terminology as the present study, including one that sought to examine the transfer of another Mujaddidī line from a Muslim context to a Hindu one,[104] somewhat similar to our goal of examining a transfer from India to Euro-American contexts. While such independent origination may speak for the replicability and therefore validity of this sort of structure, the categories are not as clear-cut as it may seem and there is substantial interdependence and overlap among them. For instance, cosmology dictates much in terms of practice, so for instance, beginning the practice of *murāqaba* would be impossible without knowing at least the name and location in the body of the heart *laṭīfa,* the *qalb* which is two fingers-width below the nipple and inside the chest. Likewise, underlying the intention (*niyya*) which initiates the practice is the notion that there is a divine essence to which one's attention can be directed. Moreover, from an emic perspective, without the spiritual transmission (*tawajjuh*) from the *shaykh*, the entire undertaking would be futile.

In fact, as already alluded to, we might easily lump all of the six key terms into a discussion of practices, and indeed, out of the above two summary statements in *SfT*, all six of them are taken from the practice-oriented one. Therefore, one critique of this selection might be that it is biased toward practices. Yet such an angle of approach seems justifiable in light of Rasool's own highlighting of these particular terms, which is tied to his above noted orientation toward the practices, something that should become clear to the reader during our examination of his mysticism. Furthermore, while we will delve into different layers of meaning for each of these terms, and often terms within those terms and so forth, the terms themselves also serve as anchors, allowing us a kind of home base for our discussion as we, to give a fuller picture of Rasool's mysticism and that of his heirs, make brief excursions to related neighboring concepts within the same areas of cosmo-psychology, practices and role of the *shaykh* and community. For instance, practices like the recitation of blessings upon the Prophet (*durūd*), do not fall under the label of *dhikr*, yet we use our discussion of this term as both a springboard to and a place for situating our consideration of such other practices.

While the exploration of mysticism constitutes the core of our inquiry, the framework presented thus far is insufficient for answering those research questions that relate less directly to mystical experience. Accordingly, added to the beginning of the exploration of Rasool's mysticism is a section on institutional and biographical background, with special attention paid to personal spiritual search narratives, primarily pertaining to the *shaykh*, but also to his student base. Appended to the end, after the examination of his mysticism and with an eye toward answering the third and fourth main research

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[103] Asbury and Zarrabi-Zadeh, "Dynamics of Mystical Islam in the American Space."

[104] See, for instance, the tables of contents for Thomas Wolfgang Peter Dahnhardt, "Change and Continuity in Naqshbandi Sufism: A Mujaddidi Branch and its Hindu Environment" (PhD diss., SOAS, University of London, 1998), now published as *Change and Continuity in Indian Sūfīsm: A Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī Branch in the Hindu Environment* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2002); Antoon Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition* (London: Curzon, 1997); and lastly, without the cosmology and using "ritual" instead of "practice," Asfa Widiyanto, *Ritual and Leadership in the Subud Brotherhood and the Ṭarīqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya* (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2012).

questions, are two sections considering the nature of the relationship of his Sufi teachings to Islam as well as to active engagement in the world. The entire process is then repeated twice over, once for each of Rasool's two living heirs and their respective teachings and organizations, each part beginning with a biographical and institutional introduction leading into an examination of their mysticism through the categories of cosmo-psychology, practices, and role of the *shaykh* and community and proceeding to considering their relationship to Islam and positions toward social and/or political activism. While considering the mystical teachings of his heirs, the three categories of cosmo-psychology, practices, and the role of the *shaykh* and community provide the structure for each respective examination. While still using Rasool's six key terms as anchors to allow for a comparison of their teachings to their predecessor, a greater degree of latitude is also exercised so as to facilitate an understanding of each *shaykh* in his own right. Some terms appear more or less prominently, from one generation to the next, and sometimes new terms are introduced and others left out, often for very pertinent reasons, which will be discussed as we encounter such cases. But with the framework for our core examination in place, we now turn to the data sources and methods by which it will be achieved, namely textual analysis and ethnography. All materials, whether texts or ethnographic field data, such as notes and interview transcripts, were coded according to numerous subcategories that differed from one *shaykh* to another, but all fell within the main above described categories of mysticism (divided into cosmo-psychology, practices, and role of the *shaykh* and community), relationship to Islam, and position toward societal engagement. Descriptions and analysis of both textual and ethnographic data are interwoven together into one coherent narrative for each *shaykh* and community, but here we examine these methods separately, turning first to the textual sources and their analysis.

Textual Analysis

Since we are examining the teachings and organizations of three different *shaykh*s, there are three separate sets of primary source texts to be dealt with. These materials are only briefly outlined here, along with some observations concerning methodological problems, but described in greater detail in the respective sections for each *shaykh*. This is due to how their very nature often provides insights into institutional structures, modes of dissemination, and the role of the *shaykh* that are salient to the discussions below. As the nature and especially the number of these texts is often quite different, very different approaches are called for, ranging from exhaustive exploration of a few sparse available sources, as was the case for Hamid Hasan, to a more cursory examination of a significantly larger number of texts that percentage-wise account for only a miniscule sampling of a massive corpus, as was the case for Abdur Rashid. Such difference is one factor in accounting for the notable size disparity between the sections on these *shaykh*s, Abdur Rashid's section being the longest, Hamid Hasan's the shortest and Rasool's falling somewhere in between.

But before going further, we should pause for just a moment to consider why the center of our discussion has evolved from "words" to "*shaykh*s." In each generation, the *shaykh* is the key determining factor and agent in defining the lineage in his or her time and place, thus it is how he or she uses those words that most concerns us here, hence they and their texts will occupy our greatest attention. William Rory Dickson, in his study of *Living Sufism in North America*, similarly focuses on the spiritual guide, since it is he or she that "makes critical decisions on how to teach Sufism: which elements of the tradition to maintain and which to adapt in a new context. The *shaykh* is the nexus where history, lineage, and students come together […]."[105] Thus we turn to the range of textual materials clustered into three groups around Rasool and his two heirs.

Beginning with Rasool himself, we rely primarily on his two main English works,[106] the first of which is *TTH*, a collection of edited questions and answers between the *shaykh* and his students in

[105] Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 3.
[106] In English, he has also published a selection of *sūrah*'s entitled *Thirty-Three Verses of the Holy Qur'an* and an edition of *Ḥizb al-Baḥr* ("Litany of the Sea"), a popular litany across the Muslim world that is attributed to the

the West. The second work, *SfT*, has a more complex structure and diverse range of content. It was prepared during Rasool's lifetime but published posthumously in 2010 under the oversight of Hamid Hasan. First and foremost, it is an English translation of the Urdu biography that he wrote of his own teacher, Muḥammad Sa'īd Khān (d. 1976). It includes an account of the latter's life, notes of him answering student's questions that were amassed over the more than a quarter of a century that Rasool spent accompanying him, a collection of his writings, and a sampling of his letters. Still, more than this, it also includes Rasool's own autobiography and spiritual search narrative as well as technical explanations of Sufi terminology and methods, an explanation of how those methods were introduced to the West, including how they were adapted to allow non-Muslims to begin the practices, and a copy of the 1975 proposal for the Institute of Search for Truth (IST), which was established to accomplish that very mission, an accomplishment that Rasool, perhaps too humbly, gives full credit to his teacher for. The idea of establishing IST to attract and allow Western spiritual seekers to begin Sufi practice was Rasool's. While Sa'īd Khān, just months before his passing, approved the plan, its mission was to be carried out by Rasool himself.

The composite nature of *SfT*, however, presents some unique challenges to the analytical process, particularly in the attribution of content to Rasool versus to Sa'īd Khān. The second chapter, which delves a great deal into technical terminology, is the main case in point: Unlike most other sections of the book, where it is fairly clear whether the text was written by Rasool or derives from his notes of Sa'īd Khān's responses to questions or translations of the latter's writings and letters, the authorship of most of this chapter is unclear. While it opens with a series of short segments presenting Quran and *ḥadīth* citations that, due to their separation and the absence of a running narrative between them, suggest a collection of notes, likely taken from different occasions of Rasool listening to Sa'īd Khān; these segments are preceded by an introduction and are referred to collectively afterwards. In at least one other part, original authorship can be unambiguously attributed to Rasool, since he makes mention of "the teaching that Hazrat [Sa'īd Khān] received from Hazrat Hafiz Ḥāmid Ḥasan 'Alawī (r) […]." Incidentally this is the same sentence which this study relies on for a summary of the spiritual training passed on by Rasool. Nevertheless, whether the individual sentences or paragraphs originated with Rasool or with Sa'īd Khān, they are in a book authored by Rasool and they now form a part of his presentation of his lineage to the West and to the world internationally, and as mentioned in the editors' preface to *SfT*, he tailored this translation of his early work in Urdu with special attention to a Western audience.[107] Similarly, *TTH* was authored by Rasool and compiled with the aid of Abdur Rashid. Therefore, it is difficult to know if any particular content derived originally from Rasool or was inserted by Abdur Rashid and then approved by Rasool for inclusion. Again, however, the work was published under Rasool's name and unless there is good reason to believe otherwise, content will be treated as his own.

TTH and *SfT* are supplemented with reports about Rasool and his teachings by both Hamid Hasan and Abdur Rashid[108] along with several of Rasool's senior students, including from the UK, Germany, and India. Additionally, Hamid Hasan graciously allowed the researcher to examine two PDF documents detailing the daily practices and complete curriculum of the Mujaddidiyya as taught by Rasool. Similarly, Abdur Rashid very kindly provided several audio recordings (with accompanying transcriptions) of Rasool answering students' questions while visiting the World Community in the 1990s. Yet another source for examining Rasool's teachings is a work that Abdur Rashid published,

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Shādhiliyya founder, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 1258), and consists of various Quranic verses and supplicatory prayers (*du'ā'*). Rasool has furthermore authored biographies in Urdu of his own *shaykh*, Muḥammad Sa'īd Khān, and the two preceding links in the *silsila* before him, Ḥāmid Ḥasan 'Alawī and Sayyid 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh.

[107] *SfT* xvi.

[108] When listing both of these heirs together, the sequence of their listing is determined by the order of their appearance in this study rather than any sort of ranking priority. There is the argument that Abdur Rashid received his *ijāza* first, having been made Rasool's *khalīfa* in 1984, and thus has seniority, but on the other hand, there is the report from a senior SOST member in the UK that a few years prior to his death in 2006, Rasool announced that Hamid Hasan would be his successor, including assuming leadership of SOST and IST. The issue of ranking was not a major topic during the research, as each heir has his own mission, approach, and base of students and the two branches of this lineage operate entirely independent of one another. Thus, the issue of ranking is not dealt with here.

first in 1989 and again in 2015, entitled *A Guide to Modern Sufi Teaching: Questions and Answers for the Sincere Seekers*, henceforth *GMST*. It again consists of questions and answers with students at the World Community, probably during the 1980s, and based on the content, it seems to have been a precursor to or even an earlier version of *TTH*.

The literature used by SOST presently under the leadership of Hamid Hasan mostly consists of the two abovementioned books by Rasool, primarily *TTH*, which are already treated in the section on Rasool. Thus, the materials consulted for our examination of SOST today include the main official website, SufiSchool.org, yet the content draws mainly from these two sources, and regional websites, which by and large reproduce much of the same material from the main website, though often translated into local languages. Also consulted, however, are PDF documents used to impart the teachings via email as well as a short series of online videos of questions and answers with Hasan, lasting mostly between just one and a half to three minutes each. Relying on these materials alone, it would seem that at this stage, there is not much new to be said. After all, a report of "no change" is still a report. While a valid comment, things are not quite that simple, and in addition to these sources, the section on Hasan and SOST currently relies most significantly on fieldwork described below. Additionally, an unpublished recording of Hasan speaking at an interfaith dialogue event held in conjunction with SOST's 2017 retreat in Poland has provided further insight into his own thought.

Conversely, Abdur Rashid offers an overwhelming abundance of texts, including over 5,000 hours of recorded lectures. A significant number of these have been transcribed and published in pamphlet form and the remainder can be accessed online as audio or video files. This amount continued to grow, throughout the course of this research and beyond, by around four hours every week as new sermons were recorded and posted. Abdur Rashid has also published two books that were used extensively in the research: *Applied Sufism: Classical Teachings for the Contemporary Seeker* and *Islam and Democracy: A Foundation for Ending Extremism and Preventing Conflict*, the latter having been published under his birth name of J.E. Rash. Chapters and articles he contributed to edited books and journals were also consulted as well as printed brochures and the websites for the Circle Group, Legacy International, and the World Community Education Center (WCEC). A video recording of a talk he gave as the President of Legacy as well as the script of a lecture he prepared for a Sufi conference in Morocco proved especially helpful. So while the texts consulted for Rasool and Hasan are all geared toward their Sufi students and prospective students, with the exception of the audio recording of the latter at an interfaith dialogue event, in the texts examined for Abdur Rashid, the audience sometimes varies widely. In most of the texts consulted, he is addressing his own student base, yet in some he is speaking to participants at Legacy events, parents of potential students of the WCEC, non-Sufi Muslims visiting the World Community's mosque, a local church congregation as a part of an interfaith dialogue event, or a gathering of Sufi *shaykh*s and practitioners of different lineages. This adds complexity to the hermeneutic task but provides interesting examples of how he adapts quite similar topics to varied audiences.

Moreover, obviously not all of his lectures, or even a modest percentage thereof, could be consulted, let alone fully examined for this research. A further difficulty was that his teachings are constantly evolving and in flux, and even though he may revisit the same topic multiple times with common threads throughout, with each iteration there tends to be something new, a process that has been taking place over decades. Earlier drafts of the present volume focused on his two published books, supplemented with just a few of his lectures available online. Yet over the course of four visits to the World Community from January 2017 to June 2019, this small sampling expanded considerably in dialogue with Abdur Rashid himself. Additions were either located by the researcher or provided by Abdur Rashid, the selection criteria being driven by 1.) a search for lectures addressing the six key terms identified in Rasool's works as well as 2.) words and topics that came up time and again in interviews with Abdur Rashid as well as in his work *Applied Sufism*. Additionally, pertaining to the timeframe, most of the lectures consulted date from within the last ten years, a limit which developed rather organically but which allows us some view onto his most recent teachings.

Proceeding now to some general notes on the analysis of these texts, in order to understand any form of mysticism, some degree of epoché is required. We have to be able to enter into it and immerse ourselves in it, stepping inside its internal logic while suspending our disbelief and bracketing out our

own skepticism about the veracity of any claims. But then we must also be able to step outside again, to see it in its broader historical, social, cultural, and political contexts. In striving to do both, while approaching each of these three sets of texts and making rounds through the hermeneutic circle,[109] this study seeks to strike a balance between the perspective of the wholly accepting theologian and the cynically skeptical academic scholar. As part of this, the researcher will adopt a position of methodological agnosticism.[110] Thus sometimes, to avoid excessive and cumbersome use of such phrases as "according to" or "in the view of," these are omitted, which might even make it seem as though the researcher himself is making theological assertions. This is not the case. The goal is not to advocate or in any way evaluate the veracity of the claims, but rather to more fully understand and describe those claims and then to compare, contrast, and contextualize them.

This study therefore seeks to combine a hermeneutic of suspicion[111] with an empathetic reading of the texts. It has to be recognized, however, that as with empathy, suspicion is a form of bias, and while it is indeed a powerful tool for penetrating through façades to reveal ulterior motives and latent hidden meanings and functions, a purely adversarial stance will fail to apprehend the very object of this study. For that matter, a hostile position is unlikely to yield much useful in understanding any form of mysticism as mysticism, rather than solely as societally-embedded people and institutions with interests and objectives. Each of these two complimentary angles of approach may be more or less appropriate for effectively answering particular research questions. For example, the first question posed by this research, on the mysticism of Rasool and his heirs, largely but certainly not exclusively demands an inside perspective, while the second, pertaining to its introduction to the West, benefits from a much greater degree of reflection from the outside. Nevertheless, both angles are necessary for fully answering each of the stated research questions. On a similar note, in the interest of space, both description and analysis, including contextualizing as well as comparing and contrasting each *shaykh* with his predecessors and peers, will take place within each section. Thus answers to the research questions will be sought along the way rather than having separate sections devoted to description and then to analysis. But returning to the combination of empathetic "listening" and skeptical inquiry, this also applies to the approach to, and analysis of data gathered from, ethnographic fieldwork, the second prong of the research design and the topic to which we now turn.

Ethnography

Much like how the assortment of texts outlined above vary dramatically in their characteristics, the opportunities for ethnography likewise varied significantly and thus required a high degree of flexibility and adaptability. Accordingly, there are several features of this field research that made use of emerging sub-methodologies within ethnography, namely multi-sited ethnography, virtual ethnography, and autoethnography. Each of these could, on its own, serve as the dominant methodology within a given research design, yet here none of these tower over any of the others. Rather, each served as a tool for seizing upon particular opportunities or getting at certain types of data. But before dealing further with these sub-methodologies, some considerations pertaining to the field research in general will now be addressed. First, what is meant by fieldwork here is not the kind of long-term venture described in introductory university courses in Anthropology, such as Napoleon Chagnon's work in the Amazon Rainforest among the Yanomami or that of Marjorie Shostak in the Kalahari Desert among the !Kung San. Instead, we are speaking of a kind of ethnographic fieldwork that is much more common to the field of Religious Studies, wherein rather than attempting to describe various aspects of an entire culture, the scope is limited to one particular aspect of religious life, here mysticism, and instead of long-term cohabitation with the studied community, the participant observation consisted of attending

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[109] For an introduction to hermeneutics in the study of religion, see Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, "Hermeneutics," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 275-284.

[110] Douglas V. Porpora, "Methodological Atheism, Methodological Agnosticism and Religious Experience," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 36, no. 1 (April 2006): 57-75.

[111] Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, transl. Denis Savage (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 32-34.

a series of specific events,[112] that ranged from five days to just an hour or two in length. It also took place largely among people of very similar cultural backgrounds to the researcher and in places that are far more familiar to him, with the one significant exception of Hyderabad.

Pertaining to research ethics, specifically disclosure and informed consent, save for one unique instance, the identity of the researcher as a researcher was made clear to the researched communities and individuals up front and at the very outset of every first contact. The one exception to this was Hamid Hasan and the SOST group in Germany, since the first contact took place through an email inquiring about their meditation practice in September of 2014, just two weeks after the researcher had submitted his MA thesis, a comparative analysis of the *chakra*s in Sivananda Saraswati's Yoga and the *laṭā'if* among the Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya, and was still entirely undecided on the topic for his doctoral dissertation but was actively exploring all suitable options. The researcher's desire to study this lineage arose after having had some initial exposure to SOST as well as reading Rasool's *TTH* and *SfT*. He then drafted a proposal, the topic was approved by his doctoral supervisor in January of 2015, and the task of requesting access as a researcher, rather than just a curious inquirer, was undertaken in February 2015, approaching first the senior German group leader and through him the *shaykh*, Hamid Hasan, as gatekeepers to the community itself. For the Circle Group, after reading *Applied Sufism*, *Islam and Democracy*, and several lectures posted publicly online, direct email contact in which the researcher was immediately identified as such was made in December of 2016, first through one staff member and then with Abdur Rashid himself, followed by further introductions to the members of his community. All other interactions, namely for the purpose of developing the broader survey of Naqshbandī-related presence in the West, similarly began with an introduction of the researcher as a researcher. Anonymity of informants was maintained as far as was possible, except in the cases of public personalities, such as the two living *shaykh*s or students who published works of their own that are referred to. Senior students and group leaders of particular regions are not identified by name, but unavoidably they would be recognized by position among members of their respective groups.

Returning to the research itself, ethnographic aspects pursued the same line of inquiry as that of textual analysis: namely mysticism through the three categories of cosmo-psychology, practices, and the role of the *shaykh* and community, alongside the relationship to Islam and societal engagement. As with the textual analysis described above, and for the same stated reasons, our greatest area of focus lay on the personalities and teachings of each respective *shaykh*, particularly how they use the identified lexicon, complimented by a supplementary interest in the communities made up of the practitioners of such teachings. Thus, the ethnography serves a kind of supporting role to deepen our understanding of the texts and to better understand how they are lived. Indeed, one of the main benefits of ethnography in the study of religion is its ability to delve into how religion is actually lived *vis-à-vis* how it ought to be lived according to the normative texts produced by its leaders. But many will no doubt see the present study's reliance on texts and the related focus on the *shaykh* and his teachings as a lost opportunity. Alexander Knysh, for example, has lamented how a strong text-orientation at the expense of observed field data, even in ethnographic studies on Sufism, has helped to cement an understanding in the West of Sufism as primarily "a treasure trove of wisdom, be it poetic, spiritual, didactic, or metaphysical, rather than a rigorous, regimented discipline, self-imposed deprivation, submission to the vagaries of the will of the master, routine pedagogical and ritual activities and so on." He notes how the latter overshadowed "quotidian aspects […] do not resonate with the tastes and expectations of Western audiences,"[113] something Rasool also struggled with as we will see below.

But while Knysh's argument is convincing, there are also some compelling reasons behind the choice in the present study to focus on the *shaykh*s and thus also largely their texts. In addition to how, as argued above, it is the *shaykh* who defines the lineage in each generation, we also have 1.) the

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[112] For an introduction to field research in Religious Studies, see Graham Harvey, "Field Research: Participant Observation," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, 217-244.
[113] Alexander Knysh, "Definitions of Sufism as a Meeting Place of Eastern and Western 'Creative Imaginations'," in *Sufism East and West: Mystical Islam and Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Modern World*, eds. Jamal Malik and Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 53-75, here 59-62.

significant percentage of individuals who are new to the practices and often to Islam among SOST in Germany, 2.) the distinctively inward and contemplative nature of their practices, which greatly limit what can be gleaned from observing external acts, combined with the inappropriateness of invasive in-depth interviews in this particular setting, and 3.) the comparatively brief character, due to resource limitations, of the trips to the World Community in which most of the time was spent in conversation with the *shaykh* himself. Points two and three are discussed further below in the sections on autoethnography and multi-sited ethnography respectively, but on newness to Sufism and Islam, we draw a parallel from personal experience.

At meetings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that the researcher attended in his childhood and adolescence in the small town of his birthplace in the largely non-Mormon North Carolina, recent converts were sometimes assigned to give a talk or would stand to bear their testimony. In doing so, they might use terminology like being "saved" or otherwise make statements drawing not from official church doctrine, but rather from that of their own previous denomination. This not only produced a kind of temporary and transitional syncretic blend of Mormonism and evangelical Christianity, but more than that they were interpreting their newly embraced beliefs and practices "through an existing reference system." [114] This did not represent some kind of broader trend in the direction of Mormonism in the southeastern US, rather it was a reflection of the process of conversion in which older beliefs are modified or replaced over time.

Thus, studying a community like SOST in Germany, with many who are new to both Sufism and Islam, seems like the wrong setting for comparing textual ideals to lived religion, though it might be ideal if our sole focus were processes of conversion. Originally, the researcher did have the idea of examining how individual practitioners' experiences and interpretations of the terminology compare to the original texts, via personal accounts from in-depth interviews, but ultimately in this context, it was felt to be too invasive and probing, and could be seen as testing them to see if they got it "right," right being measured by how closely their understandings match those of the *shaykh* as found in his texts as well as of thinkers from Muslim-majority contexts. So this choice was also driven by ethical implications, in that if we focus on the differences between texts and how they are understood and lived by practitioners in such a setting, then this could easily be construed as pointing out how the latter got it wrong and could thus be embarrassing and hurtful. But if one is especially interested in how Rasool's students in the West have received his teachings, then a comprehensive case study is provided below of an American student who was made a *shaykh* himself, namely Abdur Rashid. Yet all is not lost for those who, like Knysh, call for a greater balance between text and lived religion in Sufi studies. While here there is still a heavy reliance on texts, this study's consideration of the lived aspects of Sufism does indeed bring the "practical, quotidian and routine" out of the shade and into the light.

Multi-Sited Ethnography

Due to the international scope of Rasool's efforts to spread his Sufi teachings and the fact that two organizations today led by two different *shaykh*s are being studied, along with the continuing international mission of SOST, the field research for this study has taken place on three continents: Europe, North America, and Asia. Pertaining to SOST, opportunities for such multi-sited ethnographic research[115] were mostly determined by specific events taking place at different locations within Germany along with one in India. In contrast, there was only one location for fieldwork with the Circle Group, namely the World Community in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the US, and the dates for visits there were largely driven by the availability of the *shaykh* for interviews. The content of such ethnographic research is detailed below in the two communities' respective sections, but here we outline the different occasions in which participant observation and interviews took place, turning first to SOST.

While to be sure, there are some connections between SOST members outside of officially scheduled events, they only constitute a distinct and observable community at annual retreats and

[114] For some brief reflections on the complexities of the process of conversion, see the introductory paragraphs to *ISA*, "Excursus: Conversion and Mission," 182-83.

[115] On multi-sited ethnography, see George E. Marcus, "Ethnography In/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 95-117.

weekly meetings. Accordingly, the main events attended by the researcher consisted of four annual retreats that took place at two different venues in Bavaria from 2015 to 2018. These lasted between three to five days in length and were held in September or October of each year. In between these, the researcher periodically attended weekly meetings, primarily taking place in Munich but that were also held in Nuremburg and Regensburg. Since group members are also scattered in different areas of Germany, supplemental to these were weekly meetings of remotely synchronized meditation over WhatsApp. In addition to these regularly scheduled events, the researcher also attended a book reading by Hamid Hasan in Munich for the release of *Sich dem Herzen zuwenden*, the German translation of *TTH*, which immediately preceded the first annual SOST retreat in Germany. This brings us to an important point: under Rasool, SOST established branches in a number of places outside South Asia, including the US, UK, Australia, and New Zealand, and while there were already a handful German students who had been involved with SOST for several years, the beginning of this research quite happenstantially coincided with the beginning of SOST's active expansion into Germany. Thus, we are witness to a unique phenomenon, the genesis and growth of the German SOST group, and on top of that, under the leadership and direction of the new *shaykh*, Hamid Hasan.

To provide some contrast between SOST in a European setting as compared with this lineage's original Indian context, the researcher made a brief field excursion in August of 2016 to India, where he took part in a five-day retreat held in Hyderabad. So the field research on SOST all took place in different locations within Germany, particularly Bavaria, complimented by one excursion to India. Hence, any attempts at a Geertzian-style "thick description"[116] of SOST events will only apply to either the German or Indian contexts. Such an imbalance, however, is unavoidable to some degree or another in any scholastic undertaking which seeks to examine a phenomenon that spans across continents, even in studies with the most abundant time and resource availability. This study, particularly the section on SOST, would have greatly benefitted from further field excursions such as to annual retreats or even just the regular meetings held in relatively nearby London, Scotland, Poland, or Russia or to one of the international retreats held in places like Jerusalem and Bukhara. Unfortunately, however, this was not feasible with the resources available. Nevertheless, this was somewhat made up for by second-hand reports of a number of attendees at retreats in Germany who had either visited such retreats or were even members of those groups, especially the London group. This leads us to the topic of interviews, which took place primarily at retreats and were mostly informal, but sometimes semi-structured in nature.

In the beginning, the researcher prepared a detailed list of questions intended for the *shaykh* and senior students, which turned out to include the group leaders for London, Germany, and Hyderabad as well as a number of others who had been engaged in the practices for several years, and who oftentimes had started under Rasool. These questions were mostly geared toward refining the researcher's understanding of the content of Rasool's two works as well as of the history, structure, and activities of SOST, though a clearer picture of this organization under Hasan in particular would gradually begin to emerge. As the researcher wrote more and more of the dissertation and attended further retreats and group meetings, new questions arose and new lists were generated. In an attempt to be as unobtrusive and non-invasive as possible, like a fly on the wall so to speak, he carried these lists around with him, seizing upon opportunities to ask these key individuals as they presented themselves, such as before or after meditation sessions, during meals, while having tea or taking a walk, during his scheduled private meeting that each participant has with the *shaykh*, at classes for new students, or while waiting for transportation.

While the *shaykh* was quite forthcoming and candid in answering all questions presented to him, and also brief and to the point as is his usual style, the greatest number of opportunities for discussing and having questions answered was among senior students. In one case outside of officially scheduled events, the researcher had the chance to meet with the leader of the New Zealand group who is also one out of the three most senior British students (the other two leading the London and Scotland

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[116] Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3–34.

groups respectively) that joined under Rasool shortly after the founding of IST and were instrumental in the order's expansion into Europe, particularly the UK. He happened to be in Munich as a contributor to an art exhibition curated by the German group leader and was kind enough to meet with the researcher for a semi-structured interview over dinner. Discussions also of course took place with newer participants, which proved useful in understanding the demographics and backgrounds of those drawn to SOST, though as mentioned above, they were in no way "tested" on their knowledge or understanding of the contents of Rasool's works.

The fieldwork that took place at the World Community was of an entirely different character than that among SOST, not only in that there was now just one location to visit, but also especially with regard to a dramatic reversal in the ratio of participant observation of events to interviews with people, with the latter coming predominate in the case of the Circle Group. This is probably in some part due not only to the researcher's primary location in Germany, but even more so to differences in the manner that the researcher's relationship with the two communities began and developed. With SOST, he began as a curious inquirer about Sufi meditation who then asked for access as a researcher, whereas with the Circle Group, he was first a researcher about whom it was later discovered was also practicing Sufi meditation, and within the same lineage at that. Also, considering how fieldwork with SOST began almost two years before that for the Circle Group, one might also look to an increasing confidence, decreasing timidity, and a clearer picture of the research goals (though still developing) on the part of the researcher as he gained more knowledge and experience. But there is certainly more to why participant observation predominated in the fieldwork with SOST, while interviews prevailed in the research among the Circle Group, such as Hasan's emphasis on practices over discussing Sufi concepts intellectually compared with Abdur Rashid's extensive use of lectures alongside the practices. The latter approach provided a lot more to talk about, as did Abdur Rashid's emphasis on practically applying the results of their Sufi practices through positive societal engagement, such as through the work of their secular non-profit organization, Legacy International.

Altogether, the researcher travelled four times to the World Community from 2017 to 2019, during which time a total of over twenty-two hours of audio-recorded interview with Abdur Rashid was taken, not counting notes from conversations with him that were not recorded. In addition to the *shaykh* himself, the researcher was able to have informal interviews and discussions with a number of his students who, in contrast to the experience in Germany, had nearly all been with the community for decades, sometimes even approaching half a century, having joined prior to their encounter with Rasool and Sufism. The researcher was also able to speak with several employees of Legacy, including some who were also students of Abdur Rashid and others who were not. In between such interviews and discussions were various opportunities for participant observation at specific events, whether involving the Circle Group or Legacy International.

Provided now is a general sketch of what transpired over these four visits. Although these lasted only one to two days each, they tended to be densely packed with interviews, meetings, and events (some of which are highlighted below), and were prepared for and supplemented by numerous email exchanges with Abdur Rashid and different students of his leading up to and following such visits. For the first visit in January 2017, the researcher prepared a lengthy list of questions pertaining to the background of the *shaykh* and the community as well as with regard to his thought and teachings as found in *Applied Sufism*, *Islam and Democracy* and a small selection of his online lectures, especially as they pertain to mysticism and in comparison with the teachings of Rasool as found in *TTH* and *IST*. The researcher provided these questions to Abdur Rashid in advance and the lion's share of the time during this first visit was spent in the *shaykh*'s office conducting a semi-structured interview. Over the course of two days, he answered each and every question in detail, but while also stepping outside of the researcher's narrow list of questions to provide his own account, unfettered by the research design and its limiting scope. Encouraging the researcher to dig more deeply into his teachings, Abdur Rashid handed him stacks of printed pamphlets of his lectures, seemingly handing him what happened to be on hand rather than offering a carefully crafted self-presentation.

These interactions led the researcher, in a desire to tell a more complete and accurate story, to not only expand the inquiry well beyond Rasool's identified six key terms, but to also explore areas that his original research design would have not necessarily excluded, but certainly would have only touched upon superficially, such as Abdur Rashid's engagement with "new science" and the work of Legacy. During this first visit, the researcher also had the opportunity to attend prayers at the community's

mosque as well as a group meditation session, have dinner with a senior student and founding member of the World Community and former Vice-President of Legacy, and be given a tour of the grounds by another long-time student who was also one of the two sitting Vice-Presidents of Legacy, a tour that included visiting the World Community Education Center and which also focused extensively on the work, structure, and activities of Legacy. In the time between the first and second visits, the audio recordings were transcribed, coded, and then interwoven with the material covering the contents of Abdur Rashid's books and now numerous lectures for a first draft.

The second visit in August 2017 once again involved long hours in the *shaykh*'s office along with an entirely new set of questions. These were not provided in advance this time and they were driven in great part by the expanded topics the *shaykh* had brought up during the previous visit as well as by the contents of the pamphlets he had provided and to clarify certain points from the first interview. Yet since the first visit largely centered around his mysticism, discussions at the second focused a great deal more on getting at answers to the third and fourth research questions concerning "orthodoxy" and "activism," especially about Legacy. This iteration, the researcher also attended a group dinner where the community members assembled followed by a lecture given by the *shaykh*, along with having some time the following morning to wander freely about the World Community, engaging with those he encountered on the way and in the offices of Legacy. After the second day of the second interview, the researcher again walked away with still more pamphlets, also seemingly chosen by what was available at the time. Additionally, at the request of the *shaykh*, the World Community's archivist also provided him with a more carefully selected set of rough transcripts of recent lectures pertaining to topics that the researcher had asked about or that Abdur Rashid had brought up. Such exchanges continued throughout the remainder of the research. For a bit of reflexivity on how the observer might influence the observed, it was noted that after the first interview, the *shaykh* sometimes gave talks on subjects that the researcher mentioned he had not found much material to clarify, such as *fikr*, which he ended up giving an entire series on months later, and the practical side of the teachings, which were the subject of talks he gave at the Ramadan retreat the following year and included in a reader the archivist provide the researcher during that visit. While this may be purely chance, a dynamic of two-way influence cannot be discounted.

During the third visit in June 2018, the interview was geared more toward refining a number of points across the full range of the research design as well as getting important details that had been missed, such as a full description of the contents of their vocal *dhikr* ceremony. Significantly, however, by this point the researcher felt that sufficient trust had been developed to ask some more difficult probing questions from a less empathetic and even hostile perspective, playing the devil's advocate so to speak, particularly pertaining to the role of Legacy but also to the *shaykh*'s views on contemporary Islam and extremism.[117] During this visit, the researcher also joined Abdur Rashid, accompanied by a Legacy staff member who was not associated with the Circle Group, in an interfaith luncheon that he takes part in once a month with two other local religious leaders, a pastor and a rabbi, the latter of whom was unable to attend that day.

Leading up to the fourth visit in August 2019, the researcher sent a working draft of the full section on Abdur Rashid, the Circle Group, the World Community, and Legacy International (then totaling 186 pages) for their review and had received a copy back with comments in the margins of the first 50 pages (consisting of the summary and background sections). This meeting focused on discussing this draft and the comments as a form of respondent validation (see below). In addition to the *shaykh*, also present was a senior student, the other of the two sitting Vice-Presidents of Legacy who also served as the resident historian and had been reading the draft in detail. Another significant event during this visit was having lunch at the World Community's dining facility among a group of youth participants and chaperones from the Turkish embassy in one of the citizen exchange programs being administered by Legacy. The day concluded with the researcher attending one of the men's meetings wherein they offered supplicatory prayers for the benefit of the world and those in difficulty (women's meetings are

[117] For some of the results of this interaction, see the below sections "Ending Extremism" and "Is There a Hidden Agenda?"

also held) followed by observing one of the weekly collective vocal *dhikr* sessions with all of the members and then attending the evening group meal held prior to the *shaykh*'s lecture.

Thus we see two quite different types of fieldwork that, rather than trying to impose a uniform approach across the board, adapted to and took advantage of the opportunities that presented themselves in each context: 1.) among SOST in different locations within Germany and in Hyderabad, we find mostly participant observation at retreats and group meetings supplemented with mostly informal interviews, primarily with senior students and to a lesser extent the *shaykh*, whereas 2.) among the Circle Group in the US, we have extensive semi-structured interviews with the *shaykh*, and to a lesser extent his students, supplemented with participant observation at select key events. It should be noted, with regard to the weaving together of textual and ethnographic data and analysis, that since both groups descend from Rasool, ethnographic materials collected among both groups have informed not only their own respective sections but also, where appropriate, elements collected from one group or the other have been woven into the primarily textual section on Rasool. But now we proceed to two other more unique aspects of this fieldwork, namely virtual ethnography and autoethnography.

Virtual Ethnography

As already seen above with regard to the various websites listed among the primary sources, this research has used the Internet as an important source for collecting textual materials. In fact, in one instance a Facebook post from an individual that the researcher never met in person was used to inform part of the biographical account of Rasool. The researcher debated long with himself, carefully considering whether the information ought to be included or not. Afterall, if this information had been revealed in an interview in person or handwritten on an unidentified piece of parchment tucked away in an archive somewhere, would it not at least be worthy of mention? In the end, after evaluating against other verifiable data, the information seemed plausible and consistent with other known facts and additionally, the individual who posted it was known to Abdur Rashid, who could also verify his connection to Rasool. The data was thus deemed as possibly reliable and has been included below, with a cautionary note of course.

So in addition to being a source for texts, the internet has also been used more interactively as a supplemental means for conducting fieldwork, or what has been called "virtual ethnography," "online ethnography," and "netnography," among other innovative terms.[118] In the cases of both of the main studied communities, initial contact as well as introducing oneself as a researcher, requesting access, and much of the subsequent interaction were all conducted online, primarily through email but also later through WhatsApp. Moreover, the synchronic contemporary survey of Naqshbandī-related presence in the West would not have been possible without the Internet and the ability to network and interact via online forums like Maktabah.org and social media sites like Facebook.com and MeetUp.com, not to mention the kindness of those individuals who offered their feedback, assistance, and suggestions. In all instances, the researcher identified himself as such up front and made clear the nature of his research. However, two ethics-related issues did come up while using the internet as both a source of textual materials and as a means of conducting ethnography. First, several testimonials that provide spiritual search narrative accounts of students who joined under Rasool's leadership are posted on SOST's website. Given that these are anonymous, were provided willingly for promotional purposes, and thus there was no expectation of privacy, and are posted publicly online, they have been considered in the research. Still, an attempt has been made to deal with them tastefully so as to avoid causing any emotional distress.

Second, one opportunity that was briefly considered, but rejected in short order on ethical grounds, dealt with how MeetUp.com displays the interests and memberships in other groups of its users. Such information might be used in a quantitative statistical analysis to gain insight into the backgrounds of those expressing an interest in the group. Such information was after all semi-public, that is while behind a password wall, anyone could view the data by simply providing their email to

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[118] See, for instance, Daniel Domínguez, Anne Beaulieu, Adolfo Estalella, Edgar Gómez, Bernt Schnettler, and Rosie Read, "Virtual Ethnography," *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 8, no. 3 (2007): http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0703E19; R.V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online* (London: Sage Publications, 2010).

create an account. One might argue that under such conditions, one would have no reasonable expectation of privacy, yet a significant counterpoint is that we cannot assume that all of the users were fully aware of how MeetUp.com employs such user data, nor can we assume that all were equally savvy at controlling their privacy settings. While a few general observations concerning MeetUp.com and some of the recurring interests noted through normal usage of the website are mentioned below, the idea of a systematic qualitative analysis of all of the members seemed frighteningly invasive and "creepy" and was thus foregone.

Lastly, and as a brief related sidenote, beyond relying on the Internet as a source of material and a means for conducting ethnography, this study also examines how the Internet is used by the communities studied, such as in reaching a larger and more diverse audience, and even how it has been incorporated as a key part of traditional Sufi practices, such as with SOST participants' timing collective meditation over long distances via WhatsApp as well as receiving instructions for their spiritual practices in PDF documents via email or how the Circle Group has de-territorialized accompaniment (*ṣuḥbat*) with the *shaykh* via real-time telephonic and online conferencing platforms.

Autoethnography and Experiential investigation

In the initial stages of this research and on good recommendation, the researcher attempted to delve into speech act theory, through the works of J.L. Austin and John Searle,[119] as well as social performance theory,[120] yet these routes quickly proved unfeasible. The problem was that at the SOST meetings and retreats there were not a lot of speech acts going on; locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary, or otherwise; nor much else at all other than a room full of people sitting quietly with their eyes closed. As will be detailed extensively below, the practices of this lineage involve silent meditation and recitations, thus studying the verbal and performative aspects of their form of spiritual training would be rather uneventful for the outside observer, a bit like watching the grass grow. Now this is somewhat of an exaggeration, as surely there are some aspects involving speech and performance that could have been used, such as the pledging of *bay'a*, but in the case study lineage, this rare occurrence is a private event between the student and the *shaykh*, without fanfare or even the knowledge of other members of the group unless it happened to be brought up in conversation. Thus, the researcher is faced with a similar dilemma to that encountered by Gustavo A. Ludueña, who undertook fieldwork in Latin America among silent, contemplative monks. Ludueña's solution was to adopt aspects of their *habitus*, such as self-imposed silence and a regimen of prayer and reading, to provide him some window into what the monks were experiencing.[121]

Yet it is not only the silent nature of this lineage's practices that poses a problem, but also the very inner experiential nature of mysticism itself with its asserted ineffability. The words being studied here are considered by the practitioners themselves to be only signifiers rather than the signified, or to borrow a Buddhist metaphor, "fingers pointing at the moon," rather than the moon itself.[122] So how can such a study as this one actually approach seeing the moon itself, instead of being trapped in only examining the fingers that show where to look for it? In considering the challenges that the category of mysticism presents to historiography, Nile Green similarly notes that "if 'mysticism' as the essence of Sufism lies in transcendental private experience, then historians are inevitably condemned to recording only its trivial outward shells by way of texts, institutions and actions."[123] While acknowledging the

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[119] J.L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, 2nd Ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962); J. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).
[120] Jeffrey C. Alexander, Bernhard Giesen, and Jason L. Mast, eds., *Social Performance Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[121] Gustavo A. Ludueña, "Asceticism, Fieldwork and Technologies of the Self in Latin American Catholic Monasticism," in *Fieldwork in Religion* 1, no. 2 (2005): 145-164; cited in Harvey, "Field Research: Participant Observation."
[122] This metaphor is attributed to the Buddha in *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, a text used among Chan and Zen Buddhists. For a translation, see Charles Luk (trans.), *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra* (London: Rider, 1966), 59-60. I am grateful to Ken Gorman for pointing out this parallel.
[123] Green, *Sufism*, 3.

possibility of a phenomenological approach, as already noted, he prefers to abandon “mysticism” in favor of “tradition.” This study, however, involves living people and thus still allows for other options.

In his *Exploring Mysticism*, the Sanskritist Frits Staal examines “How Not to Study Mysticism,” dismissing in turn dogmatic, philological, historical, phenomenological, sociological, physiological, and psychological approaches as all being deficient.[124] He ultimately concludes, in the section “How to Study Mysticism,” that the study of mysticism should involve first-hand experiential investigation on the part of the researcher. As he states, “If mysticism is to be studied seriously, it should not merely be studied indirectly and from without, but also directly and from within.”[125] That is, according to Staal, the researcher should find a guru, or in our case a *shaykh*, and diligently and sincerely follow his instructions while bracketing out judgement, only later re-examining one’s experiences from an objective scholarly perspective. This later shift in perspective back from internal and subjective to external and objective is as important for Staal as the initial embarkation into the first-hand direct experience he speaks of. As he explains:

> The difference between a student of mysticism and a person in search of nirvāṇa, mokṣa, or salvation, lies here. While both have to share certain attitudes, the student has sooner or later to resume a critical outlook so that he can obtain understanding and make it available to others.[126]

As already mentioned, the researcher’s relationship with SOST began out of a personal curiosity to learn more about the *laṭā’if*, which he had just written a master’s thesis on with regard to another lineage. This occurred while also searching for a suitable topic for his doctoral dissertation, which he hoped would also have something to do with this unique concept. As part of this initial encounter, he had begun the first introductory meditative practice involving the heart subtle center that is assigned to all new SOST students. Thus, the ground was already set for first-hand experiential investigation. That is, the researcher, himself an agnostic non-Muslim, resolved to strive to temporarily suspend subjective judgement while sincerely attempting the meditative practices of this lineage under the guidance of Hasan, the current *shaykh* of SOST, on a daily basis throughout the duration of this research. What better way to see from the inside than to actually become an insider? To request permission to continue performing the practices with them, but while also as a researcher, he wrote to the senior German group leader, who in turn asked the *shaykh*. While the former admitted that he was skeptical about the idea, he explained that the *shaykh* thought that it would be good for someone who is carrying out academic research on Sufism to actually be engaging in it themselves.

There are certainly precedents to scholars of Sufism also being practitioners, notably Traditionalists like Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Martin Lings, and Titus Burkhardt, though they have not escaped critique. There are also even other studies of Sufism in the West wherein the researchers were actually initiated disciples in the communities being studied.[127] Likewise, numerous scholars of Western Esotericism, a field not so distant from Sufi studies as one might presume, are also full practitioners of the disciplines which they study, and Riffard has noted that while the “internal method” is a “tautology,” scholarly exploration is a “detour” which fails to fully apprehend the object of inquiry.[128] Arthur F. Buehler, the foremost scholar on Naqshbandī Mujaddidī contemplative practices and translator of many

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[124] Frits Staal, *Exploring Mysticism: A Methodological Essay* (Berkeley: University of California, 1975).
[125] Idem 123.
[126] Idem 130.
[127] Daphne Habibis was in fact not only a disciple, but also the wife of one of the two *shaykh*s studied for her dissertation, “A Comparative Study of the Workings of a Branch of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order in Lebanon and the UK” (PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 1985). For another case of the researcher having been initiated into the lineage studied, see Julianne Hazen, “Contemporary Islamic Sufism in America: The Philosophy and Practices of the Alami Ṭarīqa in Waterport, New York” (PhD Thesis, SOAS, University of London, 2011). Also see her article, “From the Balkans to America: The Alami Tariqa in Upstate New York,” in *Varieties of American Sufism: Islam, Sufi Orders and Authority in a Time of Transition*, eds. Elliot Bazzano and Marcia Hermansen (Albany: SUNY Press, 2020), 151-174.
[128] Pierre A. Riffard, “The Esoteric Method,” in *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion: Selected Papers Presented at the 17th Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, Mexico City, 1995*, ed. Antoine Faivre and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1998), 63-74, here 64.

of Sirhindī's letters, echoed these sentiments and called for a "twenty-first century" approach to the study of Sufism, one in which researchers seek first-hand experience of that which is being studied and even go so far as to employ the collected "post-rational" data in analysis.[129]

Approaching any form of mysticism, or indeed any field of human experience, from an exclusively external and positivistic perspective misses much of what is intended to be elucidated. Rejecting the possibility of incorporating the kind of experiential investigation proposed here would itself be a lack of objectivity, a decision to see only from a scientistic materialist paradigm, one which defies the principle of methodological agnosticism that this study seeks to abide by. In both the hermeneutic endeavor and in experiential investigation, one must temporarily set aside skeptical objections long enough to understand from within and to experience what it is like to perform mystical practices before then returning to examine the subject from a critical external perspective. We are not talking about anything more here than the kind of suspension of disbelief and engagement that one does when reading a book or watching a movie. Some hypothetical situations might highlight how odd it would be to attempt a study of other similarly subjective and experientally-oriented topics without ever having actually tried them, that is with no personal experience of the object of inquiry. Imagine a devout practicing Mormon writing a book for cigar aficionados, wine connoisseurs, or coffee snobs, or even more dramatically, a celibate renunciant writing a book about human sexuality. Personal experience shapes our ability to understand.

The intention of the current researcher to "try out" the practices and later reflect on his experiences in support of textual analysis does not quite reach the level proposed by Staal, in that here it is only one of many other supplemental and mutually supporting methods. It also differs from that proposed by Buehler, in that it does not seek to make use of post-rational data, a paradoxical thing which cannot even possibly exist. Nevertheless, this research is a step toward opening the door for such a radically different approach, which could challenge the established scientistic materialistic paradigm that leaves scholars of religion, and indeed the humanities at large, envious of the natural sciences and awkwardly grasping to imitate their methods, no matter how much their objects of study refuse to fit in such a confined space. In fact, we might do well to significantly expand our approach, considering the possibilities offered by the methodologies of other fields that also have much subjective content to be considered, such as literature, performing arts, and fine arts. Unfortunately, such avenues could not be explored for the present study.

Nevertheless, the current study has benefited from this modest attempt at experiential investigation in several ways, such as its providing a common ground with the practitioners, which facilitated and served as a basis for discussion, enhanced empathy of the researcher, and gained greater respect from and rapport with the studied community. But most importantly, it has provided the researcher insight from personal experience of the object of inquiry. The researcher has in fact become his own informant and is thus practicing a form of what has been called "autoethnography," which Ellis and Bochner have defined as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience."[130] Accordingly, a brief descriptive reflection on his own personal experiences over the course of this study are included in an appendix, but when helpful, such experience has informed and been incorporated within the systematic analysis of the teachings of Rasool and his two heirs, something that is most apparent with regard to *murāqaba*, the main practice performed by the researcher. This is not, however, to be understood as taking post-rational data as evidence.

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[129] Buehler, "Researching Sufism in the Twenty-first Century"; see also his "The Twenty-first-century Study of Collective Effervescence."

[130] Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner, "Autoethnography: An Overview," *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung /Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12, no. 1 (2011): http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1589/3095. See also Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000), 733–768. I am grateful to Angelika Böck for bringing autoethnography to my attention.

Insider-Outsider Dichotomy

The preceding discussion of experiential investigation and autoethnography brings us to consider the issue of the researcher's status and the dichotomy of insider and outsider, keeping in mind that there can be no such case of being purely one or the other, rather there are degrees and different ways in which one may be more or less inside or outside. For several reasons, in the German and American contexts, the researcher was probably more of an insider than an outsider, sharing a quite similiar background to that of many if not most of the members of the two studied communities. He largely encountered university-educated, middle to upper class individuals either hailing from or comfortable within a Western setting, and often with past spiritual interests similar to his own, such as having explored Yoga, Qi Gong, and Buddhist forms of meditation. Most of these commonalities also remained largely true during the excursion to India, as will be discussed in further detail below, though as a non-Indian he was still quite an outsider in many respects pertaining to culture and religion. Language only presented a major problem once, in speaking with the senior practitioner from Hyderabad, yet other attendees who were fluent in both English and Urdu kindly volunteered to act as translators. As the researcher is a native English speaker and an upper intermediate (B2) German speaker, few difficulties arose in Germany and none in the US. In Germany, most respondents spoke far better English than the researcher's German, thus conversations were most often conducted in English. In those cases when the respondent was not as proficient in English or in group settings of primarily German-speaking participants, German or a mixture of German and English were used.

Likewise, while there are certainly cultural differences between the US and Germany, the researcher had been living in Germany since 2009, most of which was spent in Bavaria where the research took place, and at least in his own eyes, his American-ness did not make him especially more of an outsider, particularly among the cosmopolitan gatherings at SOST events. In the US, the researcher was largely among his fellow countrymen and women. In fact, quite happenstantially, the World Community is located just a two-hour drive from the researcher's birthplace. But most important to the insider aspect of his status was the fact that he too was performing the practices. Due to the relatively recent expansion of SOST into Germany and the practice of only allowing prospective students to take the oath of allegiance (*bay'a*) after advancing through a set of ten preliminary practices, which can take months but more often years to complete, like many of the participants in Germany, he too was in this liminal exploratory phase of the process. Thus, we see that there are of course layers to insiderness. The fact that the researcher was performing practices also provided a degree of insider status at the World Community, despite how he was doing so with SOST in Germany and under the guidance of Hasan, rather than Abdur Rashid. Although the researcher was not a member of that particular community, they were nevertheless considered the same practices and the same lineage.

In both cases, however, he was an outsider in two main respects: 1.) as a non-Muslim and 2.) as a researcher. On the first, at SOST events, he was not even fully an outsider in this respect either, as there were many others who were also non-Muslims and he was thus not the only one who did not perform the prayers. Hence the most important facet to being an outsider was the very fact of being a researcher, and this was largely an issue that existed in the researcher's own mind while conducting research and analysis. Senior students and the *shaykh*s may have exercised some degree of caution in their phrasing and in what they said to the researcher or in his presence, knowing that it might end up in print, but if this did happen, it never presented a serious impediment to research. It did not at all seem as if anyone was going to any lengths to compartmentalize and protect information. On the contrary, there was a remarkable degree of openness and even a desire for transparency. Therefore, the ethnography portion of this research greatly facilitates the goal of understanding this mystical tradition from within, and from a variety of perspectives within at that. It is in stepping back outside again and seeing it from the perspective of a scholar that the challenge lies.

Respondent Validation

On a final note pertaining to ethnography, contact with living representatives of the tradition one is studying allows the research something lacking in studies that examine the texts of earlier Sufis, namely the opportunity for respondent validation. That is, the researcher has the ability to engage directly with these living practitioners who can thereby serve as collaborators in the research. Thus, both for SOST and the Circle Group, draft copies of the section of this research on Rasool's life and

teachings, along with their respective sections, were provided for their review and feedback, something not at all uncommon for ethnographies, though not so much so for critical textual analyses. The idea was that, again in line with phenomenologist precedents, studies of religion should not only meet the standards of academic scholarship, but they should also be recognizable by the peoples studied.[131] Responses differed. The senior German SOST student, after reading the sections on Rasool and SOST today under Hamid Hasan, wrote an email to the researcher with very kind positive feedback and explained that he did not find any changes to recommend.

On the other hand, the process of respondent validation for the Circle Group, due to the sheer size of their section, involved receiving the draft back in parts as Word documents with comments in the margins made by Abdur Rashid himself as well as a long-term student of his who served, among other things, as kind of the resident historian at the World Community. Being conscious and respectful of the researcher's need to maintain scholarly objectivity, their comments were basically limited to the following four categories: 1.) corrections to factual errors such as related to places, dates, and the chronological order of events; 2.) concerns about the implications of the manner of presentation, such as word choice; 3.) clarification of cited statements by the *shaykh*, typically as further elaboration and detail; and 4.) suggestions for the inclusion of further facts, topics, or material within the scope of inquiry but that had not been included.

These comments provided valuable insights and were discussed over email and at follow-up interviews. Yet not all of the recommendations were implemented, for instance, they questioned the implications of the terms "theoretical mysticism" and "speculative mysticism," and wondered if these would be accurate in describing the content of Abdur Rashid's lectures. But being at a loss for better words, these admittedly imperfect ones were retained. Abdur Rashid also wondered why the researcher felt the need to highlight his indirect contact with Gurdjieffian circles in which he himself had not participated. Yet the researcher felt it necessary to point out his proximity to such currents to help contextualize his life and works within the broader picture of the arrival of Sufism in the West. Similarly, Abdur Rashid felt there was too much focus on his own life and background and not enough on the community and its members, but this would have required significantly more data collection and, due to limited time and resources, this could not be rectified.

Historiography

Major criticisms of the phenomenological approach are that it is a-historical and that it minimizes context, but as seen in the very research questions of this study, we are hoping to understand the mysticism of Rasool and his heirs (Q1) and its arrival to a new context in the West (Q2). Thus, with the second research question, historical and contextual dimensions are built into the research itself. To answer the second research question, we need some comparison partner that can demonstrate what the mysticism of this lineage was like prior to 1976, that is before its arrival in the West. One approach might be to choose a single comparison partner, for instance, a prominent personality like Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624) as if such an individual, no matter how revered, can exclusively define what it means to be a Naqshbandī or even Mujaddidī, and then measure deviations from that standard. Yet even a cursory glance into the history of this lineage reveals a much more dynamic reality, a tradition that continuously adapts to changing circumstances and new contexts.

Thus it seems more appropriate to take a longer view beyond an individual personality, time period, or region and accordingly, the historiographical aspect of this research seeks to look backward into time to locate the origins and trace the development of the various key words and clusters of those words found in the current lexicon, detailing their earliest appearances in Islamic thought and following the evolution of their meaning and interrelationships through to their current configuration. This backward-looking and teleologically oriented approach would be an unsound methodology if our aim were to illuminate these earlier periods. Yet this survey is intended to shed light on the present, and we

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[131] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Comparative Religion: Whither and Why?," in *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, eds. Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 31-58, here 42 and 52; cited in Mujiburrahman, "The Phenomenological Approach In Islamic Studies," 429.

will find no answers to our research questions in this section. It is only when we consider the case study in light of this survey that answers to our questions begin to emerge. It should be noted that while many important texts have been studied and translated, there are vastly more sitting in archives that have yet to be examined, thus this survey, which relies on secondary sources, is greatly limited by the state of current scholarship and the capacity of the researcher to sift through even that.

This diachronic historical survey is complemented by a synchronic contemporary survey, so that after tracing the chronological development of the lexicon, we consider other related lineages, namely Naqshbandīs, that have also arrived in the West to see if they too have the same or similar terms, doctrines, and practices and if not, what they do have instead. This discussion also uses the framework of mysticism, divided into three sub-categories, alongside orthodoxy and activism. While the historical survey is based on secondary literature, the contemporary survey combines secondary and primary sources, largely in the form of the internet websites of related lineages. More details are provided on the theory and structure behind the synchronic contemporary survey below, so here we consider our approach to the diachronic historical survey.

To aid in navigating this vast breadth of time and space, the historical survey is presented in seven phases, each between 150 to 250 years in length, beginning with the time of the Prophet and leading up to 1975, the year before the transfer in our case study took place. This seven-phase model is based on an earlier one proposed by Jamal Malik,[132] which has been modified to suit the needs of the present study. While tracing the emergence and development of the constitutive elements of the lexicon, using the six key terms as our main guide, for each phase we loosely follow the three-fold framework of cosmo-psychology, practices, and the role of the *shaykh* and community, but also the categories of orthodoxy and activism. Considered along the way are also key events taking place concurrently in the West that pave the way for the arrival of this lineage and its reception there, especially with regard to alternative spiritualities there and their resonance potential. Such consideration increases leading up to the actual beginning of the transfer in 1976.

Another guiding feature we will employ is tracing the Naqshbandī Mujaddidī *silsila* of our case study lineage. An attempt has been made to consider the entire *silsila*, though for some individuals, nothing much more than a date of death could be found. Those individuals in the Naqshbandī Mujaddidī *silsila* appear in bold print in their first main occurrence in the section where they are discussed, while when we mention other personalities that appear in other *silsila*s of the case study, namely Chishtī, Qādirī, or Shādhilī figures, their names will be underlined. Although scholars generally view the various *silsila*s as having been created during the period of the emergence of the *ṭarīqa*s, we place the individuals listed in the *silsila* within their respective time periods, irrespective of whether or not there is historical evidence or even the possibility of time-bound and physically embodied contact between early individuals in the chain, since there are multiple time- and space-defying *uwaysī* links in the Naqshbandī *silsila*, which we must note are too obvious to have been accidental.[133] In his *The Naqshbandiyya*, Weismann uses the approach of considering the personalities in the *silsila* out of the historical sequence of their lifetimes, but within the context of when the *silsila* was created. This not only creates a somewhat confusing situation for the reader, but it also reduces our ability to grasp the emic perspective with regard to their *silsila*. Academic precedents for following a lineage's *silsila* while considering its history can be found in Ernst and Lawrence's *Sufi Martyrs of Love* as well as Algar's "The Naqshbandī Order." But since it is the lexicon that is our main guide in this endeavor, the survey is in no way limited to the *silsila*, though it is for the most part restricted to within the Islamic tradition.

This study is thus in no way an attempt to authenticate the veracity of the *silsila*. The authenticity or inauthenticity of the emic account of the route of transmission of these teachings is irrelevant to the research questions. It has no bearing on the nature of the mystical doctrines and practices themselves or whether or not continuity can be demonstrated, since continuity does not require person-to-person contact. For example, if a later Art Nouveau painter in Buenos Aires sees and draws inspiration and ideas for his own works from the works of Alphonse Mucha, but never met him in

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[132] Jamal Malik and John Hinnells, *Sufism in the West* (London: Routledge, 2006), 2-11.

[133] It is important to note that the Bakrī *silsila* employed by the case study, and nearly all of the other lineages in the synchronic contemporary survey, was made standard by Sirhindī and there are in fact three different variations of the Naqshbandī *silsila*. For these, see Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 23, figure 2.3.

person, we can nevertheless speak of continuity in the development of Art Nouveau. No one could reasonably expect there to be a requirement that they personally met or had any sort of relationship for there to be demonstrable continuity. The same could be said of literary and philosophical movements. If a contemporary thinker in Montgomery, Alabama reads Sartre and Camus and this substantially shapes his own thought and writings, we could speak of continuity in Existentialism. In these examples, time, space, and personal relationships – or the lack thereof – are entirely irrelevant to the questions of content and continuity, just as they are with regard to mystical doctrines and practices in this study. If Rasool learned/derived all of these teachings from a book or manuscript – though this seems very unlikely and has not been seriously questioned by anyone – it would still have no impact on the final conclusion argued below: that continuity is undeniably and unambiguously there, no matter what the route of transmission. With those considerations discussed, we now turn to the diachronic historical survey itself.

Diachronic Historical Survey

Revelation and Asceticism (600-800)

In Arabia around 609 CE, a man named **Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim (570-632)** went into a cave and received a message from God. That message was given, via the Angel Gabriel, to the heart of Muḥammad.[1] It was the first of a series of such communications that would become the Quran. In presenting "the Problem of Muḥammad's Inner Life," Massignon asserts that it is impossible to prove, based on the Quran alone, whether or not he had any mystical inclinations, but by our definition of mystical experience as an encounter with the divine, which differs from Massignon's and other preceding understandings in that it is not restricted to experiences which the subject describes in unitive terms,[2] we are able to say that by his own account Muḥammad did have mystical experiences, viz., on the occasions of the revelation of each and every verse of the Quran.

These mystical experiences occurred after practices such as retreating to the cave at Hira for prayer and vigil and the results of these experiences include the Quran and the religion of Islam itself. He also taught mystical practices to others which structured daily life around God, such as the five obligatory prayers, requiring renewed ritual purity, as well as the practice of asceticism for a full month each year. Yet it is important to remember that he was not merely an inward-looking mystical teacher, he would also come to be a social, political, and military leader. Thus, Muḥammad offered the prototype for being engaged with both inner spiritual life as well as outer social life, as attested to in the Quran as an historical document and by its very existence. The Quran is understood by Sufis, and some scholars like Massignon, as being the main source of Sufism and much, but not all of their technical vocabulary can be found in it. Whether their interpretations and usages of those words are what Muḥammad would have understood them to mean, however, has been a topic of heated debate up until the present.

As just alluded to, the message that Muḥammad brought included moral and mystical prescriptions that involved a degree of self-denial, something that had been made into a full-time vocation by such Christian hermit-ascetics as the Desert Fathers in nearby Egypt in the 3rd century. The Quran, however, comments on such monasticism by the Christians and makes clear that it was not prescribed for them.[3] Nevertheless, among the first three generations of Muslims, asceticism became an increasingly prominent means pursued to "get right with God," especially out of concern for the afterlife, which given the eschatological content of the then recently revealed Quran must have seemed quite imminent at the time. Yet renunciation to please God in the face impending judgement should certainly be considered a transaction and thus indeed an encounter, however distant and transcendent that God may have seemed.

There are numerous accounts, from *ḥadīth*s and other later literature, of varying degrees of authenticity pertaining to asceticism or ascetic tendencies among the companions of the Prophet (*ṣaḥāba*), and even among the first four Sunni caliphs, though Massignon dismisses most as spurious while conceding some plausibility in certain cases, such as Abū Dharr al-Ghifāri (d. 652) and 'Imrān ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 672 or 673).[4] Later texts mention the *ahl al-ṣuffa* ("people of the bench") who were said to have lived solely on the veranda of the mosque in Medina, having dressed in ragged clothing, and devoted themselves entirely to religious practice and study. Sufis would look back to them as their early predecessors and reports of their numbers range from ten to seven hundred. Previous scholarship, however, has tended to be dismissive of this group as mostly legendary but in his article for *EI*^{3}, Roberto Tottelli provides a convincing description based on *ḥadīth*s that show a group of pious Muslims not from Medina but who had come anyhow despite the hardship of not having any belongings or residence there. Hence, they ended up staying at the mosque, a situation very similar to some that the researcher has experienced during field excursions to visit different *shaykh*s and is thus now significantly more

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[1] Quran 26:192-94.

[2] Louis Massignon, *Essay on the Origin of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism*, transl. Benjamin Clark (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 94-8.

[3] Quran 57:27.

[4] Massignon, *Essay on the Origin*, 107-111.

plausible to him.[5] This seems like a natural outcome of travelling to visit a religio-spiritual teacher. Not much more can be said of asceticism until after the reign of *al-khulafā' al-rāshidūn*, a period we consider below.

But now we briefly consider the emic historiography of the *silsila*s and the *ṣaḥāba*, and after them. All Sufi *silsila*s begin with Muḥammad, and in most, including the Chishtī, Shādhilī, and Qādirī lines, he is followed by his cousin and son-in-law ʿAlī ibn ʾAbī Ṭālib (601-661). In the Chishī *silsila*, we see some standard representatives of an ascetic trend, as immediately following 'Alī is a figure who has been seen as the proto-typical ascetic, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (642-728), to whom we soon return, and then in turn later ascetics, namely Abū al-Faḍl 'Abd al-Wāḥid ibn Zayd (d. 793), Abū al-Fayd Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ (d. 803), and Ibrāhīm ibn Adham Balkhī (d. 777). Also of note, the first seven links of the Qādirī lineage correspond to seven of the first eight individuals recognized as *imām*s by Twelver Shi'ites,[6] the largest denomination of Shi'ism; namely 'Ali, Ḥusayn (d. 680), 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn (d. 712), Muḥammad Bāqir (d. 731), Jā 'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 765), who also appears as the fourth link in the now standard Naqshbandī *silsila*, Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 799) and Mūsā Riḍā (d. 818). This provides a strong blood connection to the family of the Prophet, one which is followed immediately by a firm foundation in the Baghdad school of Sufism described in the next phase.

Yet in most, especially Mujaddidī, renderings of the Naqshbandī *silsila*, including that of Rasool, the Prophet is followed not by 'Alī, but by **Abū Bakr al-Siddiq (d. 634)**, the first of Sunni Islam's four "rightly guided caliphs" (*al-khulafā' al-rāshidūn*).[7] The appearance of Abū Bakr instead of 'Alī in the *silsila* is significant in that from the outset it plants the order firmly on Sunni ground. Since Abū Bakr is considered by Sunnis to be the greatest of the *ṣaḥāba* and even the best human being following the prophets, Naqshbandīs have used this connection to argue precedence over other orders who trace their lineage through 'Alī. Furthermore, the Naqshbandī practice of silent *dhikr* has been described as originating with the story of the Prophet and an unidentified individual, generally recognized as Abū Bakr, hiding from pursuers in a cave for three days.[8] Abū Bakr died only two years after the Prophet in 634 and another of the *ṣaḥāba*, a barber named **Salmān al-Fārisī (d. 655 or 657)** or "Salman the Persian", is the next link in the Naqshbandī *silsila* after Abū Bakr, and as Weismann notes, his presence connects the line early on to the Persian world.[9] As with some other companions of the Prophet, ascetic tendencies have been attributed to Salmān al-Fārisī.[10]

Continuing to the *tābi'ūn*, the generation after the immediate companions of the Prophet, **al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Abū Bakr (d. 726)** is listed as following Salmān al-Fārisī in the Naqshbandī lineage. He was born in Medina in 655, the same year that his predecessor died in Jerusalem, meaning that he would have been an infant if the two even physically met at all, thus implying that something other than conventional, face to face contact would have had to have taken place. He is followed in the *silsila* by his grandson, **Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 765)**, the last personality in the Naqshbandī *silsila* for this phase who is also considered the sixth *imām* by Shi'is. This inclusion of an

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[5] *EI*[2] "Ahl al-Ṣuffa" and *EI*[3] "Ahl al-Ṣuffa."

[6] The missing *imām* is 'Alī's immediate successor for Shi'ites and other son, besides Ḥusayn, Ḥasan.

[7] Abū Bakr was succeeded in his role as caliph by 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb (d. 644), known for his conquests and expansion of the Muslim empire. After 'Umar was murdered, leadership passed to 'Uthmān ibn ʿAffān (d. 656). From the time of Muḥammad until the third Sunni caliph 'Uthmān, the verses of God's revelation through Muḥammad were not written down but preserved by individuals who had memorized them. It was at the command of 'Uthmān that these verses were committed to writing and arranged in their current configuration, proceeding mainly from longest to shortest. This is extremely significant for the current study since it paved the way for analysis and reflection on the meaning of the Quran, which would eventually evolve into Islamic theology, jurisprudence, and mystical exegesis. 'Alī as the last caliph or the first *imām*, from Sunni or Shi 'i perspectives respectively, is discussed below. Hans Küng, *Islam: Past, Present & Future* (London: Oneworld, 2009),161-81; Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Vol. 1: The Classical Age of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 187-230.

[8] Hamid Algar, "The Naqshbandī Order: A Preliminary Survey," *Studia Islamica* 44 (1976): 123-52, here 128-29.

[9] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 24.

[10] Alexander D. Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 5-6.

early direct descendant of the Prophet allows Naqshbandīs to claim a familial connection with Muḥammad in addition to the superiority, from a Sunni perspective, of a lineage through Abū Bakr.[11] Ja'far al-Ṣādiq has been credited with the authorship of a mystical exegesis on the Quran, which Nwyia presents as an early demonstration of using experience as a hermeneutic principle. There are, however, no extant manuscripts of this work dating prior to the 10th century, thus rendering its attribution unverifiable historically.[12] Nevertheless, his personality has become associated with the esoteric dimensions of the Quran, and he is credited with saying that there are seven layers of meaning to the Quran.[13] But returning more to etic historiography, we do so through the third link in the Chishtī *silsila*.

al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (642-728) and the Ascetics of Basra

Under the first four caliphs, the early Muslim territory that had been confined to the Hijaz and Yemen during the life of the Prophet had expanded to not only engulf the entire Arabian Peninsula, but also to stretch from Tripoli in North Africa to Merv in Khurasan and up to Tbilisi in present-day Georgia. Under the Umayyads, until their fall at the hands of the Abbasids in 750, this vast Islamic empire would expand even further to the west coast of North Africa and include nearly all of the Iberian Peninsula and in the east, it would reach past Khurasan to include Transoxiana and as far as Multan and the Indus River.[14] But returning to the latter half of the 7th century, the same time as the split within the *umma* into Sunni, Shi'i, and Khariji denominations[15] and the establishment of the Ummayad Caliphat in 661, asceticism began to grow among the *tābi'ūn*. Later records give the names of ascetics in Kufa, Damascus, the Hijaz, Yemen, and most significantly here, Basra.[16] Under the now Damascus-based rule of the Umayyads, in contrast to the political elites, an "urban culture of the new mercantile and educated classes" emerged in various parts of the empire, including most notably for the present discussion, the former garrison but now cosmopolitan city of Basra. Among both the ruling class and the middle class were those with an interest in coming to understand the revelatory legacy Muḥammad left with the Muslims. From these two distinct camps, however, came two opposing positions which would form the second major theological debate in Islamic history, that over man's free will versus God's predestination. God's predestination was upheld by the Umayyad's, and to them, He had chosen them to rule and whatever actions they performed, even if extravagant and debaucherous, were foreordained by God. On the other hand, were the Qadarites, those upholding man's own free will, and as a result personal responsibility and accountability for one's actions, including the rulers. A number of ascetics in Basra could be counted among the Qadarites and though theirs would not become the conventionally

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[11] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 24.

[12] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, 30, also see Chapter Two of Paul Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique: nouvel essai sur le lexique technique des mystiques musulmans* (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq sarl, 1991), for a discussion of this *tafsir* as an example of using experience to interpret the Quran. The chapter concludes with a list of technical terms found in the *tafsir*.

[13] *EI*³ "Esotericism and exotericism."

[14] Küng, *Islam*, 221.

[15] After the third caliph 'Uthmān was assassinated, 'Alī succeeded him and moved the capital from Medina to Kufa but leadership of the *umma* soon became contested and for the first time in history, different Muslim armies fought against each other. An important topic of theological debate arose following the Battle of Siffin in 657, when 'Alī opted for a negotiation with Mu'āwīyya which led to the establishment of the Umayyad Caliphate, with Mu'āwīyya as its first ruler. From among the camp of 'Alī, a group which became known as the Kharijites turned against him, condemning him for having surrendered his authority as the caliph while also rejecting Mu'āwīyya's rule. The Kharijites believed that sinful actions could render one a non-Muslim, but contradicting this view, another group, the Murji'ites placed more emphasis on belief than actions by calling for the suspension of judgement until the Day of Resurrection as only God, and not other humans, can truly judge one's status as a Muslim or unbeliever. This Murji'ite stress on inward belief rather than outward actions might be seen as an early step toward the mystical focus on one's inner life. In any case, the schism that took place which divided the *umma* into three groups which remain separate to the present day, viz. Sunni, Shi'i, and Khariji, is also significant in that it establishes an important parameter for our hind-sighted definition of orthodoxy, that of Sunni Islam, the denomination which the overwhelming majority of Muslims worldwide belong to. Küng, *Islam*, 182-99.

[16] Massignon, *Essay on the Origin*, 111-3.

accepted Islamic position, such a correlation is logical, since if personal conduct is predetermined by God, what incentive is there for resisting natural impulses?[17]

Some scholars have held that the first historical document from the Qadariyya,[18] indeed even "the only product of early Muslim theology [prior to the Mu'tazila] that has come down to us," is an epistle to the Umayyad ruler, 'Abd al-Malik (d. 705) in support of the Qadarite doctrine. This letter was supposedly written by none other than al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī,[19] and would be an example of political activism by an early Muslim mystic (one who used the technique of asceticism, as did most Muslim mystics of that period). He deserves particular attention here as he has been described by contemporary scholars as well as later Sufis as the proto-typical Sufi and his personality has been associated with strict ascetic piety. In his preaching, al-Ḥasan is believed to have exhorted his audience to morally upright behavior, rejecting the mundane pleasures of this world in favor of salvation in the afterlife. This concern with the hereafter rather than the here and now, can be compared to later developments concerning external and internal realities, where one is told to turn away from the physical world, and look inwardly for a personal experience of God in this lifetime. Though the "inward turn" which Karamustafa speaks of[20] had not yet taken place at this point, and al-Ḥasan was concerned with salvation in the afterlife rather than objectives which would develop in the next phase, such as *fanā'* and *baqā'* or *ma'rifa*, he was not devoid of the experiential aspect of the relationship with God, although granted not a unitive one, but of fear of punishment and hope for redemption.

Indeed, according to Massignon, for al-Ḥasan "the essential thing in an act is the intent (*niyya*), which must be purified (*ikhlāṣ*) of vainglory (*riyā'*),"[21] a clearly introspective and subjective experiential imperative. Furthermore, pertaining to the psychology of man, al-Ḥasan appears consistent with the Quran in his emphasis on the heart as the seat of religious experience and he has been credited with the term *'ilm al-qulūb* ("science of hearts") as well as the statement, "Repolish these hearts for they very quickly grow rusty!"[22] In the eyes of both Massignon and Knysh, al-Ḥasan's introspection, "self-scrutiny," and his "definitions of examining conscience (*muḥāsaba*) prepare the way for" al-Muḥāsibī, discussed below.[23] In terms of orthodoxy, he seems to have been more interested in the spirit of the law than the letter, or "the 'kernel' rather than the 'husks'," as he is thought to have been less than rigorous in transmitting accurate *ḥadīth*s, sometimes even allowing his own sayings to circulate as the words of the Prophet.[24] The historical validity of this image, however, has recently been challenged by Suleiman Ali Mourad in his *Early Islam between Myth and History*,[25] yet Mourad's analysis has not

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[17] Küng, *Islam*, 220-25.
[18] *EI²* "Ḳadariyya." The Qadarites or Qadariyya is not to be confused with the Sufi *ṭarīqa* known as the Qādiriyya.
[19] Julian Obermann, "Political Theology in Early Islam: Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī's Treatise on Qadar," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 55, no. 2 (1935): 138-162, here 139; see also Schwarz, Michael. "The Letter of Al-Hasan Al-Baṣrī." *Oriens*, vol. 20, 1967, pp. 15-30.
[20] Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Berkeley: University of California, 2007), 1-7.
[21] Massignon, *Essay on the Origin*, 128.
[22] *EI²* "Ḥasan al- Baṣrī."
[23] Massignon, *Essay on the Origin*, 132.
[24] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 12; *EI²* "Ḥasan al- Baṣrī."
[25] Suleiman Ali Mourad, *Early Islam between Myth and History: Al-Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī (d. 110H/728CE) and the Formation of His Legacy in Classical Islamic Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 2006). Mourad claims that scholarship on Sufism has based their understanding of al-Ḥasan's historical personality on selective readings of the sources. In fact, Mourad calls into question nearly every aspect of what conventional wisdom in Sufi studies and among Sufis themselves since medieval times tells us about al-Ḥasan. Significantly, his depiction as the forefather of Islamic mysticism seems to have only been introduced in the latter half of the 10th century, perhaps the earliest example of which being in al-Makkī's *Qūt al-Qulūb* (Mourad, *Early Islam*, 98, 120). Nevertheless, there are certain tangibles regarding the historical figure, such as "his piety, his long residency in Basra, and the large number of his local disciples […]" (idem 54), which included a colorful mixture of proto-Sunnis and Sunnis as well as proto-Shi'is, ascetics, Murji'ites, and predestinarians along with Qadiris and Mu'tazilis. For a selected list of students of al-Baṣrī annotated with their political and religious leanings, see idem Appendix III.

gone unchallenged.[26] Whatever the truth may have been about the historical person of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, regarding practices it is clear that there was a large ascetic tradition in Basra which thrived well after his death and included personal students of his such as ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Zayd (his successor according to the Chishtī *silsila*) and Rabīʿ ibn Ṣabīḥ (d. 777). The former may have founded the cloister at Abbadan, around sixty kilometers southeast of Basra, which was a military outpost that became "a major attraction for *jihād*-minded Muslim ascetics who flocked there from far and wide." Rabīʿ would serve as the commandant of that same institution where the practices of fasting, nightly vigils and other supererogatory worship were staples of daily life.[27]

Later Asceticism

In the last hundred years of this period, asceticism would continue to grow, centered mostly in Basra and Kufa but also present in the Hijaz and at the edges of the empire. Asceticism came in a variety of forms and a number of epithets were used to describe them and their different tendencies, such as *ʿubbūd* ("servants"), *nussāk* ("devotees"), *qurrāʾ* ("reciters [of the Quran]"), as well as *bakkāʿūn* ("weepers") for their frequent crying over fear of the Day of Judgement, an external manifestation of a subjective experience of God, however distant, or perhaps sometimes to make others view them as pious, the result of a subjective experience of the social. Also *ṣūfiyya*, a likely origin for the terms *ṣūfī* and *taṣawwuf*, was used to describe those who, particularly in Basra and Kufa, chose to don woolen cloaks like their Christian renunciate counterparts.[28] Yet another title was *quṣṣāṣ* ("preachers") and Massignon describes this period as "the century of preachers," as the *khuṭba* delivered at Friday prayers by these popular preachers, until this function was institutionalized by the ʿAbbasids,[29] who usurped the Ummayads in 750 and established their capital in Kufa, though it later moved to the newly formed city of Baghdad in 762. With regard to social and political involvement, a variety of positions were possible, but on the whole, these Muslim ascetics were not cut off from their communities like many Christian ascetics. In most cases that we know of, there was some degree of social engagement and even political activism, as the movement included urban religious scholars; along with former religious scholars who had become disillusioned with their vocation, like Fuḍayl Ibn ʿIyāḍ (fifth Chishtī link); who exhorted to piety (social activism) and may have criticized the rulers (political activism) as well as soldiers fighting on the frontiers, like Ibrāhīm Ibn Adham (sixth Chishtī link)[30] on the Byzantine front or Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 810) in Khurasan and Transoxiana. But as we will see, al-Balkhī can be seen as part of a turn toward proximity to God over distance.

Early Developments in Jurisprudence

Important in the defining of Islamic orthopraxy during the 8th century are key developments regarding both *ḥadīth*s and *fiqh*. Originally in Arabia, *sunna* referred to local customs within a community, but during this period the *sunna* of the Prophet took on a much greater role, eventually becoming the legal source second only to the Quran. People began to collect accounts of Muḥammad's words and actions and as the accounts grew exponentially, efforts to verify their authenticity such as the *isnād* (chain of transmitters, similar to and prefiguring the Sufi *silsila*) were implemented. Such work came to be an actual profession, that of the *muḥaddithīn* ("traditionists," sg. *muḥaddith*). This elevation of the Prophet from being the messenger to being the exemplar for mankind, the model for how to regulate every aspect of life.[31] The proponents of *ḥadīth* studies, *ahl al-ḥadīth*, opposed previous

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[26] Such as the review by Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh and Jamal Malik in *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 134 (2009): 1170–72. See also the review by Mustafa Shah in *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 11, no. 2 (2010), 93-119.

[27] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 18-19.

[28] Idem 15-6. Despite numerous theories of the term's origins, which are recounted in probably every introductory text on Sufism, Karamustafa maintains that scholars old and new agree on the wool origin as the most likely. Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 6.

[29] Massignon, *Essay on the Origin*, 113-9.

[30] For an extensive German language treatment of his life experiences and thought, see Richard Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder des Sufitums, Band 1* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1995), 135-279.

[31] *EI*^{2} "Ahl al- Ḥadīth."

religious legal scholarship as relying too much on human reasoning (*al-ra'y*), but the traditions would eventually become essential to religious law. Another profession emerged which would involve the practical application of the Quran and *ḥadīth*s, that of the *fuqahā'* ("jurists," sg. *fakīh*). Thus, during this period, and extending into the next, lived the four individuals who are often identified as founders of the four widely accepted Sunni jurisprudential denominations (*madhāhib*, sg. *madhhab*), Mālik ibn Anas (711-795), Abū Ḥanīfa (699-767), Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (767-820), and Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (780–855), recognized as the founders of the Malikī, Ḥanafī, Shāfi'ī, and Ḥanbalī *madhāhib* respectively. These schools, however, would require several generations to fully take shape. Initially, on the one hand, there was the more conservative Mālik ibn Anas, who strictly observed the Arab customs of the Hijaz, while on the other hand, was the more liberal Abū Ḥanīfa, who was more accepting and tolerant of difference, allowing greater space for the use of reason and opinion. A former student of Mālik who also interacted with Ḥanafī scholars, was al-Shāfi'ī, who systematized much that had already been present in the emergence of *fiqh* prior to him; like identifying its four main sources as the Quran, *sunna*, *qiyās* ("analogy"), and *ijmā'* ("consensus"); and while doing so laid the ground work for a third school, the Shāfi'iyya which was less restrictive than the Mālikiyya yet more so than the Ḥanafiyya. A student of al-Shāfi'ī, Ibn Ḥanbal would diverge from his teacher to be the most literalist of any of the four *madhāhib* founders. In the next phase, he would personally come into conflict with both those advocating reason, the Mu'tazila, as well as subjective experience, al-Muḥāsibī.[32]

Beginnings of an Inward Turn

In conclusion, during this first two-hundred-year period, the Quran was revealed and showed a single multifaceted deity who is at the same time immanent, merciful, and compassionate while also being a transcendent and just judge. The ascetics largely focused on the latter aspect in their relationship with God, but hints of a shift toward the former were detectable toward the end of this period. In their zeal to please God, the ascetics sought to do much more than the minimum obligatory practices and some were not even satiated with the available supererogatory ones resorting to greater lengths in turning away from the world and resisting base impulses, such as self-mortification, celibacy, and self-imposed poverty, measures that sometimes pushed or overstepped the boundaries of orthopraxy. This "going the extra mile" likely created a feeling, and a perception by others, of being special or chosen. While certainly not prophets, the preaching that many ascetics engaged in also afforded them a degree of religious authority, hence prefiguring doctrines of sainthood and the role of the *shaykh*.

Ascetics, despite sometimes criticizing the elites, did not experience the kind of friction with the state or religious scholars that later mystics would. Nevertheless, an internalizing of *zuhd* [33]can be seen as a means of bringing asceticism clearly within the confines of the guidance in the Quran and *sunna*, of orthopraxy, yet this corrective set a trajectory which in the next phase would stretch and even overstep the boundaries in a different way with regard to both belief and practice. That is, the "inward turn," which might be better seen as the concrete elaboration of the inner experiences of the ascetics of the first phase. This elaboration in words of personal experience is characterized by a shift away from a distant transcendent God who will be the judge on the Day of Resurrection to a God that is immanent and which man can experience closeness to, even love, in this lifetime. Among those whom Karamustafa lists as being the pioneers of this turn are the already mentioned Shaqīq al-Balkhī as well as Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya of Basra (d. 801), whose historicity is questioned at least in part by even the most generous scholars, but whose attributed imagery is unforgettable. Whether historically accurate or not, one particular tale precisely addresses the nature of the transition at hand. Therein Rābiʿa is described as holding a pail of water to extinguish hellfire and a torch to burn down Paradise so nothing

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[32] Küng, *Islam*, 269-276; Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Vol. 1*, 315-58. In contemporary times, the Ḥanafiyya is the most widely followed *madhhab* and it is also the one which was most often found adhered to among SOST practitioners. On the other end of the spectrum is the most conservative and literalist school, the Ḥanbaliyya, which is today confined mostly to the Arabian Peninsula but gains an international voice through initiatives such as those of the Saudi government building mosques and funding *madrasa*s.

[33] For an examination of the concept of *zuhd*, see Leah Kinberg, "What Is Meant by Zuhd?" *Studia Islamica*, 61 (1985), 27-44.

will remain of fear of punishment or hope for reward and mankind can focus on God alone, the relationship with whom is characterized by love (*maḥabba*) and intimacy (*uns*).[34] As for al-Balkhī, he may have been the first to elaborate a sequence of experiential stages (*manāzil*), which he describes as four in number beginning with *zuhd*, which he relates to subduing the *nafs*, followed by fear (*khawf*), desire (*shawq*) for paradise, and love for God (*maḥabba li'l-Llāh*).[35] As noted by Knysh,[36] it is significant that he places *zuhd* at the beginning of his stages, a pattern which would be repeated in coming centuries and lays the foundation for the ultimate reversal of this approach in the principle of *indirāj al-nihāyat fi'l-bidāyat* (*INfB*). Two others in this transitional group will be significant for our discussion in the next phase, Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (781-857) as well as our next link in the Naqshbandī *silsila*, the "intoxicated" Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (804-874 or 877-8).[37]

From Distance to Proximity: Sufism Appears (800-950)

During this period, the Abbasid capital of Baghdad plays a crucial role, for it was here that a new and distinctive style of piety, already anticipated in the preceding phase, came into full bloom, that of the Baghdad school.[38] With this came a shift from a distant fearful encounter with a transcendent God to an intimate and even loving encounter with an immanent God. Ma'rūf al-Karkhī (d. 815) is sometimes seen as the forefather of this movement and the abovementioned Sarī al-Saqaṭī (d. 867/8) as one of its prominent early leaders, but it is perhaps the latter's nephew, Junayd al-Baghdādī (835-910), who has become the best known and is widely respected representative of the Baghdad school. We should recall here that the Qādirī *silsila* of our case study lineage begins with key family descendants of the Prophet followed by representatives of the Baghdad school, referring to the above three individuals in turn and then to Junayd's friend and pupil Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 946). But it was here around the mid-9th century that adherents of the Baghdad school came to be widely called and/or self-identified with the label of *ṣūfī*. It had hitherto been used to denote wool-wearing ascetic renunciants, in contrast to 9th-century Baghdad, where it was being applied, as Karamustafa notes probably with a certain "avant-garde" or "hip" appeal, to urban middle-class part-time intellectual-mystics with a new style of piety with the key characteristic of greater proximity to God in this lifetime.[39]

Green has argued that rather than a blossoming of mysticism out of earlier asceticism, it would be better to see these as competing movements, with the new overtaking the old. He also points out that seeing the earlier ascetics as merely proto-mystics is reductive.[40] Nevertheless, we do see a relationship with ascetic circles in Basra and what would become Sufi circles in Baghdad, such as al-Muḥāsibī's influence discussed below. Moreover, given the teleological nature of this survey to shed light on a Sufi lineage in the 20th-21st century, it is their foundational role for which they are important here. And indeed, there is a trend in Sufism up to the present day, one we saw in the proto-Sufi al-Balkhī, to incorporate ascetic techniques and ideals in the lower stages of the path, like repentance, renunciation, and trust in God, and placing more intimate encounters with God in the later stages, like love and intimacy.[41] And of course, this provides the ground for the ultimate reversal of this with the Naqshbandī concept of *INfB*. But the Baghdad version of Islamic mysticism was not the only kind in existence, as there were other movements in other areas of the empire which are important to note during this period. In Basra, there were circles developing similar intimate tendencies to those being discussed in Baghdad, and there was much exchange between the mystics of these two urban centers. There were also other

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[34] *EI*[2] "Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya al-Ḳaysiyya."
[35] Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique*, 213-31.
[36] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 34-35.
[37] Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 2-3.
[38] Idem 6-7.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Green, *Sufism*, 21-23.
[41] "Early in the third century of the Hegira—the ninth after Christ—we find manifest signs of the new leaven stirring within it. Not that Sûfîs ceased to mortify the flesh and take pride in their poverty, but they now began to regard asceticism as only the first stage of a long journey, the preliminary training for a larger spiritual life than the mere ascetic is able to conceive." Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, Inc., 2002), 4. For some examples, see Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, 40, and 17, 44, 55.

movements further afield, notably in Khurasan, which sometimes retained ascetic practice, like the Karrāmiyya, or rejected it, like the Malāmatiyya. These other movements, however, would eventually either be displaced or absorbed by the Baghdad style of Sufism.

Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (781-857)

Emerging from the ascetic circle at Basra and later moving to Baghdad is an individual who would become known as the forefather of Sufi introspection, Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī. According to Karamustafa, examining the soul was strong in al-Baṣrī's group, esp. his student ʻAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Zayd, but it would reach its culmination in al-Muḥāsibī,[42] whose very epithet is taken from the practice of self-examination (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*). Although he may have primarily been a theologian,[43] in fact Baldick declares that "he was neither a Sufi nor a mystic, but a moralizing, pious theologian,"[44] al-Muḥāsibī certainly provides some important precedents. Still others have justifiably seen him as a proto-Sufi.[45] Indeed, his ideas can be found echoed among Sufis throughout history and up to the present day. He also had multiple direct personal ties to the emerging Baghdad school, notably including Sarī al-Saqaṭī (d. 867) and his nephew Junayd (d. 910).[46] As we will see, al-Muḥāsibī had a profound effect upon the latter and thus in the formation of Sufism.[47]

For al-Muḥāsibī, the relationship between God and mankind is one of master and servant, in which the servant wishes to draw near to his beloved master but can be prevented from doing so by disobedience, that is sin, which comes between them as a barrier. After removing such veils, one is able to be in the immediate presence of God to acquire knowledge (*maʻrifa*) of Him, become more than a mere servant by enjoying intimacy (*uns*) with Him, and even experience vision (*mukāshafa*) of Him in this lifetime. When the aspirant transcends his own ego, it is not an ontological union which takes place, but rather a unification of the individual human's will with the Divine will. The foundation of such profound obedience, according to al-Muḥāsibī, is *waraʻ* (meticulously avoiding that which is forbidden), the foundation of which is *taqwā* (pious mindfulness of God), the foundation of that being *muḥāsaba* (taking account of oneself), which in turn rests upon the twin pillars of fear (*khawf*) and hope (*rajā'*).[48] Thus for al-Muḥāsibī, the inner life of man is of immense importance and actually determines his outer conduct, so by taking account of and rectifying the inner, one regulates the outer.

We now turn to the practical means which he recommends for ensuring that one's inward state, and thus also one's outward moral actions, are aligned with the will of God. Generally speaking, al-

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[42] Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 5.
[43] Josef van Ess, *Die gedankenwelt des Harit al-Muhasibi. anhand von Ubersetzungen aus seinen Schriften* (Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität Bonn, 1961).
[44] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, 34.
[45] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 47-48; Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 37; A.J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (London: George Allen & Unwin Brothers Ltd., 1956), 46. Arberry states: "The first Sufi author of the foremost rank whose preserved writings may truly be said to have formed to a large extent the pattern of all subsequent thought was al-Harith b. Asad al-Muhasibi."
[46] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 47.
[47] Our discussion here primarily draws from Margaret Smith's *An Early Mystic of Baghdad: A Study of the Life and Teaching of Hārith b. Asad al-Muhāsibī* (London: The Sheldon Press, 1935). Smith offers a broader coverage of al-Muhāsibī's teachings, while a much more recent monograph focuses particularly on his method of purifying the self (*tazkiyat al-nafs*). Gavin Picken, *Spiritual Purification in Islam: The Life and Works of Al-Muhasibi* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011). While Smith offers a broader range of topics, there is also the drawback that she tends to read al-Muḥāsibī through later Sufis, which perhaps anachronistically attributes meanings to his thought which he may or may not have had. For instance, her discussion of his psychology draws insight heavily from the models of earlier Sufis, making a cleaner model than she offers evidence for from al-Muḥāsibī himself. Thus, we find a kind of *Jurassic Park* scenario, wherein frog DNA is used to fill in the missing pieces of the "dino DNA." As a result of this, an attempt to understand his psychology here based on Smith's account (*An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, 86-95, 100-101, 112-122) has been entirely discarded as fruit of the poisonous tree. The remaining discussion has sought to work around the affected parts and rely only on what Smith provides evidence for from al-Muḥāsibī himself.
[48] Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, 104, 111-112.

Muḥāsibī recommends a middle path when compared with the earlier ascetic trend within Islam. One should not withdraw entirely from the world to engage in harsh austerities, but rather, remain in the world while directing one's faculties to God. He advises avoiding the enticements of the three enemies by steering clear of situations in which temptation to err might arise.[49] He stresses the importance of prayer, and especially one's inner intention (*niyya*).[50]

Of course, a major feature of his practical guidance is the abovementioned *muḥāsaba*, which deserves more detailed treatment here. If we recall, it is fear and hope upon which *muḥāsaba* rests, but the fear which al-Muḥāsibī refers to is not an eschatological fear of punishment on the day of judgment, but instead, a more sublime fear of failing to please God by not following His command. This is paired with hope, not for the reward of paradise, but hope for His acceptance of one's repentance. Underlying these sublimated forms of fear and hope is a love (*maḥabba*) of God which causes the true servant to want to please Him.[51] This calls to mind the image of Rābiʿa al-Baṣrī, carrying a pail of water in one hand and a torch in the other so that she might extinguish the flames of hell and burn down paradise in order to be completely undistracted from God. But while Rābiʿa in this tale seeks to be rid of the base forms of fear and hope in favor of love, for al-Muḥāsibī, fear and hope in their elevated forms, permeated by love of God, are desirable, and indeed the major driving forces for drawing closer to God. Such elevated fear and hope are the desired balance when taking account of oneself (*muḥāsaba*), in order to maintain *taqwā*, practice *wara'*, and thus be obedient to God and without the veil of sin.

Additionally, al-Muḥāsibī mentions *murāqaba*, *dhikr*, and *mushāhada* in a progressive order of practice and result. Unlike *muḥāsaba*, which involves examining and keeping watch over one's own inner state, much like the later Naqshbandī principle of *wuqūf-i zamanī* described below, *murāqaba* involves turning all of one's faculties, both inner and outer, away from the created world and toward God. Although far less systematized, this is a fundamentally identical description of the practice of *murāqaba* as found among SOST and the Circle Group today, thus we see their central practice preceding the very emergence of Sufism as an established tradition. And again, similar to our contemporary case study lineage, al-Muḥāsibī considers *murāqaba* to be the very means by which to progress toward knowledge (*ma'rifa*) of God in this life and its purpose is to rouse affection for God, so one is led to pious actions and feelings.[52] Another consequence of *murāqaba* is that afterwards, one longs to return to this experience of contact with God. This leads to *dhikr*, not in the ritual sense of recitation with the tongue, but rather a condition of continuous remembrance of God, whether in quiet solitude or engaged within the world.[53] The culmination of *murāqaba* and *dhikr* is *mushāhada*, in which one is freed from all distractions but God,[54] and again we are looking at the basic goal of *murāqaba* as still practiced today. But to conclude with regard to his relationship to evolving Islamic norms, al-Muḥāsibī criticized the rationalist Mu'tazilites, yet his own reliance on rational argumentation in doing so, as well as his emphasis on the intellect and its use in taking account of oneself, led to criticism from his fellow Sunnis. The most consequential of these was the traditional literalist, Ibn Ḥanbal, who felt that al-Muḥāsibī's self-scrutiny seemed to usurp God's judicial function.[55] This foreshadows future tensions that would emerge as Islamic mysticism and scriptural scholasticism continued to develop alongside and in dialogue with one another in overlapping and interconnected social formations.

Junayd al-Baghdadi (835-910)

Junayd al-Baghdādī (830-910) hailed from an urban middle-class background and was himself a silk merchant. He lived his entire life in Baghdad, apparently leaving only once to perform the *ḥajj*. Junayd was a pupil of his uncle Sarī al-Saqaṭī, in whose footsteps he would follow as a leader in the

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[49] Idem 122-128.
[50] Idem 199-206.
[51] Idem 97-8, 238-41.
[52] Idem 207-211.
[53] Idem 212-218.
[54] Idem 218-219.
[55] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 43-44. See also Christopher Melchert, "The Adversaries of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal," *Arabica* 44 (April 1997): 234-253; Christopher Melchert, "The Ḥanābila and the Early Sufis," *Arabica* 48, no. 3 (2001), pp. 352-367.

Baghdad school.[56] He was also deeply influenced by al-Muḥāsibī, with whom he would take walks and discuss mystical ideas, as can be seen in his own mysticism. Al-Muḥāsibī is known to have even took down and published such conversations.[57] In addition to being a merchant and a mystic, Junayd was well-schooled in Shāfiʿī *fiqh*, and for him, the fully accomplished mystic is outwardly indistinguishable from "a teacher of Shariʿa."[58] Nile Green notes that Junayd's qualifications in *fiqh* "placed him squarely in the intellectual mainstream of the Baghdad of his day" and that, like his peers and teachers, Junayd sought to base his ideas firmly within the Quran and the *sunna*. A major example of this is his placement of *tawḥīd*; the very first principle addressed in the *shahāda* with the phrase "There is no god but God" and perhaps the most central tenet of Islam; at the very center of his mystical theory.[59] This topic was one commonly discussed in Junayd's time and before, such as by the Muʿtazila, and as Karamustafa explains, already by the 9th century, "the exact meaning of God's unity and uniqueness had become a major bone of contention among a growing number of specialists in the intellectual and confessional foundations of Islam."[60]

Junayd seeks to move beyond merely the use of scripture or reason, and toward an experiential understanding of *tawḥīd*. Although Junayd's personal encounter with the Oneness of God is much different than that of traditional ascetics, whose experience of God was characterized by unbridgeable distance, and indeed he interprets the highest level of *tawḥīd* as being taken up in God, he is very careful to clarify that there is still a separation and that he is professing neither the deification of man (*ittiḥād*) nor the incarnation of God in man (*ḥulūl*) and that the unification he speaks of is one of wills rather than of being.[61] In feeling that the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) can be perceived more intimately than mere dogmatic understanding and adherence to *sharīʿa*, he considers four different levels. In the lower levels of *tawḥīd*; that is 1.) its understanding by the general populace and above that 2.) those of religious learning; one is still inwardly affected by fears and hopes with regard to things other than God. One must transcend such feelings until 3.) one is in adherence with God's command both outwardly and inwardly. Beyond this, however, there is yet a higher level of *tawḥīd* for there still remains something other than God, namely one's own individuality. Only when 4.) such individuality is abandoned, can a true union of man's will with God's will take place.[62]

Junayd presents this highest level of *tawḥīd* as a return to a pre-existence within God prior to man's descent to the created world and attachment to a physical body to be challenged and tested. In support of this view, he cites the Quranic account of what would come to be widely known as the Covenant of Alast (7:172):

> When thy Lord had brought forth their descendants from the loins of the Sons of Adam and made them to witness concerning themselves, 'Am I not [*alastu*],' said he, 'your Lord?' They said: 'Yes! we do so testify.'

The state man enjoyed while making this pre-existential covenant (*mīthāq*) is temporarily revisited by the mystic in the highest stage of *tawḥīd*.[63] In this fleeting experience, however, though the physical body remains, the mystic's own individuality has been annihilated (*fanāʾ*) and he abides within God (*baqāʾ*). *Fanāʾ* and *baqāʾ* are terms usually described as having first been used by another member of the Baghdad school and contemporary of Junayd, viz., Abū Saʿīd Kharrāz (d. 899).[64] For Junayd these

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[56] Knysh, *Mystical Islam*, 52-53.
[57] Arberry, *Sufism*, 600.
[58] Green, *Sufism*, 38-39
[59] Idem 36-37.
[60] Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 16.
[61] Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of Al-Junayd: A Study of a Third/ninth Century Mystic* (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1962), 81-87.
[62] Idem 72-75.
[63] Idem 76-80.
[64] Green, *Sufism*, 32. For Arberry's translation of al-Kharraz's *Kitāb al-Ṣidq*, see Abu Saʿid al-Kharraz, *The Book of Truthfulness (Kitab Al-Sidq)*, transl. A.J. Arberry (London: Oxford University Press, 1937).

two concepts are two aspects of the same thing, and it is in fact the annihilation of individuality which paves the way for abiding in God.[65] It is vital to note that in this condition of having returned to the pre-existential *mīthāq* mode of being, although the mystic has been taken up into God, there is still a separation and God is ultimately not knowable in a comprehensive manner.[66] Later Sufis like Simnānī and Sirhindī, discussed below, would feel the need to underscore this point. After this experience, one's sense of individuality must needs be returned and ecstasy gives way to sobriety (*saḥw*). This aspect of sobriety is perhaps the greatest hallmark of Junayd's thought, which from the time of al-Hujwīrī (d. 1077) has often been contrasted with the intoxication of other Sufis, most notably al-Bisṭāmī and al-Ḥallāj.[67] Such sobriety is also an important feature of our case study lineage and the Naqshbandiyya in general. Junayd also emphasizes that the unitive state is not the final goal and that after it, one returns to one's senses to serve mankind as an exemplar, keeping something of his experience of the pre-existence in God within and allowing it to shine outward through word and deed. Thus, there is a return ascent to God and a return descent back to the world, and while some later Sufis like Ibn al-'Arabī would emphasize this ascent, others even later, like Simnānī and Sirhindī, would emphasize the descent aspect. This second separation from God, the first separation having been when the soul was originally cast down to earth, can be experienced both positively and negatively. The mystic longs to return again and looks to beauty in this world, such as in nature or the artistic achievements of man, yet this experience is bittersweet as these material reflections of the divine in creation are indeed beautiful reminders, yet they remain inadequate substitutes for the One. Alternatively, the one who has returned from the highest experience of *tawḥīd* may now find himself completely unaffected by the world of creation.[68]

Of note, Junayd also uses the term *ma'rifa* to describe the highest *tawḥīd*, though he uses it only out of want for a more precise term, as it has nothing to do with knowledge since knowledge of *tawḥīd* and the experience of *tawḥīd* are two entirely different things. Thus, while the *'aql*, which is the faculty for gaining knowledge, is useful on the initial stages of the path, in acquiring first the knowledge of reason and second that of intuition, after this point it becomes an obstacle to be annihilated as part of one's individuality.[69]

Turning to practices though, as with al-Muḥāsibī, the rejection of this world practiced by the early ascetics continues in a tempered form as the worshipper has responsibilities in this world which cannot be cast off while still adhering to the *sharī'a*. Junayd considers those who favor ascetic renunciation to be worse off than thieves and adulterers.[70] For him, the practices leading up to a return to the pre-existential *mīthāq* state, or rather the preparations the mystic undergoes to ready himself in the hopes that by the grace of God he is granted an experience of the highest *tawḥīd*, are described as three successive levels of *fanā'*. The first *fanā'* involves regulating outward moral actions, the second *fanā'* curtails inward motivations, and in the third and final *fanā'*, individuality itself is annihilated.[71] In this process, a teacher can initially have a role to play, although this is limited and after a certain point, the mystic proceeds alone. This of course differs, and is in a way the opposite of the later *ṭarīqa*-model of Sufism wherein the teacher is indispensable, especially in the later stages. But Junayd's doctrine of *saḥw*, wherein the mystic returns to his senses to serve his fellow man, rejects both ascetic withdrawal from the world and ecstatic antinomianism, and prefigures the Khwājagān-Naqshbandī ideals of firm adherence to the *sharī'a* and engagement in society by roughly half a millennium.

Nevertheless, before and during Junayd's time, inward trends and closer experiential encounter with God came under the scrutiny of traditionalists and the earlier-style practitioners of asceticism. Two

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[65] Thus, for Junayd, *baqā'* is not the return to creation from union, as it is sometimes understood by later Sufis, but the reverse side of the coin to *fanā'*.
[66] Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings*, 81-85.
[67] Jawid A. Mojaddedi, "Getting Drunk with Abū Yazīd or Staying Sober with Junayd: The Creation of a Popular Typology of Sufism," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 66, no. 1 (2003): 1-13.
[68] Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings*, 88-93.
[69] Idem 96-103.
[70] Idem 89.
[71] Idem 82.

of Junayd's teachers; his uncle al-Saqaṭī as well as al-Muḥāsibī, as mentioned; were subjected to harsh criticism from Ibn Ḥanbal. Tensions like these came to a head in such cases as the execution of al-Ḥallāj, who had belonged to the Baghdad school as well as been a student of al-Tustarī in Basra among others, though his demise probably had more to do with politics and his associations with the Shi'i Qarmatis.[72] Another early case is the 877 "inquisition" spurred by the anti-Sufi ascetic, Ghulām Khalīl (d. 888), and it is said that Junayd avoided arrest and prosecution by representing himself as a scholar of *fiqh* rather than a Sufi. In such an environment, despite Junayd's careful efforts to reconcile the two halves of his own religious identity; the scriptural *'ālim* and the experiential Sufi, ensuring that his explanations of the latter did not contradict the former; he was still keenly aware of the need for discretion.

Scholars have proposed that Junayd's writing is deliberately obscure and difficult to penetrate, in order to protect against any accusations of heresy.[73] It seems that he was quite conscious of this risk, as he rebukes his friend and student al-Shiblī, for whom love of God played an important role, for writing too openly about mystical matters lest their correspondence be intercepted,[74] and in fact, Junayd made mention of one of his own letters having been opened by someone other than its intended recipient.[75] On openly expressing mystical ideas, Junayd was criticized by his contemporary fellow Baghdad Sufi and another outspoken proponent of love mysticism, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 907) for being too cryptic, and thereby "cheating" his audience rather than providing them with "counsel."[76] Similarly, in our case study, we will see Rasool being more cautious on the issue of love, though this probably has more to do with the risks of metaphorical love, while his American *khalīfa*, Abdur Rashid, is more apt to refer to love as a means. Later Sufi tradition would create a classic dichotomy of two types of Sufism, characterized by intoxication (*sukr*) on the one hand and sobriety (*saḥw*) on the other, with al-Bisṭāmī as the main representative of the former and Junayd as that of the latter.[77] Melchert asserts that it is suspect, however, to claim that al-Bisṭāmī and Junayd practiced completely different forms of mysticism, since Junayd is said to have "admired Abū Yazīd and lectured on his *shaṭḥiyyāt*."[78]

Regarding the issue of activism versus quietism, in contrast to the preceding harsh rejection of the world and extreme *tawakkul*, Junayd's doctrine of returning to sobriety after being lost in *fanā'* clearly calls for worldly engagement and fulfilment of one's responsibilities in this life. At the same time, however, he seems to reject involvement in the political sphere, or at least anti-governmental involvement. In one letter, Junayd expresses how "rebellion against authority is an action of the ignorant who are not righteous, of those who have gone astray and are in error, those who seek rebellion and are enamoured of corruption in this world."[79] Thus it seems that Junayd should be considered politically quietist yet socially engaged.

But before leaving Junayd, we briefly consider the issue of the similarities between his thought and Neoplatonism. Under the Abbasid Caliph Ma'mūn (r. 813–833), the task of translating the massive body of literature of the conquered realms, in particular works of Greek philosophy and science, received substantial caliphal funding and support at the *Bayt al-Ḥikmah* ("House of Wisdom") in Baghdad. Sometime during the lifetime of al-Kindī (801–873), who was employed there and would become known as "the father of Arab philosophy,"[80] a partial and modified translation of Plotinus'

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[72] For more on Ḥallāj and his trial and execution, see for instance, Louis Massignon, *The Passion of Al-Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Carl W. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 63-72, 102-09. See also Louis Massignon, *The Teaching of Al-Hallāj*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Herbert Mason, *Al-Hallaj*, (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1995).
[73] Arberry, *Sufism*, 56-59.
[74] Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 18.
[75] Arberry, *Sufism*, 56-59.
[76] Christopher Melchert, "The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at the Middle of the Ninth Century C.E." *Studia Islamica* 83 (1996): 51-70, here 68.
[77] Mojaddedi, "Getting Drunk with Abū Yazīd or Staying Sober with Junayd," 1-13.
[78] Melchert, "The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism," 66.
[79] Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings*, 143.
[80] Tony Abboud, *Al Kindi: The Father of Arab Philosophy* (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., 2006).

Enneads became available in Baghdad, as it was al-Kindī who edited it, though it was falsely attributed to Aristotle rather than Plotinus. Sedgwick explains that this work marks the beginning of Arab Neoplatonism,[81] and indeed, the next major figure after al-Kindī in Arab philosophy is al-Fārābī (872-950), who has been called the "founder of Islamic Neoplatonism."[82] Sedgwick also asserts that "Neoplatonism gave Sufism its distinctive theological system," as well as that "Without Arab Neoplatonism in the form of Arab philosophy and of access to the *Enneads*, Sufism would have been something different from what it became."[83]

Given Junayd's position in the intellectual mainstream of cosmopolitan Baghdad, it is thus quite possible that he and the other Sufis of the Baghdad school came into contact with Neoplatonic ideas, whether by directly reading such a translation or by engaging in discussions with philosophers who had. The main study on Junayd consulted here by Abdel-Kader in fact includes a comparison of Plotinus and Junayd in which he points out a number of similarities. He explains that both Plotinus and Junayd assert that there is an ultimate reality, or God, which is separate from the lower material world. The soul originated from that higher reality and longs to return to its Origin. In addition to a pre-existence, for both Plotinus and Junayd, there is the possibility of a return to that Origin after death. But a return ascent is also possible in this very lifetime through "continuous striving and labour," through "the hard method of discipline." One must turn away from the phenomenal world, away from one's impulses, desires and thoughts toward that higher reality, becoming ever more subtle and eventually losing oneself (*fanā'* for Junayd) in that Origin. For both men, it is possible to "see" this reality by way of an "inner vision." Moreover, sounding much like Rasool's definition of *nisbat* below, the ascent is "not an approach in space, but through similarity; separation is through difference." Junayd and Plotinus both use the imagery of light, but Plotinus uses the metaphor of lover and Beloved, though as Abdel-Kader rightly points out, contemporaries of Junayd were already using this theme which would continue to grow among Sufis. Both men speak of the difficulty of describing the experience in words, its ultimate ineffability despite their attempts to do so. Both Plotinus and Junayd view the return descent back to the world in negative and positive ways. The return to a state of separation is painful, but beauty in the world can remind one of that unitive state and indeed the memory of that state will allow those who have experienced it "to be active for the best of his fellow men."[84] Of course, Abdel-Kader does note a few differences, such as the doctrine of sobriety being unique to Junayd and also that his Islamic notion of God is quite different from Plotinus' Greek one, in that for the former, God is both transcendent and immanent, whereas the latter's One is "utterly remote."[85]

Sahl al-Tustarī (818-896)

As reflected in extant texts and scholarship to date, more so than any other single personality in phase two, Tustarī is a highly significant figure in the development of ideas and practices which recur together during the course of the development of the selected lexicon. Major aspects include a propensity for visions, light imagery, the concept of a pre-existential Muḥammad which prefigures *al-ḥaqīqat al-Muḥammadī* in later Sufi thought, use of the term *laṭā'if* in describing man's subtle anatomy, explication of the *sirr al-nafs*, the centrality of the breast and heart to mystical experience, the connection to God of man's heart through Muḥammad's heart (thus prefiguring the practice and idea of *rābiṭa*), a stratified hierarchy of *awliyā'* (the highest position of which he claims for himself), mystical exegesis of the Quran based on his own mystical experiences, and an emphasis on the practice of

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[81] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 30-32. He bases much of his discussion of this text on Peter Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus: A Philosophical Study of the "Theology of Aristotle"* (London: Duckworth, 2002).

[82] Majid Fakhry, *Al-Farabi, Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism: His Life, Works, and Influence*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2002; Ian Richard Netton, *Al-Fārābī and his School* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

[83] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 30-32.

[84] Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings*, 112-13.

[85] Idem 112, 114. Abdel-Kader's work has been harshly criticized in a review by J. Vajda in *Arabica* 10, no. 3 (January 1963): 315-17. In particular, the comparative chapter on Plotinus and Junayd cited here was described as "*non seulement superficiel, mais assez inutile*" ("not only superficial, but quite useless"). But this criticism was not on the grounds that his parallels were invalid, rather because, according to Vajda, he inadequately interrogated the issue of the infiltration of Neoplatonism into Muslim thought during that era.

recitation, and perhaps for the first time, connecting it to the term *dhikr* as a means for purifying the heart to achieve a mystical experience.

Born in 818 in the village of Tustar, ca. 300 kilometers northeast of Basra, until the age of about sixteen, Tustarī was educated in *ḥadīth* studies by his uncle, who also taught him the practice of *dhikr* in the form of silent recitation. Early on, he was engaged in a spiritual search and as part of this, practiced severe austerities as well as travelled to places like Mecca to perform the *ḥajj* and to the ascetic centers of Basra and ʻAbbadan. The latter is where he experienced his famous vision of the name of God written in luminous green letters across the sky.[86] During his travels, he is said to have met Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī, a man whose death in 860, Karamustafa points out, happens to roughly coincide with Tustarī beginning to take on spiritual disciples. This emergence as a teacher, however, would come only after having spent around two decades in his native Tustar, in isolation engaged in practices such as fasting and presumably contemplating the meaning of the Quran.[87] His teachings, which were committed to writing by his disciples, include mystical Quranic exegesis and surely include insights from his own mystical experiences during this lengthy period of seclusion.

Tustarī's account of creation, like that of Junayd, incorporates *mithāq* as a primordial state of purity which the mystic longs to re-actualize, yet his cosmology is far more complex in that it not only begins eons before the actual covenant, but it also balances this ideal existence before life in the world of creation with another eschatological ideal existence after it. According to his account, which draws on imagery found in *āyat al-nūr* ("light verse," Quran 24:35), in the beginning, there was only God unexistentiated, who from his own light manifested forth a mass of light which prefigured all of creation. This was the pre-existential light of Muḥammad (*nūr Muḥammad*) which then bowed before God. This light then took on the shape a diaphanous, crystal-like column and over a period of eons it worshipped God, all the while absorbing the divine attributes in its very core, the heart of Muḥammad (*qalb Muḥammad*). From *nūr Muḥammad* then emerges a primordial Adam and contained within him are the "prophetic prototypes," at which point God and the prophets enter into a covenant and the prophets are assigned their mission to perform in the world of creation to come. From the loins of these pre-existential prophets, mankind as sentient particles of light issues forth and is made self-aware as God points to the covenant as evidence of their cognitive faculty.[88]

The relationship between God and man in this pre-existence is one of an intellect (*ʻaql*), realizing and acknowledging its Lord (*Rabb*), an event which is the very first experience of *maʻrifa*. When placed in the world of creation, however, man is tested by the temptations it holds and by his own, newly acquired lower nature. With the possibility of erring, the ideal earthly role of man toward God is that of a faithful servant (*ʻabd*). On the issue of predestination versus free agency, though Tustarī has positions and arguments of his own, he upholds what would come to be the orthodox position of favoring predestination. After embodied existence on earth, on the day of resurrection (*yawm al-qiyāma*) those who were preselected on the day of the covenant to be *awliyā'*, proceed directly from the grave to paradise and the divine presence to enjoy the manifestation of God (*tajalli*) and abiding with Him eternally (*baqā' al-Ḥaqq*). Such a conception of *baqā'*, as noted by Baldick, differs from the usual presentation of the term in that for Tustarī, it takes place in the afterlife and furthermore, it is not paired with *fanā'*, although the idea of leaving behind the lower self to ascend toward God is in fact present in his thought, as will be discussed below.[89] The ideal relationship with God evolves and the mystic who was an *ʻaql* in the pre-existence and then an *ʻabd* on earth, realizing and being faithful to God as his *Rabb*, in the afterlife enjoys the special status of *walī*, an intimate of God as *al-Ḥaqq* ("the Truth").

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[86] Here we have a very early example of a vision involving light, and in particular, colored light, a phenomenon which would reach the height of its importance in terms of this survey among the Kubrawiyya from the 11th to 14th centuries and later be deemphasized, though retained, by Sirhindī in the 16th to 17th centuries.

[87] Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 38; *EI²* "Sahl al-Tustarī."

[88] Gerhard Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: The Qur'ānic Hermeneutics of the Ṣūfī Sahl At-Tustarī (d. 283/896)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1980), 156-7. Our main source here is Böwering, but for a recent translation of Tustarī's *tafsīr*, see Sahl b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī*, transl. Annabel Keeler and Ali Keeler (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2011).

[89] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, 38-9.

Tustarī provides a hierarchy of those predestined to be saints, at the top of which he places himself as *hujjat Allāh* ("proof of God"), or *quṭb* ("axis") as a manuscript gloss indicates, a claim which raised the ire of the *'ulamā'* and seems to have been the cause of his exile from Tustar to Basra in 877.[90] While others like the Baghdad mystic al-Kharrāz were also addressing the issue of *wilāya*, Green asserts that for Tustarī, the doctrine took on far greater importance.[91] His description of *wilāya* versus *nubuwwa* clearly places the latter above the former, but there are similarities as well as differences between the two. Like the prophets, the intimates of God emerged from *nūr Muḥammad* in the pre-existence, and similarly, both are given the task of reminding mankind of God. The prophets differ, however, in that they have the additional role of spreading the faith and that in terms of proximity, they are closer to God. As spiritual elect above the common believers yet still subordinate to the prophets, the intimates of God have been endowed with special abilities, such as understanding the esoteric meaning behind revealed scripture, seeing the signs (*āyāt*) of God, and performing miraculous wonders (*karāmāt* as opposed to the *mu'jiza*, or "miracles" of the prophets), the last of which Tustarī seems to have downplayed both when ascribed to others and to himself.[92] Thus this feature is not unique to modern Sufism.

al-Tustarī's Psychology

The psychology of man in Tustarī is not as cleanly and precisely defined as in later models, although even up to the present, nothing that can really be called "precision" has been attained. Different words are used for designating the same subtle aspect of man when discussed in different contexts, and such terms are not always applied consistently, a situation we will also see today with our case study. Noting that Tustarī's style of exposition is that of a mystic rather than a "logician," Böwering nevertheless admirably analyzes and coherently elucidates what was likely intended by the numerous designations.[93] Overall, it seems that there are three major components to Tustarī's model of the subtle constitution of man which include two opposing parts, the first being the positive and God-oriented compulsion of man, that is the *nafs al-rūḥ* ("spiritual self"), and the second being the base, self-centered drives of man, or the *nafs al-ṭabi'* ("natural self"). The third aspect is the trust which God placed within man, called the *sirr al-nafs* ("secret of the self") and in order to realize this hidden treasure enclosed within man, the *nafs al-rūḥ* must establish its rightful dominance over the *nafs al- ṭabi'*.[94] It is significant that Tustarī employs the term *laṭā'if* in reference to both of the two opposing aspects,[95] and may also even be referring to the *sirr* as a *laṭīfa* when he states that man is only capable of seeing God because of a subtle substance which God "united" with man's heart.[96]

Nafs al-Rūḥ ("Spiritual Self")

The God-oriented aspect of man, that is the *nafs al-rūḥ*, can also be signified with the terms *qalb*, *'aql*, and *rūḥ*, but instead of being different constituent parts of the spiritual self, they all refer to the *nafs al-rūḥ*, but in its different modes of perception and respectively, these modes are *fiṭna*, *fahm*, and *ḍihn*. These three aspects of the spiritual self exist in a hierarchy, as can be seen by Tustarī 's statement that "discernment (*fiṭnah*) is the guide (*imām*) of the understanding (*fahm*) and the understanding is the guide of the intuition (*ḏihn*)."[97] Böwering explains that when referring to the *nafs*

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[90] Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 38.
[91] Green, *Sufism*, 35.
[92] Böwering, *The Mystical Vision*, 238-240. He rejected a legend that he had walked on water by pointing to a man who had rescued him after he fell into a well and even compared miraculous events with a rattle given to a child to entertain it. Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 38.
[93] Böwering, *The Mystical Vision*, 247.
[94] Böwering treats the two opposing parts of man separately from the *sirr al-nafs*, yet here these three aspects of Tustari's thought are examined together as their interrelationship at this stage is important in understanding the development of the doctrine of the *laṭā'if* from the earliest appearance of its constitutive elements.
[95] Böwering, *The Mystical Vision*, 245.
[96] Idem 210.
[97] Idem 247-250.

al-rūḥ on the whole and not in juxtaposition with the *nafs al-ṭabi'*, Tustarī tends to use the word *qalb*.[98] Thus we see a very early example of a description which persists to the present day of the term *qalb* being used to denote the positive aspect of man collectively in all of its facets as well as to refer to a specific facet of this God-oriented force within man. It is likely impossible to tease apart, with any degree of certainty and in all cases, exactly in which instances Tustarī is referring to the comprehensive sense of the heart versus the *qalb* as just one facet of the *nafs al-rūḥ*.

In addition to the qualities ascribed to the heart in the Quran, particularly its perceptive and volitional capacities, Tustarī describes it as a container which houses such spiritual treasures as faith, *ma'rifa*, and the profession of *tawḥīd*.[99] Such a treasure mine within the mystic's breast is filled by the pre-existential treasure mine of *qalb Muḥammad* which absorbed the divine attributes over eons of worshipping God before the creation of anything else. Böwering sums up Tustarī 's concept of *qalb Muḥammad* saying that it can be seen "as the fount of man's mystical union with God, as the treasure mine of scriptural revelation, and as the well-spring of mystical knowledge"[100] which shines out and "illuminates the hearts of men."[101] This concept anticipates the later practice of *rābiṭa*, or connecting one's heart to God by way of one's *shaykh*, through the *silsila*, and ultimately via the Prophet, although the mediatory function of the *awliyā'* is absent at this stage. But to bring the discussion of the *nafs al-rūḥ* in and of itself to a close, although the *rūḥ* as a one of its component parts seems to receive little treatment, the *'aql* does have an important specified role. The *qalb* in man, presumably in the comprehensive sense, is described as consisting of two aspects, an inner portion known as the *qalb al-qalb* and an outer portion known as the *ẓāhir al-qalb*, the former being capable of sight and hearing and the latter having intellect (*'aql*),[102] the very means by which *ma'rifa* is realized,[103] and this *'aql*, which is marked by knowledge, is contrasted with the *nafs*, which is characterized by ignorance.[104]

Nafs al-Ṭabi' ("Natural Self")

On the day of the covenant, each human as a particle of light was pure and equipped with faculties which are by their nature oriented toward God, viz., the above-discussed *'aql*, *qalb*, and *rūḥ*, but when placed in the world of creation, they became burdened with mankind's lower nature (the *nafs al-ṭabi'*), ego-centered, and inclined towards passions. Just as Tustarī uses the word *qalb* to indicate the *nafs al-rūḥ* in general and when not being juxtaposed with the *nafs al-ṭabi'*, he likewise uses the term *nafs* to indicate the latter when speaking of it in isolation. While the *nafs al-rūḥ* is predisposed toward God, it can turn away toward that which is other than God, because of the forgetful and ignorant influence of the *nafs al-ṭabi'*, and at this point, the whisperings of Iblis in man's breast can take hold. It is our prime imperative on this earth for our *qalb* to be established in its rightful place as the ruler over our *nafs*, although this is ultimately only accomplished by the grace of God, a prominent feature of our case study lineage's understanding of the *qalb* as the rightful ruler in man. The base urgings of the *nafs* must be overcome in order for us to realize the secret which lies at the very core of our being.[105]

Sirr al-Nafs ("Secret of the Self")

By now it should be clear that to Tustarī, man him-self has two halves or two sub-selves, a spiritual self and a natural self. The term *sirr al-nafs* indicates that within this two-fold self is a secret (*sirr*). Further statements reveal a more specific "location," for lack of a better word, as being within the spiritual half of the broader self and even more specifically at its very core, the *lubb al-qalb*.[106] With its position in the subtle anatomy now established, we proceed to explore what the term *sirr*, which has

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[98] Idem 247.
[99] Idem 250-1.
[100] Idem 164-5.
[101] Idem 148.
[102] Idem 252.
[103] Idem 195.
[104] Idem 258.
[105] Idem 253-261.
[106] Idem 199-200.

two enigmatic uses in the Quran, means to Tustarī. The *sirr* is the divine spark within man which was the particle of light that emerged on the day of the covenant and this secret is mankind's proclaiming "Yes, we testify."[107] It is the *amāna* ("trust") which God placed as the very core of man's being which is sought to be realized by the mystical seeker. The *sirr* seems to have certain qualities that Tustarī also ascribes to the *qalb* which contains it, significant among these is its capacity for perception as "It is the eye (*'ain*) by which you see the truth (*ḥaqq*), the ear (*uḏun*) by which you hear the truth […]" but it is not only receptive and can also be used to communicate as it is also "the tongue (*lisān*) by which you proclaim the truth."[108]

Having both passive and active communicative capacities, the function of the *sirr al-nafs* is to serve as the "locus of intimate colloquy between God and man."[109] Thus it is the place at the core of man's heart where he communicates with God and God communicates with him. If one is able to cast off the seven terrestrial veils of his passions and "bury" the lower self, an idea remarkably similar to *fanā'*, and allow the spiritual self to ascend beyond the seven celestial veils toward God, one is able to re-actualize the day of the covenant,[110] the ultimate mystical goal for both Tustarī and Junayd which is also directly tied to another concept that both men give centrality to, *tawḥīd*. When the *qalb* professes *tawḥīd*, this leads to a re-realization and once again, within the *sirr*, the mystic experiences *ma'rifa* of God's Lordship as he did in the pre-existence.[111] At this realization, there is no longer the need for a two-way dialogue between God and man, and thus, to use Böwering's terminology, this "colloquy" is transformed into God's "soliloquy of *ana rabbukum al-a'lā* (I am your Lord Most High)."[112]

As the spiritual self overcomes the natural self so that ultimately the state of purity enjoyed at *mithāq* is restored, man's apprehension of the secret trust within himself, as the object of observation rather than the subject performing the observation, is described in a number of facets. In the "inmost being (*sirr*)" of every human is a portion of the treasure of the divine light which shined out into the hearts of mankind through *qalb Muḥammad*. This light can be apprehended by the mystic in a number of ways, namely as *nūr al-ma'rifa* ("light of gnosis"), *nūr al-īmān* ("light of faith"), *nūr al-hidāya* ("light of guidance"), and *nūr al-yaqīn* ("light of certainty").[113] The last of these deserves some attention here as it allows us to see some of Tustarī 's views on stages of the encounter with the divine, on what the results such experience brings for the mystic still living in the physical world, and on the compatibility of having such a close encounter with God at the core of one's being with conventional exoteric understandings of God.

When the heart is turned toward God alone, the "light of certainty," which leads to *'ayn al-yaqīn* ("eye [or quintessence] of certainty"), appears. This certainty has three successive stages which were prefigured by not only *nūr Muḥammad*, but also by the physically embodied prophets, Moses, Abraham, and Muḥammad . The first stage of certainty is *mukāshafa* and it is the removal of the veil from man's heart and the terrestrial precedent for this is Moses' encounter with God on Mount Sinai. This is followed by the second stage of *mu'āyana*, which involves a "momentary grasp of suprasensible realities" and was experienced by Abraham. This fleeting vision of God is replaced by a more permanent witnessing, that is the third and final stage of *mushāhada*, experienced by Muḥammad during his night journey to heaven.

The premise that the mystic can share in experiences of God that had been had by prophets foreshadows a key feature of Naqshbandī Mujaddidī practices and conceptualizations of mystical experience, but it would still be almost three centuries later before Simnānī would associate each of the *laṭā'if* in his model individually with a particular Prophet and seven centuries later that Sirhindī would expound his doctrine of the mystic taking part in *nubuwwa* as a mystical stage higher than *wilāya*. A further point regarding *mukāshafa* is that Tustarī explains that it results in *iḥsān*, that is rather than the

[107] Idem 195.
[108] Idem 198.
[109] Idem 185-186.
[110] Idem 191-3.
[111] Idem 195, 199, 223.
[112] Idem 193.
[113] Idem 216-7. These lights are also described as being within the heart, but considering that the *sirr al-nafs* is itself at this core of the *qalb*, this is not problematic.

mystic encounter with God being just a blissful experience for personal satisfaction, it results in the perfection of man's faith, which manifests in his actions in this world. Such a practical approach seems to somewhat parallel Junayd's doctrine of sobriety, at least in terms of end goals, and it certainly anticipates the Naqshbandī principle of *khalwat dar anjuman*. Lastly, it should be noted that Tustarī is careful to clarify the orthodoxy of this experience of God within man. He specifically denies the possibility of this being *hulūl*, *jam'*, or *ittiṣāl*, explaining that "the unification of the servant (*ittiṣāl al-'abd*)" with God indicates "the place of his profession of" *tawḥīd* and his obedience to God and the Prophet.[114]

Dhikr as Recitation and that Affects the Heart

In terms of practices, Tustarī represents a significant step in the development and formulation of *dhikr*, which for him is the most central and underlying practice, and it is the one which leads to *ma'rifa*, toward the intimate encounter with the divine at the core of one's being. Green observes that he appears to be the first to connect the practice of *dhikr* with purifying the heart to reveal the lights encased within it,[115] but as with al-Muḥāsibī, *dhikr* nonetheless still refers less to a specific ritual and more to an inner state of being mindful of and oriented toward God, rather than being mired in the concerns of this world. Part of this is complete trust in God, "like the corpse in the hands of the washer,"[116] although this famous phrase by Tustarī would be used by later Sufis to describe the ideal relationship to one's *shaykh*. Such *tawakkul*, however, is not one of radical asceticism, since Tustarī advocated earning one's living as exemplified by the Prophet.[117] The very foundation of *dhikr* is having a knowledge of one's state (*'ilm al-ḥāl*), that is whether it is oriented toward God or toward creation, and then correcting that azimuth toward the divine. This practice of *'ilm al-ḥāl* greatly resembles later Naqshbandī principles, especially *wuqūf-i zamanī*.

For Tustarī, *dhikr* in this general sense of remembering God should be constantly nurtured in daily prayers and it can also be cultivated with devotional practices such as listening to the reading of the Quran or the recitation regimen he learned from his uncle. This practice quite simply involved saying three times silently, and while keeping one's tongue still, *Allāh shāhidī* ("God is my witness") before retiring to bed each evening. Again, we see an early explicit and historically documented precedent for a significant Naqshbandī practice, that of silent *dhikr* (*dhikr-i khafī*). In any case, for Tustarī, such remembrance is the sustenance of the *qalb*, or the *nafs al-rūḥ*, and since the *nafs al-ṭabi'* is dependent upon the *nafs al-rūḥ* for its existence, by default it also survives on the remembrance of God. Additionally, elsewhere he notes that the *sirr al-nafs* also subsists on *dhikr*. A final major characteristic of his conception of *dhikr* is that this remembrance of God is brought about in the mystic by God himself, described in such ways as "the recollection of God by virtue of the Object of recollection (*aḏ-ḏikr bi'l-maḏkūr*)."[118]

In addition to remembering God through practices such as the recitation of specific formulae, listening to the Quran, and ensuring the proper mindset during prayers, Tustarī recommends *murāqaba*, study (*muṭāla'a*), and adherence to *sharī'a* as tools for allowing the spiritual self to gain the upper hand in its struggle against the natural self.[119] He also mentions that the "substitutes" (sg. *abdāl*), the middle grade in his three-tiered hierarchy of *awliyā'* if excluding his own position at the pinnacle, have achieved their status through "empty bellies (*iḫmāṣ al-buṭūn*), seclusion from mankind (*i'tizāl an al-ḫalq*), nightly vigils (*sahar al-lail*), and silence (*ṣamt*)."[120] Although Tustarī did spend twenty years in his youth pursuing such harsh asceticism himself, Karamustafa notes that he seems to have become less draconian in his later years.[121] Thus in Tustarī, we find disciplining of the *nafs* through asceticism and

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[114] Idem 207-216.
[115] Green, *Sufism*, 34.
[116] Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 41.
[117] Idem 43.
[118] Böwering 200-7.
[119] Idem 242.
[120] Böwering 237.
[121] Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 38-43.

seclusion but at the same time sustaining the *qalb* with *dhikr* as something higher, again, the basic building blocks for *INfB*.

al-Tustarī's Relationship to Islam and Activism

With his background in *ḥadīth* studies and the fact that what we know of his thought is through Quranic exegesis, it seems fair to assume that Tustarī would have seen his ideas and practices as being fully based on and compatible with revealed scripture, yet his esoteric interpretations did cause friction with some *'ulamā'*. His 877 exile from Tustar to Basra may have been caused by his claim to be the *hujjat Allāh* and afterwards in Basra, he was criticized by certain Shāfi'ī scholars for the same claim.[122] Nevertheless, he held that any *wajd* ("ecstasy") must conform to the Quran and *sunna*, and if not it should be rejected. Although he spent a great portion of his life in seclusion, after he emerged to teach, he was well known in society, but steered himself and his disciples clear of political and social intrigue.[123]

In addition to sharing some resemblance with the Neoplatonic style of emanational theory already explored with regard to Junayd, it has been asserted that Tustarī's practices and thought may have been influenced by Nestorian Christianity, namely in reference to *dhikr* as recitation, and Gnosticism, particularly with regard to the ideas of a divine spark within man, experiential knowledge of God, and an emphasis on a spiritual elite.[124] Conversely, it has been argued that Tustarī is better seen as a creative thinker whose ideas originate, not in systems foreign to Islam, but from the Quran itself and his struggle to understand it in the light of his own personal experiences.[125] Of the identified potential items of transfer external to the Islamic tradition, the aspects that apply directly to our lexicon are *dhikr* as a practice of recitation and the concept of the divine spark, the *sirr al-nafs*. In argument against such influence, Green observes that first, the words recited during *dhikr* derive from the Quran, and second, "remembrance" (*dhikr*) itself is exhorted in the Quran,[126] although this is admittedly without any specific instructions regarding recitation of formulae. On the second point, for Tustarī, the ultimate source of this spark is the one Islamic God and the intermediate steps of creation through which it becomes enshrined within man are through the pre-existential Muḥammad and the prototypes of the prophets. He draws upon extensive exegesis of the Quran rooted in the text itself combined with his own personal intuitive experiences to support this concept.

Competing Mystical Movements in Khurasan and Transoxiana

The thought of Tustarī in Basra and the Sufis of the Baghdad school shared a number of comparable elements, including an emanationist framework and similar ideas on the psycho-spiritual components of man as well as the goals of turning away from worldly affairs and achieving a profoundly intimate encounter with God. But there were also other mystical movements, particularly in Khurasan, with differing degrees of similarity or difference from what would become the classical Sufi style of piety found in the Baghdad school and in Basra. One of these was the Karrāmiyya, who practiced strict asceticism and renunciation. They viewed earning a living to be a hindrance to their spiritual aims and their lasting contribution to Islamic mysticism would be the institution of the *khānaqāh*, which would later be adopted in Sufism.[127] In contrast, were the Malāmatiyya of Nishapur, who similar to the Sufis of Baghdad, were gainfully employed as members of the urban middle class, again prefiguring the Naqshbandī principle of *khalwat dar anjuman*. Their focus was particularly on taming the *nafs* with a stronger emphasis than the Baghdad Sufis, though while avoiding the ostentatious displays (*riyā'*) of the ascetics and instead concealing their piety. This included avoiding loud recitation, a very Naqshbandī position to have, and shunning distinctive dress, something shared with SOST today. Such concealment is what Knysh has considered a reaction to the Karrāmiyya's extreme asceticism.[128] While

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[122] Idem 38, *EI*[2] "Sahl al-Tustari."
[123] Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 38-43.
[124] Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, 40.
[125] Green, *Sufism*, 33.
[126] Idem 34.
[127] Green, *Sufism*, 45-46; Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 88-94; Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 61; *EI*[2] "Karrāmiyya."
[128] Green, *Sufism*, 46-47; Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 94-99; Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 48-51; *EI*[2] "Malāmatiyya."

the Karrāmiyya lasted as a competing movement from the 9th century until the Mongol invasions of the 13th century, the Malāmatiyya seems to have largely been absorbed into Sufism.[129] In fact, Weismann often refers to the Malāmatī origins of the Naqshbandiyya,[130] which we return to again below. But yet a third movement active during this period in Khurasan and Transoxiana is the much smaller and more exclusive Ḥākimiyya, a name that was later applied to what Knysh describes as "a loosely structured group" of mystically oriented thinkers with "a more elitist version of mystical piety" than the Sufis or Karrāmiyya.[131]

Early Psycho-Physiology: Locations in the Body and it Basic Elements

The typically provided representative of the Ḥakīmiyya is al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (b. ca. 820-830, d. ca. 907-912), a prolific writer who even authored an autobiography, an unprecedented genre at the time, in which visions and dreams (his own and his wife's) play a significant role, such as in verifying his degree of mystical attainment.[132] His writings also exhibit some major similarities with the mysticism of his contemporaries in Baghdad and Basra. Understanding *tawḥīd* plays a notable role as does love (*ḥubb*), he gives a detailed account of the pre-existence, which includes light symbolism, and it is this pure original state (*fiṭra*) which is held up as the ideal to return to.[133] He is perhaps best known by scholars of Sufism for his detailed hierachy of *awliyā'*, which is said to have been a forerunner of Ibn al-'Arabī's, as both men spoke of the *khatm al-awliyā'* ("seal of the saints").[134] What interests us most about Tirmidhī, however, is his own highly unique description of the subtle anatomy of man, which is also intimately connected with the physical body and its processes. As with his counterparts in Baghdad and Basra, Tirmidhī puts the human being, and specifically the heart as the battleground between opposing forces in the battle between good and evil, between love (*ḥubb*) and base desire. In his complex and quite specific psycho-physiology, or cosmo-psychology, Tirmidhī speaks of different negative and positive aspects in terms of internal structures, locations and organs, and also of five basic elements comprising the body.

The negative internal structures are located in the lower part of the body, the abdominal cavity (*jawf*), with the carnal soul being specifically in the lungs, where it can contaminate the originally pure blood and spread throughout the body, vitiating it. The positive structures are found in the upper parts of the body, the spirit (*rūḥ*) being found in the head, though he considers other organs elsewhere positively, like the spleen and the liver, noting how the latter is a juncture of all of the veins in the body by which the blood is nourished and enriched. Between these countervailing forces within each human is the heart, which is of a changing nature, as it can be influenced by either the positive or negative aspects and it is situated in the chest (*sadr*), the decisive terrain in this inner battle and the place of discerning truth from falsehood. He considers the heart as both the physical organ and a spiritual one, describing it as a series of seven nested envelopes, progressively more subtle from outer to inner

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129 Christopher Melchert, "Sufis and Competing Movements in Nishapur," *Iran* 39 (2001): 237-247.

130 Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, passim. In particular, he cites Hamid Algar, "Éléments de provenance malamati dans la tradition primitive Naqshbandi," in Nathalie Claire, Alexandre Popovic and Thierry Zarcone (eds.), *Melamis-Bayramis: édutes sur trois mouvements mystiques musulmans* (Istanbul: Isis, 1998), 27–36.

131 Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 105; Green, *Sufism*, 47-48.

132 For some translations, see Bernd Radtke and John O'Kane, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism: Two Works by al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996). For a recent study, see Sara Sviri, *Perspectives on Early Islamic Mysticism: The World of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī and his Contemporaries* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019). See also Sara Sviri, "Hakîm Tirmidhî and the Malâmatî Movement in Early Sufism," in *The Heritage of Sufism, Vol. I*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999), 583-613.

133 Geneviève Gobillot, *Le Livre des nuances: Ou de l'impossibilité de la synonymie* (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 2006), 60.

134 Bernd Radtke, "A Forerunner of Ibn al-'Arabī: Ḥakīm Tirmidhī on Sainthood," in *Journal of the Ibn 'Arabī Society* 8 (1989): 47.

layers.[135] Thus we see an early example of the *laṭā'if* being conceptualized as consecutively subtler sheaths within one another, something Buehler would note with regard to al-Ḥallāj and ʿAmr ibn ʿUthmān al-Makkī (d. ca. 909).[136] Returning to Tirmidhī, however, for him the essential attribute of the heart, is that it has vision. Accordingly, there are two eyes on the outermost part of the heart (*fu'ād*) and the inner part of the heart (qalb) has the capacity to be entirely filled with love.[137]

But he also speaks of these opposing forces within the human being in terms of five elements; earth, fire, water, wind, and light; which he also places on different sides in this battle. On the one hand is earth (*turāb*), the inherently defective base material of the physical body, along with fire, which was placed within man as auxiliary troops for Iblis. On the other hand, the positive elements in the body are water, which contains mercy and compassion and which douses the fire of the passions and moistens the earth to make it malleable for the infiltration of the next two positive elements: breath or wind (*rīḥ* and *rūḥ*), which provides the animating life force, and noblest of all, light.[138]

Although what are often called the Empedoclean elements of earth, water, fire, and air, after the ancient Greek philosopher Empedocles (d. 435 BC), are not found as a list in the Quran, we do find references to them individually. We are told that mankind was created from clay (*ṣalṣāl*, 23:12) or dust (*turāb*, 35:11) while Satan and *jinn* were created from fire (7:12). We are also told that every living thing was created from water (Quran 21:30, 24:45, and 25:). Fire tends to be a sign of God's punishment in the hereafter (9:63) while water appears as a sign of God's mercy and beneficence (25:48), as does wind (7:57). Even if Tirmidhī's particular grouping of these four elements was somehow related to Abbasid translation efforts of antique Greek philosophy, he was still looking primarily to the Quran for the content of his teachings. This is much like in the very creation of *fiqh*, as jurists adopted structures and aspects of Roman law in forming Islamic law, but basing the content mediated by these structures primarily on the Quran and accounts of the Prophet's life.[139]

As we saw in Tustarī, much of what would become the largely standard Mujaddidī model for the *laṭā'if* (discussed in parts two and three in detail) in addition to light imagery was present among Basran-Baghdadi mystical schools during the earlier years of Sufism's development. But during the same period and nearly 3,000 kilometers away at the eastern edge of the empire, we find quite similar ideas, but also further elements that provide quite early precedent for features of the Mujaddidī *laṭā'if* system. While the heart was already the seat of religious experience, Tirmidhī has a particular physiological emphasis on the chest as the main arena for man's inner battle. Another important aspect is his viewing the body as comprised of the four elements, in addition to light.

Figures of the 9th/10th Century in the Chishtī and Naqshbandī Silsilas

Although textual references date from much later periods, it is during this phase that the founder figure of the Chishtiyya, Abū Isḥāq al-Shāmī Chishtī (d. 940), is said to have been sent by his teacher from Syria to the village of Chisht, near Herat, at the eastern frontier in Khurasan. Although he is said to have eventually returned home to Syria where he died, his successor in the Chishtī *silsila*, Abū Aḥmad Abdāl (d. 966), is said to have died and been buried at a shrine in Chisht, whence this *ṭarīqa* takes its name.[140]

For the entire 150-year span of this phase, there is only one individual listed in the Naqshbandī *silsila*, that is **Abū Yazīd Ṭayfūr al-Bisṭāmī (804-874)**. This is explained via non-physical, non-temporal, *uwaysī* connections, first before him to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq who died ca. four decades prior to al-Bisṭāmī's birth, and then to al-Kharaqānī, who was born almost a century after his death. These *uwaysī* linkages provided further early precedent, on top of Uways al-Qaranī's non-physical connection to the Prophet, for later such major time-space jumps in the chain of transmission, namely Bahā' al-Dīn

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[135] "[…] *un assemblage de plusieurs enveloppes emboitees selon une progression allant de la plus epaisse a l'exterieur a la plus fine a l'interieur*." Gobillot, *Le Livre des nuances*, 116-18.
[136] Buehler, *Sufi Heirs*, 106, fn 31.
[137] Gobillot, *Le Livre des nuances*, 116-18.
[138] See Chapter Six of Gobillot, *Le Livre des nuances*.
[139] Daher, "The Shari'a."
[140] Carl W. Ernst and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 19-21.

Naqshband's connection to al-Ghijduwānī and in the 19th century, Sayyid ʿAbd al-Bārī Shāh's numerous *uwaysī* links to the founder figures of the *silsila*s he passed on to the case study group today.

Bisṭāmī is generally represented as the archetypal "intoxicated" mystic, for his numerous controversial statements like "*Subḥānī!*" ("Glory be to me!"), as well as when he "turns the direction of prayer (*qebla*) from God to himself, and declares that the Kaʿba walks around him," or is said to have replied to the cry of "*Allāhu akbar*" by the *mu'addin*, "I am greater."[141] Such shocking and apparently blasphemous statements were recorded by people who came to visit him as well as by his students, and while he wrote nothing himself, there are some 500 sayings attributed to him. These would later be understood as ecstatic utterances (*shaṭaḥāt* or *shaṭḥīyāt*, sg. *shaṭḥ* or *shaṭḥ*) made while absorbed in a unitive state, rather than descriptions of an ontological reality, thus exonerating Bisṭāmī of any accusations of heresy. He also, likewise controversially, uses the term *ʿishq* in speaking of love of God, a word usually reserved for passionate love between humans, as opposed to the more accepted Quranic *muḥabba*. Moreover, he used words to describe the unitive state that will appear again in this survey and in part three, like "singleness" (*waḥdāniyya*), "I-ness" (*ananiyya*), and "one-ness" (*aḥadiyya*).[142] He furthermore seems to have been the first to describe his mystical ascent as a re-enactment of the Prophet's night journey (*miʿrāj*), a comparison that would be adopted by later Sufis.[143] Like Tustarī, miracles were attributed to Bisṭāmī, though he seems to have made light of these, such as walking on water or flying through the air, by saying that wood also floats and birds fly.[144] Thus, downplaying the miraculous is again, not necessarily a modern phenomena.

His distance from the capital may have allowed him to make such shocking statements with relative impunity, as compared with those in Baghdad who were subjected to Ghulām Khalīl's inquisition. Still, although he spent most of his life in his native Bistam, he occasionally had to leave town for brief periods on account of the controversy he caused with the *ʿulamā'*.[145] There are also accounts of his interactions with significant figures mentioned so far, like meeting Shaqīq al-Balkhī as a boy and later having been well acquainted with Junayd's uncle and predecessor, al-Saqaṭī. While he does not seem to have met Junayd in person, Bisṭāmī's sayings made their way to the Abbasid capital and it was Junayd who became their chief interpreter and apologist.[146]

Orientalist scholars and others in search of extra-Islamic Indian influences have made much of the origins of Bisṭāmī's teacher, Abū ʿAlī al-Sindī, a name indicating that he came from al-Sind (India), and how the former taught the latter the Arabic verses of the Quran necessary for prayer and, in exchange, al-Sindī taught Bisṭāmī about unity with the divine. Böwering has outlined this debate and he sides with Massignon and Arberry against Tholuck, Zaehner, Nicholson, and others, holding for instance that Arberry successfully demonstrated that, rather than the Upanishads and Vedanta, Bisṭāmī's ideas "can be explained on the basis of Koranic imagery and Sufi language."[147] Algar notes that while his intoxicated reputation contrasts with the general sobriety of the Naqshbandiyya, certain details do prefigure major characteristics of the order, such as his being said to have performed silent *dhikr*,[148] and Böwering describes how when going "into seclusion to meditate, he closed every opening in his apartment so that no noise would disturb him." This reminded the researcher of early SOST meetings in private apartments in Munich, wherein the curtains were closed to dim the room and help shut out the sound of the traffic below.

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[141] *EIr* "Besṭāmī, Bāyazīd,"
[142] *EI*[2] "Abū Yazīd (Bāyazīd) Ṭayfūr b. ʿĪsā b. Surū<u>sh</u>ān al-Bisṭāmī."
[143] Arberry, *Sufism*, 54.
[144] *EIr* "Besṭāmī, Bāyazīd."
[145] *EI*[2] "Abū Yazīd (Bāyazīd) Ṭayfūr b. ʿĪsā b. Surū<u>sh</u>ān al-Bisṭāmī."
[146] *EIr* "Besṭāmī, Bāyazīd."
[147] Ibid.; *EI*[2] "Abū Yazīd (Bāyazīd) Ṭayfūr b. ʿĪsā b. Surū<u>sh</u>ān al-Bisṭāmī."
[148] Hamid Algar, "A Brief History of the Naqshbandī Order," in *Naqshbandis*, ed. Gaborieau, Popovic, and Zarcone, 3-44, here 6. Elsewhere, however, Karamustafa asserts that we do not know what methods al-Bisṭāmī used to reach such states. *Sufism*, 5. Yet Böwering provides some insights such as his scrupulousness in maintaining ritual purity and the above quote on meditation. *EIr* "Besṭāmī, Bāyazīd."

Extremely significantly, however, is his asserting that "the beginning of his path was the end of the path of others,"[149] the exact same claim attributed to Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband half a millennium later. He does in fact seem to have rejected outer asceticism, dismissing such outer renunciation by saying, "This world is nothing; how can one renounce it?"[150] Accordingly, Trimingham classifies Bisṭāmī as a Malāmatī, as does Weismann, who furthermore applies the same classification to the next link in the Naqshbandī *silsila*, Kharaqānī.[151]

Standardization: Balancing Revelation, Reason, and Intuition (950-1100)

While Abbasid glory shone brightly in the 9th century, especially in Baghdad, the early 10th century saw economic collapse and fragmentation, as in 945, Abbasid rule gave way to the Shi'i Buyids, though in 1055 the Turkish Sunni Seljuks seized Baghdad. From the early 10th century, the Ismā'īlī Caliphate had been expanding eastward across North Africa. Going along with the political ascendancy of the Shi'is, there were important developments in Shi'i mysticism, such as with the Ismā'īlī mystic, poet, and philosopher Nāsir Khusraw (1004-1088)[152] or the *Rasā'il Ikhwān Al-Ṣafā* ("Encyclopedia of the Brethren of Purity"), the cosmological doctrines of which are also emanationist and are among the many sources said to have later influenced Ibn al-'Arabī.[153] It is against this backdrop, with Baghdad a shadow of its former glory, that our geographical focus now shifts eastward, primarily to Khurasan.

The overlapping fields of the religious sciences, mysticism, and philosophy continued to develop in parallel and in dialogue with each other. The influence, exchange, and sometimes tensions amongst the overlapping groups of *'ulamā'*, mystics, and philosophers continued. Following in the footsteps of al-Kindī and al-Fārābī was the third great figure of Islamic philosophy, Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, ca. 970–1037). He described an emanationist descent proceeding "from the Necessary Being, through the Intelligences and Souls to the four elements,"[154] the themes of love and light were important in his thought, and he divided the cosmos into the impossible (*mumtani'*), the necessary (*wājib*), and the contingent or possible (*mumkin*).[155] Such a division of the cosmos would become important in later Sufi thinking, like that of Ibn al-'Arabī, and later still, Mujaddidī cosmologies, including our case study, would speak of the sphere of contingent existence (*dā'irat-i imkānī*). The exchanges and tensions among religious scholars, mystics, and philosophers were important shaping factors in the continuing formation of Sufism and would have important consequences up to the present.

Scholars of Sufism generally consider this a period of standardization. Leading up to this phase and continuing through it into the next, Baghdad-style Sufism would gradually subsume or displace the other movements, like the Malāmatiyya and Karrāmiyya. A significant number of Sufi texts were being produced, largely by Khurasanian authors, that described and analyzed earlier Sufis and their teachings, even creating typologies. Thus, Sufism had become a self-conscious reflexive tradition, it was the very emergence of the field of Sufi Studies. An important example of such standardization is in the continued development of the theory of "subtleties" (*laṭā'if*) within man. Some components of man's inner being, identified from the Quran and expounded on in various models in the last two periods, viz., the *qalb*, *rūḥ*, and *nafs*, was already more or less standard. But a fourth aspect of the subtle anatomy, one that was proposed by Tustarī, also became widely accepted, that is the *sirr*, a "mystery" or "secret" at the

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[149] Algar, "A Brief History," 6.
[150] *EIr* "Besṭāmī, Bāyazīd."
[151] J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders of Islam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 52; Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 24-25.
[152] Annemarie Schimmel, *Make a Shield from Wisdom: Selected Verses from Nasir-i Khusraw's Divan* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001).
[153] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines: Conceptions of Nature and Methods used for its Study by the Ihwan Al-Safa, Al-Biruni, and Ibn Sina* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964); Ian Richard Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991).
[154] Idem 38.
[155] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages: Avicenna-Suhrawardi-Ibn 'Arabi* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1997), 26.

core of one's heart, the very place of colloquy with God. This term was adopted and used in similar ways, although its exact place in the hierarchy of the subtle anatomy was not yet uniform, by al-Sulamī (d. 1021, *nafs*, *qalb*, *sirr*, *rūḥ*), al-Qushayrī (d. 1074, *nafs*, *qalb*, *rūḥ*, *sirr*), and al-Hujwīrī (d. 1077, see below).[156] On the last of these, having travelled throughout the Ghaznawid Empire, from Damascus to Nishapur, it was at the direction of his own *shaykh* that in around 1040, al-Hujwiri established himself in Lahore to provide spiritual support to the Ghaznavid troops stationed there. It was there that he wrote the first Persian-language treatise on Sufism, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*.[157] Therein, in addition to the *nafs*, *qalb* (Pers. *dil*) *sir*, and *rūḥ* (Pers. *jān*), with regard to man's physical body, he described how the four humors correspond to the four elements of water, earth, air, and fire.[158] Thus we already see eight components of the ten-*laṭīfa* model that would be expounded by Sirhindī in the 17th century, the remaining two components emerge in the next and coming periods. A second major development, with much broader ramifications for Sufism as a whole, is the elevation of the role of the teacher. While the preceding period was characterized by loosely linked informal circles around various teachers, it now became necessary to have a guide, as can be noted in Qushayrī's insistence on the need for a *shaykh* to guide one on the mystical path.[159] Buehler considers this period to have been marked by the transition from the teaching *shaykh* to the directing *shaykh*.[160]

This leads us to the next figure in the Naqshbandī *silsila*, **Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Kharaqānī (953 or 962 or 964-1033 or 1088)** was born in the village of Kharaqan north of Bistam. He claimed Bisṭāmī as his teacher, having been initiated by him in a dream after a series of extra-physical nightly visits to his teacher's tomb in Bistam. Like his teacher through *uwaysī* connection, Kharaqānī was uneducated and untraveled, and has been described as a Bisṭāmī "somewhat tamed" ("*un Bayezid quelque peu apprivoise*"),[161] though still rather provocative, such as in the story of him stretching out his little finger and declaring, "Here is the *qibla*, if anyone desires to become a Sufi."[162] Kharaqānī attracted a number of important visitors during his lifetime, including Ibn Sīnā, 'Abd Allāh Anṣārī and al-Qushayrī. One story, which falls in line with the rise in importance of the *shaykh*, involves some travelers being attacked by bandits. One of them, as he had been instructed by the *shaykh*, called for help from Kharaqānī and was spared, while the others invoked God but were robbed anyway. To them, Kharaqānī is said to have explained, "You invoke God formally, whereas I invoke Him really. Hence, if you invoke me and I then invoke God on your behalf, your prayers are granted; but it is useless for you to invoke God formally and by rote."[163] This is an early example of the mediatory role of the spiritual teacher.[164]

The next Naqshandī link is **Abū 'Alī al-Fārmadī Ṭūsī (1011/1012-1080)**, who was born in Khurasan in the village of Farmad near Tus. Unlike his predecessor Kharaqānī, Fārmadī was well-educated. In Nishapur, he joined the circle of Qushayrī, first becoming a religious scholar and then gaining an interest in Sufism in which, after Qushayrī, he reportedly had two further mentors, Gurgānī (or Kurrakānī, d. 1076) and of course Kharaqānī, whom he may or may not have met in person. There are no known writings of his that have survived, but among his students, were two important brothers: Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 1126), who emphasized love, and the scholar turned mystic Abū Ḥamid al-

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156 Shigeru Kamada, "A Study of the Term *Sirr* (Secret) in Sufi *Lata'if* Theories," *Orient* 19 (1983): 7-28.
157 For a translation, see Ali b. 'Uthman al-Jullabi Hujwiri, *The Kashf al-Mahjub "The Revelation of the Veiled": An Early Persian Treatise on Sufism*, transl. Reynold A. Nicholson (London: Luzac & Co., 1911).
158 Kamada, "A Study of the Term *Sirr*," 18-20; Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 99.
159 Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, 63.
160 See Chapter Two of Buehler, *Sufi Heirs*.
161 Serge de Laugier de Beaurecueil, *K͟hwadja Abdullah Ansari (396-481 H./1006-1089): mystique hanbalite* (Beirut: Institut de Lettres orientales, 1963), 65-7.
162 Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, 96-7.
163 For these and a number of other sayings of Kharaqānī, see Nicholson, *Mystics of Islam*, 61, 96-99.
164 *EI*[2] "K͟haraḳānī."

Ghazālī (d. 1111).[165] Of note on man's spiritual psychology, Aḥmad describes three stages of *qalb*, *rūḥ*, and *sirr*, while his brother, Abū Ḥamid lists only *qalb* and *rūḥ* alongside the *nafs*.[166]

The latter is a monumental figure who would be crucial to the balancing to acceptable proportions of revelation, reason, and intuition that characterized this period of standardization, and he would remind all of the primacy of revelation. Thus, he would be crucial in making Sufism acceptable among the *'ulamā'*, but his sights were particularly aimed at the philosophers. As the author of *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* ("The Incoherence of the Philosophers"),[167] al-Ghazālī is well known for his refutation of the Hellenistic philosophical influences within Islam, particularly al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Despite his harsh critiques of the philosophers, he was probably nevertheless partly indebted to them for his own cosmological understandings. As Sedgwick observes, "Ghazali too was something of an emanationist […]."[168] Stating it in the terms of our above coffee beans, water, and milk analogy, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī would conclude that the appropriate proportions of the ideal beverage should definitely not be a watered-down Café Americano or Viennese Verlängerter (too much reason) and also that it should not be taken black (empty ritualism).

Sufi Theosophy and the Emergence of the Ṭarīqas (1100-1300)

This phase is marked by two major developments in the history of Sufism: the culmination of preceding Sufi thought in certain key thinkers and the emergence of institutionalized Sufism in the form of *ṭarīqa*s, but also important for our case study is a movement that arose as a counter-response to the *ṭarīqa*s. During this period, however, the Muslim world would face two major external threats. First from the West, starting in 1096, European crusaders, under the support and direction of the Catholic Church, were engaged in multiple and successive campaigns to wrest the Holy Land from Muslim control. The second and much more consequential threat came from the East in the form of the Mongol invasions in the 13th century, the last half of this period. They overtook and occupied Khwarazm, Transoxiana and Khurasan from 1219-1221 and seized Baghdad in 1258, but soon thereafter in 1259, the Mongol Empire began to fragment into four main successor states, the most important of which for us is the Chagatai Khanate, whose lands include Transoxiana. Despite their ferocity, these conquerors were also pragmatic, and although they originally practiced a blend of Buddhism, Shamanism, and Tengriism, the Mongols would eventually adopt the faith of their newly acquired subjects, Mubārak Shāh (r. 1252–1260 and 1266) being the first Chagatai ruler to convert to Islam.[169] The Mongol invasions led to some important Sufi figures below being killed by the Mongols or seeking refuge in other parts of the Muslim world, such as Anatolia. Some were in other areas outside Mongol grasp like North Africa or Syria before they reached there, and many discussed below lived in the 12th century before the invasions took place.

High Medieval Theosophy: Islamic, Jewish, and Christian

We turn now to the first major development, viz., the alleged culmination of Sufi theoretical mysticism. One of the major figures involved in this was Shihāb ad-Dīn Suhrawardī (1154-1191), known as *Shaykh al-'Ishrāq* "Master of Illumination" and the founder of the 'Ishrāqī ("Illuminationist") school, whose emanationist cosmology had a basis in Ibn Sīnā's and was entirely centered around light. He sought to revive a long lost, pre-Islamic "oriental theosophy," which he believed had once been entrusted to the ancient Greeks as well as to the Zoroastrians. Thus, he produced an early version of the perennial philosophy, one which predates Marsilio Ficino's (d. 1499) *prisca theologia* by three centuries! Recalling Ḥallāj before him, he was executed in Aleppo on charges of heresy, but the exact reasons may have been for certain alleged political content in his teachings, for propagating Shi'i

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[165] *EI²* "Abū ʿAlī," and Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 124.
[166] Buehler, *Sufi Heirs*, 106-07, fn 32.
[167] For a translation, see Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali and Michael E. Marmura (transl.), *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 2nd Ed. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2000).
[168] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 67.
[169] Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World: From Conquest to Conversion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017).

(Ismāʿīlī) *bāṭinī* ideas, or both.[170] He will be referred to here as Suhrawardī "Maqtūl" ("Murdered"), to distinguish him from other key figures below from the same village of Suhraward in northwestern Iran, and thus with the same *nisba*. In contrast to Suhrawardī and his giving centrality to light, hailing from Balkh, in modern-day Afghanistan, is another key thinker who focused on love and expressed himself through poetry. That individual is none other than the famed mystic poet Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī (1207-1273). He did not spend long in his native Balkh, displaced from childhood as a result of the Mongol invasions, and ultimately ended up in Anatolia in around 1228. Yet he is not only important here for his contribution to Sufi theosophy in the form of his vast corpus of poetry, but also because after his death, a Sufi *ṭarīqa* was established with him as its founder figure, the Mawlawiyya, popularly known for the whirling which characterizes their *samāʿ* sessions.

Perhaps most important of all to the development of high medieval Sufi theosophy is the thought of Ibn al-ʿArabī (1165-1240), also known as *al-Shaykh al-Akbar* ("The Greatest Shaykh"). His three arguably best known doctrines are *al-insān al-kāmil* ("the perfect man"), *waḥdat al-wujūd* ("unity of being"), which has been interpreted or more likely misinterpreted as pantheism,[171] and *al-ḥaḍarāt al-ilāhiyyat al-khams* ("the five divine presences").[172] The last doctrine is the most important for this survey, as it is basically his emanationist account of the structure of the universe divided into five main levels. These five can be grouped, after Ibn Sīnā, into the necessary (the first two emanations or entifications) and the contingent (the last three). The first entification, analogous to Tustarī's *nūr Muḥammad*, is "the Muhammadan Reality" (*al-Ḥaqīqat al-Muḥammadiyya*), which he also refers to by countless additional names, including "the First Intellect" (*al-ʿAql al-ʿAwwal*), "the Exalted Pen" (*al-Qalam al-Aʿlā*), "the Reality of Realities" (*al-Ḥaqīqat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*), and numerous others.[173] True to his epithet of *al-Shaykh al-Akbar*, Ibn al-ʿArabī's importance in subsequent Sufi tradition cannot be overstated. In fact, his teachings would later greatly influence Sirhindī's thought and teaching. Whether he was agreeing with "the Great Shaykh" or not, his mark was certainly and indelibly imprinted, and indeed provided the basic structure and framework within which Sirhindī shared his own ideas, though modified to ensure compatibility with the *sharīʿa*.

In the context of Ibn al-ʿArabī's life and work coinciding with the rise of the *ṭarīqa*s, Schimmel observes that Ibn al-ʿArabī and his school would "give this widespread mystical upsurge a framework into which its main ideas could be put: a fixed vocabulary and a comparatively simple theology." Although "simple" is relative, it can be simplified or at least given a more definite structure. It might also be put into poetic terms, as Rūmī did, that might be more easily accessible to the masses, attempting to defy the ineffability of the ineffable, to describe the indescribable, so that others may also take part in it. Therefore, the *ṭarīqa*s might be seen as vehicles for bringing the thought of such masters and the preceding teachings of earlier Sufi masters on whose shoulders they stood, to a much larger audience, making Sufi ideas and methods reproducible and transferrable well beyond only the small circles of urban intellectuals among which Sufism first emerged in Baghdad. But important to note, some *shaykh*s who founded or propagated a *ṭarīqa* were also prolific mystical writers and thinkers.

But before we turn to the *ṭarīqa*s, this period was also important for developments in Jewish and Christian mysticism which may have been tied to the availability of Neoplatonic emanationist ideas that had been preserved and translated in Abbasid Baghdad. These are important to note here, since similar frameworks among dominant and emergent forms of religio-spirituality in the (post-)modern West will allow for resonance upon Sufism's arrival there. Thus, we turn first to Kabbalah, which has

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[170] Roxanne Marcotte, "Suhrawardi," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), accessed March 11, 2020, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/suhrawardi/.

[171] For a rebuttal of the interpretation of *waḥdat al-wujūd* as pantheism, see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 266-68.

[172] William C. Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences: From Al-Qunawi To Al-Qaysari," *The Muslim World* 72, no. 2 (1982): 107-28.

[173] Affifi gives eighteen examples of such different designations for the Muhammadan Reality, but says the list could go on and on. Affifi himself calls it the "Mohammedan Logos" and equates it with "the First Intellect: Plotinus' Nous or the Universal Reason of the Stoics." A.E. Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid Dín-Ibnul ʿArabí* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1939), 66.

not only been important to Judaism, but also in what has been called Western Esotericism. Sedgwick posits that while the exact route of introduction is unclear, Neoplatonic ideas were important in the development of Jewish Kabbalah in 12th-century southern France. In particular is the *sephirothic* tree, which emerged among early Kabbalists and uses light imagery in describing ten levels of emanation (*sephiroth*, sg. *sephirah*) from the transcendent "Infinite" (*Ein Sof*), return to which is facilitated by constant prayer and vigilant observance of religious law.[174] One personality relating to Jewish mysticism from this period, who will appear again in the thought of Ahmed Abdur Rashid, is the Andalusian Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), whom Sedgwick describes as a reconciler of Judaism and Neoplatonic philosophy,[175] much like al-Ghazālī did with Islamic revelation.

Pertaining to Christendom, earlier Christian thinkers like Augustine (d. 430) and Boethius (d. ca. 524) had been influenced by Neoplatonism, but it was only well into the Medieval era that it would make a comeback in Paris. Shortly after al-Andalus began to collapse and its libraries were left in Christian hands, most of Western Europe started to emerge from the "Dark Ages." In this context, Sedgwick describes how the scholastic philosophy taught in Paris from the 13th century had much in common with Arab philosophy, and thus with Neoplatonism. One especially important Christian mystic who seems to have been a significant part of this Neoplatonic revival was none other than Meister Eckhart (1260-1328),[176] though much like the early Sufis, he faced a backlash from established orthodoxy and was branded a heretic.[177] He lived at the end of this period and into the next, and thus he was a contemporary of Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā' and the last decade of Eckhart's life overlaps with the first decade of Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband's (see below).

Emergence of the Ṭarīqas

We have already seen how the Mawlawiyya was founded in Konya just after Rūmī's death in 1273, but this was one of the later appearing *ṭarīqa*s. On the whole, the founder figures of the major orders did not actually found, organize, and name *ṭarīqa*s after themselves. This was instead usually accomplished posthumously by their disciples, as was the case with Rūmī and, as we will see in the next phase, with Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, the founder figure of the latest of the major *ṭarīqa*s to appear, the Naqshbandiyya. Another of the later *ṭarīqa*s to emerge during this period was the North African Shādhiliyya, organized by the followers of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (1196-1258), who is said to have provided *uwaysī* initiation to a 19th-century figure in our case study lineage, 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh.

But on the initial emergence of the *ṭarīqa*s, one could certainly do worse than to start with 'Abd al-Qādir Gīlānī (1078-1166), another founder figure who is said to have, from the grave, made 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh his *khalīfa* via a time and space defying *uwaysī* connection. In addition to being a Sufi, 'Abd al-Qādir was a Ḥanbalī scholar who, much like al-Ghazālī, proffered a quite orthodox form of Sufism, and just as for Junayd, for 'Abd al-Qādir, the accomplished mystic and the religious scholar are outwardly much the same thing. Such orthodoxy is also linked with a social activism that would later also be ascribed to the Naqshbandīs. As Knysh describes it, avoiding "metaphysical speculations" and "play[ing] down the sensational," 'Abd al-Qādir's Sufism "was driven by a clear communal agenda: to morally uplift his fellow Muslims and to guide them to salvation."[178] The Qādiriyya seems to have emerged from among his descendants and followers in Baghdad, where he served as the head of a *madrasa* with an adjacent *ribāṭ*, where residents adhered to a strict regimen and code of conduct as laid out by 'Abd al-Qādir himself. In spite of his own intense orthodoxy and sobriety, 'Abd al-Qādir would in some cases be nearly deified in later popular forms of Sufism up to the present,[179] a phenomenon bolstered by a statement ascribed to him that his foot rests of the necks of all the saints, thus making

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174 Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 55-56.
175 Idem 54-55, 67.
176 Idem 58-68.
177 For a comparison of the mystical teachings of Rūmī and Eckhart, see Zarrabi-Zadeh, *Practical Mysticism in Islam and Christianity*. For one example of the many comparisons of Ibn al-'Arabī and Eckhart, see Robert J. Dobie, *Logos and Revelation: Ibn 'Arabi, Meister Eckhart, and Mystical Hermeneutics* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010).
178 Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 181.
179 Idem 179-92.

him the most powerful. In fact, despite not even appearing in the *silsila*, he is sometimes invoked in the *khatm-i khwājagān* of some Naqshbandīs.

Another Persian religious scholar-Sufi who would have an order named after him is Abū al-Najīb Suhrawardī (1097-1168). He initially studied under the abovementioned intoxicated Ghazālī brother, Aḥmad (not his more orthodox brother Abū Ḥamid), and then under another *shaykh* (Ḥammad al-Dabbās, d. 1131) who had been a teacher of ʻAbd al-Qādir. Like ʻAbd al-Qādir, Abū al-Najīb ran a *ribāṭ* and a *madrasa* in Baghdad and had a group of followers.[180] As we will see in the contemporary survey, providing education (usually religious) alongside acting as a Sufi *shaykh* continues to be a common combination today. He also wrote an important work, not on Sufi metaphysics, but on Sufi ethics and personal conduct entitled *Kitāb Adab al-Murīdīn* ("Book of Conduct for Disciples").[181] It was his nephew and student Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʻUmar al-Suhrawardī (1145-1234) who would actually found the line in his uncle's name. He is known for the work, *ʻAwārif al-Maʻārif* ("Gifts of Divine Knowledge"), wherein he presents a *laṭīfa* system comprised of the *nafs*, *qalb*, and *rūḥ*, but also discusses different ideas on the place of the *sirr* in the thought of earlier Sufis.[182] Also of note, his mutually beneficial ties with the Abbasid Caliph Nāṣir (1158-1225), who recognized how Shihāb al-Dīn's large following and influence among the populace could be instrumentalized in the service of the empire, represents the proto-typical example of state patronage of Sufis. It would set a precedent for the Suhrawardiyya and their relationships with rulers, one that would also be pursued by some Naqshbandīs. The caliph not only appointed Shihāb al-Dīn a court theologian, made him the *Shaykh al-Shuyūkh* ("Shaykh of Shaykhs"), and had him serve as an emissary, but he also built a lodge for him and put him in charge of the *futuwwa* guilds.[183] This seems to prefigure certain recent attempts by governments in the West as well as in majority-Muslim nations, to co-opt Sufism, almost making it a state-sanctioned version of Islam, in the face of violent radical fundamentalists, something we return to below.

The Kubrāwī Masters of Colors

Another student of ʻAbū al-Najīb Suhrawardī, the uncle founder figure not the nephew, was ʻAmmār al-Bidlīsī (d. 1200) whose own student, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. ca. 1220) would be the founder of another *ṭarīqa* which would provide some significant doctrinal and practical precedents for the Naqshbandiyya. He is said to have died in battle facing the Mongol invasion of his native Khwarazm, despite being 75 years of age at the time. As Corbin observes, just as Suhrawardī "Maqtūl," who was roughly contemporary with Kubrā though slightly before, was the "Master of Light," Kubrā was the "Master of Colors." He seems to be the first major figure to have elaborated in depth on visions of colored lights perceived while performing Sufi practices. These colors associated with particular visions indicate stages of purification and advancement toward the goal, changing from black to white, dark blue to red, and black to green as inner foes are vanquished and greater purification is achieved. The loftiest of all the colors for Kubrā is green, or what Corbin calls, the *visio smaragdina* ("emerald vision").[184] As the aspirant progressively burns away the veils of separation, they pass through stages in the development of the subtle faculties of the *shaykh al-ghayb*, one's own inner or "hidden guide," which sounds very much like our case study lineage describing awakening inner potentials and coming to know one's true higher self. For Kubrā, these *laṭāʼif* are three in number, the *nafs*, *ʻaql*, and *qalb*, and the visions which they herald depict spiritual warfare against three enemies (one's natural being, the

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180 Idem 192-95.

181 ʻAbd Al-Qāhir Ibn ʻAbd Allāh Suhrawardī and Menahem Milson, *A Sufi Rule for Novices: Kitāb Ādāb Al-murīdīn of Abū Al-Najīb Al-Suhrawardī* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1975).

182 Kamada, "A Study of the Term *Sirr*," 23-24; ʻUmar Ibn-Muḥammad As-Suhrawardī, Maḥmūd Ibn ʻAlī Al-Kāšānī, and Henry Wilberforce Clarke. *The ʻAwarif-u'l-Maʻarif: Companion in Sufism to the Dīwān-i Khwājah Ḥāfiẓ* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1979).

183 Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 103-04.

184 Henry Corbin, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism* (New Lebanon, NY: Omega Publications Inc, 1971), 61-98. In perennialist fashion, Corbin connects this with the *Tabula Smaragdina* ("Emerald Tablet") attributed to Hermes Trismegistus.

commanding soul, and Satan), a struggle which enacts virtuous transformations in one's self which correspond to the three classic levels of the *nafs* taken from the Quran.[185]

We find instructions for one method of *dhikr* by which he pursued such purification and which seems, especially in light of two later Kubrāwī figures discussed below, to prefigure a practice that would come to be known as *nafī wa ithbāt*. In Kubrā's *dhikr*, as described by Corbin, one imagines an upward movement like an intense purifying flame, invoked through the recitation of the first part of the Islamic profession of the faith (*shahāda*): *lā ilāha illā Allāh*.[186] Of even greater significance, however, is the fact that Kubrā appears to have been the first person to begin articulating the concept of *INfB*. He addresses the problem of spending one's entire life in the lower stages of the path and never advancing to higher levels, and how the Kubrāwīs overcome this by relying on *jadhba* as a faster method for making progress on the path.[187]

In addition to his spectacular visions and interpretations thereof, just like Tustarī before him with his vision of green light and concept of *nūr Muḥammad* derived from Quranic exegesis informed by mystical intuition, Kubrā also began a massive *tafsīr* project which would be continued by two of his spiritual descendants described below. He also outlined ten rules in his *al-Uṣūl al-ʻAshara*, the first eight of which are said to have come from Junayd, while Kubrā added two of his own.[188] From a more etic historiographical perspective, and as already noted by Algar,[189] this seems to anticipate the attribution of the first eight of the eleven Naqshbandī principles to Ghijduwānī, and perhaps even one-upsmanship, since Bahā' al-Dīn is supposed to have added another three principles for a total of eleven, as described below and in the next section. But moving on to his spiritual progeny, Majd al-Dīn al-Baghdādī, a direct student of Kubrā, would have two important disciples of his own. One was Farīd al-Dīn ʻAṭṭār, who like Kubrā was killed by the Mongols around 1220 but who was an accomplished poet, famous for his *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr* ("Conference of the Birds"), and who is also said to have met a young Rūmī and recognized his talent.[190]

The other of Majd al-Dīn's students was Najm al-Dīn Dāya al-Rāzī (1177-1256), who had also met and trained with Kubrā in person in Khwarazm. Dāya al-Rāzī, however, was able to escape the Mongol onslaught, since before their arrival he had travelled to Konya in search of patronage, where he met the Abbasid emissary Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (the nephew), who would whole-heartedly approve of his *Mirṣād al-ʻIbād*.[191] He then went to Baghdad where he found similar employment, since he travelled to Tabriz as a diplomatic envoy in 1225.[192] He not only continued, but did not complete, the *tafsīr* project initiated by Kubrā, yet he also expanded upon Kubrā's system of colors and method

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[185] The visions allow the mystical traveler to recognize which of the three nemeses they are facing and understand at which level they are in the process. At the first stage, one faces *wujūd* ("being" or one's base nature) which appears as a black cloud perhaps with red hues if one is particularly ruled by his lower self, but these clouds lighten and even become a billowing white with further and further purification. The next foe to be dealt with in this ethereal combat is *al-nafs al-ʿammāra* ("the lower self"), which appears as dark blue water, swelling up from a spring, which in the worst of cases is accompanied by fire. This level of the self corresponds to the *laṭīfa* of the *nafs*, in the sense of "soul," and continued polishing makes one aware of their own shortcomings and raises them to the station of *al-nafs al-lawwāma* ("the self-blaming self") which corresponds to the subtle organ of the *ʻaql*, which appears as an enormous red sun. The final opponent is *Shayṭān* (or Satan) himself and he appears either as a dark, smokey fire or sometimes as a negro man with a terrifying countenance. With further and further continuous polishing, eventually the *murid* attains to the level of *al-nafs al-muṭmaʾinna* ("the self at peace") which corresponds to the *laṭīfa* of the *qalb* and is manifested in the astral plane as numerous green orbs. Idem 93.

[186] Idem 73-74.

[187] Buehler noticed this in the Arabic portion of Meier's edited version of Kubrā's *Fawāʾiḥ*. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs*, 121, fns 81 and 82; see also Fritz Meier, *Die Fawāʾiḥ al-ǧamāl wa-fawātiḥ al-ǧalāl des Naǧm ad-Dīn al-Kubrā* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1957), 285.

[188] Cyrus Ali Zargar, "The Ten Principles: Theoretical Implications of Volitional Death in Najm al-Din Kubra's *al-Uṣūl al-ʻAshara* (A Study and Translation)," *The Muslim World*, Vol. 103, (2013) pp. 1-24, here 6.

[189] Algar, "A Brief History," 9.

[190] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 152-56.

[191] Idem 196.

[192] For a history of Dāya's life and a translation of his magnum opus, see Hamid Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return (Merṣād al-ʻEbād men al-Mabdāʾ elāʾl-Maʻād): A Sufi Compendium* (Delmar, NY: Caravan, 1982).

of *dhikr*, which seems to be a closer step to the evolving remembrance of *nafī wa ithbāt*. For Dāya al-Rāzī, this *dhikr* involves focusing within the body and imagining two movements. Moreover, and quite significantly for this study, Dāya also describes *INfB* from a different perspective, rather than the *jadhba* mentioned by Kubrā, he explains the asserted greater efficacy and speed of Kubrāwī *shaykh*s' methods by saying that they begin with the heart in contrast to others who begin work on the *nafs*. This fact seems to have escaped the notice, or at least comment, of scholars thus far, with the one exception being a pencil notation in the margin of an *ex libris* Dr. Schimmel copy of Algar's translation of *Mirṣād al-'Ibād*, presumably by Schimmel herself, who describes this principle in her *Mystical Dimensions*. That gloss in Arabic script simply reads "Naqshbandī."[193] Also, and perhaps even more significantly, Dāya al-Rāzī seems to be the first to have added a new *laṭīfa* to the conventional earlier *nafs*, *qalb*, *rūḥ*, and *sirr* model, viz., the *khafī*, which has been translated as "hidden" or "arcanum."

In Dāya's conception of the spiritual aspects within man,[194] as compared with Kubrā's, he adds three *laṭā'if* and removes the *nafs* from Kubra's construct, though certainly not from his thought overall, leaving the *'aql*, *qalb*, *ruḥ*, *sirr*, and *khafī*. This grouping of the positive spiritual aspects perhaps anticipates Sirhindī's model of the five *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr*. Unlike later constructs where each *laṭīfa* is associated with a particular color, Dāya associates visions of colored lights with only one of these subtle faculties, the heart, and calls the graded procession through these chromatic levels, "unveiling of the heart" (*mukāshafāt i dil*). Each of the other *laṭā'if* has their own respective forms of manifestation, for example, Corbin explains that the *mukāshafat* ("unveiling") of the *'aql* would be exhibited by a blossoming of one's intellect while the opening of the *khafī* would be marked by a revelation of "the time and space of the beyond."[195] As for the unveiling of the heart and its associated colorful visions, however, Dāya articulates seven levels, six of which are associated with the beauty (*jamāl*) of God while the last is associated with his majesty (*jalāl*). At the beginning of the mystical path, one sees brief flashes of light which, by degrees, become brighter and steadier until they are like the stars, then the moon, the sun, and ultimately a pure light "free of any locus."[196] The colors of these photisms begin with blue at the level of *al-nafs al-lawwāma*, when the *murīd* realizes his faults and seeks to purify himself of them. As the light of the soul begins to show through more, the visions of light become red, and when there is more light than darkness in one's soul, they are yellow. When there is finally no more darkness in the soul, the lights become white, and "When the light of the spirit begins to mingle with the purity of the heart, a green light appears." At the last of the *jamālī* levels, the heart has been burnished to such a degree that it is free of impurities and the light one witnesses is colorless. The one *jalālī* station, and the last of the seven levels, is marked by the color black. This is not a black of darkness or pollution, but a *lumière noir* or "luminescent black" (*aswad nurānī*) which removes the desire for anything but God,[197] and it is at this point when one has reached the highest station of Dāya's polychromatic system for gauging spiritual progress.[198]

On his method of *dhikr* by which such unveilings are achieved, unlike the single upward visualization of Kubrā, Dāya breaks the first part of the *shahāda* into two movements, first rising up from the navel, negating the mundane with *lā ilāha* to rise toward the divine unhindered by worldly desires, and second, a reciprocal movement which descends into the heart with *illā Allāh*. This contrasts not only with Kubrā's earlier uni-directional upward movement with the same phrase undivided, but also with Simnānī's later four-stroke visualization, discussed in the next section. Perhaps it represents a developmental step between the former and the latter. Furthermore, Dāya uses the analogy of polishing a mirror, stating that through *dhikr*, the more one polishes their heart, the clearer it becomes. This process is to be repeated continuously and vigorously but with reverence, much like the Naqshbandiyya's general focus on sober practices,[199] which is often contrasted with the lively,

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[193] Idem 213.
[194] Corbin, *Man of Light*, 99-120.
[195] Idem 109-110.
[196] Algar, *Path of God's Bondsmen*, 294.
[197] Corbin, *Man of Light*, 100.
[198] Algar, *Path of God's Bondsmen*, 301-303.
[199] Idem 272.

intoxicated *samā'* of the Chishtiyya, to whom we now turn. This also requires, for the first time in this survey, a shift to India.

The Chishtiyya Arrives in India

Islam already had some presence in South Asia during the early half of the 7th century in the first phase of this survey. In fact, it is possible that the first Muslim naval expedition there may have been as early as 636, just four years after the Prophet's death. Subsequently, most of the earliest Muslims arriving in India were primarily Shafī'ī Arabs who became established in coastal areas and maintained close contacts by sea with Arabia. The first military conquest into India was also during the first period, by Muḥammad ibn Qāsim (d. 715), allegedly to come to the aid of Muslim women who had been captured by pirates, although economic opportunity may have also offered some incentive. Following his invasion of Sindh in 711, which would initiate over 1,000 years of Muslim rule on Indian soil, he is reported to have declared that "to us the (Hindu) temples shall be like the churches of the Christians, the synagogues of the Jews, and the fire temples of the Magians […]."[200] Whether or not this was out of genuine human fellowship or political pragmatism, and whether or not this quote, recorded by an historian born almost a century after the fact, was actually spoken by Ibn Qāsim, it offers an early example of extending the tolerant and pluralistic position the Prophet had toward the people of the book to other religious communities in new contexts. In the quite religiously diverse Indian context, some rulers as well as Sufi *shaykh*s proved to be highly pluralistic, such as among the Chishtiyya, while others were much more exclusivistic, particularly among the later-arriving Naqshbandīs, who at this point had still yet to even be formed.

That said, several centuries after the first Muslims came to India in the early 7th century, another major wave of Muslims arrived in the early 13th century just prior to the Mongol invasions. These were Central Asian Turko-Persians who, coming overland from what is now Afghanistan, arrived in the north and established the Sultanate of Delhi, which lasted from 1206-1555.[201] Under the Delhi Sultanate, Persian would eventually become the language of administration as well as mystical expression, though Arabic retained its importance among the *'ulamā'* and as a liturgical language.[202] The establishment of the sultanate set the stage for the longevity of two major Sufi orders who had just recently or were about to arrive in India, the Suhrawardiyya and the Chishtiyya.

The latter, which would eventually come to predominate, was introduced there by the Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī (1142–1236), prior to the establishment of the sultanate. He originally hailed from the village of Sijzi in Khurasan and is said to have come, allegedly in response to a request made of him via *uwaysī* means by the 11th-century al-Hujwīrī, first to Delhi in 1193 and later settling in Ajmer.[203] He is also said to have been friends with Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, and early Chishtīs in India relied on Shihāb al-Dīn's *'Awārif*.[204] Mu'īn al-Dīn is given much credit for the propagation of Islam in South Asia, but in addition to spreading Islam, the Chishtiyya has also been understood as a major vehicle for the transmission of the thought of Ibn al-'Arabī to India, though this has been brought into question.[205] It has even been suggested that Mu'īn al-Dīn may have met Ibn al-'Arabī on a visit to Damascus prior to setting off for India.[206] Whatever the route, it has been well argued that when Ibn al-'Arabī's idea of *waḥdat al-wujūd* reached India, it was widely interpreted in what might be called pantheistic terms in its South Asian reception as *hama ūst* ("all is He").[207] On propagating Islam, Sufism in general has been

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[200] Jamal Malik, *Islam in South Asia: Revised, Enlarged and Updated Second Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 47.
[201] Idem 76.
[202] Idem 77.
[203] Idem 89-90.
[204] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 196, 204.
[205] *EIr* "Češtīya."
[206] Roger Ballard, "Popular Islam in Northern Pakistan and its Reconstruction in Urban Britain," in *Sufism in the West*, ed. Malik and Hinnells, 160-186, here 170.
[207] On the reception of Ibn al-'Arabī in South Asia as *hama ūst*, see the first chapter of Khodamoradi's *Sufi Reform in Eighteenth Century India*; as well as her "Sufi Reform and the Mystical Ideology of Divine Unity," in *Peshawar Islamicus* (2012): 1-20. More generally on Ibn al-ʿArabī in South Asia, see William Chittick, "Notes on Ibn al-'Arabī's Influence in the Indian Sub-Continent," *Muslim World* 82 (1992): 218-41.

seen as having served as a major means for the spread, and vernacularization, of Islam. In particular, Nile Green notes how temporo-spatial distances as well as cultural differences, between the Prophet and his companions in early 7th-century Arabia and Muslims in other lands centuries later, have been overcome and bridged through Sufism. The *shaykh*s serve as heirs of and proxies for the Prophet, Islam and Sufi ideas are made accessible through vernacular languages and art. Moreover, the visitation of local saintly shrines echo the performance of the *ḥajj*.[208]

Of the two main orders in India at the time, each is often presented as taking quite different approaches toward their relationships with rulers, the Suhrawardiyya, following Shihāb al-Dīn's example, embracing and seeking out such relations, whereas the Chishtiyya, at least in principle, rejected such involvement although some important early figures were, or were said to have been, the spiritual guides to the rulers of the Delhi Sultanate. For instance, Mu'īn al-Dīn's successor, Bakhtiār Kākī (1174-1235) had the founder of the Delhi Sultanate, Iltutmish (d. 1236), as a disciple but refused to accept a government appointment from him as *shaykh al-Islam*, and the posting went instead to a Suhrawardī.[209] Kākī's successor, Fārīd al-Dīn Ganj-i Shakar (Bābā Fārīd, 1179-1266), who is famously said to have practiced forty-day retreats while suspended upside down in a well (*chilla-i ma'kūs*), was also described by Ibn Battuta (d. 1369) as the spiritual guide of the Sultanate of Delhi, although this has been questioned, and Fārīd al-Dīn has been quoted as saying that "Every darvesh who opens the door of association with kings and nobles is doomed."[210]

His successor in the case study's Chishtī *silsila* is the famed Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā' (d. 1238-1325), who was born east of Delhi in Badayun, where his ancestors had arrived after fleeing from Bukhara to Lahore to escape the Mongols. At around the age of twenty, Niẓām al-Dīn became a disciple of Fārīd al-Dīn, who made him responsible for the area of Delhi, where he established a *khānaqāh* (and where his *dargāh* now stands) from which he would significantly expand the Chishtiyya, having some 700 *khalīfa*s. Although he produced no texts of his own, his sayings were recorded by a student in his *malfūẓāt*.[211] Even in the face of harsh critique, he was a strong advocate of the characteristically Chishtī practice of *samā'*,[212] as well as their pluralism and egalitarianism, such as by opposing the notion of the superiority of light-skinned individuals of Turkish heritage over darker skinned Indians of native background.[213] Through his numerous *khalīfa*s, Niẓām al-Dīn has been seen as the key figure responsible for the spread of the Chishtiyya throughout the subcontinent, thus giving it its "all-India status" very early on.[214] So we see that from the very emergence of the *ṭarīqa*s, there is a strong drive to grow, expand and share their identity and teachings with others. But the emerging institution of the *ṭarīqa* did have its critics, such as from a group that would be known as the Khwājagān, the precursors to the Naqshbandiyya.

The Khwājagān: A Counter-Ṭarīqa

In at least the 13th century, a major time of the emergence, formation, and spread of the *ṭarīqa*s, one movement evolved in Central Asia which can be seen as a response to and critique of those organizations, namely the Khwājagān ("Masters") tradition, the immediate precursors to the Naqshbandiyya. Unlike the comparatively prolific Suhrawardī and Kubrāwī *shaykh*s as well as of course the likes of Ibn al-'Arabī and Rūmī, whose writings are well known with attributions that are not

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[208] For his summary, see Green, *Sufism*, 112-15.
[209] Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 91.
[210] Idem 101. On Farīd al-Dīn, see Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-uʾd-din Ganj-i-Shakar* (Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, 1973).
[211] Idem 136. For two different translations, see Bruce B. Lawrence. *Nizam Ad-Din Awliya: Morals for the Heart*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1991); and Amir Hasan 'Ala' Sijzi Dehlawi, *Fawaʾid al-Fuʾad: Spiritual and Literary Discourses of Shaikh Nizamuddin Awliya*, transl. Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, (New Delhi: D.K. Print World Ltd, 1996). See also Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Nizam-uʾd-din Auliya* (Delhi Idarah-i Adabyat-i Delli, 1991).
[212] Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 139-140.
[213] Idem 114.
[214] Idem 92; Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 281.

seriously contested, the earliest sources on the Khwājagānī origins date back to around the mid-14th century.[215] Contemporary scholarly accounts tend to draw heavily and sometimes uncritically on later Naqshbandī works, since the Naqshbandīs would eventually emerge as the dominant Central Asian *ṭarīqa*, displacing or absorbing the rival Yasawī and Kubrāwī lines, much like how Baghdad-style Sufism did with other competing mystical movements. Thus, we proceed with some degree of caution, since most of what we know is through the eyes of those who would emerge triumphant, the Naqshbandiyya.[216]

For a broader perspective in timeline, later descriptions of the Naqshbandī *silsila* would assign different groupings to the evolution of the order, so the individual links in the *silsila* and their respective disciples during the period from Abū Bakr until Ja'far al-Ṣādiq came to be called the Siddiqiyya; from Bisṭāmī to al-Fārmadhī, the Ṭayfūriyya after Bisṭāmī's *nisba*; from al-Hamadānī to Amīr Kulāl, the Khwājagān; and beginning with Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, the Naqshbandiyya, which would eventually sometimes accrue additional designators, the most prominent being Mujaddidiyya and Khālidiyya. While the labels of Siddiqiyya and Ṭayfūriyya were not used by those who are labelled as such and they should not be seen as actual organized, related, and continuous groups, the Khwājagān can be seen as a loosely organized movement seeking to assert its own identity in the face of emerging institutionalized forms of Sufism. There seems to have indeed been a distinct group at least as early as the 13th century who identified themselves around the personality of Ghijduwānī.

Devin DeWeese argues that we can see "Khojagānī Sufi communities of the thirteenth-fifteenth centuries, as well as, in large measure, the Naqshbandiyya itself, as a movement that arose in opposition to established Sufi groups."[217] From his perspective, this new counter-*ṭarīqa*, had a basic message: 1.) "Sufism around us is indeed corrupt," and 2.) "we are not like the other Sufis."[218] Of course, this is reductively based entirely on a hermeneutic of suspicion that focuses on the rhetoric over the content of the message itself, again, as is the current academic norm, looking at the husk and not the kernel. Nevertheless, DeWeese does bring up some important points about that husk and, as always, he provides marvelous insights into the historical development of Sufism in Central Asia. Some of the issues these followers of Ghijduwānī, which DeWeese has labelled "a 'reformist' current in Central Asian Sufism,"[219] wished to define themselves by in contrast to the institutionalized Sufi *ṭarīqa*s revolved around aspects like the nature of the teacher-student relationship, the *khānaqāh*, bestowing of *khirqa*s, and the *silsila*. They did not outright reject such practices, but problematized them, presenting their rivals, inter alia, as "charlatans who seek only public acclaim," and as DeWeese notes, "the issues raised for the most part deal with the social profile of Sufis."[220] Perhaps we are looking at a proto-version of the critique of the mediating *shaykh*. One institutional criticism can be found in the saying, "For us the 'tree' (*shajara*) does not matter; it is the fruit (*thamara*) that matters."[221] This is echoed in a statement attributed to Bahā' al-Dīn discussed in Part Two below. This articulation of a distinctive communal identity is much like how our case study group would also place less emphasis on such outer aspects and seek to differentiate themselves from more popular forms of Sufism, East and West, whether that be Islamic mediating *shaykh*s or de-Islamicized versions that had already appeared in the West. Moreover, the Khwājaganī position seems to echo Malāmatī critiques of ostentatious displays and to pre-figure later Naqshbandī critiques of *samā'*, *wajd*, and vocal *dhikr*, performed by other lineages.

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[215] Devin DeWeese, "The *Mashā'ikh-i turk* and the *Khojagān*: Rethinking the links between the Yasawī and Naqshbandī Sufi traditions," *JIS* 7/2 (1996), 180–207.

[216] For a more historically critical view of the developments of this Naqshbandī, Yasawī, and Kubrāwī triad, see DeWeese, "The *Mashā'ikh-i turk* and the *Khojagān*."; Devin DeWeese, "The Eclipse of the Kubravīyah in Central Asia," *Iranian Studies* 21.1-2 (1988): 45-83; Devin DeWeese, "Khojagānī Origins and the Critique of Sufism: The Rhetoric of Communal Uniqueness in the Manāqib of Khoja 'Alī 'Azīzān Rāmītanī," in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, eds. Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 492-519.

[217] DeWeese, "Khojagānī Origins and the Critique of Sufism," 495-6.

[218] Idem 496.

[219] Idem 495.

[220] Idem 505-06.

[221] Idem 515.

All of that said, we now look at the links according to today's *silsila* and based largely on a work that was compiled by a Naqshbandī toward the end of the next phase in around 1503, the *Rashaḥāt*. For that, we return to the end of the previous period (950-1100) for the birth of **Yūsuf al-Hamadānī (d. 1140)**, allegedly in 1048, who is considered the first of the Khwājagān by Khwājagān-Naqshbandī accounts. Born in the village of Buzanjird near Hamadan, he studied Shafī'ī *fiqh*, although himself a Ḥanafī, in Baghdad. Yet there he is also said to have met 'Abd al-Qādir, who purportedly inspired him to pursue Sufism. Thus, he became a disciple of Fārmadhī (student of Qushayrī and Kharaqānī as well as the teacher of both Ghazālī brothers), subsequently establishing a *khānaqāh* in Merv where his tomb remains to this day.[222] Both *Maslak al-'Ārifīn* and *Risāla-yi Ṣāḥibiyya*, a text on Hamadānī that is questionably attributed to Ghijduwānī, list his spiritual predecessors in a very similar manner to the standard Naqshbandī *silsila*; that is, from Fārmadī though Kharaqānī, Bisṭāmī, and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq to Abū Bakr.[223] He is supposed to have practiced silent *dhikr* and he also had a fairly standard (pre-Dāya) theory of spiritual psychology involving the *qalb*, *rūḥ*, and *sirr* , one that was congruent with that of Sulamī above.[224] According to a much later Naqshbandī account, Hamadānī had four successors,[225] two of which were highly significant personalities. One was Aḥmad Yasawī (d. 1166),[226] eponym of the Yasawiyya, known for a form of vocalized recitation said to resemble the sound of a saw, called *dhikr-i arra*.[227] Though as DeWeese has noted, this may be a case of later appropriation by Naqshbandīs of the founder figure of one of their two main rivals, the Yasawīs.

Although Hamadānī is usually seen as the first Khwājagān, his other major successor 'Abd al-Khāliq Ghijduwānī (d. 1179 or 1220), is considered the founder of the Khwājagān tradition, from which the Naqshbandiyya would spring, though Jürgen Paul believes it is unlikely that Hamadānī and Ghijduwānī ever personally met. The latter is credited with having set forth the first eight of the eleven Naqshbandī principles (*kalimat-i qudsiyya*) as well as for having introduced their distinctive silent *dhikr*, a practice which he is said to have been taught in a dream by Khidr, who instructed him to recite God's name while submerged underwater.[228] Regarding the Naqshbandī principles, if we were to summarize their main thrust, it could be said that they point to achieving a profound awareness of the divine while living in this world and engaged in society. According to the 1503 *Rashaḥāt* discussed below, the later Bahā' al-Dīn would explain, in the section on *khalwat dar anjuman*, that the fundamental principle of his path is "being outwardly with your fellow creatures, but inwardly with the Lord of Truth." Such profound awareness, or consciousness, of God in daily life can be seen for example in the principle of *hūsh dar dam* as being "To breathe not a single breath while heedless of Allāh."[229] This is something that actually has the potential to be expressed in different terminology in the post-modern West, such as in the language of the elevation of consciousness, a possibility that has been taken full advantage of by our case study lineage, as have other ideas, such as the *laṭā'if* being described as inner potentials to be awakened. But again, this is based on a Naqshbandī text written around three centuries after Ghijduwānī's death.

There were earlier versions, however, and Paul divides the eight principles attributed to Ghijduwānī into two groups of four, with the first known textual evidence of the first group (*yād kard*, *baz gasht*, *nigah dasht*, and *yad dasht*), which are usually presented last, being in the mid-14th-century text *Maslak al-'Ārifīn*; the second group (*hūsh dar dam, naẓar bar qadam, safar dar waṭan*, and *khalwat*

[222] *EI*³ "Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf al-Hamadānī"; Algar, "A Brief History," 7.
[223] *EI*³ "ʿAbd al-Khāliq al-Ghijduwānī" and *EI*³ "Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf al-Hamadānī."
[224] Paul Ballanfat, "Théorie des organes spirituels chez Yûsuf Hamadânî," *Studia Islamica*, no. 87 (1998): 35-66.
[225] The *Rashaḥāt* has a repeating pattern of *shaykh*s leaving behind four successors, after the prophetic example of Muḥammad being succeeded by the four rightly guided caliphs according to Sunni Islam.
[226] *EI*² "Aḥmad Yasawī;" *EI*² "Yasawiyya."
[227] Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders*, 176.
[228] *EI*³ "ʿAbd al-Khāliq al-Ghijduwānī."
[229] 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn Kāshifī Ṣafī, *Rashaḥāt 'Ain al-Ḥayāt: Beads of Dew from the Source of Life, Histories of the Khwājagān, The Masters of Wisdom*, transl. Muhtar Holland (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Al-Baz Publishing, 2001), 17-18.

dar anjuman) appearing for the first time in *Manāqib-i ʿĀzīzān*, written ca. 1400;[230] and all eight appearing together at the start of the 15th century beginning with the chief ideologue of the Naqshbandiyya and direct disciple of Bahā' al-Dīn, Muḥammad Pārsā (d. 1410). *Waṣiyyat-nāma* is a work attributed to Ghijduwānī that teaches personal ethics in accordance with the *sharīʿa* as well as earning an honest living but advocates political quietism and warns against the dangers of wealth. As Paul notes, Ghijduwānī's emphasis on *sharīʿa*, sobriety, silent *dhikr*, and earning a living are all very much in line with the future Naqshbandī tradition, but his "outlook on politics and economics" would not be a lasting feature, as will be seen in the coming sections.[231] The next link presented in the Naqshbandī *silsila* is **ʿĀrif Rīwgarī (d. 1219 or 1239)**, but little else is known of him other than that, according to the *Rashaḥāt*, he was born and died in the village of Riwgar, outside Bukhara.[232] The next person in the chain is **Maḥmūd Anjīr Faghnawī (d. 1245 or 1272 or 1317)**, a carpenter hailing from Faghni, also in the vicinity of Bukhara. The *Rashaḥāt* reports that, in contrast to Ghijduwānī, he (re-)introduced vocalized *dhikr* so that "the sleepers may awake, so that the heedless may hear, and so that they may incline towards the path of Truth […]," yet he also reserves this practice for only those who have already attained a particular degree of purity.[233] From Faghnawī through Amīr Kulāl, Bahā' al-Dīn's teacher, vocal *dhikr* was practiced.

The next link is **ʿAzīzān ʿAlī Rāmitanī (d. 1239 or 1315 or 1321)**, born in the town of Rāmitan, outside of Bukhara, he earned his livelihood as a weaver, observes the *Rashaḥāt*, based on references to him by the later Naqshbandī and poet Jāmī (d. 1492) and allegedly Rūmī. He is also said to have had some correspondence with Simnānī, a Kubrawi advocate of *dhikr-i khafī*, who is supposed to have sent a representative to pose certain questions to Rāmitanī. From these questions and replies, we are told that Rāmitanī believed silent and vocal *dhikr* are of equal value, and that being renowned for practicing *dhikr* in secret basically amounts to "hypocritical ostentation." An account of him speaking with another scholar has Rāmitanī clarifying this position by saying that *dhikr* of the tongue leads to *dhikr* of the heart, and furthermore that the highest form of *dhikr* "affects all the organs and atoms of the body,"[234] a description which sounds very much like later accounts of *sulṭān al-adhkar*, a practice that the abovementioned Simnānī seems to have contributed to the development of, as we will see below, along with several other traits that would become distinctively Naqshbandī. We also see a statement that seems to point toward the idea of *waḥdat al-shuhūd* described below, which says that al-Ḥallāj would not have been executed if he had met a Khwājagān,[235] because he would have reached a higher stage, presumably beyond the perception of unity and to the realization of ultimate separation. The Khwājaganī links of the *silsila* continue into the beginning of the next period with three more of the Khwājagān, the third of whom is the founder figure of the Naqshbandiyya.

The Fastest Path Emerges (1300-1550)

From this point on, our survey focuses on the two lineages in which the key 19th-century figure in our case study lineage, ʿAbd al-Bārī Shāh, received initiation from a physically embodied teacher, namely, the Naqshbandiyya and the Chishtiyya. Guided by Rasool's lexicon, we will mainly be paying attention to the former. Accordingly, the present period is defined primarily by the pre-Mujaddidī phase of the development of the Naqshbandiyya. Thus, the main geographical focus area for this phase will be Transoxiana, and in the last two phases it will shift to India. In the previous phase, emic and etic historiography of the Chishtiyya began to converge, and it is in this phase where we see much the same thing happening for the Naqshbandiyya. The current phase, which covers a full 250 years that bridge the late medieval era with early modernity, sees the fragmentation of the Mongol successor states of the Ilkhanids and the Chagatai Khans, weakened inter alia by the Plague and internecine conflicts. This

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[230] In this text, appended to these four phrases is a fifth one attributed to Ghijduwānī that was not included in the final set: *dil ba-yār wa tan ba-bāzār* ("the heart with God and the body at the marketplace"). See DeWeese, "Khojaganī Origins and the Critique of Sufism," 507.
[231] *EI*[3] "ʿAbd al-Khāliq al-Ghijduwānī."
[232] *EI*[2] "K̲h̲wād̲j̲agān"; Ṣafī, *Rashaḥāt*, 31.
[233] Idem 31-2.
[234] Idem 34.
[235] Idem 35.

paved the way for the rise of the Timurid Empire which would also fall toward the end of this period, though what might be seen as a Timurid successor state would take advantage of the decline of the Sultanate of Delhi to seize Delhi and establish the Mughal Empire, a key development leading into the next phase.

The Last of the Masters of Color

But before addressing the emergence of the Naqshbandiyya and considering the Chishtiyya, we devote considerable attention to an important figure whose life straddles this and the preceding period. Like al-Bisṭāmī and al-Ḥallāj before him, despite or perhaps because of wide popularity, Ibn al-ʻArabī's teachings would face critique early on, and two notable critics were also Sufis and contemporary with one another, namely the Qādirī Sufi ʻIbn Taymiyya (d. 1328)[236] as well as the Kubrāwī Sufi ʻAlā' al Dawla al-Simnānī (1261-1336), a fifth link down in the Kubrāwī line through Majd al-Dīn.[237] It is the latter of these two on whom we focus. Simnānī's best known contribution was his criticism of the seemingly pantheistic character of Ibn al-ʻArabī's ideas, instead offering the idea of *waḥdat al-shuhūd* in the place of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, and thus sparking the beginning of the entire *wujūdi-shuhūdi* debate.[238] The profile of this debate has perhaps made it seem like this was a more radical departure than it actually was. It is one of clarifying details and refining aspects of earlier thought, and not of throwing out the whole system for something entirely different. Simnānī is still operating within a fairly typical emanationist framework: he has a four-fold scheme comprised of commonly encountered Sufi levels of the cosmos, *lāhūt*, *jabarūt*, *malakūt*, and *nāsut*, within which is a Ptolemaic hierarchy of celestial bodies, the four Empedoclean elements, and the levels of matter, plants, animals, and humans.[239] In this respect, his cosmology is not all that different from Ibn al-ʻArabī or earlier Sufis. The crux of the matter is whether or not the final goal is an existential unity (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) or an apparent unity (*waḥdat al-shujūd*). To drastically oversimplify the matter, we might say that Simnānī was basically underscoring the ontological separation between God and man, even in the heights of mystical experience, thus ensuring that the unitive state is congruent with divine revelation. It is not an ontological union, but a unity of witnessing, like becoming the image in a mirror before God.

The other great contribution of Simnānī, which is far more important to this study, was his chromatic seven-fold theory of the spiritual psychology of man. Continuing the colorful *laṭīfa* systems of previous Kubrāwī *shaykh*s, he went even further to add a *laṭīfa* even subtler than either the *sirr* or the *khafī*, that is *al-laṭīfa al-ḥaqqiyya*, prefiguring the later Mujaddidī *akhfā*. He was also the first to associate each *laṭīfa* with a particular Prophet. As we will see, Kubrāwī works were known to and discussed by early Naqshbandīs, though what would take root with them was not the doctrine of *waḥdat al-shuhūd*, but his *laṭīfa*-model, which is the closest yet to current Mujadiddī models, and perhaps his strong emphasis on silent *dhikr* as well as his own distinctive method of performing such *dhikr*, which may have been the proto-type for the method of *nafī wa ithbāt* practiced by many Naqshbandīs today. We consider these further below, after some biographical background.

While Kubrā was martyred in battle attempting to repel the Mongol invaders from Khwarazm and Dāya was safe far away in Anatolia during the same invasion, Simnānī was born well after this near Simnan during the rule of the Buddhist Ilkhanids. Simnānī was in fact employed at the court of the Mongol ruler Arghun before turning to a life of spirituality following an epiphany in battle. Unlike the already Muslim Chagatai Khans, the first Ilkhanate ruler to convert to Islam did so in 1295. It is clear

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[236] George Makdisi, "Ibn Taimīya: A Ṣufī of the Qādirīya Order," American Journal of Arabic Studies V (1873): 118-29.

[237] Simnānī did not retire to his home until 1290 to establish two *khānaqāh*s and spend out his days teaching and writing, hence his inclusion in this phase, as his writings would have begun circulating mostly during this time. Jamal J. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God: The Life and Thought of ʻAlā' Ad-Dawla As-Simnānī* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 27-31.

[238] For a German translation and introduction to this debate between Simnānī and the proponent of the Ibn al-ʻArabī school, ʻAbd al-Razzāq Kāshānī (1256-1353), see Hermann Landolt, "Der Briefwechsel zwischen Kāshānī und Simnānī uber Wahdat al-Wujūd," *Der Islam* L/1 (1973): 29–81.

[239] Elias, *Throne Carrier of God*, 61-78.

that Simnānī was familiar with Buddhist doctrine, and he was known for his prowess in debating with Buddhist priests at Arghun's court. Nevertheless, Simnānī unwaveringly felt that Islam was superior to Buddhism, though he did recognize some merit in Buddhist spiritual practices and respected certain accomplished practitioners. This is illustrated by an anecdote wherein Simnānī collaborates with a Buddhist monk, whom he had known at court, in order to instruct one of his disciples. Simnānī praised the monk's high level of spiritual attainment gained through ascetic practices, despite his being a non-Muslim.[240] Similarly, Sufis in India would also recognize the spiritual achievements of non-Muslim Yogis, even going so far as to exchange ideas and practices with them, as we will see below.

But before declaring that Simnānī's conception of the *laṭā'if* was influenced by the Tantric Buddhist four-fold version of *chakras*, it should first be noted that Simnānī's *laṭā'if* do not seem to have been localized in any specific locations in the physical body, though his *dhikr* instructions do involve visualizations of movements in the area of the torso. Although Tirmidhī's psychology was intimately connected with the physical body, the practice of assigning physiological locations to this developing model of the *laṭā'if*, other than the heart, does not appear to have emerged until around or just after Sirhindī's time, as mentioned below. Much more important is the fact that the major developers of this psychology up to this point; Tustarī, Kubrā, Dāya, and Simnānī; were all Quran exegetes. Their mystical teachings developed out of serious efforts to unlock the various layers of meaning they believed the Quran to have. Indeed, it was Simnānī who completed the monumental *tafsīr* of the Quran that had been conceived of and begun by Kubrā and continued by Dāya. The various colored lights Simnānī describes are indications of the level of one's progress in travelling through the realms of existence toward the divine, casting off the seventy thousand veils which separate the aspirant from God, a very Islamic God at that. After this process is completed, one experiences *jadhba*,[241] quite unlike Kubrā's assertion of beginning with *jadhba*, and Simnānī holds that any vision or experience must comply with the Quran and *sunna*.[242]

As for his rendering of man's spiritual psychology, Simnānī is similarly the closest yet in our survey to Sirhindī's model, which is now more or less standard among those contemporary Naqshbandīs who are known to teach a guided curriculum of meditations. Simnānī elaborates seven *laṭā'if*, the *qalab* ("mold"), *nafs*, *qalb*, *sirr*, *rūḥ*, *khaf*, and *ḥaqq* ("truth"), restoring Kubrā's *nafs* to the list, removing the *'aql*, and adding the *qalab* and *ḥaqq*. The pinnacle of mystical achievement, however, is also described as a *laṭīfa* though not part of this seven-fold list, that is *al-laṭīfa al-anā'iyya* ("I-ness"), which is when one becomes a perfect mirror for God.[243] Thus it is not an ontological unity of being that is sought, but a unity of witnessing, of being the mirror for God, a seemingly much more orthodox "I-ness" than Bisṭāmī's.

In addition to adding a further *laṭīfa* on top of Dāya's *khafī*, Simnānī also seems to be the first to associate each of these subtleties with a prophet from the Quran, though we did see Tustarī associate Moses, Abraham, and Muḥammad with three stages of certainty. As Corbin described it, for Simnānī, these are particular "prophets of one's being" ("*prophètes de ton être*") which govern within the subtle body of each person. This feature requires an understanding of the difference between *zamān āfāqī*, which is objective chronological time, and *zamān anfusī*, or "the existential time of the soul" ("*le temps existentiel de l'âme*"). While in mundane time and space, one may be both temporally and spatially removed from these prophets by as much as multiple millennia, this historical separation is of no consequence in the spiritual time of *zamān anfusī*, as each of these prophets has authority over a particular *laṭīfa*. The *qalab* is ruled by the first of the prophets and the prototypical man, Adam and the associated color is a smoky gray while the second station of the *nafs* is the "*Noé de ton être*,"[244] as the prophet Noah struggled with his people, just as one must struggle with one's *nafs* (Abdur Rashid makes this point in Part Three below). The color of the *nafs* is blue, being comparable to the station of the *al-*

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[240] Marijan Molé, *Les Kubrawiya entre Sunnisme et Shiisme aux huitième et neuvième siècles de l'Hégire* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1961), 79-80. For more on Simnānī's biography, see Part One of Elias, *Throne Carrier of God*.
[241] Idem 134-136.
[242] Idem 134.
[243] Idem 94-97.
[244] Henry Corbin, *En Islam Iranien: Aspects spirituels et philosophiques, Tome III, Les Fidèles d'amour Shî'isme et soufisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 275, 290; Corbin, *Man of Light*, 121-44.

nafs al-ammāra in the constructs of both Kubra and Daya. Abraham has authority over the red *laṭīfa* of the *qalb* and Moses, who enjoyed secret communication with God, rules the *sirr* which corresponds to the color white. The color assigned to the *rūḥ* is yellow and its prophet is David. While Simnānī retained Dāya's luminescent black, he has relegated it to being the second highest *laṭīfa*, the *khaf* which falls under the purview of Jesus. Finally, the penultimate station is the *laṭīfa haqqiya*, which is heralded by a light of emerald green, and is ruled by none other than the seal of the prophets himself, Muḥammad. Thus, Kubrā's original recognition of green as the highest color, which was supplanted with the luminescent black of Dāya, was restored to the highest position and associated with the seal of the prophets by Simnānī. Green as higher than black would generally come to be the Mujaddidī standard, with the lower-level colors of, from lowest to highest, red, white, yellow (*qalb*, *sirr*, *rūḥ*) receiving the slightly different order of yellow, red, white (*qalb*, *rūḥ*, *sirr*), and in our case study we will see the *nafs* as either blue, like for Simnānī, or colorless. As just seen, however, for Simnānī, the *rūḥ* is higher than the *sirr*, which was not unheard-of during phase three, such as with Hujwīrī, but would be reversed in the Mujaddidiyya.

Particularly noteworthy pertaining to practices, anticipating Bahā' al-Dīn's reinstatement of silent *dhikr* among the Khwājagān, is Simnānī's abhorrence of vocalized *dhikr*, and strong emphasis on silent *dhikr*,[245] for which he had a quite distinctive method. Simnānī's version is more complex than Kubrā's uni-directional upward *dhikr* or Dāya's two stroke up-down *dhikr*. Instead, Simnānī goes further and breaks the first part of the *shahāda* into four components or strikes (*darb*). His version most resembles the contemporary practice of *nafī wa ithbāt*. The first movement (*lā*) goes upward from the navel to the head with a strong exhalation. With an inhalation, the second movement descends to the right side of the chest (*ilāha*) followed by another exhalation and a horizontal movement from the right to the left side of the chest (*illā*) where the heart is located. Lastly, the movement goes into the pineal heart with the power of the last word (*Allāh*) cleansing one's heart of base desires.[246] Of final note on similarities, Simnānī saw being under the tutelage of a living *shaykh* as a prerequisite for travelling the mystical path, and one should have unquestioning obedience to that *shaykh*.[247]

Several scholars have also noticed similarities between the Kubrāwiyya and the later Naqshbandiyya, such as Landolt, Buehler, and Elias.[248] But despite the above listed similarities with later Naqshbandī and Mujaddidī doctrines and practices, there were certainly differences, perhaps the most consequential of which is Simnānī's view that worldly possessions and duties to one's family can prevent one from attaining *ma'rifa* in this lifetime,[249] along with his emphasis on retreat from this world and the performance of *khalwa*, adhering draconianly to Kubrā's principles of Junayd and engaging in ascetic practices to combat the lower soul.[250] In fact, as DeWeese proposes, perhaps it was the introspective and other-worldly outlook of Kubrāwī Sufis that allowed them to ultimately be "eclipsed" in the 16th century by the more socially engaged and politically activist Naqshbandīs.[251] Moreover, it seems like the rise of the Safavids not only ended Naqshbandī presence there, but encouraged Simnānī's spiritual descendants to convert to Shi'ism, as today among the few remaining Kubrāwī-related lines are two Iranian Shi'i offshoots, the Nūrbakhshiyya and the Dahabiyya.[252] Yet it seems that some aspects of the Kubrāwiyya may have survived within a similarly sober and orthodox Sunni, Central Asian Sufi tradition, the Naqshbandiyya, to whose origin we now finally turn. Although since the rejection of the decline model in Sufi scholarship and with the fall of the Soviet Union allowing increased access to manuscripts preserved in the homeland of the Naqshbandiyya, progress has been made in scholarship on the early history of Central Asian *ṭarīqa*s, current scholarship on the subject still stands far behind

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[245] Elias, *Throne Carrier of God*, 130.
[246] Idem 126-127.
[247] Idem 123-124.
[248] Landolt, "Der Briefwechsel"; Buehler, Sufi Heirs, 107-09; Elias, *Throne Carrier of God*, 57-58, 160-63.
[249] Elias, *Throne Carrier of God*, 104.
[250] Idem 120. Chapter Seven of Elias' *Throne Carrier of God* describes Simnānī's emphasis on *khalwat*.
[251] DeWeese, "Eclipse of the Kubravīyah." This view has been challenged, however, by Elias, *Throne Carrier of God*, 57.
[252] Elias, *Throne Carrier of God*, 51.

what we know of earlier Sufism and on the later Naqshbandiyya in the Ottoman lands and South Asia, the main areas it would expand to.

The Naqshbandiyya is Born

The next Khwājagān figure in the Naqshbandī chain, **Muḥammad Bābā Sammāsī (d. 1340 or 1354)**, is presented in the hagiographical tradition as having been the spiritual "father" of Bahā' al-Dīn.[253] The *Rashaḥāt*, almost two centuries later, records that going past the latter's village just three days after his birth, he noticed the "inimitable scent of a hero!" Sammāsī thus paid a visit to the newborn and predicted that he would become "the paragon of the age and the saving guide of the people of Love!" Yet he is said to have entrusted the spiritual training of this newborn to the next figure in the *silsila*, **Sayyid Amīr Kulāl (d. 1370)**.[254] Kulāl is mentioned in the memoirs ascribed to Tīmūr the conqueror, and is reputed to have been his spiritual guide, though Algar declares it is certain that he "did not play a directive role in the career of Tīmūr.[255] Kulāl's circle was active in areas just outside of Bukhara, where his teachings appealed to "the more articulate artisans of Iranian stock," in contrast to in the urban centers where, as Weismann observes, there was a "weakening of the 'learned' brand of Islam" and popular forms of Sufism had come to dominate as a result of Mongol rule. Thus, Weismann argues that the Naqshbandiyya itself arose from out of this Khwājagān circle as a reform movement.[256] In our case study lineage, we also see *shaykh*s wishing to distinguish themselves from more popular forms of Sufism and also attracting "articulate artisans," but this time in major the urban centers of Europe and America.

From among Kulāl's disciples was **Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband (1317-1389)**, the eponym and founder figure of the Naqshbandiyya. Algar observes that his epithet was probably given to him for his role as a spiritual guide, saying:

> Its true meaning consists of the making of an impress (*naqsh*) of the Supreme Divine Name ALLAH, upon the tablet of the purified heart, and then fixing it there permanently (*band*), to the exclusion of all other impresses.[257]

While already a student of Kulāl, Bahā' al-Dīn was visited in a vision by the founder figure of the Khwājagān, Ghijduwānī, who is said to have taught him the practice of *dhikr-i khafī* as opposed to the vocalized *dhikr-i jalī* that had been practiced among the Khwājagān from Faghnawī to Kulāl. It is important to note, however, that the *Rashaḥāt* describes this silent recitation that Bahā' al-Dīn was taught by Ghijduwānī as *al-dhikr al-qalbī*, an emphasis on the heart that existed previously and would continue in this new lineage. After this foundational vision, Bahā' al-Dīn remained in Kulāl's circle, but would excuse himself whenever they practiced vocal *dhikr*. In Part Three of the present study, we will see a similar situation, but in reverse, when Rasool stands outside, listening but not taking part, as his American *khalīfa* held a vocal *dhikr* gathering. Despite their differences on this practice, the relationship between Bahā' al-Dīn and his teacher continued, and Kulāl is said to have held his student in high regard.[258] A further development in practices which can be traced to Bahā' al-Dīn is his addition of three further principles to Ghijduwānī's *kalimāt-i qudsiyya*, thus forming the full list of the eleven Naqshbandī principles. [259] In addition to re-introducing silent *dhikr* and adding the final three principles, he is discussed by Sirhindī as the originator of the principle of *INfB*.[260]

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[253] *EI*[3] "Bābā Sammāsī."
[254] Ṣafī, *Rashaḥāt*, 41.
[255] Algar, "Political Aspects," 124-25.
[256] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 21-22.
[257] Algar, "The Naqshbanī Order," 137.
[258] Weisman, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 16-17.
[259] *EI*[2] "Naḵshband."
[260] The researcher was unable to find any evidence of pre-Mujaddidī discussions of *INfB* among Naqshbandīs, although given its being prefigured in the Kubrāwiyya and the current state of affairs in Naqshbandī studies, where

The First Generation of Naqshbandī Shaykhs

After Bahā' al-Dīn's death, the Naqshbandiyya would be spread to different areas of Central Asia by his immediate heirs. Of his direct disciples, three important figures stand out, and Weismann describes how, although these three figures went different ways to found their own circles after Bahā' al-Dīn's death, they nonetheless played complimentary roles in the formative years of the Naqshbandiyya.[261] First, Bahā' al-Dīn's son-in-law, recognized heir, and the next link in the *silsila*, **'Alā' al-Dīn al-'Aṭṭār (d. 1400)**,[262] was a charismatic leader who was most responsible for the spread of the new lineage within Transoxiana. Second is the scholarly Muḥammad Pārsā (d. 1420),[263] who functioned as the newly created *ṭarīqa*'s chief theoretician and has been described as "the founder of the learned and literary traditions of the Naqshbandî order,"[264] since Bahā' al-Dīn left no writings of his own behind, and his sayings would be collected and recorded by Pārsā in his *Risāla-i Qudsiyya*. The third major figure from this first generation of Naqshbandīs, and the next individual in the *silsila*, is **Ya'qūb al-Charkhī (d. 1447)**, who received his initiation directly from Bahā' al-Dīn but was trained under 'Aṭṭār[265] and is best known for his spiritual successor Aḥrār, discussed below, through which the present *silsila* would be carried on. While Pārsā and his immediate successors remained in Bukhara and then also Balkh, 'Aṭṭār's circle and descendants would become established in Herat, and Charkhī's in Samarqand.[266]

Concerning doctrinal foundations, Pārsā not only recorded and relied on the sayings of his teacher, Bahā' al-Dīn, but he also drew from the wellspring of preceding Sufi thought, including early thinkers from the formative years of Sufism, like Ghazālī, Qushayrī, and Hujwīrī,[267] but also later figures like Simnānī and most especially, Ibn al-'Arabī. One important example here is that Pārsā accepted Simnānī's colorful seven-fold theory of the *laṭā'if* unchanged and he in fact expounded further upon them. Pārsā even prefigures the conclusions of the study of the *sirr* by Shigeru Kamada by noting, inter alia, that some past Sufis place the *sirr* as lower than the *rūḥ*, while others reverse this.[268] Nevertheless, Necdet Tosun notes that the *laṭā'if* did not seem to take on a greater importance until the Mujaddidī phase of development with Sirhindī,[269] though we should note that the heart does indeed take a central position. Yet Simnānī's *waḥdat al-shuhūd* did not seem to be as readily accepted as his *laṭā'if*, since the thought of Ibn al-'Arabī was propagated by the very first generations of Naqshbandīs. Pārsā's son recounts how for his father, the *Futāhāt al-Makkiya* and *Fusūs al-Hikam*, the two masterpieces of Ibn al-'Arabī, were like his heart and soul respectively.[270] On the other hand, the below mentioned Charkhī favored Rūmī and wrote commentary on his massive magnum opus, the *Mathnawī*, which has

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seminal texts have yet to receive full academic treatment, it is quite possible that *INfB* existed among the earliest Naqshbandīs. He was recently informed of a manuscript attributed to Aḥrār, discussed below, which mentions *INfB*, but this lead requires further investigation.

261 Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 14-15, 18-19,

262 *EI*[3] "ʿAṭṭār, ʿAlāʾ al- Dīn-i."

263 *EI*[2] "Pārsāʾiyya." His bookishness seems to have been timeless, as Pārsā's personal library is now the public library in Bukhara, Maria Eva Subtelny, "The Library of Khwaja Muhammad Parsa," in *Studies on Central Asian History in Honor of Yuri Bregel*, ed. Devin DeWeese (Bloomington: Indian University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 2001).

264 William Chittick, "Reflections of Ibn 'Arabi in Early Naqshbandî Tradition," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society*, Vol. X, 1991: 45-66. Also available at: http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/naqshibandi.html#sdendnote14anc.

265 Lloyd Ridgeon, "Naqshbandī Admirers of Rūmī in the Late Timurid Period," in: *Mawlana Rumi Review* Vol. 3 (2012), pp. 124-168, here 1.

266 Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 32, figure 2.4.

267 Idem 29.

268 Necdet Tosun and Muhammed F. Bayraktar (transl.), "*Laṭā'if* (Subtle Centres) in the Pre-Mujaddidi Naqshibandi Order." This translation is available on Bayraktar's Academia.edu page as well as at Maktabah.org: http://maktabah.org/blog/?p=2441; Buehler, *Sufi Heirs*, 108-09 and footnote 37.

269 Tosun and Bayraktar, "*Laṭā'if* (Subtle Centres) in the Pre-Mujaddidi Naqshibandi Order," 2.

270 Chittick, "Reflections of Ibn 'Arabi in Early Naqshbandî Tradition."

been called the Quran in Persian.[271] Subsequent generations of Naqshbandīs would also propagate and comment on the teachings of Ibn al-'Arabī and Rūmī.[272]

We have seen that early Naqshbandī cosmology and psychology was informed by preceding Sufi thought, and as for practices and the relationship to the *shaykh*, we turn to consider *tawajjuh* and *murāqaba*. In his examination of these two terms in early and later periods of the Naqshbandiyya, Tosun describes four meanings for the word *tawajjuh* in Naqshbandī sources: "1. *Tawajjuh* to God (with the heart), 2. *Tawajjuh* to the heart, 3. The Murīd facing (*tawajjuh*) his Shaykh [or a deceased saint], 4. The Shaykh facing (*tawajjuh*) his Murīd." Tosun holds that in the pre-Mujaddidī Naqshbandiyya that *tawajjuh* and *murāqaba* in fact held much the same meaning, and he clarifies that "In *tawajjuh* the object of the facing can differ, but in *murāqaba* the object is always the heart." He argues that in the Mujaddidī era, the second two senses became more systematized,[273] thus *tawajjuh* came to refer more to these, especially the fourth meaning, as we will see. Nevertheless, there are numerous examples of non-physical phenomena in early Naqshbandī and preceding Sufi sources[274] and the practice of visualizing the *shaykh* to establish a bond (*rābiṭa*) between student and teacher was indeed practiced in the first generation. According to Weismann, visualizing the *shaykh* was first introduced by 'Aṭṭār.[275] The complex around the heart-to-heart connection or bond between the student and the *shaykh*, indicated from different perspectives by multiple words that are often used synonymously (*rābiṭa*, *tawajjuh*, *tasarrof*, *taṣawwur-i shaykh*, etc.), has already been especially well studied, probably due to its prominence in the Khālidiyya.[276] Visualizing the *shaykh* was not taught by Rasool but the spiritual attention of the *shaykh*, Tosun's fourth sense of *tawajjuh*, was nonetheless quite important. Another aspect of the relationship to the *shaykh* that needs to be mentioned is *ṣuḥbat*,[277] keeping in the company of one's *shaykh*, and by default, the other students of the *shaykh* who are also gathered in his company. Schimmel in fact considers *ṣuḥbat* as so characteristic of the Naqshbandiyya that she describes it alongside silent *dhikr*.[278]

On *murāqaba* among the early Naqshbandiyya, Tosun describes it as directing one's attention to the heart and controlling it, or basically being synonymous with the first two meanings of *tawajjuh*. For a first-generation description of *murāqaba*, he provides one attributed to 'Aṭṭār, "Through *murāqaba* one can reach the stations of disposal of the angelic and material realms. Recognizing astray thoughts (*khawātir*), glancing with insight and enlightening the heart happens through *murāqaba*." Moreover, Pārsā explained how to gauge whether one is performing *murāqaba* correctly by saying quite simply that they will follow the *sharī'a*.[279] Our current case study *shaykh*s describe the results to a mixed Muslim and non-Muslim audience as exhibiting positive character traits. We also find Charkhī's student Aḥrār, treated below, describing *murāqaba* as waiting, along with the story about how Junayd is said to have described *murāqaba*, as being like a cat watching a mouse's hole.[280] These are both

[271] Ridgeon, "Naqshbandī Admirers of Rūmī."
[272] Chittick, "Reflections of Ibn 'Arabi"; Ridgeon, "Naqshbandī Admirers of Rūmī"; Farah Fatima Golparvaran Shadchehr, "Abd al-Rahman Jami: Naqshbandi Sufi, Persian Poet" (PhD Diss., Ohio State University, 2008), 86-88.
[273] Necdet Tosun and Muhammed F. Bayraktar (transl.), "Contemplation (*Murāqaba*) and Spiritual Focus/Attention (*Tawajjuh*) in the Pre-Mujaddidi Naqshibandi Order." This translation is available at Maktabah.org: http://maktabah.org/blog/?p=2447.
[274] For some examples, including a retelling of Khāraqānī's above story with the travelers attacked by bandits but applied to Amīr Kulāl's son, see Tosun and Bayraktar, "Contemplation (*Murāqaba*) and Spiritual Focus/Attention (*Tawajjuh*) in the Pre-Mujaddidi Naqshbandi Order," 3.
[275] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 29.
[276] Michel Chodkiewicz, "Quelques aspects des techniques spirituelles dans la ṭariqa Naqshbandiyya," in *Naqshbandīs*, eds. Gaborieau, Popovic and Zarcone, 69-82; Fritz Meier, *Zwei Abhandlungen über die Naqšbandiyya. I. Die Herzensbindung an den Meister. II. Kraftakt und Faustrecht des Heiligen* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994).
[277] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 29.
[278] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 366.
[279] Tosun and Bayraktar, "Contemplation (*Murāqaba*) and Spiritual Focus/Attention (*Tawajjuh*) in the Pre-Mujaddidi Naqshibandi Order," 2, 4-5.
[280] Idem 2, 5.

standard ways of describing *murāqaba* that are used in our case study lineage today, as will be described. So it is clear that the basic practice of *murāqaba* was present and accorded high status from the beginning and that it was described in very much the same way as it had been by al-Muḥāsibī, as turning one's attention toward God (but now especially via the heart), before Sufism even existed, when it was a reality without a name. What is unclear, however, a fact that is quite important for this study, is whether or not a series of intentions for *murāqaba* to guide students through the various levels of Sufi cosmology actually existed at this point.

On the practice of recitation, there were different positions on whether it was acceptable to practice vocal *dhikr* alongside the silent *dhikr* that Bahā' al-Dīn had taught exclusively, rejecting vocal recitation. While Pārsā, whom we might also note commented on Kubrā's *nafī wa ithbāt*,[281] saw vocal *dhikr* as acceptable for beginners, holding that it should be discarded after advancing further, Charkhī opposed any vocal *dhikr* whatsoever, a position adhered to by his student Aḥrār below.[282] We must also mention the *khatm-i khwājagān*, a litany usually attributed to Ghijduwānī consisting of such features as recitations from the Quran, supplications for blessings upon the Prophet, and honoring the saints of the *silsila*. As we will see, today, some groups perform this as a private silent daily devotional practice, while others do so communally and aloud alongside an individually performed daily *wird* or *waẓīfa*, though the exact formulae tend to vary greatly among contemporary Naqshbandīs. A comparison of different early versions of this, both original Naqshbandī and Mujaddidī lines including Sirhindī's version, can be found in Meier's *Zwei Abhandlungen*.[283]

In the context of the rise of the *ṭarīqa*s and the beginning of a so-called decline, when "Sufism was brought to the level of the common man," Trimingham speaks of the "mechanization" of mystical experience from the 12th century on into a range of techniques that are either designed to mechanically induce altered states or are superficially routinized. He laments that "the very *dhikr* of the divine names was so vulgarized and associated with *ṣalāt* as an extra personal appendage, as to become despiritualized."[284] We do indeed see increasing complexity of techniques from the 12th century, and this argument frames the same chapter where Trimingham describes *dhikr-i nafī wa ithbāt*, outlines the eleven Naqshbandī principles, and discusses personal daily recitations and regular collective *dhikr*. Rasool in our case study, however, views these developments much more positively, as a further evolution in Sufism that made it possible, through concrete transferrable techniques, for the average person to pursue the same realizations as the great Sufi masters of the past. From such a perspective, these practices are structured around the obligatory prayers to deepen religious devotion. Thus, it is difficult to see why Trimingham viewed the association with ritual prayer as somehow despiritualizing the practice, unless by "spiritual" he meant something ideally separate from Islam. That said, from the earliest generation of Naqshbandīs, we see the main elements of Rasool's approach to spiritual training, though the *laṭā'if* model would evolve beyond Simnānī's version to their current configuration in the next period with Sirhindī.

Socio-Political Activism and the Spread Beyond Transoxiana

So out of the first generation, while Pārsā provided much of the intellectual basis and 'Āṭṭār the necessary charisma, Charkhī is best remembered for his role as the spiritual guide to the next link in the *silsila*, **'Ubayd Allāh al-Aḥrār (d. 1490)**,[285] probably the next most significant personality after Bahā' al-Dīn himself. He would become the proto-type for the Naqshbandiyya's famed penchant for activism. Born into a wealthy family, his agricultural ventures amassed vast landholdings and economic capital.

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[281] Stéphane Ruspoli, "Réflexions sur la voie spirituelle des Naqshbandi," in *Naqshbandīs*, 95-107, here 103.
[282] Weismann*, The Naqshbandiyya*, 27. For 'Aṭṭār's description of this, see Tosun and Bayraktar, "Contemplation (*Murāqaba*) and Spiritual Focus/Attention (*Tawajjuh*) in the Pre-Mujaddidi Naqshibandi Order," 2.
[283] Fritz Meier, *Zwei Abhandlungen über die Naqšbandiyya. I. Die Herzensbindung an den Meister. II. Kraftakt und Faustrecht des Heiligen* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994); 188-213
[284] Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders*, 194-217.
[285] *EI*[2] "Aḥrār;" *EI*[3] "Aḥrār, ʿUbaydallāh." For an analysis of the social, political, and economic significance of Aḥrār as seen through his own letters, including reproductions of the original Persian, see Jo-Ann Gross and Asam Urunbaev, *The Letters of Khwajah 'Ubayd Allah Ahrar and His Associates* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

Not only did he have a circle of disciples, but also a much larger base of loyalty and mutual support among the wider population. With such spiritual and economic power, beginning in 1450, he sought to influence the Timurid court and encourage them to follow the *sharīʻa*, serving as an advisor to two Timurid rulers but also refusing government subsidization so as to maintain independence. Aḥrār explained that in addition to acting as a *shaykh*, God had assigned him a different task: "to protect the Muslims from the evil of oppressors, and for the sake of this we must traffic with kings and conquer their souls, thus achieving the purpose of the Muslims."[286] He is thus not only concerned with the spiritual development of his immediate circle of disciples, but also with the welfare of Muslim society.

Weisman describes his socio-political aspirations as being primarily motivated to "protect what may be construed as the civil society of his day," and describes two ways in which he sought to do this, ways that might be considered philanthropy and peacekeeping. In this respect, Aḥrār somewhat prefigures the work of Abdur Rashid's NGO discussed in Part Three, although with some significant differences, such as its purely secular mission, its global scope to benefit all of humanity rather than only the Muslim community, and a more cautious and distant approach to government, which Abdur Rashid, rather than encouraging them to follow the *sharīʻa*, encourages them to adhere to the universal values he holds are found in all faiths. But returning to Aḥrār, on what we are calling philanthropy, he provided tax-relief from his own coffers to lighten the financial burden in Tashkent and also lobbied to amend the taxation system. On peacekeeping, he sought to prevent a siege in Bukhara, end a rebellion, and negotiate a treaty between competitors for Timurid rule.

Aḥrār's combining Sufism with acting in a mediatory role as an advocate for the interests of the people, from whom he enjoyed widespread support, also prefigured the wider social, economic, and political influence and activities undergone today by contemporary Naqshbandī-derived Turkish *cemaat*s in the Islam 1st and post-*ṭarīqa* categories below as well as certain particularly influential Pakistani *shaykh*s. One of the former groups, perhaps echoing their aspiration to continue Aḥrār's legacy, runs a vast economic venture, a media group known as Semerkand, after the Timurid capital where Aḥrār based himself. Others, like the Sulaymançis and Millî Görüş, formed organizations that have come to represent the interests of Muslim communities, sometimes acting as an interface with governments in the West and in the majority-Muslim world alike. But well before this, later Naqshbandīs in Mughal India would also attempt to follow in Aḥrār's footsteps, as we will see in the next period, which leads us to consider his substantial role in the initial spread of the Naqshbandiyya beyond Bukhara, Balkh, Herat, and Samarkand.

Aḥrār was also the first to send representatives to spread the Naqshbandiyya outside of Transoxiana, notably leading to its long-term establishment in what is now Turkey. It also spread into Khurasan, but would be short-lived there due to the rise of the Shiʻi Safavids creating a less-than-hospitable climate for the scholarly Sunni Naqshbandīs.[287] It was only shortly after his death that his successors would actively propagate the Naqshbandiyya in India, closely following the establishment of the Mughal Empire. Lastly, however, the *Rashaḥāt* was written by one of Aḥrār's disciples shortly after his death, and it consists of hagiographical accounts of preceding generations from the earliest of the Khwājagān, through Bahā' al-Dīn and leading ultimately to Aḥrār, to whom roughly a third of the work is devoted.

Brief mention should also be made here of a towering figure in Sufi poetry in Persian and Arabic, ʻAbd al-Raḥman Jāmī (1417-1492). He lived in Herat and his Naqshbandī *silsila* traces back three steps to ʻAṭṭār (in a separate line from Charkhī's). He was a contemporary of Aḥrār, with whom he corresponded and met in person on four occasions.[288] Like Aḥrār, he engaged in what has been called philanthropy, again mainly dealing with the relief of tax burdens and performing a mediatory function for the populace. Jāmī was already an accomplished and well established poet before he was initiated into the Naqshbandiyya, but his devotion to his *shaykh* is clear and it is starting with him that Algar describes the Naqshbandiyya as not only a *ṭarīqa* of *ʻulamāʼ*, "but also, to a lesser degree, as one of poets," which he aptly notes speaks much of its character.[289] We will also see some important

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[286] Algar, "The Naqshbanī Order," 138.
[287] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 43-48; Algar, "The Naqshbanī Order," 137-39.
[288] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 161-63; *EI*[2] "Djāmī."
[289] Algar, "The Naqshbandī Order," 141.

Naqshbandī poets in the next phase in 18th-century Delhi. Jāmī declined to accept leadership of the Naqshbandī circle of his teacher in Herat, and Weismann posits that this may account for this particular line's fading from existence.[290] Also of note, Jāmī was an important propagator of the thought of Ibn al-'Arabī, not only through his poetry, but also in his other writings, such as a commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*.[291]

In contrast, and returning to Aḥrār, while quite familiar with Ibn al-'Arabī's teachings, he was of the opinion that "its secrets were dangerous and should not be divulged to the uninitiated."[292] As already mentioned, Aḥrār described *murāqaba* as "waiting" and upheld the exclusive practice of silent *dhikr*, shunning vocal *dhikr*, in line with his teacher Charkhī and also Bahā' al-Dīn. We will see more of his mystical teachings as we consider the eleven Naqshbandī principles below. Listed after Aḥrār in the *silsila* are two individuals who are both said to have died in Samarkand, **Muḥammad al-Zāhid Wakhshī (d. 1529)** and after him, **Darwīsh Muḥammad (d. 1562)**, who is in turn followed by a *shaykh* whose circle was in Samarkand and is said to have died in Bukhara: **Muḥammad Khwāja al-Amkanagī (d. 1600)**. Not much more than names along with believed dates and locations of death could reliably be found about these three individuals. Yet the latter, al-Amkanagī, would send a quite consequential *khalīfa* to India propagate the order in the newly founded Mughal Empire during the next phase.[293]

The Eleven Naqshbandī Principles

While the first eight of the eleven principles are attributed to Ghijduwānī in the 12th to 13th century and the last three to Bahā' al-Dīn in the 14th century, and there are different accounts including partial lists earlier than the *Rashaḥāt*, it is to this early 15th-century work wherein all eleven principles are expounded and detailed that we turn our attention. Here we less than ideally rely on an English translation of a Turkish translation of the original Persian. Yet preceding academic summaries of these principles, notably Trimingham, Fusfeld, and Weismann, relied on much later sources for their descriptions of the eleven principles, even basing analysis of earlier periods on such later descriptions. Therefore, it is hoped that the use of a translation of a translation of the original Persian here, although far from ideal, is a small improvement by consulting an earlier source (though linguistically twice removed) and placing it in its context. It must be acknowledged that the English translator's coming from the post-Gurdjieffian milieu (described below), may have influenced his choices in translation, such as opting for the word "consciousness." A comparison with the original by a competent Persian linguist might prove insightful to, inter alia, the Western reception of Sufism. Accordingly, the researcher will use this to inform his argument, but it will not serve as the foundation on which it stands. Hence, we provide a brief summary of the eleven principles as described in a text that was probably produced around 1503, just over a decade after Aḥrār's death by one of his students, and it includes several instances of Aḥrār's mystical teachings.

Hūsh dar dam ("conscious breathing"): The *Rashaḥāt* concisely summarizes this as: "To breath not a single breath while heedless of Allāh." Bahā' al-Dīn is quoted as saying "The foundation of progress on this path rests on the breath." Then he describes it much like the above statement, not being preoccupied with the past or present and being mindful of God whether inhaling or exhaling. Kubrā, the Kubrāwī founder figure, is also cited as saying it is necessary to "maintain, with every breath, the consciousness of being with Allāh." It has been argued that breath control, which in fact is not described under *hūsh dar dam* in the *Rashaḥāt*, but under *yād kard* below, somehow undoubtedly demonstrates

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[290] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 33.
[291] Idem 30-31. For a massive (848 pages) edited volume on Jāmī's reception in subsequent centuries and in different regional contexts, see Thibaut d'Hubert and Alexandre Papas (ed.), *Jāmī in Regional Contexts: The Reception of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī's Works in the Islamicate World, ca. 9th/15th-14th/20th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2018). On Jāmī and love, see Parvaneh Adelzadeh and Masoumeh Khalilnoe Aliabad, "Survey on the Meaning of Love from Nur ad-Din Abd Ar Rahman Jami View Point," *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research* 3, no. 2 (2013): 1156-1161.
[292] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 30-31.
[293] Idem 53-54.

Indian influence, even by some early Naqshbandīs,[294] or alternatively eastern Christianity.[295] But just as with the control of natural impulses through asceticism, or specific postures like kneeling or sitting cross-legged, breathing is a universal human phenomena and thus any attempts to view methods for controlling the breath as the exclusive purview of any particular region or religious tradition, ought to bear a larger burden of proof than Orientalist scholars have held themselves to.

Naẓar bar qadam ("watching one's steps"): involves keeping one's eyes on one's feet so as to be ever vigilant against "treading absent-mindedly." This lowering of one's gaze, it is explained, is not allowing the eyes to wander, so as to be in contact with the inner aspect of one's being.

Safar dar waṭan ("journey homeward"): is described, with very emanationist imagery, as leaving behind negative character traits and travelling to one's "original homeland," that is "the abode of good qualities and angelic attributes." But it is also said to refer to travelling in the outer world to find one's spiritual guide.[296]

Khalwat dar anjuman ("solitude in the crowd"): is explained by citing Bahā' al-Dīn as having said that the fundamental principle of his path is "being outwardly with your fellow creatures, but inwardly with the Lord of Truth." He is said to have further explained that "The basic principle of our spiritual path is fellowship," and, echoing the Malāmatī position, that being aloof from society, such as being a renunciant ascetic, amounts to seeking fame, and "disaster resides in celebrity." It is also explained in two other ways, as being so entirely engrossed in the remembrance of God that even when in a noisy and crowded place, 1.) one does not hear it, or in the second account attributed to Aḥrār, 2.) the "shouting and quarrelling among people will all seem like remembrance."[297] Notably, in spite of Aḥrār's dealings with kings and contrary to what one would expect from how much has been made in academic scholarship about how this principle in particular is responsible for instances of socio-political activism among people who are also Naqshbandīs, there is nothing in the description of this in the *Rashaḥāt* that points to political or even social activism. Instead, it describes being with people outwardly while being inwardly with God. It does not exclude the possibility of such activism, but it certainly does not prescribe it.

Yād kard ("remembering"): Here, two examples of quite specific guidance for the practice of *dhikr* are provided. One of these is from Aḥrār and involves keeping the breath in the lower abdomen, lips together, tongue touching one's palate, and performing *nafī wa ithbāt* in a fashion almost identical to that described by Simnānī, but with an important difference which we will see after Aḥrār, that there are only three strokes, with "*illā Allāh*" going directly into the heart.[298] Here Aḥrār is also quoted describing the heart at some length, speaking of it as "the centre of feeling and understanding," discussing its changing quality and involvement with worldly concerns, but also how it is "the focal point of the endless mysteries," and he speaks of "relinquish[ing] everything other than Allāh." Aḥrār encourages devoting all of one's time to the above practice,[299] and elsewhere, he associates *yād kard* with diligence in remembrance,[300] much like the *shaykh*s in our case study constantly exhort to persistence in performing one's assigned practices.

Bāz gasht ("returning [from distraction]"): This is described as "dispelling every thought, good or bad, that comes to mind involuntarily during the remembrance," which sounds somewhat like descriptions of *murāqaba* in our case study lineage, although in that case it is not so much banishing the thoughts as not getting involved with them. Particularly commented on is the phrase "O Allāh, my goal is You and Your good pleasure; it is nothing else!"[301]

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[294] Jürgen Paul, "Influences indiennes sur la Naqshbandiyya d'Asie Centrale?," *Cahiers d'Asie centrale* 1, no. 2 (1996), 203–217. Available at: https://asiecentrale.revues.org/439 (Accessed on 15 Jun 2017). Paul states: "[…] c'est sur un point seulement que nous pouvons être sûrs que les naqshbandî d'Asie centrale se sont inspirés des pratiques mystiques indiennes non musulmanes; il s'agit bien sûr des techniques de respiration."

[295] Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders*, 194-95.

[296] Ṣafī, *Rashaḥāt*, 18.

[297] Idem 18-19.

[298] Idem 19-20.

[299] Idem 19-21.

[300] Idem 22.

[301] Idem 21 and 22.

Nigāh dāsht ("attentiveness"): Again, quite similarly to *murāqaba* in our case study as well as the preceding principle of *bāz gasht*, *nigāh dāsht* is explained as maintaining "vigilant control" over the "random thoughts and feelings that occur to the heart," using the word *khawāṭir* ("thoughts"). Elsewhere, Aḥrār is cited as describing *bāz gasht* as turning toward God and *nigāh dāsht* as preserving that state of being turned toward God.[302]

Yād dāsht ("recollection"): is elucidated as being aware of God at all times and places "by means of ecstasy and rapture," but then the text mentions how some say that this is to take "the form of calm repose, without passing beyond oneself." Such inner intoxication combined with outer sobriety is also described by the main figure of the case study lineage, ʿAbd al-Bārī Shāh below. Aḥrār is also quoted as describing *yād dāsht* as a "deepening" of the previous "attentiveness" of *nigāh dāsht*.[303]

Wuqūf-i zamānī ("awareness of time"): This principle is self-reflective, as it involves being aware "with every passing moment" of one's own spiritual state, whether it is expanded or contracted, and whether one is in a state of remembrance or heedlessness, and to give thanks or ask forgiveness accordingly. The text also refers back to previous principles here, saying that one must keep such vigilant watch over their state that not a single breath passes in forgetfulness of God, and also that if one falls into such heedlessness, that "it is necessary to embrace the principle of 'returning [*bāz gasht*]' and set to work anew."[304]

Wuqūf-i ʿadadī ("awareness of number"): Although described as paying attention to the number of repetitions made while performing *dhikr*, it is made certain to point out that the principle is "not merely a matter of keeping count; it is a matter of deepening the remembrance of the heart, within the framework of counting." A quote attributed to Bahā' al-Dīn's main successor, ʿAṭṭār, has him saying that it is quality that matters rather than quantity, that the recitation must be performed "with present awareness and consciousness," and large numbers of empty recitation are "nothing but useless fatigue."[305]

Wuqūf-i qalbī ("awareness of heart"): is presented as being two-fold, first it is equated with the earlier principle of *yād dāsht*, and described as "a state in which the heart becomes so conscious of Allāh, that nothing other than Allāh will be within the heart." The second aspect consists basically of a discussion of the heart itself. Its location in the physical body is given as "beneath the left breast," exactly where it is described as being today, and this location is "the point on which all attention should be focused," much like what is performed today in our case study lineage. Despite God's omnipresence, directing one's attention to the heart reveals the "path to the spiritual Kaʿba," and although one is "imprisoned in the dungeon of the forms peculiar to his nature, […] the same human being is also outside of these confinements." Here the heart seems to be the very means of escape from this dungeon, and it is described how the physical organ serves as a "metaphor," that in reality it is "the symbol of the reality of the spirit, and it [the heart] serves as a kind of focal point." It is furthermore explained that "it is necessary to turn towards this point of metaphor [the heart], and to find in it the key of esoteric knowledge."[306] The parallels here to our case study lineage's descriptions of the heart and instructions for *murāqaba* are striking.

To conclude this discussion of the eleven principles, if Muhtar Holland's translation of a translation just outlined is anywhere close to resembling the original, it becomes clear that these principles all center around developing a profound awareness of God, not only while performing *dhikr*, but also in daily life in all circumstances and at all times. Moreover, the locus of this awareness to which one directs their attention is the heart, described in the same location as the case study. There is also substantial emphasis placed on the heart, as opposed to the disciplining of the lower soul through austerities and renunciation. In these respects, the Naqshbandī principles are already quite similar to some major features of the mysticism of our case study lineage.

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[302] Idem 21-22.
[303] Idem 22.
[304] Idem 22-23.
[305] Idem 23-24.
[306] Idem 25.

Meanwhile in India: Chishtiyya, Syncretism, and the Arrival of the Naqshbandīs

The Chishtiyya, achieving its all-India status with Niẓām al-Dīn and his 700 *khalīfa*s, would continue to grow and develop in India alongside the Suhrawardiyya and other orders, including also now the Qādiriyya, which was introduced there by Sayyid Muḥammad Makhdūm Gīlānī (d. 1517).[307] With a growing number of *ṭarīqa*s and greater opportunities for initiation, we start to see individuals with initiations into more than just one *ṭarīqa*, something not limited to but found especially in India. One example is Niẓām al-Dīn's successor, Naṣīr al-Dīn Maḥmūd Awadhī (d. 1356), better known as Chirāgh-i Dihlī ("Lamp of Dehli"), who initiated the already Suhrawardī-affiliated Jalāl al-Dīn Bukharī (d. 1384) into the Chishtiyya.[308] Multiple *ṭarīqa*-affiliations would become increasingly common, particularly in South Asia, and it is a practice that continues to this day, as can be seen in how our case study offers spiritual training in five different *silsila*s.

It is also important to note that in the Indian context, as elsewhere, Sufism and Islam were becoming vernacularized, and not only in the linguistic sense. We have tried to view claims of "influence" with caution, but sometimes there are quite explicit cases of combining a Sufi practice of Islam with local religious traditions. For instance, in his *Risāla-yi Shaṭṭāriyya*, Bahā' al-Dīn Ibn Ibrāhīm Anṣārī (d. 1515-16), a Shaṭṭārī Sufi who was born in Sirhind, makes boldly explicit use of practices that it seems difficult to deny have drawn on Hatha Yoga. For an example, from the very sitting posture he recommends; that is sitting cross-legged with the heel at the perineum, the anus constricted, the stomach sucked in, and the tongue on the palette; "one may conclude that Anṣārī's selected posture may be a mixture of *siddhāsana* along with *mahā*, *mūla*, and *uḍḍīyāna bandhas*." He also includes specific instructions for purification exercises that partially resemble the six *kriya*s of Hatha Yoga as well as making recitations while focusing on seven different locations in the body that in fact correlate nearly exactly to what are now the standard set of seven *chakra*s. He also promises a set of eight powers that Ernst and Khodamoradi describe as resembling the eight siddhis of Yoga. This is not to mention his *mantra*s wherein he combines classical Arabic *dhikr* formulae, including *nafī wa ithbāt* using similar visualized strikes (sg. *darb*), which may have originated with Simnānī, discussed below, with Hindi *mantra*s like *aum* and *hum*.[309]

Some of his Hindi or Sanskrit *mantra*s are said to have been created by none other than Bābā Farīd in our case study Chishtī lineage. When we contrast this quite open incorporation of Yoga into Sufism with scholarly claims that the *laṭā'if* were borrowed from Hinduism, in spite of their long history within Islamic Sufism and before, as just demonstrated, such claims become less tenable. But also important to observe, with regard to the interaction of Sufism and indigenous faiths, but also pertaining to future conflicts that will emerge, is the fact that it was at the end of this period that Guru Nanak (1469-1539) lived, the founder figure of a religion that at once drew from as well as criticized aspects of both Islam and Hinduism (although the term "Hinduism" is of quite recent origin), that is Sikhism. Their holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib, would incorporate verses attributed to Bābā Farīd alongside Kabir, a mystic poet who also combined elements of, while simultaneously rejecting, both Islam and Hinduism.

Additionally, in the latter part of this period, something very significant took place which would pave the way for the Naqshbandiyya in India. A descendant of Timur, Zahīr al-Dīn Bābur (1483–1530) invaded North India and eventually toppled the Delhi Sultanate to found the Mughal Empire in 1526, an event which also marked a significant expansion for the Naqshbandiyya, from Central Asia to North India. Bābur revered Aḥrār and the Naqshbandiyya would be a kind of *ṭarīqa* of the aristocracy in this Indian Timurid dynasty.[310] The first Naqshbandīs to arrive in India were among the administration of these Timurids, including descendants of Aḥrār. But out of political expediency, subsequent rulers after Bābur had to support locally established lineages, notably the Chishtiyya. As we will see in the next

[307] Knysh, *Mystical Islam*, 282.
[308] Idem 205.
[309] Carl W. Ernst and Soraya Khodamoradi, "Risāla-yi šaṭṭāriyya," *Perso-Indica. An Analytical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions*, F. Speziale, ed. Carl W. Ernst, accessed March 11, 2020, http://www.perso-indica.net/work/risala-yi_sattariyya.
[310] Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 203-05; Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 51.

section, some Naqshbandīs would seek to continue the political role that Aḥrār had played in Central Asia in India. [311]

The New World, Protestantism, and Neoplatonism in the Renaissance

Before proceeding to the next phase, wherein our focus shifts entirely to India, it is prudent here to also take inventory of some important developments in the West which would set the stage for the eventual arrival of this lineage there. First of all, the same year that the famed poet and Naqshbandī Jāmī died in 1492, and just two years after Aḥrār's passing, the New World was discovered, when Christopher Columbus made landfall in the Bahamas. The Atlantic slave trade that began shortly into the next century may well have brought the first Sufis to the New World as slaves from Africa,[312] but documentation of lived Sufism in North America only goes back to the early 20th century, as will be treated below in phase seven. The 15th and 16th centuries were also seeing the emergence of humanistic ideals in the European Renaissance, similar ideals we will see Abdur Rashid describe as having been inherent in the original message of the Prophet, though perhaps such an expanded worldview could not be realized until the age of globalization. For some, such humanistic ideals would eventually lead to a secular humanism away from religion, but this was not necessarily originally the case. But there were definitely ruptures appearing in the dominant religion of Latin Christianity during this period. Notably in 1517, two years before Bahā' al-Dīn's birth, Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to a church door in Wittenburg, Germany, thus sparking the Protestant reformation, which lasted until the middle of the 17th century. This is an important development in our survey for its challenging the authority of the established Roman Catholic Church and undermining the need for intermediaries between God and man, thus paving the way for alternatives, personal choice, and individualism. For example, by translating the Bible into German, Luther made it directly accessible to the layperson, removing the mediatory function of the clergy, an event which prefigures Walī Allāh's translation of the Quran into Persian in the next phase.[313] Returning to the Renaissance in 15th-century Florence, contemporary with Aḥrār and Jāmī, we see what Sedgwick calls Florentine Neoplatonism, which has also been called Hermeticism. This involved the search for a *prisca theologia* by the likes of Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), who believed this ancient philosophy, thought to underly all religions, was passed "from early antiquity through a chain of sages, including Hermes, to Plato and Plotinus."[314] The name Hermeticism has been used because it was originally believed that the writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus were much older than they are. They actually date after, and seem to draw from, Plotinus. Similarly engaged in this effort at Florence was the humanist philosopher Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), who looked especially to the Kabbalah, which as already noted by Sedgwick also relies on emanationism.[315] Not only does this quest to uncover ancient knowledge echo Suhrawardī "Maqtūl's" attempt to restore a lost oriental philosophy, but it is important here since perennialism and the search for such an ancient wisdom tradition would provide much of the appeal for Sufism in the West from the early 20th and probably still in the 21st century.

Renewal and Reform (1550-1800)

This period centers almost entirely on the Indian subcontinent, since it is in this time that the two physically embodied lineages of 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh were now both in South Asia: the Chishtiyya, who had already been established in India for three centuries, alongside what will in this stage become the Mujaddidī sub-branch of the newcomers to India, the Naqshbandiyya. While the last phase was

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[311] Muzaffar Alam, "The Mughals, the Sufi Shaikhs and the Formation of the Akbari Dispensation," *MAS* 43 (2009): 135-174; Stephen Dale, "The Legacy of the Timurids," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 8 (1998): 43-58.

[312] Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 64.

[313] Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 283.

[314] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 88.

[315] Idem 86-89; Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 60-63; Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 41-67.

largely in the late medieval era, but transitioning into early modernity, we are now fully within what is generally considered the early modern period. The Mughal Empire began in the last phase with Bābur and will continue throughout the entirety of this phase, though experiencing a drastic decline toward the end and it will putter out in the first part of the next phase. This ultimately paves the way for their eventual replacement in the following phase by the British, whose economic hegemony (among other competing European East India companies) was felt early on, as the British East India Company was in fact founded in 1600 during Sirhindī's lifetime. In the last half-century of this phase, we see the Battle of Plassey and subsequent British military occupation beginning in Bengal. This was actually part of a much wider European conflict called the Seven Years' War 1756–1763, which took place in one way or another on every inhabited continent save for Australia. The world is becoming smaller.

The Naqshbandiyya is Planted in Indian Soil

Returning to just before the beginning of this phase, the (post-)Timurid invasion of the subcontinent, and the subsequent establishment of the Mughal Empire, brought the first Naqshbandīs to South Asia, many of whom were descendants of Aḥrār. Soon after, Naqshbandī *shaykh*s with the mission of propagating the order in this newly formed empire would arrive from Central Asia. Among these was **Muḥammad Bāqī Bi'llāh (1564-1603)**, who was sent by his own teacher al-Amkanagī in Samarkand to spread the order in India. Staying first in Lahore, Bāqī Bi'llāh arrived in Delhi in 1599, where he sought patronage from the Mughal elites, among whom he gained notable disciples, thus continuing Aḥrār's politically engaged legacy. In contrast to other active Central Asian missionary Naqshbandī *shaykh*s in India at the time, Bāqī Bi'llāh did not limit himself to the Mughal elites and taught among indigenous Indians, even appointing local *khalīfa*s, which further allowed him to be credited with the feat of establishing the Naqshbandiyya in India. Weismann notes that his ability to do so was because he was between two-worlds so to speak, something we will see below in the case of Rasool. Although Bāqī Bi'llāh's family hailed from Samarkand, he was born in Kabul. An ardent advocate of the *sharī'a*, he is also usually understood as a proponent of Ibn al-'Arabī's *waḥdat al-wujūd*.[316] He also, like Pārsā and Simnānī before him, followed a seven-fold *laṭīfa* model, which he listed but did not expound upon, although further details were provided by one of his notable successors, Tāj al-Dīn ibn Zakariyya Mahdī Zamān al-Rūmī (d. 1640).[317] A rival to Sirhindī for the place of main heir to Bāqī Bi'llāh's leadership, it appears that Tāj al-Dīn lost that struggle as he relocated to Mecca after his master's death, where he translated both Jāmī's *Nafaḥāt al-Uns* and the *Rashaḥāt* into Arabic.[318] He also describes the practice of *nafī wa ithbāt* in the exact same three-stroke manner as is credited to Aḥrār in the *Rashaḥāt* and he is Trimingham's source for this and the eleven Naqshbandī principles.[319]

In Delhi in 1599, Bāqī Bi'llāh initiated his most consequential disciple and successor, a local who had been born in Sirhind in the Punjab named **Aḥmad Farūqī Sirhindī (1564-1624)**, who would become the founder of the Mujaddidiyya. There is much that we will not delve into with Sirhindī, who is probably the most studied of any single Naqshbandī figure, such as his early education and dealings in Delhi, imprisonment by Jahāngīr, messianic millenarian ideas and doctrines surrounding lofty saintly ranks as well as renewal (*tajdīd*),[320] though we return to the latter toward the end of Part Three. Moreover, his emphasis on a steady decline since the time of the Prophet, which is a common characteristic in Islamic thought, is well-used by Rasool in its new setting by depicting the Sufi methods as scientifically tested spiritual technologies that emerged to counteract such decline. There is thus much we could do here, but using Rasool's six keywords as our guiderail, we consider primarily his mysticism through the lens of these terms, along with the supplemental categories of orthodoxy and

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[316] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 49, Algar, "The Naqshbandī Order," 142-43.
[317] Tosun and Bayraktar, "*Laṭā'if* (Subtle Centres) in the Pre-Mujaddidi Naqshibandi Order," 4-5.
[318] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 61.
[319] Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders of Islam*, 202; the summary of the *kalimat-i qudsiyya* on pages 203-4 draws from the same manuscript, available at "Islamic Manuscripts: Epistle on the Customs of the Naqshbandiyya Order." Cambridge Digital Library. Accessed January 08, 2018. http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01073/12.
[320] Jamal Malik, "Islamic Revival and Millennial Movements in the 16th and 17th Centuries: The Case of Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624 CE)," *Journal of South Asian Intellectual History* 4/2 (2022): 223-47.

activism. Given the controversial image that Sirhindī sometimes evokes, we will deal up front with his reformist orthodoxy and activism to clear the air before considering his mysticism.

To do so, we ought to first consider the context of late 16th- to early 17th- century Mughal India. While Bābur was an admirer of Aḥrār with nostalgia for his Central Asian homeland,[321] his successors would have to pursue a practical approach in this entirely new setting. This was true not only with regard to the other *ṭarīqa*s that had already been established in India; like the Chishtīs in particular along with others like the Suhrawardīs, Qādirīs, and Shaṭṭarīs; but also and even more importantly in light of the boggling religious diversity of India, including not only a multiplicity of sects that have come to be called "Hinduism," but also Jains, Zoroastrian Parsis, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, and more recently, Sikhs. In this context, the religion of the Mughal rulers, namely Islam, was a rather small minority religion in India.

Thus, Bābur's grandson, the third Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605), adopted a pragmatic and highly pluralistic approach. He built the *'ibādat-khāna* ("house of worship") in 1575, wherein he took part in inter-faith discussions with Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and other religious specialists. He and his son and successor Jahāngīr (1569-1627) adhered to a policy of *ṣulḥ-i kull* ("reconciliation with all") and promoted diversity and equality among all faiths. In 1582, Akbar introduced the *Dīn-i Ilāhī* ("Divine Faith"), a syncretic religion designed to overcome religious difference. In this context, Malik notes an increasingly humanistic *Weltanschaung* which, congruent with developments in the Renaissance, emphasized reason and was characterized by a shift from seeing in terms of the Islamic community alone to humanity as a whole. Such a view was doubtless in no small part facilitated by the popularity of the notion of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, or rather its South Asian reception as *hama ūst*, which facilitated syncretism and a blurring of the boundaries between religious traditions. These developments were also taking place at the expense of the preceding Islamic establishment. The dominance of the old aristocracy of Muslim elites of Central Asian background (*ashraf*) came to be challenged by increasing Hindu influence at court. Likewise, the rational sciences came to ascendancy over the revealed ones.[322] Malik posits that such circumstances resulted in a counter-trend, one of increasing confessionalization in which religious boundaries came to be reified and religious differences stressed, one that he notes was not only taking place in Mughal India, but also across the Muslim world in the 16th century.[323]

It is in such a context that Sirhindī's especially *sharī'a*-oriented Sufism, but even more so his Sunni Islamic exclusivism, must be understood. In fact, Malik describes how "Sirhindi's response was a distinctively Indian purist answer to a widespread heterodox Sufism in the subcontinent."[324] Recalling our coffee analogy, wherein al-Ghazālī sought an appropriate balance of proportions, upholding the supreme and unquestionable primacy of revelation, Sirhindī did much the same, and in the Indian context, he seems to have also preferred not to have any Darjeeling mixed into his Arabic blend. Following suit with his own teacher and Aḥrār before him, Sirhindī sought to influence government policy and wrote letters to the Mughal elites during the reigns of both Akbar and Jahāngīr, some of which are preserved in his *Maktūbāt*. Within these letters, one can find him advocating some quite exclusivist positions, such as discouraging the employment of Hindus at court and even the humiliation of Hindus, quite in contrast to the pluralism (and religious syncretism) of Akbar or the inclusiveness of the great early Chishtī saints of the past like Niẓām al-Dīn. Whether or not this can be considered a "Naqshbandī reaction" has been questioned by noting similar sentiments by another figure in the Chishtī Sabirī line that Sirhindī had been initiated into by his father before meeting Bāqī Bi'llāh.[325] But regardless of whether this reaction's roots were Naqshbandī or Chishtī, it was clearly a reaction nonetheless, such as to not only the loss of the status quo for the *ashraf*, but also to religious syncretism

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[321] Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 206.
[322] Idem 108-18.
[323] Idem 222.
[324] Idem 226.
[325] David W. Damrel, "The 'Naqshband Reaction' Reconsidered," in: David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (eds.) *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000), 176-198.

and a fear that Islam itself, a small minority religion in this ocean of religious multiplicity, was under threat, that mosques were being destroyed and temples built in their place.[326]

But Sirhindī's religious exclusivism not only contrasts with Akbar, but also with widely accepted pluralistic norms of the current globalized setting and the religiously pluralistic outlooks propagated by our case study *shaykh*s in particular. Consequently, the exclusivist facet of his personality is one that contemporary Mujaddidī Sufis who value religious pluralism may feel the need to reconcile, which some have done by seeking to understand him in his context. In reflecting on such apparent incongruence with today's values, an American-born *'ālim* and student of the contemporary Turkish Naqshbandī *shaykh*, Mahmut Ustaosmanoğlu (1929-2022) gave a talk entitled, "The Struggle to Preserve Minority Islam in Moghul India: Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624) As Defender of Faith and Its Relevance to the Rise of American Nativism." Therein, while citing the example of Thomas Jefferson owning slaves, he draws a comparison to how the founding fathers of the US could write such beautiful words as are found in the Declaration of Independence, like "all men are created equal," but do things that are utterly incongruent with values held today.[327] Another empathetic reflection and attempt to understand Sirhindī within his own context can be found in Buehler's "Ahmad Sirhindi: Nationalist Hero, Good Sufi, or Bad Sufi?"[328] With regard to our case study lineage, despite Sirhindī's significance as the Mujadaddī founder figure, whose name is prominently featured in the daily silent *khatm*, this issue has not arisen and most are probably unaware of the controversy. His importance for them lies not in his politics, but as one of the most important saints in their lineage and significant contributors to their regimen of spiritual training. Indeed, Sirhindī's letters to Mughals comprise only a small percentage of his *Maktūbāt*, and the rest are devoted to his strongly *sharī'a*-oriented mysticism, or what Buehler calls his "juristic sufism," which is of course what most concerns us here. Sirhindī was primarily a mystic, not a political activist.

Rasool's Keywords in Sirhindi's Mysticism

In Sirhindī, we finally find nearly all of the identified six key technical terms, and their constituent sub-elements, from Rasool's lexicon together and used in very similar ways. Sirhindī employs the terms *nisbat* or *munāsaba* to denote both the relationship of affinity or connection that the mystic seeks with God, as well as the relationship with one's *shaykh* which helps lead to such relationship with God.[329] He also refers to a variety of other types of *nisbat*, such as to denote one's connection to a particular *ṭarīqa*, speaking of the Naqshbandī *nisbat* as the highest.[330] Since *nisba* is an element of Arabic grammar and not known to be a classical era Sufi technical term, its latter usage, such as seen with Sirhindī here, was difficult to trace. While the researcher was able to find numerous examples of *nisbat* being used as a technical Sufi term by post-Sirhindī mystics, none were found prior to his time. Thus, such usage may have originated with Sirhindī or earlier uses may have simply not yet been brought to light by scholarship.

Similarly, and apparently for the first time ever, Sirhindī provides all ten *laṭā'if*, listed identically to Rasool as outlined below and divided in the same way into the worlds of command and of creation,[331] though textual evidence for these being assigned specific locations in the body would only later be found in the writings of his disciple Mīr Muḥammad Nu'mān (d. ca. 1650), along with

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[326] Idem 238.

[327] "Sirhindi & Minority Islam in India - Shaykh Naeem Abdul Wali," Sunna Institute, accessed February 24, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PlvSzFB3OY&fbclid=IwAR1EZ-8M_tGdQZWhWRenkMM_HEEwtzAtijwaYr9pZbdFKoyPnHYJoe5Y1hQ.

[328] Arthur Buehler, "Ahmad Sirhindi: Nationalist Hero, Good Sufi, or Bad Sufi?," in: Clinton Bennett and Charles M. Ramsey (eds.): *South Asian Sufis Devotion, Deviation, and Destiny*, London 2012. See also, Buehler's "Aḥmad Sirhindī: A 21st-Century Update," *Der Islam* 86/1 (2011): 122–141. Of course, on the range of views of Sirhindī after his time, see also Yohanan Friedmann, "Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī: An Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity" (PhD Diss., McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies), 1971.

[329] J.G.J. ter Haar, "Follower and Heir of the Prophet: Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624) as Mystic" (PhD Diss., Het Oosters Instituut, 1992), 78-80.

[330] Arthur Buehler: *Revealed Grace: The Juristic Sufism of Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624)* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2011), 117, 130, 146, 151, 157.

[331] Ter Haar, "Follower and Heir," 90-91.

colors and sources of *fayḍ* for each *laṭīfa*.[332] For a brief aside considering that we are now on Indian soil, if one is looking for Hindu influences on the creation of the *laṭā'if*, the only somewhat stable ground they have to stand on would be this addition of specific locations other than the heart, which already had a locus from the very revelation of the Quran. The fact that Simnānī's version has seven subtleties associated with a vibrant color scheme has been used to argue allegedly clear Yogic influence, since as everyone knows (or thinks they know) the Yogic *chakra*s are an ancient established seven-fold chromatic system. In support of the Yogic origins theory, for example, Baldick erroneously ascribes seven-fold colored *laṭīfa* schemes to the earlier Kubrāwī figures of Kubrā and Dāya.[333] The current popularly known version of the *chakra*s, wherein a seven-fold scheme is associated with a vibrant "Roy G. Biv"-spectrum color scheme, seems to actually be of more recent origin. Although there are certainly examples of seven-fold models in early Yogic texts, it was only in 1918, that this would become the generally recognized standard, when the British Orientalist Sir John Woodroffe published *The Serpent Power*, his translation of a 16th-century Yoga treatise, under the *nom de plume*, Arthur Avalon.[334] It was Woodroffe's work that made the seven-fold arrangement of *chakra*s the "standard" because of the enormous success and widespread readership of *The Serpent Power*, an understanding that was exported back to the subcontinent.

The American Indologist David Gordon White observes that, "One need not go back very far to find the principal source of the seemingly timeless system of the six plus one [seven] *cakras*" pointing to Woodroffe's popular work, and accusing scholars of imprudently receiving this arrangement of *chakra*s as "an immutable, eternal system, as old as yoga itself."[335] Moreover, the color associations seem to have first become significant with the Theosophist Charles W. Leadbeater's 1927 work, *The Chakras*,[336] based on his own "clairvoyant investigations" and whose colors are still comparatively drab in comparison to the currently popular vivid representations of the *chakra*s being associated with seven rainbow colors of the visible light spectrum. In addition to the problematic numbering of seven as the definitive model and the seemingly recent providence of the role of colors, advocates of the Yogic *chakra* origin theory for the *laṭā'if* also have to contend with the facts that: 1.) the colored lights, terminology, and more importantly, the concepts behind the *laṭā'if* derive largely from not only mystical experiences but also the serious exegetical efforts to unlock the meaning of the Quran, namely Tustarī and the above Kubrāwī *shaykh*s; and 2.) their localization seems to have first occurred among the earliest Mujaddidīs, a Sufi mileu that was vehemently against syncretism and would have been loath to consciously borrow anything in their Islamic mystical practices from Hindus.

Returning to Sirhindī though, he expounds at length upon the principle of *INfB*, ascribed to Bahā' al-Dīn, and in very distinctive and similar ways as Rasool, discussed in detail below, such as with the same opposing pairs like *jadhba* and *sulūk*, and *sayr-i anfusī* and *sayr-i āfāqī*, and *tazkiya-yi nafs* and *taṣfiya-yi qalb*.[337] Pertaining to practices, what is notably absent from existing studies on Sirhindī, however, is the topic of *murāqaba*. If it were included in his *Maktūbāt* or other works, it is hard to imagine ter Haar or especially Buehler overlooking it. We did already see this term and practice described in ways used today by contemporary Mujaddidīs in the earliest stage of the Naqshbandiyya, and even long before that with al-Muḥāsibī prior to the emergence of Sufism itself. In his *Maktūbāt*, we find Sirhindī assessing students' progress according to different levels, but the question remains as to whether or not the detailed standardized intentions for travelling the path found in later texts and among some Mujaddidī lines today had yet developed. Whether these existed in an oral tradition, as Buehler posits, or if this aspect was less standardized at this stage of development, one clearly finds the structure

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332 Tosun and Bayraktar, "*Laṭā'if* (Subtle Centres) in the Pre-Mujaddidi Naqshibandi Order," 1; Buehler, *Sufi Heirs*, 235, fn 4.
333 Baldick, *Mystical Islam*, 93.
334 John Woodroffe, *The Serpent Power: Being the Shat-Chakra-Nirūpana and Pādukā-Panchakā* (Madras: Ganesh & Co., Private Ltd., 1953).
335 David Gordon White, "Yoga in Early Hindu Tantra," in *Yoga: The Indian Tradition*, ed. Ian Whicher and David Carpenter (London: Routledge, 2003), 143-161, here 144.
336 C.W. Leadbeater, *The Chakras* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books/Theosophical Publishing House, 2013).
337 Ter Haar, "Follower and Heir," 91-92.

and content of the intentions today reflecting the cosmology of Sirhindī as found in his letters and other writings, as will be discussed below.

On *dhikr*, he upholds sober and silent recitation, and was adamantly against *samā'*, dancing and intoxicated ecstasy (*wajd*). He speaks of the same two major formulae described by Rasool, namely *nafī wa ithbāt* and *ism-i dhāt*, and likewise maintains that *dhikr* must be learned from a *shaykh*. Sirhindī also saw *dhikr* as more than just recitation, and for him it is in fact also simply following the *sharī'a*, something we definitely find in our case study lineage. Also of note, consistent with his *shuhūdī* perspective, on silently reciting "Allāh," Sirhindī emphasizes God's ultimate transcendence and not his attributes,[338] a topic that comes into play in Part Three below. Ter Haar also observes that in one letter, Sirhindī describes *muḥāsaba*,[339] a practice we see Abdur Rashid advocate in Part Three.

As for the role of the teacher, Sirhindī emphasizes, like Rasool below, the need for a qualified, perfected (*kāmil*) and perfection-bestowing (*mukammil*) guide, who has already completed the path to guide the aspiring mystic on that same path, and he advises firm adherence to that *shaykh*. He stressed *ṣuḥbat*, in the sense of spending time in the company of the *shaykh*, as an important means of facilitating spiritual progress, so that the student gradually begins to take on the character of the *shaykh*.[340] Ter Haar observes that he was familiar with the notion of *rābiṭa* as visualizing the *shaykh* and advised it for beginners. More important for our case study lineage, however, is that Sirhindī used the term *tawajjuh* to refer to the *shaykh*'s spiritual attention on their students, as he credits the combination of Bāqī Bi'llāh's *tawajjuh* and *ṣuḥbat* for his advancement and he himself practiced *tawajjuh* toward his sons and others.[341] But he also used the term in an older yet also newer sense, in light of his greater emphasis on the *laṭā'if* than the first generation of Naqshbandīs. That is, Sirhindī also employed *tawajjuh* to indicate the orientation of the *laṭā'if*, such as toward God or toward creation.[342] An additional note that comes into play later in Parts Two and Three is that the classic Naqshbandī principles seem to have a lesser importance for Sirhindī, as he only mentions seven of the traditional eleven[343] and he explains them in terms of his own ideas, such as when he states that *safar dar watan* describes *sayr-i āfāqī* being included within *sayr-i anfūsī*.[344]

Sirhindī's Cosmology

Having addressed all of Rasool's six key terms as they are used by Sirhindī, we now consider the latter's cosmology and conceptualization of the spiritual path. The path, in the briefest of terms, is essentially an ascent (*'urūj*) toward God which is followed by a descent (*nuzūl*) or return (*rujū'*) to creation. An understanding of this journey in any further detail requires a little knowledge of the main levels of his basically emanationist cosmology, which is highly oversimplified here and the researcher does not pretend to fully grasp its intricacies. The following summary of both cosmology and path is based largely on ter Haar's and Buehler's accounts. But even prior to that summary, we should at least touch on the *wujūdī-shuhūdī* debate. Sirhindī followed suit with Simnānī's critique of Ibn al-'Arabī's *waḥdat al-wujūd*, and even used the same words to do so: *waḥdat al-shuhūd*. As Elias already noted, and congruent with Malik's increased confessionalization thesis, Simnānī's and Sirhindīs circumstances were not all that different.[345] Whether under the syncretic Mughal emperor Akbar or under Buddhist Ilkhanid rule, Islam's position was weakened, which may have caused a doubling down on Muslim identity and the need for a strongly orthodox Islamic God whose separation from His creation was not in doubt.

Accordingly, Sirhindī describes *waḥdat al-wujūd* as a lesser stage of mystical advancement wherein the mystic confuses their experience as actually having attained union with God. The higher stage is a unity of witnessing, the *waḥdat al-shuhūd* which Simnānī spoke of, which underscores the

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338 Idem 81-83.
339 Idem 84-85.
340 Idem 78-79.
341 Idem 94, 138.
342 Idem 91.
343 Idem 109-110.
344 Buehler, *Revealed Grace*, 190.
345 Elias, *Throne Carrier of God*, 57-58.

separation of God and creation, though a full comparison of both men's respective versions of *waḥdat al-shuhūd* has yet to be carried out. To put the issue in Persian and indigenously South Asian terms, it is not that "everything is He" (*hama ūst*), rather it is that "everything is from He" (*hama az ūst*). These two forms of "unity" (*wujūdī* and *shuhūdī*) can be mapped onto Sirhindī's cosmology thus: *waḥdat al-wujūd* takes places within the *'ālam-i amr* in the shadows of the Divine names and attributes, yet *waḥdat al-shuhūd* actually takes place beyond that.[346] But despite such critique and academic exaggeration of the intensity of the criticism, Sirhindī highly respected and based his own teachings on Ibn al-'Arabī, only refining further to ensure it complied with divine revelation.[347]

In Sirhindī's cosmological model, creation took place when the divine essence emanated, individuated, or manifested five sequential *ta'ayyunāt* ("entifications," sing. *ta'ayyun*), each level emanating from the previous one, analogous to the doctrine of the five divine presences in the Ibn al-'Arabī school. The first of these, the *ta'ayyun-i awwal*, is also known, following Ibn al-'Arabī, as the *ḥaqiqat-i Muḥammadī* ("Muhammadan reality"), which Sirhindī refers to as the *dhāt* ("essence"),[348] despite it having emanated from its undifferentiated source. The second manifestation contains the names and attributes (*asmā' wa'l-ṣifāt*), as well as the qualities (*shuyūn*) and aspects (*i'tibārāt*), of God. The third entification is none other than the *'ālam-i amr* which contains the *aẓlāl* ("shadows" or "adumbrations," sing. *ẓill*) of the names and attributes in the preceding entification. The fourth entification is the *'ālam-i mithāl* ("world of prefigurations"), which serves as a bridge between the *'ālam-i amr* and the fifth manifestation, that is the *'ālam-i khalq*. In the microcosm of man, the *'ālam-i amr* consists of the five *laṭā'if* of *qalb*, *rūḥ*, *sirr*, *khafī*, and *akhfā* and the *'ālam-i khalq* is comprised of the *nafs* and the *qālab* ("frame" or "mold"), that is the *'anāṣir-i arb'a* ("four elements").[349]

The Four-Fold Journey

In accordance with principle of *INfB* ascribed to Bahā' al-Dīn and as interpreted by Sirhindī, the journey begins in the *'ālam-i amr*, that is the third entification; and then proceeds to ascend through the second, and ultimately to the first entification, after which begins a return descent to creation and multiplicity in the fifth entification.[350] This inner journey, is a "movement (of mind) in [intuitive] knowledge"[351] which can be divided into four sections, the first two of which are related to *wilāyat* ("intimacy") and ascent, while the second two are associated with *nubuwwat* ("prophethood") and return/descent.[352] The first leg of the journey is 1.) *sayr ila'llāh* ("travel toward God") and it consists of two types of travel, *sayr-i anfūsī* ("inner travel") and *sayr-i āfāqī* ("outer travel"), which are actually experienced as one means of travel, since the latter is included within the former.[353] *Sayr-i anfūsī* is travelling through the *'ālam-i amr*, beginning with the *qalb* and finishing with the *akhfā*, whereas *sayr-i āfāqī* is travelling in the *'ālam-i khalq*. *Sayr-i anfūsī* involves *jadhba* ("attraction to God"), what ter

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[346] Buehler, *Revealed Grace*, 37

[347] *EIr* "Ahmad Serhendi (2)." On the *wujūdī-shuhūdī* debate, see Abdullah Kartal, "Ahmad Sirhindî's Criticism of Wahdat Al-Wujûd and its Historical Background," *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 4, no. 1 (2013): 171-80; Mir Valiuddin, "Reconciliation Between Ibn Arabi's Wahdat-al-Wujud and the Mujaddid's Wahdat-ash-Shuhud," *Islamic Culture* 25 (1951): 43-51; Heike Stamer, "Sa'īd al-Dīn al-Farghānī's Usage of the Term Waḥdat al-Wujūd and his Role in Ibn 'Arabī's School," in Heike Stamer (ed.), *Mysticism in East and West The Concept of the Unity of Being* (Lahore: The Reckoner Publications, 2013), 24-40.

[348] Buehler, *Revealed Grace*, 34.

[349] For more detailed summaries of this cosmology, see Buehler, *Revealed Grace*, 32-36; ter Haar, "Follower and Heir," 126-27.

[350] For summaries of this four-fold movement, see Buehler, *Revealed Grace*, 36-38; ter Haar, "Follower and Heir," 93;

[351] Muhammad Abdul Haq Ansari, *Sufism and Shari'ah: A Study of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi's Effort to Reform Sufism* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1986), 201. This source as well as another, Burhan Ahmad Faruqi, *The Mujaddid's Conception of Tawhid* (Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf, 1940), are written from a somewhat emic Islamic perspective with both authors clearly advocating Sirhindī's views. If such partiality is kept in mind, these can be quite helpful works.

[352] Friedman, "Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī," 36.

[353] Buehler, *Revealed Grace*, 194.

Haar describes as the "passive" approach, wherein one's *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr* are purified (*tasfiyat*) resulting in one manifesting "praiseworthy character traits." On the other hand, *sayr-i āfāqī* involves the "active" pursuit of *sulūk* ("wayfaring") in which the *nafs* is cleansed (*tazkiyat*) and one's "bad character traits" are eliminated.[354] Sirhindī gives precedence to *jadhba* and *sayr-i anfūsī* but, as mentioned, contained within these are *sulūk* and *sayr-i āfāqī*. It is in this leg of the journey, when one traverses the shadows of the names and attributes that Sirhindi believes most Sufis become mired in ecstasy, confusing the actual names and attributes of God with their shadows, failing to push beyond *waḥdat al-wujūd*. The second leg is 2.) *sayr fi'llāh* ("travel in God"), and it is the beginning of the stage of *wilāyat-i sughra* ("lesser intimacy")[355] wherein one, having been annihilated, has left the world of contingent existence behind and is now passing through the actual names and attributes of God in the second entification, rather than their mere adumbrations in the third, to eventually arrive at the first entification, *ḥaqiqat-i Muḥammadi*. This stage is related to *baqā'* and the experience of *waḥdat al-shuhūd*, but this only completes half of the journey, the ascent, and having reached the summit of closeness to God, one begins their descent through the third stage of 3.) *sayr 'an Allāh bi'llāh* ("travel for God, by way of God"). Having started to share in the *nubuwwat* of the prophets,[356] it is the stage of *wilāyat-i kubra* ("greater intimacy"), which involves a descent that entails separating one's *rūḥ* from one's *nafs*.[357] At the end of this descent, one has come full circle, ascending from multiplicity to unity, and descending back to multiplicity again. At this point, one is engaged in the fourth stage of 4.) *sayr fi'l-ashyā'* ("travel in things") within the corporeal world, having fully regained their awareness of multiplicity which was lost during the first stage.[358]

Such ascent and descent had already been discussed by earlier Sufis, including both Ibn al-'Arabī and Simnānī,[359] but also even as early as Junayd. As demonstrated in the discussion of Junayd and Plotinus, we also find similar ideas in other faiths and spiritual traditions of different times, places and cultural contexts, which of course, and significant for our examination of the case study lineage's reception in the West, provides the possibility of resonance. It should also be remembered that Sirhindī's thought is not as neatly arranged as it has been presented here. Although his treatises provide some structural framework, in addition to these, his thought has also largely been understood and interpreted by later Mujaddidīs and academic scholars alike through his over five hundred letters which comprise the *Maktūbāt*. During his lifetime, he would communicate with this disciples and *khalīfa*s in different places through letters, much like we see Sa'īd Khān and Rasool in our case study lineage doing in the 20th century, and after them in the 21st century, Hasan and Abdur Rashid doing the same through email. Sirhindī's letters were compiled during his lifetime and under his supervision, but this provides some insight into how his teachings have come down to us. It is also important to note that his thought evolved over his lifetime, thus with its scattered and changing nature, there could be many ways of interpreting Sirhindī's teachings. The above outline, however, presented similarly by both ter Haar and Buehler, provides the structure of the intentions for meditation which we find textual evidence for at the end of this period and the beginning of the next.

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354 Idem 183.
355 Idem 37.
356 Friedman, "Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī," 36.
357 Buehler, *Revealed Grace*, 37-38.
358 As pointed out to the researcher in a discussion with a participant at a SOST retreat, despite undeniable differences in the Buddhist doctrine of *śūnyatā*, this full circle journey sounds remarkably similar to a Chan (Zen) Buddhist quotation that was popularized in the West by D.T. Suzuki and Alan Watts. The latter's rendition as found in *The Way of Zen*, originally published in 1957, is as follows: "Before I had studied Zen for thirty years, I saw mountains as mountains, and waters as waters. When I arrived at a more intimate knowledge, I came to the point where I saw that mountains are not mountains, and waters are not waters. But now that I have got its very substance I am at rest. For it's just that I see mountains once again as mountains, and waters once again as waters." Alan Watts, *The Way of Zen* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 126.
359 This was noted by Buehler, *Revealed Grace*, 36; who cites Hermann Landolt, "Le 'double échelle' d'Ibn 'Arabi chez Simnānī," in Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (ed.) *Le voyage initiatique en terre d'Islam: Ascensions céleste et itinéraires spirituels* (Paris: Peeters, 1996): 251-264.

Figure 1 Rauza Sharif: The *Dargāh* of Aḥmad Farūqī Sirhindī
(Located near the Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib in Sirhind-Fategarh, India)
Photo by the Researcher

Initial Spread of the Mujaddidiyya

Although Sirhindī sent *khalīfa*s to northern India during his own lifetime, it was the disciples of his son and principle heir, Muḥammad Ma'ṣūm (d. 1688) that were most responsible for the initial spread of the Mujaddidiyya. In the subcontinent, they expanded the lineage to areas of what are now Afghanistan and Pakistan, such as Kabul, Kandahar, Badakhshan, and Sindh. At the same time but further afield, other disciples of Ma'ṣūm would spread the Mujaddidiyya in the original homeland of the Naqshbandiyya in such Transoxianian cities as Bukhara and Tashkent, in what is now Uzbekistan, as well as Yarkand, now in modern-day China, where it maintains a presence today as the researcher encountered a Chinese Mujaddidī shaykh and a group of his disciples while at Sirhindī's *dargāh*.[360] The order also spread further westward into the Islamic world as another disciple of Ma'ṣūm, Muḥammad Murād Bukhārī (d. 1720) spent thirty years, from 1669, moving between Damascus, Istanbul, and Mecca. He established lasting nodes in Damascus which would spread out into other areas of Syria and Palestine as well as in Istanbul, where numerous *tekke*s would grow from his efforts. He also travelled to and was respected in Cairo and Baghdad.[361] Given this early missionary zeal to spread the newly created Mujaddidiyya, it is through Ma'ṣūm that nearly all current Mujaddidī and Khālidī lines (who also comprise the overwhelming majority of still existing Naqshbandī lines), trace their *silsila*. One important exception is the present case study lineage.

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[360] Algar, "A Brief History," 24.
[361] Idem 27-8.

Figure 2 The *Dargāh* of Muḥammad Maʻṣūm
(Located next to the tomb of Sirhindī in Sirhind-Fategarh, India)
Photo by the Researcher

Rather than through Sirhindī's son and principal successor, Maʻṣūm, from whom most existing Naqshbandī lines today descend, the case study lineage traces back to Sirhindī through **Ādam Banūrī (d. 1643)**, who gained a substantial following in the Punjab among the Pathans. His growing influence there was apparently seen as a threat by the Mughals, who exiled him to the Hijaz, arriving in Mecca in 1642.[362] There his selected translation of the *Maktūbāt* into Arabic sparked controversy among the *'ulamā'* on the issue of subordinating the reality of Muḥammad to that of the Kaʻba.[363] "Apparently to relax tensions," notes Weismann, Maʻṣūm sent his disciple Aḥmad Jār Allah Juryānī (d. 1707) to Mecca in 1646, and Maʻṣūm himself, accompanied by a number of followers, performed the *ḥajj* in 1656 and then spent three years in Medina before returning to India. One member of the envoy, however, Badr al-Dīn al-Hindī (d. unknown) remained behind with he and Juryānī settling permanently in the Hijaz, winning the acceptance of the *'ulamā'* and initiating pilgrims and locals alike to create an enduring Mujaddidī presence. While further debate on the *Maktubāt* arose in 1682, regarding Sirhindī's personal claims and his millenarianism, Weismann believes that the controversy subsided and that the Mujaddidiyya was "integrated into the scholarly fabric of the Haramayn," although not supplanting earlier Naqshbandī lines.[364] Banūrī's line, however, would end up back in South Asia, and the next link in the case study *silsila* is his disciple **Sayyid 'Abd Allāh Akbarābādī (d. unk.)**, said to have died in Agra. Akbarābādī is followed by **Shāh 'Abd al-Raḥīm (d. 1719)** who combined his role of being a Sufi *shaykh* with that of a Ḥanafī jurist, and founded the Madrasa Raḥīmiyya in Delhi, the leadership of which he would pass on to his son, who is also the next link in the *silsila*, Shāh Walī Allāh.[365]

Before considering him, we need to cover some contextual developments, but even before that, another important point to note is that the spread of the Mujaddidiyya roughly coincides with what has been considered a Chishtī revival begun in Delhi by Shāh Kalīm Allāh Jahānābādī (1650–1729), whose pluralistic approach to other faiths is notable and who is found in the case study lineage's Chishtī

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362 *EI*³ "Banūrī, Muʿizz al-Dīn"; *EI*² "al-Banūrī"; Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 61-62.

363 The present researcher is still trying to work out how this fits into Sirhindī's overall cosmology, since the Muḥammadan reality is the first entification and thus the highest. His best guess is that the higher prophetic and divine realities that Sirhindī describes offer a zoomed in, detailed view of the first entification, overall known as the Muḥammadan reality.

364 Algar, *A Brief History*, 28; Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 61-2, 70-1.

365 *EI*³ "ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Dihlawī, Shāh."

silsila.[366] It has been questioned, however, whether or not there ever was a Chishtī decline to be revived in the first place.[367] Whatever the case, it is clear that there was a Mughal decline, which we now consider.

Decline of the Mughals and Early "Neo-Sufi" Reform

In sharp contrast to the *Dīn-i Ilāhī* and *ṣulḥ-i kull* of Akbar, Awrangzeb (1618-1707) pursued a policy of Islamization. It has been argued that such Islamization was the fruit of activism on the part of Sirhindī and his successors, though probably unjustifiably.[368] Awrangzeb was the last of the great Mughal emperors and after his death, the empire was decidedly and irreversibly in decline. As the center, if it ever truly was centralized, lost its control, the territorial princely states at the peripheries became more powerful. Internal stability was challenged by conflicts over succession and increasing polarization into Sunni and Shiʻi camps at court as well as the revolts of the Marathas, Rajputs, Jats, and Sikhs, while Delhi itself became subject to external predation, notably in Nadir Shah's invasion and sacking of the Mughal capital in 1739 and the multiple Afghan invasions in the decades that followed. By the end of the 18th century, the Mughal Empire's area of influence was essentially limited to Delhi. In the next period in 1803, that too would fall under British control, though with a Mughal emperor installed as a figurehead. Even during the present period, starting from 1757, the British already occupied Bengal, from which their reach would continue to expand.[369] The decline narrative found in Sirhindī and preceding Islamic thought could certainly find justification for Muslims in Mughal India, especially Delhi, and such decline required reform to correct, which fit into a broader impetus for reform across the Muslim world at the time.

Regarding such a context, it has been argued that a distinctive and new kind of Sufism, a "neo-Sufism," was emerging in the late 18th and early 19th century in different areas of the Muslim world. This has been particularly discussed in the context of North Africa, but also South Asia, and with some important figures in our survey. Some of these defining characteristics of the highly contested notion of neo-Sufism (in the present sense of the word) which are relevant here include: rejection of ecstatic and popular practices, namely, *samāʻ*, vocal *dhikr*, and the visitation of the graves of saints; critique or rejection of Ibn al-ʻArabī's teachings, particularly with respect to *waḥdat al-wujūd*, and accordingly, an emphasis on the ontological separation between God and creation and the descent aspect of the mystical journey; an increased importance of the personality of the Prophet, manifested in ways like emphasis on *ḥadīth* studies, the adoption of the label Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya, or seeking annihilation in the Prophet; use of independent reasoning in interpretation of the revelation (*ijtihād*), as contrasted with relying on the interpretations of the established schools of thought (*taqlīd*); and a willingness to engage politically and even militarily to defend Islam and the Muslim community.[370]

Examples can certainly be found of several of these characteristics in earlier Sufi tradition, as critics of the notion of a late 18th- to early 19th- century neo-Sufism have rightly argued,[371] and we have seen examples thereof, such as with some facets of Sirhindī, Aḥrār, Simnānī, and even the Khwājagān with its communal distinctiveness as a counter-*ṭarīqa*, and even the Naqshbandiyya itself might be seen as a proto-neo-Sufism. Yet, as we will see below and at the beginning of the next phase, the particular cluster of characteristics ascribed to neo-Sufism does seem to become especially important during this period, certainly lending credence to the label of neo-Sufi. Whether such differences amount to a

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[366] *EI²* "Kalīm Allāh al-Djahānābādī."
[367] Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love*.
[368] Friedmann, "Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī."
[369] See Chapter Seven of Malik, *Islam in South Asia*.
[370] R.S. O'Fahey and Bernard Radtke, "*Neo Sufism Reconsidered*," *Der Islam* 70, no. 1 (1993), 52-87, here 57. See also John O. Voll, "Neo-Sufism: Reconsidered Again," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 42, no. 2/3, *Engaging with a Legacy: Nehemia Levtzion (1935-2003)* (2008): 314-330.
[371] For example, see Valerie J. Hoffman, "Annihilation in the Messenger of God: The Development of a Sufi Practice," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31, no. 3 (August 1999): 351-369.

complete departure from earlier Sufism or the continued development thereof is a matter of perspective, what angle one takes and what one chooses to emphasize. We are back to the issue of Theseus' ship or John Locke's socks, determining what is new versus what is old is a matter of subjective judgement and what one chooses as metrics and points of reference. Each generation offers something new as well as preserves and builds upon old things. Rather than arguing over whether something is new or old, it seems better to explore both aspects. Also important to note, however, is that the developments taking part in different areas of the world that have been described as neo-Sufism, must be seen as part of a broader trend of reform that was also just beginning to take place across the Muslim world during this period, a notable representative of which was Muḥammad ibn ʻAbd al-Wahhāb (1703-1792), the founder figure of the Wahhābī movement. Unlike the "neo-Sufis," who emerged from the same general drive for reform and criticized certain aspects of popular Sufi practice, what would come to be called the Wahhābīs by their critics, would reject Sufism *in toto*, as would later movements like the Ahl-i Ḥadīth and those who are sometimes called Salafīs.

Reason and Ḥadīth-Based Reform

While perhaps best known today as a reformist scholar and a major proponent of *ḥadīth* studies, the next link in the case study's Mujaddidī *silsila*, **Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī (1703-1762)** was also of course a Sufi *shaykh* who had been initiated into some seven different *ṭarīqa*s. As with the three of his contemporaries discussed below, Walī Allāh witnessed the Mughal decline firsthand and up close, living through multiple invasions of Delhi, and it is in such an utterly bleak situation that his thought and reform efforts must be understood. Quite unusually for the time, the Madrasa Raḥīmiyya which Walī Allāh attended and would assume leadership of from his father, the founder, had a dual curriculum that taught the revealed sciences (*manqūlāt*) alongside the rationale sciences (*ma'qūlāt*). After heading the *madrasa* for over a decade, he performed the *ḥajj* in 1730 and stayed for around two years in Mecca, where he studied with numerous scholars, including of the Mālikī school. But he also had multiple spiritual experiences in the Hijaz and was greatly influenced by the time he spent there. Upon his return to Delhi, he devoted himself to writing, seeking solutions for the problems facing the Muslim society of his day.

Pertaining to the proposed political and economic reforms expounded in his writings, Muhammad Khalid Masud explains that Walī Allāh saw the underlying causes of the decline of the Mughal Empire as two-fold: "exorbitant taxes" and "an unproductive wealthy class living as parasites on state resources."[372] His educational and social reforms sought to not only address what he perceived as a moral decay accompanying the Mughal decline, but also to reconcile sectarian differences among the Muslims, such as between Sunni and Shiʻi as well as *wujūdī* and *shuhūdī* perspectives and among the different *madhhab*s. The ethical reforms he called for were of a revivalist nature and he placed a great deal of emphasis on the study of *ḥadīth*s, returning to the foundational sources for the exemplary custom of the Prophet Muḥammad, along with asserting the right to independent reasoning (*ijtihad*).[373]

On the related topic of his critical thinking and use of reason, probably owing much to his early education and continuing role at the *madrasa*, Masud explains that Walī Allāh's magnum opus, *Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bāligha*,[374] offers "rational analysis of Islamic teachings on almost all the traditional subjects," and additionally, for him, "the real objective of revelation is refinement of the human soul."[375] So the reason-based explanations about Islamic prescriptions that we see Rasool providing to his students in the West, as well as his framing of the *sharī'a* in terms of its benefits for spiritual progress, are not really new at all, nor are they somehow something first introduced by the British colonialists, but instead already seen in an important pre-colonial link in their *silsila*. Thus, he may well represent an example of an emerging pre-colonial indigenous modernity. Although reason had a greater role to play in his thought, it was certainly not subordinated to revelation. But also for Walī Allāh, there

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[372] *EI*[3] "al- Dihlawī, Shāh Walī Allāh."
[373] Daud Rahbar, "Shah Waliullah and Ijtihad: Translation of Selected Passages from his ʿIqd al-Jid fī Ahkam al-Ijtihād wa al-Taqlīd," *The Muslim World* 45, no. 4 (1955): 346–358.
[374] Marcia Hermansen, *The Conclusive Argument from God: Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi's Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).
[375] *EI*[3] "al- Dihlawī, Shāh Walī Allāh."

would be absolutely no Darjeeling mixed in with his quite pure Arabic blend, as he was particularly concerned with purifying the faith of any and all un-Islamic innovations (*bid'a*), including certain aspects of shrine visitation.

Regarding Rasool's six keywords, however, while an exhaustive search of the many studies available on him[376] was not possible for this research, we do make some observations on three terms: *laṭā'if*, *nisbat,* and *dhikr*. On the first, among the many subjects Walī Allāh studied in his youth was *ṭibb yūnānī* ("Greek medicine"), and Hermansen believes that this left a strong mark on his theory of the subtle anatomy of man.[377] He in fact wrote much on the *laṭā'if*, even devoting an entire treatise to the topic entitled *Altāf al-Quds*.[378] He presented an expanded 15-*laṭīfa* model, adding five additional subtleties to Sirhindī's existing ten-*laṭīfa* model: the *'aql* ("intellect"), *nūr al-quds* ("light of the holy"), *ḥajar-i baht* ("perplexing stone"), *anāniyya kubrā* ("greater selfhood"), and the *al-dhāt* ("the essence"). These fifteen *laṭā'if* are divided into three tiers of the beastial, the human and the angelic. Walī Allāh believed that following the *sharī'a* naturally results in a balancing of the beastial and lower human subtleties; viz., the four elements along with the *'aql*, *qalb*, and *nafs*; and thus producing ethically sound behavior, but that through *murāqaba* and *dhikr*, it is possible to realize even more sublime levels relating to the higher human and angelic subtle faculties.[379] One significant aspect of this expanded model is that it seeks, in line with his broader reconciliatory agenda, to reconcile *wujūdī* and *shuhūdī* perspectives, placing *walāyat* and *nubuwwat* side-by-side as two paths that must both be traversed to reach the divine essence, thus striking a balance between Ibn al-'Arabī's and Sirhindī's respective emphases on sainthood and prophecy. Also of note, Walī Allāh, like Sirhindī, used the term *nisbat* at least in the senses of one's affiliation with a particular *ṭarīqa* and with God, and he explains that silent *dhikr* was not need during Bahā' al-Dīn's lifetime because of the strength of his *nisbat*, whereas in his own day, vocal *dhikr* should not be prohibited on account of the prevailing weaker connection to God.[380]

Ultimately, however, his understanding of man's spiritual psychology does not seem to have survived as part of a living and practiced tradition. The *laṭā'if* system in Rasool's line today matches that of Sirhindī and, moreover, Hermansen describes how Walī Allāh's heirs in the Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya movement, discussed below in the next phase (to be distinguished from 'Andalīb and Mīr Dard in this phase below), practiced a Neo-Sufi "synthesis of Sūfī teachings and *ḥadīth*-based *sharī'a*," placing a greater emphasis on devotional practices of the Prophet himself, as found in the *ḥadīth*s, rather than the insights and practices developed by later Sufis.[381] Although probably less known during his lifetime than his contemporaries below, in the long-run, Walī Allāh would ultimately have a larger and longer-lasting impact in Muslim thought in South Asia and beyond. It is also worth noting, and rather sadly ironic, that his characteristic emphasis on *ḥadīth*, which was intended to overcome sectarian differences and unite Muslims, has in fact become a source of bitter division among many South Asian Muslims today.

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[376] For an extensive bibliography of sources on Walī Allāh, see Marcia Hermansen, "Shah Wali Allah Bibliography," posted to her Academia.edu page. Some notable studies include J.M.S. Baljon: *Religion and Thought of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi, 1703–1762* (Leiden: Brill, 1986); Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Shah Wali-Allah and his Times* (Canberra: Ma'rifat Publishing House, 1980); G.N. Jalbani, *Teaching of Shah Waliullah of Delhi* (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 1998).

[377] Marcia K. Hermansen, "Mystical Paths and Authoritative Knowledge: A Semiotic Approach to Sufi Cosmological Diagrams," *Journal of Religious Studies and Theology*, 12, no. 1 (1992): 52-77, here 63-67.

[378] For an English translation of Altāf al-Quds, see G.H. Jalbani's *The Sacred Knowledge of the Higher Functions of the Mind: The Altaf al-Quds of Shah Waliullah* (Salem, MA: Ishk Book Service, 1982).

[379] Hermansen, "Mystical Paths and Authoritative Knowledge," 64.

[380] Aamir Bashir, "*Sharī'at* and *Ṭarīqat*: A Study of the Deobandī Understanding and Practice of Tasawwuf," MA Thesis, International Islamic University Malaysia, 2010, 52-53.

[381] Marcia K. Hermansen, "Shāh Walī Allāh's Theory of the Subtle Spiritual Centers (*Laṭā'if*): A Sufi Model of Personhood and Self-Transformation," in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 47, No. 1, (1988): 1-25; Idem, "Mystical Paths and Authoritative Knowledge," 63-67.

Figure 3 Graves of Shāh Walī Allāh (right) and Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (left)
(Located in Delhi outside of Shahjahanabad near Turkman Gate)
Photo by the Researcher

Head of the Mujaddidī Khānaqāh in Delhi

Of noble Afghan extract with a family background in the Mughal administration, despite a promising career in the military, Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān (1699–1781) gave this up early on to devote himself to Sufism, eventually consolidating disparate Mujaddidī lines and serving as the head of the Mujaddidī *khānaqāh* in Delhi.[382] Although not a prolific writer, he was an accomplished poet and a propagator of Sufism, primarily the Mujaddidiyya, but he also initiated disciples into the Chishtiyya, Qādiriyya, and Suhrawardiyya. He appointed numerous deputies who became established in the Punjab and the Deccan. He not only would correspond with them, but they would travel regularly to see him and he would travel regularly to see them.[383] This certainly prefigures the travelling of the later Indian *shaykh*s in our own case study lineage as well as furthers the practice of writing letters found already in Sirhindī. Because of such efforts to establish a network of disciples and deputies, it is through him that most Naqshbandī lines in existence today trace their lineage back to Sirhindī via Ma‘ṣūm. Despite what one might expect from Mirzā's firm emphasis on following the example of the Prophet, for which he was given the epithet of the "Sunnicizer" (*Sunnītarāsh*), and although quite anti-Shi‘i, perhaps owing in part to the growing Shi‘i influence at court (he was ultimately assassinated by a Shi‘i), Mirzā's interreligious pluralism is readily apparent and important to note. Not only did he consider some Hindus as monotheists and discuss their faith favorably, but he was in fact willing to take on Hindus as disciples,[384] something not unheard of among other lineages like the Chishtiyya, though it may well

[382] On Mirzā, the *khānaqāh* and his successors, see Fusfeld, "The Shaping of Sufi Leadership in Delhi." See also, Muhammad Umar, "Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan: A Religious Reformer of the Eighteenth Century," *Studies in Islam* 6 (1969), 118–154. On his mystical teachings, see SherAli Tareen, "The Conduct of the Sufi Path: Naqshbandī Meditation in Early Modern India," *Tasavvuf Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi* 2, 2 (2023): 251-62.
[383] *EI*[3] "Jān-i Jānān, Maẓhar"
[384] Particularly with regard to his positions toward and relationship with Hindus, as well as his Hindu spiritual progeny, see Dahnhardt, *Change and Continuity in Indian Sufism*; and Yohanan Friedmann, "Medieval Muslim

have been a first for Naqshbandīs. This set an important precedent for Rasool's opening the teachings to prospective non-Muslim students in the West in the late 20th century. It would also set the course for another development with long-term results up to the present, namely, the appointment of a Hindu as a *khalīfa*, thus passing Mirzā's line into a Hindu family in the next phase during the 19th century. The Hindu membership in his circle has been explained by a shared interest in poetry,[385] and indeed, Mirzā is considered among the four pillars of Urdu poetry.[386] In Irina Tweedie's account of her own training in this line considered below, her teacher Bhai Sahib often recites Persian poetry. Despite a seemingly very different faith, a Hindu Bhakti Sant tradition *vis-à-vis* a quite orthoprax Sunni Sufi Islam, something in the poetry must have resonated with them.

Figure 4 *Dargāh* of Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān and Shāh Ghulām ʻAlī
(Located in within the grounds of the Delhi *khānaqāh*
inside of Shahjahanabad near Turkman Gate)
Photo by the Researcher

Views of Indian Religions," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95, no. 2 (1975): 214–221. SherAli Tareen points out that Mirzā did not go so far as to declare Hindus as people of the book, as has sometimes been assumed by scholars. Tareen also maintains that viewing Mirzā's position as religious pluralism would be inaccurate and anachronistic on the grounds that Mirzā upheld the superiority of Islam. Nevertheless, the present author contends that this is in fact a significant display of religious pluralism, since Mirzā does indeed find value in Hinduism and accepts Hindus as disciples at his *khānaqāh*. SherAli Tareen, "The Perils and Possibilities of Inter-Religious Translation: Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan on the Hindus," *SAGAR: A South Asia Research Journal* 21 (May 2014): 43-51. See also SherAli Tareen, "Reifying Religion While Lost in Translation: Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Janan (d.1781) on the Hindus," *Macalester Islam Journal* 1, no. 2 (2006): 18-30.

[385] *EI*[3] "Jān-i Jānān, Maẓhar."

[386] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 372.

Yet another reason Mirzā is important for this survey is that it was among his spiritual progeny that we first find evidence of a detailed curriculum of intentions for *murāqaba* in the form of the *ma'mūlāt* genre. Works of this category contain practical recitations, as indicated etymologically by the root *'-m-l* and the related meaning of "making something work," which are to be performed to achieve a variety of ends. Buehler notes as precursors to this genre two works by Walī Allāh, which contain "practical formulae for things like repelling rabid dogs, protecting children, and keeping bothersome disembodied spirits from one's house."[387] Thus such worldly instrumentalizing ends of spiritual practices are certainly not the exclusive purview of occultism-oriented spiritual seekers in the modern and post-modern West.

Whatever the case, according to Buehler, Mirzā's disciple, Na'īm Allāh Bahrā'ichī (d. 1803/4), whose own spiritual descendants would eventually include the Hindu lines discussed in the contemporary survey below, was the first to initiate the *ma'mūlāt* genre of texts that outline Mujaddidī meditative exercises. Although Buehler acknowledges the possibility that these were not exactly what was practiced by earlier Mujaddidīs,[388] that is the chance that an established curriculum of intentions for *murāqaba* may not have existed until the emergence of the *ma'mūlāt* genre around the turn of the 19th century, he more or less accepts the assumption that these were preserved in an oral tradition. This assumption underlies his model of the mediating *shaykh*, and from there, the assumption has also been accepted as fact by other scholars, though before him Fusfeld also mentions oral transmission but provides no earlier textual sources. Buehler also lists subsequent works emerging from the disciples of another of Mirzā's students, in fact his main successor, Shāh Ghulām 'Alī (1743-1824), discussed in the next phase. Among his students is the author of the next work in the *ma'mūlāt* genre after Bahrā'ichī's that Buehler was able to identify, the *Hidāyat al-Ṭālibīn* by Abū Sa 'īd Farūqī (d. 1835). The work was written during Ghulām 'Alī's lifetime and used at the *khānaqāh*, and as the text itself explains, he expressed his approval.[389]

The Rose and the Nightingale

Two other Mujaddidī poets and prominent figures of 18th-century Delhi need also be mentioned: Muḥammad Nāṣir 'Andalīb (1697–1758), who similar to Mirzā was a military officer turned Sufi, and 'Andalīb's son, chief disciple, successor, and commentator, Mīr Dard (1721-1785), the latter of whom, is considered, like Mirzā, another of the four pillars of Urdu poetry.[390] Like Walī Allāh, theirs was an attempt, among other things, to overcome intra-Muslim divisions, such as Shi'i versus Sunni and *wujūdī* versus *shuhūdī*. They sought to entirely transcend these distinctions by means of a "Pure Muhammadan Way," the Ṭarīqa-yi Khāliṣ Muhammadiyya, which they claimed was nothing more or less than the path followed by the Prophet. As founder of this new-old path, 'Andalīb expounded it in an approx. 1,800-page Persian-language work entitled *Nāla-yi 'Andalīb* ("Lament of the Nightingale"), which is in some ways like an Indian *1,001 Nights*, containing allegorical stories within stories.[391] The author of the epilogue appended to one later-compiled manuscript of this work, however, rejects this comparison to *'Alf Layla wa Layla* on the grounds that it is not merely a collection of stories for entertainment, but that it is a spiritual work intended to impart deep mystical insights through its ornate symbolism.[392]

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[387] Buehler, *Sufi Heirs*, 235-36.

[388] Idem 235.

[389] For a study on the *Hidāyat*, see Demetrio Giordani, "Stages of Naqsbandi Suluk in Sah Abu Sa'id Mugaddidi's 'Hidayat al-Talibin,'" *Oriente Moderno* 92, no. 2 (2012): 393-417. Also of note, the description of the Mujaddidī path, and the Naqshbandī principles, provided by Fusfeld is drawn from this work in combination with the later work *Manāhij al-Sayr* by Abū'l-Ḥasan Zaid Farūqī (d. unk.), which is itself a synthesis of other works. Fusfeld, "The Shaping of Sufi Leadership in Delhi," 71-115, on Ghulām 'Alī's approval of the text, see 109, fn 10.

[390] Khodamoradi, *Sufi Reform in Eighteenth Century India*; *EI*^{3} "ʿAndalīb, Khvāja Muḥammad"; *EI*^{2} "Dard."

[391] This work has been summarized and analyzed by Neda Saghaee, "Reconstruction of Cultural History of India in the 18th Century based on Nāṣer 'Andalīb's Work: Nāla-ye 'Andalīb," PhD Diss., University of Erfurt, 2018.

[392] See idem, the section of Chapter Two entitled "Value in the Eyes of ʿAndalīb, His Successors and Modern Academia."

The main plot is a love story between a rose and a nightingale (*'andalīb*), metaphors for God and the Prophet. Unlike the later *ma'mūlāt* works, which require the guidance of a *shaykh*, 'Andalīb intended *Nāla-yi 'Andalīb* itself, and the allegorical stories within it, to serve the very guiding function of the *shaykh*. After completing this massive collection of colorful tales, he wrote the *Risāla-yi Hūsh-Afzā* ("Treatise on Higher Consciousness") to describe a chess-like game called *hūsh-afzā* that he had already invented and even referred to in his earlier magnum opus. Like *Nāla-yi 'Andalīb*, this game was to perform a spiritual pedagogical function, in contrast to the game of chess, which was popular in that time and which 'Andalīb saw as not only mere entertainment, but an idle distraction from religious obligations. Through this new game, he hoped to reach an even larger audience, and the game itself was intended to prepare those of lesser intellectual or spiritual capacity for penetrating the mysteries contained within *Nāla-yi 'Andalīb*.[393]

'Andalīb's son and successor, Mīr Dard composed *'Ilm al-Kitāb*, which interprets and compliments his father's *chef d'oeuvre*. Ziad observes of both 'Andalīb and Mīr Dard that they "did not wish to create an institutionalized *ṭarīqa*, but rather an ethical and philosophical way potentially accessible to everyone and subject to constant renewal."[394] Accordingly, Mīr Dard appointed his brother not as heir to the lineage, but as the caretaker of *Nāla-yi 'Andalīb* and later writings of the Ṭarīqa-yi Khāliṣ Muḥammadiyya, like *'Ilm al-Kitāb*.[395] Thus, this lineage faded from history as a living tradition. The two figures of 'Andalīb and Mīr Dard have probably not received their due amount of scholarly attention, but this trend may have begun to turn with recent monographs by Homayra Ziad, Soraya Khodamoradi, and Neda Saghaee.

Of note, Khodamoradi characterizes Mīr Dard as a "strong intra-religious inclusivist and a mild inter-religious exclusivist,"[396] which is quite the reverse of Mirzā's anti-Shi'i intra-religious exclusivism but strong inter-religious inclusivism, or we might say pluralism. This demonstrates how multiple positions toward intra- and inter-religious inclusivism versus exclusivism; in addition to all of the other differences among major 18th-century Mujaddidī figures in Delhi like Mirzā, Walī Allāh, 'Andalīb and Mīr Dard; are possible within the same sub-lineage, in the very same city, and during the very same time period. Further on the diversity within this lineage, quite in contrast to Sirhindī and the more commonly encountered Mujaddidī rejection of music, 'Andalīb and Mīr Dard were in fact proponents of musical recitals (*samā'*).

Nevertheless, in the pure Muhammadan path of 'Andalīb and Mīr Dard, one does find many elements bespeaking its Mujaddidī origins, like the four-fold path in 'Andalīb's *Nāla-yi 'Andalīb* or in Mīr Dard's *'Ilm al-Kitab*, wherein he speaks of the *dhikr* of the five *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr*, associating them with the same locations as Rasool, and also of how the *dhikr* is to come to permeate one's entire body (*dhikr sulṭānī*). Mīr Dard views such *dhikr* as a medicine and sees it as practical, not based on book learning.[397] So just as we saw with the *ma'mūlāt* tradition as well as in Aḥrār, there is an emphasis on diligent practice of particular techniques and on personal experience, both of which will be quite important in our case study lineage. The term Ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya, however, will take on an entirely different form within our case study lineage in the next phase. It should lastly be mentioned, however, that Mīr Dard was at the vanguard of a new and emerging form of public space, the *mushā'ira*, poetry fora which are in some ways, such as by offering an egalitarian space for free expression and the exchange of ideas, perhaps analogous to the coffeehouses and literary salons of the

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[393] See idem, Chapter Two, the section entitled "Relationship between *Nālah-yi 'Andalīb* and *Risāla hūsh-afzā*."
[394] *EI³* "'Andalīb, Khvāja Muḥammad."
[395] Homayra Ziad, "Quest of the Nightingale: The Religious Thought of Khvajah Mir Dard (1720-1785)" (PhD Diss., Yale University, 2008), 326-27.
[396] See Chapter Six of Khodamoradi, *Sufi Reform in Eighteenth Century India*.
[397] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 174-75.

European enlightenment,[398] which leads us to consider certain key developments taking place in the West during this same period.

Secret Societies, the Age of Reason, and Reconciling Science and Spirituality

Early on during this period, from within Roman Catholic Christianity in the 16th century, similar to Eckhart at the turn of the 14th century, we find expressions of emanationism in what has been called "mystical theology" in the likes of Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582) and John of the Cross (1542-1591).[399] But we also find Protestant emanationism combined with another development that will soon become important, the idea of a secret society holding special esoteric knowledge. Toward the end of Sirhindī's lifetime, a series of publications known as the Rosicrucian manifestoes were published between 1614 and 1617, in Kassel and Strasbourg in modern-day Germany and France respectively, just prior to the start of the Thirty Years War. These manifestoes have been understood to all be the work of a single author, a Lutheran pastor named Johann Valentin Andrae (1586-1654), and to contain a mixture of various ideas, but among them including Hermeticism and Kabbalah in particular, systems that employ an emanationist framework, but now there is also the added element of a secret society, not to mention an activist reform component. He seems to have sought to solve the problems of the time via a synthesis of "Hermetic philosophy and [Protestant] Christian theology."[400] The Rosicrucians probably only existed as a literary idea in the mind of Andrae at the time, but the belief that there actually was such a society "caused real societies to spring up." As Faivre notes, "The explosion of initiatory societies in the Western world from the seventeenth century onward was a direct result of this."[401] This idea comes into play again in the next phase.

Yet esoteric ideas were certainly not the only thing to come out of the Renaissance, and more broadly, this phase was marked by the Scientific Revolution from the middle of the 16th century, and following on its heels, the Industrial Revolution beginning in the latter half of the 18th century. The 18th century is also considered the time of the Age of Reason, or the Enlightenment, which had emerged out of Renaissance humanism. Leading up to this, among certain thinkers like the philosopher John Toland (1670-1722), the relationship between revelation and reason was being understood in some radically new ways, that is the subordination of revelation to reason, the view that if the former contradicts the latter, then it is reason that must be seen as right.[402] During the Enlightenment, ideas about the equality of man were being spread in the coffee houses and literary salons of Europe as well as notably among freemasonic lodges. The latter were closely tied with the further development of Western Esotericism and can be seen not only as a vehicle for the dissemination of ideas that developed among what Sedgwick calls the Florentine Neoplatonists, like Ficino and Mirandola, but freemasonry also facilitated the spread of enlightenment ideals, like valuing science and reason, and it sought to "unite people of all religions based on universal principles, including the belief in God, the immortality of the soul, and the brotherhood of all people."[403] On the basis of such Enlightenment-era notions as "all men are created equal" and "*liberté*, *égalité*, *fraternité*," the yokes of old monarchies are being thrown off, notably the American Revolution (1765-1783) and the French Revolution (1789-1799). The latter of these included rejection of the Catholic church, seeking to establish a state-sanctioned atheistic religion, the short-lived *Culte de la Raison*, a step away from not only the Catholic church, but also God.

In Britain and North America beginning in the 1730s, a mass revivalist movement that came to be known as the First Great Awakening was taking place which, somewhat like Walī Allāh's

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[398] Jamal Malik, "Literarische Salons im Indien des 18. Jahrhunderts. Ein Beitrag zur Moderne im Islam?," in *Islam in der Moderne; Moderne im Islam. Eine Festschrift für Reinhard Schulze zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Monica Corrado, Johannes Stephan, and Florian Zemmin (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 301–327. See also Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 269-70.

[399] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 82-84.

[400] Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 38-39.

[401] Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 65; cited in Albanese, *A Republic of Mind & Spirit*, 38.

[402] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 93-94.

[403] Dickson, *Lived Sufism in North America*, 63.

synthesizing reconciliation efforts, transcended denominations in favor of a broader evangelical identity.[404] Also, even more precisely contemporary with Walī Allāh was the Swedish scientist and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), whose writings were paving the way for alternative spiritualities that would emerge in the West in the following century, such as New England Transcendentalism, Spiritualism, and Theosophy. His thought was characterized, inter alia, by Neoplatonic ideas, the allegorical interpretation of scripture, and quite significantly, a concern with expressing the spiritual in scientific terms.[405] The same year Swedenborg died (1772), we also see the beginnings of the literary presence of Sufism in the West with the publication of a work by the British philologist stationed in Calcutta, Sir William Jones (d. 1794), including his translations of the poetry of the Persian Sufi poet Ḥāfiẓ into English.[406]

British Colonialism, Independence, and Western Spiritual Seekers (1800-1975)

While European economic hegemony was felt even before the turn of the 17th century, when the British East India Company was established, and British colonialism in India could be traced to the Battle of Plassey in 1757, as the East India Company's focus shifted from trade to controlling territory with the decline of the Mughal empire, the looming British rule was most felt in our case study lineage in 1803, when they took Delhi and the last Mughal emperor under their protection. In this period, we consider different reactions to the now direct British rule, leading ultimately to independence, but also partition, in 1947. We will also see further development of the revival and reform agendas that arose in the last period, which will see Sunni Muslims in India fragment into various communities. Sufism itself will come to be threatened by revivalist reformers as well as modernist Muslims, and also declared to be on the decline by Orientalist scholars. The period ends, however, with a potential new opportunity for Sufism: Western spiritual seekers arriving in India in the 1960s and 70s.

British Rule, a Fatwa, and a Jihād

Like his father, Walī Allāh, and grandfather, ʻAbd al-Raḥīm, before him, **Shāh ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz (1746-1824)**, the next personality in our case study's Mujaddidī *silsila*, assumed leadership of the Madrasa Raḥīmiyya in Delhi.[407] ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz was well known and respected within his lifetime, by the elites and the populace alike, who would come to him as a scholar for religious rulings as well as for his function as a Sufi *shaykh*, including for spiritual protection and healing.[408] He also continued his father, Walī Allāh's emphasis and program for *ḥadīth* studies as well as his aim of reconciling sectarian differences among the Muslim community. Nevertheless, scholars differ on how to interpret his *Tuḥfat Ithnā ʻAshariyya* ("A Gift for the Twelvers"),[409] some arguing that it was a critical refutation of Shiʻism, which would make the title rather tongue-in-cheek, while others maintain that it was in fact a sincere effort at reconciliation, with Masud noting that the author himself explains that the text was intended to foster mutual understanding by examining differences.[410] Another and even more important point of debate was a religious ruling (*fatwa*) that he delivered in response to a question posed to him about whether or not India, now under non-Muslim British rule, could be considered *dār al-ḥarb* ("abode of war"). His ruling was in the affirmative, yet despite the ominous sounding nature of the new status

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[404] Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).
[405] Robert S. Ellwood, *Alternative Altars: Unconventional and Eastern Spirituality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), 84-89.
[406] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 117.
[407] *EI*[2] "Shāh ʿAbd Al- ʿAzīz Al-Dihlawī."
[408] Idem 333-34.
[409] Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 336. Also of note, see Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz: Puritanism, Sectarian Polemics, and Jihad* (Canberra: Maʻrifat Publishing House, 1982).
[410] *EI*[2] "Shāh ʿAbd Al- ʿAzīz Al-Dihlawī."

categorizing India as an "abode of war," this *fatwa* was neither a call to armed *jihād* against the British, nor for non-Muslims to emigrate to Muslim-controlled territory.[411]

Instead, this new categorization was intended to allow Muslims a relaxation of certain injunctions of the *sharī'a* in the changed setting, such as being able to charge interest to Christians. As Malik argues, 'Abd al-'Azīz in fact took a quite integrationist approach to the newly established British rule, even encouraging the learning of English so that Muslims could benefit from employment by the British.[412] Indeed, he seems to have been on congenial terms with the British officials who visited him, unlike Shāh Ghulām 'Alī discussed below. His declaration of India as *dar al-ḥarb*, however, has been interpreted by later Muslim nationalists as the beginning of the independence movement. His impact on Islam in India was indeed significant, as Masud asserts that "Almost all the later Indian Sunnī schools of thought trace their genealogy of religious authority back to *ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz*." Of these, he lists several that will be discussed below, namely the Deobandīs, Ahl-i Ḥadīth, and interestingly, the Barēlwīs.[413] As already alluded to, a quite opposite approach to the British and the new circumstances, was taken by 'Abd al-'Azīz's contemporary *shaykh* who was also in Delhi and based not far from the Madrasas Raḥīmiyya with his *khānaqāh* inside the gates of Shahjahanabad, namely Shāh Ghulām 'Alī described below.

But 'Abd al-'Azīz also differed significantly from an important disciple of his, the next personality in the *silsila*, **Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd Barēlwī (1786-1831)**, who would see the need to take up arms in light of the drastically changing circumstances and loss of Muslim power. The term *Tarīqah-yi Muḥammadiyya*, already seen in India in the 18th century, is used by Sayyid Aḥmad at the beginning of the 19th, this time not just as an ethical concept and approach to authority that goes directly back to the Prophet, but also now a considerably activist movement. In him and his movement, a number of the defining characteristics of what has been called neo-Sufism come to the fore, notably an emphasis on the personality of the Prophet, not only in the name of the movement, but also the stress on assiduously following his example as found in the *ḥadīth*s, but also and significantly, a willingness to resort to armed conflict in the defense of Islam along with of course the creation of a mass organization, emphasis on social and moral teachings over spiritual practice, and the rejection of popular Sufi practices.[414] Groups that also self-identified with the label of Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya who also exhibited several similar characteristics were emerging at the very same time in North Africa, namely the Tijāniyya, Sanūsiyya, and Idrīsiyya,[415] which was also a period of wider European colonialism.

Sayyid Aḥmad is to be distinguished from the later Barēlwī movement and its founder, discussed below, with whom Sayyid Aḥmad shares very little in common other than a *nisbat*, in the purely grammatical sense of the term. In fact, their respective views on correct Islamic practice are quite on opposite ends of the spectrum to one another. The *nisbat* of Barēlwī indicates his birthplace of Raebareli (or Bareilly depending on the source, which are two different cities in Uttar Pradesh), wherefrom he departed at around the age of eighteen, eventually arriving in Delhi in ca. 1804, where he became a disciple of 'Abd al-'Azīz. He later served for seven years in the army of the future Nawab of Tonk, after which he dedicated himself to touring, not so much as a Sufi *shaykh*, but as a reformist preacher who gained thousands of followers that became the movement known as the Ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya, which he founded along with his close disciples and companions, among whom could be counted some of Walī Allāh's biological descendants, notably his grandson Shāh Ismā'īl Dihlawī (1779–1831). The latter authored *Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm* to propagate their ideas and the movement made extensive use of available technology in the form of the printing press to effectively reach a larger audience, much like the internet is being used today as a means of spreading reform ideas as well as Sufi teachings.

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[411] For some excerpts of his rulings on the matter, see Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 349-352.

[412] Idem 333-34. For more on 'Abd al-'Azīz, see also Muhammad Khalid Masud: "The World of Shah ʿAbd al-ʿAziz (1746–1824)", in: Jamal Malik (ed.): *Perspectives of Mutual Encounters in South Asian History 1760–1860* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 298-314.

[413] *EI*² "Shāh ʿAbd Al- ʿAzīz Al-Dihlawī."

[414] On Sayyid Aḥmad as a neo-Sufi, see Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), 203-06.

[415] Rex S. O'Fahey and Ali Salih Karrar, "The Enigmatic Imam: The Influence of Ahmad Ibn Idris," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19, No. 2 (May 1987): 205-219.

Sayyid Aḥmad and his followers propagated a purified form of Islam, rejecting what they saw as un-Islamic innovations, including popular traditional Sufi practices like saint veneration at shrines and even *taqlīd*. While Walī Allāh and ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz were scholars who propagated reform ideas, Sayyid Aḥmad and his followers gave such reform a concrete form by bringing it to the masses, and in doing so, they even took these ideas further than their spiritual and ideological forefathers, such as pertaining to *taqlīd*. Their puritan approach has been likened to that of the Wahhābīs, and in fact, the British erroneously equated Sayyid Aḥmad and the Ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya with the Arab Wahhābiyya.[416] After performing the *ḥajj* in 1821, his missionary social activism quickly turned both political and military in nature, going beyond a grassroots piety movement, preaching to his fellow Muslims and urging them to return to the pure and simple pious example of the Prophet, he now sought to restore Muslim rule in India and to do so by military means.[417]

Such an activist shift after travelling to the Hijaz was also seen in Walī Allāh propounding his reform program, and might be read as both men being inspired and further encouraged by contact with the broader growing reformist zeal in the Muslim world, including especially in Arabia, though Walī Allāh's program actually shortly preceded that of the Wahhābīs.[418] Such a view has merit, but we should also consider another dimension: the profound nature of the experience of performing the *ḥajj* and being in the two holiest places of Islam, as geographically close to God as one can possibly come in this lifetime. As noted at the beginning of this study, religious experience, particularly its subset of mystical experience, can do things, it can inspire to action for the best of one's fellow man, though the size of the scope among one's fellow man and the exact nature of the action needed seems to vary greatly from person to person and from context to context. For Sayyid Aḥmad, his scope was Muslims in India and what was needed was military action to restore Muslim rule there. We will see quite different scopes and types of action later on in this lineage with our case study.

As far as the nature of the *jihād* he envisioned, Sayyid Aḥmad aspired both to topple the British as well as to wrest control over the Punjab, where it was believed Muslims were being prevented from worshipping freely, from the Sikhs. He and his followers emigrated from Delhi, under British control, to the north-west to establish their own Muslim state. Their military efforts were first directed against the Sikhs and the Ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya would never actually engage in combat with the British until after Sayyid Aḥmad's lifetime, since he and Shāh Ismāʻīl were killed facing a Sikh army at the Battle of Balakot in 1831. Hence, the honorific of a martyr, Shahīd (lit. "Witness"), is often posthumously appended to his name. Such is used later in this research to distinguish him from both the founder of the Barēlwi movement and from the modernist Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, both discussed below. The movement continued after Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd's death, though its headquarters shifted eastward to Patna, and they would ultimately be put down by the British in the aftermath of the 1857 rebellion. The movement would later be looked back to as forefathers by Muslim nationalists.[419]

Regarding Sayyid Aḥmad and mysticism, however, although his primary Sufi training was in the Mujaddidī line of ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz, he initiated disciples into the four major orders in South Asia, namely, the Naqshbandiyya, Chishtiyya, Qādiriyya, and Suhrawardiyya, after which he would have them give *bayʻa* in the Ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya.[420] There are two other important points relating to Sayyid Aḥmad and mysticism, ones that respectively reflect his later *jihād* mission and his purifying reform. One concerns how when some of his disciples complained that while training for *jihād*, they were unable to pursue their spiritual practices, he is said to have replied:

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[416] Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 337-41.
[417] *EI*[2] "Sayyid Aḥmad Brēlwī."
[418] Rahman, *Islam*, 203.
[419] *EI*[2] "Sayyid Aḥmad Brēlwī." Mohiuddin Ahmad, *Sayyid Ahmad Shahid: His Life and Mission* (Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1975); Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahhabi Movement in India* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1966). For a more recent and thorough analysis of the movement, especially with respect to after Sayyid Aḥmad, see Pearson, Harlan Otto. *Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth-century India: The Tarīqah-i-Muhammadīyah*. New Delhi: Yoda, 2008.
[420] Bashir, "*Sharīʻat* and *Ṭarīqat*," 59.

> These days we face a more virtuous task than that. Our heart is engaged in it. It is preparing for *jihād* in the way of Allāh. […] Seeking the knowledge of *sulūk* is subordinate to this (*jihād*). […] That work (*sulūk* and *taṣawwuf*) is for the time when one does not need to prepare for *jihād*. The heightened spiritual *anwār* (lights) during prayers and meditations that we have been perceiving for the past couple of weeks are due to this activity (*jihād*).[421]

Thus for him, not only did the circumstances of his time necessitate *jihād*, but preparations for such *jihād* took precedence over performing spiritual practices, and moreover, these preparations even acted as a replacement for the practices, resulting in some of the same visual phenomena as have been reported with regard to *murāqaba*.

Another point on Sayyid Aḥmad and mysticism, one that seems to have had a lasting impact on this lineage up to the present, is that when ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz instructed him to perform *taṣawwur-i shaykh* (an important point in itself in that it tells us that ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz advocated this practice), Sayyid Aḥmad respectfully declined to do so on account of him being unable to distinguish such a practice from *shirk*. ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz was reportedly not only willing to accept this refusal, but he was also quite pleased, hugging him, kissing his forehead and telling him he had been blessed by God with "prophetic enlightenment."[422] Today, in our case study lineage, visualizing the *shaykh* is not usually practiced and there is a consciousness of this event as having been when such visualization came to no longer be practiced. While the Ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya took its own course, one of its members who fought at Balakot would provide the link for this Mujaddidī lineage to survive on its own as something different from Sayyid Aḥmad's movement, namely Ṣūfī Nūr Muḥammad (d. 1858). We discuss him and the remaining five 19th- to 20th-century Indian *shaykh*s after him that precede Rasool in the next section.

Sufism on the Sacrificial Altar of Islamic Modernity

Here, however, we consider some of the different movements, denominations, or schools of thought that developed in the late 19th and early 20th century, some of which look back to Walī Allāh and ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz as ideological forefathers and also to Sayyid Aḥmad and his followers as champions of the Muslim cause, such as the Deobandīs and Ahl-i Ḥadīth, of whom we turn first to the former. The British, as part of their civilizing mission and to train service elites for their administration by which they could rule India indirectly and through the local, created and supported institutions like the Madrasa Alia in Calcutta in 1781. As opposed to these, the Deobandī movement began to emerge from the Darul Uloom Deoband, a seminary for higher Islamic education established in 1866. In contrast to the Anglicizing institutions supported by the British, they rejected government subsidization, relying instead on private contributions. They furthermore established a network of *madrasa*s across South Asia that propagated a reform, scripture, and *ḥadīth*-oriented Islam. They maintained the necessity of adhering to a *madhhab* (usually Ḥanafī) and while criticizing certain elements of Sufism, they retained others, though on the whole, the Sufi elements seem to have decreased over time.[423] Yet as we will see in the contemporary survey below, there are a number of Deobandī-trained or influenced Naqshbandī *shaykh*s currently active today, including in Europe and North America. Somewhat in contrast, are the more puritan Ahl-i Ḥadīth, promoting *ijtihād* and rejecting *taqlīd*; although in practice they often end up following the understanding of one of the madhhabs anyway, especially the Ḥanafī school; while also basically decrying Sufism *in toto* as *bidʻa* and *shirk*, and still, like the Deobandīs, being influenced and inspired by Walī Allāh as well as the Ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya of Sayyid Aḥmad.[424] Like the latter, they have also been referred to as the Indian Wahhābīs, as well as being classified by some as Salafīs.

It must be underscored how the rejection of *taqlīd* and of Sufism, by the Ahl-i Ḥadīth, Wahhābīs, Salafīs, and other movements that have since emerged and which all continue to the present and have achieved a louder voice than more traditional forms of Islam, is a dramatic break from preceding Islamic tradition. From the very first phase of our survey, with the emergence of the different

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421 Idem 60-61.
422 Ahmad, *Sayyid Ahmad Shahid*, 36-37.
423 Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 398-99. See also Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).
424 Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 397-98.

schools of thought in Islamic scholarship, like the *madhhab*s but also in other fields like *kalām*, and the beginnings of mystical Islam, first with an emphasis on asceticism and later on proximity to God, Islam has been characterized by a blend of the religious sciences and Sufism. Until starting in the mid-19th century, the dominant form of Islam was defined by a long tradition of scholarship and mysticism, a blend of *fiqh*, *ḥadīth* studies, Quran exegesis, *kalam*, and other scripture-oriented religious sciences alongside Sufism. In fact, nearly all of the individuals we studied in the historical survey were not only Sufis, but also had some degree of training in the more external religious sciences, oftentimes being full-fledged *'ulamā'* alongside their Sufi credentials. Groups rejecting *taqlīd* and Sufism, seek to interpret divine revelation directly, bypassing over thirteen centuries, by today's count, of the endeavors of preceding scholars and mystics to unlock its meaning.

Quite in contrast to both the Deobandīs and Ahl-i Ḥadīth is the Barēlwī movement, who prefer to be known by the contested name of Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jamā'a ("People of the Tradition [of the Prophet] and the Community"), which implies an exclusive claim to authentic Islam, much like the label of Ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya. They must be understood to have emerged in significant part in response to Deobandī reformist critiques of aspects of Sufism as it had come to be practiced in the subcontinent. The movement was founded by Aḥmad Riḍā Khān Barēlwī (1855–1922) and they uphold traditional Sufi beliefs, like according the Prophet a superhuman and omnipresent status, and practices like the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, *'urs*, and the *ziyāra*.[425] Given such sectarian differences, another Darul Uloom was founded in 1893, Nadwatul Ulama, which has notably had links to the Aligarh school (discussed below), blending reform and modernism and advocating a "solidarity traditionalism," that is pursuing the ecumenical aspect of Walī Allāh's reform agenda by emphasizing shared ground over differences. Eventually, however, the Barēlwīs would withdraw their support.[426]

But the critique of Sufism in the modern era came not only from the abovementioned either fully or partially "anti-Sufi" quarters on the grounds that it was an un-Islamic accretion, but it also came from Muslim modernists who held that Sufism was a superstitious obstacle to an Islamic modernity, that it was backwards and irrational, blaming it for the decline of the situation of Muslims. Notable in this regard is Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (1817–1898), a major figure in 19th-century Indian history who sought to prove the compatibility of Islam with science and reason. He founded the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in 1875, which would eventually become what is now Aligarh Muslim University, an institution that reappears in the lives of three *shaykh*s in the case study lineage. For him, the intellect (*'aql*) was of paramount importance. In contrast to the later followers of the Ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya movement who fought against the British, Sayyid Ahmad Khan was a loyal supporter who condemned the rebellion of 1857. On his relationship to Sufism, Malik describes a kind of "Sufi amnesia," wherein he sought to "silence Sufism," or aspects thereof, as superstitious and incompatible with a modern, rational, and scientific worldview, while at the same time remaining personally attached to certain other aspects thereof, such as his deep reverence for Shāh Ghulām 'Alī, to whom we soon go back in time to consider, and visitations of his shrine in Delhi.[427]

Thus from the mid-19th century on, Sufism was being criticized to varying extents from sides that were to different degrees partially within Sufism, like the revivalist-oriented reformers of Deoband and the modernist-oriented reformer Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, and between those positions the Nadwīs, and from completely outside of Sufism, like the Ahl-i Ḥadīth, who share some not inconsiderable common ground with the Deobandīs and Nadwīs, as well as the Wahhābiyya and Salafiyya further afield. This situation played into Orientalist declarations of a decline of Sufism, theories that were read

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[425] Idem 399-400. See also Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi and His Movement, 1870–1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[426] Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 406-07.

[427] Jamal Malik, "Sufi Amnesia in Sayyid Ahmad Khan's *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*," in Malik and Zarrabi-Zadeh, *Sufism East and West*, 76-103. For more on Sayyid Ahmad Khan, see Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 402-405; Christian W. Troll: *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1979); David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); S.M. Tonki, *Aligarh and Jamia: Fight for National Education System* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1983).

also in the East and found resonance there, adding fuel to the fire. Sufism was being barraged from within and without, by revivalist reformers and modernists alike, and declared as being in its final throes by Orientalist scholars.[428] Itzchak Weismann has eloquently observed that "Sufism is the major sacrifice offered by Islam on the altar of its modernization in the last century and a half."[429] In such a context, it is not surprising to see the passionate cries of Rasool's *shaykh*, Sa'īd Khān who is discussed in the next section, for the Muslim youth to make the most of their birthright and for the "successors of Ghazali, Razi, Rumi, and Mansur al-Hallaj" to step forward. It is also no wonder that his student Rasool was on the lookout for greener pastures and saw opportunity when in the 1960s, droves of Western spiritual seekers started arriving near his doorstep, though looking primarily to Yoga gurus, something that happened at the end of this period and which we address below.

Congress Party, Independence, and Partition

Since it arises again in Part Two, we should mention here the Indian National Congress (INC), though there were many other political parties, movements, developments, and issues leading up to independence, such as the Muslim League, the Khilafat Movement, the Two-Nation Theory, etc, which there is insufficient space to address here. The INC, or simply Congress, was founded in 1885, mainly by Hindus, as a common platform for Indians of all faiths and denominations with the aim of greater Indian participation, rights, and autonomy. As a part of this, they promoted journalism. While maintaining the superiority of Islam, reformist scholars among the Deobandīs and Ahl-i Ḥadīth in fact supported the INC, with its growing nationalism, and advocated collaboration with Hindus on issues of secular concern. In contrast, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān sought to hold on to the model of *ashrāfī* Muslim superiority under the British, and later on, the Barēlwīs avoided supporting the INC due to its Deobandī connections as well as out of a refusal to collaborate with Hindus.[430] Its agenda gradually become more oriented toward independence, becoming a mass movement for that aim in the 1920s with Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (d. 1948) as its head and Jawaharlal Nehru as a major proponent of such a shift toward independence. Two notable Muslim Congress supporters and leaders who will appear again in Part Two below are the pacifist Pashtun activist Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (d. 1988) and the scholar and revolutionary journalist Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (d. 1958), who served as President of the INC and adopted the *nom de plume* of Azad ("Free"). As we will see below, Rasool's older brother took an interest in politics and it was a touring Congress party politician who gave Rasool his new first name of Azad, as opposed to his birthname of Ghulām ("Slave").

Eventually, the year 1947 marked the end of the British Raj and India's independence, but it also marked a partition wherein majority-Muslim areas in the eastern and western parts of South Asia would form a separate Muslim nation, the Dominion of Pakistan, despite substantial geographical separation and considerable cultural and linguistic difference between (and within) these two halves, West Pakistan and East Pakistan, not to mention the fact that many Muslims lived in and chose to remain in, or were unable to emigrate from, what is now the Republic of India. In 1971, after a genocide to suppress efforts for self-determination and a war of independence, East Pakistan gained its hard-won independence from West Pakistan to become what is now Bangladesh. In the contemporary survey we find Naqshbandī Mujaddidī lines hailing from India (our case study lineage) as well as Bangladesh, but out of South Asian countries, mostly from Pakistan, but also Afghanistan, Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Cyprus, and Indonesia. This brings our discussion to return back in time to the beginning of this face, when the British took the last Mughal emperor under their protection in Delhi in 1803.

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428 Martin van Bruinessen, "Sufism, 'Popular' Islam and the Encounter with Modernity" in *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates*, eds. Muhammad Khalid Masud, Armando Salvatore and Martin van Bruinessen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 125-50; Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defense, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).
429 Itzchak Weismann, "Sufism in the Age of Globalization," Lloyd Ridgeon (ed.) *Cambridge Companion to Sufism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 257-81.
430 Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 409-11.

Thus returning to the beginning of the 19th century to consider another line, Malik contrasts the "integrationist" approach of Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz, having a kind of mediating role between the Muslim public and the British, with the "isolationist" approach of his contemporary Shāh Ghulām 'Alī Dihlawī (1743–1824),[431] who disapproved of service in the British establishment and who led and further institutionalized the Delhi *khānaqāh* of Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān, which operated independent of government subsidization.[432] While 'Abd al-'Azīz was better known as a scholar and was issuing *fatwa*s to help the Muslim populace cope with living under non-Muslim British rule, Ghulām 'Alī's inwardly turned isolationist approach centered on training disciples, and as we have mentioned, it was among his followers and their heirs that the *ma'mūlāt* genre would be further developed. He also interpreted and commented upon Sirhindī's thought,[433] perhaps providing further structure and systematization for the development of a standardized and transferrable set of intentions for *murāqaba*, if such a curriculum did not already exist in oral tradition, as Buehler posits.

Figure 5 Graves of Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān and Shāh Ghulām 'Alī
(View from inside the Mausoleum)
Photo by the Researcher

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[431] *EI*3 "Ghulām ʿAlī Shāh."
[432] Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 334-35.
[433] For excerpts of Ghulām 'Alī describing the various stages of the Mujaddidī path from Bayraktar's selected translation of his *Risāla al-Murāqaba*, see Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 352-56. On developments in Afghanistan, see Waleed Ziad, "Transporting Knowledge in the Durrani Empire: Two Manuals of Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Sufi Practice," in *Afghanistan's Islam: From Conversion to the Taliban*, edited by Nile Green, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016, pp. 105-126.

While seemingly quietist, there was still a very activist thrust, that is in spreading the Mujaddidiyya and its teachings, and to this end, Ghulām ʻAlī appointed numerous *khalīfa*s who would spread the *ṭarīqa* far and wide. The *khānaqāh* became a significant hub from which his lineage, within just a few decades, would be disseminated not only across South Asia, but also well beyond.[434] Indeed, it is through Ghulām ʻAlī that most (though definitely not all) other existing Naqshbandī-related groups today, which we will discuss in the next section, descend. Though this is by far not the only possibility,0 as there are numerous other lines that continue to the present day outside of Mirzā and Ghulām ʻAlī's spiritual descendants, such as of course our case study lineage or the Mujaddidī family and what is now the Sayfiyya that were both in Afghanistan during this period. The Ghamkol Sharif community of today also has a different line, not to Sirhindī through Maʻṣūm, but through another of Sirhindī's heirs, Muḥammad Shāh Ḥusayn. The Aslamiyya branch today as well as the line of Jamāʻat ʻAlī Shāh (d. 1951), whose heirs established the Naqshbandiyya Foundation for Islamic Education (NFIE) in Arizona, trace their lines back to Maʻṣūm through his disciple Ḥujjāt Allāh Naqshband. The latter's student in both of these lineages was Muḥammad Zubayr, thus the first four Mujaddidī links in these lineages were the traditionally recognized four *qayyūm*s, on whom the sustainment of all of existence was held to depend, according to Sirhindī's doctrine of *qayyūmiyya*, and who stood at the pinnacle of the saintly hierarchy, namely: Sirhindī himself, Maʻṣūm, Ḥujjāt Allāh, and Zubayr. The latter was also the teacher of ʻAndalīb, a poet whose line, like that of Jāmī, is now extinct and lives on only through his written word. It was Jamāʻat ʻAlī Shāh that served as the main case study for Buehler's *Sufi Heirs*, in which he is presented as the mediating *shaykh* par excellence, and accordingly, he travelled extensively to attend to his large following.[435]

Returning to the *khānaqāh* line, however, though not through Ghulām ʻAlī, but via another disciple of Mirzā, Naʻīm Allāh Bahrāʼichī (who according to Buehler wrote the first known text in the *maʻmūlāt* genre), a significant and unprecedented event occurred in 1896. A spiritual descendant of Mirzā through Naʻīm Allāh, Shāh Faẓal Aḥmad Khān (1838-1907) gave *ijāza* as a *khalīfa* in the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya to his Hindu disciple, Rāmchandra Saksenā (1873-1931), from whom multiple existing Hindu or universalist lines persist to this day.[436] Returning to the lines descending from Ghulām ʻAlī, one notable personality who has apparently eluded academic inquiry to date is Faẓal ʻAlī Shāh Qurayshī (1854-1935).[437] He appointed several *khalīfa*s and his line continues among multiple Pakistani-derived lines in operation today, including of both Deobandī and Barēlwī orientations as well as positions in between, that also continue the practice of appointing multiple *khalīfa*s.

Of particular note for the spread of the Delhi *khānaqāh* line, further afield and much of the reason we assert that Ghulām ʻAlī's descendants are the most widespread today, is because of a Kurdish disciple, Khālid al-Baghdādī (1779–1827). He travelled to Delhi, after hearing of Ghulām ʻAlī while in the Hijaz, and was initiated, trained, and appointed a *khalīfa*. He then returned to his homeland, appointing numerous *khalīfa*s of his own, who themselves would in turn, spread the lineage throughout the Ottoman Empire, especially in what is now Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, but also in northeastern Africa, Central Asia, and even reaching places like Indonesia, where pilgrims returned from the *ḥajj* having been initiated in the Haramayn. This transnational line quickly became the Khālidī sub-lineage, indicating those descending from Khālid, with him as its eponym. He was not only concerned with spreading the order, but also with encouraging rulers to implement the *sharīʻa*, notably being active in Baghdad and Damascus, where he was buried not far from Ibn al-ʻArabī's final resting place. His successors would continue his politically activist *sharīʻat*-izing program.[438]

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[434] Fusfeld, "The Shaping of Sufi Leadership in Delhi."
[435] See Chapter Nine of Buehler, *Sufi Heirs*.
[436] Dahnhardt, "Change and Continuity in Naqshbandi Sufism," 70.
[437] For his biography, see Talib Ghaffari, "Pir Fazal Ali Qureshi Naqshbandi Mujaddidi (1270-1354 AH)," *Maktabah.org*, accessed February 27, 2020, http://maktabah.org/blog/?p=179.
[438] On Khālid and his successful expansion of his sub-lineage as a mass social movement, see Sean Foley, "Hagiography, Court Records, and Early Modern Sufi Brotherhoods: Shaykh Khālid and Social Movement Theory," in John Curry and Erik Ohlander (eds.), *Sufism and Society: Arrangements of the Mystical in the Muslim World, 1200–1800* (London: Routledge, 2012), 50-67.

Regarding mysticism, Khālid is notable here for two major contributions pertaining to *khalwa* and visualizing the *shaykh*. In order to quickly train and appoint deputies, he implemented an intensive training program, the *khalwa*, which was certainly not a permanent renunciation of the world, since they were to return to the world to continue the work of the order. Khālid's other major distinctive contribution was a particular stress on the visualizing the *shaykh* aspect of *rābiṭa*, and he insisted that such visualization was to be exclusively of his own image, even by the disciples of his *khalīfa*s who had never actually seen him in person. This was challenged in his lifetime by some *khalīfa*s' having their disciples visualize them instead of Khālid and subsequent Khālidī *shaykh*s would ignore his posthumous prescription up to the present. Khālid's emphasis on *rābiṭa* through visualizing his image explains why it is more noticeable among Khālidī lines today, whereas in the subcontinent, especially with strong concerns of avoiding *bid'a* and *shirk*, the practice seems to have a lower profile. For instance, Khālid's stance on visualizing the *shaykh* stands in stark contrasts to that of Sayyid Aḥmad Barēlwī. Nevertheless, *taṣawwur-i shaykh* was also criticized and required theological defenses in the Ottoman lands as well.[439]

Of importance for Khālid's descendants today, while Khālidīs initially supported the Tanzimat reforms, as the latter started to take on a more secular character, different agendas emerged and in 1925, the Sufi orders were banned and the lodges closed by the newly established secular government of Turkey. They were nevertheless able to survive underground and the Naqshbandiyya, with its sober practices of silent *dhikr* and *ṣuḥbat*, were probably much better equipped to do so than the Mawlawiyya or the Rifā'iyya, with their higher profile collective practices. In the latter half of the 20th century, the orders have been making a steady comeback, as has their role, as well as the importance of Islam generally, in Turkish politics.[440]

Sufi Poetry and German Romanticism

We now consider some developments in Europe and North America during this period that would set the stage for our case study lineage, as well as the Naqshbandiyya in general, to arrive in the West in the late 20th century among urban, educated, and initially non-Muslim Western spiritual seekers. From the very beginning of this phase, and even slightly before it, we already see an interest in and a turn toward the "mystic East" for spiritual wisdom and fulfillment. We see further presence of Sufism as literature through translations into Western languages, now especially in German with the ca. 1812 translation of Ḥāfiẓ by Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall and Rūmī by Friedrich Rückert in 1821. This would inspire and influence German Romantics, such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), whose 1819 *West-östlicher Divan* was inspired by Hammer-Purgstall's translation of Ḥāfiẓ.[441] Goethe, whose lifetime was roughly contemporary with that of Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz, died in Weimar the year after Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd was killed at Balakot.

Transcendentalism & Neoplatonism in America

Shortly after the deaths of Goethe and Sayyid Aḥmad, in the United States in the Boston area, a literary movement that came to be known as New England Transcendentalism emerged, perhaps best typified by Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), which rejected pure rationalism alongside the dogmatism of established religion and sought contact with something transcendent outside of the framework of traditional religion. A former Unitarian minister, Ralph Waldo Emerson was influenced early on by Swedenborg, but would also come to rely on Marsilio Ficino but also Plotinus directly, particularly homing in on the aspect of seeing the transcendent in nature, what might be termed a "nature mysticism," such that Sedgwick observes that for Emerson, the goal itself was beauty rather than union with the One. Emerson had a love for and helped to popularize Persian poetry, such as Ḥāfiẓ and Sa'adī (d. 1291) while also quoting extensively from the "Conference of the

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439 On the development of *khalwa* and *rābiṭa* among the Khālidiyya, see Butrus Abu-Manneh, "*Khalwa* and *Rābiṭa* in the *Khālidī* Suborder, in *Naqshbandīs*, 289-302.
440 See, for instance, Chapter Six of Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*.
441 Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 118-19;

Birds" by Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, who had the same Kubrāwī *shaykh* as that of the second great master of colors, Najm al-Dīn Dāya al-Rāzī. In such Persian Sufi poetry, Emerson recognized the similar framework of emanationism that he knew in Plotinus and Ficino.

Emerson was also quite interested in and found resonance with Advaita Vedanta, from which he also drew, while his friend and another key figure among the New England Transcendentalists, Thoreau, was especially drawn to the *Bhagavad Gita*.[442] Sedgwick also describes a similar later current that he calls Missouri Neoplatonism and traces to a periodical published throughout the 1880s entitled *The Platonist*. Speaking to the view that Neoplatonism is basically the esoteric core of all faiths and worldviews, the masthead of this publication would come to read, "The esoteric doctrine of all religions and philosophies is identical."[443] Thus from the very beginning of this period, we already see a rejection of both pure rationalism and the dogma and exoteric practices of the traditionally dominant religion in the West and a turn to not only the Western esoteric tradition directly to classical antiquity in Plotinus, but also through later interpretations and variants like Renaissance Hermeticism (or Florentine Neoplatonism) but also to the mystic east, whether Hindu, Islamic, or otherwise.

The Theosophical Society

Concurrently with such smaller intellectual and literary movements, there were also major developments in religion and spirituality in the form of large movements taking shape in the US. From the turn of the 19th century until around 1870 saw a period of revival and reform within Protestantism known as the Second Great Awakening, from which emerged some forms of Christianity differing significantly from what had preceded, notably Mormonism and Adventism.[444] Later somewhat second order developments include the Jehovah's Witnesses, also within Christianity, as well as a movement that was not so much outside of Christianity as it was an occult parallel to it, that is Spiritualism, which began in 1848 and sought contact with the spiritual world, namely deceased relatives, by means of séances and mediums. It was out of Spiritualism that Mary Baker Eddy's (d. 1910) Christian Science Church would emerge but also, and most significantly for this study, so would the Theosophical Society, which was founded in New York in 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (d. 1891) and Henry Steel Olcott (d. 1907). Theosophy started, inter alia, as both a critique of and a development out of Spiritualism, going beyond only contacting the dead, but instead seeking to get at a more sublime and higher truth (we return to where they looked for this truth). One might also look to earlier developments like the interest in psychic phenomena which the Theosophical Society also pursued, as in the case of Franz Friedrich Anton Mesmer's (d. 1815) Mesmerism, as a potential point of resonance for the idea of *tawajjuh*. Whatever the case, the Theosophical Society also stood against pure rationalism as well as materialism, but they also sought to bridge science and religion, or at least spirituality, seeing their "theosophical mysticism as a scientific endeavor."[445]

The aspects of bridging science and religion, anti-materialism, and pursuing ultimate Truth are quite readily found within the thought of Rasool and his teacher Saʿīd Khān, as discussed below, though there were also some substantial differences. Namely that Theosophy was, at least in principle, anti-dogmatic,[446] and similar to the universalism of the Transcendentalists, they left behind the dominant religion in the West of Christianity and looked to multiple places elsewhere to find this truth. They sought the revival of ancient wisdom through a blending of sources, with Blavatsky's foundational writings like *Isis Unveiled*, published in 1877, drawing on the Western esoteric tradition, including Hermeticism, but they also, and significantly, expanded and even shifted their gaze from the Hellenistic world to the mystic east, primarily to Hinduism and Buddhism, though not so much to Sufism. This continued a trend of an eastward turn that was already seen in the German Romantics and New England

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442 Idem 137-41; Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 65-66.
443 Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 140-41.
444 Thomas S. Kidd, *America's Religious History: Faith, Politics, and the Shaping of a Nation Hardcover* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019).
445 Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 68.
446 Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 142.

Transcendentalists, which was notably facilitated by Orientalist scholarship and translations,[447] and academic studies of Eastern traditions would of course continue to play a role to the present, as we will discuss. As already mentioned, the main goals include acting as a nucleus for the "universal brotherhood of humanity," the comparative study of religion, philosophy and science, and the exploration of humankind's latent powers. In some ways echoing the Rosicrucian manifestoes, as a source for her knowledge and legitimacy, Blavatsky claimed contact with a "Great White Brotherhood" through secret teachers known as the "Mahatmas," supposedly based in the Himalayas.

The Theosophical Society spread quickly and dominated the scene of alternative spirituality in the West beginning in the late 19th century. It and its offshoots would come to shape and lay the groundwork for much of the alternative spiritualities that came after it,[448] including Sufism, as many of the earliest Sufi practitioners and Sufi-like figures in the West were associated with it, either directly or indirectly, which we return to shortly. The Theosophical Society's eastward turn also set the stage for the arrival of spiritual teachers coming from the East beginning with the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. Sedgwick describes the World Congress of Religions as "a turning point in American attitudes, popularizing the view that there was value in all religions,"[449] an idea that already existed with a long history in South Asian Sufism and was also seen with Simnānī in his debates at the court of the Buddhist Arghun, and which we might also find precedent for in the Prophet Muḥammad's expounding the notion of the people of the book.

Ceremonial Magic

One group that might somewhat be seen as an offshoot of Theosophy and a rejection of its eastward turn is the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (HOGD), founded in London in 1887. Esoteric currents in the West preceding Theosophy had looked to places like ancient Egypt, alleged home of the ancient sage Hermes Trismegistus, who is supposed to have taught Moses this perennial wisdom tradition, and to the Hellenistic mystery cults whose initiatory tradition they drew inspiration from, as well as later developments in Europe itself. HOGD kept this more Western orientation, drawing not from Hindu or Buddhist sources but on, among other things, Hermeticism, Kabbalah, and Rosicrucianism. They practiced ceremonial magic as a means of spiritual development, a kind of theurgy. Somewhat like Blavatsky's Mahatmas, their foundation myth involves the discovery of an encoded manuscript from what is held to be an older German branch of the order called "Die Goldene Dämmerung," claimed to have been led by an Anna Sprengel in Nuremberg, who was in turn allegedly in contact with certain "Secret Chiefs." It based its initiatory structure on the Rosicrucian (which had become an actual movement by then, inspired by the 17th-century literary version) and masonic model, key founding members also being involved in masonic organizations. They attracted such notables within Victorian British society as William Butler Yeats and Evelyn Underhill, but also Aleister Crowley, and would serve as a model for later forms of magic, including that of the founder of Wicca, Gerald Gardner, who returns again below.[450]

Early Lived Sufism in the West: Universalists and Traditionalists

Another group that might be seen at least in part as an offshoot of Theosophy is the neo-masonic Martinist Order, founded in France in 1886. Two significant individuals in the initial reception of Sufism in the West were members of this organization: Ada Martin, the first disciple of Inayat Khan, and the Traditionalist René Guénon, though their positions were on quite opposite ends of the spectrum. Dickson aptly summarizes it thus:

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[447] Mark Bevir, "The West Turns Eastward: Madame Blavatsky and the Transformation of the Occult Tradition," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62, no. 3 (Autumn, 1994): 747-767.
[448] Kevin Tingay, "Madame Blavatsky 's Children: Theosophy and Its Heirs," in Sutcliffe, Steven. *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.
[449] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 141-42.
[450] See Chapters Six and Seven of Henrik Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008).

> Sufism's establishment in the West begins with a born Muslim from the East presenting Sufism as a universal spiritual way beyond any one religion, and a Western convert to Islam maintaining the central role of Islamic practice within Sufism.[451]

Inayat Khan found a base of students in the West among Spiritualist and Theosophical milieus and in 1911, he seems to have originally tried to teach Ada Martin Islamic Chishtī practices, as her notes describe not only a set of recitations and *murāqaba*, but also the *shahāda* and ritual prayer,[452] yet in short order, his teachings would take on a more universalist character, as we saw from his lectures delivered from 1917-1920 wherein he called for transcending religion. On the other hand, Guénon, continuing the search for an ancient primordial wisdom tradition that we saw being pursued in Renaissance Florence, maintained that this perennial philosophy could be found as the esoteric core of existing religions and that since Islam is the most recent revelation, it is that faith which is most suitable for contemporary times, an argument we will see Rasool use below.[453] Thus, Rasool probably drew on aspects of both for his presentation of Sufism to the West, relying on the former to find ways of appealing to a similar demographic and on the latter, for explanations of the inseparability of Sufism from Islam.

Gurdjieff, Tweedie, and 1960s Counterculture

It should also be mentioned that the development of alternative spiritualities in the 19th-century West was never far from the emerging scientific discipline of modern psychology. The "father of American psychology," William James (1842-1910) conducted serious research into Spiritualist phenomena and was a member of the Theosophical Society starting in 1882,[454] two decades before he published *The Varieties of Religious Experience* in 1902, which is cited in our section on theory. Similarly, C.G. Jung was deeply interested in Western esotericism, especially alchemy,[455] and thus Hermeticism, the figure of Hermes Trismegistus being the founder figure of sorts of alchemy.[456] The lines between alternative spirituality and modern psychology have never been cleanly and unanimously demarcated, something which continues to the present, as we discuss again below.

Such blurring of the lines, which can be seen as an attempt to reconcile intuition and reason, mysticism and science, is particularly apparent in the case of G.I. Gurdjieff (1866-1949) and P.D. Ouspensky (1878-1947), whose teachings are inextricably intertwined, and both of whom were active in Theosophical circles in Russia at the turn of the 20th century. Perhaps analogous to Theosophy's "Great White Brotherhood" or HOGD's "Die Goldene Dämmerung," Gurdjieff's claimed source of knowledge is what is said to be an ancient wisdom tradition that he encountered at a monastery in Central Asia among the "Sarmoung Brotherhood," for which no evidence of their existence is available. He also reports having encountered a dervish twelve-days walk from Bukhara named "Bogga-Eddin," a likely reference to Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband. Sedgwick assesses the sources of the teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky as being "primarily Theosophy and early psychology" and for Ouspenski's 1912 work dealing with the topic of consciousness entitled *Tertium Organum*, he identifies specific sources on which Ouspenski drew, including mainly William James and the Theosophist Annie Besant. Consciousness would also be central to Gurdjieff, as Sedgwick explains:

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451 Dickson, *Lived Sufism in North America*, 55. On the development of this lineage and a case study of Australia, see Celia A. Genn, "The Development of a Modern Western Sufism," in *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam*, ed. Bruinessen and Howell, 257-77, here 259-60.
452 Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 159-60.
453 Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
454 Tony Lysy, "William James, Theosophist," Quest 88, no. 6 (November-December 2000): 228-233.
455 C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy, 2nd Ed., Collected Works of C. G. Jung* (London: Routledge, 1980). See also Robert A. Segal, "Jung's Psychologising of Religion," in *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality*, ed. Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 65-79.
456 Stanton J. Linden, *The Alchemy Reader: from Hermes Trismegistus to Isaac Newton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

> By the second half of the twentieth century, "the expansion of consciousness" would be the new standard, and the union of the soul with the One would become marginal. Gurdjieff was a pioneer in this transformation.[457]

As we will see in Part Three, however, the idea of the "expansion of consciousness" need not necessarily entail the exclusion of God from the equation, but in fact, He can be restored to a place of centrality. Among Gurdjieff's last words were reportedly the statement: "I've left you all in a fine mess!" Perhaps this was a reference to the probably non-existent Sarmoung, or to his deliberately baffling writings, or to something else altogether. Nevertheless, what is certain is that after Gurdjieff's death, his British student J.G. Bennett (1897-1974) sought out the source of his teachings and this led to several encounters with long-term ramifications in the arrival of the Naqshbandiyya in the West. This is unsurprising considering that the Naqshbandiyya, having eclipsed the Kubrāwiyya and beat out the Yasawiyya in Central Asia centuries earlier, was the closest thing to the Sarmoung in existence. Starting his search around 1953 which continued until his death in 1974, Bennett met in turn, among other Sufi teachers, ʻAbd Allāh Daghestanī (*shaykh* of the famous Nazim al-Haqqani), Pak Subuh (founder of Subud), Idries Shah, and Hasan Lutfi Shushud.[458] We touch on three of these lines in our contemporary survey below, as well as on Idries Shah's (d. 1996) elder brother Omar Ali-Shah, who unlike Idries, is known to have claimed to be a Naqshbandī *shaykh*. These four Naqshbandī-related traditions as well as others to come, like our case study, not to mention non-Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa*s, benefitted from the popularity of Gurdjieff in the West and the opportunity to expand into an existing market, something noted by Hammer as necessary for their success, as mentioned in the theory section above.[459]

Further elaboration on the Shah brothers is required here due to their lasting mark on Sufism in the West. Idries Shah was primarily an author rather than the leader of a Sufi lineage. In fact, his Sufi qualifications are less than clear. His literary career started in the late 1950s writing works on magic, and even ghost-writing for the abovementioned Gerald Gardner, creator of the form of witchcraft known as Wicca. Not long afterwards, he made the sudden and complete switch from magic to Sufism, since from 1961, he and his brother presented themselves as representatives of a secret Sufi hierarchy, alluding to the teachers of Gurdjieff, to Bennett and his circle. Idries Shah's work has been described as largely offering a retelling of folk stories from the Muslim world but repackaged for Western consumption, particularly by viewing such tales, which he basically equates with Sufism itself, as sources of ancient psychological insights. Such works also seem to have contributed to the perception in the West that storytelling is a, or even the, central part of Sufi pedagogy. Shah's works also incorporate concepts found in Ouspensky and Gurdjieff, sometimes giving them names of his own like "conditioning," thus further propagating a kind of blend of Theosophy and psychology. One of his students Robert Ornstein, is a notable psychologist, particularly in the field of Consciousness Studies, who appears again below in Part Two.[460] Idries Shah is significant here since many non-Muslim Westerners, had their first encounter with the notion of Sufism through his writings, which we will see examples of throughout the examination of our case study.

Yet it needs to be considered whether the teachings of Gurdjieff, Ouspensky, and the Shah brothers are fundamentally at odds with Sufism. Sedgwick tends to emphasize the differences between Shah's understandings of Sufism and how it is practiced in the Muslim world as well as Gurdjieff and Sufism. In contrast, Michael S. Pittman, in his *Classical Spirituality in Contemporary America: The Confluence and Contribution of G.I. Gurdjieff and Sufism*, has argued for a "confluence" of the latter two, and indeed a significant contribution of Gurdjieff to Sufism in the

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[457] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 178.
[458] Idem 176-82, 194-201, 208-21, 246-47.
[459] Hammer, "Sufism for Westerners," 143.
[460] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 208-21; Mark Sedgwick, "The Reception of Sufi and Neo-Sufi Literature," in *Sufis in Western Society: Global Networking and Locality*, eds. Ron Greaves, Markus Dressler, and Gritt Klinkhammer (London: Routledge, 2009), 180-97.

American context.[461] Indeed, describing man as an automaton driven by unthinking impulses, or Shah's version of this in the form of overcoming "conditioning," is not necessarily a far step from the Sufi idea of overcoming being ruled by one's carnal soul. We will in fact find some confluence of Shah, and perhaps through him Gurdjieff, in our case study lineage in Part Three.

On an entirely different lineage, in 1961, around the middle of the time of Bennett's search for the sources of Gurdjieff's teachings, the Theosophist and Russian émigré to London, Irina Tweedie (1907-1999) travelled to India after the death of her husband. Although she was in search of a Yoga guru, but as we will see, certainly on the lookout for representatives of Blavatsky's "Great White Brotherhood," she ended up becoming a disciple of one of the spiritual descendants of Mirzā through the Hindu Mujaddidī line of Rāmchandra Saksenā. Upon her return to London, she began giving lectures to Theosophical circles, thus the early arrival of this Hindu-derived but now universalist line to the Euro-American sphere.[462] As we will also see, Tweedie had a great interest in Jungian psychotherapy and dreamwork.

More broadly speaking, going slightly back in time to the 1950s, there was a fascination with Buddhism and also Taoism, given the availability of authors like D.T. Suzuki and Alan Watts, which was further popularized by literary figures such as Jack Kerouac of the comparatively small counter-cultural literary movement known as the Beat Generation. The Beatnik phenomenon of the 1950s transitioned to the substantially wider counterculture of the 1960s, and a new generation of spiritual seekers, including the post-WWII Baby Boomers of the US, looked en masse to India, particularly to Yoga gurus.[463] It was this very development that Rasool saw opportunity in and led him to establish the Institute of Search for Truth, which as we will see, resulted in the spread of our case study lineage to the West, beginning with the UK and the US. Coming out of the same 1960s counterculture milieu and into the present are the Human Potential Movement and later the related field of Transpersonal Psychology. Building on the foundations laid by early psychologists like James, Jung, Maslow, and others, the field of Transpersonal Psychology emerged in part from the HPM, and seeks to explore higher levels of human consciousness and development,[464] something Rasool would also describe his newly founded Institute as seeking to do.

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[461] Pittman, *Classical Spirituality in Contemporary America*.
[462] See Hermansen, "South Asian Sufism in America," 252-53, and the contemporary survey below.
[463] Ellwood, *Alternative Altars*.
[464] Eugene Taylor, "An Intellectual Renaissance of Humanistic Psychology," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 39, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 7-25.

19th- & 20th-Century Indian Predecessors (1831-1976)

Since a substantial number of studies have been written about earlier individuals in the Mujaddidī and Chishtī *silsila*s of SOST and the Circle Group, which in fact read like a who's who in the history of Sufism (and even of Islam) in South Asia, we provide greater detail separately here on later and lesser-known persons who are unique to this particular line. As with the preceding historical survey, we focus on the Mujaddidiyya for its primary importance in this lineage, a feature which should soon become even more apparent. Although the later links in their Mujaddidī *silsila* were quite active in Bengal in the latter half of the 19th and the first part of the 20th centuries, this line has largely eluded detailed scholarly attention in the field of Religious Studies. For instance, they did not meet the parameters for inclusion in Muhammad Enamul Haq's *A History of Sufi-ism in Bengal*, likely due to its broader range, historically (with greater coverage of medieval Sufis) and otherwise.[1]

Nevertheless, certain earlier personalities have brief entries in N. Hanif's *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: South Asia*, and this lineage has been briefly discussed in some dissertations from Aligarh Muslim University, namely those of Shabnam Begum, Muhammad Ismail, and Shamsul Hasan, cited below. Moreover, Hamid Algar noted this line in his "A Brief History of the Naqshbandī Order," where he presents it as his sole example of a continuing Sufi line from Walī Allāh and he lists all of the personalities up to Rasool's own *shaykh*, Sa'īd Khān.[2] Rasool himself is obliquely but respectfully referenced by another Sufi guide, Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, in quotations from Dickson's interviews which he included in his *Living Sufism in North America*.[3] Buehler also very briefly mentions Rasool in two different places.[4] Of course and quite significantly, mention must also be made of the above-noted doctoral dissertations in the fields of architecture and design by SOST practitioner-scholars Katya Nosyreva and Nevine Nasser.[5]

But before delving into this lineage's proponents in the West and their teachings, we provide some background trajectory with the six individuals in the *silsila* immediately prior to this line's transfer to the West. The first three biographies have been pieced together from various sources outside the lineage, such as those mentioned above along with one colonial source, while the last three rely on SOST hagiographical accounts. Thus, while the latter require a greater degree of hermeneutic suspicion, they also provide a window into this lineage's self-understanding and major characteristics. Of these six, the greatest attention is paid to two men from the latter group: Sayyid 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh (d. 1900), who may well be seen as the founder figure for the case study lineage, and even more so to Muḥammad Sa'īd Khān (d. 1976), not only because the most information by far is available on him, since *The Search for Truth* is primarily an account of his life, work, and teachings, but also because he was Rasool's teacher who approved the very idea for bringing this lineage to the West and he provided much of the ideological underpinning that would shape its trajectory into this new area. With these six biographies, we see a geographic shift from 1831 to Bengal as well as a shift in emphasis: a continued orthodoxy but a softening of the activist reformist zeal to a seeming quietism, adapting to the realities of British colonial hegemony and rule, but still having much the same missionary drive as the Ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya, a feature which would provide the impetus for its expansion into the West. That development would involve not preaching to and providing Sufi teachings to other Muslims, but offering the latter to largely non-Muslims in the West, which we shall return to in due course. But first we return to early nineteenth-century India.

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[1] Muhammad Enamul Haq, *A History of Sufi-ism in Bengal* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1975).
[2] Algar, "A Brief History," 26-27.
[3] The British-born but US-based universalist Mujaddidī spiritual teacher, Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee (see below) cites correspondence with Rasool, but since he is not the main focus of discussion in this quotation, he is only identified there as "a wonderful Naqshbandi *shaykh* from Delhi who passed on, Hazrat Rasul […]" or as "the Muslim Naqshbandi shaykh in Delhi I knew." Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 133, 163.
[4] Buehler, "Sufi Contemplation," 323; Buehler, *Recognizing Sufism*, xi.
[5] Nosyreva, "The Unknown Craftsman and the Invisible Guild"; Nasser, "Beyond the Veil of Form."

Ṣūfī Nūr Muḥammad (d. 1858)

One of the major areas from which the Ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya movement drew support and membership was Bengal. Among those who answered this call was Ṣūfī Nūr Muḥammad (d. 1858). He was born, although the date is unclear, in the village of Dandira in the southeast of what is now Bangladesh (Noakhali District) into an upper-class family. His early education was under the care of his father until he went on to study in Kolkata at the Madrasa Alia, an institution established by the British colonial administrator Warren Hastings in 1781[6] and which reappears again in the lives of Ghulām Salmānī and Sa'īd Khān below. Following a dream in which the Prophet told Nūr Muḥammad to become a disciple of Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd, he did so and became active in the latter's movement and also performed the *ḥajj* with him, staying for a while in Medina, likely referring to the 1821 *ḥajj* and subsequent two-year stay. He also fought in the fateful 1831 Battle of Balakot, but unlike his teacher, Nūr Muḥammad survived the battle, though not without being badly wounded,[7] and continued his efforts to propagate a *sharī'a*-oriented renewal of Islam in Bengal, apparently with so much zeal that he seems to have shunned marriage. Later in life, he settled in a village just north of Chittagong called Nizampur, which became his final resting place in 1858.[8] At some point, he also seems to have been initiated into the Chishtiyya and Qādiriyya, since he passed these, along with the Naqshbandiyya, on to the next personality in the *silsila*. So the traditional *ṭarīqa* structure would not, after all, be replaced by a comprehensive Ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya, but the preaching mission would continue, though adapting to and operating within the political realities of the time.

Ṣūfī Fatiḥ 'Alī Uwaysī (1825-1886)

Nūr Muḥammad's student Ṣūfī Fatiḥ 'Alī Uwaysī (1825-1886) was born in Chittagong, in what is now Bangladesh, but he studied at a *madrasa* in a village northwest of Kolkata in the Hawrah District of modern-day West Bengal where "Within a short period of time, he attained proficiency in Islamic learning." Professionally, he served as the "Private Secretary" of Wājid 'Alī Shāh, the last of the rulers of Awadh prior to complete British annexation in 1856. After this position, he was appointed as the "Superintendent of Political pension office." After leaving his government position and settling in Murshidabad, he spent the last nearly two decades of his life, starting from about 42 years of age, "propagating the teachings of Islam" and was laid to rest in a cemetery in the Maniktala area of Kolkata.[9] He had been initiated by Ṣūfī Nūr Muḥammad into three orders; the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya, Chishtiyya, and Qādiriyya; yet the only lineage that would be passed through him to Azad Rasool, is the first of these. He left numerous disciples who would spread his Naqshbandī line throughout Bengal.[10] In fact, the Sureswar Darbar Sharif in Bangladesh lists 36 *khalīfa*s, foremost of whom they describe as being his own daughter, but they also include their founder and more importantly for this research, the next personality in the *shajara*, Ghulām Salmānī.[11] While Nūr Muḥammad brought this Walī Allāhī line to Bengal, it seems that Fatiḥ 'Alī Uwaysī had the most students who would continue to propagate it, although with a far less politically activist character than Sayyid Aḥmad and the generations that followed would also adhere to or diverge to differing degrees from his reformist ideas, witnessing the return of some traditional practices like *ziyāra* and celebrating *'urs*.[12] During the course of this research, the only other Sufi line through Sayyid Aḥmad, Walī Allāh, or Ādam Banūrī

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[6] Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 364.

[7] Shamsul Hasan, "Impact of the Naqshbandi Silsilah on Indian Muslims" (PhD diss., Aligarh Muslim University, 2010), 268-69.

[8] Shabnam Begum, "Bengal's Contribution to Islamic Studies During the 18th Century" (PhD diss., Aligarh Muslim University, 1994), 75-76; Hasan, "Impact of the Naqshbandi Silsilah on Indian Muslims," 268-69.

[9] N. Hanif, *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis: South Asia* (New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2000), 108-109.

[10] Hasan, "Impact of the Naqshbandi Silsilah on Indian Muslims," 270.

[11] Sureswar Darbar Sharif, "Sureswar Darbar Sharif," *Sureswar Darbar Sharif*, Sureswar-Bangladesh.blogspot.de, accessed February 10, 2017, http://sureswar-bangladesh.blogspot.de/; and Sureshwar Darbar Sharif, "Sureshwar Darbar Sharif," SureswarDarbarSharif.net, accessed February 10, 2017, http://www.sureswardarbarsharif.net/.

[12] For the biographies of several of his disciples, see Chapter Nine of Muhammad Ismail, "Development of Sufism in Bengal," PhD diss., Aligarh Muslim University, 1989.

encountered outside of Bengal was that of the Nadwis of Nadwatul Ulama.[13] The overwhelming majority of Naqshbandīs today trace their lines instead through Shāh Ghulām ʻAlī and Muḥammad Maʻsūm. There were of course others who looked to Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd, Walī Allāh, and Sirhindī as their ideological forefathers but who did not maintain a *silsila* through them, including reformists like the scholars of Deoband.[14]

Ghulām Salmānī (1854 or 1858-1912)

Among the numerous *khalīfa*s that Fatiḥ ʻAlī Uwaysī appointed was Ghulām Salmānī (1854 or 1858-1912), born in the Hooghly District of what is now West Bengal, into a family with a history of serving in public positions, his granduncle having been appointed a "Commissioner" in 1811 while his grandfather was a *vakil* ("lawyer") and his father, Ghulām Rabbānī, a scholar and locally respected *munshif* ("judge"). Salmānī was no exception to this trend and at around 20 years of age, he began serving as a teacher at the Hooghly Madrassah that he himself had attended, rising to be the "Head Moulvi" by age 30 and then at 37, being transferred to the nearby Calcutta Madrassah only to return again to Hooghly to serve as the *madrasa*'s assistant superintendent at around the age of 52. The following year, Salmānī was among those who received honors, being bestowed with the title of "Shams-ul-Ulama," at the third *durbar* ("court") in Delhi in 1911, an event which celebrated the coronation of King George V and recognized him as the Emperor of India.[15] This honor was given to him "in recognition of his learning and services to education." Salmānī, who was an *ʻālim* and in particular a *muḥaddith*, was also given the title of "Sultan al-ʻArifin" by his fellow *ʻulamā'*. He was also among those assembled for the emperor's subsequent visit to Kolkata from December 30, 1911 to January 8, 1912 and reportedly, when asked by this colonial ruler if there was anything he desired, he replied "I only wish that I should die while earning my own livelihood." Later that year, on the first of July, he passed away and was buried in the village of Furfura Sharif in the Hooghly District. Despite having several other *khalīfa*s, it was through Sayyid ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh that his *silsila* continued to our case study.[16]

Sayyid ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh (1859/60-1900)

Sayyid ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh can best be seen as the founder figure of the present case study lineage, though he did not formally establish a separate order, or sub-order by appending a *nisba* of his own to an existing line. It is in his personage that the five *silsila*s taught by SOST and the Circle Group today converge, and for this lineage (or conglomerate of five lineages), his role in the systematization of the teachings and practices places him on par with the likes of Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband and Sirhindī. His humble beginnings, life of abject poverty, and lack of formal education represent a stark contrast to the other Indian figures in the *silsila*, generally coming from educated Muslim gentry, and his story instead recalls the earlier figure of al-Kharaqānī. Most of his time is described as having been spent performing spiritual practices and most of his training as having been of an *uwaysī* nature.

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[13] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 149.

[14] Bashir, "*Sharīʻat* and *Ṭarīqat*."

[15] Robert E. Frykenberg, "The Coronation Durbar of 1911: Some Implications," in: Robert Frykenberg (ed.): *Delhi Through the Ages: Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 369–90.

[16] Ismail, "Development of Sufism in Bengal," 270-1; Hasan, "Impact of the Naqshbandi Silsilah on Indian Muslims," 271-72; Rai Bahadur, *Supplement to Who's Who in India: Containing Lives and Photographs of the Recipients of Honours on 12th December, 1911, Together with an Illustrated Account of the Visit of their Imperial Majesties the King-Emperor and Queen-Empress to India and the Coronation Durbar* (Lucknow: Newel Kishore Press, 1912); and John Fortescue, *Narrative of the Visit to India of Their Majesties King George V and Queen Mary: And of the Coronation Durbar Held at Delhi, 12th December 1911* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 231-42. Ismail lists his other *khalīfa*s as "Khān Bahadur Abul Khair Mohammad Siddiq, Nawab Sirajul Islam of Brahman Baria, Comilla, Nawab Sultan-i-Alam, Tali Gunj, Calcutta, Khān Bahadur Aminul Islam, Sufi Mohd. Abdullah of Assam."

Born in 1859/60 in Balagadhi (probably referring to the village of Balagarh north of Kolkata), ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh was raised from the age of six by his mother, who spun thread to support them after the death of his father, who is described as having had expertise in theology, Sufism, and traditional chemistry. After his father's passing, they moved to Hooghly, closer to Kolkata, and later to Naldanga, though all three locations are in the Hooghly District of what is now West Bengal. His biography is filled with fantastic accounts of visions and spiritual encounters, beginning with the tale of how as a youth, reluctantly recruited as the lookout for some other boys stealing from a coconut tree, he was rebuked by a ghost from a nearby cemetery that told him he was created for a loftier purpose. Later in life, having taken a well-paid position at the railway, his father visited him in a dream to point out the corruption there. Thus he resigned, returning to a life of poverty while devoting himself to spiritual practices and the search for a teacher.[17]

He was first initiated into a line of the Chishtiyya Niẓāmiyya by Karīm Bakhsh, who is in fact the father of ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh's successor and the next link in the *silsila*, Ḥamid Ḥasan ʻAlawī. ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh learned the breath control method of *pas anfas* from Karīm Bakhsh, but after this, his training is said to have been taken over by an earlier saint in the order, one who had died over six hundred years earlier, none other than Muʻīn al-Dīn Chishtī (d. 1236) himself.[18] As far as the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya, his physically embodied *shaykh* to whom he pledged *bayʻa* was Ghulām Salmānī. Interestingly though, Rasool explains that ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh was able to awaken the ten *laṭā'if* on his own prior to pledging *bayʻa*, but with the assistance of the transmissions of Salmānī, whom Rasool also describes as his "contemporary." When ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh sought to become Salmānī's disciple, the latter refused. Rasool explains that "unlike other teachers of the time [perhaps a reference to mediating *shaykh*s], [Salmānī] was not fond of taking followers as *murīds*." The issues of 1.) hesitance toward initiating disciples and 2.) awakening the ten *laṭā'if* prior to *bayʻa*, return again below. But Salmānī is said to have eventually acquiesced after the relentless prospective disciple returned with an account of having had a vision of an earlier saint in that lineage, namely Sirhindī himself, who had died around two and a half centuries earlier. From that point, he is said to have outwardly been a student of Salmānī but inwardly of Sirhindī.[19]

The other three schools taught today by SOST and the Circle Group are said to have been passed entirely by *uwaysī* connections with the figures usually credited as being their founders. Thus, in addition to dual embodied and *uwaysī* training in the Chishtī Niẓāmī and Naqshbandī Mujaddidī lineages, through exclusively *uwaysī* connections, ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh is said to have been made a *khalīfa* and given permission to teach (*ijāza*) in the pre-Mujaddidī Naqshbandiyya by Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband (d. 1389), the Shādhiliyya by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 1258), and the Qādiriyya by ʻAbd al-Qādir Gīlānī (d. 1166). A sixth lineage, the Uwaysiyya, was also said to have been imparted to him via *uwaysī* training by the seventh-century figure Uways al-Qaranī, yet Saʻīd Khān explains that he avoided teaching it because its practices require a perpetual state of ritual purity, which is difficult to maintain while living in the world and fulfilling the requirements of the *sunna*.[20]

Of the five orders that ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh passed on, the generally North African Shādhiliyya stands out as the only one without a substantial presence or history in the subcontinent, so we take a moment to consider its inclusion here. The Shādhiliyya has some important common ground with the Naqshbandiyya and its Mujaddidī sub-branch, since like these, among some defining characteristics proposed for the Shādhiliyya are orthodoxy, sobriety, deemphasis on miracles, and a rejection of asceticism.[21] Given the special significance of the Mujadiddiyya for ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh, as we will see, such shared features between these two lineages are significant if looking for positivist explanations outside of the possibility of an actual *uwaysī* initiation from al-Shādhilī himself. Also important is the fact that the famous litany attributed to al-Shādhilī, *Ḥizb al-Baḥr*, was well known in India and used by

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[17] *TTH* 113-15.
[18] Idem 115-16.
[19] Idem 118-19.
[20] *SfT* 112.
[21] *EI*[3] "Sh̲ād̲h̲iliyya."

some Mujaddidīs there well before ‘Abd al-Bārī Shāh’s time, like Shāh Ghulām ‘Alī,[22] and continues to be taught by the former’s spiritual descendants in SOST and the Circle Group today.[23] Thus some knowledge of the Shādhiliyya and its characteristics would have been available to ‘Abd al-Bārī Shāh, even without any *uwaysī* training. Further still, also worth noting is the fact that at the beginning of the 19th century, around the same time Sayyid Aḥmad, four links earlier in ‘Abd al-Bārī Shāh’s Mujaddidī *silsila*, established the Ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya in South Asia, independently from this, other *ḥadīth*-focused Sufi reform movements claiming a return to the way of the Prophet which also happened to use the name Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya sprang up among Shādhilī-derived lineages in North Africa, such as that of Aḥmad al-Tijānī (d. 1815), founder figure of the Tijāniyya, or the Sanūsiyya and Idrīsiyya, who also had Shādhilī roots.[24]

Yet the eponym of the Qādiriyya, ‘Abd al-Qādir Gīlānī, himself a Ḥanbalī, is also known for his orthodoxy. So of the five lineages, we find the distinctively Indian Chishtiyya, which is in no way itself inherently antinomian, alongside four others with a particular reputation for devout adherence to the *sharī‘a*: the Naqshbandiyya and its Mujaddidī sub-branch, the Qādiriyya, and the Shādhiliyya. As if in contrast to the ecstasy (*wajd*) pursued by many Chishtīs,[25] ‘Abd al-Bārī Shāh is presented as emphasizing sobriety, something seen in his introduction of *murāqaba* into all of the lineages over the usually typical Chishtī practice of *samā’*. Sa‘īd Khān recounts a story of ‘Abd al-Bārī Shāh restoring a disciple to his senses after he was overwhelmed in attraction to God and then stating “There is a difference between my path and other paths. In my path, a person does not lose his senses even though the state of attraction comes and goes.”[26] Sa‘īd Khān goes on to explain that “Remaining sober is desirable but losing one’s senses is not,” and “There is a difference between an imbalance of passion (*junun*) and attraction (*jadhba*).”[27] Related to such sobriety is the very practice of *murāqaba*, and as with later personalities in the *silsila*, ‘Abd al-Bārī Shāh’s diligence in performing this and other silent practices is underscored in hagiographical accounts. It is explained that most of his time was spent in *murāqaba*, that every sitting was about three hours in length, as opposed to the single sitting of 35-45 minutes prescribed for beginners today, and that he even frequently spent the entire night in meditation.[28]

As with diligent performances of the practices, another theme that appears in his life and that is also emphasized for subsequent personalities in the *silsila* is that of humility. For instance, it is explained that he “did not like any special distinction to be accorded to him,” and he is said to have instructed his *khalīfa*s when he stayed with them, that should anyone inquire, they were to be told he was simply a guest,[29] thus avoiding attracting attention and adoration as a spiritual guide. This low-key approach that continues today can probably be seen as a reaction to the phenomenon of the mediating *shaykh*, as can another aspect of his teachings. Out of his dissatisfaction with existing norms in the student-teacher relationship, in which large numbers of disciples were being initiated, he is credited with instituting a change that would have significant ramifications for this *silsila* in the West. That change was allowing students to begin their spiritual training before pledging *bay‘a*, though it is explained that he found they had difficulty proceeding beyond the initial activation of the ten *laṭā’if*

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[22] Buehler, *Sufi Heirs*, 236. I am grateful to Shaykh Abdur Rashid for encouraging me to look further into the “shared taste” that he himself noted between the Naqshbandiyya and the Shādhiliyya.

[23] Another important litany of prayers for the Prophet, *Dalā’īl al-Khayrāt*, was composed by a later Shādhilī personality, Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Jazūlī (d. 1465), and it is known to be recited by other Naqshbandī lines today such as the Haqqaniyya and among the Menzil community discussed below. For its daily broadcast by the Menzil community, see “Delail-ul Hayrat,” SemerkandTV.com.tr, accessed February 12, 2020, http://www.semerkandtv.com.tr/program-detayi/delail-ul-hayrat/27.

[24] R.S. O’Fahey and Berndt Radke, “Neo-Sufism Reconsidered,” *Der Islam* 70, no. 1 (1993), 52-87.

[25] Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love*, 5.

[26] *SfT* 90-1.

[27] Idem 91.

[28] *TTH* 122.

[29] Idem 122.

without a formal student-teacher relationship.[30] As we will see, Rasool extended such preliminary pre-*bay'a* training to also be available to non-Muslims. Continuing the theme of humility, as we will see in the following synchronic contemporary survey, the practice of making sub-lineages named after significant later personalities in a *silsila* is common. The current head of SOST, Hamid Hasan explained that because of the profundity of changes and contributions 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh made, his name could have been used to designate his own 'Abd al-Bārī Shāhī lineage, but due to his humility, that was not his wish.[31]

Indeed, his importance in the eyes of his posterity is difficult to overstate and in *The Search for Truth*, he is placed alongside two individuals for which lineage *nisba*s have been created and who are seen as the most important contributors to their system of spiritual training. First, Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband is recognized for having devised the method of *INfB*, then Sirhindī for having further systematized the teachings and made them available to greater numbers of people, and finally, 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh for having systematized further still and introduced *INfB*, and along with it *murāqaba*, into the other *ṭarīqa*s.[32] Further highlighting his towering significance in this line, Rasool cites stories of the various ranks in the hierarchy of saints that 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh is credited with, such as having assumed the role of an *abdāl*, of being both the *quṭb al-madār* and *quṭb al-irshād*, having the title of "*muḥāfiẓ al-'ulūm*: 'guardian of knowledges'," of both *sharī'a* and *ṭarīqa*,[33] and elsewhere he is regarded as a *mujaddid*.[34]

But even setting aside the astonishing stories of miracles, visions, non-physical and time-defying exchanges with great and long-past saints, and the loftiest appointments in the Sufi hierarchy, the objective scholar has to point out that his story sounds a bit fantastical. Rasool himself seems to have taken some of the hagiographical details of 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh's life with a grain of salt, or at least made room for his readers to do so, noting that all orders recount stories of past saints and that whether understood "literally or metaphorically, they can provide inspiration" for the student.[35]

Similar *uwaysī* Sufis like al-Bisṭāmī and al-Kharaqānī left behind sayings attributed to them that were taken down by others, not fully systematized curricula of intentions for structured, guided, step-by-step travel through the levels of Sufi cosmology. The idea that a poor and uneducated man, though still of Sayyid ancestry, who died at only the age of 40, would be so inclined and also that he would have sufficient knowledge of Sufi metaphysical theory to do so, especially since most of his spiritual training was of an *uwaysī* nature, sounds incredible. For an historical analogy, although 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh is not credited with establishing a new *ṭarīqa* or sub-lineage, he would be well seen as the founder figure of the case study lineage. Most saints who are said to have founded orders, do not appear to have actually done so themselves. Rather, this was the accomplishment of their immediate students and heirs, like the Mawlawiyya being founded by Rūmī's son, Sulṭān Walad (d. 1312),[36] or the Naqshbandiyya being consolidated by Pārsā, 'Aṭṭār, and Charkhī.[37] More recently, considering how Rasool gives credit for the establishment of IST to his own teacher, it makes one wonder if some of the developments in the *silsila* attributed to 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh were not actually the contributions of Ḥāmid Ḥasan 'Alawī or even Sa'īd Khān. That being said, the sources are nevertheless very clear and specific on what is attributed to 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh and what modifications were made by others before and after him. Moreover, almost as if in reply to such skepticism, it is explained that despite his lack of education, he had unhindered access to "every field of knowledge and science" through inspired knowledge (*al-'ilm al-ladunī*), "quoting books and even citing page and line numbers" in answering people's

[30] Idem 122.
[31] SchoolOfSufiTeaching, "20. How did Hazrat Sayyid Abdul Bari Shah (r.a.) transform the teachings of the order ?," accessed May 10, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRmSsBfw4Vs&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=22.
[32] *SfT* 50-52.
[33] *TTH* 119-21.
[34] *SfT* 51.
[35] *TTH* 118.
[36] Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, 158-89.
[37] Algar, "The Naqshbandī Order," 137.

questions.[38] Whether or not he was fully responsible for the systematization of these curricula, it is clear that his personality has left a lasting mark on this lineage well over a century after his lifetime.

For instance, Hasan describes ʿAbd al-Bārī Shāh as "one of the most important saints of our order" and "the *qutb* of his time" who gave "a completed structure to the practices of all the five orders," saying that this very modification is what "has made the practices of our lineage so successful and so effective." He also praises his introducing *INfB* and *murāqaba* to all of the orders, some of which had previously relied primarily on some form of *dhikr*. Hasan elaborates how such introduction of meditation to orders where it did not previously exist has made the practices of those orders "very powerful," since "meditation is one of the strongest practices," noting also its particular suitability for students in modern times.[39] But to conclude our discussion of this highly significant figure, there is an important account that can be seen as the foundation story for the efforts of subsequent generations, providing the very impetus and continued drive for spreading this lineage, East and West. Living in poverty and without any children of his own, ʿAbd al-Bārī Shāh is said to have feared that his contributions to these lineages would be lost and have all been for naught. Yet God made it known to him that through His blessings, "this order would spread from East to West and from land to sea."[40] This drive to spread his lineage was perhaps driven by Sufism coming under attack from Muslim revivalists and modernists in the 19th century as well as perhaps their getting a late start compared to the already vast spread of the Delhi *khānaqāh* line and others. As we will see with the next figure, ʿAbd al-Bārī Shāh took some practical measures to achieve this objective by appointing *khalīfa*s and assigning them geographical areas of responsibility for spreading the order.

Ḥāfiẓ Ḥamid Ḥasan ʿAlawī (1871/72-1959)

Ḥamid Ḥasan ʿAlawī was born in Azamgarh to parents who were both disciples of the Chishtī *shaykh* Mawlānā Nijabet ʿAlī Shāh. It is significant that at the *shaykh*'s recommendation, his parents specifically chose not to "formally educate" him so as to avoid "cloud[ing] his spiritual abilities," perhaps revealing a degree of protest against the British and their education system designed to produce service elites who could facilitate their proxy rule through local Indian informants.[41] Instead, more traditionally, he was taught Arabic and memorized the Quran, hence the title of *ḥāfiẓ*. His father, Karīm Bakhsh, would come to be a *shaykh* himself, in fact he is one of the two abovementioned physically embodied *shaykh*s to provide initiation to ʿAbd al-Bārī Shāh, who would in turn become Ḥamid Ḥasan ʿAlawī's teacher in the five Sufi orders eventually passed on to Azad Rasool. When Karīm Bakhsh, by then himself a Chishtī *shaykh*, brought his student ʿAbd al-Bārī Shāh to his home to meet his son, Ḥamid Ḥasan, the meeting of the two is described as having been "like an alchemist encountering a philosopher's stone." While little is revealed about his spiritual training under ʿAbd al-Bārī Shāh, at some point, the task of spreading the order in the eastern half of the subcontinent was delegated to him by his teacher. He may have already been performing this task, perhaps with a limited *ijaza*, at the time of ʿAbd al-Bārī Shāh's passing, since he was in neighboring Burma in 1901 when he received notification that his teacher was seriously ill. Arriving just after his *shaykh*'s death, he was informed by the latter's wife of his appointment as *khalīfa* at around the age of 30. Whatever the case, Rasool reports that Hamid Hasan brought students to the order in East India, Bangladesh, and Burma,[42] and Ismail describes how he had "thousands of […] admirers and disciples in in Chittagong, Bogra, Hajshahi,

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[38] *TTH* 123.

[39] SchoolOfSufiTeaching, "How did Hazrat Sayyid Abdul Bari Shah (r.a.) transform the teachings of the order," accessed February 12, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRmSsBfw4Vs.

[40] *TTH* 123. Hamid Hasan repeats this story here: SchoolOfSufiTeaching, "How did Hazrat Sayyid Abdul Bari Shah (r.a.) transform the teachings of the order," accessed February 12, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRmSsBfw4Vs.

[41] Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 306; For details pre-1857, see Michael Herbert Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System*, 1764-1858 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[42] Rasool specifically mentions "Purnia, Dhaka, Chittagong in Bangladesh, and Burma." *SfT* 30.

Cox's Bazar and Rangpur districts," and came to be known as "Azamgarhi Huzur."[43] It seems that he did so primarily by way of annual tours undertaken from February to May since, as a landowning farmer, he would have been overseeing planting and harvesting at other times of the year. Another *khalīfa* of 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh named 'Abd al-Ṣamad was made responsible for western India. The latter passed away before his mission could be realized,[44] but the banner would later be taken up in this region and beyond by Azad Rasool, as we will see below.

In addition to his role in spreading the order in eastern India, several topics stand out in Ḥamid Ḥasan 'Alawī's biography as provided on the SOST website. As with 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh, humility is a prominent theme that might be seen as a continued precedent for one aspect of this lineage that has contributed to its appeal in the West, namely the avoidance of a cult of personality around the *shaykh*. Anecdotes describe how he could be seen daily amongst the workers during the construction of residence quarters for pilgrims to 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh's shrine, which he had commissioned, and also how while en route to a wedding, he opted to walk in the heat after realizing that transportation had not been arranged for everyone in his party. Of further note, it is also pointed out that he placed a major emphasis on the importance of *tawajjuh*. Moreover, like his teacher, his diligent performance of the practices is emphasized. But in contrast to 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh; who was so entirely devoted to his spiritual practices that he and his wife were on the brink of starvation early on, and later, after he was elevated to sainthood, they only occasionally had to go hungry a few days in a month;[45] Ḥamid Ḥasan 'Alawī is presented as having been an exemplar of balancing spiritual and worldly life, thus offering a model for contemporary students. On this, his daily routine is detailed, wherein his professional duties are interwoven with diligent performance of prayers and Sufi practices like *murāqaba*, *dhikr*, and *durūd sharīf*. Yet it is also mentioned how he would devote time to being in the company of his disciples (*ṣuḥbat*) and "giv[ing] talks on religious matters," even continuing such instruction in the fields while supervising his lands.

On a final note which sets the tone for this lineage's arrival in the West with regard to its maintaining the connection to Islam, Muhammad Ismail, after discussing in his dissertation the links of the *silsila* from Ghulām Salmānī to Ḥāmid Ḥasan 'Alawī, characterizes their main feature as adherence to the *sharī'a*. But he also notes their "least possible interest in the traditional form of Sufism viz. Urs, Khanqah system, hereditary succession, 'Tabiz' [amulets] and 'jhar phook' [exorcism] etc." He goes further to say that "They are considered as true representatives of *Naqshbandi Mujaddidi Wali Allahi* Sufism in Bengal. That is why we do not find tombs on the graves of the sufis of this time." He then contrasts this with a different lineage in Bengal, wherein "slowly the traditional and popular form of sufism has crept in the silsilah of Maulana Abu Bakr Siddiqi of Furfura where all these formalities are given much importance."[46] Thus we see that even though 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh's training was primarily of an *uwaysī* nature, the reform orientation of this lineage continued through and after him.

Muḥammad Sa'īd Khān (1907-1976)

Born in 1907 in Chattapur Sarai in the Azamgarh District of the state of Uttar Pradesh, but after living in the Nonari area of the same district, Muḥammad Sa'īd Khān moved to Mangarawan, where his family owned the farm on which his *dargāh* would eventually stand. As a youth, he memorized the Quran at the instigation of his father, who was also a *ḥāfiẓ*, and then studied basic Arabic and Persian followed by completing his studies in 1926 at the Zia ul-'Ulum *madrasa* in Kanpur. After this, he served as a teacher at the Madrasa Muhammadiyya in Allahabad for ten years starting from 1928, during which time he also passed his examinations in *tibb yūnānī* ("Greek medicine").[47] More significantly, it was

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[43] This is a reference to Karamat 'Ali Jaunpuri, who was called "Jaunpuri Huzur" and was a preacher and major proponent for the spread of the Ṭarīqa-yi Muḥammadiyya in Bengal. Nevertheless, Karamat 'Ali did not advocate *jihād* unless Muslims were being prevented from practicing their faith. Ismail, "Development of Sufism in Bengal," 273-4; Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 255.

[44] *SfT* 30.

[45] *TTH* 118.

[46] Ismail, "Development of Sufism in Bengal," 274-5.

[47] *SfT* 21-2. *Tibb yūnānī* is a traditional and now alternative form of medicine found largely among Muslims in South Asia. One might liken it to Ayurvedic medicine, homeopathic healing, or traditional Chinese medicine.

also during the later part of this time period, probably around 1936 or 1937, that Sa‘īd Khān would meet Ḥamid Ḥasan ‘Alawī. Rasool describes Sa‘īd Khān's own search for truth as beginning with the outer dimension of Islam, yet being unfulfilled by the exoteric alone. Rasool mentions that during this time in Allahabad, Sa‘īd Khān, who was then in his twenties, had been impressed by the devotion of communist leaders to their cause and their willingness to endure hardship for their ideological beliefs, like the Marxist intellectual Sajjad Zaheer (d. 1973), but that he was having a crisis of his own belief, one which would eventually lead him to Sufism and a period of intense renunciation of his own.[48]

Sa‘īd Khān is quoted as admitting to having had "superstitious notions" about Sufism, possibly influenced by the prevalence in this colonial context of reformist or modernist ideas or both, and not seeing "the truth shining brilliantly in front of" him. Nevertheless, his search led him to write to Ḥamid Ḥasan ‘Alawī explaining that his faith was only "based on conformity" with the religion of his birth, but "If that is not all there is to know and if there is something more, I entreat you to tell me." So it seems he yearned for a personal experience of the Truth. The two first met in Allahabad, and while Sa‘īd Khān was still somewhat skeptical of Sufism, the *shaykh* invited him to "Follow the practices and see the results." He was also instructed to maintain contact with a more senior student, Hakīm Aḥsan Miyān, who lived nearby and who would supervise his training in activating the ten *laṭā'if*.[49] As we will see in the coming chapter, this is a similar invitation and process of instruction used today internationally. In fact, Rasool may have highlighted aspects of this search narrative so as to resonate well with his student base of spiritual seekers in the West, especially his questioning the faith of his birth, initial skepticism toward Sufism, and the importance of personal experience.

During the course of Sa‘īd Khān's spiritual training, although said to have been initially skeptical even after having gone through all ten preliminary exercises, it seems that his dedication quickly increased. In 1938, Sa‘īd Khān had become disillusioned with his work at the *madrasa* in Allahabad, so he resigned and returned to Azamgarh, thus inaugurating a period of abject poverty but one that was spent at the mosque in near perpetual meditation, to which Rasool attributes his rapid progress. After only two years of diligently performing the practices under Ḥamid Ḥasan, Sa‘īd Khān received an *ijāza* to teach and in 1940, at around the age of 33, he was instructed by Ḥamid Ḥasan to go to Kolkata to spread the order, yet overwhelmed by the task, he returned after just eight days, though this would only be the beginning of his mission.[50]

In 1941, he accepted a position as an Arabic teacher at the "Shibli School"[51] in Azamgarh, which he would hold until his retirement 27 years later, despite an ultimately unrealized plan of accepting a position at the "Madrasa-yi ‘Alia"[52] in Kolkata so that he could live in nearby Bandel, where the shrine of ‘Abd al-Bārī Shāh is located, so as to look after the *khānqah* there.[53] After the aborted attempt at propagating the order in Kolkata, he was later sent by Ḥamid Ḥasan to Tata Nagar, also known as Jamshedpur, the most populous city in the state of Jharkhand where, over the course of a few

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[48] Idem 22-3, 26-8. He also mentions a "Dr. Ashraf," likely referring to Dr. Kanwar Mohammad Ashraf.

[49] Idem 25-27.

[50] Idem 29.

[51] This might refer to either the Shibli National College, founded in 1883 by Shiblī Nuʿmānī (d. 1914), who was active in both the Aligarh movement and Nadwatul Ulama and struck a balance between the modern and the traditional, having taught at Aligarh but also served as the principal of Nadwatul Ulama. Malik discusses his role in the development of critical historiography in Urdu, describing Nu‘mani's perspective on what historiography ought to be as a "synthesis of traditional Islamic sciences […] and Western objective analysis." Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 303-4. "Shibli School" might also refer to the Shibli Academy, which was in any case founded in 1914 under his influence. Cf. "Shibli National College, Azamgarh (شبلی نیشنل کالج)." Shibli National College, Azamgarh. Accessed November 23, 2017. http://shiblicollege.ac.in/About.aspx; and Darul Musannefin Shibli Academy. Accessed November 23, 2017. http://www.shibliacademy.org/Allama_Shibli_Nomani/Allama_Shibli_Nomani_by_Ian_Henderson.

[52] This institution is now called Alia University and, true to its current name, is more oriented toward secular education rather than traditional religious learning. Cf. "Aliah University." Aliah University. Accessed November 23, 2017. https://www.aliah.ac.in/.

[53] *SfT* 22-3.

years, the number of practitioners in the lineage is said to have grown from only one to hundreds.[54] It is unclear as to exactly when, but at one point when Ḥamid Ḥasan was becoming too frail to travel, he expanded Saʿīd Khān's mission and charged him with the task of restoring standardization to the teachings after the individual interpretations of different *khalīfa*s began to creep in. This concern with standardization seems to live on today in the more centralized nature of SOST.[55]

In 1949, the same year that he performed the *ḥajj* for the first of what would be five times between then and 1972, he had the occasion to be in Mathura for a teacher refresher course and had received a letter from a certain Azad Rasool, who would become his student and eventually be authorized by Ḥamid Ḥasan, who was likely in his early eighties by this time, to teach. Rasool began to propagate the order in west and south India and in 1955, Saʿīd Khān accompanied his disciple Rasool, who we now know as his future heir, on a tour through the areas where the latter had been working to spread the order. This tour consisted of a loop beginning in New Delhi and proceeding to Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Jaipur, Ajmer, and ending back again in Delhi. Just as Ḥamid Ḥasan would go traveling during the months between planting and harvest, this tour by Saʿīd Khān and Rasool, which lasted approximately one and a half months, would come to take place annually during the summer, when both men, as professional educators, would have had vacation time. It seems that Saʿīd Khān's mission would expand even further west, as Rasool mentions him teaching disciples in the Pakistani cities of Lahore, Karachi, and Sindh.[56]

When a student asked Saʿīd Khān why he travelled on tours instead of allowing disciples to come to him, he replied that "It is a matter of time and expediency" and, citing the precedents of the Prophet sending representatives to propagate the faith or Muʿīn al-Dīn Chishtī coming to India, he finds that it is equally acceptable for a *shaykh* to either travel or to stay in the same place.[57] His teaching not only took advantage of travel by train to visit groups of disciples on annual tours, but correspondence by post was another important aspect, as he encouraged students to write to him regularly. Rasool notes that the time he invested in such correspondence revealed his dedication to propagating the order. Indeed, the letters he sent to individuals taking part in the effort to spread the teachings reveal his strong concern; as well as that of his own teacher, Hamid Hasan; for achieving this aim and fulfilling God's assurance to ʿAbd al-Bārī Shāh that the order would spread "from East to West and from land to sea."[58]

After his retirement in around 1968, while continuing to go on tours, he was also finally able to realize his goal of moving to Bandel, where he devoted himself to spiritual practices and study, also spending some time writing down or dictating his own thoughts, which may have been when he produced the writings included in the "*Nigarishat*"[59] chapter of *The Search for Truth*. Additionally, according to Rasool, "a steady stream of seekers visit[ed] from all over the Subcontinent," coming to see the *shaykh* and do the practices in his company. As he began to age, however, he moved to Aligarh at the urging of one of his sons, an Islamic Studies professor at Aligarh Muslim University, but a few months later, he moved back into the same apartment he had rented while serving as a teacher in Azamgarh. It was there that he died on the 30th of January, 1976 and his shrine is now located nearby on the family farm in Mangarawan. Just three months prior to his passing, however, Said Khān wrote a letter dated the 31st of October, 1975 that included his amendments to and approval of a proposal drafted by his student Azad Rasool for the founding of the Institute of Search for Truth, along with the instruction to start a center for this initiative in Delhi.[60]

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[54] This work must have been carried out part time, perhaps during the summer months, because of his employment in Azamgarh.
[55] *SfT* 30.
[56] Idem 30-1.
[57] Idem 107.
[58] A selection of some of his letters comprise an appendix to *The Search for Truth*. The following excerpts reveal a deep concern for the propagation of the order: "You are aware of the deep interest that Hazrat Pir Sahib has in spreading the teachings of the order." *SfT* 140; "Hazrat is hopeful that you are doing your utmost to carry out the responsibility of spreading the order." Ibid.; "Hazrat's greatest happiness lies in the furthering of the order." Ibid.; "Make every effort to increase the number of the seekers of Truth. […] Try to hve more and more people join the order and a group of sincere seekers may develop." Idem 151.
[59] In Persian and Urdu, *nigārishāt* means "writings."
[60] *SfT* 75-7, for a full copy of the proposal, cf. idem Appendix B, 152-5.

What we know of Sa'īd Khān's life, teachings, and thought comes from Rasool's work *The Search for Truth*, which contains only a selection of the material collected by Rasool over the course of nearly three decades as his student.[61] It includes Sa'īd Khān's writings and letters along with a chapter entitled "The Discourses." The latter consists of a collection of isolated paragraphs wherein a location is typically specified along with a question posed to the *shaykh*, the identity of the person posing the question, and the *shaykh*'s response. It is presumably these paragraphs that Rasool is referring to when describing how when his *shaykh* spoke, he found note-taking to be distracting, thus Rasool captured the responses afterwards, sometimes being later verified or corrected by the *shaykh*.[62] Therefore, whether writings, letters, or notes of his speaking, we are seeing Sa'īd Khān through the eyes of one of his students, as well as translated and presented for the consumption of a Western audience. Thus, without recourse to the unedited full collection of material in its original Urdu to be examined by a competent Urdu linguist, it seems imprudent to attempt a full examination of Sa'īd Khān's thought as separate from Rasool's.

Nevertheless, a few key areas of continuity as well as some differences between the two men can be gleaned from *The Search for Truth*. Overall, Rasool's teachings seem to be characterized by continuity and the maintenance of the traditions passed to him by his teacher and the few areas of divergence that can be detected from the picture of Sa'īd Khān that he presents, can usually be attributed in large degree to the different audiences being addressed, viz., South Asian Muslims versus Westerners who may or may not be Muslim. The questions asked by Sa'īd Khān's majority Indian Muslim students demonstrate both difference and similarity with the questions we will encounter with Rasool and his students in the West. For instance, unlike the latter as reflected in *Turning Toward the Heart*, Sa'īd Khān's students asked such questions as how to tell what is *harām* versus *halāl* in the modern age, why non-Islamic practices had become incorporated into Sufism, and what the difference is between *waḥdat al-wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd*, but there are also commonalities such as in questions about serving humanity or how to bring about world peace.[63]

On the issue of mysticism, he advocated a strong orientation toward, rather than preaching and theoretical instruction, encouraging students toward regularity and consistency in performing the practices.[64] Still, as we know from the nature of the contents of *The Search for Truth*, he did write down some of his ideas, though it seems mostly as related to his activism, addressed in short order below, but

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[61] *SfT* xv. The book is an English-language rendering of the Urdu *Sawanih-i hayat-i Hadarat Maulwi Muhammad Sa'īd Khān Sahib (r)*. New Delhi: Idara-yi Talash-i Haqq, 2003. According to the editors, the English version is specifically tailored toward students in the West and Rasool was involved in "every detail and decision made in both the editing and translation processes […]." *SfT* xvi.

[62] Idem xix.

[63] In reply to the question about how world peace will be established, he explains that "The establishment of true and everlasting peace is beyond human capacity. The true purpose of human beings is to return to their primordial nature. As goodness and piety are intrinsic to a human being's primordial nature, people strive to be virtuous. If you are virtuous you will not quarrel with anyone because quarrels are found where there is a lack of virtue." Idem 88-9. In response to the question about interfaith dialogue, he holds that due to divergence in beliefs it can be difficult to reach a common ground but that if one looks to the practices of different faiths then "to some extent reconciliation is possible" going on to say that "Serving God's creatures is considered important in every religion. Similarly, every religion seeks to reform society and inculcate a high standard of morality in individuals." Idem 93.

[64] In one place he says: "We do not preach or give sermons. We do however, place great emphasis on meditation and remembrance of God." (Idem 102),[64] and in several places he emphasizes consistency in the practices, explaining: "A seeker should be mindful of performing spiritual practices. These should not be missed. The other important thing is punctuality." (Idem 100); "Two things are important: regularity and punctuality. Consider it a duty to do the spiritual practices at the appointed time. Other than this, the company of those who are near to God makes progress easier." (Idem 95-6); "In this day and age, people maintain that they are so caught up in the affairs of the world that it is difficult to take time out for practices. So, if someone sets some time aside from worldly occupation and devotes time to the remembrance of God, this in itself is a great achievement. Setting time aside on a daily basis leads to the attainment of certain spiritual states and strengthens one's relationship with God." (Idem 114).

one essay describes the *laṭā'if* in detail. He also spent some time answering students' questions. For instance, when asked about the difference between *waḥdat al-wujūd* versus *waḥdat al-shuhūd*, he explains that essentially "one is a state, the other a station," before going on to discuss the *wujūdī* perspective, which he says has been popular among Chishtīs but because of misinterpretation had been misused during Akbar's reign, then he covers Sirhindī's *shuhūdī* perspective, and finally he expresses admiration for Walī Allāh's attempt to reconcile the two.[65] Furthermore, when asked about what books to read, he recommended Sirhindī's *Maktūbāt*.[66]

On the relationship of Sufism to Islam, Sa'īd Khān maintained the inseparability and indeed interdependence of *taṣawwuf* and *sharī'a*, saying that the observance of *sharī'a* "affects the inner being" while purifying the heart and self makes it easier to observe the *sharī'a*.[67] According to Rasool, he "was very strict about matters relating to adherence to the sunna," and he "felt greatly distressed when he perceived the slightest deviation from the sunna in his students' attitudes or actions. He did his utmost to ensure that his students did not disregard even the most minor injunction."[68] But at the same time, he advised against both excessive literalism and becoming overly involved in the details of practice.[69] On whether or not non-Muslims could be taught the practices, he replies that "if they are willing to recite the attestation of faith it can be started" and "Compliance with other tenets of Islam, such as the ritual prayers, will gradually follow."[70] It seems that either at some point his perspective on this changed to allow non-Muslims to begin the preliminary practices without first converting or that this represents a difference between his approach and that of Rasool.

In any case, while his work was mainly directed toward a Muslim student base, Rasool describes his teacher as having had a religiously pluralistic outlook. He mentions Sa'īd Khān meeting with and "winning the hearts of non-Muslims and Muslims alike," and explains that "his compassion was not limited to the followers of any particular faith or creed," and that "The love and compassion that Hazrat felt in the beginning for Muslims came to embrace all human beings."[71] The statement "in the beginning" might point to the policy shift of allowing non-Muslims to begin the practices. We might also see Rasool's underscoring this aspect, which is not apparent in the earlier biographies, to more easily resonate with a majority non-Muslim Western audience and to compensate for how his biography features a great deal of exclusively Islamic content and his dealings with mostly Muslim students. Yet Sa'īd Khān himself does describe how the various faiths are not in conflict with one another, but that they are related through a chain of evolution.[72] While such an assertion points to his opinion of Islam as the culmination of such evolution, it nonetheless affirms his commitment to peaceful coexistence with other faiths. Similarly, he often affirms the inherent equality of all of humanity, saying for example that "What differentiates one human being from another is beauty of character not cast, creed, or color."[73] Such pluralism also comes into play with regard to the category of activism.

Despite his own brief early period of intense renunciation, Sa'īd Khān finds that overall, living in the world and being gainfully employed is important.[74] He also maintains the necessity of service to

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[65] Idem 94-5.
[66] Idem 110.
[67] He also states that "The people who profess to follow the Sufi path and claim that they have nothing to do with the shari'a are in the wrong." Idem 95
[68] Idem 22.
[69] For example, he says, "There is a difference between dictionary meaning and the technical meaning of words. […] it is wrong to try and understand the Holy Qur'an through the dictionary meaning of words." (Idem 92) and also "These days it has become very difficult to discern the finer points of what is lawful and what is unlawful. Therefore, consider that which is deemed lawful in the shari'a as lawful, and that which is prohibited as unlawful. Remain constant about this but do not delve into the intricacies. Even in this age we have a fair idea, for example, that unlawful earnings block the flow of divine blessings." (Idem 89).
[70] Idem 110.
[71] Idem 71-2.
[72] In two different essays, we find the following statement: "Different religions are not in conflict with each other. They are linked to each other through a process of evolution." Idem 123, 126.
[73] Idem 121-2.
[74] He even asserts that simply "earning one's own living and not being dependent on anyone is, in itself, a great service to humanity." Idem 128.

our fellow human beings and emphasizes this in several places,[75] but for him, the primary motivation ought to be seeking to please God, because if one is motivated by anything else, the ego inevitably becomes involved and true sincerity cannot be obtained.[76] This position is echoed by Rasool as seen below. Still, Sa‘īd Khān's essays evince a very socially activist impulse, as he writes passionately about social change and the necessity of action to bring about such change, but the nature of the action he recommends is not rooted in reforms in the physical world or in the political, at least not directly. Two instances were found of isolated statements in his writings that do cross over into the political realm, dealing with the relationship of God and governance.[77] Rasool's translation uses the term "God," which in the original Urdu was probably "Allāh." These statements may well have had some underpinnings of a political Islam or perhaps nostalgia for Islamic Mughal rule in India. We cannot know whether there were more statements with such an orientation that had been left out to appeal to a Western audience for whom mysticism is ideally aloof of the political. If he had such aspirations, they have certainly not been pursued by those of his spiritual progeny who have sought to realize in the West his unambiguously stated objective of spreading their Sufi lineage today.

On the whole, at least from the writings selected for inclusion by Rasool, the main thrust of his activism, and the way to bring about the social change which he calls for, lies in calling others to embark on the Sufi path. Much of his writing centers around a dichotomy between, on the one hand, modernity, science, materialism, and secularism, and on the other, spirituality, religion, Sufism, and Islam. Yet despite speaking of a war between science and religion and placing modernity and Islam at odds with one another, he does not see these two sets of poles as necessarily or entirely contradictory or in opposition to one another. On the contrary, he feels that the two sides have much in common[78] and that they should work together in the service of humanity.[79] He finds great benefit in the technological and even social advances which have come with science, reason, and modernity,[80] but he also laments what

[75] For example, he says that "The way in which societies can best be developed is through serving human beings and doing good deeds. This will lead to human beings becoming sensitive to others and true to their real nature." Idem 120. Also see the section on purification of the self below, where he asserts its interdependence with service as well as idem 122.

[76] Or in his words: "A person can never attain to selflessness and total sincerity until the prime motive of work is earning the pleasure of God. If the primary motive is serving humanity, the community or the society, a person's actions will not be devoid of egoistic motives. The ego will certainly be involved in such an enterprise. Such a person begins to think of individual needs as everybody's needs. Undoubtedly, caring for human beings is a virtue, but the highest virtue is performing all actions for the sake of God and for the attainment of His pleasure." Idem 85. And also: "There is no denying that serving humanity is beneficial. At the same time, one must be careful not to blemish the purity of the self through one's thoughts and actions. […and also that…] For the sincere seeker, only results in the Hereafter are worth pursuing and the seeker cares little about temporary and impermanent results." Idem 122.

[77] In one place, he says that "A relationship with God is of fundamental importance to the development of rules and laws that govern society." Idem 121. But then he also goes on to explain in the next sentence that it is additionally important to have "respect for the norms of society." Elsewhere he states that "The only way in which a nation can protect itself from decline is by establishing a relationship with God […]." Idem 127.

[78] "Broad-minded materialists and spiritualists have much in common. Both value freedom, compassion and service; both consider oppression and slavery to be a curse; both view human beings as responsible and accountable for their actions. Even in the realm of economics both have similar views. However, for the spiritualists, the ultimate goal is the Hereafter while the materialists completely deny its existence." Idem 127.

[79] "There is an ongoing war between materialism and spirituality. You must rise to the occasion. […] The materialists have illumined this world with their achievement, and the upholders of spirituality can also undoubtedly benefit from their efforts. For example, it is due to the efforts of the materialists that pilgrimages to sacred places can be made in a matter of hours! The materialists and the spiritualists need to work together to serve humanity. If they form a meaningful partnership they can become an indomitable force." Idem 126.

[80] He asks, "Whose actions have borne fruit and who is suffering from heedlessness? Who has created the means of comfort for human beings? Who has plumbed the depths of the oceans and created submarines? Who has

he considers the accompanying economic materialism, self-centeredness, and most of all, the turning away from religion and the exclusive focus of science and modern secular education on only the physical world and the development of the mind. While appreciating their benefits, he questions "But is it enough?"[81] Instead of being limited to the physical world and the mind, he advocates also turning toward the spiritual world and the development of the heart.[82] Accordingly, he extends an invitation to scientists and rationally minded people to consider the possibilities of exploring the spiritual realm through Sufi teachings.[83] He also makes an impassioned call to Muslims, the youth in particular, to awaken from their slumber and not squander their inheritance, but instead to live up to the legacy of their Sufi forebears, saying:

> O descendants of the keepers of secrets! Progeny of the travelers of spiritual worlds! Will you limit yourselves to venerating your ancestors? The descendants of Mill, Newton, and Darwin are not killing time by living in the past. The world is waiting for the successors of Ghazali, Razi, Rumi, and Mansur al-Hallaj […] to challenge the materialists! It is waiting for the spiritual centers [*laṭā'if*] to show what is possible, or at least to show how the wisdom of the ancestors can be understood and applied. Atheism has not been happily accepted. It is born of despair. People want to understand and experience the Truth.[84]

This call, which must be understood in the context of Sufism itself being barraged from multiple sides in the Muslim-majority world, as discussed in the last phase of the historical survey above, would be answered, and the invitation further extended to others in new and far spread places, by Sa'īd Khān's successor, Rasool, with the establishment of the Institute of Search for Truth, the proposal for which Sa'īd Khān himself modified and approved. This document contains many of the same themes, ideas, and arguments as found in his essays, especially on the compatibility of science and modernity with spiritual exploration and his appeal to broadminded scientific inquiry. In addition to Rasool, Sa'īd Khān is known to have left at least four other *khalīfa*s, including his own son, and one of these is known to at

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developed new technology for agriculture? Who has invented the radio and the x-ray? Who is responsible for new discoveries? Who has dominion over the air and space? Who established criteria for justice in governance? Who dispensed with violence and cruelty? Who did away with feudalism? Who brought about a revolution and broke the chains of slavery so that every human being was equal and free? Let the critics come forward and tell us. Muslims have been left with nothing. Wherever you look you find only dust." Idem 124.

[81] He goes on to ask: "Does refinement and intellectual development lead to contentment? Does it not leave foom for any further quest? Does the conscience not cry out for something more? People have pure sparkling water to quench their thirst, glittering air-conditioned buildings to live in, expensive clothes to wear, and jets in which to fly, but even the most affluent human beings continue to long for peace and contentment." Idem 117.

[82] "Detailed plans have been made for the exploration of the universe, but it does not seem to have occurred to scientists that human beings themselves, the creators of these plans, may have within themselves other subtle centers of consciousness. If the universe around us is full of marvels, could there not be something miraculous about human beings themselves? Science has, unfortunately, limited itself to exploring the material world. If science had ever turned towards the spiritual world, it could have understood its realities. Scientists strive to benefit the world through their endeavors, and yet, had they explored the spiritual realm, they would have benefited the world immeasurably. Just like advancements in the fields of agriculture and architecture have provided comforts, in the same way, efforts made in the spiritual realm yield eternal peace, joy, and illumination. […] People have gained significantly by developing the mind, and yet little effort has been made to develop […the heart…] and thus the door to the spiritual realm has remained closed." Idem 117-8.

[83] He states that "Modernity is not about denying the truth. Unless a modern scientist is blinded by hostility and hatred, he must accept the invitation to the teachings of the Truth because even a single atom is not without value in his eyes." He furthermore argues that "Scientific principles imply that human beings employ all the means at their disposal to establish the truth without prejudice. It encourages broad-mindedness and a tireless search for the truth, free from social dogmas and illusions." Idem 117.

[84] Idem 119 and 120. He also says, with regard to more than Sufism, "Our youth must also wake up from their slumber. […] It is a shame to be known as an underdeveloped nation, therefore rise! Throw yourself into action and reclaim your lost glory. Enter every field of endeavor. Through your success show this acquisitive and materialistic world how gain is equitably divided among the people, how they should be cared for, and how one should fulfill one's duties towards humanity, one's nation and city." Idem 128.

least have one disciple living in the US.[85] To explore some significant examples of what fruits Sa‘īd Khān's and his predecessors' efforts bore for the present day, particularly in the West, this research will examine the lives, work, and teachings of Rasool and his two heirs. But first, we now look to the full range of other Naqshbandī-related presence that has also made its way to Europe and North America.

[85] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.

Naqshbandī-Related Presence in the West

In order to situate our case study of Azad Rasool and his two heirs with respect to other lineally related currents that have in one way or another also reached the West, we have chosen to focus on the Naqshbandiyya for its particular predominance and influence in Rasool's lineage. The Naqshbandī Mujaddidī aspects dominate in our case study and therefore other Naqshbandīs, almost all mentioned here being Mujaddidī, make better comparison partners than other lineages like the Chishtiyya, with which they may share less in common in terms of Sufi doctrines and practices. If we were to have made a survey of the Chishtī-related presence in the West, it would have assembled a range from the universalist Ināyatīs and the famous musician Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan to the learned scholars of Deoband.[1] A Qādirī survey would have brought together groups as different as the highly context adaptive Budshishiyya[2] with the traditional and distinctively South Asian Barēlwī movement, founded by the Qādirī Sufi Aḥmad Rizā Khān Barēlwī.[3] It would also have to include the famous Pakistani-Canadian Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, an Islamic scholar and Sufi *shaykh* who founded the progressive Minhaj-ul-Quran International. A Shādhilī survey would have not only entirely shifted our gaze to Africa as the land of immediate origination, as opposed to South Asia and the formerly Ottoman lands with the Naqshbandiyya, but it would have brought together the Traditionalism of René Guénon (1886-1951) and the ensuing eclectic Maryamiyya of Frithjof Schuon (1907-1988) with more recent arrivals like the Darqawiyya of Abdulqadir as-Sufi (b. 1930) and the numerous well-known Western-born *'ulamā'* of this lineage discussed below, as well as Tijānī lineages, like that of Ahmed Tijani Ben Omar, or the Sudanese Burhāniyya. One smaller Shādhilī lineage to attract Westerners of non-Muslim origin is that of Muhammad Sa'id al-Jamal al-Rifa'i al-Shadhili (d. 2015), who unusually left no successor.[4] There is also Abdullah Nooruddeen Durkee (b. 1938), who appears again in Part Three. While primarily known for being a Shādhilī *shaykh*, he also holds a Naqshbandī *ijāza*.[5] This highlights an important point though: a *shaykh* may have multiple *ṭarīqa* affiliations, but usually one becomes dominant or primary, for instance, Inayat Khan (1882-1927) was initiated into the Naqshbandiyya, Qādiriyya, and Suhrawardiyya,[6] but it was his Chishtī affiliation that he has become best known for, much like the Mujaddidī branch of the Naqshbandiyya predominated for Rasool.

Surely such contextualizing of Rasool's lineage with other cousin groups via other lineages would have yielded beneficial insights, and studies on these certainly have helped to inform this chapter as well as this research as a whole. Yet because of the focus on mysticism in this study and certain particularities of Naqshbandī mysticism, like the *laṭā'if*, *murāqaba*, *INfB*, and the eleven Naqshbandī principles (though some of these concepts and practices have also been adopted by other lineages), our current Naqshbandī focus seems justified. In this survey, we have assembled just as motley a crew as any of those mentioned above.

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[1] See Chapter Seven, "Modern Day Chishtis," of Ernst and Lawrence, *Chishti Martyrs of Love*, 129-46.

[2] Marta Dominguez Diaz, "The Būdshīshiyya's Tower of Babel: Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in a Transnational Sufi Order," in *The Languages of Religion: Exploring the Politics of the Sacred*, ed. Sipra Mukherjee, (London and New York: Routledge, 2018). See also her other works cited below and in the bibliography.

[3] Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India*.

[4] Elliot Bazzano, "A Shadhiliyya Sufi Order in America: Traditional Islam Meets American Hippies," in *Varieties of American Sufism: Islam, Sufi Orders and Authority in a Time of Transition*, eds. Elliot Bazzano and Marcia Hermansen (Albany: SUNY Press, 2020), 85-119.

[5] For a sketch of Shādhiliyya lines in the West, other than those tracing back to Guénon and Schuon, see Marcia Hermansen, "The Other Shādhilīs of the West," in *Une voie Soufi dans le monde: Le Shādhiliyya*, ed. Eric Geoffroy (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2005), 481-99. For those not covered by her, see Mark Sedgwick, "The 'Traditionalist' Shadhiliyya in the West: Guénonians and Schuonians," in *Une voie Soufi dans le monde*, ed. Geoffroy, 453-71. For his expanded treatment of the history of the same groups, see Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*. On the Burhāniyya in Germany, see Søren Christian Lassen, "Growing up as a Sufi: Generational Change in the Burhaniya Sufi Order." in *Sufis in Western Society: Global Networking and Locality*, edited by Ron Geaves, Markus Dressler, and Gritt Klinkhammer (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 148–61. For a more recent survey of Shādhilī presence in the West, see Aziz El Kobaiti Idrissi, *Islamic Sufism in the West* (Bradford: Diwan Press, 2013).

[6] "Our Lineage," InayatiOrder.org, accessed February 5, 2020, https://inayatiorder.org/about/our-lineage/.

The transfer in question took place primarily at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century, during the time of globalization wherein time and space are drastically reduced, and people and ideas are able to travel rapidly, easily, and inexpensively across the globe, a time which has also been labelled as an era of post-modernity.[7] In the arrival of the multivalent forms of Naqshbandī-related mystical ideas and practices to the West beginning in the 1960s and 70s and continuing onwards up to the present, we see the convergence of two seemingly very different trajectories. The first is largely indigenous and is characterized by a turn away from the traditionally dominant religion of Europe and North America, Christianity in its own varied forms, yet this trajectory has not been disenchanted by science and reason and retains a longing for an encounter and contact with something beyond merely the physical world. It seeks an alternative spirituality, and in this search, it has often turned eastward, in this case finding the Naqshbandiyya. The other trajectory was initially immigrant, but is becoming increasingly indigenous as new generations of both indigenous convert and immigrant Muslim origin but born and/or raised and educated in the West come to the fore. That trajectory is the Naqshbandiyya itself, with its traditional connection to an Islam that is firmly rooted in the Quran and *sunna* but also in the understanding and implementation of these through religious sciences like *fiqh*, *kalam*, and of course *taṣawwuf* (Sufism). These two trends are not inherently separate and, as well demonstrated by both Sedgewick and Dickson,[8] there have been points of contact and interaction between them throughout medieval and modern times, and they are now increasingly becoming ever more intertwined.

Choosing a Typology

In making some kind of sense of the convergence of these two trajectories and the resultant wide spectrum of Naqshbandī-related articulations present in the West, it becomes necessary to impose some kind of structure. Thus, in following with and drawing from existing scholarship on Sufism in the West, we resort to a typology. The range of typologies used by scholars to date to classify the different strands of Sufism in the West have been assembled in an article by Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh.[9] Therein he creates a taxonomy of these typologies as follows: 1.) chronological/generational; 2.) modes of presence, such as living, literary, and virtual; 3.) affiliation with a denomination (Sunni/Shi‘a) or a particular *ṭarīqa*; 4.) "migrant-native or East-West"; and 5.) connection to Islam. Chronologically-based typologies,[10] while illuminating for studying the broader arrival of Sufism in general to the West, are not well-suited to examining specifically Naqshbandī presence, since these groups primarily arrived during the same relatively small time period: from the 1960s and 70s onwards. During this time, a range of Naqshbandī-affiliated or influenced groups began to appear either as a result of a search by Western spiritual seekers, often combined with the desire of Naqshbandī teachers to respond to such a search and spread their teachings to the West, or as the byproduct of immigration. The division of living,

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[77] On Sufism and globalization, see for instance, Itzchak Weismann, "The Myth of Perpetual Departure: Sufis in a New (Age) Global (Dis)Order," in *Islamic Myths and Memories: Mediators of Globalization* ed. Itzchak Weismann, Mark Sedgwick and Ulrika Mårtensson (London: Routledge 2014), 121-37.

[8] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*; Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*.

[9] Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh, "Sufism in the Modern West: A Taxonomy of Typologies and the Category of 'Dynamic Integrejectionism'," in *Sufism East and West: Mystical Islam and Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Modern World*, ed. Jamal Malik and Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh, Leiden: Brill, 2019, 180-208.

[10] The chronological typologies he considers draw from: Gisela Webb, "Third-Wave Sufism in America and the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship," in *Sufism in the West*, edited by Jamal Malik and John Hinnells (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 86–102; Gritt Klinkhammer, "The Emergence of Transethnic Sufism in Germany: From Mysticism to Authenticity," in *Sufis in Western Society: Global Networking and Locality*, edited by Ron Geaves, Markus Dressler, and Gritt Klinkhammer (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 130–47; Andrew Rawlinson, *The Book of Enlightened Masters: Western Teachers in Eastern Traditions* (Chicago: Open Court, 1997).

literary, and virtual forms of Sufism[11] is likewise not particularly helpful, since although there may be tendencies toward one or another of these aspects, nearly all of the groups mentioned here have both an embodied living presence accompanied by websites and often a body of print literature. Denominational or *ṭarīqa*-based typologies are equally uninformative, since the majority of the groups considered here that embrace Islam are Ḥanafī Sunni and of course, due to the scope of inquiry, they each have some relation to the Naqshbandiyya. One might argue that in the case of South Asian groups that a Deobandī-Barēlwī *maslak* typology would be useful, but this would be confined to comparing groups sharing this region of origin. Similarly, one might also argue for sub-*ṭarīqa* divisions, yet this too does little to clarify the picture, since the Naqshbandī connection of the overwhelming majority can be traced back to Sirhindī.[12] Nearly all could fall under the label of Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī and less than a quarter of these belong to its Khālidī sub-branch, and this subdivision alone has considerable internal diversity. Because of the highly transnational or global nature of most of the groups examined, any typology based on the native/migrant dichotomy,[13] as well as any attempt to classify based on countries of origin or countries of reception is likewise doomed to assemble an assortment of highly dissimilar groups into one category. Thus, approaches like Hermansen's "theirs" and "ours," that rely on geographical factors like the location of the main *shaykh* were not deemed as helpful here, since the physical location of the headquarters is increasingly less significant with the relative affordability of intercontinental flights and even more so with the deterritorialization allowed by web-based forms of communication. Nevertheless, Søren Christian Lassen's triad of New Age, convert, and diaspora phenomena, as well as Hammer's Sufism for Westerners versus Sufism for immigrants, does have some overlap with the next group of typologies which we have found more useful here. On geography though, the groups in our survey which have expanded to have some degree of presence in North American and Europe,[14] originated from South Asia, especially Pakistan but also India and Bangladesh, along with Afghanistan or formerly Ottoman lands, especially Turkey, but also Iraq, Syria, Cyprus, Bosnia, and beyond, referring to how the Naqshbandiyya, particularly its Khālidī branch, reached Indonesia via pilgrims being initiated by *shaykh*s they encountered in the Hijaz, such as Turkey in particular, but also Syria, Iraq, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Indonesia. The two most prominent scenarios involve Pakistanis arriving in the UK and Turkish immigration to Germany, but as we will see, these are of course far from the only cases.

The last set of typologies explored by Zarrabi-Zadeh, viz., those based on the relationship to Islam,[15] offer the most informative means of examining Naqshbandī presence in the West by bringing

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[11] Zarrabi-Zadeh bases the "modes of presence" typology by discussing the widely used "literary" versus "living" Sufism, or "written" versus "oral" Sufism dichotomies, in addition to the third mode of "virtual" Sufism. Zarrabi-Zadeh, "Sufism in the Modern West," 182-83. On the former, he cites, Thierry V. Zarcone, "Rereadings and Transformations of Sufism in the West," *Diogène* 47, no. 187 (1999): here 110–11; and on virtual Sufism, Mark Bryson-Richardson, "Cybertariqas: Sufism in the Diaspora, Identity and Virtual Community," *Islamica* III, no. I (1999); Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor, "Online Sufism–Young British Muslims, Their Internet 'Selves' and Virtual Reality," in *Sufism in Britain*, ed. Ron Geaves and Theodore Gabriel (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 161-76. But see also, Robert Rozehnal, *Cyber Sufis: Virtual Expressions of the American Muslim Experience* (London: Oneworld Academic, 2019). See also Garbi Schmidt, "Sufi Charisma on the Internet," in *Sufism in Europe and North America*, ed. David Westerlund (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 109-26; and Milani and Possamai, "The Nimatullahiya and Naqshbandiya Sufi Orders on the Internet."

[12] The three exceptions to this are Robert Abdul Hayy Darr, with his non-Mujaddidī Aghan lineage; Itlaq Yolu, which rejects Naqshbandī identity in favor of a purely Khwājagān one; and Omar Ali-Shah, who provides no *silsila* to examine.

[13] Green, *Sufism*; Lassen, "Growing up as a Sufi"; Hammer, "Sufism for Westerners"; Marcia Hermansen, "Global Sufism: 'Theirs and Ours'," in *Sufis in Western Society: Global Networking and Locality*, edited by Ron Geaves, Markus Dressler, and Gritt Klinkhammer (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 26–47.

[14] All but two have some kind of either asserted or claimed presence in Europe or North America, but the other two have an assumed presence because of their significance in their region of origin (Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya) or due to a large body of English literature (Osman Nuri Topbaş).

[15] Alan Godlas, "Sufism, the West, and Modernity," accessed January 24, 2020, http://islam.uga.edu/sufismwest.html; Ron Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain: An Exploration of Muslim Identity*

together the most similar groups under the same headings, as it is hoped will be demonstrated by the remainder of this chapter, though there is still a range of diversity within each heading. These typologies were produced by Alan Godlas, Ron Geaves, and Marcia Hermansen to address the broader phenomenon of Sufism in the West generally, the US, and the UK respectively. These three, but particularly Hermansen, serve as the basis for the typology used in the present study, with minor modifications meant to more exactly depict specifically Naqshbandī, rather than generally Sufi presence. Another element aside from Islam, however, that is found in the typologies of Geaves and Godlas as well as more recent works of Hermansen is affiliation with institutionalized Sufism, that is for our purposes, self-identification as being Naqshbandī.

In adapting these typologies, which were designed to describe Sufi presence in the West generally as opposed to a certain *ṭarīqa*, to the needs of this study, certain modifications have been made. These were necessary in making this typology more accurately describe specifically Naqshbandī presence in the West as encountered here, though the modifications may also be beneficial for considering other lineages and the phenomenon of Sufism at large. For example, the "perennials" from Hermansen's garden model has been changed to "universalists," making use of a distinction underscored by Sedgewick,[16] since not all of those in our universalist category promote the idea of an ancient perennial religion. The second category of Sufism 1st correlates to Hermansen's "hybrids" yet this term has been abandoned here since it could imply a degree of syncretism or mixing of Naqshbandī teachings with other elements within the receiving environment, which may or may not be the case, as we will discuss. But most significantly, we consider the factor of the sequence in which adherents to both Naqshbandī Sufism and Islam encountered each respectively. Thus we turn to our typology.

Universalists, Sufism 1st, Islam 1st, Post-Ṭarīqa

From the 20th century, more than any other time in history, it has become increasingly possible to conceive of encountering Sufism as independent from Islam. Therefore, in making sense of the variety of Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī mysticisms present in the West today, one might do well to consider how practitioners there arrived at Sufism and conversely, how it came to them. Thus, on top of the factors of *ṭarīqa* affiliation and the overall relationship with Islam, it is perhaps even more revealing to divide groups on the basis of whether the majority of their adherents, and therefore the most likely target audience for their teachings, websites, books, and other literature; have arrived at Sufism or Islam first (not meaning first in terms of priority, rather in terms of the sequence of encounter). The target audience with their existing base of knowledge and experience, in large part, determines how the path is presented. Whether that audience is already Muslim, be it from birth or by conversion, and decided to explore the inner dimensions of their faith (Islam 1st) or if they are non-Muslims or non-practicing Muslims who encountered Sufism prior to turning or re-turning toward Islam, if they even did so at all (Sufism 1st), is the single most important factor in determining the manner in which the teachings are presented.

Therefore, by creating a Venn diagram with two circles, one representing Islam and another representing the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa*, on one side are those who generally identify as Naqshbandī but not necessarily as Muslim, on the other side are groups that identify as Muslim but do not necessarily identify as Naqshbandī, despite having a Naqshbandī background. In the area of overlap are groups that identify both as Muslim and as Naqshbandī, and as might be expected, there is a great deal of diversity among these. Thus to enhance the resolution of the picture, this category where *sharīʻa* and *ṭarīqa* coincide is divided in two by looking into the nature of members' relationships to both Islam and Sufism. On one side are groups with a significant number of members, but not necessarily even a

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(Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 2000); Marcia Hermansen, "In the Garden of American Sufi Movements: Hybrids and Perennials," in *New Trends and Developments in the World of Islam*, edited by Peter B. Clarke (London: Luzac, 1997), 155–77; and later Marcia Hermansen, "Hybrid Identity Formations in Muslim America: The Case of American Sufi Movements," in *The Muslim World* 90, no. /1–2 (2000): 158–97.

[16] "Perennialism is the idea that the secret, esoteric core [of religions, as opposed to their exoteric form] is very ancient, and thus can be traced back to the remote past. Universalism is the idea that truth can be found in all religions." Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 5-6.

majority, who have encountered Sufism prior to embracing Islam, and on the other side are those who had already embraced Islam, either by birth or through conversion, prior to/or simultaneously with encountering Sufism. Thus emerges a four-fold typology of those groups whose membership largely encountered 1.) Sufism as independent from Islam (universalists), 2.) Sufism prior to Islam (Sufism 1st), 3.) Islam prior to/or simultaneously with Sufism (Islam 1st), and 4.) Islam influenced by Sufism but without formal affiliation to a *ṭarīqa* (post-*ṭarīqa*).

There are admittedly some limitations to this typology in catching all possible scenarios, since for example, in the groups labeled as Sufism 1st, the phenomenon of reversion exists where someone born into Islam that had strayed from the fold, finds their way back to Islam as a result of Sufism. This also occurs in the Islam 1st groups. Another problem is that Islam 1st implies that Islam and Sufism are always encountered at separate times, which would be untrue for a large number of Naqshbandīs, even a majority in some areas, who were born into Naqshbandī Muslim families or communities, and thus encountered Islam and Sufism simultaneously, hence the above inclusion of the disclaimer "or simultaneously with."

Another shortcoming is that some groups fall outside of the Venn diagram entirely, rejecting Naqshbandī and/or Sufi identity despite having indisputable connections to this order. To begin with, some of the Hindu-derived lines deny any connection to Sufism or the Naqshbandiyya or Islam whatsoever. Similarly, Hasan Lutfi Shushud (1902-1988), creator of Itlaq Yolu, claimed to draw from Khwājagānī sources while eschewing Naqshbandī identity.[17] The problem with that claim, however, is that historical sources about the Khwājagān are Naqshbandī. Another example is Subud, whose founder Pak Subuh (1901-1987) was both Muslim and had been initiated into the Naqshbandiyya-Khālidiyya, though the movement itself is neither.[18] It seems unnecessarily confusing to provide Subud with its own separate hybrid category of "universalist/post-*ṭarīqa*" and since they are universalists in addition to having both Theosophical and Gurdjieffian connections as part of their reception in the West, it would be most appropriate to consider them alongside the universalist Naqshbandīs. If forced into the post-*ṭarīqa* category, they would have little in common with their neighbors there. This is also where we have placed the Hindu lines denying Naqshbandī-affiliation. Likewise, we have placed Itlaq Yolu with the Sufism 1st groups, in light of Shushud's American successor of sorts Yannis Toussulis' comments about the inseparability of Sufism and Islam, though with a broad definition of Islam.[19] Thus when we make statements about the lines embracing Sufism or Naqshbandī-identity, we have less than ideally lumped the above groups into such statements, despite their rejection of one or the other. In a similar vein, those who claim to be Naqshbandī, whether or not there is evidence of any physical initiation, have been included, such as with Jenenne Castor-Thompson's asserted *uwaysī* connection to Irina Tweedie (1907-1999),[20] as well as Omar Ali-Shah (1922-2005)[21] and Abdullah Sirr Dan al-Jamal (né

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[17] Yannis Toussulis, *Sufism and the Way of Blame: The Hidden Sources of a Sacred Psychology* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 2011), 64. Shushud was the last teacher Bennett encountered in his search for the Sarmoung, prior to Bennett's passing in 1974. Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 246.

[18] Subud's initial expansion into the Euro-American sphere was among Gurdjieffian circles from 1956-61 and was directly related to J.G. Bennett's search for the teachers of Gurdjieff. After 1961, according to Sedgwick, Subud was able to develop further on its own. Thus, it constitutes the earliest arrival on the scene. For this history, see Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 197-200. For more on Subud, see for example Asfa Widiyanto, *Ritual and Leadership in the Subud Brotherhood and the Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya* (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2012); Antoon Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition* (London: Curzon, 1997); Clarke, *New Religions in Global Perspective*, 291-3.

[19] Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 182-84. On the connection between Shushud and Tousillis, see idem 111-12.

[20] This is described in Castor-Thompson's autobiography, *The Rose Garden: Autobiography of a Modern Naqshbandi Sufi* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2014). In addition, her *Falling, Dancing, Flying* trilogy consists of *The White Rose: The Albedo* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2007); *The Red Rose: The Rubedo* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2013); and *The Yellow Rose: Citrinitas* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2013). Her website is Jenenne.com.

[21] On the Naqshbandī connection of Ali-Shah's "The Tradition," aside from his publication of the book, *The Rules or Secrets of the Naqshbandi Order* (Reno, NV: Tractus Books, 1998), shortly after his passing in September

John Ross, d. 2000),[22] neither of whom publicly provided a *silsila* of their own. We have also included Laleh Bakhtiar (b. 1938) and her Sufi Enneagram, though the Sufi and even more so Naqshbandī origins of the enneagram are questionable.[23] Moreover, this is a literary mode of presence in comparison with the remainder of living modes mentioned here, but since it comes up again below and is important for comparison, it is included. The reader may notice that in the table listing all of the groups in the survey, we find a mixture of the names of individual leaders and organizational or institutional names. This is due to the fact that, while we have preferred to speak in terms of sub-lineage (among other reasons, since several *shaykh*s have died in recent years and who their main *khalīfa*s will be may still be somewhat unclear), not all of the leaders have created a new sub-lineage with their own *nisba* (e.g., Sardārī, Tahiri, Aslami, Owaisi, Haqqani, etc.) or an organization name. Likewise, in the post-*ṭarīqa* category, we are not looking at a traditional Sufi order centered around a *shaykh*, but at movements, institutions, and organizations. Also of note, the groups covered range in size from literally a handful of students to massive transnational movements.

Despite its imperfections, no typology seeking to make sense of such a varied phenomenon can be entirely watertight,[24] but the present researcher holds that this four-fold division is the most viable for the purposes of the present survey. On completeness of the groups listed, while the researcher feels confident that the coverage of Naqshbandī-related universalists is more or less exhaustive, and probably Sufism 1st as well, the groups described as being in the last two categories of Islam 1st and post-*ṭarīqa*

2005, in a discussion thread that has been archived on Google Groups (https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/alt.sufi/tSgP1gkJkXU, accessed February 4, 2020), a posting was made including text presented as a transcription of a manuscript entitled "FATWAH," dated 12 May 2004, and signed "Syed Omar Ali-Shah Naqshbandi." In it were instructions that, in the event of his death, the leadership of the Tradition should be passed to Arif Ali-Shah, "carrying as he does the Baraka of the Silsilah, […] and that the structure and activities of the Tradition as laid down by me should continue as before." Following in the same post is a transcription of a fax message from Arif Ali-Shah confirming his acceptance of this appointment. Under the tab "what we are," of the website RealSufism.com (accessed February 4, 2020), the title reads "A Functioning Naqshbandi School with a Living Teaching Master. Syed Hashim Arif Ali-Shah" although this is not displayed anywhere as part of the page itself.

[22] He interacted with the Haqqaniyya, Aslamiyya and Menzil community and these *silsila*s are provided on a memorial website ("Chains of Transmission," SheikhAbdullah.net, accessed on February 4, 2020, http://sheikhabdullah.net/chains-of-transmission/), but such interactions were after he returned from travels in India and elsewhere and established himself as the *shaykh* of the community known as the Muridu'l Haqq in 1974 London. Habibis, "A Comparative Study," 220. Although he left no successor and directed his disciples to follow the Haqqaniyya, he is included here as an important step in the Western reception of the Naqshbandiyya.

[23] Mark Sedgwick, "Sufism and the Gurdjieff Movement: Multiple Itineraries of Interaction," in ed. Malik and Zarrabi-Zadeh, *Sufism East and West*, 129-48.

[24] The limitations of academic typologies of Sufism in the West has been observed in recent studies. For instance, for a critique of existing typologies by studying a diverse lineage which spans categories and defies being placed in a single box, see Simon Stjernholm, "What Is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani *Tariqa*? Notes on Developments and a Critique of Typologies," in Geaves and Gabriel (eds), *Sufism in Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 197-211. Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, particularly in terms of distinctions between the criteria of universalist versus Islamic. He studies ten different *shaykh*s that have either previously been categorized as or would fit comfortably into the perennialist and hybrid or similar categories, here universalist and Sufism 1st. He argues that the line between universalist/perennialist brands of Sufism and those embracing Islam is not as clear cut as scholars believe. He does so largely on the basis of broader definitions of Islam provided to him by the *shaykh*s he interviewed. Such definitions do not necessarily require adherence to a juristic understanding of *sharī'a*, such as in accordance with one of the four accepted Sunni *madhhab*s. Dickson acknowledges that none of the *shaykh*s he interviewed come from among the more exclusively immigrant communities. When factoring these in, however, it becomes clear that not everyone would be willing to accept such broad definitions of Islam. There are those placed in the Sufism 1st category that accept broader definitions of Islam, such as Yannis Toussulis, whom Dickson interviewed, and Abdur Rashid, but the latter also himself abides by a juristically bound Islam and expects the same of his students. Thus, for the purposes of this study, both broader and juristically bound definitions of Islam will count simply as Islam. Just as with the label of Naqshbandī, with the few noted exceptions, the criterion is self-identification with that label.

may well be just the tip of the iceberg, showing only those groups that have a noticeable online presence or that have been the subjects of academic studies to date. This is probably related to not only a tendency for these latter two groups to be spread through personal contacts in Muslim communities,[25] but also because of "crypto-Sufi"[26] strategies like deemphasizing Sufi terminology and identification (discussed below) in the face of anti-Sufi reformist critique, making smaller groups that adopt such strategies more difficult to locate through web-based searches. Throughout the course of this research, finding new groups with Naqshbandī affiliation or origins has been a continuously unfolding process, discovering new personalities and organizations time and again, yet at some point analyzing those that have been discovered had to take place. In estimating what lies beneath the tip of this assumed iceberg, one might expect numerous smaller and localized groups in diaspora communities originating from the same predominant countries as the groups already discussed, particularly Pakistan and Turkey, which represent the overwhelmingly most common countries of origin for Naqshbandīs in the West. It should also be noted that following the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003, and more recently, the Syrian conflict, ISIS, and the return of the Taliban to power in 2021, large numbers of refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, all countries with a substantial Naqshbandī presence, have sought sanctuary in Western Europe and North America. It seems very likely that within this comparatively recent diaspora are, at a minimum, individuals influenced by the Naqshbandiyya, but probably also Naqshbandī initiates and even fully authorized *shaykh*s.

As Weismann notes, very little is known of Naqshbandī activities in the majority Sunni Arab areas of Iraq,[27] but given the emergence of the Jaysh Rijāl al-Ṭarīqat al-Naqshbandiyya,[28] led by ʻIzzat Ibrāhīm al-Dūrī (b. 1942), originally an insurgent organization against US occupation, it has become evident that the order there had strong Baʻath ties under Saddam Hussein, a potential motivator for maintaining a low profile, at least in the US. In Syria, some Naqshbandīs are known for working with the Baʻath regime there, such as the Grand Mufti of Syria, Aḥmad Kuftārū (1915-2004),[29] as well as others for resistance against it.[30] There are also likely some Naqshbandīs from still further areas with a less pronounced or studied presence than Turkey and South Asia, such as Egypt, Central Asia, and China as well as additional groups from Indonesia.

Furthermore, because of this study's focus on mysticism, it is likely that many post-*ṭarīqa* organizations that have been founded or influenced by Naqshbandīs but do not overtly claim *ṭarīqa* affiliation or promote Sufism have escaped notice. There is also the question of how far does one go in describing a group as post-*ṭarīqa*. After all, the idea for the creation of Pakistan has been credited to Sirhindī,[31] shall we then include that entire nation and its interactions with the West? Perhaps better not. Consequently, we have focused on organizations and movements with some Naqshbandī background that continues, in one way or another, to be noticeably relevant to mystical doctrine and practice. Hence, we have included the Deobandī and Barēlwī *maslak*s as well as Nadwatul Ulama, because of the role

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[25] Hammer, "Sufism for Westerners," 139.
[26] This term seems to have been coined by Thierry Zarcone in "The Transformation of the Sufi Orders (Tarikat) in the Turkish Republic and the Question of Crypto-Sufism," in Jayne L. Warner (ed.), *Cultural Horizons: A Festschrift in Honor of Talat S. Halman* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 198–209.
[27] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 148.
[28] David Jordan, "Jaysh Rijāl al-Ṭarīqa al-Naqshbandīya: The Sufi Resistance of the Former Baʿth Party in Iraq," in Rüdiger Lohlker and Tamara Abu-Hamdeh (eds.), *Jihadism Revisited: Rethinking a Well-Known Phenomenon* (Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2019); David Jordan, "State and Religion in Iraq: The Sufi Insurgency of the Former Baʿth Regime in Historical Context," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 55 (2023): 344–52.
[29] On his *silsila*, particularly the links immediately preceding him, that is Amīn Kuftārū and ʻĪsā Al-Kurdī, see Kenichiro Takao, "Sufi Genealogy of Shaykh Ahmad Kuftaru: Damascene Networking of Naqshbandi Sufi Order in 19–20th Centuries" Doshisha University, Center for Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions (CISMOR) Departmental Bulletin, *The World of Monotheistic Religions* no. 1 (2010): 110-119. See also Itzchak Weismann, "The Forgotten Shaykh: ʻĪsā Al-Kurdī and the Transformation of the Naqshbandī-Khālidī Brotherhood in Twentieth-Century Syria." *Die Welt Des Islams*, New Series, 43, no. 3 (2003): 373-93; 377-8.
[30] Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 162.
[31] Buehler, "Ahmad Sirhindī: Nationalist Hero, Good Sufi, or Bad Sufi?," 143.

of Naqshbandīs in their founding and development and/or the overt affiliation or indirect influence on some of the other groups in our survey. But on the whole, the post-*ṭarīqa* groups are only dealt with marginally here.

Accordingly, because the purpose of this survey is to help frame our case study, we have placed disproportionate emphases on Sufism 1st groups, as well as universalists with whom they share a somewhat overlapping audience (non-Muslim spiritual seekers in the West) and those in the Islam 1st groups with which they share similar practices and South Asian origin. The South Asia focus has also been influenced by the researcher's departmental background and area of research interest. Also, since the survey is designed to illuminate and contextualize our examination of Rasool and his heirs, we have gone into detail in certain areas that arise again in dealing with them, while glossing over others, like political parties and certain collective practices that offer less for comparison. These are noted but not dealt with at length.

Lastly, the remainder of this chapter will not be structured along the lines of this typology, as one might have expected up to this point. Instead, after a brief background consideration, we will refer to these four categories while considering in turn each of the three main analytical categories described in the methodology above: mysticism (cosmo-psychology, practices, role of the *shaykh* and community), orthodoxy, and activism. In such a situation, it is important to point out that there is a tremendous difference between saying "across all four categories we find examples of XYZ," versus much less frequent absolute statements like, "in all groups we find XYZ." It was the original intent to carry out a brief but systematic analysis of each and every group with respect to these categories for comparison with the case study. This was a bit too ambitious for the time available, not to mention the need to maintain a somewhat reasonable size. Accordingly, we have not been able to delve into equal depth for all groups, and some may only be mentioned once or only in footnotes. Apologies aside, it is hoped that this preliminary survey proves to be a helpful first volley at the long overdue attempt at a comprehensive mapping of Naqshbandī-related presence in the West, indeed globally, in addition of course to its main purpose of providing greater context for the present case study lineage.

Universalists/Perennials		Sufism Encountered First (Hybrid)	Islam Encountered First/With (Transplant)		Post-Tariqa
Transferred to a Hindu Family in Indian Context	Direct or Indirect Gurdjieffian Connection		South Asia	Formerly Ottoman Lands & Beyond	
Llewelyn Vaughan-Lee	Subud	SOST	Tahiryya	Menzil Cemaati	VIKZ
Annette Kaiser	The Shah Brothers	Circle Group	Sardariyya	Arvasi Cemaati	Nurculuk Movement
Jenenne Castor-Thompson	Laleh Bakhtiar's Sufi Enneagram	Haqqaniyya	Zulfiqar Ahmad Naqshbandi	İskenderpaşa Cemaati	Guelen Movement
Sri Ram Chandra Mission	Yannis Toussulis	Tarika-e-Khas Mojaddedia	Yusuf Ahmed Naqshbandi	Osman Nuri Topbaş	Milli Gorus
Institute of Sri Ramchandra Consciousness		Abdullah Sirr Dan al-Jamal	Naeemullah Farooqi	Kuftariyya	Deobandis
Ramashram Satsang Mathura		Robert Abdul Hayy Darr	Asif Hussain Farooqui	Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn	Nadwatul Ulama
NaqshMuMRa International Fellowship			Ghulam Hussain Shah Bukhari	Halil Halusi	Barelvis
			Faizul Aqtab Siddiqi	Qadiriyya wa Naqshbandiyya	NFIE
			Ghamkol Sharif		
			Aslamiyya		
			Owaisiyya		
			Mohammad Alauddin Siddiqui		
			Ahmad Nisar		
			Saifiyya		
			Abobaker Mojadidi		

Figure 6 Naqshbandī-Related Presence in Europe and North America

Background

Naqshbandī-related articulations began to appear in Europe and North America primarily in the 1960s and 70s among 1.) Western spiritual seekers and 2.) Muslim labor immigrants, largely from Turkey and South Asia. In the first case, the turn toward the "mystic East" for spiritual wisdom created a pull factor, initially among those searching for the origins of the teachings of the Armenian mystic G.I. Gurdjieff and his claimed training under the Sarmoung Brotherhood, notably Gurdjieff's student John G. Bennett (1897-1974) and those around him, or the Theosophical Society's Madame Blavatsky and her mysterious Mahatmas, referring here to Irina Tweedie.[32] This search for authentic origins led ultimately to Naqshbandī-related teachers, who responded to such a search by offering their own teachings, sometimes requiring eventual conversion to Islam (Sufism 1st) and sometimes not (universalist), thus providing a push factor. Since then, a number of Naqshbandī-related groups continue to attract individuals who have looked eastward for spiritual fulfillment; especially to Yoga, Qi Gong, and Buddhist forms of meditation, and often citing having arrived at Sufism through Gurdjieff or especially the Shah brothers;[33] and many originally universalist seekers have come to whole-heartedly embrace Islam. This is not to say that a significant number of Muslims are not also drawn to the Sufism 1st category, but only that the most important feature here is the possibility of some form of involvement with an Islamic Sufi lineage without necessarily being Muslim.

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[32] While the search for Gurdjieff's probably non-existent but purportedly Central Asian Sarmoung Brotherhood is rather straightforward, particularly in the case of J.G. Bennett's encounters with Pak Subuh, Idries Shah, and Omar Ali-Shah, Nazim Haqqani's teacher, and Hasan Lutfi Shushud (as has been well traced by Sedgwick in *Western Sufism*), the case of the Mahatmas needs to be nuanced and explained a bit. Irina Tweedie went to India in 1961, after the death of her husband, looking for instruction in Yoga. In her 1877 *Isis Unveiled*, Blavatsky had named the source of her wisdom as the "Mahatmas" or the "Masters of the Hidden Brotherhood" and placed them in Tibet. From Tweedie's journal entries written within a month after meeting her Mujaddidī teacher Bhai Sahib on October 3, 1961, it is obvious that Tweedie, herself a Theosophist, was on the lookout for these mysterious Mahatmas. On October 30, 1961, she writes, "'Do you know how you look in samadhi?' I asked when he opened his eyes. 'Tibetan, and as old as the hills!'" On November 1, she reports that when Bhai Sahib mentioned "service to humanity," that "I pricked up my ears. This was the sign I was waiting for […] It means that he belongs to the Hierarchy, the Great Brotherhood who help the evolution of mankind." The next day, November 2, she writes, "[…] I told him what a relief it was for me to know that he belongs to the Hierarchy. 'Hierarchy?' He lifted his eyebrows. Clearly he did not know what I meant […] I explained what I know from books about the Great Brotherhood and its function in the world to help with the evolution of mankind. He sat motionless, looking at me. His face was expressionless." Irina Tweedie, *The Chasm of Fire: A Woman's Experience of Liberation Through the Teachings of a Sufi Master* (Shaftsbury: Element Books Limited, 1988), 23-28. This work was originally published in 1979. Soon thereafter, an expanded version was released: Tweedie, Irina. *Daughter of Fire: A Diary of a Spiritual Training with a Sufi Master* (Nevada City, CA: Blue Dolphin Pub., 1986).

[33] Nazim first arrived in London in 1972, finding students of non-Muslim background among the group that had formed around Bennett. His first group of converts continued to foster connections to the Gurdjieffians as well as to a "neo-shamanic group." David W. Damrel, "Aspects of the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order in North America," in ed. Malik and Hinnells, *Sufism in the West*, 115-26, here 117; Jorgen S. Nielsen, Mustafa Draper and Galina Yemelianova, Transnational Sufism: The Haqqaniyya," in ed. Malik and Hinnells, *Sufism in the West*, 103-14, here 105-07. On Nazim coming to London, see Atay, "Naqshbandi Sufis in a Western Setting," 54-56. Habibis mentions that many drawn to the Muridu'l Haqq had previously read books by Carlos Castaneda, Alan Watts, D.T. Suzuki, Idries Shah, Gurdjieff, and Bennett and that most "could equally well have joined a Tibetan or Zen Buddhist group." Habibis, "A Comparative Study," 220. In a two-part discussion, Toussulis mentions that he arrived at Sufism because he was searching for the Sarmoung and Darr mentions his first encounter with Sufism as having been through Idries Shah. "Sufism: The Khwajagan, Naqshbandiyya, and the Malamatiyya - Part One," Yannis Toussulis, accessed February 5, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1A8o2fbIg8; "Sufism: The Khwajagan, Naqshbandiyya, and the Malamatiyya - Part Two," Yannis Toussulis, accessed February 5, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8D9ufQXRRo. Of note, Toussulis also makes reference to Layla Bakhtiar, another person mentioned in this survey where Gurdjieff, Psychology, and Sufism meet. Elsewhere, Darr elaborates on his involvement with Shah's organization beyond only reading his books. Robert Abdul Hayy Darr, *Spy of the Heart* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2006), 41-43.

Universalists and Sufism 1st groups tend to draw from much the same pool of potential students, attracting well-educated Westerners, often of an intellectual or artistic slant, much like the earlier 20th-century receivers of Sufi and Sufi-like teachings in the West, who it should be noted often had Theosophical backgrounds, like the Traditionalists, Inayat Khan's students, and Gurdjieffians, as well as later, Shah's followers, which included some prominent literati. The same high degree of education and often artistic-intellectual tendencies were also seen among Muslim-born students of SOST. Given the somewhat overlapping recruitment pools of the universalists and Sufism 1st groups, they also sometimes operate in the same spaces. This was seen with how SOST's debut in Germany was at an Ināyatī-affiliated universalist Sufi center in Munich, and their initial retreats were at a retreat center where they encountered members of Tweedie's Mujaddidī line that happened to be there at the same time to take part in a Qi Gong seminar.

Besides choice of venue, there are also other ways of attracting, appealing to, and being understood by such an audience. There may be a greater initial focus on Sufi ideas and practices, emphasizing Sufism as a method for spiritual development or a mystical philosophy over specifically Islamic content. Terminology may be simplified or concepts explained in ways that would be familiar to Western spiritual seekers, so that, for example, *baraka* is translated as "energy" or the *laṭā'if* are described as "*chakra*-like." While a high degree of adaptability has been noted in the Haqqaniyya, such that new doctrines and practices have been introduced, in the cases of SOST, the Circle Group, and the Berkeley Sufi Center, their respective curricula of spiritual training do not appear to have been modified from how they are practiced in India and Bangladesh, but it has rather been packaged in a way that is appealing to and/or more easily understood by non-Muslim Westerners. Such presentational differences stand in contrast to the Islam 1st and post-*ṭarīqa* categories, who hold less appeal for a non-Muslim Western audience, particularly since they do not attempt to market toward such a demographic. The writings, lectures, and websites of these groups overwhelmingly assume a Muslim audience that is already familiar with basic Islamic terminology, practices, and beliefs. Instead, they hold greater appeal for those who have already embraced Islam and this category is by far the largest. These groups vary widely as to whether their demographics are a carbon copy of their presence in the homeland, some groups consisting of a single ethnicity while others have successfully transcended ethnic barriers, but generally their mysticism seems to greatly resemble that practiced in their respective places of origin. So now we consider their arrival.

With changes in labor immigration laws in the US and western Europe in the 1960s,[34] the same period which also saw British migrant workers from South Asia who had been arriving since after WWII establish firmer roots and come in larger numbers,[35] some *shaykh*s arrived with the express purpose of offering spiritual guidance to diaspora communities, sometimes even as workers in European factories

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[34] In 1961, the West German government signed an agreement with the Turkish government to allow "guestworkers" (Gastarbeiter) to immigrate in order to fill a labor shortage in West Germany, thus beginning a long history of Turkish immigration there. Other West European countries signed similar agreements. See, for example, Sarah Thomsen Vierra, T*urkish Germans in the Federal Republic of Germany: Immigration, Space, and Belonging, 1961-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Jennifer A. Miller, *Turkish Guest Workers in Germany: Hidden Lives and Contested Borders, 1960s to 1980s* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2018). In the US, this corresponds with what Hermanson has identified as a fifth wave of South Asian migration. Hermansen, "What's American About American Sufi Movements?," 39-43.

[35] Ballard, "Popular Islam in Northern Pakistan and its Reconstruction in Urban Britain," 175-77.

alongside fellow migrant Muslims (Islam 1st).[36] Though labor immigration was the most common route, there were also other reasons, such as fleeing a conflict-ridden homeland.[37]

There were also affiliations with organizations and movements with Naqshbandī roots that these immigrants brought with them (post-*ṭarīqa*). The term post-*ṭarīqa* was used by Hermansen in the context of South Asian Islam in the US, referring specifically to the Deobandī and Barēlwī movements[38] that formed in the late 19th century due to reform versus traditionalist orientations and to which some but not all of the South Asian Islam 1st lineages prescribe or displays tendencies toward. For our purposes, the post-*ṭarīqa* label also fits well in describing Turkish "Sufic lay communities," as they were called by Gerdien Jonker,[39] which no longer maintain a *silsila* or have a *shaykh* that initiates disciples. Such development in Turkey can in large part be seen as a crypto-Sufi survival adaptation to Atatürk's 1925 banning of the orders and closing of their lodges. Among the Muslim diaspora, both organized Naqshbandī practice and post-*ṭarīqa* affiliations have expanded beyond blue collar workers to encompass the full range of Muslim society. Likewise, while largely maintaining particular ethnic affiliations, they include not only first-generation immigrant "transplants," but also second and third-

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[36] Sufi Abdullah (1923-2015) of the Ghamkol Sharif community arrived as a labor immigrant but also with a Sufi mission in 1962, as did Sufi Mohammed Aslam of the Aslamiyya in 1963. See respectively Pnina Werbner, "Seekers on the Path: Different Ways of Being a Sufi in Britain," in Malik and Hinnells, *Sufism in the West*, 127-41, here 131; and "Mission of the Naqshbandi Aslami Sufi Tariqah," Naqshbandi.org.uk, accessed February 6, 2020, http://naqshbandi.org.uk/about.html; and "Sultan-ul-Awliya Hazrat Khwaja Sufi Muhammad Aslam (ra)," Naqshbandi.org.uk, accessed February 6, 2020, http://naqshbandi.org.uk/Articles/sultan-al-awliya.html. In contrast, some individuals came to provide full-time spiritual support to the diaspora community, such as the Deoband-educated Ismaeel Ahmed Wadee (b. 1921), who came in 1973 and worked as an *imām* in Blackburn as well as volunteering as a *madrasa* teacher ("Hadhrat Shaikh Ismaeel Wadi Sahab RA," Tazkiya.org, accessed February 6, 2020, https://www.tazkiya.org/shaikh-ismaeel-wadi-sahab-ra). Asif Hussain Farooqui (b. 1947), an educated businessman who had already established himself in Manchester, met his *shaykh* on a visit to Pakistan. He returned with an *ijāza* to spread the teachings in the UK in 1977. "Profile," BeautyofIslam.org, accessed February 6, 2020, http://beautyofislam.org/profile.html.

[37] The Afghan American community leader, social activist, descendant of Sirhindī, and Naqshbandī Mujaddidī *murshid* Abobaker Mojadidi (b. 1978) presents a rather unique case. At the age of only nine months old in January of 1979, he was kept safely hidden away in a *tandūr* oven while Soviet and pro-Soviet troops imprisoned over 140 members of his family, 79 of whom are believed to have been subsequently executed. Asta Olesen, *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 275; Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 122; and, cited in Weismann (Chapter 7, footnote 16), David B. Edwards, "The Political Lives of the Afghan Saints: The Case of the Kabul Hazrats," in *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam*, eds. Grace Martin Smith and Carl W. Ernst (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1994), 171–192). Among them were his grandfather Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Mujaddidī, a hereditary Naqshbandī Mujaddidī *shaykh* who bore the honorific *Żiya' al-Mashā'ikh* ("Light of the *Shaykhs*") (Ludvig W. Adamec, *A Biographical Dictionary of Contemporary Afghanistan*, Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1987), 124, cited in Bo Utas, "The Naqshbandiyya of Afghanistan on the Eve of the 1978 Coup d'État," in *Naqshbandis in Western and Central Asia*, ed. Elisabeth Özdalga (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 1999), 117–127, here 120, footnote 18. For his *silsila*, see Lizzio, "Saving Grace," 73; or Olesen, *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*, 49),[37] and his father Muḥammad Ismā'īl Mujaddidī, the then head of what might be considered Afghanistan's first Islamic political party, Khuddām al-Furqān, which shortly afterwards aligned with Ḥarakat-i Inqilāb-i Islāmi, an anti-Marxist *mujāhidīn* faction (On the history of Khuddām al-Furqān, see Thomas Ruttig, "The Ex-Taleban on the High Peace Council: A Renewed Role for the Khuddam ul-Furqan?," Afghanistan Analysts Network, accessed November 9, 2019, https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/20101020TRuttig_ExT_in_HPC.pdf, 6-8). Soon thereafter, Mojadidi was brought by his mother, along with four siblings, to Pakistan and later to the US, where from the age of four he was raised and educated, earning a BS in Telecommunications and Project Management. In addition to his secular education in America, Mojadidi also studied religious sciences and received his spiritual training under *'ulamā'* in Afghanistan (Abobaker Mojadidi, Email to Michael E. Asbury, May 29, 2018; see also AfghanMuslim786, "Islam, Afghanistan, & Unity Campaign Part I," YouTube, November 18, 2007, accessed March 31, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_yBu6cNY4U).

[38] Hermansen, "South Asian Sufism in America," 257-262.

[39] Gerdien Jonker, "The Evolution of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Sulaymançis in Germany," in ed. Malik and Hinnells, *Sufism in the West*, 71-85.

generation diaspora Muslims who were born and raised in Western countries, including some Western-born *shaykh*s. Islam 1st groups may also include individuals of non-Muslim Western origin who either converted to Islam and later discovered Sufism or who converted to a Sufi form of Islam. Now we set about the task of finding common threads and considering variations within this highly diverse array of groups and individuals.

Mysticism

After making the quite valid argument that Sufism is more than just mysticism, Bruinessen and Howell also state: "Nonetheless, the common thread through all is the possibility of heightened awareness of the Divine."[40] These words could not be more true of the present survey, whether such enhanced awareness of God is framed as *iḥsān* or as the elevation of consciousness (or as both by the same spiritual teacher), and whether the Divine is understood in purely Islamic theological terms or is left more open-ended (or as both by different people within the same group), and whether the expected results are described as living according to the Prophet's *sunna* or being "a highly humane and moral person." It is also true whether this awareness is pursued within the traditional *ṭarīqa* structure under the name of Sufism or not.

We can positively say that all of the groups examined here promote some form of mysticism, that is 1.) the mystical experience itself, defined here as some kind of subjective encounter with ultimate reality or God, along with 2.) things done leading up to such an encounter as well as 3.) what proceeds from it, since such an encounter has some kind of effect in this life, in either the physical or spiritual worlds, and/or in the afterlife. The experience of such an encounter is frequently described as a change in one's inner state which is qualitatively different than everyday waking consciousness. In fact, it is this very day-to-day inner state of being concerned with worldly affairs as well as one's base desires, which one seeks to change. What is sought is a complete shift in perspective to a state of perpetual remembrance of God, from world and ego-centered consciousness to God-centered consciousness, sometimes also described as closeness to or awareness of God and even spoken of in unitive terms.

Cosmo-Psychology

Across all four categories, we find that the understanding of reaching such encounter for many groups or teachers has a grounding in an emanationist understanding of the nature of the universe and the return path to God that characterizes not only most Islamic, Christian, and Jewish mysticism, but also many alternative spiritualities in the West, including Theosophical and Gurdjieffian teachings. It also, as attested to by the innumerable scholarly assertions of Hindu "influences" on Sufi metaphysics, as well as indisputable cases of comparing notes and among Yogis and Sufis like the abovementioned Gangohī, has potential common ground with other traditions like Advaita Vedanta, such as the need to turn away from the world toward the realization of some greater reality. This is not to perpetuate a revised version of the perennial philosophy, but only to underscore that there are very real and tangible similarities, ones which it is not only delusional, but also irresponsible to ignore or minimize. Thus, there is substantial possibility for resonance. In Islam, such cosmology may well have been latent in the Quran itself, and if so, it was made more explicit in 9th-century Baghdad, more systematized via the Ibn al-ʻArabī school and more widely accessible such as via the poetry of Rūmī from the 13th century, and more acceptable to orthodoxy at the turn of the 14th century by Simnānī and again by Sirhindī at the turn of the 17th century. Since then, the poles of *wujūdī* versus *shuhūdī* have largely come to be seen as referring to the same thing from different perspectives. For universalists, contact with or realization of ultimate reality is also the goal, but the concept of God is not defined by Islamic theology, correct Islamic practice is not a concern, and fate in the afterlife is not usually a stressed topic. For instance, in the case of Kaiser, in urging her readers to shatter the "Mythos der Trennung," she advises leaving all ideologies behind, declaring that "Die Erkenntnis—ob im Osten, Westen, Norden oder Süden—ist

[40] Julia Day Howell and Martin van Bruinessen, "Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam," in Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell, *Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 3-18, here 6.

grundlegend dieselbe: Menschliches-Göttliches sind untrennbar eins, Nicht-Zwei."[41] Among universalists, certain elements of Naqshbandī mysticism have been removed from their Islamic container, which for the Hindu-derived lines took place in the 19th century, and combined with elements from other traditions, whether that be Yoga, Taoism, Javanese mysticism, Western ceremonial magic, speculative freemasonry, Theosophy, or post-Theosophical currents and different forms of psychology, especially Jungian psychotherapy, as well as forms of science, especially quantum physics, that are interpreted in such a way as to be amenable to a spiritual worldview. While Sufism 1st groups reject religious syncretism, we do see efforts to bring Sufism into dialogue with both psychology and science.

In the first three divisions of our typology, those embracing Sufism, we have groups whose teachings are intended to guide students in traversing this inner universe to establish contact or develop a closer relationship with God. In some instances, this is carried out through a well-defined and highly structured curriculum of contemplative practices which is advanced through under the direct supervision of a teacher. The only groups that the researcher could confirm having such a curriculum is the main case study with SOST and the Circle Group discussed below, along with the Owaisiyya,[42] Sayfiyya,[43] Hakimabad Khanka-e-Mozaddedia,[44] Ṭarīqa Naqshbandiyya wa Qādiriyya,[45] and the eight different lines descending from Faḍl 'Alī Shāh Qurayshī (1853/4-1935),[46] though more probably do also.[47] One researcher and Naqshbandī practitioner informed the current researcher that he has examined such curricula among several Khālidī lines and that they follow the same structure as the other lines descending from Ghulām 'Alī. Other Islamic Naqshbandī groups tend to revolve around the personality of the *shaykh* and collective activities, without seeming to provide such a guided set of meditations, though the same general cosmological structure underlies their discussions. We know fairly certainly that at least one group does not follow such a syllabus. From Werbner's extensive research on the Ghamkol Sharif community, it appears that association with the *shaykh* and performing recitations and devotional practices are considered sufficient without a detailed curriculum.[48] Similarly, among the

[41] Annette Kaiser, *Die Seele Europas erwacht. Ein Beitrag zur aktuellen Europe-Debatte* (Amerang, DE: Crotona Verlag GmbH & Co.KG, 2017), 52.

[42] For their complete curriculum with instructions, see Ameer Muhammad Akram Awan, *Ramooz-e-Dil: Mysteries of the Qalb* (District Chakwal, Pakistan: Dar ul Irfan Idarah Naqshbandiah Owaisiah, 2009).

[43] For the entire Sayfiyya curriculum, see Lizzio, "Saving Grace," 243-49; Buehler, *Sufi Heirs*, 249-53. For more on the Sayfiyya, see Kenneth Lizzio, "The Naqshbandi/Saifiyya Battle for Islamic Tradition," *The Muslim World* 96, no. 1 (2006): 37-59.

[44] Though not provided on their website, the researcher was informed by a third party (not a member of the community but with access) whom he considers a reliable source that they do. Given the content on Alam's website Love-Real.com as well as the researcher's past correspondence with Alam about proceeding through the activation of the *laṭā'if* as a preparatory exercise, this seems quite plausible.

[45] Widiyanto, *Ritual and Leadership*, 162-66.

[46] For example, see "Lessons of the Naqshbandi Mujaddidi Tariqah," Talib Ghaffari, accessed February 6, 2020, http://maktabah.org/blog/?p=227; or "Naqshbandi Sabaq #1 Muraqabah|| Hazrat Shaykh Humayun Hanif Db," Islahenafs - Shaykh Humayun Hanif, accessed February 6, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmKsQyVcESA&list=PLh009rc-XfZtXjB_cDOac2-nE5UteoAQG.

[47] The original Urdu source for the graphic depiction of one version of the Mujaddidī path used by Buehler and Hermansen can now be found in translated form: Syed Muhammad Zauqi Shah, *Selections from Sirr-e Dilbaran (Secrets of the Beloveds): The Encyclopedia of Sufism*, transl. Wahid Buksh Sial Rabbani and Qazi Muhammad Saeed, (Islamabad: The Army Press, 2010), 125-32. Moreover, Buehler examines one text from a 20th-century *shaykh* in Hyderabad, India in his "Sufi Contemplation: ʿAbdullah Shah's *Suluk-i Mujaddidiyya*", in: Louis Komjathy (ed.): *Contemplative Literature: A Comparative Sourcebook on Meditation and Contemplative Prayer*, Albany: SUNY Press, 2015.

[48] For one Ghamkolwi disciple Hajji Karim's unfulfilled search, which also echoes Buehler's, see Werbner, "Seekers on the Path," 135-37. For Karim's s own attempts to understand and explain Mujaddidī cosmology to Werbner based on his own exploration of textual sources rather than teachings from his own *shaykh*, see the diagrams and descriptions in Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 183-212.

universalists, Vaughan-Lee[49] and Kaiser describe a formless path, although the latter does teach according to a planned curriculum of lectures.[50] For the majority, however, we simply do not know whether or not a syllabus of disciplined contemplative practices is being taught. In most cases, while such metaphysics are indeed frequently discussed, referenced, or alluded to, from only the brief survey conducted, progression through particular stages of such cosmology to the Source is not clearly defined as a set curriculum. As pointed out to the researcher by Hamid Hasan, SOST's current *shaykh*, such training may take place in private and be restricted to only a small circle of close disciples. From current scholarship and the literature examined here, however, it is impossible to know with certainty. This issue returns again below with regard to practices as well as in considering the role of the *shaykh*.

In the post-*ṭarīqa* category, however, while there is no standardized curriculum of practices for traversing this cosmology and no guide to lead one through it, aspects of this metaphysics may be discussed at length or earlier sources widely read. This is in fact true across the four categories, with various sources being consulted, including notably Ibn al-ʻArabī among the Sufism 1st groups,[51] but particularly Sirhindī and his *Maktūbāt*, especially among Islam 1st and post-*ṭarīqa* groups where it has been more linguistically accessible. While throughout the 20th century, Ibn al-ʻArabī, as the very culmination of "golden age" Sufism, has been well-studied and translated into Western languages, the same has not been true of Sirhindī until quite recently. We address this and its potential implications below. But in addition to a clear impact on Gülen, as we will see below, the *Maktūbāt* are also read by Sulaymançis[52] as well as Deobandī scholars.[53]

On subjective experience, reference may be made to certain altered states of consciousness that lead up to or are part of or result from such a goal, like losing a separate sense of self (*fanāʼ*), abiding in God (*baqāʼ*) and other varied experiences. Most tend toward outward sobriety, such as the trance-like "drifting" (*ghunūdgī*) mentioned by Rasool, but there is also the more outwardly intoxicated ecstasy (*wajd*) of the Sayfiyya,[54] who also have more sober silent *murāqaba* which is performed separately. Moreover, there is the possibility of ecstatic experiences in Subud's *latihan*, alongside the *dhikr* and other collective practices described below among some Islamic Naqshbandī groups, which can range from being more restrained to being quite animated. For universalists and Muslims alike, dreams, another type of altered state in which communication with the unseen is believed to be possible, may also be given importance and interpreted by the *shaykh* or collectively,[55] often in terms of the student's spiritual progress, or used as a source of legitimacy, such as with accounts of being visited and even

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[49] In addition to further citations below, see the article by William Rory Dickson, "The Golden Sufi Center: A Non-Islamic Branch of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya," in *Varieties of American Sufism: Islam, Sufi Orders and Authority in a Time of Transition*, eds. Elliot Bazzano and Marcia Hermansen (Albany: SUNY Press, 2020), 27-54.

[50] For Vaughan-Lee, see GoldenSufi.org. Kaiser, on her website AnnetteKaiser.ch, refers to the Mujaddidī teachings she received from Tweedie as "*dem pfadlosen Pfad der Liebe*" (or "the pathless path of love"), yet she has also gone on to develop her own system in 2001 called *Einen Übungsweg DO* ("One Path of Practice DO"), which is divided into different units of instruction and seeks to instill "non-dual cosmocentric understanding."

[51] Referring to the Guenonian Shādhilīs, Zarcone notes the importance of Ibn al-ʻArabī among Western converts to Islam through Sufism (here Sufism 1st). Thierry V. Zarcone, "Rereadings and Transformations of Sufism in the West," *Diogène* 47, no. 187 (1999): 110–21, here 117-20.

[52] Jonker, "The Evolution of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Sulaymançis in Germany."

[53] Bashir, "*Sharīʻat* and *Ṭarīqat*," 38.

[54] *Ghunūdgi* is associated with silent meditation, most often performed in solitude, and it may precede the experience of visual phenomena, while *wajd* may take place during group *dhikr-i mehfil* accompanied by music in praise of the Prophet (*naʻat*s). For an example of a Sayfī *mehfil* in which *wajd* takes place, see "Saifi Naqshbandi Zikr (reply to current molvi) Muslims in Wajd & deep love of Allah,naat mehfil," Ahlussunna1, accessed February 6, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrrPkL8wo14.

[55] Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee and Irina Tweedie: *Catching the Thread: Sufism, Dreamwork, and Jungian Psychology* (Inverness, CA: The Golden Sufi Center, 2003); Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, "Dream-Work within a Sufi Tradition," in *Sufism, Islam and Jungian Psychology*, ed. Spiegelman, Inayat Khan, and Fernandez. A Sardārī site includes substantial material on dream interpretation. "Dream Interpretations," Zikr.co.uk, accessed February 1, 2020, http://www.zikr.co.uk/content/view/83/158/.

initiated by the Prophet or an important saint in a dream,[56] which may also occur in waking visions. In some Muslim groups, there may be more talk of correct Islamic practice and concern for one's fate in the afterlife and less emphasis on, or an absence of, higher levels of absorption in God, but the subjective inner experiential dimension in this lifetime is still very much present and central, as seen in goals like closeness to God and sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), which among Muslims is indispensable for acts of worship to be accepted by God.

Another commonality across all four categories is the idea that, beyond an expanded worldview (to the ultimate context, whether called God, Allāh, the Beloved, etc.) and improved moral conduct (however defined), contact with the divine can benefit one in this world. As for groups embracing Islam, the very presence of supplicatory prayers (*du'ā*) is an example of this, but it may also take the form of saintly miracles, exorcisms, and amulets (*ta'wīz*) for healing and other worldly concerns[57] as well as, more so with the universalists, psychological well-being and even, as seen with Ali-Shah, improved personal effectiveness with the assistance of "the energy of the Tradition to achieve something which is useful" for oneself.[58] Yet such theurgy, if you will, is generally seen across the board as inferior to cultivating a relationship with God for its own sake, or rather more often among Muslims, for the sake of God.

Psychology

This encounter with ultimate reality takes place within one's own inner being. This inner aspect of each person is often described with reference to a microcosmic subtle anatomy, anthropology, or psychology comprised of different components. These are sometimes called *laṭā'if*, which serve different functions such as being supersensory organs for perception in the realm of the unseen and receivers for divine grace. Among these there is usually the heart (*qalb*), as the seat of religious experience, as well as two competing aspects, one which inclines toward God and higher virtues (*rūḥ*) and another that is initially drawn toward the material world and base desires but that can be reformed (*nafs*). Many include a deeper core within the heart as the site of colloquy with God (*sirr*), and some levels that are even deeper (*khafī*) and deeper still (*akhfā*), as well as the four elements which make up the physical body.[59] While all groups that are known to have a set curriculum of contemplative exercises, as well as some others where this is unknown, use this exact ten-*laṭīfa* (or seven depending on how they are counted) model that was introduced by Sirhindī, those who do not appear to have such a series of *niyyāt* may use a simplified set of *laṭā'if*, at least in the literature surveyed, including only the first four, three, or even only two of these. Reference to Sirhindī's set may thus be a possible indicator that a standardized curriculum is taught, though this is not always the case, as seen by the explanations of Gülen, who denies being a Sufi *shaykh*.[60]

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[56] In addition to that mentioned with 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh, see the various dream encounters of Sufi Muhammad Aslam, "Sultan-ul-Awliya Hazrat Khwaja Sufi Muhammad Aslam (ra)," Naqshbandi.org.uk.

[57] Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 213-41; Ballard, "Popular Islam in Northern Pakistan and its Reconstruction in Urban Britain," 164-66.

[58] Omar Ali-Shah, *The Sufi Tradition in the West* (New York: Alif, 1994), 15. See also below in the discussion of the eleven Naqshbandī principles.

[59] See, for example, "Lataef," Tazkiya.org, accessed February 6, 2020, https://www.tazkiya.org/lataef. Also, Muhammad Akram Awan, head of the Owaisiyyah, elaborates on the progressively deeper nature of the first five *laṭā'if* (Awan, *Ramooz-e Dil*, 1-13), as does Gülen (see the next footnote). Awan describes how this process results in a progressively greater ability to follow the *sharī'a*, something also seen in the discussions on these subtle centers with our case study in Parts Two and Three below, although at least Abdur Rashid's understanding of the *sharī'a* and Awan's Deobandī perspective are probably quite different in interpretation and application. For a transcript of Kamaluddin Ahmad elaborating on these five *laṭā'if*, see "Muraqabah is a Source of Tazkiyah," accessed February 6, 2020, https://islamicspiritualitytranscripts.wordpress.com/tag/lataif-e-khamsa/.

[60] Mustafa Gökçek, "Gülen and Sufism," in ed. Robert Hunt and Yuksel Aslandogan, *Muslim Citizens of the Globalized World: Contributions of the Gülen Movement* (Somerset, NJ: The Light, Inc., 2007), 183-93. In

In the diverse Haqqani literature, however, in addition to the basic threefold structure (*qalb*, *nafs*, *rūḥ*) with no indication of the presence of Sirhindī's version, one finds at least an additional two different models for the subtle anatomy, neither of which match Sirhindī's. One is somewhat closer[61] while another, the "nine points," is entirely unique to the Haqqaniyya and without any known precedent.[62] Doctrinally, since each point is associated with only one person in the *silsila* and three of those points listed are Nazim and the two links immediately before him, it is truly a uniquely Haqqani concept. It is claimed to be the origin of Gurdjieff's enneagram, though the only evidence for this comes from the writings of Kabbani.[63] He adds to the documented story of Bennett meeting Nazim's teacher 'Abd Allāh Daghestānī (1891-1873) in the early 1950s (Gurdjieff died in 1949, so Bennett's search had just begun), even before encountering Subud,[64] by saying that before that at an earlier point, Gurdjieff had met 'Abd Allāh's teacher Sharaf al-Dīn Daghestānī. It thus seems best to understand the nine points as another Haqqani marketing strategy, one that in fact affects doctrine and practice, that is Kabbani's attempt to appeal to spiritual seekers in the US who have an interest in Gurdjieff and/or the enneagram. The enneagram itself has been psychologized by many, including Laleh Bakhtiar, who maintains its Sufi origins and has mentioned its supposed Naqshbandī roots.[65]

The classical subtle faculties have persisted among universalists as well, such as in the writings of Subud's founder Pak Subuh, whose micro and macro-cosmology as described by their founder Pak Subuh is thoroughly and distinctively Sufi.[66] In contrast, while Omar Ali-Shah uses the word "lataif"

Gülen's four-part series *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism: Emerald Hills of the Heart*, available online at his official website (FGulen.com),[60] he expounds upon a range of Sufi and especially Mujaddidī ideas and practices. For instance, he details the four-fold Mujaddidī path expounded by Sirhindī, as well as the eleven Naqshbandī principles (see his articles "Safar (Journeying)" and "Sayr u Suluk (Journeying and Initiation)"), and also in fact comments on the standard arrangement of the *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr* (See his two-part article "Qalb (Heart)" as well as "The Spirit and What Follows," "Sir (Secret)" and "The Horizon of 'the Secret' and What Lies Beyond"). He describes *murāqaba* in a quite typical manner as turning away from what displeases God and separates one from Him while "opening the spirit to receive the radiances, gifts, and favors coming from Him." Yet an important difference is that for Gülen, this practice can be done without a guide. Similarly, his discussion of *tawajjuh* treats it as the individual directing their own attention toward God, thus the *shaykh* is excluded from the equation (see his articles "Muraqaba (Self-Supervision)" and "Nazar and Tawajjuh (Attention and Regard)"). Fethullah Gülen, "Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism-1," *Fethullah Gülen's Official Web Site*, accessed December 9, 2019, https://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/sufism/key-concepts-in-the-practice-of-sufism-1.

[61] Kabbani, *Classical Islam*, 437-38.

[62] The researcher was able to find only one reference to these nine points outside Haqqani literature, and that was a single reference to "the nine points" (found in "Sultan-ul-Awliya Hazrat Khwaja Sufi Muhammad Aslam (ra)," Naqshbandi.org.uk) which is a word-for-word extraction from Kabbani's *Classical Islam* just cited. It was included in this other source to discuss the special nature of Aslam's dual, *uwaysī* and physical initiations, which Nazim is also said to have experienced. The mention of these nine points seems to be an incidental (or even accidental) inclusion rather than a central doctrine, especially since in the original text, Nazim is depicted as the last of the nine *shaykh*s to have this honor, a claim that would conflict with that of the author of Aslam's biography. Thus, despite this single appearance on the Luton *khānaqāh*'s website, the nine points appear to remain a feature exclusive to the Haqqaniyya.

[63] Idem 435-37, 438-41.

[64] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 195-97.

[65] Sedgwick, "Sufism and the Gurdjieff Movement," 142.

[66] On Subuh's description of God and the process of creation and the ultimate goal of the *latihan*, God is incomprehensible to man and is both transcendent and immanent. Prior to the creation of the universe, there was only "emptiness" only God existed and Geels quotes Subuh, whom he describes as speaking seldom of creation, as saying that, "Out of the emptiness arose the first manifestation. Suddenly there was the light called '*Nur*', the divine light. The '*Nur Muhammad*.'" It was from this light that creation emanated, being composed of the four elements of earth, water, air, and fire. As the first humans, Adam and Eve existed in an ideal state of primordial unity and the goal of the *latihan* is to return to that state, something that is very Sufi indeed. Geels explains it thus: "by giving Adam the Holy Spirit (*Roh Ilofi*) and the power of the angels (Roh Kudus), God made it possible for Adam and his children to remember the state of original unity. To take us back to this state is the most profound

on occasion,[67] and his brother Idries gave a lecture on the *nafs* and the five *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr* described by Sirhindī,[68] more often than not, Ali-Shah refers to elements of the psyche drawn from modern psychology, like the ego and the subconscious mind. Among the Hindu-derived branches, the ten-*laṭīfa* model was in most cases replaced in 19th- century India by a system of Yogic *chakra*s, although the focus of their meditation is solely on the heart *chakra*. But the heart itself has an inner core that Tweedie calls "the Heart of Hearts,"[69] thus echoing the *sirr* and deeper levels of the heart, and a concept of overcoming a lower self and eschewing attachment to the world remains. We again see psychologization in Irina Tweedie, who frames Sufism as "a continuation of the Jungian process, but on a higher octave."[70] Thus the rational and the scientific is reconciled with and then surpassed. Vaughan-Lee has continued in this line of psychologization, such as in comparing the *nafs* to Jung's shadow, and in his emphasis on Jungian dreamwork.[71] Yet he often explores the roots of Sufism through existing academic research combined with his own experiences, as further discussed below, even giving a lecture on his own interpretation of Sirhindī's *laṭīfa*-model.[72]

We also see some psychologization in the Sufism 1st groups, with Sufism being proposed as a beneficial supplement to modern psychology with Ali-Shah's lectures to therapists as well as in the writings of Toussulis, himself a PhD in psychology.[73] Also, in two particular Sufism 1st groups, the Circle Group and the Haqqaniyya, we see a linking of Sufi ideas and practice to healing, which may have analogs to the HHM, but healing is not alien to Sufism and the practice of traditional medicine (*yūnānī ṭibb*) has often been connected with Naqshbandi Sufism in the subcontinent, including among Deobandīs.[74] We also see a degree of scientification in the universalist and Sufism 1st groups, such as with Kaiser, Abdur Rashid, and among the Haqqaniyya.[75] While one might more negatively view this as seeking to draw on science to legitimize outmoded practices and ways of thinking, this could also be understood as an attempt to bridge reason and science to faith and spirituality in a complementary way. Rasool also made an appeal to the compatibility between these seeming opposites by not only reference to modern science and psychology, but also Western philosophy. Yet this is not at all limited to groups seeking non-Muslim students, as we also see Gülen in the post-*ṭarīqa* category doing much the same thing.[76]

Returning more specifically to the subtle anatomy, however, with the two competing impulses within man, one drawn toward God and the other toward the created world, there are efforts to

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task of the *latihan kejiwaan*, the spiritual exercise given to human beings of the twentieth century through the mediation of Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo [Pak Subuh]." Antoon Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, (London: Curzon, 1997) 132-6.

[67] For example, Omar Ali-Shah, *Sufism as Therapy* (Reno, NV: Tractus Books, 1995), 15.

[68] For an audio recording of this talk, see "Idries Shah - the Latifas," BarakaBee, accessed February 6, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnfKjVYE9vo.

[69] Tweedie, *The Chasm of Fire*, 116, 119, 142, 161, 168.

[70] Irina Tweedie, "Spiritual Sufi Training is a Process of Individuation Leading into the Infinite," in *Sufism, Islam and Jungian Psychology*, ed. J. Marvin Spiegelman, Pir Vilayat Inayat Khān, and Tasnim Fernandez (Scottsdale, AZ: New Falcon Publications, 1991), 119-30, here 119.

[71] Vaughan-Lee, *Catching the Thread*.

[72] "Chambers of the Heart - Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee," GoldenSufiCenter, accessed February 6, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1c_v3jfFE28.

[73] Omar Ali-Shah, *Sufism as Therapy*; Toussulis, *Sufism and the Way of Blame*.

[74] Bashir, "*Sharī'at* and *Ṭarīqat*," 231-32.

[75] Kaiser asserts that "Die Quantenphysik vermittelt uns ein ganz anderes Bild der Existenz," and speaks of "eine tiefere Ebene der Existenz" and of "Parallel-Universen." Kaiser, *Die Seele Europas erwacht*, 55-56. The same type of imagery is found in Abdur Rashid's lectures discussed in Part Three below. See also M. Siddiqui and Ziad Sidawi, "Secrets of Light and Quantum Physics," NurMuhammad.com, accessed February 6, 2020, https://www.nurmuhammad.com/secrets-of-quantum-physics/.

[76] For example, much like Rasool, Gülen brings together Plato, Plotinus, and Henri Bergson alongside Avicenna, al-Ghazālī, and al-Rāzī in his "The Spirit and What Follows," accessed February 6, 2020, https://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/1361-key-concepts-in-the-practice-of-sufism-3/26530-the-spirit-and-what-follows.

encourage and strengthen the first while subduing, taming, and reforming the latter. Some of these groups emphasize one or the other, but the principle of prioritizing the heart (*indirāj al-nihāyat fi'l-bidāyat* or *INfB*) is held by many to be a defining approach of the Naqshbandiyya, one said to make their way of achieving closeness to God the fastest and most efficient. This principle, or elements thereof, are often discussed among both Sufism 1st and Islam 1st groups in much the same way that they appear in Sirhindī's letters.[77] But such continuity is not only limited to the two categories that embrace both Islam and the Naqshbandī path, as even the famous Deobandī spiritual leader Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī (d. 1943) described *INfB*, from the perspective of *jadhba* and *sulūk*,[78] and among universalists, it has even persisted in one way or another in the Hindu-derived lineages,[79] and all of the latter in fact emphasize the heart. Shri Ram Chandra Mission (SRCM), for instance, practices what they call *sahaj marg*, which is normally translated in their literature as the "natural path," but it could instead be translated as the "easy path," thus clearly echoing Naqshbandī claims to being an easier and faster method than other *ṭarīqa*s. Likewise, they also call their practice "heartfulness meditation," thus exhibiting the Naqshbandī focus on the heart in accordance with *INfB*, despite the fact that SRCM has erased the Naqshbandiyya from their history and all Muslim personalities in their *silsila* (leaving just four links starting in the 19th century).[80] "Heartfulness" also seems to be an excellent marketing strategy for attracting potential members from among spiritual seekers in the West who may have tried Buddhist "mindfulness" meditation. But this of course also leads us to the question of practices.

Practices

Moving on now to actual practices, the performance of which are intended to lead to some kind of subjective encounter with the divine, whether that be a simple awareness or a profound absorptive one. All of the groups embracing Islam share the basic obligatory Islamic ritual practices, for instance, all pious Muslims stop their daily activities five times a day, turn away from the world, make an intention with their heart and prostrate before God. There is also of course the possibility for additional supererogatory acts of worship. But the obligatory prayers in fact form the immutable structural framework for daily Naqshbandī practice, with the exception of non-Muslim universalists. Even among them, however, Ali-Shah is known to have incorporated Islamic prayer along with assigning his students *dhikr* to perform with a *tasbīḥ*,[81] thus leading us to the practice of individual recitation. Daily individual practice among Muslims, whether in lines known to teach a curriculum of intentions for *murāqaba* or not, usually consists of a litany of recitations (*waẓīfa*) that are usually performed either entirely silently or in some cases a quiet voice. The individually performed recitations among Muslim Naqshbandīs typically consist of such *dhikr* as *ism-i dhat* or *nafī wa ithbāt* as well as Quranic verses, particularly *ṣūra*s *al-Fātiḥa* and *al-Ikhlāṣ*, formulae like the *hawqala*, and supplications for blessings upon the Prophet, his family, and companions (*durūd sharīf*) as well as selected personalities in the *silsila* (*khatm sharīf*). While the exact content of the privately performed litany differs from line to line, we find the following three recurring elements: praise of God, wishing blessings upon the Prophet, and honoring

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[77] One significant exception, however, is Kabbani, who in addition to his unusual and multiple *laṭīfa* models, also has a rather unconventional understanding of how Naqshbandīs include what is usually the end for other paths in their beginning. He states that out of the 70,000 veils that separate the disciple from God, unlike in other orders, the Naqshbandī *shaykh* begins to remove the veils starting with those furthest away from the student (that is, he begins by removing the veils closest to God), so that they will not see how much progress they are making, which would, it is explained, feed their ego. Arabic translations of the *Maktūbāt* are widely available, thus the Lebanese Kabbani could have read standard discussions of this concept in his own language, thus his reasons for employing such a different interpretation are not clear. Kabbani, *Classical Islam*, 635-37.

[78] Bashir, "*Sharī'at* and *Ṭarīqat*," 203-05.

[79] See for instance, the discussion between Tweedie and her teacher, using Yogic terminology, where she expresses how she thought *dhyana* was the final stage of the path, and he corrects her saying that in their path, they begin with *dhyana*. Tweedie, *The Chasm of Fire*, 125. He also explains to her that their unique method is the "Path of Love" and that it is much faster than the reverse, but unlike with *INfB* (which holds that the Naqshbandī path is both faster and easier), he also says that despite being faster, it is much more difficult. Idem 109-10.

[80] SRCM.org; SahajMarg.org; Heartfulness.org.

[81] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 217-18. Ali-Shah, *Sufism as Therapy*, 80.

the saints of the *silsila*.[82] Of note, *nafī wa ithbāt* often involves strikes (sg. *darb*) like those we first saw with Simnānī and may be related to what is called *sulṭān al-adhkar*, wherein all of the subtle faculties are illuminated.[83] Though those mentioned are the main recurring elements, other practices may also be recommended, like pious reflection (*fikr*), accounting for oneself (*muḥāsaba*), giving thanks to God (*shukr*), and offering *du'ā* for others.[84] Among post-*ṭarīqa* groups, a daily *dhikr* may still be performed, for instance among the Sulaymançis who, although they no longer maintain a *silsila*, still honor the last living *shaykh* as part of this.[85] One finds references to Tweedie's teacher Bhai Sahib performing *japa* (a Yogic term for making recitations with a beaded necklace or *mala*) and her also doing it throughout her diary,[86] yet for all of the Hindu lines, the silent meditation of the heart appears to be the most prominent practice, the one to which we now turn.

Meditative Practices

In some Muslim Naqshbandī groups (both Sufism 1st and Islam 1st), the *waẓīfa* is the main component of private individual practice, and while still important as a personal responsibility, in broader scope it seems to take a back seat to one's relationship to the *shaykh* along with group vocalized *dhikr* and other collective activities, which will be discussed below. Thus, a litany (*waẓīfa* or *wird*) of personal recitations is assigned without *murāqaba* appearing in the schedule of daily practices. In the Haqqaniyya, for instance, Kabbani does not list *murāqaba* as one of the daily practices, but describes it in a separate section (entitled "Notes to the Spiritual Practices") that is supplementary to and comes after that of the *wird* itself (entitled "The Spiritual Practices"). Hence, *murāqaba* seems peripheral, and there he uses it synonymously with the practice of *rābiṭa*, binding one's heart to that of the guide and involving visualizing the *shaykh*, as opposed to explicitly referring to a curriculum of guided meditations.[87] At the same time, however, in certain other groups, recitations only serve as a supplement to the main practice of meditation (*murāqaba*).

Among those groups that are known to conduct spiritual travel through a detailed curriculum of intentions, this is performed through *murāqaba*. Such meditation involves the use of focal points that localize the different aspects of man's subtle constitution, the *laṭā'if*, within the body at specific places, mostly in the area of the chest and between the eyebrows, but sometimes also in the abdomen and at the crown of the head.[88] The exact relationship of the non-physical *laṭā'if* to these physical locations in the body may be described differently in different sources, but at least for beginners, these are often simply explained as being their locations. There is generally a preliminary period wherein these centers must be activated. It is not uncommon to find instructions for beginning the very first practice of activating the heart *laṭīfa*, in accordance with the principle of *INfB*. This allows the prospective student to try out and get started on the practices before ever becoming affiliated with the lineage, much like how in SOST, instructions for this first practice were provided to the researcher via an emailed PDF

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[82] For an example of daily practices that include *murāqaba*, see Irshad Alam's "Pure Mujaddidi Practices," Love-Real.com, accessed February 7, 2020, http://love-real.com/pure-mujaddidi-practices.php; or for the Haqqaniyya's daily litany consisting of recitations only, see "The Daily *Awrad* (Spiritual Practices)," Naqshbandi.org, accessed February 7, 2020, https://naqshbandi.org/practices/daily-practices/initiated/; Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, *The Naqshbandi Sufi Tradition Guidebook of Daily Practices and Devotions* (Fenton, MI: Islamic Supreme Council of America, 2004), .

[83] This meaning is fairly standard, but again, with Kabbani, we find an unusual interpretation. While he does connect it with the recitation of the *tahlīl*, he also, quite in conflict with the historical record (unless all of the manuscripts of Simnānī and those after him using this method are forgeries, which is highly unlikely), says that this secret was first given to Sharaf al-Dīn Daghestānī (1875-1936). He also links it with his doctrine of the nine points. Kabbani, Classical Islam, 404,

[84] See this link by Farooqui's students: "A Great Way to Stay Focused," PreciousPearlz, accessed February 7, 2020, https://preciouspearlz.wordpress.com/2016/03/26/a-great-way-to-stay-focused/. See also, Kabbani, *Guidebook*, 173-74; as well as Part Three below.

[85] Jonker, "The Evolution of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi," 77.

[86] For instance, Tweedie, *The Chasm of Fire*, 181, 187.

[87] Kabbani, *Guidebook*, 174-76.

[88] For some examples, see those provided in the footnote above in the section on the subtle psychology.

supplemented by telephone calls with a group leader and later meetings with a group. In some lineages, this first practice is called *dhikr-i qalbī* and involves the heart reciting "Allāh" with every beat, which is to be made into a continuous state, thus inculcating a perpetual awareness of God.[89] After the preliminary activation of all of the *laṭā'if* under the guidance of a *shaykh* or his *khalīfa*, the student embarks on the inner journey conducted through the different aspects of Sufi cosmology toward the Source and back again. This is done by setting one of a series of prescribed intentions followed by a period of waiting silently and passively to receive *baraka*. These intentions outline the different stages of the path, getting progressively closer to God. Thus, it is a kind of guided meditation carried out, not all at once in a single sitting, but over a longer period through daily sittings, progressing incrementally further each time the *shaykh* deems the student ready and assigns a new intention.

In comparing the different sets of intentions, one finds three major types. The first is by far the most common and although there are comparatively minor variations, they can be seen as a rendering of Sirhindī's cosmology as interpreted and systematized by his heirs through the line of Shāh Ghulam 'Alī[90] into a curriculum of intentions to be travelled through, step-by-step, under the guidance of a *shaykh*. Whenever this systemization took place is up for debate, perhaps it emerged only in the late 18th or early 19th century with the first known *ma'mūlāt* texts or perhaps, as Buehler posits, it was kept in oral tradition much earlier than that. Today, it is found at a minimum among the already listed *murāqaba*-emphasizing and curriculum-teaching Mujaddidī lines based in South Asia and the Khālidī line(s) in Indonesia and, according to the abovementioned secondhand report, Turkey.

A second set of intentions is that of the Naqshbandia Owaisiah, headed by Muhammad Akram Awan (1934). The difference here might be understood by looking at their *silsila*, which true to their name includes a significant number of *uwaysī* links. The most significant is the link from Junayd, not found in any Mujaddidī lines, in 9th-century Baghdad, directly by *uwaysī* connection to 15th-century Samarkand, with Aḥrār followed by Jāmī, who did actually physically meet one another. Such a jump bypasses and excludes most of the usual Bakrī links and all of the Ṭayfūrī, Khwājagānī, and early Naqshbandī links, including Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband himself. Despite using Sirhindī's ten-*laṭīfa* model as well as some elements of his cosmology, neither he nor any other Mujaddidī personality appears in their line.[91]

Yet a third type of curriculum is found in our case study of Azad Rasool and his two heirs. This is discussed below in the chapter on Rasool with a brief preliminary comparison to the first type based on Ghulam 'Alī. We might attribute such difference here to the several *uwaysī* connections of 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh. But we might also look to his physically-embodied connection to the Mujaddidiyya for an explanation. Rather than the abovementioned Shāh Ghulām 'Alī, the 'Abd al-Bārī Shāhī line traces back to the former's contemporary Walī Allāh, thus a line descending from the latter might well have a different take on Sirhindī's thought. For instance, Buehler noted that Walī Allāh's writings omit certain higher levels of Sirhindī's cosmology, namely the prophetic and divine realities.[92] These are the same points that had caused Ādam Banūrī, a direct heir of Sirhindī and Walī Allāh's direct lineal predecessor, so much trouble with the *'ulamā'* of the Hijaz as he tried to propagate his master's teachings there. Thus, we see plausible reason for Walī Allāh's omission. These controversial stages are indeed included in the first type of curriculum, although the order has usually been changed from Sirhindī's description to fit more commonly accepted views, such as by moving the reality of Muḥammad above the reality of the Ka'aba. Whether or not this accounts for the difference cannot be known without further research

[89] For Zulfiqar Ahmad's first lesson, see "Lesson 1: Latif of the Qalb," Tasawwuf.org, accessed February 7, 2020, https://www.tasawwuf.co/writings/lesson_one.pdf. For Muhammad Tahir Abbasi's instructions, see "Zikr e Qalbi & Muraqba: Einführung und Methode," IslahulMuslimeen.org, accessed February 7, 2020, http://www.islahulmuslimeen.org/de/. While he has given blanket permission for everyone to begin the first practice, in the related Sardārī line, it is necessary to contact the *shaykh* or his *khalīfa* by email to obtain permission before beginning. "Step One: Qalbi Zikr Introduction," Zikr.co.uk, accessed February 7, 2020, http://www.zikr.co.uk/content/view/80/127/.

[90] For a selection from Muhammad F. Bayraktar's partial translation of Ghulām 'Alī expounding on the Mujaddidī path in his *Risala al-Muraqaba* ("Treatise on Meditation"), see Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 352-56.

[91] The Owaisi curriculum is included in Awan's *Ramooz-i Dil*.

[92] Buehler, *Sufi Heirs*, 235.

since, after all, a lot happened in the century and a half between the times of Walī Allāh and ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh, including the transition in India from Mughal to British rule, which we also saw have its varied effects on the development of this line in particular.

But aside from those few groups known for certain to have such curricula, which were only found in the Sufism 1st and Islam 1st categories, some Muslim groups across the spectrum use *murāqaba* to refer to a range of practices that may involve particular visualizations, contemplations, or passive waiting, but that do not appear to involve such a series of intentions, for instance, among the Haqqaniyya and Gülen.[93] There are also instances among universalists of practices involving a simple passive waiting, such as practiced in Subud's *latihan*. Moreover, as mentioned, the originally Hindu lines emphasize the heart meditation, like with Vaughan-Lee or the SRCM's Heartfulness meditation.[94] Moreover, in a lecture by Annette Kaiser that the researcher attended in Munich in March of 2018 concluded with a brief period of silent, passive group meditation which was outwardly not all that different from what was observed among an entirely Muslim group in Hyderabad, except of course that in Hyderabad participants were all men, mostly South Asian, wearing traditional Muslim dress and were sitting on the floor, whereas Kaiser's universalist audience in Munich was mostly caucasian German women wearing western-style clothing and sitting in chairs. Yet despite all of these apparent differences and the fact that Kaiser was not teaching the kind of curriculum described above, both of these groups, with their related spiritual lineages, were striving to do very much the same thing by the same method: have personal contact with God by sitting and waiting attentively in silent stillness.

Collective Practices

The last example brings us to another major point, that is to one degree or another, all groups engage in some form of collective practice, which could consist of only performing one's individually assigned practices while assembled as a group. But there could also be additional practices that are only performed collectively and on a weekly to semi-weekly basis. Among Muslim groups, this commonly takes the form of, on top of individually performed devotional recitations, a group *dhikr* assembly, wherein a particular litany is recited collectively oftentimes aloud. This pairing of individual *waẓīfa* with group loud *dhikr* can be seen at least in the Kuftāriyya, Aslamiyya, Haqqaniyya, Menzil Cemaat,[95] and the groups led by the Bosnian Halil Halusi, the Kurdish Iraqi Muḥammad ʻUthmān Sirāj al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī (1896-1997), and the British-Pakistani Faiz-ul-Aqtab Siddiqi (b. 1967), as well as some in the post-*ṭarīqa* category, like the Sulaymançis and Millî Görüş.[96] Moreover, it may range from being fairly restrained, like that of the Kuftariyya, or quite animated, like that of the Aslamiyya.[97] So we see that just as the trend toward a curriculum of *murāqaba* transcends the South Asian Mujaddidī and post-Ottoman Khālidī lines, so does the trend toward emphasizing collective vocalized *dhikr* gatherings. Among those still maintaining a *silsila*, this litany is sometimes referred to as the *khatm al-khwājagān*,

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[93] For the Haqqaniyya, aside from the abovementioned *murāqaba* as *rābiṭa*, see some descriptions of meditations involving visualizations in Mirahmadi and Mirahmadi, *The Healing Power of Sufi Meditation*. Nothing like the exercises described in this work were found anywhere else, among other Haqqanis or otherwise, except perhaps some resemblances to the visualizations of the Owaisis. On Gülen and *murāqaba*, see "Muraqaba Self-Supervision," FGulen.com, accessed February 7, 2020, https://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/sufism/key-concepts-in-the-practice-of-sufism-1/24737-muraqaba-self-supervision.

[94] For instructions on beginning SRCM's practice from Kamlesh D. Patel (b. 1956) himself, see "Learn the Basics," Heartfulness.org, accessed February 7, 2020, https://heartfulness.org/us/learn-the-basics/.

[95] The Menzil community's Hatm-i-Serif is broadcast daily at 2pm and Delail-ul Hayrat at 5am. http://www.semerkandtv.com.tr/program-detayi/hatm-i-serif/26

[96] Jonker cites reports of members of the Millî Görüş in Berlin holding vocal *dhikr* gatherings. Jonker "The Evolution of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Sulaymançis in Germany." Likewise, a respondent in the Bavarian city of Weiden in der Oberpfalz in 2018 reported to the researcher that in addition to silent *dhikr*, the Sulaymançis there meet weekly to perform a vocalized but quite reserved group *dhikr*.

[97] Habibis describes Kuftārū's more reverent communal *dhikr*, which she attended in the 1980s and which she contrasts with the more lively *dhikr* she attended with Nazim. She also discusses the daily *wird*, which is also taught to children in his network of schools as well as his role as an *ʻālim* being more pronounced than that of his being a *shaykh*. "A Comparative Study," 211-18.

and may or may not include recitations of parts or the whole of the *silsila*, but it usually also includes praises to God and recitations of his names as well as supplications for blessings upon the Prophet.[98] Thus we see a mirroring of the kind of practices that are performed only silently and individually in some groups, especially but not exclusively among those with a detailed curriculum of intentions for *murāqaba*.

Among the groups embracing Islam, there may also be listening to the recitation of the Quran and for some groups, devotional poetry recited melodiously in praise of or expressing love for the Prophet (*na'at*s), plays a prominent role, sometimes with the *shaykh* as the composer and performer.[99] Some activities are of distinctively South Asian, especially Punjabi,[100] provenance or at least flavor, with certain groups organizing regular *langar*s (communal meals)[101] and sometimes quite elaborate collective celebrations of events such as the death anniversary of a saint (*'urs*)[102] or the birth of the Prophet (*mawlid*), which may be marked with large, lively, and colorful processions (*julūs*) in which the very streets of UK cities become sanctified.[103] Thus originally rural popular expressions of Sufi Islam and Naqshbandī identity have relocated to the urban centers of Britain. Also, the practice of visiting the graves of pious predecessors (*ziyāra*),[104] which may be performed individually or collectively, is noticeable among several groups embracing both *sharī'a* and *ṭarīqa*. Yet due to the location of most Sufi shrines in Muslim-majority countries, this often necessarily involves intercontinental travel, resulting in a complex international sacred geography, perhaps most prominently exemplified by the Ghamkol Sharif community. Until recently, the only notable exception was the shrine of Muhammad Abdul Wahab Siddiqi (1943-94) in the UK. In 2015, however, after the death of Sufi Abdullah, the Ghamkol Sharif community also has another shrine in the UK, as he was buried in the grounds of the Central Jamia Masjid Ghamkol Mosque.[105] *Ziyāra* is also performed in some of the Hindu lines that recognize their Islamic *silsila*, like the NaqshMuMRa, a recognition that is reflected in their name being an acronym for Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya Maẓhariyya

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[98] For the Aslami *khatm-i khwājagān*, see http://www.naqshbandi.org.uk/Articles/khatam.html. For the Haqqani version, see Kabbani, *Guidebook*, 177-84.

[99] A significant example of this is another *shaykh* who arrived in the UK from Pakistan, Nisar Ahmed (d. 1992), though only a brief biography written by his son, Anwar-un-Nabi ibn Nisar Ahmed, is available at Naqshbandi.Uk. His *silsila* includes two links following Ghulām 'Alī, those being Abū-Sa'īd Fārūqī al-Mujaddidī and Ahmed Sa'īd Fārūqī al-Mujaddidī, making his line as equally related, in terms of *silsila*, to the Pakistani lines that trace their origins to Faḍl 'Alī Shāh Qurayshī as to the Turkish Süleymançıs. Nisar Ahmad was born in Agra, India just before the end of World War II and immigrated to Karachi where he met his *shaykh*, Syed Mahmood Hassan Rizvi, and received *ijāza* to teach and initiate disciples. After some time in Saudi Arabia, he was instructed by his *shaykh* to relocate to England where he lived for the remainder of his life. It is explained that he was proficient in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu and wrote a number of *na'at*s and *nashīd*s (Anwar-un-Nabi. "Mini Biography of Hazrat Nisar Ahmed رحمتاللہ علیہ with Some Naatay." 36. Hazrat Nisar Ahmed H. Accessed April 18, 2018. http://www.naqshbandi.uk/naqshbandi-mujadidi/nisar-ahmed-ra.). The website contains, in addition to the *silsila* with biographies, a selection of *na'at*s performed by Nisar Ahmad as well as by his *shaykh* Rizvi and the former's son and biographer, including one recited in English.

[100] On traditional Punjabi Sufi Islam and its transfer to the UK, see Ballard, "Popular Islam in Northern Pakistan and its Reconstruction in Urban Britain."

[101] For more on *langar*s, see Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 101-28.

[102] On *'urs* but also *na'at*s, see idem 242-58; as well as Pnina Werbner, "Du'a: Popular Culture and Powerful Blessing at the 'Urs," in Clinton Bennett and Charles M. Ramsey (ed.), *South Asian Sufis: Devotion, Deviation, and Destiny*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014, 83-93.

[103] On *julūs*, see Pnina Werbner, "Stamping the Earth with the Name of Allah: Zikr and the Sacralizing of Space among British Muslims," in *Cultural Anthropology*, 11, No. 3 (August 1996), pp. 309-338; Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 30-60.

[104] See, idem 259-81.

[105] "Pictures as respects are paid to Sufi Muhammed Abdullah Khan," BirminghamMail.co.uk, accessed February 7, 2020, https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/pictures-respects-paid-sufi-muhammed-8648328.

Ramchandriyya.[106] Yet among Muslims, Sufi and non-Sufi alike, aspects of such visitation, as well as the above celebrations, have been criticized as *shirk* and *bid'a* by reform-oriented Muslims, especially in the South Asian context, including other Naqshbandī lines.

Thus, the mysticism of many Muslim Naqshbandī groups seems to be primarily organized around collective activity, but also the personality of the *shaykh*, to which we will soon return, while others have a greater focus on individually performed spiritual practice. But on collective practice among the universalists, aside from group visits to shrines among Hindu lines and the abovementioned *latihan* of Subud being performed in a group setting, the universalist groups tend toward a focus on individual spiritual development. Yet this comes with an important caveat which leads into our next topic of the role of the *shaykh*: the activities of the lines tracing back to Tweedie practice keeping the company of the spiritual guide but also of fellow students, that is *ṣuḥbat*, an historically important Naqshbandī practice. Tweedie recounts in *Chasm of Fire* her time spent in the company of Bhai Sahib, and when she returned to 1960s London to give talks to Theosophical groups, she continued this practice with her students, holding meditation meetings in her apartment which included, following a period of meditation, having tea and cookies (biscuits in UK English) while talking and spending time together while the teacher shared her insights.[107] The continued importance can be seen in the very title of Vaughan-Lee's *In the Company of Friends: Dreamwork within a Sufi Group*.[108]

This fairly natural human activity of socializing and sharing knowledge of course also takes place among Muslim Naqshbandīs and post-*ṭarīqa* groups as well. Thus, another practice found across all four categories is simply spending time in the company of the teacher and of other students (*ṣuḥbat*), which can serve to bolster commitment to the path, its intended effects in how one lives life, and the sense of community. It also serves a pedagogical function, such as in learning appropriate conduct (*adab*), not to mention the students' benefitting from and sharing communally in the *baraka* of the *shaykh*. Such *ṣuḥbat* may be relatively unstructured, consisting of drinking tea and talking as above, or there may be regularly scheduled formal lectures or sermons (*bayān*) where the leader (or members) speak on particular topics, such as related to mystical ideas and/or morality. Hence, we are brought to the topic of the *shaykh* and his/her role. In the consideration of the case study groups in the following three chapters, we generally consider the role of the *shaykh* and community together in one section. This serves to balance the discussion in those parts given the comparative emphasis in that lineage toward guided individual spiritual training over collective events. Such a focus in the case study groups is also why we have only briefly discussed collective practices and activities here. Further attempts to map contemporary Naqshbandī teachings and practice in the West and on the global stage should provide a more representative and proportionate coverage of the collective and the individual. The latter

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[106] The Sufi identify and heritage of NaqshMuMRa Sufis is taken quite seriously, as illustrated by R.K. Gupta's detailed work *The Golden Chain Of Naqshbandi Sufis (Prophet Muhammad to Indian Sufis)* (SufiSaints.net, accessed February 7, 2020, http://www.sufisaints.net/content/pub_docs/The_Golden_Chain.pdf) which includes not only biographies of every individual in the *silsila* starting with the Prophet, but also photographs of many of their tombs, including a number that appear to be from the author's own visits to Khwājagān-Naqshbandī shrines in Central Asia and India as well as from an associate of his in Canada who visited the tombs of the Ṭayfūrī saints in Iran.

[107] Vaughan-Lee describes his first such meeting in Tweedie's tiny London flat, a meeting he was invited to after attending one of her lectures: "The twelve or more people attending the group sat on the bed, against the bed, against the chest of drawers, wherever there was space. Mrs. Tweedie sat beside the sink, and after the meditation, served us all with tea and biscuits." Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee and Irina Tweedie, *The Face Before I Was Born: A Spiritual Autobiography* (Inverness, CA: The Golden Sufi Center, 1997), 30. He elaborates further, but such a setting itself reminds the researcher of some of the first SOST meetings he attended in private apartments in Munich. For another description of such meetings held by Tweedie, see Brigitte Dorst, "The Master, the Student and the Sufi-Group: Sufi Relationships Today," in *Sufism, Islam and Jungian Psychology*, 19-28. Interestingly, Jennenne Castor-Thompson, who claims to be another heir of Tweedie through *uwaysī* initiation, mentions dancing as an activity that sometimes takes place in her meetings, though she specifies country-western rather than Mawlawī-style whirling.

[108] Llewellyn Vaugh-Lee, *In the Company of Friends: Dreamwork within a Sufi Group* (Inverness, CA: The Golden Sufi Center, 1994).

actually seems to be in the minority in terms of student numbers, something perhaps inhibited by their very design.

Role of the Guide and Community

Another common element found across all four categories is the presence of some form of leader figure who may perform several functions which can take the form of: giving instruction in theory and practice, guiding a student as they pursue the encounter with God, and providing some form of mediation between the student and God, hence Buehler's three-fold typology of teaching, directing,[109] and mediating *shaykh*s. We will return to consider this typology below, but for the moment, let it suffice to say that all three functions: teaching, guiding, and mediating, may all be carried out by the very same leader. That said, it is also possible that one or another may predominate, whereas others may not be present. In the groups embracing Sufism, there is often a formal oath (*bay'a*) cementing one's relationship with one particular leader. This may take place in private and after long and careful deliberation and discussion with the *shaykh*, or it may be performed without even meeting or speaking with the *shaykh*, such as in a mass *bay'a* ceremony. Literally hundreds of disciples may be initiated at once (sometimes without their even knowing it),[110] or in smaller groups new students might wait their turn as, one-by-one, each person steps forward for the *shaykh* to imprint "Allāh" on their heart through his *tawajjuh*, and thereby sparks its awakening and constant repetition of the name of God.[111] *Bay'a* may also even be given without ever seeing the *shaykh* (and without the *shaykh* ever knowing about it, unless clairvoyantly), such as when performed online.[112]

There are also usually rules of comportment (*adab*) governing the manner in which students conduct themselves in general but especially with respect to the guide. Among all of the first three groups, particularly among univeralist and Sufism 1st groups, we see instances of a rather relaxed and conversational style in interactions with the *shaykh*. Yet in other cases, they may don colorful robes and turbans and sit on a throne, thus recalling Mughal or Ottoman nobility and are accorded much the same deference if not more by their disciples. Post-*ṭarīqa* groups, however, have dispensed with the very institutions of the *shaykh*, the *ṭarīqa*, and the *silsila*, perhaps allowing a founder's writings or the collective community to take the place of a *shaykh*, as is the case with the Gülen Movement and the Sülaymançis respectively. Yet the educational institutions of some post-*ṭarīqa* groups, like among Deobandīs, do foster close and continuing bonds between students and teachers that in some ways resemble the *murīd-murshīd* relationship. Likewise, Subud's approach to leadership and pedagogy is also more nuanced, as their founder did not name a successor, but his daughter assumed an informal "spiritual advisor" status, thus there is a continuity of leadership and new members are given training by senior members prior to participating in the *latihan*.[113]

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[109] We will refer to "guiding" in place of "directing" here, as it seems to have more accurate connotations to the researcher. A military leader *directs* units under his command to occupy battle positions he may have never been to before; whereas the *shaykh guides* disciples on a path that he is supposed to have travelled before and to a destination the students have asked to be shown the way to.

[110] For a video of such an initiation taking place in Indonesia, see SufiLive, "Thousand Take Bay'at in Indonesia with Mawlana Shaykh Hisham Kabbani," accessed 29 January 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IM4FlcfHVaI.

[111] See, for example, Muhammad Sardar Ahmad Naqshbandi (b. 1930), toward the end of the first link and at the beginning of the second link. "Naqshbandi Qalbi Zikr: Introduction, Permission & Meditation: Part 1," Qalbi Zikr Academy, accessed February 7, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fwTv195FCU; for part two, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KovGmiCtE0.

[112] It is possible to do so by reading a statement at: https://naqshbandi.org/the-tariqa/initiation/. In a response to a prospective student's question from e-Shaykh.com, it was made clear that this is indeed the process of taking *bay'a*. https://eshaykh.com/sufism/permission-sufism/bay3a-online/. In another thread, it is explained that all that is to be done from there is to perform their *wird* (daily recitations) and to follow the *shaykh* on his website SufiLive.com, where videos are constantly uploaded. The *wird* is available here: https://naqshbandi.org/practices/daily-practices/initiated/. Online *bay'a* is not the exclusive purview of the Haqqaniyya. See "Oath of Allegiance," Zikr.co.uk, accessed February 1, 2020, http://www.zikr.co.uk/content/view/57/97/.

[113] Widiyanto, *Ritual and Leadership*, 173-239.

On the issue of the mediatory role of the *shaykh*, for the first three types of universalist, Sufism 1[s], and Islam 1st, a frequently though not invariably encountered theme is the non-physical relationship with the *shaykh*, and the tradition as a whole, that usually involves the transmission (*tawajjuh*) of *baraka* for spiritual advancement, and sometimes for beneficial purposes in the physical world, such as healing. For this a relationship of affinity (*nisbat*), a non-physical heart-to-heart bond (*rābiṭa*) between student and teacher is required, which sometimes involves the practice of visualizing the *shaykh* (*taṣawwur-i shaykh*). Though it does not always involve visualization, as will be seen with Rasool, but also the Pakistan-based Muhammad Naeemullah Farooqi, who has more *khalīfa*s in the US, UK, and South Africa than in Pakistan or India, and describes *rābiṭa* as simply keeping in touch with the *shaykh*.[114] The practice of visualization appears to be mostly limited to some groups under the Sufism 1st and Islam 1st categories and which, while often associated with the Khālidiyya, is also at least acknowledged as a valid practice by some non-Khālidī Mujaddidī lines. Some, especially those who perform the practice of visualizing the guide, may also speak of seeking annihilation in the *shaykh* as a prerequisite for annihilation in the Prophet, which in turn leads to annihilation in God. Yet even the Deobandī scholar Thānvī acknowledged the permissibility of the practice, though he considered it a risky method, since one may come to rely more on one's *shaykh* than God. He also held this opinion about metaphorical love (*'ishq-i majāzī*) as a means, which he says has its benefits but can be used as an excuse to fulfill one's carnal desires.[115] These two issues return again in Parts Two and especially Three below. On the other end, Omar Ali-Shah mentions some of his students visualizing him as a means of tapping into "the energy of the Tradition," but says that he discourages it, not to avoid a cult of personality, but on the grounds that it distracts rather than focuses attention.[116] But without the visualization aspect, Vaughan-Lee also speaks of "the energy of transmission" and what role the teacher plays in *Spiritual Power: How It Works*.[117] Moreover, the Hindu NaqshMuMRA site of Dinesh Kumar Saxena even makes use of the terms *nisbat* and *tawajjuh* in describing this student-teacher relationship, though while also substituting *dhikr*, *ṣuḥbat*, and *shaykh* with *japa*, *satsang*, and *guru*.[118]

Moving on, however, the transcontinental character of these groups presents a challenge to the *shaykh*'s ability to perform at least their teaching and guiding functions, if not their mediatory one as well. One strategy to deal with this is the delegation of authority and responsibility to group leaders and the appointment of *khalīfa*s, with differing levels of authority to initiate and/or train students of their own.[119] Some make much use of this possibility, like the Haqqaniyya and the Pakistani lines descending from Faḍl 'Alī Shāh Qurayshī. This results in hierarchies of numerous greater and lesser *shaykh*s, at the top of which is usually one grand *shaykh*. Still others, like Rasool, only leave one or two successors, but may rely on group leaders with limited authority to introduce new students to the basics and attend to local administrative requirements. Another possibility for their teaching function is to carry it out themselves through print but especially the internet, as seen in the vast existing online literature but also the incredible number of their lectures available on YouTube alone, let alone their respective websites. In some cases, like that of our case study with their comparatively quite small numbers, personalized guidance may be given through email correspondence or over the telephone or video calling. Alternatively, the Sufi aspirant might seek guidance on particular questions from an online discussion board like Kabbani's eShaykh.com.

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114 See the link "Primary instructions and Ma'Mulaat for a Mureed" at Khanqah-e-Naqshband.com, accessed February 7, 2020.

115 Bashir, "*Sharī'at* and *Ṭarīqat*," 264-66.

116 Omar Ali-Shah, *The Rules or Secrets of the Naqshbandi Order* (Reno, NV: Tractus Books, 1998), 175-8.

117 Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, *Spiritual Power: How It Works* (Inverness, CA: The Golden Sufi Center, 2005), see for example 7-9, 105.

118 "Nisbat," The NaqshMuMRa School of Sprituality, accessed February 7, 2020, https://sites.google.com/site/samaadhidhaam/nisbat.

119 On this practice in the Haqqaniyya, see Böttcher, *Mit Turban und Handy*, 147-50; and in the Ghamkol Sharif community, see Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 157-82.

Another arrangement is for students come to the *shaykh*, such as the Pakistan-based Ghulam Hussein Shah Bukhari, who has followers around the world, but seems more or less stationary.[120] This was also one method employed by Rasool during his lifetime, and he built a *khānaqāh* in Delhi especially for this purpose. In some cases though, the leader is headquartered in the West and the students live close by or travel to them, like the numerous Pakistani *shaykh*s in the UK with their local "fiefdoms." There are even residential *khānaqāh*s in the West, like Abdur Rashid's World Community in the US, where students from Muslim-majority areas sometimes come to visit him. Another case is the Muridu'l Haqq and their shared community in 1980s London.[121] Both of these last two examples can be seen as a convergence of the Sufi *khānaqāh* tradition with the trend of shared communities that began in California in the late 1960s. There is also the Haqqani-affiliated Osmanische Herberge ("Ottoman Hostel") near Cologne, where travelers can take part in *dhikr* and *ṣuḥbat* and stay for free, working in exchange for room and board.[122] Yet it seems more common for a building described as a *khānaqāh* or *zāwiya* to be a non-residential meeting place for regular Sufi practice, such as with the newly establish SOST *zāwiya* in London, or the Khanqah Naqshbandiyya Aslamiyya in Luton. Among universalists, we also find such designated locations, like Kaiser's two retreat centers: Villa Unspunnen in Switzerland and Windschnur in Germany,[123] or they may rent facilities, like how the Subud group in Munich holds their *latihan* in a local Yoga studio, non unlike a facility we saw SOST using in the early years of its presence in Germany or the centers used by Nazim's convert group in London in the 1970s.

When the *shaykh* is based in another country, he or she may alternatively (or also) travel on regular international touring circuits, something seen across universalist, Sufism 1st, and Islam 1st categories, such as with Vaughan-Lee or Kaiser, Hamid Hasan or Kabbani and Nazim, and Akram

[120] Ghulam Hussain Shah Bukhari is another *shaykh* whose lineage traces back to Fa ḍ l 'Alī Shāh Qurayshī. Bukhari's main emphasis is religious education, which is carried out through the Dargah Hussainabad that he established in 1980 and consists of a mosque and an *'ālim*-producing *madrasa* in which ca. 100 scholars in residence are trained at no cost. His efforts at such religious education are also directed to a broader public, said to include millions of followers in Sindh and Baluchistan but also internationally, through his organization *Tanẓīm Iṣlāḥ al-Fuqrā' al-Ḥusayniyya*, the Urdu-only website for which (MurshidHussain.com), among other things, includes a small selection of *na'at*s as well as a platform for listening to his *bayān* live (some of his archived speeches in Urdu are available at: https://hussainistream.wordpress.com). Unlike the more internationally oriented ventures of the other *shaykh*s of Fazal 'Ali Shah Qurayshī's line, his online presence does not reveal any effort to expand beyond his base of Pakistani followers. His prominence, influence, and symbolic significance locally, however, seem to have made him the target of an attempted assassination. "One killed, 5 injured in Jacobabad bombing," PakistanToday.com.pk, accessed February 7, 2020, https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2013/02/20/one-killed-5-injured-in-jacobabad-bombing/; "Cleric targeted in Jacobabad last week teaches only the message of peace." The Express Tribune. February 23, 2013. Accessed January 15, 2018. https://tribune.com.pk/story/511776/cleric-targeted-in-jacobabad-last-week-teaches-only-the-message-of-peace/.

[121] Habibis, "A Comparative Study."

[122] "Was ist eine Sufi Dergah?," Osmanische Herberge, accessed February 7, 2020, http://www.osmanische-herberge.de/index.php?page_id=5&lang=de.

[123] AnnetteKaiser.ch. Activities at events that she travels to and at these retreat centers include, for instance, lectures, Tai Chi, Qi Gong, Yoga, spending an entire day in silence to facilitate connecting to the Source ("*verbinden uns mit unserer Quelle*"), appreciating nature, and meditation. It seems that for the latter, which also includes "*unter Freunden zusammensein*" ("being together with friends"), she follows a similar formula as Tweedie, beginning with a period of silent meditation followed by tea and conversation, including about dreams ("*Stille – Teepause – Dialog – Träume*"). Likewise, Vaughan-Lee follows a similar structure and describes their otherwise wayless way as "still consist[ing] of meditation, dreamwork, discussion, and tea." He furthermore emphasizes the importance of *ṣuḥbat* with the guide. Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, "Neither of the East nor of the West: The Journey of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya from India to America," accessed May 15, 2020, https://goldensufi.org/neither-of-the-east-nor-of-the-west-the-journey-of-the-naqshbandiyya-mujaddidiyya-from-india-to-america/. See also, Hermansen, "South Asian Sufism in America," 252.

Awan respectively.[124] Such international touring circuits of spiritual teachers, common among alternative spiritual seekers and Muslims in the West alike, are a natural development emerging from globalization and more recent advances in technology. We have already seen this in the lives of the last two *shaykh*s in our case study lineage before Rasool, but also in Buehler's *Sufi Heirs* with Jamā'at 'Alī, who took advantage of railway lines installed by the British to spread his teachings. So just as steam and print facilitated the spread of not only our case study lineage, but also ostensibly paved the way for the "Rise of the Mediating Shaykh" in 19th- and 20th-century British India, it seems that intercontinental flights and the internet, offer continued new possibilities in the historical development of Sufism. But as we slowly leave themes that are normally discussed under the category of mysticism, we touch on a topic that addresses both mystical and worldly life, that is the eleven Naqshbandī principles, a topic which also allows us to illustrate an important point about *shaykh*s and the content of their teachings.

Sources of Tradition

There are a few possible sources for the content of each leader's teachings. Of course, they may strive to pass down exactly what they were taught by their own teacher, and in the same manner they were taught it. Yet this is rarely if ever entirely the case, if for no other reasons than constantly changing circumstances as well as differing personalities and perspectives. They may also prudently look to their left and right to see what their fellow *shaykh*s are teaching for ideas and inspirations. Also, especially to explain the creation of new doctrines and practices or the reformulation of old ones, we could also look, for one, to their own creativity, or to their claims of spiritual insight or instruction via dream visitations or *uwaysī* connections with the Prophet, Khiḍr (as was claimed to be the case with Ghijduwānī and the first eight Naqshbandī principles), or past *shaykh*s (such as Ghijduwānī visiting Bahā' al-Dīn, who is said to have added the last three principles). We might also consider religio-spiritual sources from outside of Islamic and Sufi tradition, as many *Quellenforscher* have. For universalists, this is not inherently problematic. For instance, Kaiser unhesitatingly seeks to draw from the range of spiritual knowledge and methods at humankind's shared disposal in her *pfadloser Pfad*, wherein an originally Hindu Mujaddidī line converge comfortably with Tai Chi and other paths. In contrast, most Muslim Sufi groups deliberately avoid anything that even remotely smacks of extra-Islamic eclecticism. Among Sufism 1st groups, this is not only to maintain the integrity of their faith and not to have their Islamicity questioned, but it is probably also at least to some degree to avoid being labelled "New Age." Ali-Shah had a similar distaste for eclecticism, though on aesthetic rather than theological grounds.[125]

Another possibility is of course engaging with, and thus also contributing to, the continually growing and evolving over 14 centuries worth of Islamic and later Sufi textual tradition, which has been highly self-reflexive since the first generations after the Prophet. At *madrasa*s in the Muslim world, and now in the West as well as even online, it is possible to study a classical text, like al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'* for example, and receive a license (*ijāza*) to teach that text. Though such formal training is only seen as a requirement for commenting on it by the most stringent of audiences, and just like any Muslim can consult the Quran and *ḥadīth*s for themselves, so can *shaykh*s cite these in their lectures as they can also consult and draw from classical Sufi texts. Viewing tradition as that which has been "passed down," it need not necessarily be limited to only what was directly taught by one's teacher, as the wealth of Sufi

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[124] For instance, Nazim reportedly travelled to London every year from 1972 until at least 1994, when Tayfun Atay completed his study on this group. Nazim also travelled regularly to visit his disciples in "France, Germany, Switzerland, the USA, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Brunei and Pakistan." Atay, "Naqshbandi Sufis in a Western Setting," 54-55. The other spiritual teachers mentioned maintain(ed) touring schedules on their respective websites.

[125] Ali-Shah criticizes the tendency of some to "pick'n mix," such as listening to Sufi music while chanting Buddhist mantras wearing clothing and adhering to the dietary restrictions of yet other traditions. He is also particularly critical of taking a "philosophical teaching;" examples of which he lists as Buddhism, Taoism, and the Tradition; and combining it with "some sort of spooky thing like stars, the Tarot, omens, or various different superstitions." He also expresses disdain for "table-moving, crystal-gazing," and especially astrology, thus evincing a proclivity for the occult in that milieu. Ali-Shah, *Rules or Secrets*, 222-3.

tradition offers a great deal and consulting is not unusual, as we saw in Saʿīd Khān's studying and reflecting on the *Maktūbāt*.

We will deal more with Islamic revelation below, but to illustrate the different relationships of some contemporary Naqshbandī teachers and students in the West to the foundational texts of their particular lineage, we use the example of the eleven Naqshbandī principles here. In different groups across all four categories, these principles may be cited in part, following Sirhindī, or as a whole. They are accorded varying degrees of emphasis from being almost a footnote to a crucial guiding aspect of the teachings. Sometimes they are cited individually as a particular teaching point in a lecture or in explaining some particular aspect of practices like *murāqaba* and *dhikr*. Usually, descriptions of these principles follow fairly closely to those found in the *Rashaḥāt*,[126] dealing overall with achieving a profound awareness of God and manifesting that in life. A notable exception is Omar Ali-Shah's contemporary adaptation, which has some unique post-Gurdjieffian interpretations centered on defeating "conditioning" and achieving one's personal aims. God is certainly present in Ali-Shah's presentation, but He stands far in the background while personal effectiveness and overcoming conditioning are brought to the fore.[127]

Returning to sources though, while Sufis from Muslim-majority countries can often access many original texts with native level proficiency, or at least their many translations into Urdu, Turkish, or Arabic, non-Muslim background, Western-born Sufi aspirants and guides alike are often at a disadvantage in this respect, as there is much that has yet to be translated into Western European languages. One major exception to this is Robert Abdul Hayy Darr, who initially arrived at Sufism through Idries Shah's writings and organization, but is now fluent in Persian, in part from his time as an aid worker in war-torn 1980s Afghanistan, where he met his own guide, a *shaykh* in one of the comparatively few existing pre-Mujaddidī lineages. Darr is thus able to read and draw directly from his own examination of, for example, Parsa's *Qudsiyya* and the *Rashaḥāt*, which he did in a lecture on the eleven Naqshbandī principles at the Baraka Institute of Kabir Helminski, head of a Mawlawī Sufism 1st group.[128] Thus the urge for authenticity, which was also in large part what brought Western seekers into contact with Naqshbandī teachers in the first place, continues with a deeper and serious engagement with early Sufi texts and thought in an effort to apply their teachings to current needs.

A different example is Vaughan-Lee, who in spite of detractors' criticism of the universalism of a tradition he inherited as a universalist one, Vaughan-Lee considers himself a rather traditional Sufi *shaykh*. His teacher, Tweedie, with a synthesizing outlook continued by her Swiss successor Kaiser, was more likely to quote Jung, Plotinus, the *Upanishads*, and the *Bhagavad Gita*, than classical era Sufis. In contrast, Vaughan-Lee, aside from continuing the engagement with Jungian psychology (and with that alchemy) which was first begun by Tweedie, he has made particular efforts to thoroughly incorporate the teachings of pre-modern Muslim Sufis, all the while maintaining a universalist position. Although not a Persian- or Arabic-speaker himself, it seems that he has availed himself of the services of one, since his website prominently features a detailed outline of the eleven principles drawing from two Persian editions of the *Qudsiyya* and the *Rashaḥāt*,[129] alongside, interestingly enough, books by Gurdjieff's student Bennett and the last *shaykh* the latter met in his search for the Sarmoung, Hasan Lutfi Shushud (1901-1988), who was also the heir to the Malāmatī lineage of the Turkish Pir Nūr al-ʿArabī (d. 1888).[130]

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[126] Such comparison here was based on the English translation, from a Turkish translation of the Persian original.

[127] For instance, in the *Rashaḥāt*, *wuqūf-i zamānī* is being aware of one's own spiritual state, and knowing whether to give thanks for it or to ask for forgiveness (Ṣafī, *Beads of Dew*, 22-23), but Ali-Shah describes it as "the halting of intellect and conditioned thinking," that is temporarily setting aside one's "educational background, terms of reference, conditioning and brainwashing […] judgement based on social conditioning […and…] preconceived attitudes." Ali-Shah, *Rules or Secrets*, 174.

[128] He cites both in "Spiritual Principles of The Naqshbandi Path -- Robert Abdul Hayy Darr," BarakaInstitute, accessed February 5, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDk8rbqqchI.

[129] Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, "The Eleven Principles of the Naqshbandi Path," accessed March 23, 2024, https://goldensufi.org/about/eleven-principles/.

[130] Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 111.

In creating his own path, seemingly in response to the politicization of the Sufi orders in Turkey, Shushud's work *Masters of Wisdom* rejects Naqshbandī identity in favor of a Khwājagān one.[131] Ironically though, he does this primarily through a 16th-century Naqshbandī text (dated almost 200 years after the last of the Khwājagān, Amīr Kulāl, died), that is the *Rashaḥāt*, stripping it of its hagiographical character and adding much on Ibn al-'Arabī. Although this is a drastic oversimplification, it led to the creation of what he called Itlaq Yolu ("The Path of Liberation"),[132] which he passed on to his student Mahmut Sadettin Bilginer (d. 1983). He in turn entrusted the task of putting "the malamati teachings into a psychological vernacular more relevant to modern societies" and finding someone trained in psychology and knowledgeable about Sufism to help him "convey the teachings in more human-scientific terms."[133] In 1995, Ozic's relationship with the American psychologist Toussulis began and the latter now leads the Nūriyya-Malāmiyya in the US and is founder of the Itlaq Foundation.[134]

Returning to Vaughan-Lee, however, to accomplish his restorative project of unearthing earlier teachings not necessarily learned directly from his teacher, but that are indisputably part of earlier Sufi tradition, Vaughan-Lee's books also draw on a range of academic studies on Sufism. This highlights another significant avenue by which contemporary Naqshbandīs can dig back further, beyond only what has been passed on from one's teacher, to the textual tradition of Sufism and Islam: that is by engagement with secular academic scholarship. Thus, academic studies and translations can become, or be used as, religious or spiritual texts.

For a particularly interesting example that also illustrates the high degree of interconnectedness among post-Gurdjieffian circles and the search for authentic teachings and sources thereof, is the case of the British-born Muhtar Holland (b. 1935). A former linguist in the Royal Navy (echoing J.G. Bennett's military intelligence work in Turkey, and the resulting linguistic benefits for his own spiritual search) and later a translator, he held several academic postings, including at SOAS and the University of Toronto. In 1969, he "was moved—by powerful experiences in the *latihan kejiwaan* of Subud—to embrace the religion of Islām." In fact, the name Muhtar was given to him from the Subud founder by request. Holland translated a number of classical and contemporary Sufi works, several of which are Naqshbandī-related. These include the seminal *Rashaḥāt* (one of, if not the major source for the Naqshbandī principles) the translation of which was commissioned by the Muridu'l Haqq, students of the Scottish *shaykh* 'Abdullah Sirr Dan al-Jamal; as well as a book by Shushud, the last of Bennett's teachers, in fact the same book we just mentioned Vaughan-Lee citing; and yet another translation for the Naqshbandiyya Foundation for Islamic Education (NFIE), an umbrella organization in the US. Two of his translations are part of the reading list on SOST's London website, one of which is the *Rashaḥāt*. Further still, the researcher was in fact first informed of the existence of this translation in 2017 by a German-born Islamic theology student connected to the Istanbul-based Ismail Aga community of Mahmut Ustaosmanoğlu (2022). The student pulled out his tattered copy of it after they had heard a visiting *shaykh* quote from and comment on an Arabic version of the *Rashaḥāt*.

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[131] A clue as to the preference for the Khwājagān over the Naqshbandiyya might be found in the statement of Shushud's student Nevit Ergin that "for the past two hundred years, most Sufism is merely political, social." Shushud, *Masters of Wisdom*, ix.

[132] The main practices of Shushud's path of liberation are listed as "Remembrance (dhikr), Austerity (riyāḍāt), Contrition (*inkisār*), Fellowship (ṣuḥba)," or in other words repeating God's name and remembering him, fasting, penitence, and keeping good company. By *dhikr*, he means the repetition of "Allāh" and constant remembrance of God as a means of "inner purification," which allows one to "penetrate the veils" and to "activate" each person's "endowment," and "develop[ing the] latent capacity" thereof, of "contain[ing] all the levels of Divine Truth and creation" and "bear[ing] all the names." By *riyāḍāt*, he means intense and continuous fasting which facilitates detaching oneself from the world and is a major driving force for "inner progress," but what he holds as the most efficacious means for this is contrition or *inkisār*, which in Arabic has the literal meaning of being broken, and here what it is that is being broken or consumed by the "fire of contrition" is the lower soul. Shushud, *Masters of Wisdom*, 145-50.

[133] Toussulis, *Sufism and the Way of Blame*, 148-49; quoted in Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 112.

[134] Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 112. See also ItlaqFoundation.com.

Thus, we have just seen Holland's translations appear in relation to seven different lineages across all three categories embracing Naqshbandī identity: two universalist, three Sufism 1st, and two Islam 1st. This also speaks to the potential boundary-defying significance that other existing and future translations may well have. Prior to Holland's translation, there were other works, like Trimingham's 1971 *The Sufi Orders of Islam*, which includes a partial translation/interpretation of a 17th-century rendition of the eleven principles. The American-born Abdur Rashid does read and/or speak some Arabic, Persian, and Urdu, but he is not a professional linguist like Holland. Thus he describes how, although he was taught about the eleven principles by Rasool, he supplemented such direct oral instruction from his *shaykh* by consulting, among others, Trimingham. Here we see tradition passed down from a living *shaykh* being supported with recourse to the textual tradition accessed through a secular academic work, though as we will see in Part Three, he also goes beyond only that learned from his teacher.

As mentioned, drawing on and reinterpreting earlier sources to serve the needs of one's time and place is nothing new in the history of Islam and Sufism. Neither is the reliance on translators in the spread of ideas, starting with the massive translation efforts commissioned by Caliph Ma'mūn in Abbasid Baghdad, though this project was often carried out by non-Muslims to access texts acquired from the vanquished non-Muslim Persian and Byzantine empires. Still, the fruits of this endeavor would help to shape the emerging Islamic scholastic, philosophical, and mystical traditions. But translations have also been important in the exchange of ideas between Muslims. Junayd translated Bisṭāmī's ecstatic utterances into Arabic. Similarly, Sirhindī's *Maktūbāt* were translated into Arabic so they could be propagated further afield, such as by al-Banūrī in the Hijaz. Yet what is different today is the element of secular academic translations and studies, rather than Muslim translators. For some, reliance on such translations and secular sources might detract from the authority of the speaker, but one might also argue that the exacting and ideally objective standards of academia in fact increase the reliability and precision of such translations and studies for determining what was intended by the original author. Alternatively, it might also be well-argued that predispositions toward a perennial philosophy, such as among Traditionalist scholars, might warp their interpretations.

But in addition to making use of scholarly works, there is also an acute awareness of Sufism being examined by academic researchers, and an active response and taking part in their debates, as can be seen in Rasool's taking sides with Massignon on the Quranic origins of Sufism, over Nicholson.[135] Sometimes leaders may publish academic works that have been written on them, such as the numerous articles posted on Gülen's website or a book by Kabbani that includes four different university studies on his lineage.[136] Similarly, the NFIE has routinely hosted academic speakers at their *mawlid* conferences, which in the past have included scholars like Buehler and Hermansen. NFIE publishes transcripts and videos of such speeches on their Blogspot page.[137] Such mutual engagement between scholars and Sufis can also be seen in the case of Fons Vitae, publisher of not only both of Rasool's two books, with their endorsements from some prominent American scholars on Sufism, not to mention a foreword by Buehler and a preface by Honerkamp, but also Holland's translation for the NFIE, a work by Kabbani, Robert Abdul Hayy Darr's *Spy of the Heart*, and Buehler's *Revealed Grace*.

Speaking of Hermansen though, she has observed a blurring of the lines in Religious Studies between scholars and practitioners, citing the likes of Nasr and Chittick. During the course of this research, this was also perceived in the other direction. In addition to scholars who are also Sufis, we see Sufis becoming scholars. One example of this is the US-born *shaykh* Kamaluddin Ahmad. In addition to his role as a Sufi *shaykh*, Kamaluddin's biography as provided on his website, IslamicSpirituality.org, lists his training in the traditional Islamic sciences alongside an academic career starting with a BA at Chicago, followed by an MA at Oxford and then being a doctoral fellow in Islamic Intellectual History at the Berlin Graduate School.[138] More broadly, one can also find cases of academic standards, such as adopting a critical perspective to the historicity of hagiographies as well as the

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[135] *TTH* 63.
[136] Kabbani, *Classical Islam*, 515-654.
[137] For example, "Allama Muhammad Iqbal(RA) and Love of Prophet Muhammad (saws)," accessed March 23, 2024, https://wwwnfiecomblogspotcom.blogspot.com/search?q=hermansen.
[138] IslamicSpirituality.org.

meticulous citing of sources, as seen in the pages of and contributions to Maktabah.org, translations by Irshad Alam, and in Toussulis' *Sufism and the Way of Blame*, which combines his roles and insights as a *shaykh* and as an academic psychologist. We might also look to Sara Sviri's involvement with Vaughan-Lee's Golden Sufi Center.[139]

Maktabah.org is an online repository of Islamic and often Naqshbandī-related articles and books, mainly available in Urdu, Arabic, Sindhi, Persian, English, and Bengali, but they have works available in a total of 82 different languages. It was created by a Sweden-based student of the Pakistan-based Muhammad Tahir Abbasi Naqshbandi, whose lineage goes back to Faḍl 'Alī Shāh Qurayshī. This website has generated discussion not only across ethnicities, but also outside the boundaries of lineage, as Naqshbandīs with allegiance to a variety of *shaykh*s come there to collaborate and share information. Notable among the contributions to Maktabah.org are the articles and translations by the German-born Muhammad Bayraktar, who among other things has made some of the scholarship about the Naqshbandiyya by the Turkish scholar Necdet Tosun available in English.

Another highly important contribution that combines scholarship with Sufi practice, is the impressive work of Irshad Alam, a Bengali *shaykh* of the Hakimabad Khanaqah line, which are available at Love-Real.com. This includes translations of Sirhindī's *al-Mabda' wa'l-Ma'ād* and *Mukāshafat-i 'Ayniyya* along with a book by Alam entitled, *Faith Practice Piety*, which includes an overview of Sirhindī's life and a thematically arranged selection of his letters from the *Maktūbāt* with commentary. Alam's book can boast of reviews from renowned scholars on the Naqshbandiyya and Sufism, such as Hamid Algar, Yohanan Friedmann, Alan Godlas, and Sajjad H. Rizvi. It also features reviews from, notably here, Laleh Bakhtiar, author of a number of books on "the Sufi Enneagram," and in a rare and bold crossing of the universalist-Islamic divide, it also has an endorsement from Vaughan-Lee.[140] Another of his writings is an analysis of the development of Sirhindī's thought over the course of his life, which also includes a comparative analysis of such development to the teachings of Ibn al-'Arabī. Most important of all, however, are his translations, directly from Persian into English, of much of the *Maktūbāt* of Sirhindī. While there are many published limited partial translations, the most recent of which being Buehler's *Revealed Grace*, and there is another extensive English translation in limited circulation which can be purchased as three printed volumes from a UK-based Naqshbandī group, Alam's is the first widely available (thanks to the internet) lengthy English edition.

Such translation and research efforts may revolutionize the Naqshbandiyya and Mujaddidiyya as understood and practiced in the West, such as by making a significantly larger selection of Sirhindī's letters available to an English-speaking audience, particularly those unfamiliar or less comfortable with the original Persian (and some Arabic) or with Urdu, Arabic, Turkish, and other languages in which full translations already exist. This demographic has hitherto relied mostly upon the teachings of practitioners' own *shaykh*s supplemented by Western scholarship on Sufism, whereas now, they have the ability to read and reflect upon translations of the *Maktūbāt* for themselves. As the latest of the major *ṭarīqa*s, emerging after the so-called golden age of Sufism, the canonical texts of the Naqshbandiyya and its main Mujaddidī branch, at least initially received significantly less scholarly attention and English translation efforts than the major classics by Sufi theoreticians or earlier *shaykh*s. But despite this late start, the situation is quickly being rectified and there are ever new signs of increasing research efforts. Just recently, the researcher was kindly invited to a WhatsApp group for people with a serious interest in all things Naqshbandī who are academic scholars, practitioners, or more often than not, both. As the situation changes, with more and more studies and translations becoming available, so will the face of the Naqshbandiyya in the West and globally. One potential result of this is that Sirhindī's especially juristic approach to Sufism, which is less easily divorced from Islam than selective readings of Rūmī or Ibn al-'Arabī,[141] a return to the original sources which must be seen in

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[139] "Sara Sviri," GoldenSufi.org, accessed February 16, 2020, https://goldensufi.org/gsc_authors/sara-sviri/.
[140] Alam, *Faith Practice Piety*, i-iii.
[141] Gregory A. Lipton, *Rethinking Ibn 'Arabi* (Oxford University Press, 2018). I am grateful to Muhammad Bayraktar for informing me of this work.

part as a response to the Akbarian dispensation, may encourage readers who are on the fence about conversion to choose between an Islamic Mujaddidī Sufi identity and universalism.

Relationship to Islam

In all of the groups, the encounter with the divine (ascent) is expected to lead to some sort of change in the individual and their behavior in the world (descent). Among universalists, it is less clear what exactly that entails, but for those embracing Islam, it follows some interpretation(s) of the broad road of the *sharī'a*. In considering the factor of the relationship of these groups to Islam, we turn first to the universalist lineages. Those descending from Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān already had Hindu practitioners since his time in 18th-century Delhi and in the late 19th century, Faḍl Aḥmad Khān passed authority to teach and train disciples into a Hindu family.[142] Thus the separation of Sufism from Islam for these groups occurred well before their arrival in the West, although the universalist Theosophical background of their foremost proponent there, Tweedie, caused a shift from Naqshbandī Sufism within a Hindu Sant tradition to a more universalist relationship to religion, one which was also adopted by other lines, such as that of the SRCM in their effort to spread their teachings globally. While Tweedie's heirs and some Hindu lines embrace their Sufi identity and to varying degrees acknowledge its historical link with Islam, they also hold a perennialist view that Sufism predates Islam. Other of these lines, especially SRCM, attempt to downplay or disavow such a connection, while the NaqshMuMRa wholeheartedly embrace it.[143] Conversely, the universalist lines connected in one way or another with the search for Gurdjieff's teachers, were initiated in the West by individuals born into Islam, Subuh and Ali-Shah, though conversion to Islam is not a part of their respective programs. In either case, we see an emphasis on spiritual development and practice rather than the dogma or exoteric practices of any particular faith. So at least as far as religious identity is concerned, their focus is on the ascent aspect of the mystical journey, though we return to reconsider this in the discussion of activism.

On the other hand, the vast majority of Naqshbandīs in the West remain firmly and unambiguously connected to Islam and they see Sufism as an integral and crucial part of the Islamic tradition, alongside the other religious sciences. In the post-*ṭarīqa* groups, Islam remains important and remnants or analogues of Sufi ideas and practices remain to varying degrees, such as devotional recitations. Among all of the groups connected with Islam, one can find examples of a kind of qualified perennialism or semi-universalism that is inherent to Islam itself, that is the acceptance of the partial validity of the faiths of the people of the book, while upholding their own exclusive truth claims with Muḥammad as the seal of the prophets. Westerlund has spoken of a spectrum of positions ranging from pluralistic to exclusivist,[144] something that aptly describes the situation here. While for some, such qualified-perennialism may be limited by many to Christians and Jews, others like Rasool acknowledge

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[142] Dahnhardt, "Change and Continuity in Naqshbandi Sufism," 12-84.

[143] There are several other Hindu or universalist organizations besides SRCM and Tweedie's heirs that trace their origin to Ramchandra and have teachings that share similarities with Mujaddidī practice, such as meditation and recitations along with a student-teacher relationship that involves transmission. These include, among others, the Institute of Sri Ramchandra Consciousness (est. 1991) with centers across India, but also in London, southern California, Texas, Maryland, and Virginia (for the organizational website, see: http://www.sriramchandra.org/; and for the website of its current head, K.C. Narayana (b. 1939), see: http://www.kcnarayana.org) and the Ramashram Satsang Mathura based in Mathura but with other branches in Maryland, Illinois, and New Jersey as well as Stuttgart, Germany (http://www.ramashram.com/, describing themselves as: "a nonprofit, educational, charitable, and humanitarian organization offering a simple and practical tool of meditation to eliminate stress, restore human values, and encourage people from all backgrounds, religions, and cultural traditions to come together and meet the best 'you' within yourself.")[143] Of particular interest, among such organizations is those identifying with the label NaqshMuMRa, such as the NaqshMuMRa International Fellowship, as these fully acknowledge and embrace their Sufi heritage as seen in the very name NaqshMuMRa as well as the use of the full *silsila* going back to Muḥammad, self-identifying as Sufi, retaining Sirhindī's five *laṭā'if* for the *'ālam-i amr*, and using a significant amount of other Sufi technical terminology, including *nisbat* (which they translate as "spiritual nexus" and use similarly to Rasool's *nisbat* in the sense of the relationship with the teacher), *tawajjuh* and *murāqaba*, but also interspersed with more Hindu terminology like *japa*, *satsang*, and *guru* (https://sites.google.com/site/laalaajinilayam/home).

[144] Westerlund, *Sufism in Europe and North America*, 25-32.

that other paths may also benefit their adherents. Rasool's origins in the plural society of India has surely facilitated this, as Genn has also posited in the case of Inayat Khan,[145] but one also finds significantly more exclusivist positions coming from India as well, such as the famed preacher Zakir Naik (not a Naqshbandī). Out of those embracing Islam, the pluralistic side of the spectrum is unsurprisingly found at its most prominent among Sufism 1st groups, though it is also found being emphasized among Islam 1st and post-*ṭarīqa* groups as well, such as with the interfaith dialogue efforts of Kuftārū or Gülen. Following the precedent of the Prophet, such pluralism often focuses on Christians and Jews, e.g., SOST's first retreats being held in a Catholic monastery, described below, or Nazim's emphasizing the Christian over the neo-Pagan associations of Glastonbury during his visit there.[146] But now we turn to the plurality within Islam itself.

Binary Fission & Glocalization

Islam is a global religion, and as such, it cannot "be understood primarily with reference to a particular core region, a region that serves as the centre of authenticity […]". While there are universally shared elements among the various forms of Islam, like the Prophet, the Quran, and prayer, local manifestations are manifold, and more so are the interpretations of individuals for themselves, which may defer primarily to a single authority or may consult the Quran and *ḥadīth*s for themselves in conjunction with a range of other sources of authority. Given such "glocalization," or we might even say "glocalindivualization," considering the topic of Islam in relation to such a varied assemblage of groups is a monumental task that we confine to just a few pages here. Needless to say, there is much that could have been said that has not been. As far as the exact form of Islam practiced by this diverse array of Naqshbandī-related groups, while usually Ḥanafī Sunni, across all of the groups embracing Islam, there are variants largely influenced by the place of origin of the leader and/or group members, as well as further variations within these variants. Ron Geaves has described a process of "binary fission" whereby regional expressions of Islam and Sufism are copied from the homeland and pasted into new environments as a kind of carbon copy, but he has also spoken of the "emergence from ethnicity."[147] Instances of both processes can be observed taking place here. The origins of the groups of our survey are in either the subcontinent, especially Pakistan but also India and Bangladesh, and Afghanistan or the formerly Ottoman lands and beyond, such as Turkey in particular, but also Syria, Iraq, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Indonesia. On variations within regional variations, sometimes the divisions in the place of origin are reproduced in the diaspora.

The most prominent example of this is in the South Asian Deobandī and Barēlwī *maslak*s, which can have a profound influence on the Sufi beliefs and practices of their adherents. While many South Asian Naqshbandīs do not identify themselves as either, orientations toward one or the other of these movements or schools of thought can often be discerned. In the context of British India, Buehler has noted a tendency toward a focus on guided spiritual training by a "directing *shaykh*" among Deobandīs and toward a collective gathering around a "mediating *shaykh*" among Barēlwīs. Indeed, in looking at those groups that are known to teach such a curriculum, there is a significant portion that either cite and openly express support for the scholars of Deoband, or who display classic indicators of Deobandicity, like denouncing "grave-worshippers." In aligning with the reformist scholars of Deoband, they may reject traditional practices like the visiting the graves of saints (*ziyāra*) or celebrating the death anniversary of a saint (*'urs*) and the Prophet's birthday (*mawlid*). In fact, those displaying such a tendency were only found among groups teaching a planned curriculum, though not all of those teaching such a curriculum were Deobandī. However, the majority of South Asian Sufis in general, might be described as Barēlwī-oriented, although this label is not usually used self-

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[145] Celia A. Genn, "The Development of a Modern Western Sufism," in *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam*, ed. Bruinessen and Howell, 257-77, here 259-60

[146] Draper observed that "It is very apparent that the Haqqaniyya, from the start, wished to associate themselves with the Christian traditions of Glastonbury," over the pagan associations. "From Celts to Kaaba," 150.

[147] Ron Geaves, "A Case of Cultural Binary Fission or Transglobal Sufism?: The Transmigration of Sufism to Britain." Ron Geaves, *The Sufis of Britain: An Exploration of Muslim Identity* (Cardiff, UK: Cardiff Academic Press, 2000).

referentially. It indicates continued adherence to traditions widely observed in South Asia, such as the just mentioned performing *ziyāra* or celebrating *ʻurs* and *mawlid*, that are denounced as unlawful innovations by many reformists. They may wear green turbans, though the presence or absence of such is not an exclusive identifier, especially since the adherents of other non-South Asian lines like the Haqqaniyya may also, in fact Nazim directed the use of different Turban colors to indicate nationality or ethnic origin.[148] Barēlwī mosques are often colorfully decorated, and their celebrations are sometimes marked by equally vibrant and highly visible processions (*julūs*). There has been a problematic tendency among Western scholars in last decades to: 1.) seek to unambiguously categorize all groups as one or the other direction, whether they identify as such or not, 2.) to underestimate the continuing role of Sufism among Deobandī-affiliated or Deobandī-leaning Muslims, and 3.) to sometimes literally take sides with the Barēlwīs, even providing them analytical support by theorizing how they might better organize in response to the reformist critique.

The lines descending from Faḍl ʻAlī Shāh Qurayshī, which do teach a curriculum for *murāqaba*, provide an interesting example of how the Deobandī-Barēlwī divide is not as clear-cut as it is often depicted, nor is it a matter of Sufi versus anti-Sufi, since it can cut across closely related lines of the same Sufi *ṭarīqa*. For instance, Kamaluddin Ahmad often refers to the authority of the scholars of Deoband,[149] whereas in the closely related Sardārī line, Mohammed Saleem Latif, the British *khalīfa* of the Pakistani Sardar Ahmad, heads an education center affiliated with Dawat-e-Islami,[150] the Barēlwī proselytizing (primarily to other Muslims) response to the Deobandī Tablighi Jamaʻat. But such identification may be rejected, like Asif Hussain Farooqui, who denies any involvement in "politics" (i.e., Barēlwī-Deobandī), although Werbner has described him as more Deobandī-oriented, and instead of celebrating *ʻurs*, he holds an annual cricket tournament. On the other end, Muhammad Tahir Abbasi, head of the Tahiriyya, does not seem to have any declared affiliation with either movement, but he does hold an annual *ʻurs*.[151] Thus in the very same set of closely related lineages, we find overt connection to Deobandī or Barēlwī movements, as well as eschewing such politics, but displaying a tendency toward the theological positions of one or the other. Akram Awan of the Owaisiah, is another example who often cites Deobandī sources. Our case study lineage does not observably affiliate with either denomination and in its indigenous Indian setting, it seems to fall somewhere in between. While Turkish Sunni Islam has not seen such a major split, it does have its own particularities and differing articulations which have also been transferred to the West.[152]

It is fairly standard among the Islam 1st and post-*ṭarīqa* groups to cater mostly to a specific ethnic group, while others, especially in the Islam 1st category, have more deliberately sought to expand into new markets. Languages used can be a useful indicator for determining how far a lineage has sought (or has not) to transcend ethnic boundaries, though it may not necessarily tell us much about how successful they have been.[153] Despite having a presence in the West, web content may be entirely or mostly in the languages of the place of origin, thus indicating little interest at present in expanding, in the capacity of a Sufi organization, beyond ethno-linguistic boundaries. For example, despite the presence of Arvasi[154] and Menzil community Sufis in Germany, their online use of German is limited. The former does not seem to have any German-language presence online, though the latter's Semerkand

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[148] Tayfun Atay describes this as follows: "[…] British mürids are supposed to wear blue turbans, the Germans purple, the Arabs green, the Turks white and the blacks as a race group (i.e., no matter whether they are African or American) red […]." Atay, "Naqshbandi Sufis in a Western Setting," 61.

[149] They are even given a sub-page on his website. "The ʿUlamā and Awliyā of Deoband," IslamicSpirituality.org, accessed February 8, 2020, https://islamicspirituality.org/lectures/workshops/the-%ca%bfulama-and-awliya-of-deoband.

[150] "Khalifa Saleem," Zikr.co.uk, accessed February 8, 2020, http://www.zikr.co.uk/content/view/49/89/.

[151] IslahulMuslimeen.org.

[152] For an idea of the range of positions among various Turkish Muslim communities in Europe based on ethnographic research, see Ahmet Yükleyen, *Localizing Islam in Europe: Turkish Islamic Communities in Germany and the Netherlands* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2012).

[153] It also does not tell us whether they have transcended the diverse ethnic groups that share a particular language, such as those in Pakistan who may all share Urdu as a national language, but which has different regional languages like Punjabi and Pashto. Here we use "ethnicity" more broadly.

[154] AbdulHakimArvasi.com.

Media Group, does have a well-maintained German website offering a range of generally Islamic books, magazines, and other media. Their online Sufi presence, however, is mostly in Turkish.[155]

Similarly, despite having published several English-language books and pamphlets as well as a large enough following to be hosted for visits in the UK and North America, the lectures given by Akram Awan (d. 2017), a large number of which are available on various YouTube channels, are all given in Urdu, though a very small percentage have been given English subtitles and his magazine Al Murshed, while mostly in Urdu, sometimes features short translations into English.[156] Perhaps more significantly, a flyer advertising a visit to the UK was written mostly in Urdu with only location names and dates provided in English. Similarly, Yusuf Ahmed Naqshbandi, despite being based in the UK and having an English-language website, delivers all of his weekly *bayān* ("lectures") in Urdu.[157] These groups have made the attempt to reach a larger audience by transcending the language barrier, but it seems as though they are still mostly speaking to a Turkish or South Asian audience. In contrast, while Muhammad Tahir Abbasi Naqshbandi gives his sermons in Urdu, the websites of his organization, Jamaat Islah ul-Muslimin, can be found in Urdu, English, German, French, Swedish, Norwegian, and Arabic.[158] These primarily feature instructions for beginning the first practice of *murāqaba* along with contact information. The prolific Istanbul-based Osman Nuri Topbaş' IslamicPublishing.org is yet another example, with his works and others being available in an astounding array of languages. Whether or not this reflects the ground reality of their membership or is just an indicator of a desire to expand into new areas requires further research. We do know for certain that Jamaat Islah ul-Muslimin at least has members of South Asian origin in Germany and Sweden. The *shaykh*s themselves also have different levels of proficiency in the languages of their countries of operation. For instance, Asif Hussain Farooqui speaks flawless British English without any hint of an accent, likely related to his business career, whereas Sufi Sahib never learned English, despite his long residency in the UK.

The existence of a comparatively younger generation of *shaykh*s and *khalīfa*s who have been born, raised, educated, or had long residencies in Western countries can also facilitate the vernacularization and enculturation of Islam and Naqshbandī affiliation, ideas, and practices, creating more distinctively British, American, etc., ways of being Muslim and Naqshbandī. A few examples include, in the US, Irshad Alam, Abobakr Mojadedi, and Kamaluddin Ahmad, and in the UK, Faizul Aqtab Siddiqi and Mohammed Saleem Latif. The inevitability of change is highlighted by the fact that during the course of this research (2015-2020), several major *shaykh*s passed away, as did another just prior to that in 2014.[159]

More pronounced transcending ethnicity and regionally determined forms of Islam also occurs. Such development is facilitated by the presence of a growing form of a more globalized Islam that, unlike with Salafīs, adheres to the classical *madhhab*s and is promoted by widely popular and respected scholars who are often Western-born converts and Shādhilī Sufis, though this aspect is not strongly emphasized in their public self-presentation, like Abdul Hakim Murad, Nuh Ha Mim Keller, and Hamza Yusuf.[160] We see connections to such traditional global Islam among both Sufism 1st and Islam 1st groups, such as in the writings of Abdur Rashid as well as in interviews by Abobaker Mojadidi on Arman TV, a satellite channel providing Islamic programming for a largely Afghan audience. The

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[155] SemerkandOnline.de. For more specifically Sufi-related material in Turkish, see SemerkandDergisi.com. Although most of the literature and websites are in Turkish, thus revealing the main target audience, the Menzil Cemaat is certainly not an ethnically closed community. For instance, we have seen that Abdullah Sirr Dan-Jamal traces one of his lineages to the late Muhammad Rashid Erol (1930-1993) and the current *shaykh*, ʻAbdul Baqi al-Husayni has disciples in Bosnia as well as in the Bosnian diaspora. Catharina Raudvere and Ašk Gaši, "Home, nation and global Islam: Sufi oriented activities and community building among Bosnian Muslims in Southern Sweden," in *Sufis in Western Society: Global Networking and Locality*, 162-80, here 168. See also "Semerkand Medya Grubu," Semerkand.com.tr, accessed February 8, 2020, https://www.semerkand.com.tr/.

[156] OurSheikh.org.

[157] Tazkiya.org.

[158] IslahulMuslimeen.org.

[159] These include Sufi Abdullah, Akram Awan, Muhammad Mamunur Rashid, and Nazim al-Haqqani.

[160] Geaves, "A Case of Cultural Binary Fission or Transglobal Sufism?," 108-10.

latter includes discussions with scholars like Zaid Shakir, cofounder of Zaytuna College, and Rami Nsour, a teacher at Seeker's Hub. Thus, in addition to his continuing ties to *'ulamā'* in Afghanistan at the time of this research, he has also established connections with a growing de-territorialized form of global Islam that is sympathetic toward Sufism alongside having a grounding in the traditional Islamic sciences,

For another example, in 2015, the researcher attended part of a week-long visit to Germany by an American-born *shaykh* who had first converted to Islam through Salafī *da'wa*, but then chose Naqshbandī Sufism after meeting Mahmut Ustaosmanoğlu on the *ḥajj* and studying with him in Turkey. Those in the audience included Sunni Muslims of Turkish, Arab, Afghan, and Pakistani origin, with individuals of Barēlwī as well as Deobandī orientations, in addition to a number of German converts. While largely Islamic theology students, there were also other attendees that were from the local Muslim community as well as another group who had flown in from the UK to attend. Most were either pursuing higher education or were already well-educated and working in white collar jobs, though the researcher also met one mechanic. The above scholars, like Keller, Murad, and Yusuf, were often cited and highly recommended in discussions the researcher had with this cosmopolitan gathering.

While Islam 1st groups primarily attract Muslims living in the West, as well as sometimes converts, Sufism 1st groups seek to also attract, and are thus more often joined by, individuals having no previous affiliation with Islam. Hence, Sufism 1st groups, by their very nature, have sought to transcend religious and sectarian boundaries, and in so doing also transcend ethnicity, though this has been achieved to differing extents and in different ways. Such diversity can cause internal tensions and splits, however, as seen with the highly diverse Haqqaniyya, which from its very beginnings in the West in mid-1970s London witnessed a fracturing into different groups along lines defined by the indigenous convert versus immigrant origins of members, such that some Haqqani groups can properly be considered Sufism 1st, while others would be better seen as Islam 1st. While one group of converts continued ties with Bennett's Gurdjieffian community, other communities formed around South Asian or Turkish identity among immigrant Muslims.[161] All three groups were only really a unified community whenever the *shaykh* visited. Hermansen has noted that "the eventual splitting of followers of hybrid Sufi groups into universalist- and *sharī'a*,-oriented branches is fairly typical in the West."[162] Furthermore, Dickson has also noted this with regard to division among the Khalwati-Jerrahis in the US. In contrast, the considerably smaller SOST has maintained just a single group in London which began in the late 1970s and early 1980s with primarily caucasian non-Muslim spiritual seekers. With time, however, they eventually sought to attract members from the diverse array of Muslims of all backgrounds in the city, as discussed further in Part Two. Thus, we see a gradual approach on the collective level that is also taken at the level of the individual.[163]

Spiritual Training or "Authenti-Fiqh-ation"

While the Sufism 1st groups tend to focus on spiritual training of the individual, leaving the interpretation and implementation of the faith as a more personal affair, Islam 1st and post-*ṭarīqa* groups usually have a comparatively more public scope with regard to how Islam is understood and lived. Stated differently, in the Sufism 1st groups, which offer the possibility of participating in Sufi practices before accepting Islam, we sometimes see less of an emphasis on moralizing preaching and extensive detailed references to *fiqh* and *ḥadīth*s. Instead, there is more of a focus on spiritual development, and the individual's practice of Islam may be considered more of a private matter, with broader values and following the "spirit" of the law being more important than exact particulars that often vary from region to region, and from scholar to scholar. Sufism 1st groups may provide resources and instruction in Islamic belief and practice for converts and potential converts, but their overall focus tends to be more on specifically Sufi ideas and practices. The converts must also educate themselves on Islam, relying on the primary sources of the revelation as well as the range of scholarly opinions available, and then

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161 For a first-hand account based on ethnographic research among these three Haqqani groups in London, but primarily with the Turkish immigrant community, see Atay, "Naqshbandi Sufis in a Western Setting," 60-74.
162 Hermansen, "South Asian Sufism in America," 254.
163 A gradual process of Islamization has also been observed among the followers of Guru Bawa Muhaiyaddin and Burhaniyya.

choose for themselves exactly how to live their newly embraced faith. In such an endeavor, a common issue arises: the need to discern what is truly Islamic from what is cultural, what are the essential and indispensable prescriptions of the faith versus what are the interpretations of a particular region or school of thought. Thus, new local forms of the global faith of Islam are continually evolving.

Hermansen has noticed a trend of what she calls "gradualism," one that is visible in the Sufism 1st groups here. One of the factors that caused splits in the Haqqaniyya early on and that drew criticism from other Muslim groups against Nazim was a perception that he allowed a laxity with regard to the *sharīʿa* among his convert disciples.[164] First off, such a perspective ignores the fact that participation is entirely voluntary and if the *shaykh* is too draconian, he will risk driving students away. Also, if we consider how these converts may be entirely new to Islam, and also in light of the vastness of the prescriptions of the faith, it takes time and study to bring one's life into accordance with the Quran and *sunna*. Therefore, a gradual approach is more likely to be successful in the long-term, something that is also true at the collective level. Another aspect of this dynamic is not imposing a particular ethno-regionally specific reading of the divine revelation and allowing local versions within the global faith of Islam to emerge. Such privatization and individualization of faith can be seen as an adaptation not only to the West, but also to the globalized, (post-)modern world. It not only facilitates the process of non-Muslims converting to Islam, but also of "revert"[165] Muslims in the West returning to their faith through Sufism.

There are also differences in the approach to conversion itself. For the Haqqaniyya, *daʿwa* to Muslims and non-Muslims alike is among their stated goals, and they often cite the large numbers of educated caucasian Westerners that Nazim or Kabbani brought into Islam. In addition to the probably inflated numbers, it is questionable how many seriously pursue Islam after knowingly or unknowingly converting by repeating the *shahāda* at a mass *bayʿa* ceremony. In contrast, for SOST and the Circle Group, *daʿwa* is not a stated aim, with both groups holding that the desire to embrace Islam must come from within, as well as deliberately avoiding putting pressure on students to convert. This approach obviously limits the number of conversions, but it ensures that those who do embrace Islam, do so knowingly and committedly. In either case, like with the universalists, the emphasis is clearly on spiritual development, yet based on an Islamic foundation and in order to benefit fully from the teachings, acceptance of Islam is considered necessary. As we will see in Parts Two and Three, following the *sharīʿa* is often framed in terms of the benefits it has for spiritual progression, with less reference to it being a religious obligation.

In contrast, in the Islam 1st category, whose audience is largely Muslim by birth or through conversion prior to or concurrently with seeking to deepen the practice of their faith through Sufism or Sufi-derived practices and are thus already familiar with and seeking to live in accordance with the *sharīʿa*, it is more common to consistently encounter quite specific moralizing guidance. Often the only justification provided is a Quran or *ḥadīth* reference, the reason for doing it is because it is a religious injunction, and Sufi practices are believed to help facilitate one's ability to fulfil such obligations. Spiritual practices support the *sharīʿa*, not the reverse. Hermansen notes a trend toward "authenti-'*fiqh'*-ation," which can indeed be felt across the spectrum, from ethnically exclusive to more glocal-individualized expressions of Islam which can be seen as different responses to, but also articulations of, reformist critique. In the subcontinent, Buehler notes a dramatic rise in the 19th century in the number of scriptural proofs appearing in Sufi texts to justify their practices and views. The revelation was always important and indeed central, but the kind of lengthy scriptural justifications for every aspect of practice were not. The prominence of "authenti-'*fiqh*'-ation" today may in part be read as a continuing manifestation of the strong scripture-focus, that Sirhindī, Walī Allāh, and others paved the way for.

[164] Zarcone, "Rereadings and Transformations of Sufism in the West," 115-16.

[165] Here we use this term to indicate those born into Islam, but who may have had an excursus away from the faith but have returned; as distinct from converts of non-Muslim origin. Others, however, to defy such distinctions may use this same term to describe any convert, a reference to the original state of all humans being born in submission (*islam*) to God.

There is usually not only more overt discussion of what exactly it means to be a good Muslim, but there also tends to be more of a focus on improving the collective adherence to Islamic precepts among the Muslim community. Many of these groups place equal to significantly greater emphasis on Islamic education than on Sufi spiritual training, founding institutions that range from after school programs that educate children on the basics of Islam, as in the case of the Sardāriyya in the UK, or full-fledged post-secondary institutions offering both secular and religious education, such as Hijaz College.[166] While sometimes the *shaykh*'s sole qualifications are as a Sufi guide, we see several cases wherein the leaders are trained *'ulamā'* and their role as such has complemented or equaled their role in teaching Sufism, such as Kabbani and Kamaluddin Ahmad, or even surpassed it, e.g., Kuftārū. In some cases in the Islam 1st category, like the Pakistani Ghamkol Sharif community or the Turkish Menzil or Arvasi communities, as well as the post-ṭarīqa groups *in toto*, we are talking about larger communities as well as broader religious, social and even political movements. In such cases, Sufi teachings are just one part, sometimes major sometimes minor, of a much larger range of activities, thus among their numbers are teachers of Sufism or Sufi ideas and practices, *'ālim*s, and people who serve both roles. Sometimes the overlapping spheres of authority of the *shaykh* and the *'ulamā'* among his following may come into conflict, as observed by Werbner.[167] But just as with the Sufism 1st groups, among the Islam 1st and post-*ṭarīqa* groups, Sufi teachings and practices are tied to and in fact are intended to result in correct Islamic living at the individual and collective levels, but in the Islam 1st groups, emphasis may be placed more on one or the other.

Considering some obvious concrete examples of how these differences manifest, just as there are a range of interpretations of Islam present in this survey, on outer indicators of Islamicity like dress and appearance, we find a range of positions across all of the groups embracing Islam. Some adherents and leaders alike may wear modest and Western-style clothing at all times and don a simple prayer cap or scarf over their hair during prayer only. At the other end of the spectrum, there may be scrupulous attention to detail in seeking to precisely imitate the custom of the Prophet in every aspect of life. Turbans and long beards as well as *ḥijāb*s may be the expected norm at all times, and there may be strong encouragement to conform, for instance the highly uniform appearance of the students of Farooqui.[168] There are of course manifold positions between these two poles, but on the first side, such aspects are seen as cultural facets of Muḥammad 's life that are less important than following the broader values he taught. For others, however, these details are highly important aspects of the faith. This is not to mention their increased importance in affirming Islamic identity and building solidarity in Western contexts, where there is often strong incentive not to stand out with such highly visible forms of Islamic dress. For instance, at the end of one Sardārī video, listeners are reminded to use a *miswāk* and the males to keep at least a fist-length of beard, since it is a *sunna* and thus incumbent upon them to observe. The narrator also reminds the ladies to be in *purdah* whenever they leave the home,[169] which brings us to the topic of gender.

One issue often discussed in relation to adaptations of Sufism to the West, particularly with respect to Islam, is gender. Such discussions usually consider factors like the percentage of female membership, the degree of separation between genders, and the presence of female leadership (and whether they are the main leader of the lineage or a subordinate leader and whether in such a role they provide leadership to both genders or only to females). While predominantly male public participation

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[166] IQRAEducation.org.uk; HijazCollege.com.

[167] Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love*, 95-97; Pnina Werbner, "Du'a: Popular Culture and Powerful Blessing at the 'Urs," 92.

[168] His students elaborate on this emphasis, but deny it being superficial or empty ritualism: "Hadhrat Shaykh's emphasis on dress and the importance of one's appearance being in line with the Sunnah is a central element of his teaching, though of course the necessity of combining this with the Sunnah of good manners and character, as well as taqwa, sincerity and love in worship, is also continuously stressed. Hadhrat Shaykh's own example shows that through incorporating the Sunnah into every area of one's life, and by combining this with abundant Dhikrullah and the company of the Friends of Allah – the people of taqwa – a person can be graced with Allah's pleasure and nearness." "Brief Bio," PreciousPearlz.WordPress.com, accessed February 10, 2020, https://preciouspearlz.wordpress.com/brief-bio/.

[169] Qalbi Zikr Academy, "Acquire a Living Heart (Qalb-e-Saleem) through Qalbi Zikr & Muraqaba," accessed February 1, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxaCC6DjHRs&feature=youtu.be.

is common in the Islam 1st and post-*ṭarīqa* categories, a trend toward significantly greater female participation has been observed among universalist Sufi groups and those attracting non-Muslim spiritual seekers.[170] Such was observed by the researcher at Kaiser's 2018 visit to Munich and at the events of both case study branches. The segregation of genders is present to one degree or another in all of the groups that embrace Islam. Among some, especially Sufism 1st groups, this separation may be limited to only during prayer and collective practices, which may nonetheless be in the same room while standing in separate lines or sitting in meditation on different sides of the room, whereas among some others, primarily in the Islam 1st and post-*ṭarīqa* categories, contact between unrelated and unmarried men and women may be proscribed to varying degrees. Here, gatherings may even be for men only, something in fact attested to by how some flyers for events include the statement "Sisters welcome." Among the groups embracing Islam, the interaction between a male *shaykh* and a female disciple may require a chaperone to ensure full propriety, though this practice seems to be less observed among Sufism 1st groups.

Such forms of separation are almost non-existent among universalists, save for the separation of men and women for Subud's *latihan* and the women-only meetings held by Vaughan-Lee.[171] While the former likely stems from Subud's Islamic roots, the latter was more a matter that evolved out of a need to create a comfortable environment.[172] Among the universalists, one finds instances of female leadership, such as in the cases of Tweedie, Kaiser, and Pak Subuh's daughter, Ibu Rahayu becoming the informal leader of Subud,[173] although most of the head leaders are still men. In contrast, none of the lineages embracing Islam have a female as the head of the *ṭarīqa*,[174] though we do find female group leaders in SOST with administrative and introductory teaching roles and in other groups, like the Kuftāriyya and Haqqaniyya, there are female *shaykha*s who lead female auxiliaries.[175] Such roles were already performed and auxiliaries formed in Muslim-majority settings and are thus not adaptations to the Western context.

Tensions and Polemics

Approaching the topic of activism and before leaving that of the relationship to Islam, we briefly consider some ways in which Islamic identity(-ies); or in the case of the universalists, the lack of any particular confession; may or may not encounter tensions with the majority non-Muslim society in the West, as well as among these groups and within the Muslim community. From the perspective of Western societal norms, universalist groups might be categorized by some as varieties of emergent religion or spirituality. They might at worst be labelled as cults or less harshly as "New Age" and be seen as dwelling on the margins of society for failing to identify with more dominant faiths in the West. Nonetheless, with the more personal rather than public nature of religious belief and practice in Europe and North America, this causes significantly less friction than it would in say, Saudi Arabia or Afghanistan, where apostasy is punishable by death. While conversions to emergent religions raised eyebrows and were often associated with the counterculture of the 1960s, since then and with the growth of the New Age movement, taking part in alternative religio-spiritual practices has moved increasingly from the margins toward acceptability within the mainstream. The fact that none of these groups

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[170] On women in a non-Naqshbandī lineage that we would label as Sufism 1st, the Budshishiyya, see Marta Dominguez Diaz, *Women in Sufism: Female Religiosities in a Transnational Order* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

[171] On Vaughan-Lee and women, see Dickson, *Lived Sufism in North America*, 163-66.

[172] William Rory Dickson, "Sufism and *Shariʿa*: Contextualizing Contemporary Sufi Expressions," *Religions* 13, no. 5 (2022): 449.

[173] Widiyanto, *Ritual and Leadership*, 186-190.

[174] Laleh Bakhtiar is included here as an author rather than the leader of an organization.

[175] For an ethnographic study of such a Kuftārī *halqa*, see Gisele FonsecaChagas, "Female Sufis in Syria: Charismatic Authority and Bureaucratic Structure," in *The Anthropology of Religious Charisma: Contemporary Anthropology of Religion*, ed. Charles Lindholm (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). Also, often cited in this regarded is Annabelle Böttcher, "L'élite féminine kurde de la Kuftariyya: une confrérie naqshbandi damascène," in *Islam des Kurdes*, ed. Martin van Bruinessen (Paris, 1998), 125-139.

promote a particular religious confession can be seen as an adaptation that makes them as acceptable as taking a Yoga class or attending a mindfulness meditation retreat. This has not, however, protected all of them from critique, since Subud has been accused in various places online of being a cult and SRCM has even been listed in a report on *dérives sectaires* ("derivative sects," meaning "cults") by the French government,[176] though the cited instances of *contrôle pesant* ("heavy control") sound like standard Sufi practice and could be found in many of the groups in this survey, or at disciplined Yoga or Zen meditation retreats. Overall, however, there is little compulsion for these groups to justify themselves in Western settings.

Yet those groups embracing Islam are faced with fears in the West regarding their faith, suspicions of terrorism, concerns about the compatibility of Islam with democracy and Western values, whether immigrants will "integrate," whether Muslims are seeking to implement *sharīʿa* law in the West, and human rights issues, like the treatment of women and honor killings. It seems that the larger organizations are more prone to suspicions, the Sulaymançis' Quran schools being accused of being centers for radicalization,[177] the Islamist nature of the Millî Görüş causing concern over their influence and aspirations, and Gülen's Hizmet Movement being described as an "Islamic supremacist cult."[178] But it also occurs at more local levels, such as when Farooqui was arrested by British police on suspicions of terrorism and shortly after released.[179] Many groups try to allay such fears through dialogue and outreach to non-Muslims, as we will discuss below and as Farooqui's students quickly did with BeautyofIslam.org being set up just two months after his arrest. But misgivings also go in the other direction, such as being concerned with Western values and rejecting materialism (a critique also found among universalists), promiscuity, as well as drug and alcohol use. In fact, these apprehensions are among some of the very reasons many of these lineages and religious communities have expanded into the West, to provide spiritual support to Muslims in a non-Muslim land.

But now we move on to consider a topic that hinges largely on religious affiliation or lack thereof: the relationships and interactions among the different Sufi groups covered here. While *shaykh*s may keep to themselves and their own base of students, there are also those who actively build ties with others, but there are some factors affecting with whom they chose to do so. From the perspective of Muslim Sufis, the groups that use the title of Sufism without practicing Islam are not generally seen as legitimate Sufis. Accordingly, there seems to be somewhat of a barrier separating universalists from the rest, though Vaughan-Lee reports written correspondence with Rasool,[180] and we have seen Irshad Alam also being unafraid of the stigma of associating with a universalist Sufi. Such hesitancy on the part of other Muslim Sufis seems to ignore the fact that this lineage was passed by a Muslim *shaykh* into the hands of non-Muslim leadership in 1896, almost six decades before Vaughan-Lee was even born.

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[176] MIVILUDES (Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires), "Rapport annuel 2003," accessed on February 3, 2020, https://www.derives-sectes.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/publications/francais/Rapport_MIVILUDES_2003.pdf, 80, and fn 25.

[177] Critics during Europe's "immigration crisis" accused the Sulaymançis in Germany of "teaching a fundamentalist Islam and preventing the integration of young people." ("[…] einen fundamentalistischen Islam vermitteln und die Integration von jungen Leuten verhindern." Krupp, Kerstin. "Das Bundesinnenministerium Begrüßt Bildung Eines Muslimrats, Experten Sehen Ihn Eher Kritisch: Bedenken Gegen Kooperation Islamischer Verbände." *Berliner Zeitung*. N.p., 02 Sept. 2011. Web. 12 Apr. 2017).

[178] Clare Lopez and Christopher Holton, *The Gulen Movement: Turkey's Islamic Supremacist Cult and its Contributions to the Civilization Jihad* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace, 2015).

[179] In November 2009, just two months before the website BeautyofIslam.org was set up by his students, the *shaykh* was arrested as part of a larger anti-terrorism operation and released without any charges being filed. During the week that he was detained, some 300 protestors demonstrated outside the Manchester police headquarters and over 20,000 signatures were collected in an online petition. Local news reported that upon his release he thanked the police for their humane treatment of him and particularly their respect and sensitivity to his religious requirements and acknowledged the responsibility of the police to "protect us all." The article also quotes a spokesman for the Bolton Council of Mosques as saying: "Shaykh Farooqui has always advocated peace, tolerance, harmony and respect for the law of this country." Steven Thompson, "Religious Leader: Police Treated Me with Respect," TheBoltonNews.Co.Uk accessed March 23, 2024, http://www.theboltonnews.co.uk/news/4755863.Religious_leader__Police_treated_me_with_respect/.

[180] Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 133, 163.

Interaction between Sufism 1st and Islam 1st groups seems much more common, such as through the NFIE, though there is a tendency to interact more within their respective categories, as is possible for the Sufism 1st groups in such fora as the Sufi Symposium and ISRA, or as we saw with Darr speaking at the Baraka Institute. This partial separation might be attributed to different areas of emphasis, spiritual development among the Sufism 1st groups and correct Islamic practice among the Islam 1st groups. There are also other intra-Sufi differences, such as pertaining to leadership styles and, as we will see in our case study lineage, there is a wish to avoid being confused with more mediational approaches.

There are also of course the abovementioned diverse ethno-sectarian and regional interpretations of Islam that can act as barriers among these groups, particularly those of South Asian origin, with the impetus to either purify the faith of un-Islamic innovations that have crept in, accepting Sufi organizational structures and practices, but rejecting *'urs* celebrations, *ziyāra* or ascribing an omnipresent superhuman status to the Prophet, or conversely to preserve such traditional South Asian practices and beliefs in the face of such reform attempts. But while all of those in the Sufism 1st and Islam 1st categories accept Sufism, there are also further reform attempts from outside who consider Sufism itself to be *bid'a*. Thus a limited reformist critique exists within these groups and, as we have discussed, it necessitates scriptural proofs to legitimize certain Sufi teachings and practices, but there are also groups who would like Sufism to be eliminated entirely, alongside adherence to the classical schools of jurisprudences (*taqlīd*). Such movements may be termed Wahhābī, Salafī, or in South Asia in particular, the Ahl-i Ḥadīth. Yet like the labels of Deobandī and Barēlwī, the first two terms are not generally used self-referentially. The complex situation has been highly simplified here, but we see that the drive to reform exists both among and outside of those embracing Sufism, a drive that in different ways was fostered by the personalities of Sirhindī, Walī Allāh, and Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd, though it is questionable as to whether they originally intended the sort of intra-(Sunni)Muslim hostilities that have since emerged.[181] Usually such tensions are a war of words, but there is also the potential for violence. Though the identities and exact motives of the perpetrators are unclear, and it may have been entirely unrelated to such ideological frictions, Ghulam Hussain Shah Bukhari was the target of an assassination attempt in 2013, when a roadside bomb detonated on his convoy, killing his grandson.[182] But in the face

[181] For more background details, see for instance, Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*.

[182] On 20 February 2013, travelling in a convoy en route to a religious gathering, the *shaykh*'s vehicle was targeted by a remotely detonated roadside bomb, wounding him and several others, including his grandson who later died from his wounds. The apparently targeted attack may well have been an act of sectarian violence, one among others during a surge of attacks in Sindh including three implanted bombs and five suicide bombings which together took no less than 150 lives (https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/150306-Interior-Sindh-has-a-history-of-suicideattacks-targeted-killings; https://www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/414187). Some news reports made certain to point out the *shaykh*'s distance from politics and his primary focus as being on religious concerns. One article explains that he "teaches only the message of peace" and also that he "made sure that the dargah is free of all political associations." The article furthermore quotes one of his grandsons as saying "Shah is a religious cleric, and has nothing to do with politics, and did not have any political rivalry either" (https://tribune.com.pk/story/511776/cleric-targeted-in-jacobabad-last-week-teaches-only-the-message-of-peace/). Another article from a correspondent for The Tribune explains that "The exact motive for the incident could not be immediately determined, as the religious scholar himself was apolitical, and did not seem to have any personal enmity with anyone" (https://tribune.com.pk/story/510107/cleric-survives-bomb-blast-but-grandson-dies/). However apolitical the *shaykh* may be, politics did inevitably come into play. The attacks were condemned by Imran Khan (https://www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/414187) as well as the leader of the secular Muttahida Qaumi Movement, but also the Barēlwī political party Sunni Tehrik, with the latter holding demonstrations calling for a day of mourning across Sindh province involving the closing of stores and other commercial activities (https://www.dawn.com/news/787417/newspaper/newspaper/column; https://www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/414305; https://tribune.com.pk/story/510825/upper-sindh-on-lockdown-as-clerics-grandson-buried/), a call that some of the *shaykh*'s followers reportedly helped to enforce by blocking the national highway between Sindh and Punjab (https://tribune.com.pk/story/510107/cleric-survives-bomb-blast-but-grandson-dies/).) Nevertheless, when religious authority reaches a certain level of influence

of reformist critique, we see a broad range of responses, from dismissiveness to engaging in heated debates and active polemics. There are also a plethora of responses in between, such as by absorbing the critique to differing extents. On the latter, this may, for instance, involve a type of crypto-Sufism, whereby non-Quranic Sufi terms are either eliminated or used more sparingly in favor of Quranic terms like *iḥsān* and *tazkiyat al-nafs*. Weismann has traced this strategy to Nadwat al-Ulama's former long-term rector and a Naqshbandī *shaykh*, Abū al-Ḥasan ʻAlī Nadwī (1914-1999),[183] from whom it spread to the Syrian Kuftārū and others. But there are also more active ways of pushing back against reformist critiques, which we will discuss in the following section.

Societal Engagement

In opening the section on the relationship to Islam, we noted that the mystical encounter is understood to *do something*, it changes something in the individual, how they see the world and how they interact with it. For those who embrace Islam, that something has much to do with an increased awareness of God, as defined by their respective understandings of Islamic theology, which is believed to result in an enhanced ability to follow the *sharīʻa*, something well illustrated by the concept of *iḥsān*. But Muslims are also exhorted in the Quran to go beyond only practicing such adherence themselves individually, and to encourage it throughout society, to "enjoin what is right and forbid what is evil."[184] Among universalists, this guiding framework is replaced by something other than Islam. This may include a combination of personal conscience and convictions determined by societal norms as well as one's existing belief system, whether that be in a more traditional codified religion, such as Christianity

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among the population, it becomes politicized, willingly or unwillingly, and the *shaykh* is said to have been visited by a number of politicians seeking his blessings, but perhaps also to benefit from his influence with the populace. One of these was the late Benazir Bhutto (assass. 2007), who is said to have visited him on more than one occasion. For a video clip of one of Bhutto's visits where she sits at the *shaykh*'s feet, see: Zeeshanghouri5. "Saeen Ghulam Hussain Shah & Benazir Bhutto." YouTube. January 21, 2012. Accessed April 09, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rskJ39QFg2A.

[183] Nadwatul Ulama ("Council of Religious Scholars") is an institution of Islamic higher education (*dār al-ʻulūm*) characterized by Ḥanafī, Shāfiʻī, and Ahl-i Ḥadīth orientations. It was founded in 1892 to chart a middle course between Aligarh and Deoband. It is seemingly closer to the latter, however, than the Jamia Millia that attempted the same and at which Rasool studied and worked, as discussed below. This synthesizing attempt, to overcome intra-Muslim differences bridging modernist and reformist approaches, can be seen in the life and work of the below mentioned Shiblī Nuʿmānī (d. 1914), with his background in Aligarh circles along with his connections to the Arab Muslim modernism of Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935) and his firm belief in the compatibility of reason and the Islamic revelation (Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 429-33). This institution, based in Lucknow, is included here for a few reasons: in addition to it being a major international hub of Islamic learning and thus the spread of ideas, along with the Naqshbandī connections of its founders, most important of which is the unique contribution of Abū al-Ḥasan ʻAlī Nadwī. Not only was he a Mujaddidī *shaykh*, but he was also the chairman of Nadwatul Ulama from 1961 to 1999, in addition to promoting *daʻwa* through his close association with the Tablīghī Jamāʻat. The Mujaddidī *silsila* of the Nadwī family of *ʻulamā'*, like that of the current case study, goes back through Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd and Walī Allāh. No other lineage in this survey has either of those key individuals. Echoing Nuʿmānī's ties to Riḍā, Nadwī maintained relations with the Muslim Brotherhood during his travels in the Middle East, but he also met with others, like the Syrian Aḥmad Kuftārū. Weismann credits Nadwī as being the originator of the strategy of "Sufism without taṣawwuf," a kind of "crypto-Sufism" whereby non-Quranic Sufi terminology is avoided, whereas Sufi practices and concepts are retained but described in purely Quranic language, like *tazkiyyat al-nafs* and *iḥsān*. Such a strategy was in turn adopted by Kuftārū, with whom Nadwī spent much time in Syria, and subsequently can be seen being employed by other groups in this survey. Itzchak Weismann, "Sufi Fundamentalism between India and the Middle East," in Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell, *Sufism and the "Modern" in Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 115-28. For more on Nadwī, see Jan-Peter Hartung, *Viele Wege und ein Ziel: Leben und Wirken von Sayyid Abu l-Hasan ʻAli al-Hasani Nadwi 1914-1999* (Wurzburg: Ergon, 2003). Such absorption of reformist critique to the extent that it changes Sufi technical terminology, and thus also effecting practice and doctrine, has later been adopted by other groups. This is especially true in the Islam 1st category, either wholly or in part, such as in their self-presentation, to compete for followers among Muslims in the contemporary environment where purist perspectives abound and scriptural legitimization is crucial.

[184] Quran 3:110; 3:104.

or Hinduism, or more often than not, a less static individualized secular humanist morality informed by a fluid metaphysics drawn from among the wide range of available alternative spiritualities. Obviously, the latitude for personal choice is far greater among the universalists, and the Islamic Sufis would assert, so is the opportunity for the lower soul to seize control. Yet this is not to say that there is no room for individual interpretation among the Islamic groups who travel along the broad road of the *sharīʿa*, but we see this at its widest among those that welcome non-Muslim practitioners. For Rasool, attaining to *iḥsān* and following the *sharīʿa*, being a pious Muslim and being a "highly humane and moral person" are seen as much the same thing.

The Naqshbandī principle of *khalwat dar anjuman* ("solitude in the crowd") or *khalwa fi jalwa*, also found in the expression *dast be-kār, dil be-yar* ("hand at work, heart with a Friend"), appears across the spectrum, though it is understood and realized in a number of different ways, ranging from a relative quietism, confined to earning a living while also refining one's inner being, to more active societal engagement and even political activism. None of the groups encountered advocate permanent retreat from the world, though sometimes stories are reverentially told of periods of extreme renunciation in the lives of past saints, periods that might involve experiences like visions and also lead to profound doctrinal realizations.[185] Across all four categories, we find mention of the need to fulfill one's worldly responsibilities while also maintaining a connection to the divine in daily life. Such a connection is held to make one a better person, however defined, and thus has moral and ethical implications for personal conduct not only individually but also in one's interactions in society. All of these work at least at the level of the individual, seeking to inculcate broader values as well as, in the groups embracing Islam, often exoteric religious beliefs and behaviors. This is also intended to have wider implications for society, but pursued on the collective level to different degrees of penetration into the public sphere.

Some of these groups, like SOST, remain focused on the spiritual development of the individual through mystical practices with the intention of allowing such personal transformation to gradually and organically develop into societal transformation. The vast majority of groups, however, are somehow more deeply engaged in the public sphere in an active and organized way. In universalist groups, this is guided not so much by religiously determined objectives but more by humanistic concerns, while in most groups embracing Islam, this involves the goal of being a pious Muslim often articulated through the preaching of sometimes very specific guidelines. But again, in the teachings of Rasool, and some others, we see these two things presented as ultimately not being all that different.

To such ends, they seek to reproduce and spread what it is they have to offer, which always includes some aspect of mysticism, whether that be practiced more individually or collectively. But that

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185 Such as in the lives of ʿAbd al-Bārī Shāh or Saʿīd Khān. Also, according to Kabbani, Nazim's teacher, ʿAbd Allāh al-Daghestānī, underwent two lengthy periods of seclusion, each consisting of five years. His description of the conditions and requirements of his first *khalwa* are included in Kabbani's *Classical Islam and the Naqshbandi Sufi Tradition*. He retreated to a cave hidden within a forest on a mountain covered in snow, where he was to take six cold showers daily with melted snow and subsist off of only seven olives and two ounces of bread each day (This equals less than 220 calories when factoring in the largest olives possible on *Fatsecret.com*'s calorie counting tool). In addition to unfailingly performing all obligatory practices as well as the prescribed *dhikr*, his daily spiritual regimen, "all to be performed in a focused and meditative state," also included, among a variety of other unspecified austerities, reciting between seven and fifteen sections of the Quran (Presumably, he is referring to *ajzāʾ*, the plural form of *juzʾ*, which when recited at the rather rapid pace of twenty minutes each would take between two hours, twenty minutes and five hours.), repeating "Allāh" 148,000 times (at a rate of reciting "Allah" three times per second, this alone would take almost fourteen hours (thirteen hours, forty-two minutes) without a break), and the *ṣalawāt al-sharīfa* 24,000 times (at an incredible rate of one repetition per second, this would still require nearly seven hours [six hours, forty-two minutes] to complete.). These practices would require superhuman speed in recitation, not to mention an extremely slow metabolism, so it is unlikely that such feats would be required of the average *murīd*, but they do offer some idea of the types of tasks assigned as well as the brutally ascetic character of *khalwa*. It was during this first *khalwa* that ʿAbd Allāh beheld "experiences and visions [that] cannot be expressed in words" and it was after his second extended *khalwa* that is said to have spoken of having ascended through the five levels of the heart and also expounded upon the nine points, assuring his listeners that he would never speak of levels to which he had not himself attained. Kabbani, *Classical Islam*, 429-31, 437.

mystical aspect may be the main thrust (especially for universalists and Sufism 1st, but also Islam 1st) or it may only be a small part of the package and even deemphasized in their public presentation over a wider Islamic identity (especially post-*ṭarīqa*, as well as Islam 1st). Whether to Muslims or to non-Muslims willing to explore an alternative spirituality, this spread occurs by word of mouth as well as print and electronic communication media,[186] but it may penetrate more deeply into the public sphere, from grassroots personal piety movements to being deeply entangled with governments in their places of origin as well as seeking to interface with and effect governments in their more recent Western contexts. This topic of activism could quickly become a black hole and a separate research project on its own for any of the given groups in this survey. Thus, the intention here is to quite briefly consider the range of Naqshbandī-related engagement in the public sphere, hitting the wavetops so to speak and providing a few examples, so as to then be able to situate our case study within this field of possibilities.

Among those focusing almost exclusively on individual spiritual training, Ali-Shah holds that this will have "a ripple effect" outwards to also benefit others.[187] Elsewhere, he similarly states that "as the spiritual development is reflected outside, so this benefits and influences one's family, one's circle, one's friends and one's society."[188] Similarly, SRCM has associated with the United Nations Department of Global Communications (UN DGC) in the aim of fostering "solidarity and goodwill" among all peoples to achieve "lasting peace and a sustainable life" for all. For their part, SRCM pursues this objective by spreading a meditative technique, or in their words, "by offering, without charge to all those who are interested, a simple and practical method of spiritual training known as Sahaj Marg." Among our case study groups, a similar position is taken by SOST, as described at the end of Part Two. For such groups, their more quietist activism involves spreading and practicing their spiritual teachings while being engaged in the world. The vast majority of groups, however, are also somehow actively engaged in the public sphere beyond providing spiritual teachings.

Across the Muslim groups, this may include preaching and active *da'wa*, which is usually, though not always, to other Muslims and largely, though again not always, to within the same ethnic group. They may make use of similar language of personal Islamic piety radiating out from the individual, thus leading to broader change in society. For instance, the Jamat Sardaria, describes itself as "a world wide religious and reformative Muslim organization," seeking the adoption of an "Islamic way of life by establishing religious institutions, reformative centers and arranging gatherings for zikrullah […]." As a result of their efforts, they assert that thousands are now "living according to Islamic teachings." And they hold that such societal transformation starts with the individual, saying "Every individual member of Jamait Sardaria begins with himself or herself, his or her family members and neighbors."[189]

Supporting or providing education is a theme found time and again across all four categories, whether local, regional, or global in scope. While among the universalists, such education is invariably secular in nature and in the groups embracing Islam it is usually either purely religious education, a

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[186] Hammer has associated dissemination through personal contacts with Islamic Sufism and through books with "Neo-Sufism." Hammer, "Sufism for Westerners," 139. This may have been true when he wrote his article in 2004, and it may still be true in a broader comparative sense, but we now see both means of dissemination used widely across the spectrum.

[187] Ali-Shah, *Rules or Secrets*, 254-5.

[188] Idem 164. In other words, as the individual develops and enhances him or herself, they influence and positively affect those that they are in contact with, and this is also said to occur at the collective level in something Ali-Shah makes frequent reference to called "the oil-spot technique" (Idem 209). In this analogy, the positive effects radiating outwardly from individuals and groups of individuals within the Tradition are likened to oil-spots dropped on a piece of paper that gradually "spread out and coalesce" (Ali-Shah, *The Sufi Tradition in the West*, 77.). Nevertheless, this collective enhancement does not result in any form of organized social activism or engagement. Omar Ali-Shah notes that he is "not supposed to save society in general" (Ali-Shah, *Rules or Secrets*, 256), stating further that "We are not the Salvation Army." While acknowledging that "certain good works, good thoughts, harmony, friendship and so forth, do exist in, and emanate from, that Church/Army activity," he says that "what one really wants is the permeation of the person, the permeation of the group, and the permeation of society in a lasting fashion." (Idem 255).

[189] "About Us," Naqshbandia.info, accessed February 10, 2020, http://naqshbandia.info/naqshbandia_sardaria/About_Us.htm.

combination of secular and religious, or is primarily secular but somehow connected with Islam. Education efforts among the Islam 1st and post-*ṭarīqa* groups may range from providing after-school classes in basic Islamic belief and practice, like the abovementioned Sardārī involvement in IQRA Education or the Sulaymançis Quran schools, to schools teaching a dual secular and religious curriculum, like Siqara Education[190] founded by Akram Awan or Kuftārū's network of schools in Syria, to adult education, college courses, and even *ʿālim*-producing courses of study, like Hijaz College.[191] Such training not only facilitates the propagation of particular understandings of Islam, but it is also salient when it comes to confronting anti-Sufi critiques with theological and jurisprudential proofs as well as attracting young Muslims who are keen on what Hermansen describes as "authenti-*fiqh*-ation." Also of note is the women-only Zaynab Academy, founded by Kamaluddin Ahmad and his wife.[192] Still, we do find exclusively secular education initiatives being promoted by Muslim groups, such as Hizmet's vast educational efforts including universities or the Ghamkol Sharif community's tutoring program which is open to local children regardless of faith.[193] There is also of course the secular education provided at the World Community Education Center as well as the civic education efforts of Legacy International, seeking to promote engaged citizenship and social responsibility among people of all backgrounds.

In addition to education, another recurring area of activity is humanitarian aid work, such as assistance to the poor, disaster relief, building hospitals, and development projects in underprivileged areas. On the official Subud website, the *latihan* is described as "the result of a renewed contact with the divine force of life," which "reconnects us with something greater than ourselves and keeps this special awareness alive and active."[194] In seeking to manifest this in the world, they established Susila Dharma International (SDI), translating *susila dharma* as being "guided from within to take action in the world." They also elaborate on the connection between their spiritual practice and what they see as its practical results in the world, saying "Subud members endeavour to put into practice what they experience in the Subud *latihan*. This includes a rich variety of projects including commercial, social, humanitarian, cultural, educational and healthcare initiatives and undertakings."[195] The four main areas of activity listed on the SBI website currently are healthcare, education, sustainable livelihoods, and the environment, which they explain are accomplished by "Harness[ing] the resources of a global network to support grassroots initiatives."[196]

In most groups embracing Islam, aid initiatives are largely directed towards majority-Muslim areas, though this is not always the case, as seen in Part Three with Legacy International, a specifically secular organization established by Abdur Rashid which is staffed by people of all backgrounds and persuasions, and which does a great deal of work in Muslim-majority regions, but also in many other places around the world. For some Islam 1st examples, Yusuf Ahmad Naqshbandi's Naqshbandi Mujaddedi Foundation is a registered UK charity that focuses on aid to a Muslim community in West Bengal in forms like providing money, clothing, food, and medical care, but also the rebuilding of mosques and religious education, funding a pre- through primary school where English is taught alongside Quran recitation.[197] There are also the Falah Foundation of Akram Awan, devoted to helping the poor in rural areas of Pakistan, which it seems has also begun to focus on inclusive education;[198] and the Muhammed Osman Siraceddin Vakfi, a foundation whose activities include a diverse array of

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[190] SiqarahEdu.com.
[191] HijazCollege.com.
[192] ZaynabAcademyonline.org.
[193] GhamkolSharif.org.
[194] Subud.org.
[195] "World Subud Association," Subud.com, accessed May 3, 2017, http://www.subud.com/organization.html.
[196] SusilaDharma.org.
[197] "Naqshbandi Mujaddedi Foundation," Tazkiya.org, accessed April 08, 2018, https://www.tazkiya.org/naqshbandi-mujaddedi-foundation; "Projects," Tazkiya.org, accessed April 08, 2018, https://www.tazkiya.org/projects.
[198] FalahFoundation.com.

community services, which largely center around healthcare and religious and secular education. The latter foundation is presently constructing a dargah complex in Istanbul.[199]

One area that seems to be more of a concern among the universalists is environmentalism. It is not widely seen on the agenda across the four categories, though it does come into play for some, as we will see with Legacy at the end of Part Three and is also the case for Subud's SDI and it is likewise brought up in Kaiser's writings. For Vaughan-Lee, environmentalism is his main activist pursuit, as seen at his WorkingWithOneness.org and in the publication of a volume he edited entitled *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth, A Spiritual Response to Our Present Ecological Crisis*. As alluded to by "A Spiritual Response" in the title, he sees the ecological crisis as also being rooted in a spiritual crisis, a situation which should also be resolved through an increased "awareness of the unity and interconnectedness of all life." Among the post-*ṭarīqa* of Turkish origin, there is somewhat of an emerging concern with environmentalism, in particular Gülen, who holds that protecting the environment is a religious obligation.[200]

In addition to education and aid work, the third common ground is interfaith dialogue, whether that be at the local level or meeting with the Pope, as was done by both Gülen and Kuftārū, and for each of these men, such dialogue is/was a significant part of their work.[201] In those groups embracing Islam, part of this is responding to the fears and apprehensions about Islam held by many non-Muslim Westerners, to the extent that the need to allay such fears, denounce terrorism, and communicate what they feel is the beauty of Islam permeates much of their self-representation, as mentioned above with the website BeautyofIslam.org and the circumstances around its establishment. Among the universalists, dialogue is especially present in Kaiser's work and teachings, having herself been educated in economics and sociology in Switzerland, she has a professional background in international aid with a particular focus on women's issues and intercultural dialogue, and founded Open Hands, an aid organization that Kaiser heads which supports projects in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. More recently, she has been working with the *idea*, as she would say "im Ursprünglichsten Sinne des Wortes," as a "form" or a "pattern," of Europe; that is how Europe's transcending national boundaries can become a template for humankind in "embrac[ing] unity in diversity."[202]

The variety of efforts in education, aid work, and interfaith dialogue are sometimes supported by governmental institutions, but more often by networks of like-minded people and non-governmental organizations, charities, and foundations of all sizes which may also be connected with large media and commercial institutions. Initiatives may rely on existing entities or such institutions may be created by the community, as can be seen with Alauddin Siddiqui's Noor TV[203] or the Menzil Cemaat's vast Semerkand Media Group.[204] As we have seen from only the modest sampling thus far, on the whole, there tends to unsurprisingly be a more universalist meta-confessional scope among the universalists, whereas among the groups embracing Islam, the focus tends to be toward other Muslims, locally or internationally, and educational efforts often involve religious education and an element of *da'wa*. A major exception to such tendency, as we will see, are the efforts of Abdur Rashid and his students, discussed at the end of Part Three. But now we move away from discussing similarities in areas of activity, though with differing scopes, across all four categories, to areas that only apply those groups embracing Islam.

Among groups in the Islam 1st and post-*ṭarīqa* categories that began to arrive largely in the 1960s and 70s, like the Ghamkol Sharif community or the Sulaymançis, we see coordination for the

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[199] "Seyyid Muhammed Osman Siraceddin Vakfı Resmi Websitesi," SiraceddinVakfi.org, accessed April 29, 2018, http://siraceddinvakfi.org/. Also available on the website is his *Sirāc'ül-Kulūb*. This book was translated and published in English by his students in Canada as Muhammad Uthman Sirag ad-Deen an-Naqshbandi al-Kaderi, *Sirag Al-Quloub: "Lantern of Hearts"* (Edmonton, Alberta: Khankah Canada, 1992).
[200] Laura Wickström, "Secular and Religious Environmentalism in Contemporary Turkey," *Approaching Religion* 4, No. 2 (December 2014), 125-40, here 137.
[201] Different accounts and photos of Gülen's meeting with the pope are easily found online. For Kuftārū, see Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 161.
[202] See her recent work *Die Seele Europas erwacht* as well as Co-Creating-Europe.eu.
[203] As of 2020, this is now Noor Play, and can be accessed at NoorPlay.com.
[204] See, for example, SemerkandTV.com.tr or SemerkandPazarlama.com.

provision of Islamic goods and services that were initially unavailable in the new majority non-Muslim setting, such as worship facilities, organizing prayer and serving as *imām*s, ensuring the availability of *halāl* meat, arranging trips for the *ḥajj*, as well as Islamic funeral, marriage, and legal services, and more recently in the European and especially German context, assisting in the integration of newly arriving Muslim refugees from various places of origin. While the preceding activities, which seek to encourage and facilitate an Islamic way of life in majority non-Muslim settings, are usually the focus, some of the social initiatives cross over unambiguously into the realm of the political by engaging with or seeking to effect government, whether at the local, regional, national, or international levels. In fact, even seemingly basic activities like the provision of *imām*s, ends up crossing into the international political arena, as can be seen in Germany with the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği, or DITIB).[205]

We see some in our survey seeking to represent Muslim interests and address the concerns of the Muslim community, such as protests against aspects of the foreign policy of Western governments. One such example is the Afghan American *shaykh* and activist Abobaker Mojadidi, founder of the League of Education and Afghan Development (LEAD). On one hand, he is outspokenly critical of certain aspects of US foreign policy, such as drone strikes or of events like the 2012 Panjwai massacre, and on the other, he promotes and engages in interfaith dialogue, seeks to counter Islamophobia, advocates the compatibility of Islam and democracy, renounces ISIS and denies that they are legitimate representatives of Islam or Muslims generally, and promotes an understanding of Islam as inherently pluralistic and peaceful. But he also furthermore seeks to address broader issues beyond only the Muslim community, such as pertaining to social justice and equality, expressing support for movements like Occupy and BlackLivesMatter.[206] In the UK, for instance, there is the case of Alaudin Siddiqui

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[205] "Germany Works to Reduce Turkish Influence on Islam," AhvalNews,com, accessed February 11, 2020, https://ahvalnews.com/turkey-europe/germany-works-reduce-turkish-influence-islam.

[206] While Mojadidi now earns his livelihood in the tech industry, he has also sought to follow in the footsteps of his family by providing community leadership. Yet this is now said to have assumed an international scope and come to include not only the country of his birth, Afghanistan, but also Pakistan, India, the UAE, and the US in his native Fremont, California in the San Francisco Bay Area, which is home to the largest Afghan community in the US. Such leadership aspirations began as early as high school, where he served as president of the Islamic Student Union and, as reported by a local newspaper in 1995, he played a major role in easing ethnic tensions between Mexican American students and those of Afghan origin (Olszewski, Lori, and Chronicle East Bay Bureau, "Ethnic Respect at Fremont School / Public Conversion Ceremony Part of Student Peace Plan," SFGate, February 5, 2012, accessed March 30, 2018, http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Ethnic-Respect-at-Fremont-School-Public-3037968.php). In 2004, he travelled to Afghanistan in the name of promoting "peace, justice, unity, education, [and] development." In Kabul, the location of his family's *khanqah*, which he now heads, Mojadidi led a delegation of religious scholars and tribal leaders from southern Afghanistan in meeting with the then Afghan Interior Minister, Ali Ahmad Jalali, who more recently served as the ambassador to Germany (2017-2018). Of note, Bo Utas describes his own visit to the Kabul *khānaqāh*, where he met Mojadidi's father and grandfather in April of 1978, just months before the tragedy of 1979, in "The Naqshbandiyya of Afghanistan on the Eve of the 1978 Coup d'État," in *Naqshbandis in Western and Central Asia*, ed. Elisabeth Özdalga (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 1999), 117–127, here 120. Next, Mojadidi travelled to Paktika, where he spoke to a large gathering calling for an "end [to] the divides of Tajik, Pashtun, Hazara and Uzbek" (AfghanMuslim786, "Islam, Afghanistan, & Unity Campaign Part II - Afghan Peace, Justice, & Unity Trip," YouTube, November 18, 2007, accessed March 30, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aoVHDKz_-Pc). Back in the US, Mojadidi would come to found and head a non-profit organization called the League of Education and Afghan Development (LEAD) (Lisa Amin, "Afghan-Americans Watch Election Unfold," ABC7 San Francisco, accessed March 31, 2018. http://abc7news.com/archive/6974056/). A number of videos with Mojadidi speaking in various formats are available on the YouTube channel AfghanMuslim786, including to local news stations in Fremont as a leader in the Afghan community there, such as at several rallies, vigils, and peaceful demonstrations. Other formats consist of him giving lectures and mosque sermons, including at a *mawlid* celebration, and a series of programs on Islam in America that were filmed for Arman TV, a satellite channel providing Islamic programming for a largely Afghan audience. The content of such videos reflects his striving to help his community strike a balance, to find

(1938-2017), *sajjada nashin* of Nenian Sherif in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, who traveled to members of his community internationally, including extended stays in the UK. He founded the Mohiuddin Trust, with its two major areas of education and healthcare, establishing the Mohiuddin Islamic University on the grounds of Nenian Sherif and the Mohiuddin Medical College. The trust also lays claim to numerous disaster relief responses as well as efforts to provide assistance to the poor with a focus on Azad Jammu and Kashmir. They have also established a community and Islamic education center in Birmingham and for a time, ran the Mohiuddin International Girls College in the town of Burnley in Lancashire. As head of the British Muslim Alliance, Siddiqui led peaceful protests in response to the controversial anti-Islamic film "Innocence of Muslims," and even lobbied for legislation against the defamation of religious figures.[207]

Another figure, Faizul Aqtab Siddiqi, the oldest son of Muhammad Abdul Wahab Siddiqi, combines being a barrister, an *ʿālim*, and the President of Hijaz College. In founding the Muslim Action Committee, he has been vocal on the issue of blasphemy, denouncing Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and caricatures of the Prophet by French and Danish cartoonists, though avoiding the term "blasphemy" itself and any legal framing thereof, and calling instead for "global civility."[208] He also founded the Muslim Arbitration Tribunal (MAT), which provides Muslims in the UK with an alternative between relying either exclusively on British law or the local *imām* to settle issues, but without the backing of the British legal system. In contrast, and as they describe their own operations, in consultation with *sharīʿa*: "MAT operates within the legal framework of England and Wales thereby ensuring that any determination reached by MAT can be enforced through existing means of enforcement open to normal litigants." They have also initiated campaigns to address issues like domestic violence, honor killings, and especially forced marriages. [209]

There is also the case of Kabbani, who founded the Islamic Supreme Council of America (ISCA) in 1998 as an alternative to earlier existing Islamic advocacy groups, like the American Muslim Council (AMC) and the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). A major theme for him is upholding the place of Sufism and traditional Islamic jurisprudence based on adherence to the four *madhhab*s within Islam while denouncing anti-Sufi reformist movements, labelled as Wahhābīs and Salafīs, as extremists. To this end, he has engaged with the US government in such venues as the US State Department's 1999 Open Forum on the Evolution of Extremism, where he famously and controversially declared that 80% of American mosques were "being run by extremist ideologies." As Dressler observers, "his remarks were vehemently criticized by Muslims throughout the country who felt that they were unjustly attacked and victims of Kabbani's political ambitions."[210] We will see the State Department and countering extremism again in Part Three, but with seemingly quite different background and intent.

Thus, we see examples of striving to influence foreign as well as domestic policy and legislation within Western countries, but these groups may hold significant sway in the politics of their original homelands as well. Weismann has noted that Sirhindī's aspirations to influence the rulers came into greater play outside of India, that is in the Ottoman lands through Khālid al-Baghdādī and his

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a place in the US as Afghan and Muslim Americans that is true to both aspects of such identity (see for example AfghanMuslim786, "ABC 7 News Coverage: Muslims Peace Rally," YouTube, December 22, 2014, accessed March 30, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PjkqhZhYUE; AfghanMuslim786, "NBC News | KRON 4 News Coverage of the 10th. Anniversay of 9/11," YouTube, October 11, 2011, accessed March 30, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABmduoQuJto; Abobaker Mojadidi, Email to Michael E. Asbury, May 29, 2018).

[207] Murtaza Ali Shah, "Muslims Call for Change in UK Blasphemy Laws," TheNews.com.pk, accessed February 11, 2020, https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/91074-muslims-call-for-change-in-uk-blasphemy-laws.

[208] Nilüfer Göle, *Daily Lives of Muslims: Islam and Public Confrontation in Contemporary Europe* (London: Zed Books, 2017), 138-39. See also GlobalCivility.com.

[209] MATribunal.com; Samia Bano, "Multicultural Interlegality? Negotiating Family Law in the Context of Muslim Legal Pluralism in the UK," in *Law and Anthropology: Current Legal Issues* eds. Michael Freeman and David Napier (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 408-29, here 427-28. Ralph Grillo, *Muslim Families, Politics and the Law: A Legal Industry in Multicultural Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 28-32.

[210] Markus Dressler, "Pluralism and Authenticity Sufi paths in post-9/11 New York," in eds. Geaves, Dressler, and Klinkhammer, *Sufis in Western Society*, 77-96, here 78.

successors,[211] a situation that continues today as, in spite of the 1925 ban and the closing of the *tekke*s, Turkish Naqshbandī-related movements have made a significant comeback beginning in the latter half of the 20th century. Certainly in Pakistan the support of influential *shaykh*s with large followings and even communities around them are important for politicians there, as seen in Benazir Bhutto's visits to Bukhari,[212] but this is at least, if not more so the case in Turkey and the Turkish diaspora with the range of *cemaat*s with Naqshbandī background. This is true whether they maintain a living *shaykh*, like the Menzil and Ismailağa communities, or are post-*ṭarīqa* like the Arvasi, Nur (of which Gülen's movement is the main offshoot), Gümüşhanevi, and Sulaymançi (not a Khālidī line) communities. In western Europe, the latter two groups have created large scale organizations to coordinate Islamic services and represent the interests of Muslims living there, including beyond only the Turkish diaspora. The Sulaymançis have already been referenced several times above, thanks to Jonker's insightful research,[213] but the Gümüşhanevi community is perhaps of greater political significance. Their lineage traces back to Zaid Kotku (d. 1980) of the Iskenderpaşa mosque in Istanbul. Based on his encouragement and backing, his follower Necmettin Erbakan (d. 2011), who would eventually serve as the prime minister of Turkey, gave rise to the international Islamic political movement known as the Millî Görüş.[214] Also important to mention is that in addition to the wide-ranging activities of Gülen's massive Hizmet Movement, including the abovementioned categories of education, aid work, and dialogue, they have also been accused of being behind the 2016 coup d'état attempt in Turkey.

So we do see some contemporary parallels to past Naqshbandī political activism and clientage-patronage, like the relationship between Amīr Kulāl and Tamerlane, Aḥrār being the effective ruler of a large portion of Central Asia, the arrival of the Naqshbandiyya to India while linked to the Mughals and Sirhindī's subsequent attempts to influence court policy, Sayyid Aḥmad's parallel state and *jihād* against the Sikhs, and that of his successors against the British, Khālid Baghdādī's seeking to influence rulers, and his successor's resistance against Western hegemony throughout the Ottoman lands. Yet still there are clearly differences between then and now, in the nature of the relationships with rulers and in the objectives sought, especially in secular democratic countries, as we will see in Part Three.

To conclude, whether on the relatively quietist or the politically activist ends of the spectrum, we are still looking at people who in one way or another are striving to become more aware of and closer to God and who feel that this makes them into better people.

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211 Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 68.

212 "Saeen Ghulam Hussain Shah & Benazir Bhutto." YouTube. January 21, 2012. Accessed April 09, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rskJ39QFg2A.

213 The "Sülaymançis" operate in Germany as the Verband der Islamischen Kulturzentren e.V. (VIKZ). Their now no longer continuing *silsila* is unique among the Naqshbandī lineages transmitted to the West via Turkey in that it is not a Khālidī branch but traces through another disciple of Ghulām 'Alī, Abū Sa'īd (d. 1834). The *silsila*, however, ended in 1959 with the death of Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan who, because of the persecution of Sufi orders at the hands of the secular Turkish government, did not allow his successor and son-in-law, Kemal Kaçar, to become the next link in the *silsila* but instead directed him to continue his mission of teaching the Quran while also holding on to certain Naqshbandī ideas and practices. In the 1960s, members of the community began immigrating to Western Europe where they set up meeting places for prayer and Islamic education, of which there were already 150 across West Germany by 1973, when the VIKZ was formally established as an umbrella organization headquartered in Cologne. In Germany, these centers initially attracted a similar demographic as the followers of Tunahan in Turkey from among the population of immigrant workers and the centers became "the glue that held the communities together." Quran schools were established that appealed to parents desiring that their children maintain Islamic identity and practice in a new majority non-Muslim environment. Attempting to adapt to this new setting, however, has not come without friction and in 1979, VIKZ's request to be recognized and granted the same privileges as the Catholic and Protestant churches by the German government was rejected. In the following years, the organization withdrew from public life until there was a turn in 1995 to engage with the German public, but with a leadership change in the organization in Turkey in 2000, the emphasis was shifted inward again to focus on Islamic education over interfaith dialogue and outreach to the German community. Gerdien Jonker, "Sülaymanlis in Germany," in *Islamic Movements of Europe: Public Religion and Islamophobia in the Modern World*, ed. Frank Peter and Rafael Ortega (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 220-1.

214 Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 152-54.

The Institute of Search for Truth

The Life and Work of Azad Rasool

Azad Rasool (1921-2006) was born, raised, and educated between two worlds, or rather multiple worlds, from his youth in Hindu-majority British India to his attendance at the dual modern and traditional Jamia Millia Islamia. His professional career would span 36 years at the same institution, mostly serving as the principal of its primary school, work which he saw as not only educating, but also developing the character of children and a prelude to what would become his other major work in life, what he saw as developing the character of adults through Sufi teachings. It was in his late twenties, that he would encounter the Sufi teachings of ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh, consisting of five different *ṭarīqa*s, including the Naqshbandiyya, Chishtiyya, Qādiriyya, Shādhiliyya, and most significantly, the Mujaddidiyya. Rasool first expanded the presence of this lineage in southern and western India and would accompany his own *shaykh* in spreading the teachings for over a quarter of a century before, in 1976, establishing an institute intended to appeal specifically to Westerners who had been arriving in India in large numbers in search of spiritual fulfillment since the 1960s. This resulted in the spread of the order internationally, particularly in the US, UK, and Australia. He spent the remaining over 30 years of his life training his diverse student base in Delhi, as well as travelling throughout India and internationally to do the same.

In imparting the teachings of his particular lineage and maintaining their integrity, he had to contend with various competing but sometimes complementary broader social trends and developments. In the context of the Muslim world, we see an Islamic reformist critique of certain aspects of Sufism being seen as unlawful innovations; yet Rasool shares a common basis with the reformists, such as in his emphasis on following the guidance and example of the Prophet, as well as common ancestors, in that Deobandī and derivative groups look to Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd, Walī Allāh, and Sirhindī as ideological forefathers, the same individuals found in Rasool's Mujaddidī *silsila*. Still, we also find the Muslim modernist critique, often linked to the personality of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, who attempted to "silence Sufism" as a superstitious obstacle to realizing the compatibility of Islam with modernity, reason, and science, and perhaps even more significantly, others still who reject religion altogether. Yet again, Rasool and his teacher before him, Saʻīd Khān, both educators at institutions that sought to blend the traditional with the modern, viz., Jamia Millia in Delhi and the Shibli School in Azamgarh, share the view of the compatibility of modernity and Islam, but they also see Sufism as indispensable. The third major pole comes from within the Sufi community itself, where Rasool must define his own tradition in the face of both antinomianism as well as the phenomenon of the "mediating" *shaykh*, seen as offering not so much spiritual training as *baraka*.

In the Indian context, Rasool finds himself between all of these positions, and in his writings, we see reflections of them in his seeking a balance and defining his own place and the place of the teachings of his lineage. We will encounter all of these at different places in the consideration of his mysticism below, but since the writings examined here were intended largely for a Western audience, what is more prominent is his responses to the competing and complementary forces that he encountered with regard to the Western context, including once again modernity, science, and reason, but also Western scholarship on Sufism, and most importantly, the eastward turn for spiritual wisdom and fulfillment, which by then included not only a literary Sufi presence, but also a number of Sufi and Sufi-related teachers and organizations.

In initially presenting his teachings to the West, what seems to have been foremost in his mind is the broader, even global matter of what he saw as a conflict between, on the one hand, religion and spirituality in general as well as Islam and Sufism specifically, and on the other, science, reason, individualism, materialism, and secularism, a framing that was also shared by his teacher. Rasool also, to some extent, faced defining his own teachings *vis-à-vis* existing Western academic scholarship on Sufism. Yet what surfaces most in *Turning Toward the Heart*, a work that he wrote after nearly three decades of teaching students in the West, is his striving to impart his own practice-based teachings as unchanged as possible and still firmly rooted in Islam, but also in a way that is appealing and understandable to an audience whose interests, expectations, and understandings were often shaped by preceding universalist, psychologized, and intellectually-oriented forms of alternative spirituality, including types of Sufism or Sufi-related pursuits that had already been present in the West before him,

often with roots in Theosophical and/or Gurdjieffian circles, such as the writings of Idries Shah. It was such a demographic that Rasool had had in mind when he created the institute, individuals in the West who, although they may have turned away from the traditional forms of religiosity in their places of origin, still resisted the postulated processes of disenchantment and desacralization and often looked toward the mystic East to do so. Such individuals were often willing, even yearning to explore an immaterial spiritual world and were open to the possibility of accessing it by turning inwardly and even to the concept of a higher power, however apprehensive or even hostile they may have been toward the dogma and exoteric practices of traditional religions.

Rasool presented the traditional Sufi teachings he had to offer this new audience as a curriculum of spiritual training for personal transformation. This system is comprised of a standardized course of practices that is understood to represent the culmination of over twelve centuries of saintly inspiration, experimentation, and refinement in the laboratory of the inner self. Such understanding of these teachings as being based on the cumulative experience of generations of mystics supports his appeal to personal experience in encouraging potential students to empirically test the practices for themselves. Such spiritual training consists of a set of meditative exercises and recitations said to have been fully standardized to their present form in the late 19th century by ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh. Rasool frames these as "curricula" taught at an "institute," both words of recent modern provenance in the early 19th century. Very similar standardized sets of recitations and exercises, drawing on the cosmo-psychology of Sirhindī, have existed at least since the time of Shāh Ghulām ʻAlī and the emergence of the *maʻmūlāt* genre among Indian Mujaddidīs since just prior to the 19th century and continue to be practiced today by other more exclusively Muslim Mujaddidī lines across South Asia, the formerly Ottoman lands and beyond.

In actuality, Rasool taught five different but similarly structured curricula, with each of the abovementioned *ṭarīqa*s being its own complete, self-contained course of study or practice, and once one of these is completed, the student can proceed to beginning the next. The foremost, and generally the first to be taught, is the Mujaddidiyya, the main sub-branch of the Naqshbandiyya, which in this lineage also significantly influenced the way in which the other *ṭarīqa*s are taught, in no small part with regard to the structured practice of *murāqaba*. As noted, and as will be further illustrated below, the teachings are based in large part on the thought of Sirhindī, the founder of the Mujaddidiyya, and the path of this order consists of an inner journey through an emanationist cosmology, passing from the sphere of contingent existence and the shadows, through the names and attributes, and toward the Source. This journey leads to an experience of closeness to and knowledge of God, but it does not end in a unitive state, instead it culminates in the mystic's return to creation, transformed after such an experience.

Still, Rasool's teachings are highly practice-oriented, as opposed to theoretical or speculative, and in order to clearly present them in his writings; or as much as one needs to know to satisfy initial curiosity, understand the basics of how the system works, and to get started oneself; he focuses on a small number of key terms. Six of these, he pays particular attention to, and it is these that have been selected to form our examination of his mysticism here, those being *nisbat*, *tawajjuh*, *laṭā'if*, *indirāj al-nihāyat fi'l-bidāyat*, *murāqaba*, and *dhikr*. For ease of presentation, as well as digestion by the reader, the sequence of these has been slightly modified from that used by Rasool and the terms are divided into the three categories of 1.) cosmo-psychology, viz., terms related to cosmology, both macro- and micro, along with the processes and effects of spiritual travel through such cosmology (*nisbat*, *laṭā'if*, *indirāj al-nihāyat fi'l-bidāyat*), 2.) practices to be performed by the student (*murāqaba* and *dhikr*), and 3.) the role of the *shaykh* and community (*tawajjuh* and again *nisbat*, in a different but related sense). In reality, it is impossible to entirely separate these categories as all three areas are interdependent. For example, on dividing theoretical ideas about cosmo-psychology from concrete practices, the former shapes the latter, determining its structure and content, and at the same time, according to the emic perspective of the teachings as a system that developed cumulatively over time, it is the latter from which the former sprang and was and continues to be refined through the centuries from the field reports of great mystics past and present. Nevertheless, these imperfect categories will be employed here to facilitate description and analysis.

Regarding the individual key words within these categories, the term *nisbat* takes on different meanings related to the goals of Sufism, the methods of achieving these, and their results, as detailed below, but perhaps the most fundamental meaning of *nisbat* is the relationship of affinity with God that Sufism seeks to develop. The student's relationship with the *shaykh* and the "affinity" (*nisbat*) that develops between them facilitates progress to the greater affinity (also *nisbat*) with God. This spiritual training furthermore involves the awakening of the *laṭā'if* ("subtleties," "subtle centers of consciousness," or "suprasensory organs"), which are associated with specific locations or focal points in the body, as well as specific colors and prophets. This awakening is carried out according to a specific sequence dictated by the principle of "including the end in the beginning" (*indirāj al-nihāyat fi'l-bidāyat*), wherein the easier work of purifying the heart precedes the more difficult purification of the lower soul. This characteristic approach of the Naqshbandiyya is described as a reversal of the sequence of most other and previous Sufis and it is held to be a faster and easier method.

The role of the student in this process is to follow the guidance and instruction of the *shaykh*, who assesses the student's progress and assigns specific practices, to be performed on a daily basis individually and weekly in group meetings, according to a series of meditative exercises (*murāqaba*) which involve setting an intention (*niyya*) that directs one's attention to one or more of the *laṭā'if*, after which one waits passively to receive the blessings (*baraka*) that emanate (*fayḍ*) from the holy essence (*dhat*), and silent recitations (*dhikr*), but also supplications for blessings upon the Prophet (*durūd sharīf*) and upon the saints of the order (*khatm sharīf*), as well as Quranic verses, particularly *al-Fātiḥa*. In addition to giving support in the form of guidance and instruction, the *shaykh* also provides his *tawajjuh*, the non-physical transmission of blessings ultimately originating from God, but which the *shaykh* has greater access to because of his connection to the chain of saints leading back to the Prophet and his own proximity to God from having completed the spiritual journey and returned to guide others. As a necessary condition for the optimal functioning of such transmission from *shaykh* to student to aid in the latter's spiritual progress, there must be a relationship of spiritual affinity (again *nisbat*) or a bond (*rābiṭa*) between the two. The intended effects of this program of spiritual training, with regard to how they manifest outwardly in the student, fall rather firmly on the side of the spectrum that seeks what might be called a trance state as opposed to an ecstatic one,[1] or to use Sufi categories, they are characterized by sobriety rather than intoxication. This training is a gradual process that it is described, rather than in specifically Islamic theological and jurisprudential terms, in more general ways as leading to certain realizations or new ways of looking at the world, or "seeing all aspects of existence in proper perspective," and such a new perspective is said to have positive moral and ethical consequences in the way one lives life in the physical world.

Despite describing the goals of Sufism in such religiously neutral terms, just as with the emphasis on sobriety, Rasool maintains continuity with another defining characteristic of Naqshbandī and thus also Mujaddidī identity, in upholding the connection of Sufism to normative Islam. Yet he also opened the teachings to non-Muslims, something already seen in his own Chishtī lineage in the Indian context, which already accepted Hindu and other non-Muslim disciples before its spread to the West, similar to that of Inayat Khān. We have also even seen this in the Naqshbandiyya with Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān's *khānaqāh* in Delhi in the 18th century and the eventual passing of one branch of his line into a Hindu family in the 19th century, a line that now has multiple universalist branches in Europe and North America. Yet in Rasool's case, this opening is more reserved, as it preserves the Islamic character of the lineage by allowing non-Muslims to engage in a set of preliminary exercises to awaken the *laṭā'if*, which if the student wishes to proceed beyond, then conversion to Islam is one of the conditions, although students that do not feel inclined to do so may continue to perform these initial practices as long as they wish. For those that do decide to embrace Islam, it is understood that there will be challenges, and thus bringing one's life into accordance with the Quran and *sunna* is a process that takes place gradually.

Aside from this upper limit to progression, there is a deliberate avoidance of external pressure to accept Islam and instead, an interest in conversion is something that must come from within the individual. Even for Muslim students, adherence to the religion is not forced upon them, for instance,

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[1] Recall that for readability and to fall in line with the norms of current usage, we have reversed the senses of the terms "ecstasy" and "trance" as they are defined by Rouget in his *Music and Trance*, 1-12.

it was reported that the *shaykh* never told disciples directly to stop drinking alcohol or smoking, but instead guided them indirectly or, if asked, he might well have counseled them to consult their own hearts regarding how they ought to conduct themselves. Thus, while remaining decidedly Islamic and upholding the importance of following the *sharīʻa*, there is less of an immediate or obvious emphasis on exact details of the external aspects of the faith. This stands in contrast to Sirhindī and Walī Allāh as well as to several contemporary Mujaddidī lines that attract a primarily if not exclusively Muslim audience. But for Rasool, one's status as a Muslim or non-Muslim and the way one chooses to live it in one's life, was largely left a personal matter between the individual and God. The concern here was more, at least initially, with the spirit of the law and developing the sincerity to follow it, especially through spiritual training. Matters of correct belief and practice were supported not with an appeal to the authority of the revealed text, but more with an explanation of why, particularly as related to spiritual progress on the Sufi path. Thus, following the Quran and *sunna* are not only obeying God's command and following the Prophetic example, but they are also important foundational means of spiritual training.

With regard to the category of activism, consistent with the Naqshbandī principle of *khalwat dar anjuman*, he emphasizes the necessity of involvement in the world and the fulfillment of responsibilities to oneself, one's family, and society at large. Nevertheless, there are no traces of political activism in his thought and despite his Mujaddidī *silsila* tracing back to Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd, when this line arrived in Bengal in the mid-19th century, it very soon afterwards took on a decidedly more politically quietist stance that remains to this day. On social activism, it may seem at first glance, and from one way of looking at it, that Rasool's position here is also quietist, since, like his teacher Saʻīd Khān, while valuing service to humanity, he places a greater priority on the performance of Sufi practices. Yet if we consider the impassioned call of Saʻīd Khān for Muslims to rise up, to realize their birthright as the heirs of Ghazālī, Rāzī, Rūmī, and Ḥallāj, and thereby to reform society, we see that Rasool's effort to spread Sufi teachings, which he sees as a system for developing "highly humane and moral" people, is for him the best form of social activism. He sees his work of spreading the Sufi practices of ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh as transforming individuals, who can in turn transform society, and to this end, he created the Institute of Search for Truth and the School of Sufi Teaching.

Biography

Born in 1921 as Ghulam Rasool in the town of Kankroli, Rajasthan in British India,[2] into a Muslim family in an overwhelmingly majority Hindu environment, the colonial and religiously plural context in which Rasool came into the world would present various influences, challenges, and opportunities on his journey to becoming a Sufi *shaykh* and introducing his teachings to the Western world as well as finding a place for Islam and Sufism in a modernized and pluralistic world. He recalls how in his youth he was impressed by the renunciation of the *sādhu*s in his hometown; known for its large temple to Krishna, under the name Dvarkadish; spending hours speaking with them in his early years and continuing to do so during winter breaks when he returned home from school in Delhi.[3] At around the age of twelve, it was in 1933 that Rasool was admitted on scholarship to the fifth class at Jamia Millia Islamia,[4] an institution that would continue to occupy an important place in his life. Contrasting the traditional approach of Darul Uloom Deoband and the modern education provided by Aligarh Muslim University, Rasool describes the purpose of its founding as having been to fulfill the

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[2] The story of how his birth name Ghulam, meaning "servant," came to be replaced with Azad, meaning "free," is found in the introduction to *SfT*. Rasool; having been taken by his politically active older brother to see a visiting "Congress leader," likely referring to the center-left political party, the National Indian Congress which successfully led the movement for Indian independence; was told by the politician, "Don't say Ghulam Rasool, say Azad Rasool!" Despite Rasool's own disapproval, the name stuck. It was on this same politician's recommendation that Rasool and his brother received scholarships to attend Jamia Millia. *SfT* 1.

[3] *SfT* 1; *TTH* xxi.

[4] Jamia Millia Islamia provides education from kindergarten through primary, secondary, and post-secondary education, including the conferral of PhDs.

"need for a school that brought together the traditional and the modern in a harmonious blend,"[5] an approach that would be echoed in his own efforts to spread Sufi teachings internationally, with the same being true of the open-mindedness and pluralism he describes as having been prevalent there.[6] He continued his studies at Jamia Millia into the post-secondary level, completing his BA in Islamic Studies and Arabic in 1942. Shortly thereafter, in his early twenties, impassioned, idealistic, and perhaps even a bit revolutionary in light of the impending fate of the British Raj,[7] Rasool set off for Lahore in hopes of beginning a career in journalism, yet he reports that within a year he returned to Delhi, citing disillusionment with the influence of the wealthy on content in order to further their own ends.

Back in Delhi, he met with Zakir Husain (d. 1969), the then vice-chancellor of Jamia Millia, who was active in the freedom movement, with which the school also came to be associated. Husain would go on to have an impressive political career culminating as the first Muslim President of India. He had provided Rasool a letter of recommendation that had been of use to him in Lahore and offered to consult contacts of his in Bombay about employment opportunities in journalism there, yet as Rasool relates, Husain pointed out to him that working in journalism would be trying to influence adult minds that had already taken shape, but that by working with children, whose minds were still being molded, he could make a greater impact. In the meantime, he invited Rasool to volunteer at his alma mater, in particular, teaching children and youths. This would have been around 1946, just prior to Indian independence.[8] Impressed with his performance, Husain encouraged Rasool to pursue certification as a teacher and, according to Abdur Rashid's biography of Rasool, Mohammad Mujeeb, a professor and later vice-chancellor at Jamia Millia as well as the author of *The Indian Muslims*, also played a role in influencing his decision to change career paths.[9] Thus in 1949, in the newly established Republic of India, Rasool earned his teaching license from the University of Allahabad and on returning to Jamia Millia, he was initially given a position as a lecturer, but soon thereafter was appointed to head the primary school, and thus began a 36 year career at Jamia Millia.[10]

It seems that Rasool's optimism, zeal, and enthusiastic idealism found an outlet other than the career in journalism he had initially pursued. Abdur Rashid presents his decision to remain at Jamia Millia, despite having the qualifications for "higher-paying and more prestigious positions elsewhere," as an idealistic and heroic act in itself, noting that "the struggling new university" which received "no government subsidies," could pay its staff only very little, with at one point Rasool's monthly salary

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[5] Malik's statement that "anti-loyalist forces in the Aligarh movement who came to be known as the Jamia Millia Islamia, were led by people such as Zakir Husain (died 1969) to start working for an alternative education system in Delhi," provides some insight into the revolutionary genesis of this school between two worlds, the modernist and the traditional. Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 1st ed., 331.

[6] *SfT* 5.

[7] One biography of Rasool posted to social media states that his father was involved in the freedom movement and also that, early on in life, Rasool himself was influenced by two major proponents of Indian independence and leaders in the National Indian Congress, Abul Kalam Azad, who was also on the founding committee of Jamia Millia Islamia, and Mahatma Gandhi. The post was accessed on Facebook on November 29, 2017. Indeed, Rasool cites Abul Kalam Azad in his writings (*SfT* 12-3) as well as mentions being "deeply impressed by Maulana Azad's *Al-Hilal*, [along with] Maulana Muhammad 'Ali's *Comrade*, and Zafar 'Ali Khān's *Zamindar*," publications which had inspired him as a student to want to be a journalist (*SfT* 2). K.H. Ansari describes *Al-Hilal* as "an Urdu daily newspaper, which published anti-Western material in sympathy with Turkey and which fanned considerable agitation [the reader should remember the colonized status of much of the Muslim world at the time]" ("Pan Islam and the making of the early Muslim Socialists," *MAS* 20 (1986): 509–37, here 512) while Malik says that *Zamindar* "became a passionate organ of young Muslim political assertiveness." (*Islam in South Asia*, 1st ed., 327). This information, while providing some insight into his background and the early interests of his youth, should not be understood as associating Rasool with any sort of political activism or with the policies of the Congress, past or present, or any other socio-political movements. Rasool's life work was primarily devoted to the education of children at Jamia Millia and serving as a Sufi *shaykh* in India and abroad.

[8] This date derives from the fact that he was asked to volunteer during preparations for the 25th anniversary celebration (Silver Jubilee) of the founding of Jamia Millia, which took place in 1946.

[9] Abdur Rashid also mentions how, as colleagues, Rasool and Mujeeb would often discuss "Sufism in light of contemporary thought and science." *TTH* xxi-xxii, xxiv.

[10] *TTH* xxvi.

being just 40 rupees and the vice-chancellor himself earning only 80 rupees.[11] Abdur Rashid asserts that this demonstrates Rasool's conviction in his decision to devote his entire professional career to "teach[ing] children and help[ing] build their characters" at a school that sought "to prepare youths to be good citizens, Indian patriots, and true Muslims, not tools of the 'British machinery'[…]."[12] Rasool indeed speaks quite fondly of his time at Jamia Millia, both as a student and a faculty member, but more would lie ahead.

The same year that he was licensed as a teacher, at around the age of 28 in 1949, was also the year that his fateful meeting with his future Sufi *shaykh*, Saʿīd Khān would take place.[13] But before discussing this, let us turn for a moment from chronological biography to Rasool's thematic account of his own "search for Truth," a story that is similar to yet differs in important ways from what we know of his predecessors, which had much to do with his education at Jamia Millia, as opposed to more traditional or purely modernist schooling, that exposed him to a range of ideas; Islamic, interreligious, and secular; as well as fostered in him a spirit of skeptical inquiry. He mentions a number of individuals and faculty at the school who were influential upon him in different ways, some of whom, as we have already seen, were rather prominent in the freedom movement and were sometimes even quite revolutionary, while others exposed him to different philosophical, scientific, and religious perspectives. Yet it is significant that Rasool never fully identifies himself with any of these perspectives or politically activist causes, as in the end, his own search would lead him to striving for what he saw as a greater cause, in fact the ultimate Cause, and bringing the knowledge thereof to others.

Rasool's search narrative only provides glimpses as to exact chronology and he presents it as a view in hindsight of the various approaches to understanding ultimate reality that he considered during the course of his life, and especially in his formative years. Being unsatisfied with any of these approaches, he ultimately turned to Sufic Islam. Thus, following Rasool's own account, which does have a rhetorically determined sequence and structure, this summary is more thematically rather than chronologically arranged, proceeding from Freudian psychology to Marxism, Christianity, philosophy, science, and then "spiritual insight and intuition," considering Jungian psychology, Hindu traditions, different forms of Islamic mysticism, and finally to meeting his own teacher.

In the beginning of this account, he cites the popularity of Freud among the young people of his generation, yet counts himself among those that took issue with aspects of Freud's thought, such as the "contention that sexual desire or social convention […] motivate every human action." Next, he mentions having been impressed by the ideas of communism and socialism, but recalls one honorary professor, Ubaidullah Sindhi (d. 1944), helping to temper this respect so as not to lose touch with Islam by arguing that while such economics-based approaches might address material needs, they fail to take into account peoples' spiritual needs.[14] Rasool also recalls discussing and learning about Christianity, and being motivated to better understand his own faith in comparison with others, during his frequent interactions and visits to the home of an English teacher, E.J. Kallat, a Christian who Abdur Rashid explains encouraged the students "to be good, reborn Muslims."[15]

He also mentions a particular interest in philosophy early on, despite it not being offered as a course of study at Jamia Millia. Undaunted, he was able to enlist the aid of a prominent faculty member,

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[11] The latter figure is corroborated by Jamia Millia's official website: "Profile of Jamia Millia Islamia - History - Historical Note," Jamia Millia Islamia, accessed December 06, 2017, http://jmi.ac.in/aboutjamia/profile/history/historical_note-13.

[12] *TTH* xxiii-xxiv.

[13] This is revealed in a letter from Muhammad Saʿīd Khān to Ḥāmid Ḥasan ʿAlawī that was reproduced in *The Search for Truth*. *SfT* 139.

[14] *SfT* 6-7. Sindhi converted to Islam from Sikhism and was educated at Deoband as well as being a socialist, a Pan-Islamist, anti-colonialist, and an activist in the freedom movement. K.H. Ansari, "Pan Islam and the making of the early Muslim Socialists," 514-7. Jamia Millia's website describes Sindhi as "a theologian and freedom fighter […who…] started a school of Islamic Studies in Jamia, called Baitul Hikmal, propagating the ideology of Shah Waliullah." "Profile of Jamia Millia Islamia," Jamia Millia Islamia.

[15] *SfT* 5-7; *TTH* xxii.

Syed Abid Husain (1896–1978),[16] in making "an in-depth study of Islamic and European philosophy." He would also eventually earn an MA in Philosophy from Aligarh. Despite this interest, however, he laments the philosophers' reliance on "the intellect and the material world" at the expense of intuition and prophetic guidance. Still, he finds hope in the "many great thinkers [who] have tried to prove the limitations of rationality." In defending intuition and religion against the attacks of rationalists, empiricists, and scientific materialists, he rallies to the cause the likes of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, as well as William James and A.N. Whitehead. He cites being especially impressed with Kierkegard and Henri Bergson. In interviews and discussions with Rasool's senior students in the US and UK, they report that he often made reference to Western philosophers, but especially to Bergson. As explained by Rasool, Bergson held that "realities could only be known through intuition, claiming that the mystics of every religion had tried to reach Reality through true intuition." Indeed, in Bergson; who has been understood as responding to Kant, a philosopher that Rasool's mentor Abid Husain was quite familiar with; one might find several potential parallels to Rasool's mysticism, particularly in Bergson's ideas related to intuition (*murāqaba* and *laṭā'if*), sympathy (*nisbat*), and "entering into" a thing to gain absolute knowledge of it.[17] Intuition is a topic addressed by Rasool frequently and it is a term that was often encountered by the researcher in conversations with senior SOST students. Rasool reports having "gained many insights" from reading Bergson, but that he disagreed with him on certain issues such as related to free will. In the end, he states that "I came to the conclusion that philosophers had no source of knowledge other than the intellect," and that this left room for "mutual contradiction and change" and thus there could be "no absolute." His narrative then transitions to his consideration of science, saying "Philosophy took me to the door of Reality but could not show me in. Disappointed, I turned my attention to science."[18]

He initiates his consideration of science by going back to the very beginnings of the Scientific Revolution in 16th-century Europe, noting how discoveries by the likes of "Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Bruno" came to be at odds with the church, and that a battle ensued between science and faith. He posits an alternative history wherein, "if the priests had not opposed science indiscriminately," humankind might not have experienced the kind of violence it has and might have advanced even further "in terms of culture and civilization." Yet he admits to having approached science with a degree of bias on account of its focus on empiricism and utilitarianism over idealism and "higher human values." He appreciates science for its "tremendous achievements in the material world" as well as for its helping "to purify religion of many superstitions," but laments its exclusive reliance on the physical world, thus leading to mankind's obliviousness to "inner realities" and the "denial of God."

Still, he finds hope that "Materialism, born of physics," will also see its downfall at the hands of physicists, looking to the likes of Einstein and Heisenberg to challenge scientific materialism and citing Bertrand Russell as having expressed that "it was Einstein's theory of relativity that made matter as the essence of the universe disappear." He also looks to two physicists, James Jeans and Arthur Eddington, and to the philosopher George Berkeley, noting that they arrive at similar conclusions through different approaches, in support of the idea of an "eternal spirit" or "universal mind," which Rasool cannot conceive as being other than God.

But ultimately, he finds that philosophy and science can really only provide insights related to the physical world and the rational mind. He describes a kind of personal crisis of being torn between faith and disbelief, unable to deny God, yet still harboring doubts. His mind filled with conflicting ideas, he speaks of having "no peace of mind," and suffering from "mental fragmentation," "restlessness and frustration," "doubt and confusion." He goes on to say that "After my disappointment with science, spiritual insight and intuition were my last hope. Perhaps by putting aside the mind, I could jump into this limitless ocean and reach the depths of reality." Yet he also notes: "It was in my nature to want

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[16] Husain, in stark contrast to Sindhi, was a major advocate of secular nationalism who he had been studying in Germany when the three decided to come to Jamia Millia in 1926, where he would remain until 1956. According to Rasool, while in Germany, he "received an excellent education in philosophy," and Kant in particular. *EI*[3] "Abid Husain." *TTH* 7 and "Profile of Jamia Millia Islamia," Jamia Millia Islamia.

[17] Leonard Lawlor and Valentine Moulard Leonard, "Henri Bergson," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, May 18, 2004, accessed February 17, 2018. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/bergson/.

[18] *SfT* 7-10.

whatever conclusion I reached to be based on my personal *experience* [emphasis added].”[19] We cannot know with certainty whether such emphasis on personal experience, an issue that will be dealt with at greater length below, in Rasool’s own autobiographical reflections and in his biography of Saʿīd Khān, are actual or purely rhetorical. The same is true for all aspects of this progression from reason and science to intuition. But given his time, place, and milieu, in between multiple worlds and worldviews, it seems safe to presume that he has indeed drawn on his own genuine experiences, but while also capitalizing on their ability to resonate with his contemporary international student base.

But returning to intuition specifically, Rasool mentions that “Most European and American philosophers mention spiritual intuition,” yet in the face of rationalism, their voices have not gained traction. He goes on to say that even “the rationality of Socrates and Plato was not without the concept of something that transcended the mind,” and that the “religious or gnostic experiences” throughout human history cannot be “dismissed as illusory or fraudulent.” He says that “These people maintained that apart from sensory perception and rationality, there were intuitive ways of knowing Reality” and he personally asserts the existence of “subtle inner faculties [alluding to the *laṭā’if*] that can reveal aspects of Reality that are not accessible to ordinary perception of the mind.” In his consideration of intuition, he comes full circle back to psychology, but this time to C.G. Jung, whom Rasool credits with helping to bring spirituality back into “mainstream discourse.” He then turns to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, whom he likens to Kant for “shatter[ing] narrow-minded logic,” and describes al-Ghazālī’s turn, after having established himself as a renowned theologian and jurist, toward mysticism and the view that “spiritual intuition” is necessary to “have access to true knowledge and Reality.”

On his personal exploration of intuitive ways of knowing, in addition to his conversations with the *sādhu*s of Kankroli in his youth, Rasool recounts a deeper and experiential excursus away from the faith of his birth, a pattern that will also be seen in the accounts of his future students. He mentions at some point having adopted the lifestyle of a celibate renunciate (*brahmachari*) as well as having taken up the study of Vedanta and Yoga under a swami, chanted “*Ram*” at the junction of the Ganges and Yamuna rivers, and read the *Bhagavad Gītā* “countless times,” even memorizing parts thereof.[20] Still, he could not accept the “yogic claim *aham brahmasam* (I am God, there is no difference between God and I).”

Next, he mentions that with regard to “Muslim Sufis and holy people […] there was hardly an important shrine where I did not pay homage.” In particular, while in Lahore, he performed a *chilla* at the shrine of Dātā Ganj Bakhsh (al-Hujwīrī, d. 1072/77), which he often frequented on account of his familiarity with this saint’s famous work *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, the earliest treatise on Sufism to have been written in Persian. Furthermore, Rasool practiced a form of *dhikr* under the Chishtī Niẓāmī *shaykh* Luṭf Allāh Shāh[21] as well as having met other Sufis “who were living in solitude” and engaging in other unspecified antinomian practices. Despite these explorations, Rasool was still unsatisfied, and aside from these approaches having 1.) failed to lead him to reality, his other major critique of the practices of both Hindu and Muslim renunciates is that while their austerities may help one acquire supernatural powers, they can also 2.) inflate the ego and make one feel as if they do not require the guidance of the prophets. Rasool’s highlighting these particular problems is significant, as it leads into the final end of his search, since a way out of these issues can be found in the Mujaddidiyya, with its firm adherence to the *sunna* and its reliance on what is held to be the easier method of “spontaneous attraction to God” (*jadhba*), as opposed to austerities (*sulūk*), which is thus more likely to lead one to the goal. So,

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[19] *SfT* 13.

[20] Rasool might have viewed the combination of Bhakti devotionalism with fulfilling one’s responsibilities in the world, as seen in Krishna’s counseling Arjuna to fulfill his duties as a *kṣatriyaḥ*, as a parallel to the Naqshbandī principle of *khalwat dar anjuman*. In fact, he reads the *Gītā* in a kind of Naqshbandī light, stating: “In this book, the war of the battlefield and the war against the ego have been infused with the philosophy of the unity of God in such a way that it removes many of the defects of a mysticism that renounces the world.” *SfT* 15.

[21] If this is the same Chishtī Niẓāmī *shaykh* named Luṭf Allāh Shāh as found in the following link, then this provides a further bracket on the timeline, since he died in 1946, just three years prior to Rasool’s first meeting with his future *shaykh* Saʿīd Khān in 1949. Muhammad Faisal, “Blog archive,” Lutfulquran International - Hazrat Moulana Lutfullah R.A., accessed February 16, 2018, https://lutfia.page4.me/100.html.

unsatisfied by both his intellectual and spiritual exploration up to that point, he was torn between two poles, or as he says, "Sometimes I tried to reach the secrets of life through the intellect, and at other times I would get fed up and jump into the ocean of mystical experience," caught, as it were, between Rūmī and Rāzī.[22]

Coming back now to 1949, after earning his teaching certification and returning to serve as a lecturer in the teacher training college at Jamia Millia,[23] an associate of Rasool who was familiar with his pained search recommended that he contact a certain Sa'īd Khān. His anguished letter to his future *shaykh*, or the part thereof from which he provides a poetic excerpt, reveals an inclination towards and familiarity with major Sufi concepts and themes, as he speaks of intoxication, of "re-enact[ing] the story of Moses on Mount Sinai," of being rescued from "the prison of phenomena," and possibly even a reference to *tawajjuh* by asking the *shaykh* to "Cast a lightning glance on the self I have hoarded."[24] He says that by chance, soon thereafter Sa'īd Khān was in Mathura (roughly 200 kilometers from Delhi) where Rasool travelled to meet him, whereupon he reports having fallen into a trance in the *shaykh*'s presence. He also at times speaks more soberly of the beginning of his training, which he says commenced under the stipulation that he suspend his rational judgement for one and a half to two years and simply perform the practices as instructed. He describes Sa'īd Khān as saying, "This is a matter of *experience*. Begin and see what happens [emphasis added]."[25] Rasool admits to having been skeptical at the outset, such as thinking that *tawajjuh* seemed suspiciously similar to "autosuggestion," as well as *murāqaba* to Yogic meditation, and the *laṭā'if* to *chakra*s.[26] Yet in spite of such doubts, he describes persisting in the practices and that gradually "Hazrat's blessings released me from the confines of rationality and led me to the vast ocean of spiritual insight. My entire perspective changed and the knots the mind had tied itself up in, began to slowly unravel."

Having looked to philosophy and science, he found them wanting in that they relied excessively on reason and the material world, at the expense of or even denying intuition, the spiritual world, and the guidance of the prophets, but in his exploration of various mystical traditions, he found the opposite extreme in renouncing the physical world, something also at odds with the guidance of the prophets. So Rasool explains that when, under the guidance of Sa'īd Khān, he was able to overcome the obstacle of his rational mind, he experienced a number of realizations including: an affirmation of the necessity of following the prophets; the existence of a means for gaining knowledge other than through the mind and the five senses, viz., the heart as the "locus of knowledge" which has "inner vision" that can perceive ultimate reality; and the existence of a spiritual realm, and that the spiritual and the material are two parts of the same whole and must remain connected and balanced.[27] We might take note of the fact that he speaks of the need to follow "the prophets" rather than only "the Prophet," thus underscoring the relationship of Islam with Judaism and Christianity. Moreover, without at all excluding Islam, he is able to explain these realizations in supra-confessional terms, asserting premises that are also true for a range of religious and spiritual currents. It is such framing, which focuses on similarity and common ground, that allows these concepts to resonate across cultural and religious divides.

So of course, we have to understand this account in its context, that is one of Rasool, addressing an international English-speaking audience likely comprised of students and prospective students, showing in hindsight the progression of intellectual and spiritual exploration that finally led him to

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[22] In a three-line verse, Rasool contrasts the famed mystic Rūmī with the philosopher and theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210). *SfT* 16.

[23] Due to the communal violence that accompanied the partition of India immediately after independence in 1947, this was a tragically tumultuous time in Indian and Pakistani history, which makes one wonder if this had any part to play in Rasool's inward turn, from his days as an aspiring journalist to his yearning to understand ultimate truth. Gandhi described the campus of Jamia Millia as "an oasis of peace in the Sahara" in spite of the riots, ethnic cleansing, and mass migrations taking place around it. "Profile of Jamia Millia Islamia."

[24] *SfT* xviii.

[25] *SfT* xix.

[26] While there is no reason to question the historicity of this report, it is also worth noting the rhetorical value that it has in connecting with his audience, who may well be experiencing the same doubts. In particular, his references to "the mind's conditioning" as an obstacle to realizing the Truth would resonate with an audience that had been primed with the writings of the Shah brothers and other Gurdjieff-influenced authors.

[27] *SfT* 16-9.

embrace the particular Sufi lineage that he did, with its own specific characteristics. So this is not necessarily a purely objective account of historical events in his life, since it also functions as an argument providing his views on the value of his chosen path in comparison to others he considered. Nevertheless, it provides a valuable window into not only Rasool's own personal search narrative and thought, but it also demonstrates his exposure to and familiarity with Western thought and his choices in how to present his teachings to the West, especially regarding the language of "intuition" and "experience" as well as speaking in supra-confessional terms. But the account also mirrors much in the writings of his own teacher, Saʿīd Khān, particularly his regretting the conflict between science and religion and calling for scientific materialists and spiritualists to work together. This is also true of Rasool's proposal for the Institute of Search for Truth, which must be seen, in large part, to be a response to his teacher's call.

In any case, it appears that Rasool became quickly involved in the order, not only as a student, but also an active participant in spreading it. According to Abdur Rashid's biography of Rasool, he took advantage of his next winter vacation, which likely refers to either December/January 1949/50 or 1950/51, to visit Ḥāmid Ḥasan ʿAlawī, to whom he then pledged *bayʿa* and who, at some point prior to 1955, also gave him permission to teach. Then Rasool, aided by his personal connections with parents of students attending Jamia Millia from different areas of India, began propagating the order, which had already been established in the east of India, in a number of cities in south and west India; including Hyderabad, Madras, Bangalore, Ahmadabad, and Jaipur; where he began to conduct six-week long tours during his summer vacations. In 1954, perhaps to facilitate his efforts, Rasool published a biography of ʿAbd al-Bārī Shāh in Urdu and in 1955, he began bringing his teacher Saʿīd Khān along with him on his tours, which then came to also include Mumbai and Ajmer. In 1959, Rasool's grand*shaykh*, Ḥāmid Ḥasan ʿAlawī passed away leaving Saʿīd Khān as his heir, and in 1961, Rasool had a son who he named Hamid Hasan and who would eventually take on the leadership of IST and SOST after him. According to the biography posted to social media, Rasool's MA in Philosophy at Aligarh was earned in 1960, and Abdur Rashid states that it involved specializations in both Muslim and Hindu philosophy.[28] Additionally, although it is unclear as to exactly when, perhaps much earlier or perhaps during this time, Rasool mentions having wanted to conduct an academic study of the thought of Sirhindī, but that this never materialized.[29] Similarly, Abdur Rashid mentions that Rasool had had the opportunity to pursue a doctorate in the US, but for reasons unclear, he declined the offer. Perhaps the responsibilities of fatherhood had something to do with him opting for the more financially stable option of remaining in his posting at Jamia Millia, rather than pursuing a doctorate in the US. But what we do know next in the chronology is that in 1967, Rasool performed the *ḥajj* along with Saʿīd Khān and when the latter retired around 1968 and moved for a time to Bandel, where the shrine of ʿAbd al-Bārī Shāh is located, Rasool was able visit with his family.[30]

So for more than 26 years, from 1949 to 1976, Rasool was a faithful student of Saʿīd Khān, whom he often accompanied on travels as well as brought on tours to see the network of students that he himself was cultivating. In fact, several of the stories Rasool recounts of being with his *shaykh* take place on a train. The two men visited and corresponded with each other regularly, and it was on one of the occasions that Saʿīd Khān was visiting Rasool in Delhi that the latter approached his teacher with a remarkable new idea.

Rasool recalls explaining that there were "People in search of Truth" coming to India from America and Europe, yet they were attracted to "*sadhus*, *rishis*, and *sants* to learn yoga and other such traditions" but not to "Muslim holy people and Sufis," since they assume that conversion to Islam is a prerequisite, a difficult step to take as it would affect their "entire life pattern." He suggested the need to establish an institute that would allow such seekers to learn about and try Sufi practices for themselves, but leaving the "choice of converting to Islam […] to their [own] discretion." Rasool explains that Saʿīd Khān was enthusiastic about this idea that would allow them to realize even further

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[28] *TTH* xxiii.
[29] *SfT* 2.
[30] *SfT* 23.

God's promise to 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh. So Rasool drafted a proposal, ran it by professors of philosophy, psychology, and Islamic studies at Aligarh and Jamia Millia, and sent it to Sa'īd Khān for his review. The latter replied with his approval, some adjustments, and instructions to establish a center in Delhi, ending the letter with "the rest I leave to you." This letter was dated the 31st of October, 1975, exactly three months before Sa'īd Khān passed away.[31]

Very shortly thereafter, students began to arrive from abroad, particularly from the US and UK. After being exposed to the practices and returning to their home countries, they would tell others, who in turn also came to Delhi. One of these early students was Ahmed Abdur Rashid, who mentions that Rasool had already been teaching at least one student from the UK when he himself arrived in the autumn of 1976,[32] and more would come in the following years. The three most senior students of Rasool outside of India to still be affiliated with SOST are all originally from the UK and continue to serve as group leaders in England, Scotland, and New Zealand. Another senior student from Poland was introduced to the order in Australia and then established a branch in his homeland. Thus, groups began to be formed in different countries so that students could meet together weekly to perform the practices and the network of these groups came to be called The School of Sufi Teaching, a vehicle for bringing the teachings of the Institute to the rest of the world.

It was also not long before Rasool's touring circuit, which had already significantly increased the geographical presence of the order within India, extended internationally, as his first trip to visit Abdur Rashid and the aspirants at the World Community was in 1981 and would become a regular and even annual occurrence over the subsequent decades,[33] as would his trips to London and Australia. After retiring in around 1985, after 36 years at Jamia Millia, Rasool shifted his focus from developing the character of children to his second major mission in life, building the character of adults, to which he was now able to place the fullness of his time and energy. The order continued to grow and expand into new areas throughout the 80s, 90s, and early 2000s, until there were groups of varying sizes in "America, Britain, Canada, Brazil, Australia, Singapore, Italy, Malaysia, Poland, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, and Germany."[34] While Germany was not one of the countries, like the US or UK, that would see a large number of students during Rasool's lifetime, a senior student from Germany mentioned that Rasool had expressed a special interest in the country and in spreading the order there. Perhaps such interest was nurtured by his exposure to the three figures at Jamia Millia, Zakir Hussain, Muhammad Mujeeb, and Syed Abid Husain, who had been studying in Germany before deciding to direct their efforts toward standing up the new institution.

So by 2000, we are looking at a *shakh* based in Delhi, who maintains not only a network of disciples within India, likely well over a thousand, but also a smaller transnational network, probably in the low hundreds. Whenever the *shaykh* would make the journey to spend time with his students, this usually took place in private homes, and when students visited the *shaykh* in Delhi, they normally stayed in hotels until 2001, when after 26 years of scraping together the funds without the benefit of any major donors, Rasool was finally able to complete the construction of a mosque and an adjacent *khānaqāh* for the students to stay in during their visits. He explains that students would usually come during the winter months, likely to avoid both the monsoon season and the heat of summer, and stay for "ten to fifteen days" to "participate in a disciplined and carefully planned program."[35]

Whether in Delhi or abroad, the *shaykh* spent time meeting privately with students to discuss their spiritual progress, answering questions in a group format, and most of all, sitting with them in meditation. Explanatory literature was produced to provide instructions for the practices and to familiarize the students with key concepts. Frequently asked questions were collected along with Rasool's responses, and these were published as booklets. These would be further edited and grow into the book *Turning Toward the Heart*, which was published in 2002 after nearly three decades of spreading the order internationally, particularly in the West. In addition to continuing his activities as

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[31] *SfT* 75-7.
[32] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, Interview by Michael E. Asbury, Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.
[33] Ibid.
[34] *SfT* 83-4.
[35] *SfT* 84; "The Khāneqah in New Delhi," School of Sufi Teaching, London, November 30, 2011, accessed October 10, 2017, http://www.schoolofsufiteaching.org/qal/school/Khāneqah.html.

the *shaykh*, Rasool spent the last three years of his life closely overseeing the editing and translation into English, and tailoring specifically for a Western readership, of a book he had already published in Urdu and which would appear in English as *The Search for Truth*. It is these two works that serve as the English-language literature of SOST currently and accordingly, they are the main primary textual sources for the entire present chapter on Rasool's life and teachings.

Introduction to the West

Before delving fully into Rasool's mysticism, let us first consider its reception in the West generally, which was of course a continually evolving process taking place over a period of just over 30 years. This involves how he chose to present his teachings to the West as well as those in the West who chose to receive them. This process was shaped not only by these actors, but also by broader social movements and trends, East and West, along with scientific developments and technological advances. As Wade Clark Roof points out, "Successful religious groups adapt to their environments," or using the imagery of a "spiritual marketplace," they "compete well."[36] Continuing with such an analogy to speak in terms of supply and demand, Rasool noticed a demand in the West among spiritual seekers there which he felt could be met by the product he had to offer, viz., the mysticism of his lineage. In order to compete well, adaptations had to be made, and it is argued here that in Rasool's case, those adaptations pertained primarily to marketing strategies and initial presentation, rather than to changes in the product itself, that is technical explanations of Sufi concepts and concrete practices.

Constructivists would dispute that the marketing shapes the experience itself, and this is probably true, thus it might be well-argued that such a distinction; between how a form of mysticism is initially presented (marketing strategy) and the actual details of the doctrines and the practices that are imparted (product), a distinction which removes the former from the scope of mysticism; is ultimately untenable. Nevertheless, it is a useful distinction for demonstrating the restricted limits of how far Rasool was willing to go in imparting his teachings to a new audience in the West. For examples of what we might consider changes to the product itself in making use of such a distinction, we recall the highly adaptive strategies of the Haqqaniyya, whose doctrine and practices have been observed to vary greatly from one group to another, such as the enneagram appearing in their cosmo-psychology or their adopting Mawlawī-style whirling to attract new students, which stands in stark contrast to SOST, where doctrinal explanations and the practices performed are relatively uniform whether in Hyderabad or in Munich.

As reflected in his writings and presentation choices, Rasool seems to have had his finger on the pulse of trends in religion and spirituality in the Euro-American sphere in developing his marketing strategy. In a study that spanned nine years and was published as *Spiritual Marketplace*, Wade Clarke Roof made a number of observations with regard to dominant trends among Baby Boomers in the US at the start of his research in 1988-89, dates falling squarely in the middle of Rasool's 30 years of spreading his teachings in the West and during which participants of the study would have been around 25-45 years of age. In the first place, Roof notes a preference among this cohort for unchurched "spirituality" over "religion," connecting this also to an interest in subjective experience over what was perceived as the dry dogma and ritualism of institutionalized religion. Here, Roof also cites William James' notions of "firsthand" religion based in personal experience and "secondhand" religion mediated through institutions, which he also notes this cohort was particularly suspicious of, whether those institutions be religious or secular in nature. He says that for them, much like what we heard from accounts of Rasool's and Sa'īd Khān's spiritual search narratives, for "religion to be alive and real, it had to arise out of their own experiences […]."[37] Roof furthermore observes a tendency to prefer a private inward-oriented spirituality over collective practice, thus making Rasool's silent meditative practices potentially appealing.[38] Yet not quite so compatible with Rasool's mysticism, Roof also

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[36] Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace*, 79.
[37] Idem 81-2.
[38] Idem 84-5.

observes that a considerable number of respondents were interested in the "paranormal," mentioning "space-age narratives, near-death experiences, shamans, angels, and past-life regressions."[39]

Another theme, is the narrative of a spiritual "journey," imagery that indeed has clear parallels in Sufi tradition, and Roof speaks of the emergence of a "Quest Culture," but going along with this was a remarkable openness to and even active interest in exploring multiple paths and various faiths.[40] Roof also observes the importance of the "language of personal transformation" and of "personal empowerment,"[41] as well as the prominence of "instrumentality," that is, concern with what involvement in a religious or spiritual tradition can do for oneself personally, as opposed to participating as a religious obligation. Such instrumentality, which is of course tied up with individualism, also informed their responses as to why they took part in religious or spiritual organizations, noting the benefits to oneself over the fulfilling of religious duties.[42] A further theme that Roof's study addressed was "religious relativism" or "universalism," finding that while respondents were equally divided on whether to agree or disagree with the statement, "all the religions of the world are equally true and good," the fact that 48% of respondents agreed, including one quarter of the Evangelical Christians who participated, is substantial.[43] Roof concludes his discussion of these themes by saying that "Young adult Americans at the time, it was clear, were looking for a more direct experience of the sacred," and that "they were very much into a quest mode."[44]

The Institute of Search for Truth (IST)

Let us begin by first considering the foundation of the Institute. The choice of creating a formal incorporated organization around the traditional *ṭarīqa* structure already had precedence in earlier introductions of Sufism to the West, and calling that new organization an institute would obviously not have been the only option, for instance, Inayat Khan founded the International Sufi Movement in Geneva in 1923.[45] Yet the word "institute" brings to mind not a broad social movement, but a smaller intellectual education or research organization. Despite IST being essentially a continuation of the traditional *ṭarīqa* structure and accompanying contemplative exercises, the word institute has a distinctively Western, secular, and scientific ring to it, e.g., the Institute for Advanced Study (est. 1930) or the C.G. Jung-Institut Zürich (est. 1948). In fact, the word "institute" itself, in a sense dating back to only the early 19th century, is an "organization having a particular purpose, especially one that is involved with science, education, or a specific profession."[46] Originally, Saʿīd Khān had wanted to call it the Institute of Search for Divinity, but ultimately the present, less overtly religious name was chosen instead.[47] Thus a deliberate image was being constructed for a 20th century revival of traditional Sufism and its introduction to the West.

Not to belabor the point, but there were precedents of Sufi-like and self-described Sufi currents which propagated their teachings in the West and founded organizations also described as "institutes." Most important of those for us here is the Institute for the Study of Human Knowledge, established in 1969 by Robert Ornstein, a psychologist and a student of Idries Shah. Rasool cites Ornstein by name, alongside C.G. Jung and Arthur Deikman, in mentioning how "Modern psychology, particularly the psychology of the unconscious, points to" the kind of "unlimited potentialities and powers hidden within" the human being.[48] Ornstein's institute came after others in the same "*silsila*" of sorts, a very interrelated progression of institutes which tie into the broader reception of the Naqshbandiyya in the

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[39] Idem 83.
[40] Idem 82-3 and Chap. Two.
[41] Idem 82, 83-4.
[42] Idem 85-6.
[43] Idem 84.
[44] Idem 86.
[45] Celia A. Genn pays particular attention to the aspect of the founding and development of formal organizational structures among Inayati Sufis in her, "The Development of a Modern Western Sufism," 257-77.
[46] "Institute: Definition of Institute by Lexico," Oxford University Press, accessed November 25, 2019, https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/institute.
[47] *SfT* 77.
[48] *SfT* 153-4.

West in general, those being Ornstein's teacher Idries Shah's own Institute for Cultural Research (est. 1965), J.G. Bennett's Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and the Sciences (est. 1946) and G.I. Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man (est. 1919),[49] which was said to have developed out of an earlier society that Gurdjieff had been involved with called, interestingly enough, "Seekers of Truth." Hence, the names of Rasool's Institute of Search for Truth and his book *The Search for Truth* might have been carefully crafted to both accurately reflect his beliefs and teachings, while also appealing to an audience already familiar with Gurdjieffian writings and activities as well as those of Idries Shah and others of the same milieu.

Similarly, Rasool's wearing of a woolen *qarāqul* cap in a number of photographs surely for some brings to mind Gurdjieff, who was also often photographed in a *qarāqul*. Other Sufis, such as Idries Shah and the Haqqaniyya, have sought to make inroads among seekers of alternative spiritualities in the West via Gurdieffian circles, thus one might assume that this was part of a carefully constructed image. But when asked about whether the *qarāqul* was his father's signature headgear, Hasan explained that it was not and that in this lineage, much in line with their overall low-key approach, having any kind of distinctive garb to separate oneself from others was shunned. He added that Rasool was particularly sensitive to the cold and in summer months, he typically donned a white *ṭāqīya*.[50] Indeed, the *qarāqul* is a warm cap that has been worn across Central and South Asia, particularly by educated Muslim men. So not only has it become associated with Gurdjieff in the West, but in South Asia it is more likely to bring to mind such figures as Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, and of course the abovementioned Abu al-Kalam Azad, whom Rasool respected. But regardless of whether Rasool's wearing it was a deliberate attempt to evoke Gurdjieff's image, it likely had that effect on many of his students in the West, and thus whether happenstantial or not, it is a tangible case of resonance.

Moving on though, there were also of course still other institutes at the time such as the Esalen Institute (est. 1962), which was central to the Human Potential Movement (HPM) and, like IST, was devoted to the exploration of human consciousness to awaken inner potentials.[51] So, it is possible that Rasool may have drawn some inspiration from these existing, and to varying degrees psychologized and often Sufi or Sufi-related, undertakings that had already found success in the West in constructing the public image of his own venture. Nevertheless, the adoption of Western-style institutions was nothing new in the Muslim world, as it had long been used as a strategy for survival and maintaining vitality in the face of Western hegemony and modernity. Indeed, there were numerous institutes for secular and modern adult education in fields as varied as medicine, law, and agriculture established in Delhi in the 20th century well before IST. But more importantly, the impulse to reveal the compatibility of Sufism and Islam with modernity, science, and reason was already present in the thought of Saʿīd Khān.

Like the name itself, the proposal for the Institute, the contents of which also likely served as a brochure or other form of advertisement, also gives the impression of a secular scientific organization. It presents its aim as being to empirically explore the inner world of man, which it is explained has been ignored by scientists and materialists to the detriment of humankind, in order to bring forth man's untapped potentials "for the benefit of humanity." The document deliberately seeks to avoid stirring up any preconceived notions or fears in the mind of the reader about Islam and even religion in general, by

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[49] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 217. Ornstein also co-authored *On the Psychology of Meditation* (Crows Nest, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1973) with Claudio Naranjo, who played a key role in the development of the Gurdjieffian enneagram into a tool for psychological analysis. See also Mark Sedgwick, "Sufism and the Gurdjieff Movement: Multiple itineraries of interaction," in *Sufism East and West*, ed. Malik and Zarrabi-Zadeh, 129-48.

[50] Discussion with Hamid Hasan at the 2018 SOST retreat in Germany.

[51] For the Esalen Institute's website, see Esalen.org. On the HPM, Elizabeth Puttick, in her article, "Human Potential Movement"; in the *Encyclopedia of New Religions*, ed. Christopher Hugh (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 2004), 399; explains that "The human potential movement (HPM) originated in the 1960s as a counter-cultural rebellion against mainstream psychology and organised religion. It is not in itself a religion, new or otherwise, but a psychological philosophy and framework, including a set of values that have made it one of the most significant and influential forces in modern Western society."

excluding explicitly religious wording as well as Arabic, Persian, or Urdu technical terms, and in fact, there is no mention at all of Sufism, Islam, or even God. It also has a nearly universalist stance, affirming that the "different creeds of religion and spirituality are nothing but elaborations of [the same] fundamental truth," which the Institute by its very name is in search of, and that "conflict with any religion or creed is totally excluded from our aims and policy."

However, it is stated that the Institute does "recommend a specific program of practical exercises" that will not contradict any other creeds and is based in the methods learned from "those who have guided us […]." Their particular technique consists of a type of meditation that "results in an intuitive insight that enables us to begin to see all things in their true perspective […]." With an appeal to the scientific method, the document invites anyone "who values an empirically-based approach to inquiry," regardless of "philosophical creed or religion," to try the Institute's technique for themselves, either by staying a week or more in Delhi or receiving instructions by mail.[52] So in the name as well as the foundational document of the Institute, we see a religiously pluralistic, almost universalistic organization, though with its own approach, that is anti-materialistic (in both senses of economic and scientific materialism) and seeks to work in collaboration with a broader scientific worldview that accepts the possibility of a non-physical world to explore human consciousness, the inner, non-material aspect of the human being, by way of a meditative discipline to awaken hidden potentials in the service of humanistic ideals and the realization of ultimate Truth.

Just as with the name of the Institute, however, there are parallels to these characteristics of his message with earlier developments in the arrival of Sufism and Eastern traditions in general to the West, such as in Vivekananda's speech at the World Congress of Religions and the establishment of the Theosophical Society as well as of course Inayat Khan's International Sufi Movement, all of which we will see Rasool mention below and all of which had one kind or another of a universalistic stance. Furthermore, the Theosophical Society also sought to reconcile science and spirituality; not to mention that its headquarters has been, since moving from New York in 1886, in Chennai, where SOST too continues to have a large student base that was first established by Rasool, and among the stated goals of Inayat Khan's organization were mentioned "discover[ing] the light and power latent in man" and "universal brotherhood," although Rasool did not agree with its goal of uniting all religions.[53]

So it may well have been, for the foundational document of IST especially, that Rasool drew on what he agreed with in these groups as models for what had previously been successful with Western spiritual seekers in order to present the teachings of his lineage, but he did so without compromising his own views, particularly in the larger picture with regard to the connection between Islam and Sufism, a connection that Inayat Khan too had initially tried to maintain.[54] But it would be inaccurate to consider this a case of only selective copying since, if we accept as accurate Rasool's descriptions of Saʿīd Khān and as authentic the writings of the latter included in *SfT*, all of these ideas were already held by Rasool's teacher and expressed to a primarily Muslim audience. The pluralism and harmony of different faiths, an inner search for Truth and the possibility of "materialists" and "spiritualists" working together, were all already prominent in Saʿīd Khān's writings. It seems no wonder that Rasool would see parallels between the path he followed and the search of spiritual aspirants in the West, as well as with the teachers and organizations that had already offered to quench their spiritual thirst.

Thus, despite being carefully crafted to appeal to a Western audience, this self-representation in its entirety is probably best seen as being consistent with Rasool's own view of his work. The only major thing missing however, and it is a big thing, is the connection to Islam. If we find any fault with Rasool for leaving this out of the initial introductory document, we must do so while also acknowledging that the lion's share of potential students, that would otherwise enthusiastically seek out and embrace such an institute, might well dismiss the idea or at least be more hesitant if the connection to Islam were more immediately explicit. By deemphasizing the religious element in the initial presentation, Rasool sought to get them in the door so they could try the teachings he had to offer. In any case, the Islamicity of the teachings and the *shaykh* would have become quite clear to any visitors early on, if not immediately, then as early as the next scheduled prayer.

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[52] *SfT* 152-5.
[53] Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 76-7.
[54] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 159-60.

So what happens when Sufism and particularly Islam inevitably and immediately come more clearly into the picture of this mysterious institute? In light of the historical survey in combination with the present examination of Rasool's own mysticism and the broader survey of the Naqshbandiyya in the West, it seems that beyond adopting a Western-sounding organizational name and allowing non-Muslims to engage in preliminary practices in a three-stage model of progression, Rasool did not really change much if anything else in the practices and structure from how he was taught by Sa'īd Khān. On the contrary, it seems that IST offers a rather traditional course in what might be considered typical Naqshbandī Mujaddidī contemplative practices that is very similar to what is currently being taught to primarily Muslim student bases in other Mujaddidī branches hailing from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh as well as Khālidī branches coming from Turkey in particular. Such a disciplined curriculum of contemplative exercises is not universal, however, and may in fact be somewhat of a rarity, since as we have seen, other branches, perhaps even the majority, revolve more around communal *dhikr* and the personality of the *shaykh* or activities in the public sphere. Nevertheless, Rasool's continuity with tradition has actually plagued the researcher throughout the course of this study, since one of the major research questions seeks to answer how Rasool adapted his mysticism for a Western audience. But there had to be more to this than just an organizational name change, other presentational modifications, and allowing non-Muslims in.

So how else did Rasool adapt the teachings for a Western audience? The answer to this is more of the same, in the presentation or the framing, and a major part of this framing is in the words with which he chose to express himself in English. Wanting to speak to his audience in a way that they could understand and that would make his teachings appealing, he adopted not only the medium of English, but also an idiom common to a broad current within Western society that had largely turned away from traditional Christian religiosity yet still sought some form of contact with something sacred and greater than themselves, but with which they could connect by looking within themselves.[55] Seeing parallels in the aspirations of this current to his own tradition, Rasool is able to describe his own teachings with words that are familiar to and resonate with his audience, words such as experience, intuition, consciousness, overcoming conditioning, fragmented and integrated personality, realization, awakening, enlightenment, transformation, and inner potential.

We could split hairs over the differences of the most common uses of these terms in the West as compared with Rasool's uses, and we will with the term conditioning below, but establishing an accepted general usage of the former terms would be difficult and time-consuming, not to mention producing results of dubious accuracy. So it seems best to accept that Rasool uses such an idiom and then seek to understand what he means, what he is saying. This is also prudent because the way he chooses to express himself goes beyond just adopting a few buzzwords. He explains concepts in ways that are likely both true for him and that can resonate with his audience. Examples include his explanation of the goal of Sufism as being "to become a highly humane and moral person" and his translation of *iḥsān* as "doing what is beautiful." Such may not be the words that the average *'ālim* or Sufi *shaykh* speaking to a primarily Muslim audience would likely choose, although they might at an interfaith dialogue event. Some may criticize this as eliding doctrinal differences, but that is kind of the point, emphasizing similarity over difference. In Rasool's view, such translation is eminently accurate, since for him, despite all their differences, all faiths point toward the same Truth. So without losing its Islamicity and while maintaining continuity with tradition, Rasool's transmission of his teachings to the West emphasized a common base of interests and ideals that he shared with his audience, such as religious pluralism, anti-materialism, the exploration of consciousness, awakening inner potential, and humanistic ideals.

Another major way that Rasool adapted his mysticism to the Western context was by focusing on a small number of key technical terms from the wealth of possibilities within Sufi tradition. The technical terms he selected allow students to understand enough of the system to get started in doing the practices. These words are the focus for our study of Rasool's mysticism. There are other aspects that have changed, such as the fact that the *shaykh* travels by airplane to the West instead of by train

[55] See the above discussion of NRMs, and the HPM and "self-religions" in particular.

within India, or that he started typing emails instead of writing letters, but these, although significant, start to take us away from or to the fringes of the main analytical category of mysticism and the supplementary categories of orthodoxy and activism. We will consider adaptations in the area of orthodoxy more fully in their proper place below just as with the category of activism, where we see more continuity than adaptation. We could also enumerate a number of traits that made Rasool personally appealing to his audience as encountered with his students in Germany and the US as well as in the student testimonials posted online, such as his low-key approach to the student-teacher relationship as opposed to the kind of cult of personality found among "mediating" *shaykh*s or other charismatic spiritual leaders, the straightforwardness and simplicity of his teaching style, and the lack of interest in earning money from providing such teachings.[56] Yet all of these were not really adaptions for the West and such attributes were also appreciated by students spoken to in India. Moreover, we saw a similar low-key approach to being a *shaykh* described in the biographies of Sa'īd Khān and Ḥāmid Ḥasan 'Alawī. This is also true of the IST proposal, as all of its major themes listed above were already extant prior to the establishment of IST, and thus were not adaptations for the West either. So for a better picture of the introduction of the teachings of this lineage to a Western audience, we look now to Rasool's first major English-language publication.

Turning Toward the Heart

In *Turning Toward the Heart*, we find a valuable resource for understanding how Rasool presented his lineage of Islamic Sufism to an audience that, although likely open to a purely universalist form of Sufism, may have been reluctant and even hostile towards the idea of adopting any single religious belief and practice, especially one with as many exoteric prescriptions as Islam. Finding that those in the West who are interested in Sufism "repeatedly ask certain questions," the book consists of a collection of Rasool's responses to such questions.[57] Thus consisting of questions and answers collected over the course of nearly three decades of spreading the order in the West, it provides insight into the students, their expectations and aspirations, their previous interests, experiences and inclinations as well as their pre-existing ideas of Sufism and of Islam, including their fears and apprehensions. It of course also reveals how the *shaykh* explained the tradition he had to offer, maintaining the integrity of the teachings along with their Islamic foundation, yet also presenting them in such a way as to not only be understandable but also that resonates with and is relevant and appealing to his audience.

Glancing at the table of contents alone already provides an interesting dialogue between Eastern *shaykh* and Western students, on one side showing perhaps what the students were looking for, and on the other, what the *shaykh* had to offer them. Several of the section titles of Part One are revealing with regard to the interests, concerns, and understandings of Sufism that students in the West may have arrived with, having section titles like "Personal Transformation," "Love and Transformation," "Humanism and Humanitarianism," "Global Issues," "Stress, Angst, and Depression," "Psychotherapy," "Gurdjieff's Teachings," "Western Conditioning," "Women's Roles," and a section that addresses similarities and differences between Sufism and Yoga or Buddhism entitled "Comparing

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[56] One testimonial from a student who joined in the early 90s describes each of these characteristics: 1.) "The Shaykh wasn't a mysterious oriental individual who spoke in riddles, or who hinted at things ineffable. He was just a normal, kind elderly gentleman who answered my questions for me."; 2.) in reference to question-and-answer booklets that preceded the publication of *TTH*, he says: "I found them to be full of common sense and unusually down to earth."; and 3.) "During all the time that I have known the Shaykh I noticed that there was at no point any issues relateing [sic] to finances. There were no fee [sic] for the teaching, and even while staying at the khaneqa, there was no mention of money beyond the normal Islamic sadaqa or voluntary offering. The Shaykh has never asked anyone for money, nor indeed for anything else." "Personal statement of a student from Eastern Europe," School of Sufi Teaching, accessed February 22, 2018, http://www.sufischool.org/students/ps1.html.

[57] *TTH* 4. With regard to his American audience, for instance, a comparison of, on the one hand, Rasool's discussion of *dhikr* in a transcript of an audio recorded question and answer session at the World Community with, on the other hand, the section on *dhikr* in *Turning Toward the Heart*, shows that the two texts follow each other very closely and even exactly in parts in terms of content, phrasing and word choice. Also, a number of Rasool's responses to a series of questions as recorded in Abdur Rashid's pamphlet *A Guide to Modern Sufi Teachings*, first published in 1989, also closely match some of the answers in *Turning Toward the Heart*.

Mystical Paths." Part Two of the book, on the other hand, opens by discussing Islam with sections entitled "Islam's Role in the Path of the Sufi" as well as "Sufism's Role in Muslim Life," followed by other sections that largely deal with specific aspects of Rasool's teachings, such as "Centers of Consciousness (*Laṭā'if*)," "Where Others End, There Marks Our Beginning [*INfB*]," "Transmission (*Tawajjuh*) and Affinity (*Nisbah*)," "Meditation (*Murāqabah*)," and "Remembrance (*Dhikr*)." This dialogue interpenetrates both parts of the book, an interplay between the *shaykh*, seeking to impart his teachings as unchanged from their original context as possible and still firmly rooted in Islam, and his students, seeking to grasp his teachings but unavoidably as passed through the filters of their own expectations, interests, and understandings of Sufism; which seem to have often been shaped by exposure to various currents that might be labeled as alternative spiritualities or NRMs, including earlier universalist and psychologized forms of Sufism, both living and literary.

This exchange is apparent in questions like the one asking about the efficacy of Gurdjieff's teachings, to which Rasool admits his own limited ability to answer, as he is not a "Gurdjieffian," but also acknowledges the role played by his teachings in stirring interest in Sufism and explains "We are grateful for all vehicles that bring students to our door, and we respect their methods and practitioners."[58] Another section, on the *laṭā'if* in Part Two, the interlocutor opposite Rasool asks "Are they the same as the *chakra*s in Yoga, or related to the psychological terms 'id,' 'ego,' and 'superego'?" Instead of making comparisons or drawing parallels, he explains the concept of the *laṭā'if* in a straightforward manner that is more or less identical to what would be encountered with other Mujaddidī *shaykh*s from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Turkey, and elsewhere as discussed above, allowing this explanation to speak for itself, saying that it should be clear that they are different from the *chakra*s and the psychological components of the psyche.[59]

Yet this appears to conflict with his statements in the IST proposal where he, despite not mentioning them by name, rather clearly alludes to the *laṭā'if* and draws a parallel to psychology for scientific validation of his assertions, saying that these are not "figments of the imagination" noting that "psychology, particularly the psychology of the unconscious, points to such vistas of human nature […]."[60] An unsympathetic reading of the seeming contradiction in these two positions might be to declare that he has been exposed for luring his students in with a bait and switch tactic, making promises of scientific exploration of consciousness but delivering superstition instead.

However, approaching it from a more sympathetic and probably more accurate angle, one could see Rasool as simultaneously holding both perspectives, feeling that the psychologists of the unconscious are pointing toward the same inner potentialities as the *laṭā'if*, or that the impulse toward spirituality and even God in alternative spiritualities in the West is aspiring toward the same reality that he finds in the orthodox Islamic understanding of God. In initially presenting his teachings to a Western audience, he focuses on these similarities, showing that in the broader picture, for him, they are all really talking about the same thing. Yet despite this broader similarity, they come to conclusions that differ to varying degrees. So in order to impart his particular teachings which arrive at their own particular conclusions, differentiation becomes necessary. Thus, while for Rasool there are areas of overlap between some of the goals and premises of psychology, Yoga, and Sufism; neither id, ego, and superego nor *mūlādhāra* through *sahasrāra* (referring to the now typical seven-*chakra* model) equals *qalb* through *nafs*.

At times he emphasizes the parallels, while at others, for his own voice to be heard and his teachings to remain coherent, the differences must be articulated. Both sides of such a perspective can be seen in his reply to the question of whether Sufism could be a kind of psychotherapy. He begins to answer by stating that "Ancient and pre-industrial cultures valued non-ordinary states of consciousness

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[58] *TTH* 8-9. He also expresses an opinion about Gurdjieff's training having been incomplete, a conclusion which echoes the basic premise of the work *The Teachers of Gurdjieff*. Rasool cites this book in an endnote, but it is quite possible that he was introduced to this work and its view of Gurdjieff by his students. In fact, Abdur Rashid was very familiar with the work and showed the researcher his own copy, pointing out the near anagram of the author's name (Rafael Lefort to "Real Effort") and giving his opinion that this was a *nom de plume* of Idries Shah.
[59] *TTH* 86-91.
[60] *SfT* 153-4.

as venues for learning about hidden aspects of existence" and that across cultures "visionary states" were "important sources of knowledge." He laments that such states came to be viewed as "diseases" with the advent of psychiatry. Still, much like in his original IST proposal, he looks for hope to and acknowledges the work of Jung, who Rasool says came "very close to mysticism," and others since, such as in the field of transpersonal psychology, who have sought to create "bridges between the scientific and spiritual traditions." He nevertheless unambiguously rejects viewing Sufism as "a religious form of psychotherapy," saying that this "misrepresents the intimate and awesome mystery experienced in the Sufi aspirant's heart: the direct communication opened between God and human being."[61]

Rasool saw reflections of his own yearnings in the West and he wanted to share what had brought him fulfillment and meaning with people he undoubtedly saw as fellow seekers in the West. Yet there was definitely a concern with maintaining the purity of the tradition, both in the sense of it remaining within the boundaries of Islam and in retaining the specific Sufi methods of ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh. As we have seen, this preservation of tradition was already a concern in the Indian Muslim context when Ḥāmid Ḥasan ʻAlawī sent Saʻīd Khān to different groups to standardize the teachings that had been modified by various *khalīfa*s. This concern may have also led to the more centralized structure of SOST today where, instead of *khalīfa*s, there are multiple regional group leaders under a single *shaykh*, which stands in contrasts to many other contemporary Mujaddidī lines. Still, he was not rigid in imparting the teachings to the West, as already seen in his adaptive presentation, and furthermore, another of the reasons behind the accessibility and appeal of *TTH* is that Rasool passed drafts back and forth between himself and his students in the West, thoroughly refining the contents prior to publication.[62] Like any good leader, and like Saʻīd Khān before him in accepting Rasool's recommendation for the establishment of the Institute, Rasool was wise enough to allow the knowledge, talents and ideas of his own students to shine through. So we find, for instance, some explanations that appear to come from a Western student, such as described below on the need for a *shaykh*. Likewise, he draws on some sources, like books aimed at Westerners interested in Sufism in the post-Gurdjieff era that it is difficult to imagine Rasool having been attracted to, such as the abovementioned *The Search for Gurdjieff* or Hasan Lutfi Shushud's *Masters of Wisdom of Central Asia*. For instance, *TTH* makes use of Shushud's distinct division between "northern" and "southern" *ṭarīqa*s.[63] It seems unlikely, however, especially with such a meticulous review process, that Rasool would have consciously allowed the inclusion of any content that was incongruent with his own thought and teachings.

Defining What Sufism is Not

In the preface to *TTH*, find an account by Rasool of the developments in the West that set the conditions and presented the opportunity for the transmission and reception of his teachings there. He looks to "the Enlightenment and the debate between scientific materialism and Christianity" as the beginning of a period of skepticism and disenchantment with traditional religiosity in the West, which rendered it unable to aid Westerners with "questions and doubts about themselves and their place in the universe." He observes that "Westerners began looking eastward for answers" and acknowledges the roles played by the Theosophical Society and Vivekananda's appearance at the World Conference of Religions in facilitating the eastward turn for spiritual fulfillment and an increased interest in "Vedanta,

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[61] *TTH* 22-3; *SfT* 153-4. In the IST proposal, he also mentions both Robert Ornstein, who we have already encountered, and Arthur Deikman, each of whom studied mystical experience in the context of consciousness studies.

[62] For example, Abdur Rashid, the American *khalīfa* of Rasool who leads the Circle Group and World Community and who also contributed the biography of Rasool to the book, fondly recalls collaborating with him on the project, passing drafts back and forth and in fact, he explained that the photograph of Rasool used on the cover was taken on the forested grounds of the World Community in southern Virginia. Abdur Rashid, Interview, January 3-4, 2017.

[63] Compare Shushud, *Masters of Wisdom*, 2 with *TTH* 71. Also, it may seem contradictory for the researcher to accept that Rasool refers to Massignon and Nicholson while finding it unlikely that he would read Rafael Lefort or Shushud, but it should be kept in mind that the former two are classical and widely-read Western scholars on Sufism whereas the latter two appeal to a much smaller post-Gurdjieff audience.

yoga, and Buddhism." Rasool notes that this eastward orientation, along with the increased interest of Western scholars, paved the way for a variety of Sufi currents, both in the form of "teaching centers," noting Inayat Khan as an early pioneer, as well as literary presence.

Recognizing that *TTH* is part of this presence, he seeks to differentiate the teachings of 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh from what he considers "more popularized presentations of Sufism," in three ways. First, rather than viewing Sufism through a "superficial, almost occultist filter," he explains that the book stresses the need for "much effort […in…] performing structured practices under an authorized guide." Second, he affirms the inseparability of Sufism and Islam, and third, he explains two major distinguishing features of his own lineage, namely that the unitive state is not considered to be the ultimate goal along with the guiding principle of *INfB*,[64] which also differentiate this lineage from the more popular ecstatic forms of Sufism in South Asia. Thus, in addition to providing some theoretical foundations to his path in the third point, in the first two we see 1.) Rasool's awareness of trends toward the popularization of Sufism in the West and his desire to distance himself from such currents as well as 2.) his making the connection to Islam clear from the start, evincing an evolution from the IST proposal.

He further differentiates his teachings, as well as his normative view of what Sufism in general should be, by defining in the negative in ways that likely reflect the preconceptions of Sufism, as well as the overall experiences, interests, and inclinations, of students he encountered over the years, along with his overall awareness of trends in alternative spiritualities in the West and the commercial complex associated with them. We have already seen how he rejects the notion of Sufism as being "a religious form of psychotherapy," and in this vein, he says that Sufism is not about "a quest for greater personal effectiveness, healing abilities, psychic powers, and the like."[65] Here he shows a willingness to make clear to his audience that they will have to look elsewhere if they are in search, as surely many have been, of what Roof called the "paranormal" or such instrumentalizing goals as healing or personal empowerment, though Rasool accepts and emphasizes the pursuit of spiritual transformation. He thus sought to impart the disciplined curriculum of spiritual practices that he had, rather than shaping it or re-presenting its functions to cater to the interests and inclinations of his audience. He draws a line in the sand and the prospective student must then take it or leave it.

Rasool also states that Sufism does not "deliberately keep students in a state of mystification," and that Sufism is not "designed to provide a good living for teachers or heads of organizations."[66] Accordingly, the simplicity, clarity, and directness of his explanations and manner are things that his students often recall with admiration. Moreover, the lack of commercialism with regard to IST and SOST, in that there are no fees for the training and the *shaykh* lives off of his own earnings in work unrelated to Sufism, is a major part of its appeal, then and now. Elsewhere, Rasool also says that Sufism is not "an armchair study" or "simply or exclusively about attending lectures, reading books, listening to spiritual music, doing sacred dances, or any combination thereof."[67] So while he does not exclude intellectual discussion entirely, he is not seeking to cater to, recalling Knysh, popular Western intellectualist understandings of Sufism as primarily a "treasure trove of wisdom" at the expense of its disciplined practical aspects.[68] This excerpt by Rasool also calls to mind, for instance, the lectures and literature of Theosophical circles as well as Gurdjieff's movements and Sufi Sam's Dances of Universal Peace.

In fact, overall, the specificity and accuracy of some of his comments in describing the kinds of activities and interests within some universalist Sufi groups and alternative spiritualities more broadly, although he mentions no one by name, demonstrates a degree of familiarity which could not have been based solely on speculation. While such familiarity is probably not from firsthand participation, and is likely based on knowledge gained from interaction with his students, it nevertheless

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[64] *TTH* 1-3.
[65] Idem 8.
[66] Idem 8.
[67] *TTH* 16.
[68] Knysh, "Definitions of Sufism as a Meeting Place," 61.

demonstrates a *shaykh* who is a seasoned veteran in teaching Western spiritual seekers. On a further note, he also explains that seeing Sufism as "a teaching designed to unite all religions and creeds," a stated goal of some groups like the International Sufi Movement, "misrepresents its focus," and while Sufism "can diminish intolerance, fanaticism, prejudice, and conflict […] these are secondary results […] not goals."[69]

Rasool's Reflections on Western Students

In Rasool's reflecting on his experiences with Western students, we see some tension between the purpose of the mysticism he sought to impart, viz., developing a selfless relationship with God, *fī sabīlillāh* ("for the sake of God"), as opposed to instrumentalizing benefits; like psychological well-being, personal empowerment, and material benefits; or the pursuit of paranormal phenomena. We see further tensions in the "seekership" or "questing mode" of some prospective students in only briefly trying different paths, being unwilling to devote sufficient effort (perhaps seeking a McDonaldized and easily consumed spiritual experience), as well as fears about submitting to the guidance of a *shaykh*, reflecting not only individualism, but also a response to "the guru phenomenon."

Beginning with the tensions, Rasool admits to having been "a little discouraged by the attitudes and expectations that some Westerners bring to the path." He says that instead of seeking ultimate Truth, some look to spiritual practices to give them "peace of mind, power, phenomena, fame, or fortune." Another issue he finds is that, despite sensing the importance of contemplative practices, many are reluctant to put forth the effort required in "an authentic tradition." He also critiques what has been called the "pick and mix" approach, where students "taste many paths," becoming only superficially familiar with each path and then "assum[ing] that they are qualified to judge it."[70] He instead emphasizes "singleness of purpose," saying that "Trying to pursue multiple paths simultaneously is like trying to sail in two boats at the same time."[71] Rasool also notes that many Westerners are hesitant to submit to the guidance of a *shaykh* for fear of losing their "freedom and individuality," but that few such people are willing to commit to the practices long enough to realize the "new levels of freedom and identity that are inherent in trust and faith."[72] Finally, he addresses how "the desire to become a teacher, shaykh, or guru puzzles" him and may reflect "a uniquely Western interpretation of individuality."[73] He advises against pursuing the path in the hopes of eventually becoming a *shaykh* oneself, considering it an "immense responsibility" to guide others, and to instead concentrate on one's own refinement.[74]

Despite these few concerns, his overall picture seems to be much more optimistic, seeing more opportunities than obstacles and observing that the West seems to be "emerging from an era dominated by rationalism, determinism, and materialism" since "More and more people are seeing value in the direct, personal experience of reality that mysticism provides," people with a "yearning for a deeper more intimate relationship with the divine."[75] It was Western seekers coming to India in search of spiritual knowledge that he saw a common ground with and which caused him to found the Institute. Such optimism is also apparent in his response to one question in the first part of *Turning Toward the Heart* that asks if the "conditioning" of Western students could be an obstacle to their spiritual development. A common trend in presenting Eastern spiritual teachings to the Euro-American sphere is the depiction of the West as, although more technologically advanced, being less so spiritually. One way this has been done, beginning at least in the early 19th century, is by asserting that Eastern religions are more grounded in personal experience.[76] While Rasool does make appeals to personal experience, he does not present Sufism as any more experientially grounded than any other traditions, East or West. Another narrative asserts that Westerners in general are somehow less spiritually capable, either

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[69] *TTH* 8-9.
[70] Idem 54-5.
[71] Idem 27-30.
[72] Idem 55.
[73] Idem 55-6.
[74] Idem 49.
[75] Idem 12.
[76] Sharf, "Rhetoric of Experience," 275.

inherently so or because of their environment. One sees this, particularly under the label of "Western conditioning," again and again in the writings of the Shah brothers, so it makes sense that students who arrived at Sufism through a study of their books, as many in the West have, would be concerned about this. Yet Rasool rejects this notion and instead points to the universal applicability of Sufism, explaining that "Sufism is intercultural. Its methods adjust to the people addressed. […] The Sufi system of transformation has always been responsive to the time, place, and circumstances." He acknowledges that cultural differences have an effect on how the teacher imparts training, but that such differences ultimately "become irrelevant to a sincere student." He also uses this as an opportunity to speak of Islam's appreciation of human diversity and its message being for all of humanity as one *umma*.[77]

But considering also the term "conditioning" itself, while rejecting the idea of Westerners being especially "conditioned" in a way that is detrimental to their spiritual development, he does accept the word "conditioning" along with the idea of conditioning as being problematic and an obstacle on the spiritual path in general, among Westerners and Easterners alike.[78] But what Rasool meant by "conditioning" was probably not the same thing it meant to Idries Shah or his brother Omar Ali-Shah, or what being an "automaton" meant to Ouspensky and Gurdjieff. While these have their origins in William James' psychological explanation of "automatic acts," which Gurdjieffians and the Shah brothers thought should be overcome, Rasool seems to have understood and used the term "conditioning" to refer to learned perspectives and ways of thinking that prevent one from realizing God, such as in his own search narrative when he mentions his crisis of faith as well as his initial doubts about Sa'īd Khān's teachings. This is actually consistent with Sufi ideas throughout their history as well as the discussion below on the *laṭā'if*, wherein the carnal soul (*nafs*) is not the only enemy from within that must be overcome, but also the mind or intellect (*'aql*).

So despite areas of friction or dissonance, Rasool chooses to make the most of the common ground he shares with such spiritual seekers in the West, areas of resonance such as their mutual willingness and desire to go beyond rationalism and materialism to achieve a personal experience of the divine, while also emphasizing the adaptiveness and suitability of Sufism for people of all times and places. But now we turn more to the students themselves, including some first-hand accounts.

Rasool's Students in the West

The expansion of this lineage into the West began with two major nodes that, although now organizationally separate since Rasool's passing, continue to be their main centers of gravity in the West today, namely the Circle Group's World Community in the US and SOST's London group, which with some 200 members at the time of this research is by far the largest SOST group outside of India. In the years that followed, this lineage grew further to other countries, as listed above. In discussing the students themselves, we will focus here on those who joined under Rasool in groups in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand that are still associated with SOST presently under the leadership of Hamid Hasan. Yet one ought to of course recall that during Rasool's lifetime, the World Community under the leadership of Ahmed Abdur Rashid, made up the largest part of Rasool's base in the US, with Abdur Rashid as a direct student and *khalfa*, and the other participants at the World Community regarding Rasool as their Grand Shaykh. These students and the history of that community have a place in the chapter devoted to them below.

As for SOST, there are three senior students from the UK who were founding members of the London group and remain active from the earliest days of IST. Each of them now serves respectively as the group leaders in London, Scotland, and New Zealand. The former recounted how the very beginnings of the London group were not actually so different from that of Abdur Rashid and his students in the US, that they had been a kind of intentional community of spiritual seekers, and in fact

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[77] *TTH* 14.

[78] For one example of him using the term "conditioning" outside of a response to a question containing the term, see *TTH* 31ff. But still here, it seems that it was the other interlocutor who initially brought up the term and Rasool has understood it and used it in the context of his own teachings, saying "As you have suggested, difficulties arise from a different source: psychological and social conditioning."

they had been under the leadership of another Sufi *shaykh*, who ultimately moved to Australia.[79] The researcher was able to speak with two of these senior students from the UK, both of whom described how initially, many of those attracted to the teachings were of non-Muslim background, but that over time, there has been an increasing number of students of Muslim origin from a range of backgrounds. This is not to say that there were not SOST students of Muslim origin in the West from shortly after its inception. On the contrary, early on the order attracted a number of individuals from not only South Asian countries, like India and Pakistan, but also from other areas of the Muslim world, including Central Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. The London group leader explained that such demographic diversification was in fact actively pursued by reaching out to the Muslim community in London, in all of its diversity with regard to ethnicity and national origin, thus fostering such a demographic balancing over time,[80] though precise numbers and percentages would require a quantitative study. A similar evolution, was witnessed on a micro level in Germany over the course of just four years from 2015 to 2019, beginning largely with members of non-Muslim origin who had learned of the order by word of mouth but with the use of MeetUp.com as well as through the SOST website, a slightly younger and often Muslim-born presence began to grow.

Before further consideration of the demographics, it is acknowledged that identity and faith can be a sensitive issue, as noted by Marta Dominguez Diaz in her research on the Budshishiyya.[81] It is not the intention here to be inconsiderate of this concern, but for the purposes of this study, to better grasp from a sociological perspective the range of students participating in SOST under Rasool and continuing today under Hamid Hasan, we might classify them according to the two main criteria of non-Muslim versus Muslim self-identification and origin and whether or not they cite encounters with alternative spiritualities. The four main types observed were students of 1.) non-Muslim origin who cite encounters with alternative spiritualities and who have not converted to Islam, 2.) non-Muslim background who also cite such encounters who have embraced Islam, 3.) Muslim origin who also cite such encounters but identify as Muslim (what have been called "reverts"),[82] and 4.) Muslim origin who do not report

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[79] Although he declined to identify the previous leader, the researcher has a strong suspicion that it was none other than the abovementioned Abdullah Sirr Dan al-Jamal (ASDJ). One testimonial from a SOST student ("Personal statement of a student from England," School of Sufi Teaching, accessed February 21, 2018. http://www.sufischool.org/students/ps3.html) describes how in the 1980s, he encountered a "commune" of Sufis in London, that had found a new *shaykh*, namely Rasool. Previously, they had practiced Mawlawī-style whirling and were led by a "Scottish laird" with seemingly "clairvoyant" abilities who gave regular talks during which he appeared to be directing his thoughts to individual members of his audience, and who eventually seems to have moved abroad. Similarly, the Muridu'l Haqq lived in a shared community in London during the same time period, with a student base largely drawn from what Daphne Habibis ("Naqshbandi Sufi Order in Lebanon and the UK"), ASDJ's wife and student whose doctoral dissertation is about him and the Muridu'l Haqq, describes as the counterculture, often arriving with backgrounds in alternative spiritualities, including familiarity with Gurdjieff and Idries Shah. They practiced Mawlawī-style whirling, were led by ASDJ who claimed noble Scottish ancestry, gave regular talks, claimed paranormal abilities including directing thoughts to audience members, and eventually relocated to Australia. Combining all of these commonalities with how the London SOST group leader mentioned that the former *shaykh* moved to Australia, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that this earlier *shaykh* was in fact ASDJ. Moreover, ASDJ returned from India asserting to be a Sufi *shaykh* himself, but he did not provide a *silsila* through India, but instead only through the Haqqaniyya, Aslamiyya, and Menzil Cemaat, groups he associated with after establishing the Muridu'l Haqq with himself as their *shaykh*. Although speculation on the part of the researcher, perhaps ASDJ met Rasool in India prior to the founding of IST, as one of the many Naqshbandī *shaykh*s ASDJ is said to have met there, and may have been given permission to teach certain preliminary practices, since he returned from India to London in 1974 with the intention of establishing a branch of the Naqshbandiyya there. If true, this would mean that the beginnings of the London group involved an expansion into a student base formerly affiliated with the Muridu'l-Haqq and possibly even that the idea for the founding of IST may have in part been inspired by this speculated contact between ASDJ and Rasool. This might also provide some insight into Rasool's consternation with the desire of Western seekers to become *shaykh*s themselves.

[80] Conversation during 2018 SOST retreat in Germany.

[81] Marta Dominguez Diaz, "Between Two or Three Worlds: Reversion to Islam, Beur Culture and Western Sufism in the Tariqa Budshishiyya," in *Sufism East and West*, eds. Malik and Zarrabi-Zadeh, 211-232, here 212.

[82] On reversion, see Dominguez Diaz, "Between Two or Three Worlds."

having explored outside of Islam.[83] The leader of the London group, however, disagreed with making such distinctions as convert and revert. Echoing sentiments also found by Dominguez Diaz among the Budshishiyya, he explained that he prefers to view all Muslims as Muslims on the grounds that such differentiation creates unnecessary divisions. Nevertheless, he concurred that for the purposes of the present research, such categorization would be more or less accurate. Still, he further objected that such categorization fails to account for each individual's personal story and what circumstances in their lives led them to the order.[84]

Thus, we turn to the SOST website, which reflects its diverse presence and gradual balancing in providing six testimonials of students who began the practices under Rasool's guidance during the 80s, 90s, and 2000s, accounts which offer a varied sampling of the demographic range, with cases of each of the above-described four types. This includes students of non-Muslim origin who, after exploration of alternative spiritualities, gained an interest in Sufism from exposure to available literature on the subject in the West, like Idries Shah or the somewhat Sufi-like Gurdjieff, and/or had positive encounters with Islam and/or Sufism through acquaintances. They may or may not have embraced Islam (types 1 and 2). Such a background is common among earlier students, but continues to the present. Among the students of Muslim origin, who while always present are increasing in number, we have made a distinction between those who explored alternative spiritualities outside of Islam (type 3) and those who do not cite such an excursus (type 4). The accounts, in conjunction with encounters of the researcher during participant observation discussed in the section on SOST today, reveal an educated, articulate, intellectual, and often artistically inclined membership base across all four types.

Yet before considering these accounts, it should first be noted that they are sometimes deeply personal, with each person having their own unique experiences and story to tell. Thus, it is with apprehension that the researcher crudely data mines these accounts, picking up just superficial bits of the background stories that lead up to what for these students were life-changing encounters with Rasool and his teachings, resulting in what they report as profoundly meaningful realizations and transformative experiences. The reader is enjoined to remember that there is much more to these accounts and the people and experiences behind them than what is presented here for the limited purposes of the present study.

That being said, we begin with the reports of more recent arrivals, and in one account of a student who met Rasool in around 2002, she explains that she had always had "an awareness of something greater than [herself], understood as 'God', but the notion was vaguely rooted in new age theories that did not really seek to pursue the reality of this presence." She reports having been interested in meditation, but finding it difficult to sit still and instead turning to Tai Chi and on to "energy work, improvisation, performance and somatic studies" including dance. She recalls returning from a Yoga retreat in Egypt, where she felt moved after hearing the call to prayer, and thus asked a Muslim colleague whom she knew was practicing Sufi meditation if she could join her. Thus began her encounter with SOST, which ultimately led to her conversion to Islam and taking *bay'a* with Rasool.[85] Another account is from a student in the UK who was born into Islam and raised in the West, and who recounts having tried a type of Yogic meditation, but ultimately come to the conclusion that "while eastern religions were being diluted to suit western needs, someone somewhere was getting fabulously rich," and

[83] A hypothetical fifth category of those of Muslim origin who cite an excursus away from Islam from which they have not returned, considering themselves as non-Muslim, is possible, though no such cases were encountered during the research. But there is also another case that does not fall so neatly into this typology, namely when a student comes from a mixed-faith home and is undecided on their own faith. We might also posit a case, one that was not encountered, wherein someone of non-Muslim background cites no exploration outside of their previous faith, but then their engagement with SOST would itself constitute such exploration.

[84] Discussion at the 2018 SOST retreat in Germany. For a detailed and nuanced examination of conversion in the West, which considers the range of motivations, see Akil N. Awan, "Conversion to Islam in Contemporary Britain: Motivations, Processes and Consequences," (PhD diss., SOAS, University of London, 2011).

[85] "An English student describes her path to Sufism," School of Sufi Teaching, accessed February 21, 2018, http://www.sufischool.org/students/ps6.html.

furthermore that his or her own "path to salvation lay in orthodox Islam."[86] The testimony of another student who met Rasool in late 2006 explains that he or she is not only of a Muslim background but also from a religious family. The account speaks positively of the effects that the practices and the accompanying realizations have had in the student's life and personal faith.[87]

The testimonials of students who joined during the 80s and 90s tend to be a bit longer and provide more data on their search narrative. Thus, one student from Australia mentions having led a "hedonistic lifestyle" during his youth which "was typical of the 1970s," but in his late twenties starting to read about "spiritual development" and eventually delving practically into Yoga and Theosophy before reading about Sufism and in due course, at around the age of 40, encountering and becoming a student of Rasool. Despite having considered it "outside the realms of remote possibility" to embrace Islam, he eventually did and this, the Islamic Sufism as taught by Rasool, seems to have been where he found his ultimate fulfillment.[88]

Another testimonial is from a student in the UK who did not embrace Islam yet still remains active in SOST after nearly three decades. He speaks of receiving confirmation in the Church of England of his own volition at age 13 and at 16 being influenced by "'existentialist' Christian theologians" like Kierkegaard, Tillich, and Bonhoeffer, but also reading Gurdjieff and works on Zen Buddhism. He reports eventually drifting away from a formalized association with Christianity as well as a period in his twenties and thirties dominated by an interest in Marxism, but all the while still remaining "intensely concerned with debates about spirituality." He also reports having been interested in the I Ching as well as reading numerous books by Osho and having had some experience living in different "communes." He cites his first encounter with Sufism as being in his early twenties when he came across a friend who "had renounced all his previous drug-taking habits" after becoming a student of "a Sufi sheikh from Algeria," perhaps in reference to one of the branches of the Darqawiyya. Later, he would be interested in the writings of the British-born Mawlawī *shaykh*, Reshad Feild. At some point, he felt the urge to reach out to a Sufi lineage himself and around 1989, en route to mail a letter to Feild, he encountered the opportunity to join the SOST group in London. Over time, he felt drawn back to Christianity, first returning briefly to the Church of England, but then to the Quakers, saying that he personally feels there are "many affinities between Quakerism and Sufism."[89] Thus, while identifying as a Christian, he has continued to be involved with SOST for nearly three decades.

The last account is by a student from Poland who first met Rasool in the early nineties. He describes having an interest in spiritual concerns from as early as he can recall and that growing up in the Catholic church, he was fascinated by the saints and served as an altar boy, but that during his adolescence in the 1970s, he drifted away from the church and toward "esoteric" and "occult" interests. Despite the limited availability of "alternative literature" on spirituality or groups for such purposes meeting publicly, due to the censorship of the then communist government in Poland, he was exposed to Theosophy and offshoots thereof. This exposure expanded significantly when in 1980, he travelled to the UK and later Australia and became "deeply involved" in the study of New Age ideas, though he reports that his "heart remained unsatisfied." After encountering the writings of Idries Shah in the mid-eighties, he recalls having felt especially drawn to Sufism and thus he set out in search of a Sufi guide, though he remarks, a living and physically embodied one rather than "a mysterious master of Theosophy." His initial search for a teacher, however, resulted in disappointment and his feeling that the groups he found that described themselves as Sufis were simply expounding the same "typical New Age ideas" he was already familiar with.

His account, with its disillusionment with the New Age, somewhat echoes the Traditionalist René Guénon's departure from Theosophy and insistence on maintaining a connection with an established religious tradition. Thus he describes having encountered groups with largely intellectually

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[86] "Personal statement of a young student living in the UK," School of Sufi Teaching. Accessed February 21, 2018, http://www.sufischool.org/students/ps4.html.

[87] "Testimonial of Muslim student in the UK," School of Sufi Teaching, Accessed February 21, 2018, http://www.sufischool.org/students/ps5.html.

[88] "Personal statement of a student from Australia." School of Sufi Teaching. Accessed February 21, 2018, http://www.sufischool.org/students/ps2.html.

[89] "Personal statement of a student from England," School of Sufi Teaching.

oriented approaches that tended to pick some aspects of Sufism while ignoring others, and especially to lack a clear moral or religious foundation. He states that he found them "misty and vague" and that "they talked all the time about 'universal religions', and about 'being spiritual,' having a spiritual name, past lives, vegetarianism, and usually extolling their founders and leaders." With regard to his later encounters with universalist forms of Sufism in the US, he describes how "There was a lot of talk, some mixture of modern psychology with Eastern terminology, a little meditation, some attempt at healing, and of course no religion […]." He speaks of noticing "a total lack of adherence to any principles, or rules, or the following of any established religion," explaining how such groups "praised all religions yet followed none" and presented Sufism as something separate from and predating Islam, even giving off "the impression that Sufism was 'to good' to be Islamic."

He admits to having initially been attracted to such universalism, saying "I was looking for a more universal kind of Sufism – one which wasn't in any case Islamic (as I dreaded any kind of religion, and Islam in particular) but which on the other hand wasn't the New Age kind either." He ultimately found that the teachings of such groups "seemed to be fragmented – choosing to ignore some or aspects of Sufism as they saw fit" and to consist mostly of superficial "mental and intellectual stretching, but without much essence." He also critiques the commercial aspect, pointing out that "Many of those Sufi teachers didn't seem to do any concrete work for a living." On a final note, he recalls that "My whole trip to the U.S. was also a kind of a mirror, a caricature of my own ideas and preconceptions about Sufism reflected back to me."

Indeed, this account in particular provides a fascinating reflection of the broader arrival of universalist Sufism in the West and the pre-existing understandings of Sufism that Rasool would have to contend with in seeking to impart the teachings of his own practice-oriented Islamic Sufism to a base of students in the West (largely referring to types 1 and 2, but also 3 and perhaps to a degree 4) whose understandings of Sufism had already been shaped by an earlier more universalist presence, often heavily influenced by Theosophy or other related and subsequent currents such as those connected with Gurdjieff or the Shah brothers.

But we also see from the students' perspectives, including apprehensions about embracing Islam or any religion at all and multiple spiritual search narratives involving past exposure to Buddhism, Yoga, Theosophy, Gurdjieff, Idries Shah, universalist forms of Sufism and currents they describe as "New Age." In these personal narratives, we find a dissatisfaction with the existing goods being offered in the spiritual marketplace. What was available seemed overly commercialized, superficial, partial, "watered down" for Western consumption, and thus inauthentic. This study argues that, while Rasool may have marketed his teachings in ways to appeal to Western spiritual seekers, he did not actually "water them down," that is he did not change the doctrines or practices themselves, or make them easier and less disciplined, to suit the whims of potential students, something particularly true with regard to their connection to Islam. It is perhaps this facet, a refusal to cater to the masses of New Age consumers that is one of the most appealing aspects of his teachings in such a market, providing what is seen as authenticity and a sense of being an elite few engaged in serious and disciplined spiritual practice.

But again, behind each of these stories is an individual with their own personally meaningful realizations and experiences on the path, yet here we have focused on only aspects of their search narratives that conform to broader patterns in the reception of Sufism in the West, as well as what was gleaned from interactions with students in the course of the fieldwork. Due to a research design that focuses more on the teachings of the *shaykh* rather than the understandings of the students, these aspects, which are likely more important to the individuals behind the narratives, have not been included. Now, before proceeding to Rasool's mysticism proper, we consider two other aspects of his presentation of Sufism that have likely also helped in making his teachings appealing in the West, but that are also more than just packaging and are in fact important aspects of his teachings, viz., the asserted compatibility with science along with the emphasis on personal experience and performance of the practices.

Science and Experience

As addressed in the above discussion of the concept of mysticism in relation to modernity, in adapting to the modern world, mysticism has undergone various processes including, inter alia, those

of scientification (including psychologization) and experientation,[90] of which Rasool's teachings can be considered a case in point. For instance, he appeals to what he considers to be similarities in some of the findings of scientists and Sufis, as we have already seen in his search narrative with regard to psychologists and physicists, but also elsewhere. In one place, he notes that "Today researchers in the fields of human consciousness, quantum physics, biology, chemistry, and psychology are drawing conclusions that parallel premises of Sufism."[91] Yet another example of him connecting scientific findings with Sufism is one that will be familiar to scholars of Rūmī, wherein he points out that centuries before Darwin, Rūmī gave a sort of evolutionary account of the creation of man from mineral to animal and finally to human.[92] Still, it is not so much the conclusions of science that Rasool is most concerned with, rather what he cares about is its methods, specifically its empirical approach. Yet unlike the empiricism of positivistic scientific materialism, which relies on the physical senses to perceive observable objective consensus reality mediated by the rational mind, he advocates the use of subjective post-sensory and post-rational data collected from the world of the unseen. We have already encountered this appeal to empiricism in Rasool's 1975 IST proposal in its invitation extended to "Everyone who values an empirically-based approach to inquiry,"[93] and it is of course directly tied to the language of experience and an emphasis on performing contemplative practices, which we have also already seen in the respective culminations of the search narratives of both Sa'īd Khān and Rasool and it is found throughout the latter's writings. This paralleling of science and empiricism with personal mystical experience through the performance of practices is found, for example, in his saying that the knowledge gained through Sufism should be "experiential" as opposed to only intellectual, drawing a comparison to the superiority of a knowledge of chemistry gained by firsthand experience in the laboratory versus only taught theoretical knowledge.[94] Echoing the words of Sa'īd Khān, Rasool points to the great Sufis of the past for inspiration and, lamenting how Sufi practitioners are sleeping while scientists are excelling, he calls them to come forth and equal or exceed the accomplishments of past mystics.[95]

But the parallels to science and empiricism are not limited to only an appeal to his audience to try the practices for themselves or even just to individual experience in general, as Rasool understands and presents the very emergence of Sufism itself and its subsequent development over the centuries as resulting from a process of experimentation and refinement in the laboratory of the inner self, a kind of "spiritual technology," though he does not use this exact term himself. So for instance, in discussing Sufism's development up to the fourth period of our historical survey (1100-1300), a time Western scholars, like Arberry and Trimingham,[96] once considered the culmination of a golden age and the beginning of a decline with the appearance of the *ṭarīqa*s, Rasool provides a much more positive picture by viewing the emergences of the *ṭarīqa*s as a beneficial development, allowing the discoveries of earlier Sufis to reach a larger number of seekers, or as he himself puts it:

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[90] Zarrabi-Zadeh, "The 'Mystical' and the 'Modern': Reconsidering a Conventional Contradiction."
[91] The quote goes on to say: "For example, many scientists now take into account the fundamental interrelatedness of all phenomena. Whether or not they speak in terms of God, their insights echo the mystics' age-old awareness of Divine Unity. Building from points of common understanding, teachers and students of Sufism are engaging scientists in dialogue, working to bridge the gaps between them and thereby help more individuals recognize the benefits of a spiritual view of life." *TTH* 7-8. This excerpt sounds a great deal like something Abdur Rashid would have written if for no other reason than the fact that it reflects his own activities and those of his students, particularly with regard to consciousness studies and quantum physics, as will be treated in further detail below.
[92] *TTH* 16-7. Interestingly enough, according to Schimmel in her *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalāloddin Rūmī* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 329, this parallel between Rūmī and Darwin was first made by another Indian Muslim educator who also sought to blend the traditional with the modern, namely Shiblī Nu'mānī. Schimmel is cited in Zarrabi-Zadeh, *Practical Mysticism in Islam and Christianity*, 155, endnote 9. For more on this quote from Rūmī along with its comparison to Darwin, see idem 154-9 and for further sources endnotes 9-12.
[93] *SfT* 155.
[94] *TTH* 16-7.
[95] Idem 44-5.
[96] Arberry, *Sufism*; Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*.

> By the end of the thirteenth century, Sufism had become a well-defined science of spiritual awakening. Through experimentation and investigation, Shaykhs had developed transferable techniques for self-refinement, the efficacy of which was confirmed by numerous aspirants.[97]

So the collective understanding of cosmology and the ontological structure of the universe, both macro- and microcosm, along with the methods used for exploring its inner aspect are seen to have been arrived at through a peer reviewed process facilitated by feedback from the field. This has also shaped the understanding of Rasool's students in the West, as one of the three most senior students from the UK, who was responding to a question from the researcher on the microcosmic *laṭā'if* and how they differed from one *ṭarīqa* to another, explained that the various descriptions derived from the field reports of past Sufis after having returned from their journeys in the spiritual world.[98] By extension, the accounts of the structure of the cosmos and the stages of the journey, which have likewise evolved over the centuries, might be seen as maps, drawn and redrawn with the refinements of successive explorers of the spiritual realm, maps that are used to navigate the same path today through the series of transmissions treated below. And in fact, in a lecture given in 2013, Rasool's American *khalīfa* Abdur Rashid described the Mujaddidī intentions collectively as a "Spiritual Road Map."[99]

As observed in the historical survey, there is clearly some historical basis behind Rasool's assertions about the developments in Sufism, but what is debatable is whether or not it is viable to compare scientific advancements with changes in mystical doctrine and practices over time. The idea has both supporters and critics, but the crux of the matter centers around the issue of "experience." Significantly, Buehler, the foremost academic specialist on Sirhindī and Mujaddidī contemplative practices, in his *Recognizing Sufism*, actually offers a quite similar perspective to that of Rasool. He asserts that "contemplatives start from a quite rational set of premises," that "any religious/spiritual truth must have evidence," that that evidence comes from "contemplative *practice*," the truth must be "tested in the laboratory of personal *experience*," and "the claims must be in accordance with the community consensus (over the centuries) by qualified sufis."[100] Of course, from a positivistic perspective, there are a number of problems with this construct, such as how to determine who a qualified Sufi is? But the point of including this here is to highlight how there are voices, however few and far between, among recognized scholars in the field who call for a shift away from the positivist paradigm.

In contrast to Buehler, is the professor of Buddhist Studies Robert H. Sharf, who, championing the more conventionally scientific view, is skeptical of our ability to assert that "Asian mystics have charted the depths of the human psyche […] and left behind detailed maps so that others may follow in their footsteps."[101] In particular, Sharf rejects the category of "experience" as "a mere place-holder that entails a substantive if indeterminate terminus for the relentless deferral of meaning," which he notes also renders the term "so amenable to ideological appropriation." He ultimately argues that whether dealing with text, art, or ritual, in the context of Religious Studies, it is erroneous to treat representations, "as if they referred back to something other than themselves, to some numinous inner realm," and that "all attempts to signify 'inner experience' are destined to remain 'well-meaning squirms that get us nowhere'." The present study, with its abovementioned commitment to methodological agnosticism, seeks to chart its own middle way, somewhere between the two extremes of Buehler's acceptance of firsthand post-rational or transrational experiential data as evidence of transpersonal realities[102] and Sharf's removing experience from the equation entirely. While Buehler represents a radical departure from currently accepted academic criteria, Sharf's proposal may be easier said than done, at least in the

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[97] *TTH* 67-8.
[98] Private discussion at the SOST Germany Retreat 2015.
[99] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Muraqabah in the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Order: The Spiritual Road Map of Contemplation/Niyyat," Lecture, June 20, 2013.
[100] Buehler, *Recognizing Sufism*, 15.
[101] Sharf, "The Rhetoric of Experience," 271.
[102] Buehler, "Researching Sufism in the Twenty-first Century"; idem, "The Twenty-first-century Study of Collective Effervescence."

case of Sufism and especially with regard to this particular lineage. For example, in support of his position, Sharf points to several pre-modern Buddhist exegetical texts and notes that on the whole, the authors do not claim to base their insights on personal experience.[103] The same, however, cannot be said of Sufism, and particularly the Mujaddidiyya, as can be seen in Sirhindī's explication of the doctrine of *waḥdat al-shuhūd* as being based in his own experiences.[104]

Of note with regard to science, experience, and religion leading up to Rasool's time, place, and milieu, Sharf traces the origins of the "rhetoric of experience" to 18th- and 19th-century Europe and America and speaks of its "Asian appropriation" in the first half of the 20th century at the hands of individuals who were, like Rasool would be, intimately familiar with Western thought, such as Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) in India and D.T. Suzuki (1870-1966) in Japan.[105] Of particular interest, he notes how Radhakrishnan placed both experience and the empirical method at the core of religion, much like with Rasool's Sufism here, and that his ideas on experience were shaped by, among others, William James and Henri Bergson, along with him citing A.N. Whitehead, all individuals that we have seen Rasool also draw upon. Additionally, interestingly enough, Sharf highlights Suzuki's early interest in Theosophy and Swedenborgianism, movements that in part laid the foundation for the alternative spiritualities in which many of Rasool's Western students would have some background.

But to bring this discussion to a close, as we will also encounter again at different points below, Rasool speaks of the various facets of *nisbat*, of the *laṭā'if*, and the circles of transmissions as all being the results of a process of development, refinement, and collective consensus among accomplished Sufis over the centuries. In fact, he does so with every one of the six key terms that we examine here, but one in particular stands out, one which is a major hallmark of the Naqshbandiyya and its sub-branches, the principle of *INfB*. Seeing the *ṭarīqa*s as vehicles for the transmission of such spiritual technology, Rasool acknowledges that the different orders have their own approaches, techniques, and understandings, and as we have seen in our survey of Naqshbandī-related presence in the West, even within a single order there is a wide array of variation. Sharf pointed to a lack of consensus on criteria for identifying the experience of *vipassana* among different contemporary branches of Theravada Buddhism in his efforts to expose and undermine the "rhetoric of experience."[106] On the other hand, Buehler argues that the similar diversity among Sufis in itself need not necessarily bring into question the validity of their claims, since "just as various types of mathematics are derived from different assumptions, sufis have different 'schools of interpretation'."[107]

Again, similar to Buehler, Rasool explains that "there are some differences in methods of achieving the goal […but that] These differences are natural because the methods are based on spiritual experiences of individual Sufi shaykhs," and that the destination is nevertheless the same.[108] So while Rasool is always careful to point out the value of all *ṭarīqa*s and that they all lead to the same goal, the principle of *INfB*; as one of the major defining characteristics of the Naqshbandī "school of

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[103] Sharf, "The Rhetoric of Experience," 276-80.

[104] Sirhindī's evolution from a *wujūdī* to a *shuhūdī* perspective and the personal spiritual experiences that led him there can be traced in his collected letters, whether they comprise a rhetorically determined account as has been suggested by Friedmann (*Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī*, 23-31), or not, as argued by ter Haar ("Follower and Heir," 30-36). Although Burhan Ahmad Faruqi clearly has some a priori theological commitments in his *The Mujaddid's Conception of Tawhid* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1940), it is worthwhile noting that he emphasizes how Sirhindī arrived at his views through "*kashf-o-shuhūd* or direct mystic experience," rather than through reason, and that his critics should have likewise based their arguments on personal experience. Of course, given Faruqi's context in 20th-century British India, he too may well have come into contact with the rhetoric of experience as found in Tagore and Radhakrishnan, the latter of whom's work, *An Idealist View of Life*, had been published in 1937, just three years before Faruqi's monograph.

[105] Sharf, "The Rhetoric of Experience," 272-76. See also the section entitled "The Concept of Experience in the Encounter between India and the West," in Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), 378-402.

[106] Sharf, "The Rhetoric of Experience," 277-80; see also idem, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience," *Numen* 42, no 3 (October 1995): 228-283.

[107] Buehler, *Recognizing Sufism*, 16.

[108] *SfT* 47.

interpretation" and said to have been introduced by the eponymous founder figure Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband himself; is held to be a cutting edge spiritual technology, a faster and easier method which provides a taste of the end of the journey at its very beginning. Sirhindī is presented as having refined and built even further upon this methodology and 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh even more so with his still further systematization of the curriculum.[109]

But such narratives of successive development and refinement, whether as a return to earlier ways or as an improvement upon those ways, is much older than the Scientific Revolution, and general claims as to the effectiveness or particular benefits of one method over another are as old as the appearance of different methodologies in competition with one another. We saw in Rāmītanī such arguments for the primacy of the Khwājagān over the nascent *ṭarīqa*s of his day during the period of their emergence as well as in precursors to *INfB* described by the Kubrawī *shaykh*s Dāya al-Rāzī and Kubrā himself, and before the emergence of the *ṭarīqa*s, we see Hujwīrī comparing and contrasting different approaches to Sufism.[110] The narrative surrounding *INfB* was not created to appeal to a modern Western audience, although in Rasool's hands, it has been well-adapted to that purpose. But more important in the Naqshbandiyya historically, and probably for most of Sufism in general, than the efficacy of a particular method for achieving the intended goal, or perhaps rather an important prerequisite to achieving that goal, is that method's congruence with the Quran and the *sunna*. While this requirement has its own rhetoric, such can be combined with other interests as well.

Accordingly, Rasool's perspective on the historical development of Sufism in his two works also, and perhaps more importantly in its original context, defends against accusations of *bid'a*. This narrative depends on 1.) a concept that has been called the "corruption of time" (*fasād al-zamān*)[111] along with 2.) the historical fact that the schools of Islamic sciences, such as jurisprudence, *ḥadīth* studies, and theology developed alongside the emergence of Sufism and its foundational ideas and practices. On the first of these, it is stated in *SfT* that "After the Prophet's (S) death, as time passed, these qualities [referring to the 'noble characteristics' of 'nearness to Allah and knowledge of the Truth' that Sufism intends to develop] became less and less common," and "To address this deterioration […] different Sufi shaykhs devised ways of attaining inner knowledge on the basis of their own experience within the framework of Islamic law."[112] On the second point, the passage continues by saying that this process "was undertaken in a way that was similar to the way in which Islamic scholars codified and developed jurisprudence through logical deduction and sincere striving," also pointing out that "These laws took many centuries to be codified after the lifetime of the Prophet (S)."[113] So, here we see a description of how Sufi ideas and practices were not present during the time of the Prophet because they were not needed at this time due to greater temporo-spacial proximity to the Prophet, from whom even a glance was enough to "take a believer through all the stages of realization,"[114] and the Sufi methods thus arose out of a need created by the spiritual decay that ensued after the Prophet's death, much like the exoteric Islamic sciences responded to more textually oriented needs related to right belief

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[109] *SfT* 50-2, 60.
[110] DeWeese, "Khojagānī Origins and the Critique of Sufism"; Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*, 213; Kubrā, *Fawā'iḥ*, trans. Meier, 285 (*INfB* in Kubrā, in particular the issue of *jadhba* versus *sulūk*, was noticed by Buehler and cited in his *Sufi Heirs*, 120, footnote 79); and al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, trans. Nicholson, Chap. XIV.
[111] On the "decline paradigm," see Syrinx von Hees, ed., *Inḥiṭāṭ – The Decline Paradigm: Its Influence and Persistence in the Writing of Arab Cultural History* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2017); and on the concept of *fasād al-zamān* in particular, see the chapter therein by Geert Jan van Gelder, "Good Times, Bad Times: Opinions on *Fasād az-Zamān*, 'the Corruption of Time'."
[112] *SfT* 46.
[113] Ibid. This narrative appears again in a similar form in *TTH* 96-97, but it is also reflected in various parts of Rasool's writings.
[114] *TTH* 96.

and living. We find very similar reasoning and even phrasing in the letters of Sirhindī,[115] and such an argument, which allows Sufi practices to fall under the label of *bidʿa ḥasana* ("good innovation," as opposed to something that is new and in conflict with the *sharīʿa*), also appears in the thought of other current Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī lineages, for instance, the internationally popular Deobandī-oriented Pakistani *shaykh* Zulfiqar Ahmad Naqshbandi.[116] We will consider another rhetorical aspect of INfB below in the section devoted to this principle at the end of the part on cosmo-psychology, but now we move from science and experience to the means of acquiring those experiences, namely mystical practices.

Practices Not Theory

As we just saw, exploring the origins of and comparing the differences between different Sufi lineages is quite peripheral to Rasool's main focus of performing the practices oneself. In discouraging his reader from delving too much into the variety of methods used by the different *ṭarīqa*s, saying that they all share the same goal of seeking to bring the student closer to God, and likening them to the tools used by a surgeon, he says that "what matters to the person on the operating table is their role in restoring health, not the details of where they came from, who invented them, or how they compare to instruments in the room next door."[117]

An emphasis on and even the centrality of the practices is probably one of the most defining aspects of Rasool's teachings, and since many of his students in the West arrived at Sufism through books and intellectual study, he seems to have struggled with their inclination to read and intellectualize at the expense of actually performing their assigned practices. He explains that "Simply accumulating intellectual knowledge serves little purpose for the seeker," as well as that only reading books about swimming does not make one able to swim, and even furthermore advising that "those who yearn to know the truth should throw away their books and meditate."[118] Instead of Sufism being an intellectual pursuit, he explains it as follows:

> *Taṣawwuf* is a journey that takes place within us, changing the totality of our being. *Sāliks* (spiritual travelers) undertake a concrete program of training. They do not speculate on cosmic principles and heightened states of being, philosophical issues or creeds. They work. They do practices that refine intuitive perception, and in so doing, come to understand the principles of Sufism for themselves.[119]

So rather than explaining the teachings intellectually, he seeks to allow the student to personally experience the realizations that they are held to offer through non-rational and non-sensory means, by way of training through assigned contemplative practices along with a *nisbat* with and the *tawajjuh* of the *shaykh*, or as he states, "some orders emphasize verbal instruction, while others emphasize meditation and the imparting of instruction by transmission." In the latter case, he is referring to his own lineage, but Rasool's students do report him spending time speaking with them informally, though

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[115] Sirhindī explains that "the expressions *fanāʾ*, *baqāʾ*, *jadhba* and *sulūk* were not used in the time of the Prophet and were invented by the *ṣūfīs*" as the terms were then unnecessary due to the companionship of the Prophet. Sirhindī quoted in Friedmann, "Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī," 61. Compare this with SfT 47, "[…] for ease of understanding, it was the Sufis who classified this spiritual affinity into categories such as annihilation in God, subsistence in God, attraction to God (*jadhba*), the path of spiritual practices (*sulūk*) […]."

[116] On his official website, Tasawwuf.co, which noticeably avoids the label of "Sufism" and prefers the original "Tasawwuf" or "spirituality" instead, it is explained that the Prophet was the "fountain of Quran, Hadith, Tafsir, Rhetoric, Fiqh, and so on," and that after his time, no one could single-handedly fulfill all of these roles, and thus the Islamic sciences emerged, and alongside those, so did *tasawwuf*. "Tasawwuf," Tasawwuf.co, accessed November 21, 2019, https://www.tasawwuf.co/tasawwuf/.

[117] *TTH* 71-2.

[118] Idem 84. One senior student remarks, "The spiritual training with the Shaykh is practical and experiential. There are no theories to believe in, no recommended reading lists, and no intellectual brooding to be done." "Personal statement of a student from Eastern Europe." School of Sufi Teaching. Accessed February 22, 2018. http://www.sufischool.org/students/ps1.html.

[119] *TTH* 84.

what was more common was for him to be sitting in meditation with them. We have also seen in the biographies of Ḥāmid Ḥasan ʻAlawī and Saʻīd Khān that they too provided some verbal instruction, with the former even including it as a part of his daily routine, though for all three men and probably for ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh as well, theory takes a distant secondary role to practice. Still, Rasool does leave room for the possibility of a greater amount of theoretical training, saying that the individual seeker might find one or the other of the two approaches just mentioned, or a combination thereof, more suitable "to his or her temperament and needs," though it seems clear that he would have considered this as something different from the established way of doing things in his own line.[120] So while "speculat[ing] on cosmic principles" or comparing various practices and methods were not things Rasool was keen on, his books do provide somewhat of a theoretical foundation to get the curious seeker started and to satiate the intellectual yearnings of those who are already his students, and it is to this foundation which we now turn in seeking to understand Rasool's teachings.

Mysticism

Before embarking on an examination of Rasool's mysticism, let us first pause for a moment to reflexively consider the prospects of such a scholarly endeavor from an emic perspective. A scholar comes to a topic, armed with theories and methodologies, drawing on the most recent academic sources in the field and seeking to engage with the debates therein while also trying to represent and get closer to a more accurate understanding of reality. Yet Sufis maintain that there are other ways of knowing, based not on reason and empirical observations of the external world, ways that the academic researcher may or may not have had access to. On who is qualified to discuss Sufism, Buehler describes three types of people with perspectives to share: scholars of particular aspects of Sufism, aspiring Sufis with some personal experiences to share, and "Accomplished sufis [who] are qualified to communicate their unitary experiences and the methods they used to get there […]."[121] If we were to accept these distinctions for the purpose of discussion, then the present researcher, with his use of experiential investigation, could be considered to fall within both of the first two categories, but by self-admission, certainly not the third. In contrast, most students of Rasool would probably consider him to fall in the third category.

Yet even if we reject these categories, it remains a fact that the researcher has only been studying this topic and engaging imperfectly in the practices under the guidance of Hamid Hasan, Rasool's son and the current head of SOST, for around five years. This research is focused on analyzing texts and conducting participant observation and interviews, whereas Rasool engaged in the practices for nearly six decades and his efforts were not toward examining texts and being tied to an academic research design. Instead, he sought to personally experience and then share with others the realizations that he believes Sufism offers. So to put things into a more emic and also humbling perspective, the following examination of Rasool's teachings should be taken for what it is, an attempt by a college student who never met the man in person; but who did spend some time examining his writings, speaking with his students and even engaging in the practices, though with far from perfect regularity, under the guidance of one of his successors; to write a monograph examining Rasool's life work and mysticism with the limited goal of answering a handful of research questions that were invented by the researcher himself. However problematic trying to objectively define who a qualified spiritual guide is, the researcher, who as his family and friends can no doubt attest is far from being somehow enlightened or morally perfected, and is painfully unqualified to provide anyone instructions for spiritual refinement.

While this discussion does get fairly detailed, certain details are intentionally excluded such as some prescribed numbers of recitations and significantly, none of the actual intentions are included. According to Hamid Hasan in a discussion with the researcher, Rasool had originally planned to publish

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[120] *TTH* 71-2; Nevertheless, as we will see in Part Three on the Circle Group, Rasool gave permission to his *khalīfa*, Ahmed Abdur Rashid, to give lectures and while Abdur Rashid shares prioritizing the practices, he is also a prolific speaker and writer.

[121] Buehler, *Recognizing Sufism*, 22.

the full set of intentions in *The Search for Truth*, but pulled them out at the last minute to prevent rogue solo attempts to travel the path without a guide, since such a person would not only lack the proper guidance, but also the *baraka* from the *shaykh* and might end up worse off than they had started. The reader must also consider that the researcher might well have gotten a few things wrong. So what follows is a humble attempt to examine six of the main key technical terms used by Rasool, along with some of the terms that are clustered around them, to produce an object for study that claims to be the mysticism of Azad Rasool. *It is not an instruction manual*, it is one person's examination of Rasool's texts supplemented by ethnographic fieldwork. Surely there are valuable aspects which have fallen through the analytical sieve, and even after reading and rereading Rasool's books, over the course of more than five years, new meanings and nuances present themselves each time. If the reader is seeking spiritual instruction, perhaps they would be better served by going directly to a spiritual teacher or the works written by one. If the reader is a student in this lineage, the researcher would remind them that Rasool would likely have preferred that they focus on doing their assigned practices rather than indulging in an intellectual study of Sufism. It seems safe to say that he would not have wanted his own books, let alone an academic examination thereof, to replace the guidance of the *shaykh*. For those still reading, we will begin by approaching his mysticism through aspects that might be considered more theoretical, with cosmo-psychology, and then proceed to more concrete practices, followed by considering the role of the *shaykh* and community, although it is of course impossible to fully divide these as the three categories are really three aspects of the same whole.

Cosmo-Psychology

In the next to last chapter of *Turning Toward the Heart*, entitled "Realizations on the Path," Rasool asserts the ineffability of mystical experience, that the inner explorations of the Sufi aspirant are "practical and personal, not theoretical," and before attempting to elucidate some of these realizations, he reminds the reader of the insufficiency of words for such an undertaking. Nevertheless, we can say that for Rasool the Sufi path results in a different way of seeing the world in the broader ultimate context and that this changed outlook carries over to one's perspective and actions in daily life. To begin with, he outlines four particular assertations that the student may come to gain an awareness of: 1.) "a transcendent dimension," immaterial and beyond the grasp of the rational mind; 2.) "an eternal self" separate from the "empirical self"; 3.) the possibility of "direct experience of the Divine through a carefully nurtured interior," an experience "which is superior to reason and intellect alone"; and 4.) that by "pursuing a discipline [the practices] with an authorized guide, one can identify one's limited self with the true self."[122] Not only are these premises applicable to Sufism, but they are also not entirely incompatible with a wide variety of other traditions, especially those with roots in Neoplatonism and Hermeticism, but also traditions of South and East Asian origin, like some Advaita Vedanta, Vajrayana Buddhism, and Taoism. Thus, descriptions of such realizations can speak to and resonate with readers who have already aspired to similar such realizations through other mystically oriented traditions.

In addition to these four assertions, to explain or point toward this new perspective, or aspects thereof, he uses various descriptions. So, for instance, he speaks of how, with the awakening of the *laṭā'if*, "understanding of self deepens. The rational mind expands, and seekers acquire the illumination necessary for the possibility of *seeing all aspects of existence in proper perspective* [emphasis added]." Other descriptions pointing to this new perspective, which eventually "become[s] inseparable from a person's way of being," are often paired with corollary effects in the aspirant's life, or as Rasool states, "A new vision of reality begins to influence their lives and thoughts." So when one sees "the Divine Presence in everything" and is able to comprehend the meaning of life, "ego-centered points of view" fall away and every "thought, word, and act" becomes an expression of worship and service and one "consciously desir[es] good" for its own sake. Likewise, the realization that one is not a slave to one's instincts is paired with another realization, of one's own inherent "urge to express higher values" and

[122] *TTH* 123-4.

ability to control one's actions.[123] So contemporary discourse on the expansion or awakening of consciousness meets classical Naqshbandī notions of a constant awareness of God while engaged in daily life.

But continuing, Rasool holds that the realization of God, by means of realizing oneself, leads to selflessness, an assertion that opens his brief discussion of two significant technical terms: *fanā'* and *baqā'*, which he labels respectively as "being annihilated or consumed in" God and "abiding in and with" God. He considers these as the culmination of a gradual transformative process but not the end of the journey itself since, in line with the four-fold path described in the historical survey with Sirhindī, after reaching this point, spiritual wayfarers then "return to assist their fellow beings," they are "with God and in this world simultaneously, translating the nearness that they feel to the Creator into service to creation […remaining…] attuned, ready to fulfill the duties and responsibilities that God presents in day-to-day life."[124] This emphasis on the descent or return aspect of the path also appears in the opening remarks of *Turning Toward the Heart* where he distinguishes between, on one hand, Sufis like Ibn al-'Arabī who view the unitive state as the end of the path, and on the other, the Mujaddidiyya which focuses on *fanā'* and *baqā'*.[125] Elsewhere, Sa'īd Khān defines *fanā'* as being to "lose consciousness" and *baqā'* as being to "regain consciousness."[126] On *fanā'* specifically, Sa'īd Khān also describes "extinction of the ego" as being when "a person is no longer subservient to desires and is free of them," the rule of the lower soul (*nafs-i ammara*) has been overturned and "the person becomes totally obedient to the commandments of God."[127] The terms *fanā'* and *baqā'* reappear in several places in both of Rasool's works, and in the following discussion, yet very little else is provided in the way of detail.

Similarly, aside from the chapter just discussed which gives the seeker some glimpses of the path, on the whole, Rasool does not delve systematically into complex descriptions of metaphysical cosmology or the experiences of the wayfarer travelling through such cosmology to the Source. The descriptions of the nature of the universe and experiences on the path to God by the likes of Ibn al-'Arabī and Sirhindī are not seen as theoretical expositions, but rather as reports of their experiences in a different reality or dimension, in the realm of the spiritual rather than the physical. However appreciated and revered these accounts of the great mystics of the past are, they now seem at first glance to be respectfully set aside in favor of actual personal practice, the pursuit of replicating the journey of those great mystics for oneself.

Yet despite this cosmological foundation's apparent absence, at least from the texts and group discussions at retreats and group meetings, upon closer inspection, it has never been removed and is in fact, truly the substructure upon which the entire system lays. The most apparent testament to this is the arrangement of the complex set of transmissions or contemplations, which comprise the curriculum of the Mujaddidiyya discussed in detail below, the training which begins after the aspirant has awakened his means of spiritual apperception, viz., the ten *laṭā'if*. The transmissions are divided into four circles, each representing a more advanced degree of attainment, those being: the circle of possibility, the circle of shadows, the circle of lesser intimacy, and the circle of greater intimacy, an arrangement that echoes Sirhindī's cosmology and divisions of the path.

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[123] Similarly, Rasool maintains that knowing that the universe is in God's hands leads to trusting in God and being "patient and accepting," just as having faith in the afterlife helps inspire one to "adopt a more pious, virtuous lifestyle." Idem 124-5. On the former, elsewhere he explains: "Whatever transpires is in accordance with God's wishes. You may find the Sufi to be optimistic, cheerful, happy, contented with simply going about his or her work, confident that everything will be alright. The Sufi sees beyond the external and apparent, and trusts that there is a purpose and meaning to all circumstances. He or she develops the perceptive organs of consciousness necessary to gain understanding of that meaning." Idem 51-2.

[124] Idem 125.

[125] Idem 4.

[126] *SfT* 87.

[127] Idem 98-9.

Being, Light, and Love

Yet even without the names of the circles for the transmissions revealing a debt to Sirhindī's metaphysics, and through him to Simnānī, Ibn al-'Arabī, and preceding Sufi tradition back to the time of Junayd and even earlier, much else in his writings point to the same, but usually in relation to personal practice. Still Rasool's teachings do include further references to major classical themes of what might be called speculative or theoretical mysticism as well as of literature, music, and the arts, such as the nature of being, illumination, and love, as typified in the fourth period of our historical survey by Ibn al-'Arabī, Suhrawardī "Maqtūl," and Rūmī respectively, but which were already present in the Quran and *hadith*s. These themes and the trends of expounding on them, vast in and of themselves, have been filtered through and further developed in the thought of Sirhindī and subsequent Mujaddidī thinkers. Nevertheless, Rasool's use of these themes too is invariably connected to how they relate to the practices.

Regarding the nature of being, Rasool's more technical discussions of cosmology and the ontological structure of the universe focus on the microcosm of man, as this has an immediate significance to the practices, and he focuses in particular on the heart. On the overall relationship between the Creator and creation, he seems to be in concurrence with his own teacher Sa'īd Khān, as well as Walī Allāh and other later Mujaddidīs, in accepting both *wujūdī* and *shuhūdī* perspectives as legitimate. In parts, his descriptions even have what might be seen as a *wujūdī* flavor, by the fact that he does not insist on underlining the ontological separation between God and creation. Such an emphasis would also likely have unnecessarily complicated matters for a Western audience unfamiliar with this debate. Examples of such potentially *wujūdī* statements usually describe the new perspective that the student of Sufism is said to eventually gain through his or her realizations, as discussed above.

In particular, his response to question 22 in *Turning Toward the Heart* includes several examples, such as him speaking of being "conscious of the Supreme Power within and around us," which sounds much more orthodox if the sentence following it is taken into consideration: "The Sufi sees the hand of the Almighty in every arrangement, and perceives how the management of this universe is under God's direction." He also states that "The Divine Presence is not somewhere far removed from us […] it is close to us, around us, within us," in conjunction with quoting Quran 50:16, which describes God as being closer than one's own jugular vein. Moreover still, he tells a story of a young fish who skeptically asked his teachers about the existence of water, to which they replied that if it were not there he would surely notice. He concludes this part of the section with the following:

> Like fish in water, we are all living in the Divine Presence, drinking it, breathing through it. Those who pursue the Sufi path strip away the veil of illusion and separation so that they may see clearly their origin and state. They become aware of the Divine Presence and expressive of the Divine Attributes that surround and are within us.[128]

But it might go too far to see these as necessarily *wujūdī* perspectives since, after all, it is in the *ḥadīth* of Gabriel, which also outlines the very creedal doctrines of Islam, that Muslims are told to maintain "an attitude of *iḥsān*: to act as if one is seeing God everywhere, and if one does not see Him, to know that He is seeing or watching one."[129] This is perhaps one of the earliest and best examples of how the new perspective Rasool describes Sufism bringing about is not really all that new. Despite engaging with the discourse on the expansion of consciousness and in terms that are not always confession-specific, this notion of achieving a profound awareness of God in daily life is at least as old as Islam itself. But furthermore, on the nature of being, in the context of the rest of Rasool's writings, along with the especially sober nature of his lineage, it seems clear that the actual distinction between God and creation is not in question.

In addition to the nature of being, the use of light imagery has also already been encountered in what seems to be a metaphorical sense with respect to the new perspective on the world that Sufism intends to cultivate, that is gaining illumination to see the world in the proper perspective, and it will

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[128] *TTH* 50-1.
[129] Idem 52.

also be seen frequently below, particularly in relation to the awakening of the *laṭā'if* and *murāqaba*, where it is even sometimes used more literally to denote visual phenomena.[130]

Lastly, on the theme of love, Rasool says that "Sufi masters use love as a tool for developing sensitivity to the Creator," giving the practice of *fanā' fi'l-shaykh* as an example, but he also says that risk is involved, since "it is not easy to differentiate between spiritual love and temporal love" and, especially with the current "degenerated" state of society, love as a technique for transformation can arouse "feelings and intentions that may endanger rather than assist a seeker's progress." This does not mean that love is not an important aspect of his path, on the contrary, love of the *shaykh* does help to develop the bond with the teacher who "guide[s] the students toward experiencing pure, all-embracing love." He even says that "This Path is a path of love." Yet instead of reliance on love as the main transformative technique, Rasool affirms the use of *tawajjuh*, *nisbat*, *murāqaba*, and the principle of *indirāj al-nihāyat fi'l-bidāyat* as being "the most effective, safe and appropriate for modern-day societies."[131] Furthermore, the theme of love appears in the last transmissions of the most advanced circles in the Mujaddidī curriculum, and moreover, Rasool declares: "The hidden power of the human self, which we are seeking to tap and utilize, is the power of love."[132] So love, in the big picture, is a major aspect with regard to the goal of the path, and we will return to it at the end of the chapter, but it is not an often repeated theme in Rasool's writings, nor is it used as a central means for reaching the goal. But now, having considered some important aspects of Rasool's mysticism that were not caught by the main methodological sieve of our six-word lexicon, we turn to the first and one of the most difficult of these terms to grasp, *nisbat*.

Nisbat ("Spiritual Affinity")

To understand how the term *nisbat* is employed in Rasool's works, the researcher offers, or perhaps imposes, a three-fold model for categorizing its different usages: 1.) to refer to the ultimate goal of the Sufi path, viz., an affinity with God; 2.) as a comprehensive category including not only aspects of the main goal, but also the processes toward that goal, interim steps on the way, experiences leading to, as well as the results of, that ultimate goal; and 3.) to indicate an affinity between people, such as a person's connection with a particular *ṭarīqa*, but especially the "congenial relationship with the shaykh," which is a necessary facilitating factor for the previous two meanings. Here we will consider these senses but return, at the end of the discussion of Rasool's mysticism, to certain facets that will make more sense to the reader after a discussion of the other elements of the lexicon. We have already mentioned the grammatical use of the Arabic word *nisba* (or *nisbat* in Persian) in the historical survey and the section devoted to the term *nisbat* in *The Search for Truth* mentions one of these uses, namely "an affinity or connection between two people." Its main technical Sufi meaning, however, is described as "the affinity that develops between God and human beings," which is the very objective of Sufism.[133] To gain some idea of what it might mean to develop an affinity with God, we must turn to the second sense of *nisbat*.

Chapter Two of *The Search for Truth* begins with a paragraph explaining the "goal of Sufism," a paragraph that ends with the following summary statement: "In short, the true purpose of Sufism is to transform the seeker into a highly humane and moral person by building the seeker's character through spiritual training."[134] What precedes this is an explanation of the goal of Sufism in more specifically Sufi vocabulary. It is stated that Sufism's goal is "the development of certain noble qualities," examples

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130 Use of light imagery may actually have been more emphasized in his English-language books than Rasool might have intended, since a comparison of the Urdu and English transmissions reveal that he translated *tajalli* ("theophany") as "illumination," a term usually used to translate *ishrāq*. Conversely, this may have been deliberate, but in any case and to whatever degree, light does play a role in his thought.

131 Idem 33-5; *GMST* 3, 11-2.

132 *SfT* 154.

133 Idem 53-4.

134 Idem 43; The original authorship of this chapter, whether Rasool or Sa'īd Khān, is unspecified, but what is clear is that it was Rasool who ultimately selected it for presentation to a Western audience and oversaw its translation.

of which he lists as “the purification of the self, purification of the heart, moral etiquette [*akhlāq* or perhaps *adab*], doing what is beautiful (*ihsan*), nearness to God [*ma‘iyyat*], inner knowledge (*ma‘rifat*), annihilation in God (*fana’*), and subsistence in God (*baqa’*).”[135] Another list of affinities to be developed is provided as: “the affinity of doing what is beautiful (*iḥsan*), the affinity of purity, […] of intense love, […] of spiritual ecstasy, […] of unity, […] of peace, and […] of remembrance.”[136] Still yet another list of affinities, or categories thereof, includes *fanā’*, *baqā’*, *jadhba*, *sulūk*, and *sayr ila’llāh*.[137]

If we collate these three lists of “qualities” or “affinities” we see that it includes: 1.) *processes* like *jadhba*, *sulūk*, and purification of the self and heart, discussed below; 2.) *intermediate steps* toward the goal like *fanā’*, *baqā’*, and *sayr ila’llāh*; 3.) *experiences* like love, peace, ecstasy, and unity; 4.) *aspects of the goal* like *ma‘iyyat* and *ma‘rifat*; and 5.) *results* like doing what is beautiful, purity, and moral etiquette. While exactly where these individual aspects should go in this sub-typology within the second meaning of *nisbat* could be scrutinized and debated, as certainly several of these terms could fit comfortably into more than one category; the main point, however, seems sufficiently clear, that *nisbat* can be used to refer to a broad range of things on the Sufi path. Also of note, however, is that in both of Rasool’s books, quite a bit is explained about the processes listed; whereas, while some of the other terms are mentioned frequently, none of them are explained in a systematic or in-depth way. This speaks to a focus on practice over theory, also underlined by mention of only the earliest stage (*sayr ila’llāh*) of the fourfold journey. Rasool and Sa‘īd Khān provide just enough theory to get the reader started.

Rasool’s description of *nisbat* includes a discussion of the very genesis and development of Sufism. According to his narrative, during and shortly after the time of the Prophet, affinity with God was easier to achieve and was attained through following the dictates of the Qur’an and being in Muḥammad ’s presence during his lifetime, as well as through performing such practices as the five obligatory prayers, supererogatory prayers, and recitation of the Qur’an. Rasool even says that “One glance from the Prophet could take a believer through all the stages of realization.”[138] As time passed following the death of the Prophet, however, it became less common and more difficult for people to have such a relationship with God.

Therefore, Sufi *shaykh*s developed methods “on the basis of their own experience [and] within the framework of the Islamic law” for achieving this *nisbat*, methods that had not been performed, nor had been needed, in the past. These *shaykh*s gave names to the various aspects of this affinity and the techniques for striving to achieve it. Furthermore, such developments were also taking place in parallel with the emergence of the other religious sciences, but while these other sciences focused on external aspects of the revelation, the Sufis focused on the inner.[139] So while some of the names and techniques involved may not have existed from the very beginning of Islam, just like many aspects of the exterior religious sciences, Rasool explains that the “essence of Sufism has always been present”[140] and that the path followed by *shaykh*s today is still the same path as that of the Prophet and his companions.[141] Such a view not only defends against accusations of *bid‘a*, as already mentioned, but this understanding of the relationship between mystical practices and obligatory acts of worship as leading toward the same end also supports the broader definition of mystical experience advocated in the present study.

For Rasool, Sufism emerged as a way for people to gain a *nisbat* with God, the same *nisbat* once enjoyed by following the *sharī‘a* and being in the presence of the Prophet, thus he sees this way as a continuation or an extension of the path of the early Muslims. It seems that in his view, achieving *nisbat* is inherent to Islam itself and that the spiritual decay resulting from increasing temporal distance from the Prophet necessitated the development of Sufism for the achievement of *nisbat*. It is noted, however, that Sufism is not the only way to achieve this *nisbat*, its techniques are only a means to achieve that end, and that even within Sufism, there are various approaches to doing so. He says that the diversity of *ṭarīqa*s is a testament to the “noble efforts of many great souls” in the pursuit of nearness

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[135] Ibid.
[136] Idem 53.
[137] Idem 47.
[138] *TTH* 96.
[139] *SfT* 46, 54.
[140] *TTH* 96.
[141] This narrative is summarized in idem 96-7 and *SfT* 46-7.

to God. In defining the specific approach of the Mujaddidiyya, he says that while other orders may focus on "advice and sermons," "service," *dhikr* and *du'a*, the celebration of *'urs*, or poetry and music, the Mujaddidiyya relies on "tried and tested methods based on *nisbah* [with the *shaykh*] and *tawajjuh* coupled with firm adherence to the *sunnah*."[142]

The third meaning of *nisbat* is the affinity which develops between human beings, primarily with reference to the *shaykh*. A connection or correspondence between the disciple and a properly qualified *shaykh*, is seen as a technique leading to, and even a prerequisite for, attaining *nisbat* with God. Having an affinity with the *shaykh*, who has himself already reached an affinity with God, is an intermediate step and facilitating factor in arriving at the latter oneself. Rasool states that since all Sufi *shaykh*s and orders trace their lineages back to the Prophet Muḥammad , they received their *nisbat* from the Prophet, and that it derived from the light of Muḥammad .[143] Thus, the disciple who develops an affinity with a properly qualified *shaykh*, is the benefactor of a *nisbat* which has been passed along through a chain of successor *shaykh*s leading back to the Prophet Muḥammad . While the companions of the Prophet had the benefit of experiencing *nisbat* directly with the Prophet's embodied personage, now spiritual aspirants share in this *nisbat* through a lineage of *shaykh*s serving as heirs to the Prophet and as conduits for *baraka* originating ultimately from God. It is through this association with the *shaykh* that the disciple can "realize their full potential" and be transformed.[144] It is this very *nisbat* between the disciple and the *shaykh*, their special relationship of correspondence or connection, which facilitates the pupil's training through *tawajjuh* and the awakening of the *laṭā'if*, the latter being the subject to which we now turn.[145]

Laṭā'if ("Subtleties")

The very first technical term which a new pupil is introduced to in receiving instructions for the practices is *laṭīfa* (pl. *laṭā'if*), rendered most frequently into English by Rasool as "subtle centers of consciousness," as opposed to the mind or intellect, but sometimes also as "centers of perception," "inner senses" or "inner faculties," as opposed to the five conventional senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch; and also as "points of light" and "hidden treasures."[146] Rather than the outer material world, perceived through the five physical senses and understood with the mind, it is the inner spiritual world that is both perceived and understood through the *laṭā'if*,[147] a perception and understanding that grows to include and have positive moral consequences in the outer world. There are ten such centers, six of which are associated with particular locations within the human body, while the remaining four are found throughout the corporeal body. Six of the ten centers are also associated with a particular color and five are each "under the feet of" a law-giving prophet, or messenger (*rasūl*).[148] These centers have both a cosmological significance, in that they are the microcosm of man, which is a reflection of the greater macrocosm, as well as a central role to play in the practices of the order. Both of these inextricably linked metaphysical and practical aspects of the *laṭā'if* will be discussed here, followed by a description of each individual *laṭīfa*.[149]

The importance of the *laṭā'if*, along with *murāqaba*, is alluded to in the statement that "the path to experiencing the Divine Presence starts within."[150] In the above quoted summary of the practices of

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[142] *TTH* 96.
[143] *SfT* 46.
[144] Idem 50.
[145] For the main discussions of *nisbat* in Rasool's works, see *TTH* 94-8; *SfT* 43, 46-7, and 53-4.
[146] Rasool quotes Sa'īd Khān as saying, in reply to a question on what Sufism is, that "Sufism is about the essence of human beings. There are many treasures hidden within a human being. Sufi practices help to develop spiritual insight and enable one to delve into the treasures of knowledge and wisdom hidden within the human being and the universe." Idem 101-2.
[147] *GMST* 15.
[148] *TTH* 90. A messenger (*rasūl*) is distinct from a prophet (*nabī*) who preached but did not introduce a new set of divinely inspired laws.
[149] Idem 86-91; *SfT* 54-6.
[150] *TTH* 6.

the School of Sufi Teaching, it is stated that spiritual training is given through "the awakening of the subtle centers of consciousness" in conjunction with a "spiritual affinity," or *nisbat* , with the *shaykh* along with the "spiritual attention," or *tawajjuh*, that he provides. These subtle centers of consciousness are means of spiritual apperception, modes of sensing, perceiving, and gaining knowledge which are separate from the mind and the five senses. In order for the *laṭā'if* to perform this function, their dimmed state as a result of being connected to the body must be reversed and their original luminous state restored, they must be "awakened," "illumined," or "enlightened." Another way of saying this is that they must be returned to their origins, or "their true form" in the *'ālam-i amr* above the throne (*'arsh*), a necessary condition for one to achieve annihilation (*fanā'*) in God.[151] This awakening, discussed more below in relation to the heart and the other individual *laṭā'if*, is accomplished largely through meditation (*murāqaba*), wherein the disciple focuses on each *laṭīfa*, awakening them in a particular sequence, also to be discussed in detail shortly. Rasool explains that just as the mind can be developed by being kept active, so the *laṭā'if* can be developed through spiritual training.[152]

Cosmologically, the ten *laṭā'if* are the microcosm of the human being and are a reflection of the greater macrocosmic universe, therefore man is also divided between spiritual and physical aspects. The catalyst for the creation of the universe was God's utterance of "*Kun*!" or "Be!," at which the "world of God's command" (*'ālam-i amr*, the spiritual world) instantly came into being and the gradual evolution of the "world of creation" (*'ālam-i khalq*, the physical world) was then set into motion, culminating in the creation of man, in whom both of these realms, the spiritual and the physical, are combined. In creating man, God placed the ten *laṭā'if* within him as a "trust," five of which being part of the *'ālam-i amr*; the *qalb* ("heart"), *rūḥ* ("spirit"), *sirr* ("secret" or "mystery"), *khafī* ("hidden" or "arcanum"), and *akhfā* ("most hidden" or "superarcanum"); and the remaining five being part of the *'ālam-i khalq*; the *nafs* ("self") along with the *'anāṣir-i arb'a* ("four gross elements") of *khāk* ("earth"), *mā'* ("water"), *nār* ("fire"), and *bād* ("air") which comprise the physical frame.[153] It is explained that this particular arrangement developed over time through the spiritual insights of various earlier saints, gained through experimentation in the laboratory of the self. A similar evolution of the subtle anatomy as found in the preceding historical survey is traced from the time of Junayd on to the key Kubrawī *shaykh*s; namely Kubrā himself, Dāya al-Rāzī, and Simnānī; then even mentioning Pārsā's acceptance of Simnānī's set of seven *laṭā'if*, finally attributing the current arrangement of ten to Sirhindī.[154]

Six of the ten *laṭā'if* are associated with specific locations in the body where attention is directed in a specific sequence during the practices, from *qalb* to *nafs* and the four elements in accordance with the principle of *indirāj al-nihāyat fi'l-bidāyat*, the subject of the next section. Locations for the *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr* are all within the torso, with the *qalb* being two fingers width below the left nipple, the *rūḥ* two fingers below the right, the *sirr* two fingers above the left, *khafī* two fingers above the right, and the *akhfā* in the center between the *qalb* and *rūḥ*. For the *'alam-i khalq*, the location associated with the *nafs* is between the eyebrows while the four elements permeate the entire body. According to Rasool, just as separate earlier saints had reported different colors from their own experiences of *kashf*, so too were different locations reported for the various *laṭā'if* and even different enumerations thereof.[155]

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[151] *SfT* 55.
[152] *GMST* 15.
[153] *SfT* 55; *TTH* 86-7.
[154] *SfT* 54-5. "Through years of effort, Sufi masters developed a scientific approach to achieving such refinement. They discovered that in addition to the mind, human beings have other centers of consciousness that serve as inner faculties for attaining knowledge." *TTH* 6; Furthermore, Walī Allāh's *Altaf al-Quds* is cited in both of Rasool's English-language works as describing the doctrine of the *laṭā'if* as knowledge that was bestowed on "later Sufis." Idem 90 and *SfT* 56.
[155] Thus, these vary among the orders taught and while the locations just described are for the Mujaddidiyya, in the Shādhiliyya, as passed on by Rasool, only the heart *laṭīfa* is used, whereas in his lines of the Chishtiyya and Qādiriyya, the same ten *laṭā'if* are used and with the same locations with the exceptions of the *khafī*, *akhfā*, and *nafs*, being respectively in between the eyebrows, at the crown of the head, and in the center of the chest. Idem 66; Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.

On the issue of light, when man's *laṭā'if* were connected or attached to his material body, they came to lose their previously "luminous" nature.[156] Stated differently, because of attachments to the physical world, the *laṭā'if* of the *'alam-i amr* have been displaced from their true place on the divine throne. The *shaykh*'s *tawajjuh* "restores them to their original position and they regain their light," and in order to experience *fanā'*, all five must be returned to their proper place above the throne. In this respect, the *laṭā'if* of the world of command are "five stations of closeness" which must be passed through "to reach the Pure Essence of Reality."[157]

With reference to specific colors, Rasool explains that in performing contemplative exercises on the different *laṭā'if*, past *shaykh*s have experienced visual phenomena (*kashf*) in the form of lights of different colors, but that each *laṭīfa* has come to be associated with a general consensus on a specific color. Thus the light of the *qalb* is understood to be "golden" in color and that of the *rūḥ* "red with a hint of gold," the *sirr* "pure white," *khafī* black, *akhfā* green and the *nafs* "azure blue of the fall sky."[158] While some aspirants perceive visions, this is not regarded as an end in itself, or even a sign of progress, as what is most important is that the *laṭā'if* are "a means to greater awareness of the Divine Presence."[159] In any case, Rasool explains that words are insufficient to describe the *laṭā'if* and their illumination, but that one comes to gain an understanding as they go through the process of restoring their light.[160]

In addition to locations in the body and colors, each of the five *laṭā'if* of the *alam-i amr* is associated with a particular prophet, more specifically a messenger. who brought divine revelation and law, the sources of guidance and "the means through which to attain nearness to God." These correspondences follow the chronological order of the major prophets of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Thus the *qalb* is considered to be "under the feet of" or "under the control of" Adam, "the epitome of humanity"; the *rūḥ* Abraham, "who is exalted in friendship and the epitome of spirituality"; *sirr* Moses, "who is exalted in love" and who spoke with God; *khafī* Jesus, "exalted in splendor"; and *akhfā* Muḥammad , "who was blessed with the highest honor and the greatest nearness to Allah."[161]

The discussion now turns to separate treatments of each of the individual *laṭā'if*, of which Rasool, usually expounds most upon the *qalb*, and to a lesser extent the *rūḥ* and *nafs*, leaving the others largely undiscussed, much in line with Sirhindī.[162] Sa'īd Khān, however, in an essay on the *laṭā'if* included in *SfT*, does provide more details and it is from this essay that most of the following discussion draws. Before proceeding, it should be noted that the terms *qalb* and *nafs* sometimes refer to individual *laṭā'if*, while at other times they refer collectively to the five *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr* and *'ālam-i khalq* respectively, and still at other times the *qalb* is used in reference to all ten of the subtle aspects of the human being, while *nafs*, with its meaning of "self" in Arabic, can also be used in the same way. Here, as much as is possible, each *laṭīfa* will be described individually, yet such separation is not always clear, particularly in the case of the *qalb*, where its multiple meanings are not precisely delineated.

The discussions of the other *laṭā'if*, especially the *sirr*, *khafī*, and *akhfā* are not only increasingly shorter, but also less specific, as much of what Sa'īd Khān tells us of these centers is through descriptions *around* rather than *of* them, pointing toward rather than clearly defining. The easiest example of this is how he explains these *laṭā'if* by describing the effects that occur when they are awakened, or rather when the process of awakening them reaches its culmination, since even the novice before pledging *bay'a* performs exercises to initiate the awakening all of these centers. Such descriptions for the *sirr*, *khafī*, and *akhfā* are likely best understood as coming from his own personal experiences after spending most of his life engaging in the practices for hours on a daily basis, since what appear to be his main textual sources on Mujaddidī technical terminology, the writings of Sirhindī,

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156 *TTH* 86.
157 *SfT* 55.
158 *TTH* 89. Although the *khafī* is generally associated with the color black, Sa'īd Khān also says that it can "manifest in different colors in different contexts." *SfT* 135. Furthermore, the *nafs* is also described as "colorless." Idem 55.
159 *TTH* 87.
160 Idem 87.
161 Idem 90; *SfT* 55, 129-30.
162 Ter Haar, *Follower and Heir*, 90-1 and 91 fn 17.

are notably silent on these issues. The discussion of these *laṭā'if* here has required a bit more reading between the lines on the part of the researcher, hence, the observations below, especially with the *sirr*, *khafī*, and *akhfā*, should be taken as tentative.

On the whole, however, to summarize some of the major characteristics, beginning first with the *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr*, we find the *qalb* as the locus of divine guidance while also being the rightful ruler of the human being, though the unrefined *nafs* and the intellect both seek to usurp its reign. Next, the term *rūḥ* seems to refer to a subtle etheric animating substance within the body and it is also particularly connected to spiritual travel. Much like the *qalb*'s function in receiving divine guidance, the *sirr* relates to the human capacity to perceive and contain a deeper kind of knowledge known as secrets, with the *khafī* and *akhfā* each providing successively still deeper and deeper perspectives onto the encounter with God,[163] all the while experiencing increasing ecstasy inwardly while manifesting complete sobriety outwardly. Turning to the *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i khalq*, the unreformed *nafs* seeks to challenge the rule of the heart as the rightful monarch of one's being, yet it can be purified and transformed into a loyal subject and active ally of the heart. Finally, the last four *laṭā'if* are the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind, which are found throughout the entire body and when they are awakened, the entire body is illuminated in remembrance of God.

Qalb ("Heart")

The *qalb* is the "foremost" of the *laṭā'if*, encompassing them all yet remaining distinct. When sufficiently awakened, it is the receiver for divine guidance and takes precedence over the intellect and the *nafs* to rule over the human organism with the knowledge and guidance it receives from God manifesting in positive qualities such as compassion and empathy. Sa'īd Khān says that the heart is "both dynamic and sensitive" and accordingly, it might be helpful here to divide its functions between active and passive roles. The active role of the *qalb* is to serve as the ruler or "monarch" of the body.[164] This is facilitated by its passive role as "the locus of guidance and theophany"[165] where *baraka*, guidance, and knowledge are received. Thus the heart provides the understanding necessary for establishing "a relationship with the Creator," the ultimate context for one's relation to the rest of creation. For this to occur, the heart must be sufficiently receptive, it must be "awakened" through a gradual process. Words that seem to be used interchangeably for this include "opened," "activated," "illumined," and "enlightened." The process leading to such awakening is also described with such words as "refinement," "reform," "polishing," or "purifying," which is accomplished in this lineage through *murāqaba*, *dhikr* and other recitations, along with the support of an affinity (*nisbat*) with the *shaykh* and his *tawajjuh*.[166]

This awakening of the heart, which starts to take place from the first transmission, might be best understood as a paradigm shift in which, by degrees, one begins to perceive everything in both the inner and outer worlds in terms of the ultimate reality. So when awakened, "Light suffuses the heart, revealing aspects of reality that previously lay hidden. There dawns a new, more complete understanding of life in all its aspects. In short, the seeker is enlightened."[167] The heart begins to constantly remember God, a state called *dhikr al-qalb* wherein "Step by step, veils of darkness give way to light, understanding and insight. The seeker beholds dimensions which the five senses could never detect nor the mind imagine."[168] We seem to be talking here about the realizations which were

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[163] Although not expounded upon in significant detail by Sirhindī, in the Turkish cleric Fethullah Guelen we find very similar descriptions of the *sirr* as well as of the *khafī* and *ahkfā*, especially with regard to them each offering different and increasingly profound perspectives onto the same transcendent reality or God. Fethullah Gülen, "The Horizon of 'the Secret' and What Lies Beyond," *Fethullah Gülen's Official Web Site*, accessed December 9, 2019, fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/sufism/key-concepts-in-the-practice-of-sufism-4/47052-the-horizon-of-the-secret-and-what-lies-beyond; idem, "Sir (Secret)," *Fethullah Gülen's Official Web Site*, accessed December 9, 2019, fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/sufism/key-concepts-in-the-practice-of-sufism-2/25429-sir-secret.

[164] *SfT* 131.

[165] Idem 129.

[166] Idem 131.

[167] *TTH* 103.

[168] Ibid.

already discussed at the beginning of the examination of Rasool's mysticism, and if we recall, these realizations are also believed to lead to positive ethical results in the physical world.[169] In further describing this new way of seeing the world, Saʿīd Khān says that "everything within the microcosm and macrocosm becomes a source of guidance and joy, justice, and truth."[170] He says that "The heart is the fountainhead of compassion, empathy, dedication, perseverance, gratitude, subtlety, and joy." With the guidance and knowledge that the awakened heart receives, it can properly rule the human microcosm, the active function of the heart, thus ensuring morally sound conduct which ultimately extends beyond the individual since, "Once the individual reforms, society is transformed; justice and equilibrium are established; and wisdom reigns supreme."[171]

The *qalb* is often juxtaposed with two other forces that rebel against the heart and vie for control over the human being, the mind and the *nafs*, though their relationship need not be antagonistic so long as the heart is given its due precedence. The proper role of the heart in relation to the remainder of the human microcosm, is one of governer and governed. This relationship is likened to that of a minister and those working in her/his ministry, with the minister receiving guidance from the "Prime Minister," or God. If the heart is disobeyed, then anarchy within the human ensues.[172] But for those who have not yet refined their heart, it and the spirit have been enslaved by the carnal soul, discussed below.[173] As for the mind, while it relies solely on form, the heart's comprehension is not limited to the material world, as it can "perceive truth directly" and "Only the awakened heart can attain God-consciousness, the mind cannot."[174]

Saʿīd Khān's description of the heart contrasts it with the mind and is interwoven with his call to balance scientific-materialism with religion and spiritual refinement. Using a dialectic style, also commonly used by Sirhindī, he contrasts "intellectuals" who place a sole emphasis on the development of the mind with those who value religion and cultivate the heart. The intellectuals believe that guidance comes from their own efforts rather than being bestowed by God. While accepting that "the marvels created by the mind are undeniable," as attested to by "the miracles of technology [that] surround us," he also notes that the mind can create its own realities, separating "cause from effect" and "form from essence." He rhetorically questions whether the "astonishing material gains and technological advances" made by "the thinkers of the West" have helped them to find "peace of heart" or to renounce "greed, injustice, and cruelty" and "lust for wealth and power" or to "realize their full human potential."[175] He also blames the "confusion, injustice, and violence we find in the world" on giving precedence to the mind over the heart.[176] Saʿīd Khān sees obeying the dictates of the mind over following the guidance of the heart as a form of tyranny, like the British rule over India, saying that "in the present age the mind is in power. In its place, the rule of the heart has to be established."[177] Further connecting inner and outer worlds, he says that without the heart, as "the locus of the light of God," it would not have been possible for the Indians to have cast off British colonialism without resorting to violence. Likely written during the 1970s, Saʿīd Khān's exposition also seems to reference a major global issue of his day, the Cold War, in seeing it as necessary to be guided by "the light of the heart" to "contain the lust for power, destruction, and the arms race."

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[169] Rasool explains that "Foremost among these centers is the heart. With diligent practice, teachers of Sufism perfected techniques that activate the heart, cultivating profound intuition and realization. The polished heart becomes a mirror that catches the light of truth and reflects it in one's consciousness. With this light dawns the understanding that beyond material phenomena, there exists a Being of which everything in the universe is a reflection. One's own being itself reflects the higher being." Idem 6-7.
[170] *SfT* 131.
[171] Idem 131.
[172] Idem 132.
[173] Idem 87.
[174] *TTH* 9.
[175] *SfT* 131.
[176] Idem 132.
[177] Idem 87.

Rūḥ (*"Spirit"*)

Sa'īd Khān's discussion of the spirit subtle center revolves around two major themes, its relation to the physical body as well as the topic of spiritual travel. On the first theme, the spirit seems to be an etheric substance that serves as the animating force in the human being. The *rūḥ* is related to and in fact "embodies the divine command" (*amr*),[178] and as one receives the "elixir of the spirit subtle center, it helps create an essence subtler than blood, which forms the etheric spirit […]." This "etheric spirit" or "etheric soul," which is found in every human being regardless of faith, "helps physical movement and working of the senses"; and is also described as being "responsible for creating movement within the body"[179] as well as facilitating "consciousness, emotions, and perception […]." The *rūḥ* has something to do with volition, as we are indebted to it for "undertaking actions and performing tasks," although "willpower and determination" derive from the *nafs laṭīfa*.[180] The *rūh* also has a greater function and capacity beyond the physical realm, that is the second theme of spiritual travel. While the spirit is "subtler than matter," its density can be affected by matter, that is by the food one eats. This variable degree of subtlety or density of the spirit has an effect on spiritual travel, as the "more gross" the food, the more it inhibits the "ascent" of the spirit.[181] This may explain, for instance, why the *dhikr* of *nafī wa ithbāt*, discussed below, is to be performed on an empty stomach. In one of Sa'īd Khān's other essays, he also writes "One should take care to eat clean nourishing and appropriate amounts of food as this creates an essential subtlety within the body that is a source of guidance."[182]

Furthermore on spiritual travel, Rasool speaks of the ability of the spirit "to soar beyond the material realm to the dazzling splendor of the spiritual realm."[183] Although the spirit is described as entirely pure and originally oriented toward God, when placed within the body, it and the heart can be enslaved by the lower soul. As discussed in the section on Sirhindī, the *rūḥ* must be separated from the *nafs*, so that it can ascend.[184] Thus when Sa'īd Khān makes statements that seem to contradict his description of the spirit as being entirely pure, such as in saying that when it is "impure" it "cannot transcend darkness […] and fly to the higher realms," this is perhaps best understood as referring to its enslavement by the *nafs*, or as he says in the following sentence, its "Imprisonment in the lower realms […]." For the *rūḥ* to realize its capacity for spiritual travel, it can be "trained" through "spiritual education" and "nurtured with purity, good conduct, constant remembrance of God, understanding, and Truth." But purity and good conduct alone are insufficient, as remembrance of God and faith are necessary for one to become "a truly spiritual being," or to "become spiritual and travel through the various stations of the spiritual realm […]."[185] Elsewhere, Rasool records Sa'īd Khān as explaining that what is meant by "progress of the spirit" is, in contrast to "mental progress," the awakening of the potential of the spirit. He goes on to explain that the "spirit, heart and other subtle centers" belong to the *'ālam-i amr* and that freeing a person from the bondage of the *nafs* lets that person, presumably their spiritual aspect, "soar."[186] So we might see the *rūḥ* not only as a single subtle center within the *'ālam-i amr*, but also as perhaps referring to the entire subtle or spiritual aspect of a person, similar to how the *qalb* and *nafs* can both refer to this very same thing but from different perspectives, and for the *rūḥ*, this perspective would involve an etheric body capable of spiritual travel. We see a similar overlap with the heart and the use of the term "spirit" to refer to the entire inner aspect of a person in both the historical survey as well as with other contemporary thinkers, such as Fethullah Gülen.[187] Overall, however, Sa'īd Khān's description of the *rūḥ* has a number of parallels to the three senses of *rūḥ* as used by Shah Walī

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[178] Idem 137. The words *rūḥ* and *amr* appear together in Quranic verses like 16:2, 17:85, 40:15, and 42:52.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Idem 133, 137.
[181] Idem 133-4.
[182] Idem 125.
[183] Idem 79.
[184] Ter Haar, "Followers and Heir of the Prophet," 90-1.
[185] *SfT* 133-4.
[186] Idem 88.
[187] On Guelen using *qalb* and *rūḥ* interchangeably to refer to the spiritual aspect of man, see Mehmet Yavuz Seker, "A Map of the Divine Subtle Faculty: The Concept of Qalb (Heart) in Classical and Contemporary Islamic Scholarship" (PhD diss., Australian Catholic University, 2012), 306.

Allāh in his *Ḥujjāt Allāh al-Bāligha* and *Alṭāf al-Quds*, discussed above in the sixth phase of the historical survey.

Sirr ("Secret")

As seen in the historical survey, the *sirr* has been described in a variety of ways by an array of thinkers from Sahl al-Tustarī in the 9th century onwards. A commonly found aspect of such descriptions is that it is a point of interface or colloquy with God at the innermost of one's being, at the core of the heart. Sa'īd Khān describes the *sirr* as "one of God's wonders" and its "glory" is "love" as Moses was "exalted in love" and spoke with God. Aside from these introductory statements, in trying to intellectually grasp the nature of the *sirr* from Sa'īd Khān's account, one might discern two major anchors or points of reference from which to make sense of the remainder of his discussion: 1.) the capacity for humans to contain divine secrets and 2.) descriptions of what takes place when the *sirr* is awakened.

On the first, it is significant that he describes the *qalb* and *sirr* as being "intimately connected" and that the former sometimes displays properties of, and "is really a part of," the latter. This may refer, at least in part, to the heart's roles of perceiving and acquiring inner knowledge. He states that God confers *baraka*, divine trust, guidance, and wisdom to the mind, heart, and spirit, yet the qualifier of "In accordance with the[ir] capacity" might indicate that the *sirr* has some sort of a higher or more refined ability to receive these. He also speaks of how the universe is "teeming with secrets" and how everything in the macrocosm is reflected in the microcosm. Accordingly, he mentions the capacity of man to "gain every kind of knowledge," which connects with their "inexhaustible capacity to contain divine secrets" and serve as "keepers of the secret" or as "keepers of the divine trust and of divine secrets," a reference to Quran 33:72 which is then quoted. This capacity of man to hold secrets degrades if the *sirr* falls into "heedlessness," that is forgetfulness of God. For some idea as to what these secrets might be, one could look to the assertion that it is the *sirr* subtle center which receives "spiritual intuition and good tidings." Further clues might be found in Sa'īd Khān's statements about God giving man the ability to perceive "invisible realities" as well as "the truth of divine law" and also "to know the Truth." Thus, these secrets have something to do with perceptions in the inner world as well as with affirming the truth of the revelation and knowing God.

In trying to understand more of the nature of the *sirr* subtle center itself, we now look to reports about what takes place when the *sirr* is awakened. Those are that one is "filled with divine light, and secret upon secret is revealed," one experiences "an extraordinary level of awareness" in both waking and sleeping states, and lastly, the awakening of the *sirr* "greatly enhances the human capacity to know."[188] In closing, the *sirr* appears to be much like the *qalb*, of which it is a part, particularly with regard to the acquisition and storing of knowledge, and specifically, a type of knowledge known as secrets, which seem to be an especially refined form of knowledge not perceived, or at least not perceived as clearly, by the *qalb*.

Khafī ("Hidden")

Sa'īd Khān's description of the *khafī*, a subtle organ that we first encountered in the fourth period of our historical survey with Dāya al-Rāzī, begins with the mysterious statement that this subtle center "is about the silence that envelopes secrets and keeps them hidden." Elsewhere, he has called it a "pure subtle center" and said that its prophet Jesus, is "exalted in splendor." We also know, from his discussion of the *akhfā*, that it and the *khafī* are both associated with "control and secrecy." Finally, we have his reports of what happens when the *khafī* is awakened. Once this occurs, no veils remain "between the seeker and the unseen," and despite this, "the seeker does not lose self-control." It seems, perhaps due to the purity and absence of any veils, that the love that characterized the *sirr* may be experienced on an even deeper level as "the fire of divine love burns inside." Perhaps as a result of this, the seeker is "tireless in striving," one might presume to mean in performing the practices and in living

[188] *SfT* 134-5.

in accordance with the divine law, and he or she endures even in the face of death. Yet another result of the awakening of the *khafī* is that "the attributes of purity and God consciousness manifest."

So considering all of this, in the phrase "control and secrecy," it seems best to understand "control," especially in light of the characteristic sobriety of this lineage, as being restraint over oneself despite being inwardly in an ecstatic state, purified of any veils so that one is unobscuredly perceiving the unseen. As for "secrecy," it might be referring to the secrets that are being perceived or another possibility, one that seems more grammatically likely here, is that it too refers to the containment of the ecstatic state and to the fact that this inner condition remains hidden, or a secret, from outside observers, an aspect also discussed in association with the *akhfā*. Now, concerning the *khafī* being "about the silence that envelopes secrets and keeps them hidden," this too might indicate outer sobriety despite inward ecstasy. Alternatively, another reading could understand this as meaning that the secrets perceived by the *sirr* were previously still somewhat obscured or "hidden" by veils (or "silence") and that the *khafī* penetrates these and brings these secrets into focus.[189] Yet another and final attempt the researcher will make at decoding this statement is that the silence surrounding the secrets and keeping them hidden could refer to the paucity, space, or time between them, that the perception of secrets through the secret subtle center are transient moments of insight. Perhaps what the *khafī* has to do with the space (or "silence") between these moments of insight is to fill them in by expanding upon and reducing the transiency of the moments when the secrets are perceived, which would tie in nicely to the statement about the awakened *khafī* bringing about "God-consciousness."[190] To conclude, however, what is fairly clear from the text is that when the *khafī* is fully awakened, one has some sort of intense experience of the unseen without any veils but nevertheless retains self-control. Their striving is strengthened and purity and God-consciousness are manifested.

Akhfā ("Most Hidden")

On the *akhfā*, which seems to have originated with Sirhindī, although Simnānī's *laṭīfa haqqiyya* provides a precedent for a center even subtler than the *khafī*, Sa'īd Khān says that it and the *khafī* are in some ways very similar and in others quite different; just as, he explains, two people can seem to be alike but "something unknowable" makes one "so much nobler than another." Accordingly, his description of the *akhfā* shows continuity with that of the *khafī*, but also differs, mostly in terms of degree. So while the *khafī* was described as "pure," the *akhfā* is both "pure and elevated." It is also noted that the above discussed "control and secrecy" of the *khafī*, "are intensified in" the *akhfā*. Furthermore, the *akhfā* is associated with the final prophet, Muḥammad , and it is said to be characterized by "ultimate nearness [to God]."

We also see some definite parallels to the experience of the awakened *khafī*, but also a deepening thereof, in descriptions of what it is like for the *akhfā* to be awakened. First, Sa'īd Khān says that despite inwardly being "joyously fulfilled on the path of Truth," the seeker "outwardly appears to be ordinary." Furthermore, their striving seems to have been intensified as they are "vigilant at night," the time of day when most of the assigned spiritual practices are carried out, as we will see in the section on the practices, and "active as a lion in the day,"[191] despite having forgone a full night's sleep to perform the practices. In summary, with the *akhfā*, we find a still deeper experience, or even the culmination of the already deepened experiences of the *laṭā'if* that precede it in the *'ālam-i amr*.

Nafs ("Self") and the 'Anāṣir-i 'Arb'a ("Four Elements")

While we have seen that the *rūḥ* is non-physical but facilitates movement in the body, the *nafs* is "both subtle and material" and is described as "the source of source of will and determination." This willpower, however, can be directed toward negative or positive ends, depending on its level of refinement. The *nafs* is inherently inclined toward "rebellion, aggression, and hatred," and while the *qalb* is the proper ruler of the microcosm of man, the unrefined *nafs* seeks to usurp the heart's rightful reign so that it can become the "dictator within the human body." If not kept in check, a person's *nafs*

[189] In Part Three on the Circle Group are included Ahmed Abdur Rashid's use of optician, radio dial, and telescope analogies to describe the workings of the *laṭā'if*.
[190] *SfT* 135.
[191] Ibid.

“will vitiate the other subtle centers and obscure their light” as well as cunningly seduce that person into self-centeredness, forgetfulness of God and failure to obey His commands, exerting its own will rather than the will of God.

This *laṭīfa*, however, can be reformed through spiritual training so that it accepts the rule of the heart, the locus of God’s guidance, and the will of the *nafs* is aligned with the will of God. Accordingly, Sa‘īd Khān says that the *nafs* is “the locus of discerning God’s command (from the ego’s command).”[192] In the descriptions of the *nafs* by Rasool and Sa‘īd Khān, it is possible to trace the standard three-fold, but sometimes an expanded seven-fold,[193] progression of stages in the transformation of the *nafs* from *al-nafs al-ammāra* to *al-nafs al-lawāmma* and finally *al-nafs al-muṭma’inna*. The first of these, or “the commanding self,” was described above with regard to the inclination of the *nafs* toward being self-centered and rebellious. The second stage, or *al-nafs al-lawwāma* (“the blaming self”), is alluded to when Sa‘īd Khān explains that “it is possible for [the *nafs*] to understand the reality of sin, to be ashamed of committing it, and to abstain from it,” thus helping to secure “the everlasting blessings of the Hereafter.” The transformation of the *nafs* is not, however, simply following the outer dictates of the *sharī‘a* in the physical world to avoid punishment and obtain reward in the afterlife. Although following the divine law is a crucial element and major end result, something more subtle is also going on here, something more than only going through the motions of following the *sharī‘a*.

Between describing abstention from sin and mentioning the hereafter, Sa‘īd Khān speaks of how the *nafs* “can let its subtlety blossom, using its powers to perfect and embellish physical and spiritual capacities.” Furthermore, in one passage, Rasool refers to the non-physical aspect of the *nafs*, and likely to its role as the source of will in the positive sense, as the “‘I’ or ‘the self’.” When activated by “mystical experience,” he says that “Like an electrical current, [this ‘I,’] runs through an individual, bringing forth untapped potentials.” So it seems that the *nafs* is not only a rebel force within the human being that must simply be conquered and subjugated, rather it becomes a loyal subject and active ally of the rightful ruler of man’s microcosm, the heart.[194] Perhaps this is the “true self” that Rasool speaks of when describing the realizations a student of Sufism may arrive at on the path.[195]

So when the command of God is distinguished from and chosen over the selfish urgings of the commanding *nafs*, Sa‘īd Khān explains the result as being that one is awakened and “peacefulness and equanimity” ensue,[196] seemingly an allusion to the third stage in the development of the *nafs*, viz., *al-nafs al-muṭma’inna* (“the self at peace”). Another positive effect related to the *nafs* is that it can “become the locus of God’s compassion.” Furthermore, when the *nafs* is activated, one gains “a certain degree of consciousness and insight,” that is “A person starts to sense that his or her ‘I’ reflects another ‘I’—the ‘I’ of a Supreme Being. He or she becomes conscious of God acting in and through creation.”[197]

Returning now to the issue of the *nafs* being both physical and subtle, according to Sa‘īd Khān, the *nafs* is part of both the *‘ālam-i khalq* and the *‘ālam-i amr*, thus “forming a bridge” between the two, unlike the spirit which belongs only to the latter, though it has influence over and can be influenced by the former. Nevertheless, the *nafs* is primarily seen as part of the *‘ālam-i khalq* and “is considered the sum total” of all of the remaining centers in that world. These other *laṭā’if* are collectively known as the *‘anāṣir-i arb‘a* (“four gross elements”), or also as *qalab* (“mold” or “frame”) in the writings of Sirhindī. Very little is written about them by either Rasool or Sa‘īd Khān, yet we do know that they constitute the physical body, are listed individually as *khāk* (“earth”), *mā’* (“water”), *nār* (“fire”), and *bād* (“air”), and unlike the six preceding *laṭā’if*, they are not associated with any specific location in the body, but are found throughout it. Furthermore, the centers are the last to be awakened when they are

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[192] Idem 130.
[193] Hamid Hasan refers to the seven stages of the *nafs* and Abdur Rashid describes these in detail, as discussed below, and considers the seven-fold model as characteristic of this lineage.
[194] *TTH* 5.
[195] Idem 124.
[196] *SfT* 130.
[197] *TTH* 5.

"infused with light, every pore of the body becomes illuminated and starts to remember God," a phenomenon often described as the most powerful of remembrances (*sulṭān al-adhkār*).[198]

Indirāj al-Nihāyat fi'l-Bidāyat ("Including the End in the Beginning")

Having enumerated and described the ten *laṭā'if*, we now turn to the principle that guides the overall order in which they come into play in spiritual training, that is beginning with the purification of the heart, with heart here referring in a broader sense to the five *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr*, and proceeding to the purification of the self, meaning the five *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i khalq*. The principle of beginning with the former is indicated by the expression *indirāj al-nihāyat fi'l-bidāyat* ("the end is included in the beginning" or as Rasool translates it, "where others end, there marks our beginning").[199] The coining of this phrase has been attributed to the eponym of the Naqshbandiyya, Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband[200] in response, as discussed further below, to the needs of his time in 14th-century Bukhara. As seen in the fourth phase of the historical survey, some precedents to this approach also existed over a century earlier with Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and Dāya al-Rāzī of the Kubrawiyya. The accounts of Rasool and Sa'īd Khān both cite and resemble those of Sirhindī, making use of similar arguments as well as his ten-*laṭā'if* model along with the terms *jadhba* and *sulūk* as well as *sayr-i anfusī* and *sayr-i āfāqī*. Essentially, what this principle translates into in practical terms for the external observer is that, instead of the student being assigned harsh ascetic practices, he or she is given a series of contemplative exercises and recitations to perform.[201]

Before examining the various constitutive elements of the principle of *INfB* as found in Rasool's writings, let us return to considering some further implications of the narrative surrounding this late medieval to early modern concept, particularly with regard to the arrival of this lineage of the Naqshbandiyya to the globalized late 20th- and early 21st-century context. First, as we have seen, *INfB* along with other technical terms and practices that did not exist at the time of the Prophet, are considered to have evolved later in response to a particular need. The argument goes that they were not needed during the lifetime of Muḥammad and his companions because just being in the Prophet's company or being that temporally close to him was sufficient for bringing about the same levels of spiritual advancement that Sufis have sought through history with the various methods that evolved over time. Yet this principle of beginning with the heart and attraction to God (*jadhba*) that is experienced at the end of the path is presented as a point of divergence that separates the methodology of Naqshbandī *shaykh*s from the Sufi teachers of earlier times as well as of other contemporary *ṭarīqa*s, who it is

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[198] Idem 88.

[199] For various descriptions of this principle and its associated processes in Rasool's works, see *TTH* 92-4 and *SfT* 47-9, 50-2. Although the section on this principle in *Turning Toward the Heart* takes up less than two and a half pages, in *The Search for Truth*, an entire chapter bears its name, in fact it is the very same chapter that provides the two summary statements, of the goals of Sufism and of how spiritual training is imparted, which have guided the very structure of this dissertation in determining the six key technical terms to be examined. Furthermore, this same chapter includes sections with some of the most detailed explanations of these six terms and therefore has provided a significant amount of the content analyzed in this chapter.

[200] For succinct accounts of *INfB* and its constitutive elements as found in Sirhindī's thought, see ter Haar, *Follow and Heir of the Prophet*, 108-9; Buehler, *Sufi Heirs*, 120-2. While Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, produced no texts of his own, further research into the writings of his prolific disciple Muḥammad Pārsa might well yield a better understanding of this concept in the pre-Mujaddidī Naqshbandiyya. While we may doubt whether Naqshband ever actually articulated this idea, given the pre-cursors to it among early Kubrawīs and the number of other features that were distinctively Kubrawī before they became distinctively Naqshbandī; such as complex multi-colored *laṭā'if* models, silent *dhikr*, the strikes visualized in *nafī wa ithbāt*, sobriety, emphasis on adherence to the *sharī'a*; it is quite plausible that the idea existed in some form in the Naqshbandiyya from its very beginnings.

[201] Schimmel describes *INfB* as follows: "It is not the long periods of mortification but the spiritual purification, the education of the heart instead of the training of the lower soul, that are characteristic of the Naqshbandiyya method. See her *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 366.

explained begin with the difficult and time-consuming task of subduing and wresting control over the *nafs* (*sulūk*).[202]

The idea centers on the view that purifying the self is a lengthy process which many aspirants might never finish within their lifetime, and thus they would never even be able to begin with purifying the heart. With the assistance of a *shaykh*, however, who has himself already reached the end of this journey, one may be granted a taste of what awaits them at their destination, by way of the accompaniment (*ṣuḥbat*) and non-physical transmission of *baraka* from the *shaykh* through *tawajjuh*. This taste serves to motivate and support the disciple so that while they are purifying their heart, the task of purifying the self becomes easier and is done concurrently with the former, thus the need for austerities is eliminated and all is accomplished primarily through assigned meditations and recitations. This approach is thus said to have the benefits of being easier and faster in addition to providing greater incentive for the student by offering a taste of the end of the path at the very beginning.

So we see an evolution from the time of the Prophet when being in his presence and following the *sharī'a* were alone sufficient to reach the same realizations that Sufis would later aspire to, followed by the emergence of Sufism and the development of additional practices to attain this goal that focused first on purifying the *nafs* and then purifying the heart, and finally, the reversal of this sequence by beginning with the heart, which is said to be a more effective method. In one place, after mentioning *INfB*, Rasool alludes to the culmination of this developmental process by saying, again with a scientific framing, that "From the experiments and tests carried out previously by others, it has been revealed that the Naqshbandi Mujaddidi way is nearer in its approach, and that students of this Order reach their destination in less time."[203]

Thus *INfB* serves as a major selling point for this lineage, in terms of the incentive taste of the end in the beginning and the resulting speed and ease of progress *vis-à-vis* the harsh, rigorous, and time-consuming training methods attributed to preceding saints and other *ṭarīqa*s, yet all the while Rasool is ever careful to include the caveat that all Sufi paths lead to the same goal as well as to acknowledge the value of other paths outside of Islam.[204] This narrative, in its interpretation and presentation of history, not only presents the method as more effective, faster, and easier, but it also simultaneously guards against accusations of *bid'a* from Islamic reformists while also being appealing to a contemporary educated and largely urban audience with an interest in authentic *tradition* and personal spiritual experience, but also that values the refinement of ideas and technologies as found in the empiricism of the scientific method, though not necessarily its materialist insistence on objective rational or physical evidence.

These two aspects of this narrative converge in a discussion of the need for this new approach wherein Rasool quotes Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband from an unidentified source as saying: "In contrast to seekers of the past, today's students are subject to constant distractions that diminish their yearning,

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[202] The author of one section in *SfT*, it is unclear as to whether it is Rasool or Sa'īd Khān, politely and obliquely contrasts the path of his lineage, although not overtly identified as such, with that of others saying that "the second group [Rasool's lineage] reject[s] the teachings and methods of the first group," viz., those that practice *fanā' fi'l-shaykh*, prioritize *sulūk*, and undergo a "detailed outward journey." Instead, for the second group, progress depends upon *jadhba*, *tawajjuh*, *ṣuḥbat*, adherence to the *sunna*, and the principle of *INfB*. It is noteworthy that the "second group" rejects not only prioritizing *sulūk* but also *fanā' fi'l-shaykh* (*SfT* 47-9), a practice popular among many other Naqshbandī lines, especially Khālidī branches, but rejected by Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd, of whom this position in this *silsila* may well be a remnant aspect.

[203] *GMST* 1.

[204] Rasool not only contrasts this distinctively Naqshbandī approach with that of other Sufi lineages, but also with traditions outside of Islam, saying that many spiritual paths begin with purifying the self, noting Yoga in particular as focusing on the mind, saying that one "may spend a long time struggling with mental processes and conditioning before becoming open to mystical insights." In contrast, the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī path "emphasizes purification of the heart. By using the heart's innate ability to be attentive, seekers enter more quickly into a state of receptivity. Even beginners can learn to turn toward the heart and to direct the heart's attention toward God by means of *niyāh* (intention). Through this practice, known as *murāqabah* (meditation), the student becomes relaxed and responsive to transmission. Only after the heart is transformed does the shaykh guide the student to devote attention to the self and the workings of the mind." *TTH* 10.

intention, and will power."[205] Yet the word "today" in a statement attributed to the 14th-century eponym of the Naqshbandiyya, living fully seven centuries after the time of the Prophet but just a century before the beginnings of early modernity, can mean different things to different people, or the same thing to the same person. It might refer to a state of deterioration due to temporal distance from the idealized time of the Prophet yet to another reader it might speak to their own busy life in a post-industrial society in the information age. The two are not mutually exclusive understandings and it seems very unlikely that this would have been lost on Rasool and it has clearly not eluded his son who, as seen in his interviews and low-key public appearances discussed below, takes this into account in making the path understandable and personally meaningful, and thus resonating with, a largely urban and educated constituency, particularly in the West.

Now moving on to the nuts and bolts, so to speak, discussions in Rasool's works of this principle and the two types of purification/wayfaring it involves may at first seem difficult to grasp, but this is made easier if it is kept in mind that there is a close relation and sometimes even near equivalency or interchangeability among two distinct sets of key paired terms: 1.) purification of the self, the *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i khalq*, *sayr-i āfāqī*, and *sulūk* and 2.) purification of the heart, the *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr*, *sayr-i anfusī*, and *jadhba*. The first pair of terms, purification of the self and purification of the heart,[206] refers to the process that is taking place and to which general aspect of the subtle anatomy; the second pair, *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i khalq* and *'ālam-i amr*, is essentially a reference to the specific subtle centers involved in this process and the two different worlds to which they belong; the third pair, *sayr-i āfāqī* and *sayr-i anfusī*, similarly refers to where the process is taking place in the microcosm of the human being, but from the perspective of outer versus inner, and instead of the "purification" aspect of the process, it describes the "wayfaring" facet of the same process; and the fourth pair, *sulūk* and *jadhba*, refers to what the *sālik* is either doing or experiencing during such modes of purification/wayfaring.

Purification of the Self and Purification of the Heart

On purification of the heart and the self, Rasool says that "The average person is ego-centered. Only after he or she has polished the heart and purified the self will the curtains lift, the rust fall away, and the eyes become able to see God."[207] He also says that such forms of purification are a prerequisite to achieving nearness to God (*ma'iyyat*) as well as that they develop *iḥsān*.[208] Similarly, Sa'īd Khān states that the purification of both "the self and the heart leads to inner knowledge [*ma'rifa*]" and also that they make it "easier to obey the laws of the shari'a with awe and humility."[209] Each of these two forms of purification is intended to remove one of two obstacles which prevent the disciple from attaining closeness to God (*ma'iyyat*), those are; first as related to the *nafs*, the external obstacle of one's enslavement to the mundane physical world; and second as related to the heart, the internal obstacle of one's "sense of being a separate self (I-ness, which is ego)."[210] These obstacles are also described as distractions; that is "distractions of the external world that attract our interest, occupy our attention, and cause us to forget God" and "distractions that come from within us."[211] Recalling from the discussion of Sirhindī, for him these two processes respectively involve overcoming the urges of the unrefined *nafs* and forgetting everything that is "other than God."[212] On the latter type of distraction, Sa'īd Khān says, "The impressions of all that is other than God should be totally erased from the mirror of the heart so there is no sensory or material connection with anything, and no desire left for anything but God.

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[205] Idem 93-4.
[206] Rasool foregoes the use of the Persian words for these two processes, *tazkiya-yi nafs* and *taṣfiya-yi qalb*, as well as their usual translations of "purification of the self" and "cleansing of the heart," preferring instead to use "purification" for both processes, most likely for clarity and simplicity.
[207] *TTH* 6.
[208] Idem 72-3.
[209] *SfT* 122, 95.
[210] Idem 50.
[211] *TTH* 92.
[212] Ter Haar, "Followers and Heir of the Prophet," 90-1.

[…] not even for the delight of the Hereafter or the pleasures of heaven."[213] Furthermore, the process of performing *murāqaba* consistently over time is described as polishing the heart to act as a mirror, "accurately reflecting events and circumstances around it."[214]

The moral dimension of all of this should not be forgotten, and it is important to recall from the earlier discussion of the *laṭā'if* that the commanding *nafs* is associated with blameworthy attributes, but it can be reformed, while the *qalb* and its aspects in the *'ālam-i amr* are associated with praiseworthy attributes. So we might assume that, consistent with Sirhindī, purifying the heart develops praiseworthy attributes, while purifying the self removes blameworthy attributes. This facet is emphasized by Rasool's son, Hamid Hasan as discussed below. Some further points by Sa'īd Khān are that the purification of the self benefits society since "it leads to selfless behavior" and that likewise, service to humanity can in turn serve to purify the self and elsewhere he writes that "the ultimate culmination is the purification of the heart and transformation into an exemplary human being who belongs to both the worlds of angels and creation."[215]

As noted in the above section on the *laṭā'if*, *qalb* can refer both to the single *laṭīfa* of the same name or it can refer collectively to the other *laṭā'if*, specifically here to the five *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr*. The purification of the heart involves these five subtle centers while similarly, purifying the self relates to the five *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i khalq*, viz., the *nafs* subtle center and the four elements (*'anāṣir-i arba'a*) of the bodily frame. Despite dealing with both the subtle spiritual and the coarse physical aspects of man, for those adhering to the principle of *INfB*, all of this is taking place within the microcosm of the wayfarer by way of contemplations (*murāqaba*) and recitations (*dhikr*) assigned by the *shaykh*. The processes of purifying the self and the heart are also respectively described as exterior and interior modes of wayfaring, viz., *sayr-i āfāqī* (wayfaring in the external world, or meaning literally, "wayfaring to the horizon") and *sayr-i anfusī* ("inner wayfaring"). If we recall from the discussion of Sirhindī in the sixth phase of the historical survey, *sayr-i āfāqī* and *sayr-i anfūsī* constitute only the first leg of the four-fold journey, that is *sayr ila'llāh* in the sphere of contingent existence. Indeed, of the four circles of transmissions in the curriculum, these two modes of wayfaring take place in the very first circle, that of possibility, prior to the circles of shadows, lesser intimacy, and greater intimacy.[216] This focus on explaining only the first circle is consistent with an orientation toward training students in a planned curriculum of assigned practices for personal experience rather than broader metaphysical speculation, that is expounding intellectually on the overall framework of the curriculum instead of actually doing the practices.

Jadhba and Sulūk

In further description of these two processes of purifying the self and heart or outer and inner wayfaring, the terms *sulūk* and *jadhba* are used to explain what it is the *sālik* is doing or experiencing, that is the means by which they perform such purification/wayfaring in the stage of the journey toward God (*sayr ila'llāh*). *Sulūk*, or "spiritual practices,"[217] are characterized by the harsh asceticism associated with the difficult work of subjugating the *nafs*, whereas *jadhba* is "attraction [to God]" and relates to the easier work of purifying the heart. If we recall from the first phase of the historical survey, those in early Islam seeking an even deeper religious experience than they found by following *sharī'a*

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[213] *SfT* 93. He also says, "One should spend one's nights and days turning away from all that is other than God, seeking the pleasure of God." Idem 125.
[214] *TTH* 103.
[215] *SfT* 122, 136.
[216] Additionally, perhaps counter to what one might assume, the intentions involving *sayr-i afaqi* and *sayr-i anfusi* are not performed only on the *nafs* and *qalb* respectively, but instead, both modes of wayfaring are performed on each of the *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr* as well as the *nafs*, in that order. These observations are based off of an examination of SOST's Mujaddidī intentions as presented in a PDF document entitled "The Mujaddidi Order: Intentions for the Circles," that was kindly provided to the researcher by the leader of the London SOST group with the permission of Shaykh Hamid.
[217] The terms "*sulūk*" and "practices" are also used in a different sense elsewhere in Rasool's writings where they refer to the recitations or meditations assigned by one's *shaykh*.

alone often turned to ascetic practices and described their experiences in terms that Rudolf Otto might connect with the label of *mysterium tremendum*, whereas toward the end of this period, and more extensively in the subsequent two periods, a shift took place toward speaking in terms of love, proximity, and even unity and identification, resembling more Otto's *mysterium fascinans*.

Whether or not this transition was a matter of competing trends, during this time, the asceticism and the taming of the *nafs* associated with some early Muslims, who are often seen as proto-Sufis, were integrated into the initial stages of the Sufi paths of a number of important thinkers, as discussed in the second and third periods. In describing these two processes combined into one path toward God, Schimmel draws a parallel to Roman Catholic mysticism by using the terms *via purgativa* and *via illuminativa*.[218] The principle of *INfB*, which developed much later, reverses this order, making the hard work of disciplining the self easier by starting first with the heart with the aid of *baraka* from the *shaykh*, thus including a taste of the end in the beginning. According to Rasool, for those Sufis that follow the older method of beginning with purification of the self, an emphasis is placed on *sulūk*, here meaning to engage in "austerities" with the aim of "Conquering the self"[219] or to take a "detailed outward journey" through the ten stations (*maqāmāt*), listed only in a footnote as "repentance, asceticism, total trust in God, contentment, solitude, continual remembrance, attention, patience, meditation, and satisfaction."[220] The critique of this approach is that it may take a lifetime to proceed through even just the initial stages of such a path, thus one may never reach the final destination.

As opposed to an emphasis on *sulūk*, the single most important aspect of the inner journey for Rasool is *jadhba* ("attraction [to God]"), which we might equate with what Sedgwick has called "emanative pull."[221] It is the driving force for spiritual travel toward and in God and it is because of *jadhba* that the arduous "detailed outward journey" of purifying the self, that is *sulūk* or passing through the ten stations, is shortened and is actually accomplished during the purification of the heart, so that "the seeker obtains a general overview of the ten stations as a whole because the blessings have absorbed him or her in love […]."[222] In other words, "in the process of pursuing […*sayr-i anfusī*, the student is…] simultaneously advancing in […*sayr-i āfāqī*]."[223] Accordingly, it is not actually the sequential order of *sayr-i anfusī* and *sayr-i āfāqī* that is reversed, and indeed the first step after pledging *bay'a* is the station of repentance, yet the difficult work of the former does not take place through austerities, but instead by meditation with the assistance of the *shaykh*'s *tawajjuh*, and in this it is the sequence of beginning with the heart and the other centers of the *'ālam-i amr* that represents a reversal. In this approach, *jadhba* precedes and pulls one through the *sulūk*, thus *jadhba* also comes to encompass and of course follow *sulūk*.[224]

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[218] "Once the seeker has set forth upon the way to this Last Reality, he will be led by an inner light. This light becomes stronger as he frees himself from the attachments of this world or—as the Sufis would say—polishes the mirror of his heart. Only after a long period of purification—the *via purgativa* of Christian mysticism—will he be able to reach the *via illuminativa*, where he becomes endowed with love and gnosis. From there he may reach the last goal of all mystical quest, the *unio mystica*. This may be experienced and expressed as loving union, or as the *visio beatifica*, in which the spirit sees what is beyond all vision, surrounded by the primordial light of God; it may also be described as the 'lifting of the veil of ignorance,' the veil that covers the essential identity of God and His creatures." Schimmel, *Mystical Dimension of Islam*, 4.

[219] *TTH* 92-3.

[220] *SfT* 48. On the ten stations, Buehler observes that Mujaddidīs do not mark their path with these, and this seems to hold true in IST's case as only the station of repentance is part of the curriculum and is done in conjunction with taking *bay'a*. Interestingly, Sirhindī is cited as arguing that "if seekers are engaged in detail with God's names and attributes, their path to God is obstructed because there is no end to the names and attributes of God." This reference to the names and attributes, which come at the later stage of *sayr fi'Llāh*, seems to indicate that *jadhba* and the assistance of the *shaykh* have a role to play in expediting this part of the journey as well. Idem 51.

[221] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 8.

[222] *SfT* 48.

[223] *TTH* 93. In the first circle of training in the unpublished SOST curriculum, transmissions, and the associated intentions involving *sayr-i āfāqī* precede those for *sayr-i anfusī.*

[224] "[…] the attraction to God that the seekers of the first group find at the end of their spiritual journey is already present at the beginning of the journey for the second group. In this way, spiritual travel can be accomplished more easily and quickly." *SfT* 49.

While a purified heart refers to where, from a Naqshbandī perspective, other paths end; at the circle of shadows where *waḥdat al-wujūd* takes place, but which represents only the first stage of a four-stage path; the student does not experience the fullness of this stage, but only a taste thereof. This taste is provided by the *shaykh*'s sharing of the *baraka* from his own level of advancement. The intended result of this taste is to "arouse students' courage and yearning to walk the spiritual path."[225] To now draw this discussion of *INfB* to a close, it should finally be highlighted that while *jadhba* is "spontaneous," in that it ultimately derives from God's grace, there are things that can be done by both student and teacher that set the conditions for such attraction: for the former, *murāqaba*, *dhikr*, and other assigned practices as well as fostering his or her *nisbat* with the *shaykh*, and for the latter, as mentioned, providing his *tawajjuh*. For instance, it is held that the more time one spends in *murāqaba*, the more one is drawn toward God.[226] Furthermore, the mechanism by which the student is given a taste of the end in the beginning is the *shaykh* sharing with the disciple some of the *baraka* from his own level of attainment by way of *tawajjuh*. Thus, it is to such practices and the terms used to describe them that we now turn.

Practices

As should be clear by now, in the writings of Rasool, a major emphasis is placed on performing the practices, and doing so regularly, as opposed to what might be called speculative mysticism. Rasool once stated: "stick to your practices, and don't look here and there in books"[227] and similarly, as was also the case with his teacher Sa'īd Khān, Rasool did not typically give lectures or sermons. Although he spent some time answering questions, he devoted significantly more time to sitting and performing the practices in the company of his students. Such emphasis results from the view that the practices alone, without any necessary prior knowledge of the cosmological structure on which they are based, are sufficient to achieve the intended results. He maintains that "Simply doing the Sufi practices regularly and sincerely cultivates qualities such as compassion, patience, contentment, equanimity, and selflessness" and that "Students automatically translate the benefits of the path into their daily activities by centering their lives around meditation, prayer, *dhikr* (remembrance), and sharī'ah."[228]

Sa'īd Khān enumerates the five essential practices of the order as being to recite *durūd sharīf*, *al-Fātiḥa*, *khatm*, *dhikr*, and to perform *murāqaba*,[229] which we might group into two categories: 1.)

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[225] *TTH* 93. As a brief aside on *jadhba*, individuals can be inherently more attracted to God and, citing Sirhindī's *Maktukabat* 1:292, a distinction is made between *murīd*s, as those who desire God, and *murād*s, as those desired by God (*SfT* 48.). Despite the emphasis placed on *jadhba*, it is maintained that it is possible to be excessively attracted to God, and a person who is "out of control in their attraction to God" is called a *majdhub*, with a distinction being made between "an imbalance of passion (*junun*) and attraction (*jadhba*)." An imbalance of *jadhba* is not considered a desirable condition and, in line with the sobriety that is typically ascribed to the Naqshbandiyya, 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh is quoted as having stated, "In my path, a person does not lose his senses even though the state of attraction [*jadhba*] comes and goes" (*SfT* 90-1). Schimmel describes *jadhba* as follows: "The mystical path has sometimes been described as a ladder, a staircase that leads to heaven, on which the *sālik* slowly and patiently climbs toward higher levels of experience. But the Muslim mystics knew that there is another way of reaching higher experiences: it is the *jadhba,* 'attraction,' by which a person can be exalted, in one single spiritual experience, into a state of ecstasy and of perfect union." In the same paragraph, she also discusses the label of *majdhūb*. *Mystical Dimension*, 105.

[226] *TTH* 101.

[227] "Q&A with Hazrat," audio recording and transcript at the World Community, 12 November 1994.

[228] *TTH* 49-50; He also says that "The journey begins with practicing. Its effects expand as the student continues to practice, extending service and kindness to others, praying to the Almighty, and allowing his or her sincerity to come forward."[228]

[229] Also between the appointed times *wuqūf-i qalbī* and *pas anfas* are performed periodically throughout daily life (*SfT* 100). While the latter of these; remembering God with every breath, sounding much like Kāshgarī's *hūsh dar dam* in the *Rashaḥāt* (Ṣafī, 17); is not much expounded on in Rasool's works nor was it encountered in the

meditation (*murāqaba*) and silent recitations (*durūd sharīf*, *al-Fātiḥa*, *khatm*, and *dhikr*). The appointed times for these practices are determined by the times for prayer, with each practice being performed after a certain prayer, a schedule discussed below at the end of the section on *dhikr*. The below discussion focuses, following Rasool, on the terms *murāqaba* and *dhikr*, as practices performed by the student. The remaining three of the five major practices are discussed in the section on *dhikr*. Also discussed is the *shaykh*'s part in these practices, viz., *tawajjuh*, along with the master-disciple relationship and terms related to it like *nisbat*.

Murāqaba ("Meditation")

Murāqaba; which Rasool translates as "meditation" but notes other meanings as being to "wait," "guard," or "protect" as well as "vigilance" and "attentiveness"; is the first practice taught to a new student and it is considered the most important component of the order's practices; over *dhikr*, *durūd*, *khatm*, and assigned recitations from the Quran; since according to Rasool, "Experience over the centuries has shown that *murāqabah* leads to all stages of perfection."[230] In contrast, *dhikr* can only take one as far as "extinction of the ego," that is the fairly early stage of *fanā'*, while advancing further than this is done through *murāqaba* and other assigned practices.[231] Regarding the origin of this practice, Rasool cites the very definition of *iḥsān* in the *ḥadīth* of Gabriel, thereby also alluding to its intended moral objective of "doing what is beautiful."[232] Also, if we look to the IST proposal, it is "meditation" which leads to the new perspective on reality that is so often pointed to, as Rasool asserts that the practice "results in an intuitive insight that enables us to begin to see all things in their true perspective, and to understand the truths about life and the universe in a proper light. It further opens up a new way of thinking that gives life a correct direction, develops one's character, and provides a healthy ideal."[233]

Murāqaba also plays a part of in the narrative wherein the Mujaddidiyya is held to be a comparatively faster and easier path as well as one that is especially suited to modern times. While explaining that past Sufis might have engaged in harsh and austere practices like extended periods of fasting and seclusion, even going as far as to do so while suspended upside-down in a well; referring to the practice of *chilla-i ma'kūs*, which was notably performed by the 12th-century Chishtī saint Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-i Shakar, who appears in this lineage's Chishtī *silsila*; Rasool notes that today all that is required is for the students to devote the necessary time out of their daily schedule, making a temporary renunciation of the world, to simply sit in *murāqaba* and "wait to receive the blessings."[234] In addition to Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband and the introduction of *INfB*, Rasool credits Sirhindī with having developed the specific methods that rendered "prolonged renunciation unnecessary" and notes that 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh systematized these even further so that they were "better suited to conditions in the modern world" and "fully compatible with today's lifestyles."[235]

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fieldwork, other than in an interview with the World Community's *shaykh* Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *wuqūf-i qalbī* is discussed in somewhat more detail. It is one of the three of the *kalimat-i qudsiyya* said to have been added by Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband. In *SfT*, it can be understood to denote both a necessary aspect of the other scheduled practices, that is protecting the heart from distractions from God, as well as a practice in itself, namely when in a state of forgetfulness "to focus on the heart and say 'Allah' at intervals, directing the attention towards the Divine Essence." (*SfT* 59-60). For brief descriptions of how *pas anfas* is taught as a form of *dhikr* in Rasool's lines of the Chishtiyya, Qadiriyya, and the original Naqshbandiyya, see idem 67.

[230] *TTH* 98; See also *SfT* 98, according to Sa'īd Khān, "Remembrance of God takes the seeker to the stage of extinction of the ego. Beyond this progress is achieved through meditation. Beyond this, there is a stage when progress […] is entirely dependent upon the grace of God." Elsewhere (idem 59), Rasool cites 'Alā' al-Dīn Aṭṭār's maintaining that *murāqaba* is superior to *nafī wa ithbāt*. See also Tosun and Bayraktar, "Contemplation (*Murāqaba*) and Spiritual Focus/Attention (*Tawajjuh*) in the Pre-Mujaddidi Naqshibandi Order."

[231] *SfT* 98.

[232] *TTH* 98.

[233] *SfT* 155.

[234] *TTH* 31; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 347-8.

[235] *TTH* 98-9.

Performing Murāqaba

In practicing *murāqaba*, the *sālik* is to cease all physical and mental activity, sit with closed eyes, direct or turn his or her attention to one or more of the *laṭā'if* as directed by the *shaykh*, mentally pronounce his or her assigned *niyya* only once at the beginning, and then passively wait. The student is expected to consistently and punctually perform this temporary seclusion, waiting on a daily basis at the same appointed times and for the prescribed amount of time (at least thirty to forty-five minutes per sitting). The *shaykh* provides his *tawajjuḥ* to assist in the disciple's spiritual progress while the blessings (*baraka*) involved ultimately originate from God and it is for these blessings that the meditator attentively waits, his *laṭā'if* being the receptors of the Divine blessings. In stating the *niyya*, one turns one's attention to the heart, and later when instructed to do so, the other *laṭā'if*. In the second part of the intention, that *laṭīfa* or those *laṭā'if*, as suprasensory organs, are then turned ("*mutawajjeh*") so as to be oriented toward "the Holy Essence" in anticipation of the flow of blessings.[236] Later intentions have an additional component of spiritual travel in specific locations in Mujaddidī cosmology.

While waiting after making the *niyya*, extraneous thoughts may vie for one's attention, but the meditator is to, rather than subdue and suppress these thoughts, avoid becoming involved with them and leave "the mind alone, letting it do its work, while he or she proceeds with awakening the *laṭā'if*." The analogy is given of sitting in a public place, allowing whatever happens to pass by to enter and exit one's field of vision.[237] This turning of one's attention toward the *laṭā'if*, and the *laṭā'if* in turn turning toward God, is explicitly distinguished as being different from the concentration and controlling of the mind practiced by Yogis,[238] since concentration is an active mental process while *murāqaba* involves ceasing physical activity, disengaging from one's thoughts and passively waiting for God's blessings. In line with the meaning of *murāqaba* as vigilance, this waiting is not "unconscious relaxation" but a "conscious involvement," it is "opening oneself to transformation"[239] or "being aware of the qualities that are being activated inwardly," and, to reference Junayd, waiting with attentiveness like a cat watching for a mouse to leave its hole.[240] It is said to not be the mind that is being attentive but the heart and the other "centers of consciousness."

Experiences in Murāqaba

In addition to wandering thoughts, one may have visual experiences, but at this stage, when one is still fully aware of oneself, they are considered to likely be one's own "thought projections."[241] Furthermore, focusing on things like the "spiritual form or color of the heart" are not the proper aim of one's attention, rather what is is "the Divine Essence, that is beyond all qualities."[242] So *murāqaba* does not involve visualizing the *laṭā'if* or their colors, and if such mental images arise, they are not dwelt upon. Nevertheless, the meditator may begin to experience some sort of "activity in the heart," sensations that are taken to be indicative of the beginnings of the gradual process of awakening the heart and of receiving the transmissions of the *shaykh*. Such sensations might be experienced and described variously as "heat," "movement," "tingling," or even as being like "the ticking of a clock, […] the singing of sparrows or water bubbling in a teapot."[243] These too, however, are not to be the focus or goal of the meditation.

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[236] On the process of setting the intention and then waiting, Rasool states: "*Murāqabah* is like knocking at a door, ringing the bell, and then settling down in a comfortable place to wait for the door to be opened." Idem 31.
[237] Idem 100.
[238] *SfT* 99, 114-5;
[239] *TTH* 101.
[240] Idem 99-101. As mentioned in phase two of the historical survey, the example of the cat is attributed to Junayd Baghdādī and is frequently used by Naqshbandīs. For example, see Buehler, "Sufi Contemplation," 341-2; or Kabbani, *Classical Islam and the Naqshbandi Sufi Tradition*, 344.
[241] "Q&A with Hazrat," audio recording and transcript at the World Community, 12 November 1994.
[242] *SfT* 59.
[243] Ibid.; *TTH* 102; *GMST* 15.

In time, distracting thoughts will subside[244] and one begins to lose awareness of his or her own "individual being" and to experience a state somewhere in between sleep and wakefulness, described in English as "drifting" or in Urdu as *ghunūdgī*. This liminal mode of consciousness, which is asserted to be different from sleep, is considered "the shadow of annihilation." In *ghunūdgī*, one "enters a different dimension,"[245] another world, in fact worlds within worlds, in which visions (*kashf*) can occur that are not merely one's own mental projections and where meetings with saints may take place.[246] There, light may be experienced not only as a metaphor but also in a more literal sense.[247] Feeling an "attraction" to devote a greater amount of time to meditating, a gradual series of "transformations" take place which culminate in *fanā'* and *baqā'*, "when not only the *laṭā'if* but the whole body becomes enlighted,"[248] sounding very much like the above description of *sulṭān al-adhkār*.

Through meditation, a gradual shift in perspective is supposed to take place, a shift that is held, as we will shortly see, to have positive moral consequences. Aspects of this shift are described in various ways with such terms as knowledge, nearness, remembrance, awakening, and enlightening, and often in relation to the heart. So, for example, the practice of *murāqaba* is said to result in "inner knowledge" (*ma'rifa*) and to "pave the path to nearness with God" (*ma'iyya*).[249] In this other dimension(s) that is visited in *murāqaba*, "one gains new insights and deeper understandings of God, the universe and one's fellow human beings."[250] Regarding this change of perspective or paradigm shift, one can look back to the discussion of what takes place when the various *laṭā'if* are awakened, in particular the heart, as well as the discussions of improved conduct below and of constant remembrance of God in the section on *dhikr*.

As should be clear, not all of this is expected to happen in just one sitting. As will be seen in the below chapter on SOST, the events just described are not necessarily what every meditator experiences every time they meditate and in this exact sequence, but would be better understood as the range of possible experiences that the student might expect over a longer period of time of consistently performing the practices. Every individual and every session of *murāqaba* is different. Some days the thoughts may not subside, likewise one may go weeks at a time without experiencing a "drifting" state. Likewise, feeling attracted to performing the practices may come and go and return again over the weeks, months, and years. It is a practice that must be done daily which deepens over time. Additionally, such experiences are not limited to only *murāqaba*, and may also occur while performing other practices as well, e.g., when reciting *durūd sharīf*, and furthermore, *sulṭān al-adhkār* is associated with the *dhikr* of *nafī wa ithbāt*.

But returning to the subject of lights and visions, although any such experiences that occur in *ghunūdgī* seem to be taken more seriously than those that happen while still aware of oneself, such experiences are to be reported to the *shaykh* who interprets and provides context for them in the larger view of where the student stands in terms of travelling on the path. Overall, however, and much in line with Sirhindī, visions like miracles or developing "extraordinary powers,"[251] are deemphasized and in discouraging an overemphasis on visions, Sirhindī is quoted as having said that visual phenomena are only there to "please the seeker's heart" and that "The final destination lies ahead."[252] Another quote from Sirhindī further emphasizes this, saying that visions of "forms and images of transcendental

[244] "[…] all the distractions, disturbances, inner dialogues, doubts, fears, and contradiction of the mind become still." *TTH* 101.

[245] *SfT* 59; *TTH* 100.

[246] In the account of 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh's meeting with Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī, he is quoted as having said: "Do not think that it was a matter of vision, […] He used to sit with me as you sit now in front of me." Idem 115-6; Rasool asserts that the lifestyles of earlier mystics contributed to their sensitivity to such phenomena, as a person who is removed from society and eats very little can be "highly receptive to *kashf* (visions) and other mystical experiences." Idem 36-7.

[247] "Q&A with Hazrat," audio recording and transcript at the World Community, 12 November 1994.

[248] *TTH* 101.

[249] *SfT* 58-9.

[250] *TTH* 101.

[251] Idem 10.

[252] Rasool also states: "Visions and phenomena may be pleasing, but the reality of improvement is far removed from such experiences." Idem 36.

realities" or "colors and lights" are no more than "play and fun" and that they are "nothing but His signs and proofs."[253] Similarly, Rasool himself states rather matter-of-factly: "If a person sees colors, well and good. If a person does not, that is fine too. The object is to remember God, not to have visions."[254] He explains that students who perform meditation but do not experience such phenomena make the same progress, using the analogy of riding in a car in the front seat with a pleasant view versus in the back seat without such a view, the destination is reached in both cases. "Whenever you sit in meditation, you receive *barakāt* (blessings). […] Even if you do not feel or see anything, […] You still will reach the destination." He even considers such phenomena as a potential distraction on the path, as "sources of gratification," and that those who do not experience visions may make faster progress due to their remaining humble.[255]

Besides visions and miraculous powers, another potential result of engaging in *murāqaba* that is considered more of a side effect than the aim of the practice is psychological well-being. In responding to a question on whether or not Sufism can assist with "Stress, Angst, [or] Depression"; one that seems to reflect the reception in the West of Sufism as psychology; Rasool reflects briefly on how *murāqaba* might alleviate such conditions, but he makes clear that this would be a "positive byproduct" rather than the actual intended goal.[256]

So rejecting visions and miraculous powers, along with psychological well-being, as means for assessing progress on the path, he instead finds it more prudent to look toward the two metrics of improved personal conduct and remembrance of God. He advises looking "for improvements in behavior and conduct," going on to say that one's "character and personality gradually change. Certain weaknesses […] slowly subside. With the purification of the heart, evil tendencies of conceit, greed, and jealousy also recede." Elsewhere, he states that "There is nothing more phenomenal than one's own transformation. To become saintly is the greatest phenomenon. The power of compassion, peace, and love is the greatest power."[257] The second metric for gauging progress, viz., remembrance of God, has been briefly addressed with regard to what happens when the heart is awakened and such remembrance is itself a particular sense of the next technical term to be discussed, that is *dhikr*.[258]

Dhikr ("Remembrance")

Literally meaning "remembrance," there are three senses in which the word *dhikr* is used, the first being "Any act that is in keeping with the shari'a […],"[259] the second is the most common meaning and refers to the recitation of specific formulae, and third, it is continuously maintaining God in one's awareness throughout daily life. As for their relationship to each other, the second sense is a technique intended to lead to the attainment of the other two senses. *Dhikr* as the practice of recitation includes different methods, each of which must be prescribed by the *shaykh*, who at certain points along the path and for specific reasons, assigns different recitations to be repeated a particular number of times, with Rasool mentioning a usual range of 1,000 to 2,000 and a maximum of 5,000 repetitions per day. While this number may, as Rasool asserts, be small and the recitations themselves fairly short in comparison to some other lineages, he emphasizes consistency in performing that which is assigned.[260] While *dhikr* is considered the main practice of many Sufi orders, including other Naqshbandī branches discussed above, in Rasool's lineage, these and other recitations play more of a supplementary role in relation to the central practice of *murāqaba*.

The reader is reminded that the Quran calls Muslims to remember God in abundance. As far as how to achieve this, invoking again the "corruption of time" narrative, it is explained that at the time of the Prophet, a single glance from him was all that was needed to instill a state of remembrance, or "to

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[253] Idem 37.
[254] *SfT* 59; *TTH* 90.
[255] Idem 36-7.
[256] Idem 21.
[257] Idem 101.
[258] Idem 37-8.
[259] *SfT* 56.
[260] *TTH* 108.

elevate a person's consciousness." In seeking to reproduce this state enjoyed by the companions of the Prophet, it is explained that, alongside the evolution of the exoteric religious sciences like *fiqh*, later generations of Muslims developed various formulae and methods of *dhikr*; silent, vocal, and in prescribed positions such as standing, sitting, or lying down; and thus it came to be an important technique in Sufism.[261] Specifically on the issue of silent versus vocal *dhikr*, in Rasool's line of the Mujaddidiyya, all recitations are performed silently. Yet both forms are acknowledged as beneficial and the *shaykh* may prescribe vocal *dhikr* in exceptional cases, such as if a student is "unreceptive" to other practices or has "difficulty focusing."[262]

It is explained that while reciting, one does not merely repeat the words mechanically, but should actually concentrate on the meaning of the formula. For instance, of the two specific formulae described, the first is *dhikr-i nafī wa ithbāt* ("remembrance of negation and affirmation"), viz., the repetition of "*Lā ilāha illā-llāh*." This formula is called the *tahlīl* and it consists of the first half of the Islamic profession of faith (*shahāda*). In this practice, while reciting "*Lā ilāha*" ("There is no god"), one visualizes the universe being destroyed, and while saying "*illā-llāh*" ("but God"), one focuses entirely on God. After reciting this for a prescribed number of iterations, the *dhikr* is concluded by reciting the *tahlīl* together with the remaining second half of the *shahāda*, viz., "*Muḥammadun rasūlu Allāh*" ("Muḥammad is His messenger"). The other form mentioned is *dhikr-i ism-i dhat*, which consists of repeating "*Allāh*."[263] Such recitations are intended to purify one's inner and outer being, one's heart and soul, to remove the veils between seeker and Sought and to bring about a constant remembrance of God in the practitioner's life, even when not engaged in recitation and in fact, at all times no matter what one is doing. In this sense, *dhikr* is "deeply connected to the purpose of life" and, more than a routinized ritual, it is "an exalted psychological state that becomes part of a human being's consciousness […] and an integral part of that person's being." The "fruits" of such a state of perpetual awareness of God are asserted to be that one lives one's life in accordance with God's commands.[264]

The second metric, remembrance of God, is framed as a shift in perspective, using the analogy of how one who is diagnosed with a terminal illness might come to realize that "nothing is permanent," a realization that then "suffuses every aspect of her life, causing her to appreciate all she has been given." Similarly in this second sense of *dhikr*, while going about daily affairs, the student reaches a point where they are continuously aware of God.

> This awareness inspires him or her to strive to be a better person, to show compassion, withhold anger, avoid greed and self-centeredness, repent for errors, overcome character flaws, seek God's forgiveness: in sum to approach all worldly relationships and activities within the context of the single paramount relationship between oneself and the Divine. […] Gradually, students start to sustain their remembrance of God for longer periods and are less frequently distracted by material concerns. Finally consciousness of God permeates every moment of their lives. This unceasing remembrance is the goal of one who travels the Sufi path, and the signs of its gradual attainment are the best proof of progress.[265]

While this is explained in clear modern English and without extensive Quranic references and language, it sounds basically like explanations of the same kind of remembrance of God advocated by the Naqshbandī principles or described by the Prophet in the *ḥadīth* of Gabriel. So we have to ask, aside

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[261] Idem 104-5; *SfT* 57. Such a narrative matches fairly well chronologically with the current scholarly understanding of the history of Islamic mysticism, as discussed in the second period with the 9th-century mystical exegete, Sahl al-Tustarī. Although his lifetime falls mostly after the imams of the four main Sunni *madhāhib*, these schools were still very much in the developmental stages and he was fully a contemporary of the compilers of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim*.

[262] *TTH* 106.

[263] Idem 104; *SfT* 58; Sa'īd Khān describes the former as "more beneficial" for *sulūk* while the latter is better for *jadhba*. Idem 97.

[264] *TTH* 106-7; *SfT* 56-8.

[265] *TTH* 38-9.

from choosing language that can speak to contemporary Muslims and non-Muslims alike, what has really changed?

But to shift gears back from results to practices, while not usually referred to under the label of *dhikr*, the practices of reciting *al-Fātiḥa*, *durūd*, and *khatm*, which together with *murāqaba* and *dhikr* constitute the five main practices of this lineage, are briefly discussed here given the fact that they involve assigned recitations. This also seems acceptable in light of the broader meaning of *dhikr* as well as the fact that Rasool sometimes refers to the practices as consisting of *murāqaba* and the *waẓīfa*, indicating *dhikr* along with the other three types of recitations under a single term. Yet another reason for including these here is that having discussed *murāqaba* and *dhikr*, the paragraphs that follow offer a broader view of how all of the pieces fit together into a daily schedule. Since the Islamic day starts at sunset rather than sunrise, the cycle of daily practices is described here from the sunset prayer or *maghrib*, which is followed by the practice of reciting *al-Fātiḥa*. Specifically, this session begins with the recitation of two *sūra*s: *al-Fātiḥa* and *al-Ikhlāṣ*, as well as *durūd sharīf* (described below), each a prescribed number of times. This is followed by a brief dedication, similar to that used in the *khatm* (described below), to "all the saints of the Order" mentioning by name two key figures in the *silsila*, Sirhindī and ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh, along with reciting from Quran 40:44. One then makes their assigned intention for *murāqaba*. Initially non-Muslims, or at least in the researcher's case, are instructed to begin directly with this intention without the preceding liturgy. The same is true for the practices at other times of day, and while more advanced students may be performing different practices, beginners will sit only with their assigned intention for *murāqaba*.

The Daily Schedule of Practices

Considering all of these practices as a whole, the main focus is worshipping, turning one's attention to, and remembering God, as seen not only in the fact that they are built around the daily prayers, but also in the practices of reciting *al-Fātiḥa* and *al-Ikhlāṣ*, verses which praise God, and of performing *murāqaba* and *dhikr*. Next, one spends a significantly smaller part of the time wishing blessings upon the Prophet, who is the "means of approach" to God. And finally, one dedicates the rewards (*thawāb*) of such practices to the saints of the *silsila*, and two significant figures therein: Sirhindī and ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh. Thus, not only is a relationship (*nisbat*) with God developed and nurtured through daily practice, but also with the Prophet and the chain of saints leading back to him, which thus connects the student to God through his messenger and acts as a conduit for his blessings. We now consider these in further detail.

Following *maghrib*, the sunset prayer, practitioners recite *al-Fātiḥa*, *al-Ikhlāṣ*, *durūd sharīf* (see below), and an excerpt from Quran 40:44 certain prescribed numbers of times before performing *murāqaba*. After *ʻishā'* the main practice is *durūd sharīf*; also called *ṣalawāt*, *taṣliya*, or simply *durūd*; that is a supplication for blessings upon the Prophet and his family. It is considered polite to make such a supplication when mentioning the Prophet in conversation and *ṣalawāt* are also made during ritual prayer.[266] Here such blessings are recited as a spiritual practice in and of itself, one which, unlike *dhikr*, does not require one to be under the guidance of a *shaykh*.[267] In this practice, a specific intention is made followed by several hundred repetitions of a supplication for "peace and blessings" upon the Prophet, as the "means of approach" to God, as well as upon his family. One then sits waiting in silence. After *tahajjud* is a lengthy performance (over 1,000 repetitions) of the *dhikr* of *nafī wa ithbāt* along with *murāqaba*. Following *fajr* is the *khatm*, which begins with reciting *durūd sharīf* and the *hawqala* a moderate number of times (in the hundreds total) before offering the rewards (*thawāb*) specifically to Sirhindī and ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh, after which is one makes their assigned intention for *murāqaba*. When performing *murāqaba* at *ẓuhr* or *ʻasr*, the same assigned intention is used as elsewhere.

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[266] *EI*[3] "Taṣliya."

[267] *SfT* 112; Saʻīd Khān also says that "Reciting the blessing on the Prophet (S) and his family regularly will bring forth innumerable blessings and the effects of these blessings will also be felt in one's worldly affairs. Love is essential." Idem 114.

On the daily schedule at retreats attended in Germany, the practice following *maghrib* was listed simply as "Meditation"; for *'ishā'*, "Durood"; *tahajjud*, "Dhikr"; and for *fajr*, again "Meditation." For *ẓuhr*, no formal practice was scheduled and after *'asr* was a meditation with a specific intention, on the *qalb laṭīfa*, made at the beginning of a session of meditating while listening to a selected recitation from the Quran. For non-Muslims introduced to the first practice, no specific prayer time is given but it is advised to set a specific time for oneself and to do it consistently at that time. Of note is the fact that the bulk of the scheduled practices take place in the evening, night, and early morning, with *tahajjud* seeming to be accorded a special significance among some students, and indeed it takes dedication to wake up well before dawn for. Consistent with the principle of *khalwat dar anjuman*, it is possible for such a program to be aligned with a regular nine-to-five work schedule, allowing one to earn a living during the day while performing spiritual practices during the hours which for most people are leisure time.

Moreover, if we recall from the survey of Naqshbandī-related groups in the West, although exact formulae, numbers of recitations, areas of emphasis and some details of how the practices are performed vary between lineages, such a set of practices assigned by one's *shaykh*, involving *murāqaba*, *dhikr*, recitations from the Quran, supplications for blessings upon the Prophet, and reciting the names of saints in one's lineage, are all fairly common among the two groups that embrace both Islam and *ṭarīqa*-based Sufism. But now that we see what the daily schedule of practices is like, let us turn to examine the curriculum of training and its structure. Examining the details of this curriculum is where we find greater difference between this lineage and other Islamic Mujaddidī branches with similar curricula. Yet whatever accounts for differences in the series of intentions themselves, they are not a result of this lineage's transfer to the West, as such differentiation evolved in India and elsewhere around a century or more before the founding of IST.

The Curriculum and its Structure

IST has a structured curriculum for proceeding through the teachings of the Mujaddidiyya, one which takes the series of transmissions systematized by 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh based on the teachings of Sirhindī, and frames them within a system specifically designed for imparting the teachings in Western majority non-Muslim countries.[268] This course of instruction and spiritual practices is divided into three stages, the first two of which require neither the acceptance of Islam nor the taking of an oath of allegiance (*bay'a*) to the *shaykh*, but these are prerequisites for entering the third stage. Should the disciple be pleased with the results at the end of the second stage yet is still not inclined to take the necessary steps to advance to the third, they are allowed to continue with the practices of the second stage as long as they wish to do so. So this three-stage division is in fact an adaptation for non-Muslim students in the West, but the contents within those divisions are no different from that which is taught to Muslim students in India. Common to all three stages is attendance at weekly local group meetings, the sole purpose of which is communal meditation, and the signing of a contract at the outset of each stage, which involves the aspirant pledging to do his or her best to diligently complete their assigned spiritual practices, to attend weekly meetings, and if necessary, to assist financially in the administration of the group. The following paragraphs outline what aspects are particular to each stage.[269]

The Three Stages

The first stage is characterized by investigation as, without any kind of pressure to either take *bay'a* or convert to Islam, the curious seeker is allowed to try out the order's initial teachings and practices. In the broader picture of the curriculum as a whole, the objective of stage one is to illuminate the heart subtle center, that is to awaken one's inner vision as preparation and to lay the groundwork for more advanced transmissions. The disciple is assigned the first contemplation, which they continue to practice until "the effects of blessings are felt" in the heart *laṭīfa*.[270] At this point, the second stage commences wherein the remaining nine *laṭā'if* are awakened. Rasool states that the objective of this stage "is to nurture the seeker's newly awakened inner vision and to strengthen trust in the Supreme

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[268] Idem 77.
[269] Idem 78-83.
[270] Idem 64.

Being."[271] Once the effects of God's blessings are perceived in the *qalb*, the *rūḥ* is included along with it, followed by the *sirr*, *khafī*, and so forth until all ten *laā'if* are meditated upon at once with a single *niyya*. Certain other practices and recitations are provided throughout this process, such as the *dhikr* of negation and affirmation (*nafī wa ithbāt*), which is assigned when the *nafs* is reached, and the other parts of the *waẓīfa*, namely *durūd*, *al-Fātiḥa*, and the *khatm*.[272]

This second stage is characterized as still being exploratory for the seeker, yet since its culmination is the point where one can progress no further on the path without being a Muslim and having pledged allegiance (*bay'a*) to the *shaykh*, the topics of converting to Islam, if one is not already a Muslim, as well as the potential disciple's relationship with the *shaykh* do come up. Along with the transmissions for awakening the *laṭā'if*, supplementary literature on Islam is made available, and the prospective *murīd* is encouraged to discuss with the *shaykh* any concerns they may have about accepting Islam if they are so inclined. Rasool explains that it is impossible to go any further on the path without "attach[ing] oneself to a prophet," since regular humans lack "the capacity to receive proper direct guidance and illumination from God and obtain enlightenment."[273] Each prophet, in their own time, serves as an intermediary, and because Muḥammad was the seal of the prophets, in this age it is he who it is most appropriate to attach oneself to. Additionally, the *tawajjuh* and *nisbat* of a qualified *shaykh* becomes necessary at this point if one is to advance further.

Stage three can begin only after the disciple has accepted Islam and established a formal relationship with the *shaykh* through *bay'a*. It commences with the meditation of the station of repentance, which includes a periodic recitation from the Quran (7:23). The duration one remains at this station generally varies from six months to two years, and other practices assigned during this time include a recitation called *durūd-i saraj al-munīr* ("supplications of the illuminating lamp") as well as the meditation of purification, the latter of which is only used if needed.[274] Once the station of repentance is completed, a complex set of numerous transmissions are given. There are four circles for each *laṭīfa* of the *'ālam-i amr* as well as for the *nafs*, and within each of these circles is a certain number of transmissions. The first circle of each of these *laṭā'if* is the "circle of possibility," which has three transmissions.[275] The second of the four circles is the "circle of shadows," with seven transmissions, followed by the third "circle of lesser intimacy," which has two transmissions, and the fourth and final "circle of greater intimacy," with one transmission.[276]

This structure with the number of transmissions is identical for each of the first six *laṭā'if*, and after completing all thirteen transmissions for the four circles of the *qalb*, the same process is repeated for the *rūḥ*, *sirr*, *khafī*, *akhfā*, and *nafs*. So each of the four circles are progressed through with each of the five *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr* and the *nafs*. Some transmissions above or in addition to the four circles exist, namely, *SfT* describes "four transmissions above the self subtle center" that come after completing the four circles in the *nafs*. *SfT* also mentions that an additional three transmissions were revealed to Ḥāmid Ḥasan 'Alawī[277] and Abdur Rashid informed the researcher that there is one more beyond those. It appears that these statements refer to the same four transmissions, but they are only assigned in certain circumstances.[278] After one's training in the Mujaddidiyya is complete, one can proceed to studying the remaining four orders, which are somewhat similarly arranged but with different

[271] Idem 80.
[272] An additional practice is the meditation of illumination, which is used in the event that there is a lack of sufficient illumination for the comprehensive contemplation of all ten *laṭā'if* simultaneously. Idem 64-5.
[273] Idem 81.
[274] Idem 65.
[275] According to *SfT* 65-6, the circle of possibility is divided into a center, which has one transmission, and two arcs, each having two transmissions for a total of five transmissions for the first circle. However, during respondent validation, Abdur Rashid could not identify with this description. Likewise, in the intentions SOST provided to the researcher for examination, there are only three intentions in the circle of possibility.
[276] *SfT* 65-7.
[277] Idem 66.
[278] Email September 11, 2020.

recitations and practices.[279] As far as the length of time required, Rasool states that one order usually takes seven to eight years to complete[280] and elsewhere that it takes "seven to ten years […] to attain selflessness. But this is only the beginning […and in fact, …] The journey continues until one's last breath."[281] Also, one should not be confused by the names, since just because one finishes the "affinities or transmissions" does not mean that they automatically attain "intimacy," also sometimes translated as "sainthood," According to Rasool, "It simply means that the course of study has been completed. The time has come for the individual to work hard and to persevere in the practices."[282]

The Four Circles

In South Asia since at least the 18th century, Sufi cosmology has often been graphically depicted with complex diagrams consisting of multiple interconnected circles.[283] Yet in line with Rasool's emphasis on practice as opposed to conceptual explanations and theosophical speculation, the issue of such circles is not even addressed in *TTH* and they are only briefly discussed in *SfT* in a discussion which was just summarized here, but some further detail was found in an audio recording and transcript, graciously provided to the researcher by Abdur Rashid, of Rasool answering students' questions at the World Community in 1994. Therein Rasool explains that "The names are given by the great saints from their experiences. If they had said, instead of circle, 'triangle' or 'square', then we would have been calling it that. They have given the name 'circle' so that's why we call it circles." Describing them as "four levels of cleanliness" he also expounds somewhat on the use of the term "circle," noting that as the world is round and revolves on an axis, so in each circle there is a particular theme around which everything else revolves. The first circle, he explains, is "related to this world and the world of angels," the second to "saints," the third being "the station of prophets," and the fourth is related to "the illuminations of the Almighty."[284]

The names of the circles clearly draw from Mujaddidī cosmology and conceptualizations of the path, but despite initial appearances, it is not possible to make one-to-one equivalencies, saying that each of the circles corresponds to one of the four stages of the journey or to particular places within the five-fold entifications that comprise the universe. The circles' names themselves prevent drawing such conclusions, since they refer to different types of things, that is the first two circles use words that designate particular places in the ontological structure of the universe and the last two circles are labeled with words that refer to two levels of intimacy with God attained by the seeker. The themes for each circle that Rasool lists suggest that each one is associated with increasingly higher and subtler levels of the cosmos, thus implying that all four circles are associated with the process of ascent, or *sayr ila'llāh* and *sayr fī'llāh*. Yet for Sirhindī, greater intimacy is associated with the descent and return to the world, or *sayr 'an Allāh bi'llāh* and *sayr fī'l-ashyā'*. To make sense of this, perhaps we could turn to Sa'īd Khān's statement that "Every station has an annihilation and an abiding" and also that "The exalted state is when a person loses consciousness of a separate self and remains conscious at the same time."[285]

Keeping this statement in mind, perhaps some of the confusion stems from looking at limited conceptual models, which unavoidably use imperfect analogies that were never intended to describe ultimate reality or the experience thereof from a rational perspective, and yet another likely contributing factor is separating theory from practice. In particular, the imagery of a journey fails to capture the fact that a practitioner, in between their various progressive realizations on the path, returns to the physical world at the very same place from which they left it when they first sat down for their practices, whether that be on a meditation cushion in one's apartment in 21st-century Germany or the carpeted floor of a

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[279] *SfT* 66-7.
[280] Idem 66.
[281] *TTH* 45-6.
[282] *SfT* 102.
[283] Marcia K. Hermansen, "Mystical Paths and Authoritative Knowledge: A Semiotic Approach to Sufi Cosmological Diagrams," *Journal of Religious Studies and Theology*, 12, no. 1 (1992): 52-77.
[284] "Q&A with Hazrat," audio recording and transcript at the World Community, 12 November 1994.
[285] *SfT* 87.

mosque in 9th- century Abbasid Baghdad.[286] At the risk of creating further unforeseen problems by introducing another necessarily insufficient analogy, if we exchange that of a journey with another one, of completing a long and involved task, such as a doctoral dissertation (which the present monograph originated as), it may provide some helpful insight.

So day by day a researcher works on a dissertation for hours and hours at a time, getting closer and closer to completing their goal. Breaks are taken to return to the world for eating, sleeping, personal hygiene, part-time work, and so forth, but every time the researcher returns from such breaks to work on their dissertation, they pick up where they left off, writing more and more and hopefully capturing increasingly deeper insights into their topic. This continues until one day, the dissertation is completed, turned in, graded, defended, and the researcher returns again to the world transformed, hopefully, into a PhD with a mission to help guide others to the same goal. So, like a PhD candidate working on their dissertation, every time someone sits in meditation, they are working toward progressing deeper and deeper, while simultaneously higher and higher toward their goal. At the end of each session, they stop and return to the world only to pick up again where they left off in the next session. Returning to Sa'īd Khān's statements about every station having a *fanā'* and a *baqā'* and that the ultimate state is experiencing both simultaneously, in the curriculum we see an ascent that necessarily includes many lesser descents, but the most important descent is the one completed after reaching the summit of the ascent, when one returns fully transformed to bring others to God, the work that prophets did.

Regarding the circles from the perspective of where the individual is in the five-fold entifications that serve as a map of the cosmos, the **circle of possibility** is clear, as the name itself refers to the *dā'irat-i imkānī*, which consists of the last three entifications: the physical world (*'alam-i khalq*), the spiritual world (*'ālam-i 'amr*), and the liminal world of image-exemplars (*'ālam-i mithāl*) in between the first two. The transmissions here deal with outer and inner wayfaring (*sayr-i āfāqī* and *sayr-i anfusī*) which Sirhindī respectively associates with *sulūk* and *jadhba*, but also with purification of the *nafs* and purification of the heart. Both modes are accomplished in the Mujaddidiyya through *jadhba* via *murāqaba*, rather than the difficult *sulūk* and purification of the *nafs*, said to be achieved through harsh asceticism in other lineages, disciplines, and traditions. In the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya, the sequence of working on the *laṭā'if* is generally reversed, in accordance with the principle of *INfB*, to begin with the heart, but the sequence of *sayr-i āfāqī* and *sayr-i anfusī* remains. Perhaps this is because one's *nafs* is being purified simultaneously as one works on one's heart.

The **circle of shadows** likely refers to the place still within the realm of the contingent (*imkān*), specifically in the third entification or *'alam-i amr*, where Sirhindī with his doctrine of *ẓilliyat* ("shadowism") asserts that *wujūdī* Sufis have become mired in their mystical progress, thinking that they have achieved union with God, when in actuality, they have only reached the level of the reflections or shadows (sg. *ẓil*) of the names and attributes. According to Buehler's description of Mujaddidī cosmology, progressing through the shadows already falls under *wilāyat-i sughrā*, which itself also includes the shadows as well as leaving the contingent world to reach the actual names and attributes, realizing *waḥdat al-shuhūd*, and completing the ascent. Nevertheless, the circle of shadows has the largest number of transmissions, that is seven, which seems to include a great deal that Sirhindī included in the broad range of experiences constituting lesser intimacy. The first of these transmissions relates to the "Shadows of the Names and Attributes," and it is unclear whether all seven transmissions are within the shadows or just this first one. Nevertheless, the next three transmissions within the circle of shadows seem to emphasize God's immanence (*tashbīh*) and to have an increasingly *jamālī* character – proceeding from "With-ness" to a "Loving With-ness" and finally to "Mercy and Compassion," the most prominent of the *jamālī* names. Conversely, the next and last three transmissions of the circle of shadows seem to emphasize God's transcendence (*tanzīh*) and to have an increasingly *jalālī* character,

[286] What is had in mind here are forms of contemplation or chanting, but the analogy might also be applied to Sufi practices that involve more mobility such as the Mawlawī *sama'* and even to a Barēlwī *julūs* ("procession" or "parade"). They may not return to the same meditation cushion, but they are likely still within the same general geographic area. While we may not know the exact practices performed by many of the earliest Sufis to achieve the states they describe, it seems safe to assume that this rule would apply to just about anything they might have done.

proceeding from the "Power (or Forces) of the Almighty (or the Ever-Dominating, the Conqueror, the Prevailer)," to the "Power of [God's] Majesty," and finally to the "Divine Power."

The two transmissions of the **circle of lesser intimacy** deal with the "Names and Attributes" and the "Love of the Holy Essence." This leads us to the conclusion that either 1.) what one has just passed through in the preceding circle of shadows (second circle) was all only the shadows (all seven transmissions) and now one has truly arrived at the actual names and attributes, or 2.) it was only the first transmission in the circle of shadows that was in the shadows, that the subsequent six transmissions were actually in the names and attributes, and this first transmission in the third circle is a comprehensive summary of them before reaching the Muhammadan Reality, beyond all differentiation among the various names and attributes. This fits well with the idea of proceeding from multiplicity toward unity.

Finally, the **circle of greater intimacy** has just one transmission, and that deals with the "Illuminations of the Love of the Divine Essence."[287] Perhaps this is also in the Muhammadan Reality, but is a deeper, fuller, more profound and intimate encounter, or beyond it to encounter the fully undifferentiated divine essence. Yet another non-mutually exclusive possibility, one that would be consistent with Sirhindī's associating greater intimacy with the descent, is that the love of the divine essence illuminates one's return to the world after reaching the heights of the mystical encounter.

But regardless of how the circles relate to particular places in the structure of the universe or legs of the four-fold journey, we see a journey that begins with activating the *laṭā'if* and then continues with travel in the sphere of contingent existence, proceeding through the shadows and then the attributes toward the divine essence before the main return or descent to the created world as a transformed person to guide others along the same journey.[288] In these respects, we can say that the series of Mujaddidī intentions taught by Rasool are quite similar to those practiced by other lineages in the West as well as in South Asia, formerly Ottoman lands, and other areas where such teachings have spread. Nevertheless, there are some very important differences which we now address.

Comparing the Four Circles with other Mujaddidī Lines

Rasool explained that 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh made such significant contributions and changes to the Mujadiddiyya that it would have been possible to speak of a separate 'Abd al-Bārī Shāhī lineage. He even mentions that he had considered outlining a comparison of all of the changes that 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh introduced, yet due to considerations of space, he abandoned this idea. We cannot presume to know here what changes he made within this particular Mujaddidī line, but we can make some some comparisons to what we know of other Mujaddidī lineages, particularly those tracing back to Shāh Ghulām 'Alī. A good starting point would be the chart of correspondences for the *laṭā'if* provided in Buehler's *Sufi Heirs*, nearly all of which tallies precisely with the teachings of Rasool, except for mostly minor details, like the four elements being at the crown of the head and having the *rūḥ* associated with two prophets, Abraham and Noah, instead of only Abraham. But more significantly, in Buehler's chart, correspondences are provided for the origin of the *fayḍ* coming to a particular *laṭīfa*. If we recall, the *laṭā'if* seem to be providing different and progressively deeper perspectives onto the same ultimate reality. For the Sayfiyya and other lineages tracing back to Shāh Ghulām 'Alī which teach such a curriculum, the *qalb* through the *akhfā* are each associated with increasingly subtle levels of cosmology, beginning with the "active attributes" (*ṣifāt-i fi'liyya*) and culminating with the "quality of comprehensive synthesis" (*sha'n-i jam'*).[289] After this, in all of the subsequent intentions, the *fayḍ* is described as originating from the divine essence or the divine presence. Yet in 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh's line,

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[287] SOST, "The Mujaddidi Order: Intentions for the Circles."

[288] In advising against judging people based on their qualities, such as their "class, color, and lineage," rather than who they truly are, Sa'īd Khān draws a connection to the necessary and the contingent and mentions travelling "through the attributes to the Source," saying "The attributes and qualities that we see in this world are all contingent because the beings that they belong to are themselves impermanent. There is only one Being who has always existed and will always exist. He is not dependent on anyone, He is One. […] That is why we must travel through the attributes to the Source. We cannot be content simply with attributes; we must know and have faith in the Source." *SfT* 128-9.

[289] Buehler, *Sufi Heirs*, 111.

from the very start, all of the intentions derive from the "Holy Essence" (*dhat*). Perhaps this difference could be chalked up to simplification for ease of the students, after all, Rasool described how 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh had made the teachings even more suitable for modern students. Yet another difference is not so easily accounted for, and it has significant ramifications for how the teachings are imparted.

In lines descending from Shāh Ghulām 'Alī, there are usually around 26 intentions, and in these, there is something called *hay'at-i waḥdānī* ("single form"),[290] by which all of the *laṭā'if* are combined, and from there, further ascent is made in all of the *laṭā'if* collectively. In Rasool's line, however, the path primarily consists of only 15 transmissions, but these are all traversed in each *laṭīfa* (except for the four elements), so that once one has completed these 15 with the *qalb*, they return to ascend again with the *qalb* and *rūḥ*, and then again adding the *sirr* (to be sitting on the *qalb*, *rūḥ*, and *sirr* simultaneously), and so forth. Thus, we can regard this process of imprinting each individual *laṭīfa*, as well as collectively, as being a particularly important aspect of this lineage. But a final difference we will address pertains to higher stations on the path as described by Sirhindī which had caused his deputy Banūrī so much trouble in the Hijaz, namely the issue of placing the reality of the Ka'ba over the reality of Muḥammad . Later Mujaddidīs seem to have gotten over this by reversing the sequence and placing the prophetic realities, including of course that of Muḥammad , above divine realities like those of the Ka'ba, the Quran, and prayer. Whether reflecting a continuation of Walī Allāh's position,[291] or perhaps it was later also done by 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh, this lineage seems to have chosen another solution by simply leaving them out of the equation entirely, that is the meditations on the prophetic realities and divine realities that the Sayfiyya, Tahiriyya, and others use do not appear in the intentions of our case study Mujaddidī lineage.

Chishtiyya, Qādiriyya, Shādhiliyya

It should be remembered, however, that Rasool taught five different *ṭarīqa*s, yet here we have focused on the Mujaddidiyya, since as with most groups having multiple *ṭarīqa*-affiliations, one lineage tends to dominate. For instance, Inayat Khan was not only a Chishtī, but he also had Naqshbandī, Suhrawardī, and Qadirī affiliations, yet the Chishtiyya came to be the most prominent. In this lineage, there are a few important aspects that bespeak the Mujaddidiyya's predominance. First, Rasool began all students in the Mujaddidiyya unless there was some compelling reason to do otherwise, such as a familial connection to one of the other lines. Moreover, the Mujaddidiyya came to greatly influence the way in which the other *ṭarīqa*s in this line are structured and taught. We already saw how 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh is said to have introduced the Naqshbandī, and thus also Mujaddidī, principle of *INfB* into the other orders. This is paralleled with how all five *ṭarīqa*s in this line advance through a different structured set of intentions for *murāqaba* supplemented by mostly silent recitations. So, for instance, while other Chishtī lines may rely on musical recitals (*samā'*) with lively *qawwālī* performers to achieve an intoxicated state of ecstasy (*wajd*), the Chishtī practices of this lineage use, much like the Mujaddidiyya, primarily *murāqaba* and silent recitations, but also some vocal recitations, to achieve a state that is inwardly ecstatic but outwardly sober. This seemingly reformist-influenced sober turn, said to have taken place with 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh, who lived from 1859-1900, is congruent with the orthopraxy and orthodoxy ascribed to this Walī Allāhī lineage when it was centered in Bengal in the last half of the 19th and the early 20th century, the formative time for the Deobandī-Barēlwī schism. Similar characteristics can be seen among Deobandīs of Chishtī affiliation or background, who revere their mystical forefathers while still rejecting their exact methods and emphasizing inward intoxication but outward sobriety.

While Rasool does not expound specifically upon the original Naqshbandī lineage in *SfT*, he explains that the Chishtiyya, Qadiriyya, and Shadhiliyya all make use of the same four circles in dividing their intentions. There are differences in the particular names of God invoked and formulae for *dhikr* and other recitations, but we see the same kinds of practices, such as recitations from the Quran,

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[290] I am very grateful to Muhammad Bayraktar for bringing this term to my attention.

[291] As mentioned in the discussion of the concept of the mediating *shaykh* in the theoretical section above, Walī Allāh excluded these levels from his cosmology.

durūd, and *khatm*, though with different verses and forms of supplication. Moreover, some of the *dhikr* formulae are in fact recited aloud. In their Chishtiyya and Qadiriyya lines, although they have the same names and enumerations of *laṭā'if* as in the Mujaddidiyya, some of the locations are different, as described above, yet in the Shadhiliyya there is only the *qalb laṭīfa*, and all four circles are performed in it, with the added difference that the practices in this lineage are done while standing. As alluded to by Rasool in *SfT* and further explained by Abdur Rashid in an interview, it is also even possible to combine the orders, that is to sit in multiple or all of the orders all at once. Lastly, Rasool notes that while it typically takes seven to eight years to complete the first order, usually the Mujaddidiyya, that the subsequent orders one masters typically proceed much faster.[292] But after this brief overview of these curricula that surely deserve further attention, we now turn to consider the role of the *shaykh* in guiding the student through them.

Role of the Guide and Community

The guiding role of the *shaykh* is indispensable in this lineage and it has thus not been abandoned in the Western setting. Yet the *shaykh* is seen not as a distant sanctified authority figure who can mediate between the individual and God, but as simply one who has travelled the path before and who now acts as a teacher and guide for students travelling that same path, though one who also serves as a connection to the *silsila* of saints leading back to the Prophet and ultimately to God. The student's relationship with this guide is more outwardly informal and toned-down as compared with some other Sufi lineages, emphasizing the student's inner spiritual relationship and attitude toward the *shaykh* over outward manifestations thereof, like the pledging of *bay'a* and external expressions of *adab*. This low-key approach to the place of the spiritual guide; which we already saw taking shape in the 19th- to 20th-century Indian context amidst strong reformism, on the one hand, and the emergence of the mediating *shaykh*, on the other; also resonates well in European and American contexts, where there can be significant apprehension about religious authority in general as well as the Guru phenomenon in particular.[293]

On the role of and nature of the relationship with the *shaykh*, Rasool explains that in India, it is common for the word *shaykh* to be applied to travelling healers who, in exchange for payment, assign "special prayers" (*du'ā*) and distribute "curative and protective amulets (*tawiz*)," with their clientele becoming "disciples of a sort," but "Neither they nor the shaykh expects that they will receive and perform assigned spiritual practices." Thus, the instrumentalization of faith and the right to ask what one can personally gain from religious practices is not limited to Baby Boomers in the US and was not unfamiliar to Rasool in India. But he says that for the Mujaddidiyya, the *shaykh*'s role is that of a teacher who provides "a full course of structured study and training" which the student should follow just as they would at a university.[294] The *shaykh*'s role is also likened to that of a physician, providing diagnoses to assess, along with prescriptions to facilitate, progress on the path.[295] Rasool explains that the need for a guide on the path was realized early on in Sufi history, as seen in the third period of the historical survey, where having a teacher was seen as indispensable, but that over time his role sometimes "received undue emphasis" and "became more of a hindrance than a help."[296] So for Rasool, the guide's role is neither that of a grand mediating *shaykh* nor a simple peddler of amulets, rather it is no more or less than a teacher and guide, who also has a link to the *silsila* and greater access to *baraka* than the average person.

On the need for such a guide, it is clear that both Sa'īd Khān and Rasool feel that it is not obligatory for everyone, but that for anyone wishing to pursue the Sufi path it is in fact necessary, and

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[292] *SfT* 66-7.
[293] Consider, for example, the controversies and conflicts in the 1980s surrounding Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, now better known as Osho, and his followers in the US.
[294] *TTH* 75.
[295] *SfT* 103.
[296] *TTH* 78.

one should not attempt the practices on their own and without a guide.[297] The three main reasons provided for this are 1.) the risk of being misled by "evil forces" like one's "own desires, indolence, fears, or cravings for power"[298] along with 2.) it being easier to learn something; whether that be a trade, an art, or spiritual wayfaring; from someone who has already mastered it, and finally,[299] 3.) because of the *baraka* the *shaykh* provides to assist in overcoming obstacles on the path.[300] The guide is seen as being qualified to perform these functions because he or she has already completed this course of study and reached nearness to God under the guidance of their own *shaykh*.[301] So while the *shaykh*'s role is to provide guidance and teachings and to share of the *baraka* from their own proximity to God with their disciples, the student's responsibility is to be receptive to what the *shaykh* is providing and to submit to his guidance.

Becoming a Student of a Shaykh

To allay the fears of reluctant students about accepting the guidance of a *shaykh*, Rasool uses the analogy, from a time before easily affordable GPS navigation devices or Google Maps, of someone who wants to drive from Washington, DC to New York City, and thus "hire[s] a guide" and submits to the guidance of that guide, who directs him "along pre-established routes, observing already-defined driving laws, to a destination that […he himself…] specified." Rasool makes certain to point out, however, that while the student "takes direction from a shaykh, […] he or she submits to God, not to a human being."[302] Rasool also advises that the "seeker should choose a shaykh carefully" but once the choice has been made, to be unwavering in one's allegiance, that is "Hold on to that shaykh's door, and hold it fast."[303] On how to know when one has found the *shaykh* that is right for them, he says that when

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[297] *SfT* 96. This view that Sufism and having a *shaykh* are not obligatory aspects of Islam differs from the thought of some other Naqshbandī *shaykh*s and their understanding of Sirhindī's teachings, such as Mohammad Mamunur Rashid, founder of the Hakimabad Khānka-e-Mozaddedia, who maintained that pursuing the Sufi path as well as belonging to an order and having a *shaykh* is necessary to follow the *sharī'a*.

[298] Rasool cites a Sufi saying that "if one has no shaykh, the devil becomes one's guide," further explaining that "Seekers who study independently are susceptible to being led astray by evil forces in the forms of their own desires, indolence, fears, or cravings for power. Satan intends that no one should take a step toward the Divine." *TTH* 76-7.

[299] Sa'īd Khān says that "if you want to learn an art, you can only learn it if you are taught by someone who has mastered it" and that similarly if someone wants to pursue the Sufi path, a guide is necessary (*SfT* 112-3). He also says that "whenever one embarks on a study, whatever it may be, the quickest way to learn is with the aid of a teacher. If one hopes to master advanced aspects of a field, one certainly needs a teacher." (*TTH* 76).

[300] Sa'īd Khān says that "There is a constant flow of blessings and bounties from the beneficent Creator but not everyone has the capacity to benefit from these directly. Therefore, the guidance of a teacher is necessary to achieve this goal." *SfT* 127.

[301] They have become "perfected," or rather they are "complete" (*kāmil*), not in the sense of being infallible, but in the technical meaning of having completed the journey to and in God and returned to perform the task of "'bringing [others] to perfection' (*mukammil*)." Ter Haar, "Follower and Heir of the Prophet," 76. On whether or not the *shaykh* is infallible, Rasool answered that it is less likely for them to make mistakes because of the selflessness they attain on the path. *GMST* 8.

[302] *TTH* 78. The same analogy with similar phrasing and the same locations, appears in the 2007 book *Applied Sufism* by Rasool's American *khalīfa*, Ahmed Abdur Rashid, who also read drafts of and provided recommendations for Rasool's 2002 *Turning Toward the Heart*. From the publication dates, it seems that the former would have been drawn from the latter, but *Applied Sufism* is a collection of earlier lectures given by Abdur Rashid and another possibility is that this story, which makes use of two cities that Abdur Rashid travels to frequently in his capacity as president of the NGO Legacy International (elsewhere Rasool uses a different analogy where he mentions driving from Delhi to Paris), could be an example of the two men collaborating to best present their tradition in a way that can be understood by a Western audience. If true, this demonstrates Rasool's openness and flexibility, being willing to listen to and integrate the ideas of his students with regard to ways of explaining and presenting his tradition, all the while ensuring that it does not change the content of the message.

[303] *TTH* 79-80. This derives from a quote "Hold one door and hold it fast," from Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyyā' (d. 1262), the individual responsible for introducing the Suhrawardiyya to India in the 13th century. This was quoted with approval by the great Chishtī saint Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyyā'. Knysh, *Mystical Islam*, 282, 285.

in their company, one feels a change in oneself wherein one's "thoughts are diverted from the material world to the spiritual world."[304] The student's selection and acceptance of a guide, and his or her being accepted as a student by that guide, is cemented through an oath of allegiance (*bay'a*) that takes place between the two parties.

In some Sufi lineages, as seen in the above survey of Naqshbandīs in the West, *bay'a* commonly takes place as part of a mass ceremony and in at least one case, it can be taken through an automated website without ever meeting or even seeing the *shaykh*. Despite the deliberate efforts to spread the teachings of 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh in South Asia and abroad, his heirs have foregone mass initiation ceremonies in favor of a more personalized approach. Rasool speaks of "emphasiz[ing] quality not quantity" and "not set[ting] out to attract large numbers of followers," saying that *bay'a* "is never taken at the outset," and while anyone who has not already pledged *bay'a* to another *shaykh* can begin the preliminary practices,[305] actual initiation is only given to those found to be truly sincere. He even says that 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh "disliked the system of making disciples" but found it necessary so that the student can "establish a relationship (*rābiṭah*) with the shaykh" before proceeding along the path beyond the activation of the *laṭā'if*.[306]

Technical Aspects of the Student-Teacher Relationship

A number of terms related to the student-teacher relationship in Sufism, and Mujaddidī and Khālidī lines in particular; like *tawajjuh*, *nisbat*, *ṣuḥbat*, *rābiṭa*, and *taṣawwur-i shaykh*; have been used differently in different times and places and by different Sufis as well as academic scholars. For instance, *tawajjuh* has been used to refer to spending time in the company of the *shaykh*, something usually indicated with the term *ṣuḥbat*, whereas *ṣuḥbat* can be seen as means to acquire *baraka* from the *shaykh* by spending time in his company, which is in fact the main function of *tawajjuh*. Moreover, the term *tawajjuh* has been used to indicate the concentration of student and teacher upon one another,[307] and *rābiṭa* has been taken to mean the practice of visualizing the *shaykh*, something denoted more explicitly by the term *taṣawwur-i shaykh*. Indeed, all of these words might be used somewhat interchangeably, since they can refer to different aspects of the same thing, a process taking place between, or a system comprised of, three main actors: the student, the teacher (along with the chain of saints and the Prophet), and God. Yet there are some academic problems with such imprecise and loose usage, including significantly here that not all lineages employing the term *rābiṭa* practice *taṣawwur-i shaykh*, Rasool's being a case in point. Thus, this study seeks to more precisely understand each of these terms individually, and before proceeding to examine how Rasool uses them, let us consider a heuristic model for describing how these terms are most often used and work together based off of not any one particular thinker exclusively, but instead a general understanding from the various texts consulted for not only the case study but also in in preparing the diachronic historical and synchronic contemporary surveys above.

To aid in understanding this cluster of terms, one might use an analogy wherein we consider *baraka* to be like electricity, which derives from a power source, rather *the* Power Source or God, and the *murīd* to be an electrical appliance. If the appliance is not close enough to the Power Source, an extension cord will be necessary, or perhaps better, a series of extension cords, that is the *silsila*. The socket and plug that connect the appliance to the extension cords must be physically close enough (*ṣuḥbat*) to connect and be compatible with one another, that is the student and the *shaykh* must have a *nisbat*. There is an electrical cord connecting the appliance with the extension cords and through this connection (*rābiṭa*), there is a current or flow (*fayḍ*) of "electricity" (*baraka*). *Tawajjuh*, in the sense of

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[304] *GMST* 8.
[305] Exceptions are made when the other *shaykh* gives his permission or has died. In one anecdote, it appears that Muḥammad Sa'īd Khān, during the process of transmission, sensed that the recipients of his *tawajjuḥ* were already associated with another *shaykh*, and presumably that they were seeking his transmission without their own *shaykh*'s authorization, thus he rebuked them and left abruptly. *SfT* 34-35.
[306] *TTH* 54,75-6.
[307] For instance, Schimmel defines *tawajjuh* as "the concentration of the two partners [master and disciple] upon each other that results in experiences of spiritual unity, faith healing, and many other phenomena." Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 366.

the *shaykh* directing his attention toward to the student, might be seen as a kind of on/off switch to initiate the flow (*fayḍ*), through the electrical cord (*rābiṭa*) plugged in with compatible plug and socket (*nisbat*), of electricity (*baraka*) that, while passing through a series of extension cords (*silsila*), ultimately derives from the one Power Source. Like all analogies, this one has its limitations and eventually breaks down, for instance *taṣawwur-i shaykh* does not fit comfortably (though we might also consider it as being like an on/off switch, but controlled by the student). Nevertheless, the researcher has found it helpful in trying to make sense of the uses of this cluster of terms within the writings of various Naqshbandī *shaykh*s', including those of Rasool, to which we now return, beginning with those of these terms that he uses most prominently: *tawajjuh* and *nisbat*.[308]

Tawajjuh ("Spiritual Attention/Spiritual Transmission")

Tawajjuh is listed by Rasool among the three ways in which spiritual training is imparted, the other two related elements of this approach being *nisbat* and the awakening of the *laṭā'if*.[309] It has the meaning of "to turn toward" or "to face," or as Rasool translates it, "spiritual attention" or "spiritual transmission." Two stories presented as precedence for *tawajjuh* from the Qur'an and a *ḥadīth* are cited in both of Rasool's English-language books as well as being included on the SOST website.[310] The first of these is the account of the angel Gabriel's first revelation to Muḥammad , wherein he embraces the Prophet three times, each time commanding him to "Recite." These embraces are viewed as successive transmissions culminating in the Prophet's ability to begin reciting what was to become the Qur'an. The second example recalls an incident where 'Umar ibn al Khattāb, who had previously loved Muḥammad more than anything in the world save for himself, came to love the Prophet even more than himself. Rasool notes these as examples of *tawajjuh* in conjunction with *nisbat*, a necessary combination for spiritual training as will be seen, and in *TTH*, he addresses these two terms together in the section entitled, "Transmission (*Tawajjuh*) and Affinity (*Nisbah*)."[311]

Accounts of more recent uses of *tawajjuh* in Rasool's writings demonstrate that it can be used to accelerate the spiritual progress of the intended recipient as well as that a disciple-*shaykh* relationship is not necessarily required for this to take place. For instance, Sa'id Khān–after his initiation under Ḥāmid Ḥasan 'Alawī–is said to have had his spiritual progress accelerated through the *tawajjuḥ* of one Mitthan Shah, a particularly spiritually endowed (*majdhūb*) associate of his.[312] Furthermore, there is the story of a yogi who sought out Sa'id Khān in hopes of having his heart awakened and whose request the *shaykh* is said to have obliged through the use of *tawajjuh*, setting the yogi dancing with glee.[313] The *shaykh* has to be cautious though, records Rasool, when focusing this attention so as not to overwhelm the recipient.[314] Somewhat conversely, it is said that *tawajjuh* can also be used to restore sobriety to the aspirant who has been overcome by "the state of attraction" and "lost his senses."[315] Rasool recounts such a use of transmission by Sayyid 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh, who restored the sobriety of a disciple who had lost his senses because of his attraction to God.[316]

In all of these cases, we have seen an active sender and a passive receiver of such attention or transmission, though Rasool chiefly applies the term to the sender, usually the *shaykh*, who we might say controls it much like an on-off switch. Yet the term *tawajjuh* itself might also be understood more

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[308] The researcher was able to discuss this analogy with two of Rasool's most senior students, one in India and another from the UK, as well as his American *khalīfa*, Ahmed Abdur Rashid. While it cannot be said that they placed their unqualified stamp of approval on it, they did not seem to have had any major objections to it and even seemed to have found some value in it.
[309] *SfT* 49-50.
[310] *TTH* 94-95, *SfT* 52-3, and *SufiSchool.org*.
[311] A third example, only included in *SfT*, is the story of when the faith of one of the companions waivered but was restored when the Prophet struck him on the chest with his hand. *SfT* 52-3.
[312] Idem 27-8.
[313] Idem 35.
[314] Ibid.
[315] Idem 90.
[316] Ibid.

broadly as the focusing or turning of a person's attention and/or the turning of the orientation of a particular *laṭīfa* (or combination of *laṭā'if*) toward a person, place, or thing, and subsequently either 1.) the passive reception of *baraka* or 2.) the already noted active transmission thereof. The first passive sense would be performed by the student every time they meditate. In making an intention for *murāqaba*, one turns their attention to the heart, with the words "I turn my attention to" or in Urdu, "*Main mutawajjeh hoon* […]." What particular aspect of the person it is that is doing this is unspecified, but as seen in the discussion of the *laṭā'if*, Rasool does refer to the *nafs* as "I." Yet whatever this "I" may indicate, it turns its attention toward the *qalb* (and/or other *laṭā'if*), and in turn, that *laṭīfa* turns its attention ("[…] *mutawajjeh hain* […]") toward a source of *baraka* or "light," something which may be the "Divine Essence," the Prophet's tomb, the *laṭā'if* of one's *shaykh*, or even the heart of a deceased *shaykh*, depending on the particular practice being performed. The importance of this process can be seen in the very title of Rasool's first English-language book: *Turning Toward the Heart*.

The far more common uses of *tawajjuh* in Rasool's writings, however, are to indicate the attention of the *shaykh* towards his students to actively transmit *baraka*, to facilitate the student's progress. This seems to be used in two different but related senses by Rasool: 1.) the specific sense of the *shaykh* providing a particular transmission for a particular purpose and 2.) the general sense of the *shaykh*'s attention and support always being available to the student. This sometimes, but certainly not always, even corresponds to his two different English renditions of the word as spiritual "transmission" and "attention." In whichever meaning, Rasool is very careful to emphasize that the *baraka* transmitted through the *shaykh*'s *tawajjuh* derives ultimately from God alone.[317] The *shaykh* simply has greater access to it because of his proximity to God from having already completed the journey along with his connection to God through the *silsila* and the Prophet.

The <u>specific and active sense</u> of *tawajjuh* deals with the curriculum of spiritual training that is largely comprised of a series of intentions for meditation, the structure of which was described above in the overview of the curriculum. Each time the *shaykh* assigns the student a new *niyya*, this is referred to as a "transmission," thus implying that the assignment of a new intention is accompanied by the *shaykh*'s *tawajjuh*, which supports and assists the student in making the next step on the path. The *shaykh*'s attention or transmission of light or *baraka* in the <u>general and active sense</u>, however, is not limited to only the times when the student is receiving a new *niyya*, or even when performing assigned practices. For instance, Rasool mentions one of the benefits of writing letters to the *shaykh* is that with such correspondence, "attention is exchanged […] four times."[318] In this wider sense, whenever the student interacts with or is in the company of the *shaykh*, or even thinks about or is thought about by the *shaykh*, the latter is providing his *tawajjuh* while the student is ideally being open and receptive to such spiritual attention. Still, this attention is not even limited to such circumstances, in fact the *shaykh*'s attention is "always available to the student."[319] In the above examples of *tawajjuh* given by Rasool, physical proximity and even contact were involved, but *tawajjuh* is not dependent upon these. Such a general sense of *tawajjuh* necessarily leads to a discussion of other aspects of the relationship with the *shaykh*, which leads us full circle to return to the term *nisbat*, and then to other related terms such as *rābiṭa*, *adab*, and *ṣuḥbat*.

Nisbat ("Spiritual Affinity [with the Shaykh]")

The scopes of meaning of the terms *tawajjuh* and *nisbat* have a considerable degree of overlap. Rasool considers them to be two aspects of "the process through which the shaykh, by virtue of his or her own inner state, seeks to uplift the student's state."[320] Elsewhere this process is described as follows: "the interplay between the shaykh and the student, in combination with the *barakāt* (blessings) from God and from the elders, evokes a change within the student's being" and the student gradually

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[317] Idem 53.
[318] *SfT* 138.
[319] *GMST* 12.
[320] He goes on to say that "The light transmitted to the shaykh's heart by his or her own teacher is transmitted in turn to the seeker's heart. As the student continues to make effort in the practices, this spark one day becomes a flame." *TTH* 94; *GMST* 14.

"undergoes [a] metamorphosis," which he equates with the terms *fanā'* and *baqā'*.[321] Here we will consider the meanings of *nisbat* in this process and to do so, it might be useful to return to the threefold categorization proposed in this research for making sense of the different ways *nisbat* is used in Rasool's works: 1.) to refer to the ultimate goal of the Sufi path, viz., an affinity with God; 2.) as a comprehensive, catch-all category including the processes, interim steps, experiences, aspects of the ultimate goal, as well as results thereof; and 3.) to indicate an affinity between people, especially the "congenial relationship with the shaykh," which is a necessary facilitating factor for the previous two meanings.

The first case was already addressed above, as well as the second to an extent, but there is a specific application that falls within the second usage which deserves mention here. This use is a convergence of *tawajjuh* as "transmissions" and *nisbat* as "affinities," where the line between the two blur and they seem to indicate the same thing. That is, Rasool sometimes refers to the "transmissions" that make up the curriculum and thus the path; that is the assigned contemplations discussed below; with the word "affinities" (*nisbat*), since these are designed to cultivate in the student aspects of the relationship or affinity with God that the *shaykh* already enjoys from having completed the path. So the student seeks to develop the same kind of relationship with God that the *shaykh* already has and to develop these qualities or affinities until they are "an essential part of [his or her] being."[322] Returning to the above two examples from the Quran and *ḥadīth*, which Rasool provides as examples of *tawajjuh* in conjunction with *nisbat*, he says that these cases are similar to the *shaykh* providing training to the student in that they too involve "progressive realizations emerging from a series of transmissions that are fostered by inner attunement."[323] It is this "inner attunement" between people that serves as the third major meaning of *nisbat*, and specifically, this most commonly refers to the "congenial relationship" with the *shaykh*.[324]

The Bond (Rābiṭa) Between Student and Teacher

We have thus far considered the dynamics of transmission and reception along with the progression of affinities leading to the ultimate affinity. For such transmission and reception to be effective, that is to function properly and facilitate progress along the path through the transmissions or "affinities" of the curriculum so that they take root and become a part of one's very being, there needs to be a "a relationship of person affinity, congeniality, and attachment" between student and teacher, that is a *nisbat*.[325] There must be a personal connection to the *shaykh* which is built upon and nurtured over time, and accordingly, Rasool states that the Mujaddidiyya works "through transmission, which establishes a personal, heart to heart relationship between the teacher and each student."[326] Furthermore, either synonymous with the third meaning of *nisbat* or specifically referring to the "connection" aspect thereof, is the term *rābiṭa*, also a "connection" or "bond,"[327] which is included among the four things

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[321] *TTH* 16.
[322] *SfT* 53.
[323] *TTH* 95.
[324] Again, however, it is emphasized that this affinity ultimately derives from God as demonstrated with a quote attributed to Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband: "I did not reach God through the saints of my lineage. An attraction to God was bestowed upon me and that is what took me to God." *SfT* 54.
[325] *TTH* 95; Sirhindī speaks of acquiring the *nisbat-i Naqshbandiyya*, the type of affinity that develops with God that is particular to the Naqshbandiyya. Ter Haar, "Follower and Heir," 31; He also spoke of the third sense of *nisbat* as a facilitating factor, viz., the necessity of having a *munāsabat* ("affinity") between student and teacher. Idem, 78-80. In his study of Sirhindī's mystical thought, ter Haar defines *munāsabat* as "the affinity which should exist between a novice and his spiritual teacher" as distinguished from *nisbat* as "the relationship between God and the mystic." Yet he also provides another definition of *munāsabat*, which is essential the same as the first sense of *nisbat* here, as "the affinity between a novice and the object of his mystical journey." Idem 173-4.
[326] *TTH* 14.
[327] If we recall that among the things which are obligatory in spiritual training, "spiritual friendship with the shaykh" is listed. In reply to the researcher asking how this may differ from "spiritual affinity" or *nisbat*, a term

Rasool says must be present for the student to be successful on the Sufi path: "support of the teacher," as "available through *rābiṭah*."[328] He distinguishes this "relationship between hearts," which he says is "based on affection, love, and trust—on inner attraction and reflection," from "the formal relationship [with the shaykh]," presumably referring to aspects discussed below like the pledging of *bay'a*, the externals of *adab*, and affiliation with the *ṭarīqa*. Rasool places a much greater importance on the former "informal, heart-to-heart, spiritual relationship."[329]

While in several other Mujaddidī and Khalidī lines, this connection is fostered through visualizing the *shaykh*, for IST and SOST, this technique is not used.[330] Whatever the case, with or without *taṣawwur-i shaykh*, it is this very bond that allows *tawajjuh* to take place without the physical presence of the teacher, making the "support of the teacher" available at all times and in all places.[331] This support through a connection based in "love and affection" is necessary for the student to receive support from the teacher who, "drawing from the resources of his or her own being, […] lifts the student spiritually over obstacles, from one stage to another," like one might lift a child over a stream that is too wide for them to cross on their own.[332] Obstacles here might be understood to mean personal problems in life, but it seems more likely in light of the rest of Rasool's writings to interpret this as referring mainly to the student's shortcomings in progressing through the stages of the path. To rectify these, the *shaykh* provides his assistance to help the student along, that is he transmits *baraka* from his own degree of attainment to the student through *tawajjuh*. This is not to say that this assistance and the resulting spiritual progress will not cure one's ails in life, but that the focus is on attaining nearness to God, rather than relying on the *shaykh*'s *baraka* to mediate in one's personal affairs.

Adab ("Spiritual Courtesy")

A major aspect of preserving and nurturing this necessary relationship and bond with the *shaykh* is through *adab*, which Rasool translates as "spiritual courtesy," thus emphasizing its inner aspect. Just as he highlights the informal relationship with the *shaykh* over the formal, he also distinguishes between external formalities of etiquette *vis-à-vis* the inner *adab* "of the heart," and he gives primacy to the latter. While criticizing empty ritualized deference to the *shaykh* and emphasizing the inner aspects of *adab*, there are still external facets, like paying attention to the *shaykh* while he is speaking, along with less obvious things like looking after his mundane needs and personal comfort, yet these are to be learned gradually from senior students or the *shaykh* and such outer *adab* is to develop and mature with time. A similar paced approach with regard to the acceptance of Islam appears below. To illustrate such gradual development, Rasool uses the example of how one would not be upset with an infant for showing poor etiquette, such as spitting on someone, but that an adult would be held to an entirely different standard. Specifically on the "*adab* of the heart," it is advised that if the student has any doubts about the *shaykh* or his behavior, to 1.) give him the benefit of the doubt and seek to understand the issue at hand in a positive way, since the *shaykh* may be trying to teaching some sort of lesson, and 2.) not to let such doubts fester, but to respectfully bring up the concern in private with the *shaykh* so that the issue can be resolved in person.[333]

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already mentioned in the quotation, one senior student of Rasool from the UK suggested that it may refer to *rābiṭa*, which does appear in Rasool's writings but not frequently. He also directed the researcher to the passage about rābiṭa in *TTH* examined here. Email from a senior student of Rasool from the UK, 20 December 2017, follow up to an interview on 17 December 2017.

[328] Those are: 1.) correct motivation, that is "the search for truth" or God; 2.) "support of the teacher," as "available through *rābiṭah*"; 3.) "singleness of purpose"; and 4.) "dedication, perseverance, and consistency." *TTH* 27-30.

[329] Idem 28-9.

[330] This may be a remaining influence of Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd, who refused Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz's instructions to do so on the grounds that it would amount to *shirk* ("idolatry"). The latter accepted his student's decision. See phase seven of the historical survey.

[331] "The physical presence of the teacher is not necessary. The teacher may be miles away, but if a bond exists between hearts, his or her presence will be felt and be effective." *TTH* 29.

[332] Idem 28-9.

[333] Idem 80-3; *GMST* 11.

Companionship of the Shaykh (Ṣuḥbat)

In contrast to the non-physical spiritual connection to the guide, there is also the aspect of physically meeting and spending time in the company of the *shaykh*, traditionally referred to as *ṣuḥbat*. Schimmel in fact listed *ṣuḥbat* as the second major defining characteristic of the Naqshbandiyya, right after silent *dhikr*.[334] Yet this term does not appear as a technical term in either *TTH* or *SfT*, but instead seems to be indicated with words like "accompaniment" and being "in the company of the shaykh." On the question of whether meeting with the *shaykh* is necessary, Rasool explains that "Our order is an Order of accompaniment" and that "Since our affinity is reflective, the time spent in the company of the Shaykh is the most productive and conducive to the student's progress." He also says that in the *shaykh*'s company, the student "receives blessings and transmission constantly, and feels as if all the inner faculties are active and alive," but that when apart, such a feeling is rare.[335]

Likewise, Sa'īd Khān's emphasis on *ṣuḥbat* is evident in a number of the statements presented by Rasool. For him, while "personal effort and striving open the door to progress," he declares that "the essential ingredient is the company of the shaykh" and "the company of the shaykh is the fundamental thing." He furthermore asserts a positive correlation between speed of progress on the path and time spent in *ṣuḥbat*.[336] On the question of how one can know God, Sa'īd Khān compares the experience to that of a blind person feeling the warmth of the sun and goes on to say that "You feel warm when you sit in the sun just like when you spend time in the company of one whose heart has awakened. At the very least it awakens the desire for spirituality in you."[337] Yet another example is when he says that "The best way to attain to the state of acting beautifully [*iḥsān*] is to spend time in the company of those who have reached that state."[338] Despite the clear importance of *ṣuḥbat* in the Naqshbandiyya historically and in this lineage in particular, as demonstrated in the above quotes from both Sa'īd Khān and Rasool, the latter did not choose to treat "accompaniment" as a major technical term, neither presenting its Perso-Arabic equivalent of *ṣuḥbat* nor providing it with its own section like the key terms examined above. This begs the question why?

In searching for the cause behind the seeming deemphasis of this facet, one might look to the diffused nature of IST and SOST with students across the globe, thus making it difficult to spend lengthy periods in the *shaykh*'s company. This may well have had something to do with it, but one should also consider that Sa'īd Khān probably only saw many if not the majority of his disciples, who were spread across the subcontinent, only once a year during his annual tours, and for him, this amount supplemented by the exchange of letters seems to have been sufficient, although of course more accompaniment could always help. Other possibilities are that Rasool was trying to streamline technical explanations and vocabulary for clarity and, since *tawajjuh* and *nisbat* already addressed the *murīd-murshīd* relationship, yet another non-English technical term was unnecessary for his objective, especially for the concept of being in the *shaykh*'s company, which may have seemed unnecessary to explain.

Alternatively or additionally, perhaps it would have placed greater emphasis on the role of the *shaykh* than he would have wanted, *vis-à-vis* both the apprehension of Western students as well as the phenomenon of the mediating *shaykh* in the subcontinent. In any case, the support of the teacher is said to be available non-physically through the spiritual relationship with the *shaykh* (*nisbat* and *rābiṭa*); which Rasool places greater emphasis on than the "formal relationship" with the *shaykh*. But still, being in the physical presence of the *shaykh* is also seen as greatly beneficial. Before leaving the topic of *ṣuḥbat*, for Sa'īd Khān, being in the company of fellow students is also of great value, as he says that "The best way to increase desire and commitment is to spend time in the company of saints and seekers of divine knowledge."[339] Elsewhere, he likewise states: "sitting in the presence of the people of love creates more love for the Prophet (S) and Allah in the heart. This is how God-consciousness

[334] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 366.
[335] *GMST* 10, 12.
[336] *SfT* 85.
[337] Idem 111.
[338] Idem 113.
[339] This is followed by a quotation of Rūmī: "Sit in the company of saints and, if nothing else, you will develop a longing." *SfT* 103.

develops."[340] This leads us to consider the broader organizational and group dynamic as discussed in Rasool's chapter on "Group Study" in *Turning Toward the Heart*.

Collective Performance of the Practices

Rasool begins this section by mentioning that in earlier times, the *shaykh* would reside in one location and his students would either travel long distances to see him or would all live together with him at a *khānaqāh*, institutions that may have begun to sprout up toward the end of the first phase of the historical survey but came into full bloom during the third and fourth periods. He notes a shift from, on the one hand, students either taking up residence near the *shaykh* or travelling long distances to visit him, to, on the other, the *shaykh* travelling to visit disciples.[341] In an analogy describing this shift, using water to represent the *shaykh*, Rasool notes: "A hundred years ago, people went to the well for water; today pipes bring water to our homes." He says that this has resulted in a new way of doing things, which he encourages, wherein students of the same *shaykh* in various places who live near one another form groups to perform the practices regularly, even in the absence of the *shaykh*.[342]

This new institutional format predates the expansion of IST globally through SOST and in this lineage was practiced at least as early as Ḥāmid Ḥasan ʻAlawī who, as seen above, instructed Saʻīd Khān at the beginning of his training to keep in contact with Hakīm Aḥsan Miyān, a senior student who lived nearby, and it is still a major aspect of SOST today, as discussed below. Rasool describes what typically transpires at such meetings and while admitting that they are "outwardly uneventful," he says that they are nevertheless important, as attending them increases the speed of the student's progress.[343] The reason for this, according to Rasool, is that "Sitting with others magnifies the blessings [*baraka*]" that each student would normally receive while performing the practices alone, since the *baraka* received by each individual is shared among everyone present. Other benefits he mentions are that attending group meetings can "dispel" the "darkness" that may accumulate from different encounters in daily life and also that attendance reinvigorates one's enthusiasm for performing the practices.[344] He makes clear that group meetings should be free of internal power struggles and also that, rather than being an event for socializing, they are to be held solely for the purpose of performing the practices.[345] Thus we see that the relationship with the *shaykh* is not the only important social aspect, and the community of fellow practitioners plays a significant supporting role, especially in a global context when the *shaykh* is not always physically present. Having considered Rasool's mysticism with regard to cosmo-psychological doctrines, practices performed by the student, and the role of the teacher as well as fellow practitioners, we now turn to the relationship of such mysticism as it exists in the West to Islam.

Relationship to Islam

While maintaining a highly religiously plural position that has strong precedents and deep roots in India but is also quite at home in the contemporary global context, Rasool also views Sufism and Islam as inseparable from one another. In a statement that addresses both non-Muslims interested in Sufism as removed from Islam and Muslims that view Sufism as alien to Islam, he says that a "clearer

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[340] Idem 114.

[341] There have been precedents of *shaykh*s who travelled to spread their teachings throughout the history of Sufism, especially so with certain Mujaddidī and Khālidī *shaykh*s like Muḥammad Maʻṣūm and Khālid al-Baghdādī and their deputies, who were responsible for the first two major post-Sirhindī transregional growth spurts of the Naqshbandiyya, but the introduction of the rail system to the Indian subcontinent in the 19th century made this process much faster and easier. So while Maʻṣūm and al-Baghdādī travelled some to diffuse their teachings, for instance the former spent three years in the Haramayn, they also operated largely through *khalīfa*s residing permanently in other areas and regions.

[342] *TTH* 46.

[343] "A typical group meeting includes performing the evening or nighttime *ṣalāh* (prayer) together, and then spending most of the time sitting, in silence, with each person doing his or her assigned recitations and meditation." Ibid.

[344] Idem 46-7.

[345] Idem 46-9.

understanding of Islam among both parties would make evident the inseparability of the Sufi rose from its Islamic rosebush."[346] Still, from IST's three different stages for introducing the practices in the West, it is clear that Rasool's teachings are open to anyone regardless of faith, but that at a certain point along the path, if a student wishes to progress further, accepting Islam is a necessary condition. The desire to convert, however, must come from within and cannot be forced from the outside, and moreover, the transition is to be a gradual one. Additionally, adherence to the *sharīʿa* is often explained rationally and in terms of how it is beneficial with regard to the spiritual path, rather than citing divine revelation.

In considering Rasool's teachings in relation to Islam, we do find responses to Muslim reformist critiques of Sufism, but as we have seen, this is largely through the narratives now embedded in descriptions of concepts like the *laṭāʾif* and which permeate Islamic Sufi discourse, serving as a kind of exoskeleton, inseparable from that which it protects. One example though, of where he provides a defense independent of any discussion of specific Sufi ideas or practices is when, in support of the acceptability and indeed "the importance of Sufism in refining faith," he chooses to quote Mālik ibn Anas and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, the founders of the two more literalist *madhāhib*, along with Ibn Taymiyya.[347] Nevertheless, the preponderance of his discussions that touch on the question of the relationship between Sufism and Islam, are geared toward the concerns of a Western non-Muslim audience, namely by explaining the inseparability of Islam and Sufism and addressing apprehensions they may have of Islam itself, in terms of both accepting it personally in practice as well as greater societal concerns like gender issues.

Qualified Universalism

Rasool presents a pluralistic perspective on other faiths, revealing a position that is almost universalist, yet one that remains distinctively Islamic. His perspective in some ways resembles the perennialism of the Traditionalists, such as in holding that there is a common mystical core in all religions, that any given mystical tradition ought not be separated from the religion from which it emerged and that since Muḥammad was the last prophet, his revelation is most appropriate for the modern age. Thus, just as he seems to have drawn on earlier universalist presentations of Sufism to the West, such as that of Inayat Khan, but revised their ideas in line with his Islamic Sufism, he may well have consulted the writings of the Traditionalists in shaping his own presentation of Sufism to the West to uphold its Islamicity. But these ideas are not at all incompatible with Rasool's Indian Sufism and his balancing between the two trends in the subcontinent of religious pluralism and exclusivism, such as in Mirzā Mazhar Jān-i Jānān's accepting Hindu's as people of the book.

We see that Rasool accepts the label of Sufism as mysticism, as well as that of the inner dimension of Islam, and he considers mysticism to be "a manifestation of the essence that underlies all religions," saying further that "Every faith has its inner, spiritual dimension,"[348] and elsewhere, "Every faith has its own Sufism."[349] He also states that "The urge toward mysticism—the urge to experience a dimension beyond the material world, to know and return to a spiritual Essence or Truth—is inherent within every person, irrespective of his or her religion."[350] He goes even beyond this in upholding that "All sacred paths lead to the Ultimate Reality"[351] and "Of course, all religions are based on one truth and one infinite God," and that his students are free to follow any religion.[352] In comparing "mystical paths," he explains that "To the extent that Buddhism, yoga, and other spiritual disciplines engender love of humanity, a sense of duty, respect for other people, and yearning for knowledge, they have much in common [with Sufism] on an elementary yet significant level."[353]

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[346] Idem 3.
[347] Idem 73-4.
[348] *TTH* 1.
[349] The quote continues: "In every nation and community there have been Sufis, although they have taken different names and adopted varying practices." Idem 5.
[350] Ibid.
[351] Idem 59.
[352] *GMST* 3.
[353] *TTH* 9-10.

Sufism is Islamic

Nevertheless, Rasool stops short of complete, unqualified universalism in upholding the inseparability of Sufism from Islam. In reflecting on the arrival of living Sufism in the West, he explains that: "The first Sufi teachers in the West, recognizing non-Muslims' doubts about Islam, introduced Sufism as a universal religion."[354] Yet for Rasool, "Sufism cannot exist outside Islam, […]"[355] as well as that *sharīʻa* is "religious law" and Sufism and *ṭarīqa* "are *its refinements* and subtleties."[356] In support of maintaining Sufism's connection to Islam, his discussion revolves around three main ideas: 1.) that Sufism emerged from Islam, 2.) that Muḥammad is the most recent Prophet and therefore the best source of guidance for contemporary times, and 3.) the requirements of Islam harmonize with human nature.

On the first of these he explains, very much echoing Traditionalism, that "Any valid esoteric path is inseparable from the framework of revelation that gave rise to it"[357] and "Sufism arose as an Islamic discipline […] There is no Sufism other than Islamic Sufism. Any mystical practice cut off from its source in revealed religion will lose vitality, just as any tree cut from its roots will die." On the second idea, he states that "Every religious system has two parts: *dīn* (the essential principles of belief) and *sharī'ah* (religious or sacred law)" and while "All religions based on revelation offer the same dīn," which he characterizes as submitting (*islam*) to the will of the one God (*tawḥīd*) and good actions (*al-ʻamal al-ṣālih*), they differ in their "*sharīʻah*—the body of law governing the expression of *dīn* in daily life and worship," noting that God sent prophets with laws; naming Noah, Moses, and Jesus; to guide mankind according to the needs of their time and circumstances. He affirms that Muḥammad is the last of these prophets and thus "Sufi masters regard his sharī ʻah as the most up-to-date vehicle, best suited to the needs of contemporary seekers."[358] René Guénon arrived at this very same conclusion,[359] though Rasool does so without creating a blend of Islam and Vedanta. Lastly, on the third idea, after comparing mystical paths, as described above, he goes on to contrast their methodology as well as "their suitability for particular individuals," noting for instance Buddhist monasticism as "a lifestyle that suits some people but not others," going on to explain that "Sufism advocates a lifestyle that is in keeping with human beings' natural inclinations."[360]

In light of such inseparability of Sufism from Islam, as well as the existing universalist understandings of Sufism in the West, Rasool asserts that "Teaching methods are needed that acknowledge the link between Sufism and Islam while introducing non-Muslims to the practices."[361] To fill this need, he offers the three-phase model of IST; wherein the first two phases, which involve the preliminary activation of the *laṭā'if*, can be undertaken by anyone regardless of religious affiliation, or lack thereof, and it is only in the third phase that the student is required to "dive deeper into Islam." Yet while "Sufism welcomes people of all religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, just as its container Islam, calls for protecting the beliefs and practices of members of other faiths,"[362] he still makes clear that this is not a matter of proselytism, saying that "Sufism is not designed to propagate religion; its purpose is to promote an experience of nearness to God."[363] He also states that "Of course, we cannot expect all non-Muslims with an interest in Sufi practices to become Muslims," even saying that doing so would be "inconsistent with Islam," citing Quran 2:256 which states that there must be no compulsion in religion.[364]

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[354] Idem 61.
[355] Ibid. It should be noted that Rasool usually uses indirect and polite language so as not to offend any who hold different views. When his main points are isolated, extracted, and presented here, without the benefit of his soft presentation style, they take on a harsher tone than he had probably would have intended.
[356] Idem 72.
[357] Idem 3.
[358] Idem 58-9.
[359] Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 72-73.
[360] *TTH* 9-10.
[361] Idem 61.
[362] Idem 10.
[363] Idem 57.
[364] Idem 60-1.

Need to Follow a Religion

Responding to the anti-dogmatism and anti-exotericism among Western spiritual seekers, Rasool finds it preferrable for students to adhere to and live by some form of religious framework, even if they never choose to accept Islam. Speaking to an audience that has often arrived at Sufism prior to Islam and even independent from any religious framework, he explains the need for such a foundation. Yet he does so not through an appeal to religious authority or obligation, but in terms of how it is beneficial spiritually. So in observing that some students are "disenchanted with religious institutions [in general, and] question the need to practice any religion at all," he responds that religion, "despite the plentiful flaws of institutions and leaders" can "still provide guidance for the spiritual search."[365] He accepts the possibility of "mak[ing] progress toward realizing God without any religion or structure," saying that anyone can simply "sit in contemplation and sense the Divine Presence," but he maintains that without following the guidance provided by religion "it is difficult to go beyond intuitive awareness to actually make contact with the Almighty."[366]

For a concrete example, the abovementioned student who began in 1989 without any religious affiliation but returned to Christianity while performing the practices with SOST, which he still continues to do, noted that Rasool responded happily to the news of his re-conversion, saying, "I am glad you have returned to some religion!" He also notes that, despite the London group being majority-Muslim, he has never felt any pressure to convert and that Rasool's concern was "that people become closer to God."[367] Furthermore, at the 2016 retreat in Germany, a Muslim student in the London group told the researcher that she had once asked Rasool if she could provide a fellow long-term student who was still Christian, possibly the same person, with some literature on Islam to nudge him toward conversion. She explained that Rasool reprimanded her in short order, saying, "You leave [name deleted] alone, he knows more about Islam than you do!"

Conversion as a Gradual Process and Inclined to from Within

The choice of conversion is left to the student's own initiative, and if they do so choose, the process of bringing one's life into accordance with the guidance of the Quran and *sunna* is a gradual one. For Rasool, students are not asked to convert, but it is one of the requirements if they wish to take part in the training beyond the preliminary practices of activating the *laṭāʾif* to the transmissions of the four circles. If the student remains undecided or chooses not to adopt Islam, Rasool explains that they "may nevertheless find that even the preliminary practices enhance their knowledge of themselves, their relationship with God, their understanding of Divine will, and their faith."[368] He sees it as futile to attempt to force or pressure someone into conversion, stating that "No one can impose a belief system on a person who does not incline toward it from within."[369] He describes how engaging in Sufi practices sometimes leads students to embrace Islam, saying:

> Much of the depth of Islam is realized in the heart. Sometimes as students experience firsthand the insights available through Sufism, they are drawn to know more about its foundation. Some discover the meaning of *lā ilāha illāllāh, Muḥammadun rasūl Allāh* for themselves. But always this is at their own pace, based on their own evolving understanding.[370]

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[365] Idem 59.
[366] Ibid.
[367] "Personal statement of a student from England," School of Sufi Teaching.
[368] *TTH* 62-3. One student who took *bay'a* describes the absence of pressure to convert as follows: "Hazrat never spoke about it and, unexpectedly did not even encourage me to take *bay'at*. Instead, he pointed out the commitment becoming a Muslim would ask of me and placed the responsibility of the decision firmly at my feet. The unpressured approach he took with me assured me, even more, that this was the path I wanted to embark on." "An English student describes her path to Sufism." School of Sufi Teaching.
[369] *TTH* 60.
[370] Idem 61.

Accordingly, for those that do choose to convert, Rasool takes a slightly different and more patient approach to living in accordance with the prescriptions of the Quran and *sunna* with his students than the stern one he attributes to Saʿīd Khān, whose audience was likely largely if not entirely already Muslim. Rasool explains that initially "some difficulties are encountered in following the sunna" but that with time this is surmounted by way of the *shaykh*'s "accompaniment and supervision" along with the student's regularity in their assigned practices.[371] In any case, both Saʿīd Khān and Rasool, instead of moralizing preaching, rely more on what they believe are the transformative effects of the practices in combination with the *shaykh*'s *tawajjuh* and accompaniment. For instance, on the question of smoking or drinking, he responded that in his lineage "The pupil is rarely told to do one thing or avoid another. The shaykh tries to improve the state of his pupil with the help of the *barakah* and blessings from God." It is expected that the sincere student will, as they progress spiritually, eventually realize that such things are harmful to both their progress on the path as well as their health.[372] In addition to his *tawajjuh*, the *shaykh* may also provide guidance by indirect means, such as offering an illustrative anecdote in a group setting so as not to single any one person out.[373]

According to discussions with students who knew Rasool, on the rare occasions that he did provide moralizing advice, it was usually supported, not with an appeal to authority, such as by citing a Quranic verse or *ḥadīth*, but with an explanation of why the advice is beneficial in practical and especially spiritual terms. We might see this as a manifestation of Max Weber's *Rationalisierung*, in which rather than the authority of tradition, behavior has come to be motivated by a reason-based assessment of the degree of efficacy of a course of action for a particular end.[374] In this vein, and related to how many of Rasool's students arrived at Sufism prior to Islam, following the *sharīʿa* can be understood as not only obeying God's commands, but also as a spiritual practice, such as a means for taming the lower soul.[375]

Furthermore, Rasool's students mentioned how, instead of telling them what they ought to do, he usually reframed the issue and asked them to consult their own heart for guidance. For instance, one long-time Pakistani student of Rasool living in the UK reports having once asked him whether or not it is permissible to listen to music. His reply was that there are different types of music, some kinds bring one closer to God, while others can make one forgetful of God, after which he expressed his confidence in her ability to know the difference for herself.[376] In one of the few examples, perhaps the only one, from the texts where Rasool gives any sort of specific moralizing advice, he does so indirectly and as a side note. In explaining the importance of marrying someone who is supportive of one's spiritual aspirations, he holds that engaging in premarital sexual relations could contribute to becoming involved in a spiritually incompatible relationship.[377]

Western Apprehensions About Islam

In a few places, Rasool seeks to rehabilitate the image of Islam for his largely Western and often non-Muslim audience. One theme in this regard is the issue of gender, to which he devotes an entire section in *Turning Toward the Heart* wherein he maintains that Islam upholds gender equality, that it "significantly advanced women's status" during the time of the Prophet, and that the inequality found in some Muslim areas is not a reflection of the Quran and *sunna*, but of "deep-rooted cultural

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[371] *SfT* 83.
[372] *GMST* 5.
[373] Or as one long-term student explains: "I have never heard of the Shaykh reprimanding or criticizing anyone, and when he wanted to convey the teaching, he used a story or a parable, to illustrate the case without confronting the person in question. The way of the Sufi is subtle, but effective." "Personal statement of a student from Eastern Europe." School of Sufi Teaching.
[374] On Weber and the rationalization of religion, see Raymond Boudon, "La rationalité du religieux selon Max Weber," *L'Année sociologique*, 51, no. 1 (2001), pp. 9-50. I am grateful to Jamal Malik for pointing this idea out to me.
[375] One student who eventually embraced Islam noted: "Rather than something that inhibited choice, I was experiencing Islam as a way to undo long held behavioural patterns and release the self from the constricting grip of the *nafs*." "An English student describes her path to Sufism," School of Sufi Teaching.
[376] Discussion at the 2016 SOST Retreat in Germany.
[377] *TTH* 56.

traditions and prejudice." He also explains with regard to Sufism, that students are treated according to their own merit rather than their "Creed, color, culture, and gender," going on to note how "the number of female saints" in Islam attests to women having an equal capacity for spiritual attainment as men and even that sometimes women, due to being "by nature more sensitive," advance more quickly.[378]

More broadly, he laments the general situation of the Muslim community today, in how some Muslims follow the basic observances of Islam, like *ṣalāt*, *ṣawm*, *zakat*, and *ḥajj*, but due to "inner impurities," fail to live by the values of Islam in daily life.[379] He also decries the divisions that exist among Muslims and how Islam has become "confused with customs, political movements, and extremist views that use its name without upholding its principles" and how "Splinter groups within Islamic communities have preached intolerance and dogmatism, fueling stereotypes." He notes that while some non-Muslims are seeking to better understand Islam, others now equate it with "oppression and terrorism." To rectify this for the reader, he refers to the etymological relationship of the word Islam itself to the meanings of "surrender, submission, peace, safety, security, wholeness, and well-being" to illustrate how, rather than "institutional structure, hierarchy, or dogma," these meanings "point instead to the human potential to achieve inner peace, wholeness, and security through being conscious and aware in the Presence of the Divine," going on to say that Islam "offer[s] a framework for deepening the relationship between individuals and their Creator throughout moment-to-moment life."[380] Regarding the challenges now facing Muslim society, rather than relying on "academicians, leaders with narrow agendas, or proponents of rigidity and intolerance," he advocates looking to the "knowers of the heart of Islam" (implying the Sufis) for a viable foundation from which to proceed, in hopes that someday "Islam will be identified globally with justice, service, and compassion."[381] Thus we arrive at considering Rasool's thought with respect to the category of activism and his vision for Sufism and the future of humanity.

Societal Engagement

A major characteristic of Rasool's teachings is the need to adhere to the Naqshbandī principle of "solitude amidst the crowd" (*khalwat dar anjuman*) on the level of personal lifestyle. He states that Sufism "not only permits but commends the fulfillment of worldly responsibilities as part of the student's development"[382] and he feels that the Mujaddidiyya has especially "considered the need for practical techniques that can be integrated with work, family, and social responsibilities."[383] He calls for a balance between the spiritual and material aspects of one's life and the avoidance of an extreme in either direction, on the one hand, emphasizing the necessity of looking after temporal needs, he also says that "All too often, we mistake wants for needs, to our own detriment,"[384] and on the other hand, he says that it is easier to abandon the world and "live alone in a cave" than what for him is the better option of "lead[ing] a normal, responsible life, fulfilling necessary duties while maintaining spiritual practices."[385] He describes an ideal balance by saying that "the Sufi attends to professional, domestic, and social duties, and then late at night or early in the morning sits in meditation. He or she is an ordinary person with extraordinary capabilities."[386]

Quietist Activism

Going beyond the individual and from the private to the public sphere, Rasool says that any spiritual path ought to "foster awareness of our interrelationships with and duties toward all living

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[378] Idem 25-6.
[379] Idem 73.
[380] Idem 57-8.
[381] Idem 74.
[382] Idem 13.
[383] Idem 4.
[384] Idem 40.
[385] Idem 43-4.
[386] Idem 53-4.

beings"[387] and that "Sufism does not focus only on the purification of the individual," but while working on oneself, one also works to improve the "condition of the community, the nation, and humanity as a whole." He explains that "This commitment to service makes Sufism a dynamic, transformative force on all levels, from personal to global."[388]

So Rasool clearly values social engagement, service, and humanitarianism, nevertheless, he unambiguously prioritizes personal transformation through spiritual training. That is, rather than focusing on trying to change the world, he emphasizes first striving to change oneself. He says that "Sufism differs with the humanists' secular premises but shares their humanitarian aims," the difference being that, for Rasool, such aims are actually only means to achieve a higher objective: "love of God," the way to which "passes through the valley of service."[389] Elsewhere he similarly states, "Service is a necessary means through which […] the purpose of human life is fulfilled," the purpose of mankind's creation according to the Quran being to worship God.[390] So while considering humanism to be "a noble ideal," he holds that it should not supplant "the pursuit and worship of the transcendent Reality," and that "Our primary goal should be to strive toward the Divine Reality." He acknowledges that some might criticize such a focus on personal spiritual development as being selfish, but conversely, he says that without attaining selflessness, "serviceful acts may end up serving one's own ego or interests more than others' needs […]."[391] Noting that while Sufis past and present have sought to address societal and other issues, he nevertheless asserts that "Sufism's greatest tool for addressing global issues is not its tradition of social action."[392]

It seems that in Rasool's view, social activism or engagement without spiritual refinement is like treating the symptoms without treating the illness. He argues that the problems humanitarian efforts hope to solve, like "injustices and inequities" (symptoms), are caused by "qualities of the unrefined self: greed, envy, hatred, egotism" (the illness). He says that one's inner state necessarily manifests outwardly, so "By improving individuals inwardly, Sufism influences their actions. By influencing their actions, Sufism permeates and benefits society."[393] He asserts that "If a person's heart is noble […] then that person […] will not be part of the problem, but part of the solution." So for him, Sufism works at the level of the individual, "light[ing] candles in the darkness," and he says that "Our societies need people who act from their hearts, with hearts that are refined and loving," and that Sufism can accomplish this. He thus calls for individuals to work to transform themselves and thereby improve society, or in other words, "No one can change the world single-handedly. Each person can change himself or herself and, having done so, influence others to do the same."[394]

For Rasool, the spread of Sufi teachings is one way of doing this, so what might seem like a withdrawn, quietist position is in fact a considerably activist one: he hopes to spread the practice of a specific curriculum for spiritual training and to accomplish this he established an organization, the Institute of Search for Truth. For the individual student to take part in this endeavor and to share Sufism with others, he recommends to "focus on your meditation," "Do the practices," since this brings about a transformation in the individual that, while one simply goes about daily affairs and interactions, can affect others "far more than words [or pretentious displays] ever could." With such transformation, he says, "wherever you are, the people you meet will be affected by the light that you carry in your heart," "affected by your inner qualities," perhaps causing them to "feel peaceful, uplifted, or more contented in your presence." Then, if someone inquires, one could extend the invitation to join one in

387 Idem 11.
388 Idem 7.
389 Idem 18.
390 Idem 53; Quran 51:56.
391 *TTH* 18-9.
392 Idem 19.
393 Idem 18-9. He also states that "Outer work alone cannot resolve the problems that beset humanity, for these problems' roots lie in the human heart." Idem 20.
394 Ibid.

meditation.[395] Indeed most of the long-term students of SOST met during this research were introduced to the teachings by word of mouth. But let us now consider the broader impact that Rasool envisioned when he created the Institute to introduce the teachings to the Western world and beyond.

Sufism and the Future of Humanity

In answering the question in *TTH* on Sufism's role in the future of humanity, Rasool draws largely from his own 1975 proposal for the establishment of IST. He describes the emergence of secularism, individualism, rationalism, and materialism and explains that historically, societies had "some concept of a higher power or powers" to which they could turn and around which they came to be organized. Yet, he says, following the Scientific Revolution, since such a higher power could not be "rationally proven," it was assumed that there was none. A relationship with the divine was no longer the core of society, but rather "a matter of personal choice," and the "unifying focus had become material progress rather than spiritual well-being."

But it is not so much individualism or secularism, in the sense of the separation of church and state, that Rasool takes issue with here, rather his main concerns are with rationalism and materialism, in both senses of economic materialism as well as the idea that the universe is comprised exclusively of matter and energy. He says that in spite of advancements in science and technology, man is no closer to finding happiness or discovering "a remedy for human suffering" and "human life on the whole is still devoid of peace and tranquility." He furthermore feels that these advancements have not only failed to solve mankind's existing problems, but since science has been misused to materialistic and selfish ends, it has exacerbated the situation, dividing humanity and fomenting "mutual hatred and selfishness," which has resulted in social, political, and environmental turmoil that has placed mankind "on a path to self-destruction." He likens the present situation of humanity to a child who wanders into a factory, sets the workings of its machinery into motion, and stands back watching in bewilderment, powerless to control it.[396]

Even more than selfishness and economic materialism, Rasool places scientific materialism at the root of humanity's present ills, stating that "The fundamental blunder of this era lay in focusing almost exclusively on external reality and neglecting the world hidden within the human heart." He rejects sole reliance on "sensory perception and reason" as the only means of acquiring knowledge and believes that these "modes of knowing" can and should be transcended. He does provide hope, however, in saying that while science has contributed to the current state of mankind, it can help to "find a way out." That is, he calls for the scientific method to be applied from a "wider perspective," specifically meaning that he advocates the consideration of post-rational data from subjective experience. He invites the reader to conduct an experiment in the laboratory of his or her own inner being, that is to try the practices oneself and judge based on personal experience. This is echoed by the experiential investigation of the present study, which in fact accepts this invitation, though without advocating a post-rational approach (as the researcher is doubtful that anything that can be called post-rational can truly exist) and insisting on reestablishing critical distance to again consider the object of inquiry from outside. This notion of carrying out such an experiment in one's inner self was already present in the writings of Sa'īd Khān, but it was Rasool who would bring it to a much wider audience outside South Asia.[397]

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[395] Idem 85; When asked how best to spread the order, Sa'īd Khān provided comparable advice, saying: "Essentially, one should strive to reform one's self. When one is graced with divine acceptance, then people will be drawn to the order of their own accord." *SfT* 92. Similarly, on *da'wa* to non-Muslims, he advocates "developing sincerity in one's actions and purity in one's heart and soul, and cultivating a character that people of different faiths are impressed by and want to emulate by accepting Islam." Idem 101.

[396] Idem 152-3; *TTH* 126-7.

[397] In one of his essays, Sa'īd Khān writes: "If the true spirit of inquiry affects the materialists, then they will understand that there are no limits to research. What is unacceptable today may be acceptable tomorrow in the light of new research. Therefore, there is always hope that even if materialism reaches its height, the soul will still be restless for the truth that lies beyond the material world and it will soar to the illuminated world of spirituality." *SfT* 127.

Rasool also holds that the exclusive exploration of the outer physical world by science and reason and the failure to explore the inner spiritual world have resulted in: 1.) an incomplete understanding or a limited view of the universe, and 2.) the unfulfillment of the full potential of individual humans and humankind collectively, and that gaining such knowledge or perspective and fulfilling such potential would greatly benefit humanity and the world. In fact, he believes it would be the very cure for its present condition, as he states that "the remedy for the ills of humanity is to be found in human nature itself."[398] On knowledge, Rasool speaks of a "fundamental truth" that all religions point to, as well as of striving to "understand the essential nature of the human being, the universe, and humanity's relationship to the universe," of fully fathoming "the interrelatedness of human existence, the created universe, and the Creator," and also that such "understanding will help us to find solutions to the problems of the individual and collective life of humanity." He makes certain to point out, however, that interpretations must not be allowed to become "static or fixed," instead they should adapt to different times and places, to remain relevant for the present and for the future. Such knowledge and perspective of the ultimate Truth are believed to result in positive changes to one's "attitudes and behavior" so that these are attuned "to the needs of our species, of our planet, and of the universe as a whole."

This knowledge and perspective can be known or perceived through the exploration of one's inner being, that is one can come to know the greater macrocosm by turning inward to explore one's own microcosm, in other words and to cite a famous *ḥadīth*, one can come to know God by knowing oneself. Accordingly, Rasool describes the human body as "a reservoir of potentialities," and speaks of an inner "treasure" to be found, of "hidden sources of human knowledge" unexplored by science and reason, of "the hidden power of the self," "hidden facts and secrets of the human self," "inner powers," and of "capabilities within the human self" that can be utilized "for the benefit of all creation." It seems fairly safe to assume that with these descriptions, he is referring to the *laṭā'if* and aspects, functions, or capacities thereof as well as to the hidden realities that they perceive in the inner world.[399] These are "hidden" because they are subtle and nonphysical and not subject to empirical observation, they are "treasures" in that they provide a means to perceive ultimate Truth, and they are "powers" in that the perception of that ultimate Truth brings forth and causes the manifestation of untapped "capabilities" or "potentialities" within the human. We return to such powers in just a moment, but the means by which this ultimate realization of the Truth takes place, the "technique" for the inner exploration the Institute calls for, is meditation, which:

> […] results in an intuitive insight that enables us to begin to see all things in their true perspective, and to understand the truths about life and the universe in a proper light. It further opens up a new way of thinking that gives life a correct direction, develops one's character, and provides a healthy ideal. It creates enough sincerity of purpose to correct the distorted notions and misguided actions of our life. In short, it serves to build up a noble personality and to discipline and optimize our lives.[400]

The knowledge that is acquired through such meditation and the capabilities or powers that this awakens are to be used "for the benefit of all creation." Now, as to what these powers are, for Rasool they boil down to one thing, as he explains:

> The hidden power of the human self, which we are seeking to tap and utilize, is the power of love. It is this power that frees human beings from the bonds of narrow-mindedness, materialism and selfishness, and persuades them to observe tolerance, sympathetic regard, benevolence, and self-sacrifice towards others. It motivates, inspires, challenges, and satisfies. The understanding of the nature of the self and its hidden powers will be conducive to adjusting our attitudes and behavior to others and to the universe as a whole. It will reveal to us

[398] Idem 153.
[399] *TTH* 128-9; *SfT* 153-4.
[400] Idem 155.

> the powerful inter-relatedness of the human existence and the universe, and will bring forth a creed of universal brotherhood and unbounded love.[401]

These quotations, which reveal the kind of quietist activism discussed above, which focuses on the spiritual development of the individual within society to improve society as a whole, can be found in Rasool's 1975 proposal for the creation of the Institute of Search for Truth. The latter quote also appears, in a shorter form, as the very last words of *Turning Toward the Heart*, appearing in its final section which deals with Sufism and the future of humankind.

Accordingly, it is with those words that we bring this examination of his writings, thought, and work to a close, and begin new chapters which consider how his legacy lives on today through his two living heirs. Having spent over 55 years spreading the order, three decades of which, since establishing IST in 1976, he spread the order to various countries around the globe, particularly in the West, Rasool had built a network of students over the years, many of whom had remained with him for decades and continue the practices with SOST or the Circle Group. Rasool stated in his proposal that "the main objective of the Institute is to [1.)] discover the capabilities and potentialities of the inner human being, and [2.)] their utilization for the benefit of humankind."[402] SOST and the Circle Group today, each use the same curriculum described above and carry on in striving to fulfill both aspects of this statement of purpose, though with different strategies and areas of emphasis. Under the leadership of Rasool's son, Hamid Hasan, IST, through the vehicle of SOST, focuses on spreading Rasool's teachings relatively unmodified, though with some new institutional aspects, to an international audience and allows the second aspect of the objective to develop organically. In contrast, the Circle Group, under the leadership of Rasool's *khalīfa*, Ahmed Abdur Rashid, makes the same structured curriculum of teachings, augmented by Abdur Rashid's own spiritual insights and contributions, available to a comparatively smaller but no less international constituency. Abdur Rashid also takes a more deliberate and organized approach to realizing the second aspect of the statement of purpose, viz., the utilization of the inner potentialities of human beings for the benefit of humanity, through the work of the secular non-governmental organization, Legacy International. Both heirs carry on Rasool's work, but each in their own particular way, which we will now examine.

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[401] Idem 154.
[402] Ibid.

The School of Sufi Teaching

The present chapter turns to the contemporary situation of the Institute of Search for Truth and the School of Sufi Teaching under the leadership of Rasool's successor and son, Hamid Hasan (b. 1961). It briefly considers the background of Hasan himself as well as those of his students, followed by the institutional structure of SOST and the communication media produced to support that structure, at the time of this research. Combining an examination of the content of such media with data collected through interviews and participant observation carried out in Germany from February 2015 until March 2020 and one excursion to India in 2016, the current teachings and operation of SOST are considered through the analytical framework of this research, examining in turn the main category of mysticism and the supplementary categories of orthodoxy and activism.

In brief, this chapter demonstrates how Hasan continues to spread the systematized curriculum of practices taught by Rasool to an international audience, building upon and expanding the institutional structures and network that his father created and developed from 1976 until his passing in 2006. While under Hasan's leadership, some modifications have been made to the curriculum's delivery system and manner of implementation, nevertheless the original 1975 stated aims and objectives, technique, and policy of IST as well as the syllabus of practices itself and the goal of spreading it "from East to West, and from land to sea," remains largely unchanged. Administrative modifications since Hasan's ascension to leadership over SOST notably include increased use of telecommunications technologies, as seen in the growing number of SOST websites and social media usage, as well as expanded intercontinental travel by the *shaykh*, that is the abandoning of the *khānaqāh* model of housing guests for retreats in Delhi in exchange for an increasing number of regional retreats and the introduction of an annual international retreat.

Conversely, in continuity with his father, Hasan places an emphasis on the practices which cannot be overstated, and he spends significantly more time sitting in meditation with his students than speaking. On the rare occasions that he does speak publicly or to a group of gathered students, it is almost invariably at the request of his students and in a question-and-answer format rather than a lecture-style presentation or sermon. Regarding content, if Rasool made the teachings both appealing and accessible to an international audience, particularly in the West, then Hasan has taken yet an additional step in the same direction with even further streamlining, that is drilling down to what for him are the most essential key concepts and fitting them together in a coherent manner that holds relevance for his audience. While some *shaykh*s have numerous writings and recorded lectures covering a wide range of topics, as will be seen in the next chapter, when Hasan does speak or answer questions, he instead focuses on a smaller number of themes, allowing him to present a concise, clear, and consistent message to SOST students across the globe, which might be seen as being in line with his father's assertion that true Sufism does not "deliberately keep students in a state of mystification."[1] Major themes discussed below under the analytical category of mysticism include gaining closeness to God, purifying the heart and cleansing the *nafs*, developing positive character traits, the student-teacher relationship, but with more of an emphasis on his pedagogical role than on his mediatory one, the suitability of the teachings for the busy lifestyles of contemporary times, and perhaps above all, encouraging students' diligence and consistency in performing their assigned practices.

On the issue of the relationship to Islam, no specific theological or moralizing preaching was observed in any of the SOST texts examined or at any of the events attended by the researcher over the course of five years. While most participants do adhere to a Hanafi Sunni form of Islam, for Muslim and non-Muslim students alike, individual faith and practice are largely left a personal matter between the individual and God. The general attitude is one of openness that might be characterized as context adaptive rather than the strict literalism of a monolithic one-size-fits-all interpretation of Islam. Here, divine revelation is to be understood in context and through the heart. Likewise, with regard to adherence to prescriptions of how to live the faith in daily life, in an environment where students include Muslims of ethnically diverse backgrounds as well as non-Muslims who may be considering embracing Islam, the intention behind the act is given greater weight than the precision of its external form. With

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[1] *TTH* 8.

regard to activism, aside from denouncing terrorism, Hasan steers clear of anything that might be remotely considered political, but he maintains that students should balance their outer and inner lives and that they have responsibilities towards family, society, and even the world. Yet again, like Rasool, he prioritizes striving to become "a better human being" through spiritual practices as a prerequisite for any attempts to make a positive contribution to the world.

The Shaykh, the Students, the Organization, and its Activities

Shortly before his passing in 2006, Azad Rasool announced that he would be succeeded by his son, Hamid Hasan who now carries on the work of his father in promoting the teachings through the Institute of Search for Truth and the School of Sufi Teaching. Born in Delhi in 1961, Hasan earned master's degrees in physics from Aligarh and in computer science and math from Jamia Millia. He went on to earn a PhD in computer science awarded by Jamia Millia, but also involving study at the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in Trieste, Italy as well as at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) in the US. This was followed by his post-doctoral work at King's College in London. After working both in industry and academia, including teaching in India and Malaysia, he went on to co-found an information technology security consulting company which continues to serve as his source of personal income, since SOST does not charge for instruction in the practices, consistent with Rasool's insistence that Sufism "is not designed to provide a good living for teachers or heads of organizations."[2] In an online interview, Hasan provides a succinct explanation of the current structure and operation of SOST, saying that, while based in New Delhi, there are SOST groups around the world that meet weekly, each with a group manager[3] who provides the initial teachings to new students who can then be given more advanced instruction from the *shaykh* himself, who travels to many of these groups once and in some cases twice annually. At these retreats or at the annual international retreat, students are able to spend time with the *shaykh* as well as other students.[4]

Regarding the current student base of SOST, as of October 2017 Hasan, who is usually addressed with the honorific "Hazrat" by his students and referred to by the same or with his first name and title together as "Shaykh Hamid," estimated that there are approximately 1,000 SOST students across India, with the largest numbers in Tamil Nadu.[5] Outside of India, he estimates an additional 400 to 500 active students with the largest single "centre" or group being in London, where two retreats are

[2] *TTH* 8. In fact, the absence of solicitation for funds was noticeable throughout the fieldwork. As weekly meetings in Germany are held either in the homes of members or remotely, no collections for these are made and at annual retreats, only room and board are paid by participants. The one and only voluntary collection made was a suggested amount that divides the costs of the *shaykh*'s air travel and accommodations. Those able to do so may donate more to help defray the cost of hosting the *shaykh* for other groups in less economically advantaged regions. SOST's ability to offer teachings at no cost rests largely on the willingness of students to assist in the running of the organization. Administrative tasks and duties are split amongst participants, with group leaders and senior students seeming to bear the greatest load themselves, such as by organizing facilities for weekly meetings and annual retreats, making travel arrangements for the *shaykh* or ensuring the translation of materials, correspondence and even Rasool's book *Turning Toward the Heart* into the language of their respective country. Other students may also volunteer or be asked to assist in smaller ways, such as in maintaining the rotating roster of sitting next to the *shaykh* at mealtimes.

[3] Several of these group leaders were long time students of Rasool before his passing. Furthermore, when we speak of groups, we are talking about very small units, sometimes even less than five people. Such groups may experience significant participant turnover, but they usually have a consistent core of long-term members.

[4] "Interview with Shaykh Hamid Hasan - Part 6 - Sufism in Other Countries," SchoolofSufiTeaching, accessed December 27, 2019, https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdQkgHvR5RY&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=7&t=0s.

[5] Interview at the 2017 SOST retreat in Germany.

hosted annually.[6] Throughout the UK, there are numerous other smaller groups, namely in Scotland, with its own annual retreat, as well as Birmingham, Devon, Lancashire/Burnley/Manchester, and Newcastle. SOST also has centres in certain realms of the British Commonwealth, namely Australia and New Zealand as well as a growing contingent in Canada. In the United States, the groups are divided by east coast and west coast, with the former being somewhat larger,[7] and in South America, there is a group in Brazil. In mainland Europe, there are groups in Germany and Italy as well as in Poland, Russia, and Ukraine. In Asia, there are groups in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Jordan, Oman, the Philippines, and UAE, and in Africa, there are groups in South Africa and Tunisia. Beyond countries with an organized center or group, there are also students living in Bangladesh, Czech Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Sweden, Turkey, and Uzbekistan.

Before returning to institutional aspects, namely weekly meetings as well as annual and international retreats, the next paragraphs consider the demographics observed at meetings and retreats over the course of five years in Germany.[8] It should be noted, however, that from the reports of several members from the London group and others who came to events in Germany, it seems that very similar demographic trends could be observed at other SOST events in Europe and North America. That being said, attendees at events in Germany came from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds. While most students were of non-Muslim European descent, there were also others of Muslim South Asian, Turkish, Central Asian, Middle Eastern, and North African heritage or in some cases, mixed ancestry. Also, at weekly meetings and retreats, the gender ratio ranged from more or less even to a slight female majority. Participants interviewed report a significant percentage of female attendees, similar to what was observed in Germany, in other groups in Europe, such as London and Poland as well as in other areas of South Asia. The gender composition does vary, however, as one photograph taken at a retreat in Malaysia showed the *shaykh* standing in a group of around at least 20 students, the vast majority of whom were females donning the *ḥijāb*, while in Hyderabad, all but two of the approximately 100 participants were male. Participants appeared to mostly range in age from early thirties to late sixties with few if any outliers, save for infant to elementary school-aged children of adult participants.

Nearly all individuals asked about their education held at least a post-secondary education and in most cases, a post-graduate degree, often even a doctorate. Accordingly, most attendees were highly fluent in English and while at local meetings German tended to be used, at the annual retreats English often eclipsed the use of German, serving as a lingua franca between international participants as well as for when speaking to the *shaykh*. Professionally, participants spoken to almost invariably held employment in urban middle to upper class occupations. Two particularly common fields were information technology and also the graphic or performing arts, among them being a number of graphic artists, including several university art professors, an occupation held by three of the seniormost practitioners from the UK and the group leader for Germany, as well as a dancer, a theatrical performer, and a photographer. Careers in the healthcare industry, including psychology, along with social work and accounting were also encountered, and interestingly enough, there was one current and one former military intelligence officer in attendance, a phenomenon we see in J.G. Bennett as well as in Arberry's acknowledgement of his potential readership including "the ex-Service man who is interested in the East."[9] Thus we see a continued attraction among the kind of urban, well-educated, intellectual, and often artistic student base that has so often characterized the reception of Sufism in the West, whether among the Traditionalists and early universalists, or later among the followers of Gurdjieff or the Shah

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[6] SOST is organizationally divided into different "centres" based on geographical location, whether or not there is an actual designated physical building devoted to the purpose of spreading and practicing the teachings. In this chapter, the terms "group" and "centre" should be considered synonymous.

[7] When the researcher expressed surprise that there was not a larger presence on the West coast where a number of alternative spiritualities have taken root, Hasan explained that people tend to want to go somewhere with a dedicated facility rather than meeting in private homes. Such facilities, however, would of course be difficult for SOST to provide without charging for the teachings.

[8] As discussed in the section on methodology, the demographics were not taken through systematic polling, which would not likely have been much appreciated at a spiritual retreat. Instead, the information was collected through participant observation and impromptu interviews and discussions with other participants.

[9] Arberry, *An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, 5.

brothers, and later still in the Islamic Sufism of the Murabitun. Moreover, from a socio-economic perspective, such a demographic gathering in major and culturally diverse centers like London and Munich might in some ways be seen as not all that different from the earliest Sufi circles in 9th-century Baghdad, consisting of well-educated and sometimes avant-garde public thinkers in "perhaps the wealthiest and most cosmopolitan city in the world" of its time.[10]

On personal background and religious or spiritual practice, although there were several non-Muslim attendees, many self-identified as Muslim, either by birth or through conversion. Those Muslim participants who were not born into Muslim families had most often accepted Islam after either having been a long-term student of SOST (or another Sufi organization in the West) or following some form of personal contact with Islam, often through a spouse or significant other but sometimes through work or study in a Muslim-majority country. Either in group meetings or in private discussions with the researcher, Muslim and non-Muslim participants alike often provided personal narratives of a search for spiritual fulfillment that led up to their discovery of SOST. Such explanations sometimes included an excursus from the religion of their birth, but very often, regardless of whether the individual was of Muslim origin or not, they made mention of past experiences with some form of Yoga or Buddhist meditation, and somewhat less often, with Chinese internal disciplines such as Qi Gong or Tai Chi. Furthermore, some cited past encounters, either with the literature of, or institutions related to, groups and individuals connected in one way or another with the arrival of Sufism, and often even particularly of the Naqshbandiyya, to the West, such as Guénon, Gurdjieff, Idries Shah, Irina Tweedie, Subud, the Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya and branches of the Mawlawiyya in the West. As mentioned above in the section on Rasool's introducing his teachings to the West, over the course of the five years during which this research was carried out (January 2015-December 2019), the number of participants of Muslim origin increased noticeably, some of whom did not cite any kind of excursus outside of Islam.

So we see the same range of relationships to Islam as discussed above, that is non-Muslims, Muslims of non-Muslim origin, persons of Muslim origin (often born and/or raised in the West) who cite some form of excursus away from Islam, or what have been called "reverts," and finally those of Muslim origin who do not cite any excursus away from Islam. On reverts in particular, their time away from Islam may be spiritual or secular in nature, as one Muslim-born participant from the UK jokingly referred to a secularized period in her life with the words, "[…] but that was back in my *jāhilī* days." Her adoption of the Mawdudian/Qutbian usage of the term as referring to secular modernity, rather than an historical period preceding the time of Muḥammad , also reveals the presence of competing voices. The adaptiveness of SOST to different contexts and the absence of moralizing preaching of a specific interpretation of Islamic belief and practice is what allows for such diversity. While this may be less appealing to those looking for more scripturally-oriented authenti-"*fiqh*"-ation, to borrow Hermansen's term, it offers a welcoming environment for others, particularly those living between two or more worlds and seeking a way to live Islam for themselves in the contemporary globalized environment, independent of someone else's regionally bound or ideologically determined versions of the faith.[11]

Weekly Meetings

As far as the activities of SOST, students are encouraged to strive individually to perform their assigned practices consistently each day of the week in addition to attending weekly meetings. Such meetings attended by the researcher at different times throughout the research were held in Munich, Regensburg, and Nuremburg. Observed attendance numbers began in 2014, just before the beginning of this research, with two to five people, including the researcher, and grew to ten to twelve by late 2017. Initially, the meetings took place mostly in private apartments, but occasionally in the office of a member, such as an art studio, but also in a studio that was rented by the hour from student donations and was also used by Yoga and Qi Gong practitioners. At the latter location, meditation was carried out while seated on the floor with the aid of cushions for comfort. If held in the dining or living room of

[10] Green, *Sufism*, 15; and Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 7.

[11] For an examination of a similarly adaptive Islamic *ṭarīqa* with a large following in the West, especially with regard to the phenomenon of "reverts," see Dominguez Diaz, "Between two or three worlds."

someone's apartment, students generally sat on the Western-style furniture that was already present, such as chairs and couches. Later on, meetings came to be held regularly at an independent living facility for the elderly, where practitioners sat either in chairs or on meditation cushions, however they felt inclined. At these meetings, the students came together a few minutes before the agreed upon time, Muslim members might meet slightly earlier for prayer, there would be some informal friendly conversation, either when meeting outside the meditation room or oftentimes over tea and light refreshments, and if there were any new members, the group leader would provide instruction on the initial meditation, viz., *murāqaba* for activating the *qalb laṭīfa*. Other members were to continue with the meditation that they had been assigned by the *shaykh*. The lights would be dimmed, students wrap themselves in a blanket and meditation would be performed for 45 minutes, usually timed with a mobile phone timer. When the time is elapsed, everyone slowly returns from their inward journey and after a short period, ranging from a few seconds to a few minutes, more polite but brief conversation gradually ensues before attendees gather their belongings (e.g. blanket, purse, jacket), bid farewell until the next meeting, and return home. While cordial events with a degree of camaraderie and pleasant exchange, the intended purpose of these gatherings is not to serve as a social club, rather, the weekly meetings are held solely for the purpose of engaging in the practices and collectively sharing in the *baraka* that each individual practitioner receives from performing these practices.

In Germany, many of the participants live some distance apart, even in neighboring Czech Republic, and therefore weekly meetings in person are impractical for those not living in the cities where the largest concentration of practitioners reside and where weekly meetings take place face to face. In order to surmount this difficulty, members arrange "remote" group meditation whereby once a week, in different places across Germany, they synchronize the start time of their meditation with each other and even with members in other countries like England, Turkey, or Egypt. Participants informally check in via WhatsApp, exchange cordialities and perform their assigned meditation. Needless to say, the described formats may be unique to Germany, or at least characteristic of smaller groups in Europe and North America. The larger London group, for example, completed the renovation of a building to serve as its *zawiya* in 2020, thus providing them with their own facility.[12] With its greater numbers and the more frequent turnover of newcomers, the London centre developed and implemented a ten lesson[13] orientation to the teachings of SOST which are given on a rotating weekly basis so that newcomers can arrive at any point in the teaching cycle. Each of these lessons addresses themes which, for the most part, are well covered in the English-language writings of Rasool, yet there is some additional information included in these lessons, such as the below mentioned instruction on *adab* and the relationship with the *shaykh*.

Annual Retreats

While initial meditation instructions can be given by group leaders at weekly meetings or less ideally through email with PDF instructions and a telephone call, more advanced practices and the transmissions associated with them are given directly from Shaykh Hamid himself, who travels to many groups once and in some cases twice annually to hold retreats lasting anywhere from three days to one week. The *shaykh*'s schedule is available at SufiSchool.org, is continuously updated and reveals a rather intensive international travel schedule, with usually at least two and sometimes three or more retreats each month, for instance, within a period of 30 days from early October to early November of 2017, he was at retreats in Germany, Russia, Tunisia, and New York City. Some students travel to multiple retreats to be with the *shaykh*, as observed in Germany where there were often several attendees from the London group as well as others from as far afield as Egypt, Pakistan, Tunisia, and Singapore. Likewise, several members of the group in Germany also attended the 2017 retreat in Poland.[14] Retreats vary in size and those that took place in Germany all had around 20 participants, while the one in

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[12] "Fundraising appeal for the London School of Sufi Teaching Zawiyah," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed December 27, 2019, https://youtu.be/DK3qwocsuu4.

[13] This is not to be confused with the ten preliminary lessons that consist of meditations assigned by the *shaykh* to activate the *laṭā'if* prior to pledging *bay'a* and proceeding through the meditations of the circles.

[14] The Hyderabad retreat attended drew participants from not only the local area, but also from Chennai, Singapore, Malaysia, and Italy.

Hyderabad had upwards of 100. Venues for retreats also vary and some may be hosted in the home of one of the participants, as observed in Hyderabad, while others may be held at a retreat center, such as the annual Germany retreat which, although the location has now changed, for the first three years took place at Frauenwörth Abbey, an 8th-century Benedictine monastery on an island in a lake in southern Germany. This abbey has its own Ayurvedic chef as well as hosts a number of other types of retreat that tend to appeal to Western spiritual seekers, including a Qi Gong group with a number of attendees who also had links to Irina Tweedie's Mujaddidī line, discussed above in Part One. Such a selection of venue provides a low-threat and even familiar environment for the demographic range that SOST tends to attract.

Figure 7 The Island Abbey where the First SOST Retreats in Germany Took Place
Photo by the Researcher

We now turn to what takes place at these retreats, but first a disclaimer should be made that, unless otherwise specified, the following observations are based on four annual retreats in Germany which took place from 2015 to 2018. Nevertheless, based on the researcher's attendance at a retreat in Hyderabad in 2016 and the reports of students who had attended retreats elsewhere, the two central aspects of SOST retreats; namely, 1.) performing the practices collectively and in the company of the *shaykh* and 2.) meeting personally with the *shaykh*; are remarkably uniform irrespective of geographic or cultural context. That being said, the retreats observed were structured around Islamic prayer times, which for Muslim students also dictate the times at which different practices are to be carried out in one's daily life outside of the retreats, as each practice is to be performed following a particular prayer. A schedule was posted on the door to the meditation room outlining the times for each of the obligatory prayers as well as the supererogatory night prayer, *tahajjud*. After the time and name for each prayer, the particular practice to be done following that prayer was specified. Participants were told that they were welcome to attend any or all of the sessions if they like, but they were not pressured to do so,

especially regarding the 4:30 am *tahajjud* prayer. For those students who had received only instructions for the practice of *murāqaba* and not *dhikr* or *durūd sharīf*, for example, they were to perform their own currently assigned meditation while the others engaged in their respective assigned recitations or more advanced meditations. Since all of these practices are performed while seated silently and wrapped in a shawl or blanket, there was little visible difference between students performing different practices save for the presence or absence of a *tasbih*, which is quietly and discreetly used to count repetitions.

During the first two retreats in Germany in 2015 and 2016, when two rooms were available within a reasonable distance of one another, prayers by Muslim students took place in a separate room from the one where the practices were performed, which was where non-Muslim students waited to start the meditation while Muslim students prayed. Whether the intended purpose or not, such separation prevented non-Muslims from feeling pressured to take part in the prayers or feeling awkwardly about standing around while others performed prostrations. It also had the practical effect of facilitating a smooth transition from the standard configuration for Islamic collective prayer, lines with the men in front and women behind, to that used for meditation, everyone being seated along the walls with men on one side of the room and women on the other.

In contrast, at the third retreat in 2017, a staff member at the monastery, when asked for a separate room for prayer, innocently and understandably provided a Catholic chapel, uncarpeted and outfitted with pews. These would have inhibited performance of the Muslim prayer ritual, with its requirement for standing, kneeling, prostrations, and other physical movements. Starting with this retreat and in those that followed it, Islamic prayer and practices were performed in the same room. One possible explanation for the initial separation at the first retreat in Germany is that it may have been a testing of the waters in this new majority non-Muslim country, exhibiting a gradualism at the collective level that also appears at the level of the individual so as not to frighten off or overwhelm non-Muslim participants and to provide a religiously neutral and therefore comfortable and welcoming setting. Whatever the case, proper etiquette dictates that the *shaykh* is the last one to enter the room and the first one to leave. Thus, as the students either stand in gender-segregated rows facing the *qibla* prior to prayer or sit against the walls, one side for men another for women, waiting to begin the practices, the *shaykh* enters the room without a word, leads the prayer and/or performs the appointed practice for that particular time, and then exits just as silently.

In between collective prayer and meditation/silent recitation sessions, students might spend time alone or mingle with and get to know other students, talk over a cup of coffee, enjoy a walk or jog around the grounds of the retreat center or at earlier retreats around the island on which the abbey is located, or even take a boat ride to an adjacent island. The latter island is the site of Neues Schloss Herrenchiemsee, one of the magnificent palaces built by King Ludwig II of Bavaria (r. 1864-1886), who also commissioned the famous Neuschwanstein castle. Meals, which were provided by the retreat center or the abbey at set times, also offered a chance for students to interact with one another as well as with the *shaykh*. A roster was maintained to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to sit with the *shaykh* during at least one meal over the course of each retreat.

In the mornings after breakfast, which itself took place after around two hours' worth of prayer (*tahajjud* and *fajr*) and meditation followed by an hour and a half of free time, optional and informal lessons lasting no more than one hour and geared toward new students were offered. Therein, attendees introduced themselves and the senior group leader in Germany provided some introductory instruction, the content of which was based loosely on the ten introductory lessons developed by the London group. The lesson sheets were used more as cues for major talking points than as a script which was strictly adhered to and the sessions mostly served to introduce basic topics that are well-covered in Rasool's *Turning Toward the Heart*. During the 2017 retreat, an additional optional and impromptu session was offered by one attendee of Muslim upbringing who provided an introduction to Islamic prayer geared toward interested non-Muslims as well as converts seeking to refine their own performance of the prayers.

It is important to note that at none of the retreats observed by the researcher did the *shaykh* lecture or give instruction in a group setting. Nevertheless, participants who had also been to a retreat in Russia observed that Hasan himself in fact gave a considerable amount of verbal instruction there. This may be reflective of the German group leader's over 15 years of experience as a student making it possible for the *shaykh* to delegate the responsibility of basic theoretical instruction to him. At any rate, the periods of instruction were characterized more by informal discussion and the answering of

questions as opposed to a uni-directional lecture. They served to supplement the main purposes of the retreat, namely to engage in the practices collectively and in the presence of the *shaykh* and to have the opportunity to meet personally with the *shaykh*, the latter being the topic to which we now turn.

The second major feature of retreats beyond collective practice in the company of the *shaykh* is the opportunity for private personal meetings with him. These were scheduled in half-hour blocks during periods of free time in the late morning and early afternoon, but sometimes took more or less time depending on what transpired in the meeting itself. Students were normally asked to arrive shortly before their planned meeting time, in the event that the previous meeting took less time than expected, and when any previous session finished, the student would go to the *shaykh*'s room, knock on the door, and be invited to come inside where student and teacher typically sat in chairs across a small table from one another. The content and structure of such meetings was not predetermined and although informal and varying from person to person, certain events might be considered typical. For instance, the student could ask the *shaykh* questions, update him on his/her regularity in or experiences he/she may have had while performing the practices, or talk about any obstacles that they may be personally facing, whether related to the practices or even to life in general.

Conversely, the *shaykh* may ask the student questions, interpret any experiences the student may have described and contextualize them in terms of their progress on the spiritual journey. On personal problems, the *shaykh* might offer encouragement and even practical suggestions for how to deal with particular issues, but from discussions with respondents, such advice usually involves having the student reframe their own perspective to find an appropriate solution on their own and from within themselves. More important to the present research, if the *shaykh* feels that a student has reached the point where he or she is ready for the next practice in the curriculum, this private meeting is an opportunity for them to receive direct instruction from the *shaykh* in their next practice as well as the transmission of *baraka* that is associated with that practice. Students may also be given supplementary practices such as special recitations to address specific issues the student may be having in life generally or on the spiritual path. Conversely, at one point, the *shaykh* even suggested to the researcher during such a meeting that he try stopping his assigned practice for a few days or even a week to see for himself whether or not the practices were having any impact. Finally and significantly, if, on the one hand, the student has completed the preliminary exercises to awaken the ten *laṭā'if* and is prepared to commit fully to the path, and, on the other, the *shaykh* is willing to accept that individual as a full and oath-bound student, this meeting can be an opportunity for the student to pledge *bay'a*, a topic discussed further below.

It should be reiterated that although the two main features of retreats, performing the practices collectively with the *shaykh* and having private meetings with him, are present everywhere, particular details may vary from place to place. For instance, while the retreat centers used in Germany are some distance from the homes of the participants, thus allowing a clean break from daily life, retreats in London typically take place in the home of a student and local participants often return to their own homes overnight and some may come and go over the course of the retreat due to work or other obligations. But in addition to regional retreats, another opportunity students have to spend time with the *shaykh* as well as to meet other SOST students is the annual international retreat. These typically last approximately one week and take place around the same time each year. The program contents and schedules vary according to the location, and during the research, these international retreats took place in Konya (2015); Bukhara, Samarkand, and Tashkent (2016); Jerusalem (2017); Mecca and Medina (2018); and Beirut (2019). The 2020 retreat was planned to take place in Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf. Such retreats also allow students to take part in an aspect of Sufism not available in say Germany, that is *ziyara*, the visitation of shrines, which is discussed below under practices.

Correspondence with the Shaykh

Interaction with the *shaykh*, however, is also not limited to collective meditation, meals, and personal meetings at retreats, since in the time between retreats, students are encouraged to keep the *shaykh* updated on their progress, and if any problems or questions arise, to ask him about these by

email, an opportunity that few disciples of other transnational *shaykh*s enjoy.[15] Despite having hundreds of students around the world, not to mention the thousand across India, all accounts from students affirm that Hasan is remarkably reliable in providing personalized responses to all inquiries within a few days or sooner. In fact, at the first two retreats in Germany, before the monastery expanded their Wi-Fi coverage, he could usually be found during down time typing emails with his laptop in the commons room next to the wireless router. So, while earlier Western students of Rasool wrote physical letters to him, and before that, Rasool mentions the volumes of letters that Sa'īd Khān's students wrote to him, now under Hasan, paper and postal mail seem to have been replaced by e-mail. This may not be entirely the case, however, as one respondent who had spent time in Delhi reported that students there brought booklets to their meetings with the *shaykh*, who would in turn write in them, presumably instructions or the intention for their next assigned practice. It seems then that email may have also replaced this practice when taken to the global context.

A SOST Retreat in India

But this brings us to the question of what other potential differences there might be between SOST as it is practiced in the West, or internationally, versus in its native India. A full account of SOST presently in the West as compared with SOST presently in India is neither the objective here, nor is it currently feasible in terms of space, resources available, or collected data on hand. Nevertheless, a modest attempt is made to shed some light on the matter, first here, in a general sense, as well as in later parts of this chapter, in addressing two notable differences observed that pertain to shrine visitation (*ziyāra*) and gender segregation (*purdah*). These two aspects are considered below in the sections that deal with mystical practices and orthodoxy respectively. Overall, however, this brief attempt at comparison draws on observations made by the researcher at a single event, the August 2016 Hyderabad retreat, supplemented by discussions with multi-region participants of other SOST events.

Across India, as globally, there are various SOST groups with their own weekly meetings and annual retreats. The retreat attended in Hyderabad in 2016 drew not only local participants, but also individuals from around South Asia, including Malaysia, Singapore, and other parts of India; along with one individual visiting from Italy. The event was held at the home of one of the local members and visitors from out of town typically slept on the carpeted floor of the meditation room or in the homes of local attendees. In all, there were probably around 100 participants total, so unlike at the smaller retreats in Germany, the researcher was unable to speak to all attendees. Nevertheless, from what could be gleaned, it seemed that the vast majority of participants were of South Asian, most often Indian, Muslim background, with the exceptions of the researcher, the Italian participant, two Hindus, and one Sikh. All three of the Indian non-Muslim participants spoken to and one of the Muslim attendees reported previous encounters with either the writings of Osho (Bhagwan Sri Rajneesh) or the meditation centers bearing his name. It was also not unusual for these individuals, along with a small number of the Muslim attendees, to cite previous interests in or experimentation with Yoga, Buddhist forms of meditation, or other pursuits that might fall in the West under the rubric of alternative spiritualities.

A colorful example of a different kind of reversion to Islam through Sufism came from one respondent who wore a long beard, turban, and *shalwār qamīẓ*, but showed the researcher a picture of a slightly younger and less Islamic-looking version of himself, clean shaven with slicked back hair, dressed in attire one might wear to a night club, and holding a trophy awarded for being the best bartender in his state. The photo was taken prior to his meeting and beginning the practices under Azad Rasool. That same individual now serves as an *imām*. There were also those of Muslim origin who cited coming to Sufism to deepen their own, already firm commitment to Islam, and others still who were born into families where Sufic Islam was the Islam that was practiced, sometimes even with parents who were students of Rasool. Combinations of these personal histories are also of course possible. So in India too, SOST is open to people of all faiths and backgrounds, and there were some non-Muslims as well as converts and reverts along with those of Muslim origin who did not cite any sort of excursus

[15] Initially, regional group leaders act as a kind of filter, preventing the *shaykh* from being inundated with correspondence by themselves providing the initial instruction in the practices to casual inquirers who may come and go from those who have become more dedicated to the practices. When it is assessed that the person is serious, they may be given the *shaykh*'s email and encouraged to write him directly with any questions.

away from Islam, but the overwhelming majority encountered at the Hyderabad retreat were indeed of South Asian Muslim origin.

Furthermore, the gender ratio in Hyderabad was quite different from that found in Germany, but also from other areas in India and South Asia in general, and at first it seemed as though the retreat was only attended by men. On the last day, however, it was learned that there were in fact two women taking part and they had remained in a separate area throughout the retreat, an aspect addressed in further detail below. The age range in Hyderabad was significantly wider than in Germany, on one end including several boys of grade school age and a number young men in their teens and twenties, and on the other end, a few more senior aged men. In terms of education and socio-economic status, the cross-section of society also seemed slightly wider than in Germany, including some working-class attendees, but still drawing primarily from the well-educated middle to upper class. This observation was concurred with by one respondent, himself an established and recognizable Indian screen actor, who lamented that the less economically privileged are so concerned with mere physical survival that they are seldom drawn toward spiritual refinement. But now we turn from the individuals involved, organizational structures, and activities, to the means by which the teachings are imparted.

Pedagogy and Literature

Similar to Rasool, Hasan gives no formal lectures and there is no speculation or extensive instruction in mystical cosmology, nor is there any moralizing preaching. In private or small group conversations with students, or on the rare occasions that Hasan does speak publicly or give interviews, he is usually very brief and to the point with his answers and explanations, which provides a clarity appreciated by many of his students. So also consistent with his father, in saying that Sufism is not intended to "deliberately keep students in a state of mystification,"[16] Hasan keeps what few words he does present publicly or privately simple and straightforward, free of any cryptic or arcane content and instead uses direct language in a rather matter-of-fact, sober, and down-to-earth manner. Complex topics are streamlined to what for him are the essential points and Persian, Arabic, or Urdu technical terminology is generally kept to a minimum, more often than not opting to use English equivalents. Also, several core themes discussed below reappear frequently, thus providing an internally coherent, understandable, and consistent system. Hasan himself provides a very similar picture of the teachings to that of his father, but in an even further abbreviated form. Thus, if Rasool was able to focus on key aspects of Sufi tradition, with an eye toward preparing students for spiritual training, and explain those selected aspects in a way that is accessible, understandable, and appealing to contemporary students of varied cultural and religious backgrounds, then Hasan has distilled this presentation even further, mastering the art of the sound bite to explain the key concepts necessary for engaging in such spiritual training to reproduce the experiences for oneself.

The literature of SOST consists of the two above examined books by Rasool, website content drawing mainly from these two sources, PDF documents used to impart the teachings, and a short series of online videos.[17] Hasan has not yet written any books on Sufism himself and gives very few talks or interviews, instead seeming to focus more on the training of students. But if we consider Rasool, it was only towards the end of his life that he began to produce texts to help carry on his work. By his own admission and the descriptions of his students, Rasool spoke very little and usually at their insistence, and thus the first book he produced, *Turning Toward the Heart*, consists of his responses to their questions and was published in 2002, the year after the *khānaqāh* in Delhi was finally built. He spent the remainder of his last years working on a second book, *The Search for Truth*, but would not live to see its 2010 publication, which was overseen by his son. But despite Hasan having not yet produced any books of his own on Sufism and that text production seems to have been something Rasool and Sa'īd Khān before him left more toward the end of their careers after decades of spreading the order, still questions were being collected in 2014 from SOST students for a potential follow up to *TTH*. As

[16] *TTH* 8.

[17] There are also two biographies still in Urdu of Sayyid 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh and Ḥāmid Ḥasan 'Alawī, although significant parts of these have been included in *TTH* and on the SOST website respectively.

for the PDF documents for providing the teachings, these were produced during Rasool's lifetime and two of them, one summarizing the complete daily *waẓīfa* and the other, all four circles of transmissions for the Mujaddidiyya, have been consulted in the above consideration of his teachings. Yet another, which provides the very first lesson on *murāqaba* and is given to each new student, is discussed below.[18] The few brief videos of Hasan speaking which have been posted online, all between one and a half to four and a half minutes each, are in general, highly oriented toward encouraging regularity in the practices and establishing them as part of one's daily life.

While there are of course the living teachings of the present *shaykh* and the memory of undergoing spiritual training under Rasool, in terms of texts and the overall imparting of theoretical knowledge, presently SOST relies largely on the base of literature produced by Rasool, yet reading these works is not a requirement and the emphasis is placed firmly on the practices. Accordingly, while many though not all of the students spoken to at retreats had read *TTH*, relatively few even knew about and still fewer had read *SFT*, and those who had regarded it as a rather in-depth read. Thus, it is the former which serves as the main text which is the most often referred to, and accordingly, *TTH* has been translated into Polish, Italian, German, Russian, Portuguese, and Tamil, and at the time of this research, translations were underway in French and Malay. The book was published in German as *Sich dem Herzen zuwenden: Das Erwachen auf dem Sufi-Weg - Vierzig Fragen und Antworten* in 2015, and on the first of October in that same year, just two days before the first annual retreat in Germany, the *shaykh* appeared for a book reading in Munich.

For a brief aside, this event was held at a universalist-oriented Sufi meditation and healing center with links to the Sufi Order International, led by Zia Inayat Khan. This was the same center where, a few years later, the researcher briefly spoke to and observed a talk given by Irina Tweedie's Swiss successor, Annette Kaiser. While SOST has no other known connection to the Sufi Order International, or to Kaiser, the selection of such a venue over a local Mosque or Islamic center, of which there are plenty to choose from in the city, is revealing about the target audience. This was the first time that the researcher had the opportunity to meet the *shaykh*, who arrived discreetly, accompanied by his senior representatives in London and Germany, wearing Western business casual attire and without any fanfare. A selection of questions from the book were read which offered the audience contextualization, an introduction to the main practice and its intended effects, as well as advice for those considering taking part in the practices.[19] This was followed by a question-and-answer period with the audience.

But returning to the issue of texts and also intellectual study in general, Hasan acknowledges that reading about Sufism and the experiences of earlier mystics can help motivate students to commit themselves to the practices, yet he warns that some texts are difficult to understand and stresses the need for a balance between one's level of spiritual advancement and the literature one reads. There are some recommended reading lists beyond the abovementioned literature produced by Rasool or SOST, such as the one on the London group's website,[20] and in some cases readings take place in groups where there are senior students to aid in interpretation.[21] Nevertheless, this seems to be more to satiate a largely well-educated student base that enjoys reading and intellectual stimulation, and it also fulfills Western

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[18] These documents are also used by Abdur Rashid of the Circle Group but printed on cardstock, color-coded according to the *ṭarīqa*.

[19] Namely, these were question three, on selecting a path; four, on the popularity of Sufism in the West; thirty-four, on *murāqaba*; thirty-five, "Awakening the Heart"; thirty-nine, "Realizations on the Path"; and thirteen, "Factors for Success on the Journey."

[20] This list includes English translations of works like al-Hujwīrī's *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā''s *Fawā'id al-Fu'ād*, Rūmī 's *Fīhi mā Fīhi*, Walī Allāh's *Alṭāf al-Quds* and *Lamaḥāt wa Ṣaṭa'āt*, the *Rashaḥāt* and 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī's *Jalā' al-Khawāthir*. The latter two translations are by Muhtar Holland and the former of these was in fact commissioned by the Muridu'l-Haqq as a gift for their *shaykh*. Notably absent, however, are Sirhindī's *Maktūbāt*, perhaps because of their difficulty or since they have yet to be translated in their entirety into English, though there a numerous partial translations. "Recommended Books," School of Sufi Teaching, London, accessed September 05, 2017, http://www.schoolofsufiteaching.org/qal/sufism/books.html.

[21] "Could the study of sufi literature be incorporated into group meetings," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed December 29, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lE35MTGvJ_Q&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=20&t=0s.

understandings and expectations of Sufism as wisdom more than practice. But in the big picture, in SOST, it is all about the practices, as was made apparent during the book reading.

Internet Presence

Continuing now to online presence, the main international website, which often serves as a student's initial introduction to SOST, is largely a carefully selected and deliberately arranged sampling of key sections of Rasool's writings. It is available in English, Russian, Italian, Portuguese, and Tamil and it; aside from providing contact information for the various groups throughout the world, announcements of retreats and visits by the *shaykh*, testimonials from students, and a referral to the publications of Azad Rasool; serves to provide a brief introduction to Sufism, to SOST and its practices, the orders taught, and the brief biographies of the last three *shaykh*s in the *silsila*.[22] This introduction draws largely from the two English-language works of Rasool, sometimes exactly and sometimes in what appear to be earlier or later drafts. This is supplemented by additional and brief introductory or connecting material. Included in the introduction to Sufism are Rasool's explanations of what Sufism is, its origins and historical development, and its relevance to global issues and the future of humanity.[23]

On SOST itself, some background information is provided followed by the unchanged aims and objectives, technique, and policy sections of Rasool's initial 1975 concept for IST.[24] The section on the practices is introduced with the same excerpt used earlier in the present monograph to examine Rasool's explanation of the goals of Sufism, wherein he summarizes these as becoming transformed into "a highly humane and moral person." It also includes what appears to be an original statement on a theme that is often used by Hasan, that is the suitability of the practices for people living in contemporary times, or a "fast-paced, materially-oriented world." This section of the website likewise draws on Rasool's two books to explain each of the six key terms of our lexicon; viz., *laṭā'if*, *indirāj al-nihāyat fi'l-bidāyat*, *nisbat*, *tawajjuh*, *murāqaba*, and *dhikr*; but it also includes the chapter of *TTH* entitled "Realizations on the Path."[25] Thus we see the website presenting a streamlined overview of the contents of Rasool's two works.

Many of the groups in different countries maintain their own websites that usually draw on or replicate content from the main SOST website, translating it into the languages of their respective region and maintaining a more or less uniform format and appearance with a light blue and white color scheme and the emblem of a light house, sometimes emblazoned with the letters "SOST" or "IST." This creates a rather standardized corporate appearance for SOST groups across the world. One of the major exceptions to this is the contact website for the SOST branch in Poland,[26] which brings together two of the major areas of involvement of the individual who introduced SOST to the country and now serves as its group leader, but who also founded and is President of the Rumi Foundation of Poland (Polska Fundacja Sufich im. Dżelaladdina Rumi ego). The site links to not only the main SOST website, but also to the International Mevlana Foundation and Dar-al-Masnavi.org, an online repository of English translations of Rūmī's poetry and prose writings as well as to Barbelo, a publishing house run by one of the board members of the Rumi Foundation, and to the Jan Karski Society, an intercultural dialogue initiative co-founded by the council chairman of the Rumi Foundation. Furthermore, the London group's website, which actually predates the main international SOST website, also contains some unique aspects, most notably a newsletter that features poetry, interviews, selected readings, and

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[22] "Sufism of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi, Chishti, Shadhili and Qadiri Orders," School of Sufi Teaching, accessed October 10, 2017, http://www.sufischool.org/.
[23] *TTH* 5-9, 63-4, 64-8, 19-20, and 126-9.
[24] *SfT* 153-5.
[25] "The Practices," School of Sufi Teaching, accessed October 11, 2017. http://www.sufischool.org/practises/opening.html, and *SfT* 43, *TTH* 86-8, *SfT* 50-4, 58-9, *TTH* 104-8, and 123-5. The section on the different orders draws on *TTH* 69-71 for the background of the Mujaddidiyya, Chishtiyya, and Qādiriyya, but includes novel or unidentified content for the Naqshbandiyya and Shādhiliyya.
[26] "Polska Fundacja Sufich," Polska Fundacja Sufich, accessed October 11, 2017. http://www.sufi.org.pl/.

articles.[27] Several groups also make use of MeetUp.com to reach a larger audience of potential students, sometimes using such tags as “Self-Improvement,” “Spiritual Growth,” “Personal Life Transformation,” and even “Mindfulness Meditation,” “Muslim Professionals,” and “Progressive Muslim,” to attract a compatible and like-minded demographic. On the use of social media, it is also possible to like and follow SOST on Facebook and Twitter (rebranded as XX in 2023).[28]

Curriculum the Same Everywhere

While the present research is primarily concerned with the presentation and reception of this lineage in Europe and North America, it should be noted that despite the few differences observed in Hyderabad, the curriculum of spiritual training itself, along with positions related to the categories of orthodoxy and activism, is remarkably uniform and consistent across different cultural, ethnic, and linguistic groups. The main elements of the Hyderabad retreat followed an identical structure to the retreats held in Germany, with meditation or recitations following each of the prayers, held in a single room, and personal meetings with the *shaykh*. In speaking with a senior student there, a former student of Rasool who had completed the training in all five orders, his answers seemed to come directly from the works of Azad Rasool, much like when speaking with senior students elsewhere.

This can be contrasted with, for instance, the Haqqaniyya, which does have a common core set of practices, but to these are sometimes appended a variety of different teachings, some traditionally Sufi while others might be traced outside of that tradition. What types of practices are found depends largely on the demographics of whichever group is observed, since Haqqani groups are sometimes determined along ethnic lines. While there are regional differences within SOST, as discussed above, they do not seem to have had a noticeable impact on the teachings themselves and one is hard-pressed in searching for more substantial differences that pertain to the analytical categories of mysticism, orthodoxy, and activism, than what have already been mentioned. Indeed, SOST has been able to remain remarkably consistent in spreading the teachings globally throughout a plethora of varying religio-cultural contexts and to avoid such fracturing along ethnic lines as seen with the Haqqaniyya. Some major contributing factors to the maintenance of this internal cohesion and standardization of the teachings, something that was a concern as early as Ḥāmid Ḥasan ‘Alawī, likely include SOST’s relatively small numbers as well as its organizational structure under a single *shaykh*, but also its deliberately inclusive and pluralistic nature.

Mysticism

Cosmo-Psychology

In terms of cosmology, relevant themes that Hasan homes in on in his streamlined presentation of this lineage’s teachings include the goal of achieving “closeness to God” as well as the distinction between the material and the spiritual and the need to balance the two. Related to the subtle anatomy of the human being, he emphasizes the heart *laṭīfa*, particularly gaining guidance and inner knowledge through the heart as well as developing it, and thereby one’s strengths rather than weaknesses, through Sufi practices. Drawing on the narrative of *INfB* and its asserted efficacy and efficiency, Hasan makes the characteristic Mujaddidī approach of beginning with the heart appealing to the busy modern spiritual seeker. With this same rationale, regarding the practices, he places the greatest emphasis on meditation (*murāqaba*). His discussions focus less on explaining the practices or arguing that they are important, and more on demonstrating how they are compatible with life in a fast-paced world and encouraging

[27] “Sufi Teachings and Group Meetings in London.” School of Sufi Teaching, London, accessed October 10, 2017, http://www.schoolofsufiteaching.org/.

[28] The SOST Facebook page had 2,300 likes and 2,400 followers at the time of this writing and includes brief quotations from Rasool’s writings and videos of interviews with Hasan. “The School of Sufi Teaching (@SufiSchool),” Facebook, accessed March 24, 2024, https://www.facebook.com/sufischool. The SOST Twitter account had 997 followers at the time of this writing and features very brief quotations from not only Rasool’s works but also from earlier Sufis, both within and outside of the lineages of SOST, like Sirhindī, Aḥrār, and Rūmī. These quotes are often accompanied by photography of flowers, landscapes and Islamic art such as architecture or calligraphy. Sufi School, “Sufi School (@SufiSchool),” Twitter, accessed March 24, 2024. https://twitter.com/SufiSchool.

students to establish regularity in performing them. This bespeaks a student base that already sees value in spiritual practices and does not even really need to be convinced of their importance, but that does need to be convinced that they can make time in their lives for such practices. Hasan also maintains the importance of the *shaykh*, though continuing with the same discreet and low-key manner of his predecessors and emphasizing his role as a teacher and guide. Regular collective group meditation is also strongly encouraged.

Closeness to God

As already discussed in the examination of Rasool's writings, the very structure of the circles that comprise the third stage of training, after the preliminary practices and pledging *bay'a*, reflect travel through an emanationist cosmology in accordance with the four-fold Naqshbandī Mujaddidī journey. Yet in line with his father, Hasan clearly emphasizes the practices over speculative mysticism, saying that nothing can replace the personal experience gained through the practices. This does not, however, mean that the new student is expected to enter this system of training without any sort of idea of the metaphysical conceptual structure on which it is based. Students do of course have access to Rasool's writings and even if they have not read them personally, the ideas within them were quite faithfully reproduced by senior SOST students in their discussions and in the few and brief periods of theoretical instruction that were observed by the researcher.

As far as Hasan's presentation, however, he often describes the objectives of Sufism as being, first and foremost, "closeness to God" which he follows by listing two major transformative processes that take place on the journey toward such closeness, viz., "purification of the heart" and "cleansing of the self," and finally, he turns to the ultimate effect of such processes on the person and the resulting closeness to God, that is "to develop a good moral character."[29] It is the first of these, the idea of achieving closeness to God that is so oft-repeated by Hasan, which most concerns us in our discussion of cosmology. While another way in which he sometimes describes the end objective of the path is to achieve constant remembrance of God, it was far more common to find him speaking of "closeness to God." This preference for representing the relationship in terms of closeness may be related to the SOST emphasis on *murāqaba* over *dhikr* as the way of describing a constant consciousness of God as remembrance is often connected with the practice of *dhikr* as recitation.

This notion of closeness to God is perhaps one of the most streamlined ways of summarizing the main idea behind the cosmologies and conceptualizations of the Sufi path that emerged with the so-called "mystical turn" in 9th-century Abbasid Baghdad, and elsewhere, that came to characterize the Sufi journey in its myriad forms up until the present day. In congruence with these, Hasan asserts a dichotomy between the physical world and the spiritual world, explaining that by gaining a greater proximity to God through the practices, the practitioner achieves a balance between their physical and spiritual existence, saying that most people pay attention to only their bodily needs while ignoring their spiritual requirements. He says that preoccupation with material concerns and lack of attention to man's spiritual aspect has resulted in "the problems we see in the world today, there's an imbalance in people's lives," one that also results in personal dissatisfaction, unhappiness, stress, and depression. In contrast, achieving a balance by paying greater attention to spiritual matters is said to result in one finding both true happiness and purpose in life.[30]

Thus, we see that the ontological structure of the material and spiritual worlds and their relation to God are not expounded upon in great detail and the intricate technical concerns found in the debates of previous centuries, such as *waḥdat al-wujūd* versus *waḥdat al-shuhūd* or the primacy of *nubūwwat* or *wilāyat*, are not even topics of discussion. Even the terms *baqā'* and *fanā'*, explained briefly by Rasool in his texts, were somewhat unfamiliar or obscure terms to all but the more senior or studious

[29] He furthermore states that the student of Sufism seeks out "peace, contentment, patience and such other qualities." SchoolOfSufiTeaching, "Interview with Shaykh Hamid Hasan - Part 1 - What is Sufism."

[30] "What are the benefits of doing the practices," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, December 29, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=841wTDpJE8Q&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=27&t=0s.

students. Again, SOST is a more practice-based than theory-based organization, and the student is to follow the instructions of the *shaykh* in advancing through the curriculum. This syllabus is based on a cosmology and methodology for traversing it that is seen as having already been determined and elaborated over the course of 14 centuries of experimentation in the laboratory of the inner self, and the practices are emphasized as the means to experience its realities personally, rather than to speculate on them intellectually. What seems to also be of greater concern than theory is the results that travelling through this cosmology is intended to have, that is the transformative processes and their effects on the individual, which are considered further in relation to the practices, orthodoxy, activism, and more immediately, the subtle anatomy.

The Heart is the Most Powerful Laṭīfa

Explanations given of the *laṭā'if* at retreats and in group meetings closely follow the description Rasool provides in question 31 of *TTH*, enumerating the five *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr* and the five of the *'ālam-i khalq*. As for Hasan himself, in line with his tendency toward streamlined explanations, during both recorded interviews and in person, he does not delve into the intricacies of each individual *laṭīfa*, but instead places a great deal of emphasis on the heart as "the most powerful" of these, going further to say that the other *laṭā'if* are all actually part of the heart.[31] When he does mention any of the other *laṭā'if*, it is usually the negative influences of the unrefined *nafs* to which he refers, but again, even in such discussion, his focus remains mostly on the heart. Similarly, the heart, as not only the most powerful *laṭīfa* but also the first to be assigned during meditation, is the topic of one of the ten introductory lessons given by the London group. Accordingly, students normally spend the greatest amount of time on the *qalb* before being instructed to include the *rūḥ* in their meditation, for instance, the researcher was kept "sitting on the heart," as some students call it, for just over two years before being assigned the second intention.[32] Speed of advancement varies according to the individual, as another practitioner was known to have passed through all ten of the preliminary exercises during the same two-year period. One senior student remarked, however, that Hasan tends to be a bit stricter than his father in ensuring a student's diligence in one practice before assigning the next.[33] In any case, activating each of the subsequent remaining nine *laṭā'if* after the heart is said to generally proceed more quickly.

In attempts to learn more about the differences among these various *laṭā'if*, the researcher questioned numerous students who had taken *bay'a* and thus had presumably completed the preliminary exercises intended to activate or awaken all ten *laṭā'if*. Although those asked ranged from relative beginners to quite long-term and advanced students, at least one of whom had completed the transmissions of all five orders, there was a fairly uniform response and consensus that, although there was a clear difference between each *laṭīfa*, in terms of the experience of meditating on each, this facet of the spiritual training was something that had to be experienced oneself rather than conceptualized in words. This sentiment was also encountered in discussions by the researcher with some students of a Khālidī *shaykh* in Germany. One aspect of this experience, described below in the discussion of *murāqaba*, is that one may experience sensations in the vicinity of the *laṭā'if* or even visual phenomena.

When the student is deemed ready and instructed to proceed from meditating on the *qalb laṭīfa* to including the *rūḥ*, the instruction given by the *shaykh*, at least in the case of the researcher, consists of providing a new *niyya* and explaining where the corresponding point on the body is located without any theoretical explanation of the difference between the *qalb* and the *rūḥ*, since such things are to be experienced, not discussed. Moving on though, to more closely examine Hasan's own conceptual presentation of the *laṭā'if*, as mentioned, he focuses heavily on the heart, or perhaps all of the *laṭā'if* collectively as part of and under the label of the heart, and specifically on two aspects thereof: 1.) the heart's role in receiving inner knowledge and guidance along with 2.) its relation to "strengths" of character *vis-à-vis* "weaknesses."

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[31] Discussion with Hasan at the 2015 SOST retreat in Germany.

[32] By admission though, the first year of experiential investigation was marked by inconsistency as spurts of diligent daily meditation were interrupted by periods ranging from days to weeks of complacency and failure to perform the assigned practice.

[33] Discussion with a senior student at the 2015 SOST retreat in Germany.

Inner Knowledge & Guidance

On the first of these two themes, Hasan makes a distinction between two types of knowledge, that which is received through the mind and that which is received through the heart, what he calls "real" or "inner knowledge." He explains that "a lot of people around the world […] are searching for truth," that is trying to answer fundamental existential or religious questions, such as what the purpose of life is, what happens after death, the nature of God, and whether or not God exists.[34] He asserts that the answers to such questions cannot be reached through the mind, but can only be understood through the heart, or in his words, "Sufis believe that questions related to religion, God, spirituality, can never be understood by the mind. These are questions that need answers through the heart." This, however, requires spiritual training, as he says that "answers through the heart come when you work on your spiritual heart and when you develop it. And when you receive the inner knowledge […] through that […] you get answers to all these questions."[35]

He further explains that the mind is easily influenced by the *nafs*, and thus any knowledge acquired through the mind may be tainted and under the sway of the lower soul, or as he usually translates it, the "ego," which seeks to maintain control by leading one away from developing their heart. Saying that while most people believe in the superiority of the mind and that the heart "is just full of emotions and sentiments," Hasan claims, on the contrary, that "in reality the heart is much more powerful than the mind, but for that you have to develop it, the heart is really the real seat of knowledge." In addition to the ability of this "inner knowledge" received by the heart to provide answers to existential and religious or spiritual questions, it also aids in personal decisions in life. He explains how, as one develops the heart and receives this knowledge, that from it also comes "guidance," that is one gains intuitive insight on how to live one's life. Rather than relying on whim, sentiment, or pure intellect, they receive inspired guidance for the choices they make.[36] But again, to receive this inner knowledge and guidance, one first has to perform the practices, as Hasan says that "Spiritual practices help us to open up our hearts to be ready receive this knowledge."[37]

Strengths & Weaknesses

Also related to how life ought to be lived, a theme that Hasan presents even more frequently than that of the heart as a source of inner knowledge and guidance is his discussion of "strengths and weaknesses," the former being associated with the *qalb* and the latter with the *nafs*. In presenting this, Hasan sometimes invokes the Islamic concept of *fiṭra*, or the original nature of human beings, although without actually using the term. He explains that children are born with only strengths but as they become more engaged with the world, their weaknesses are developed, thus the prevalence in the world of "hatred and jealousy and greed and anger," aspects associated with the unrefined *nafs*. Conversely, the spiritual practices are said to initiate a transformation that cultivates one's strengths, so that they gradually come to dominate in one's personality and "you are more patient, you are more tolerant, you become more peaceful, you are more loving, you become more humbled,"[38] character traits which he relates to the development of the heart through spiritual practices. He often says that others may be the first to notice and comment on such positive changes in a person's character.

At the retreat in Poland in 2017, in speaking about personal character and strengths; with the examples of patience, tolerance, love, and compassion; and weaknesses; such as selfishness, hatred, jealousy, anger, and arrogance; Hasan asserted that when one is under the influence of the *nafs*, they are cultivating their weaknesses, as opposed to when they develop their heart through spiritual practices.

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[34] 2015 book reading in Munich and "Sufi retreat in Poland part 2," Andrzejs52, accessed October 20, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfaYKmpFnqk&t=5s.
[35] Audio recording from 2017 SOST retreat in Poland.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.; "Sufi retreat in Poland part 2," Andrzejs52.
[38] Such changes are said to begin to be easily recognizable after six to eight months of regularly performing the practices. Cf. SchoolOfSufiTeaching, "How do the practices relate to strengths and weaknesses."

He explained that the *nafs* serves to test and that "Satan works on human beings through the *nafs,*" but if one can work on their *nafs* and bring it under their control, then this makes it difficult for Satan. The process of doing this, however, is first begun by developing the heart. Despite explaining more than usual about the *nafs* on this occasion, in order to address the audience's questions, Hasan still returned to, and indeed placed greater emphasis on, the heart and the need to develop it and thereby one's strengths.[39] He explained that if the heart is not remembering God, then Satan can gain influence over it, and that the goal of all Sufi practices is "to develop your heart and to train your heart so that it can always remember Him, that's the whole purpose, every practice is basically to take you to that level where you don't forget Him for even a moment."

He acknowledges that this is difficult to achieve and does take time, but that even just an awareness of the workings of the *nafs* and Satan can help in resisting their influences.[40] The effects and relevance to one's worldly existence of this transformation, wherein "strengths" are developed so that they eclipse "weaknesses," will be discussed again below when considering the analytical category of activism. But thus far, we have seen how in speaking of purifying the heart and cleansing the self, while Rasool used concepts like *jadhba* and *sulūk* or *sayr-i anfusī* and *sayr-i āfāqī*, Hasan instead chooses to use terms like "strengths" and "weaknesses" to be able to more clearly and effectively reach his target audience.

Related to these two aspects of the human being is the preference for beginning spiritual training by developing the heart and thereby one's strengths. This consititutes the guiding principle that dictates the sequence in which spiritual training is carried out, that is *indirāj al-nihāyat fi'l-bidāyat*. This principle is featured in Hasan's explanation of why SOST students first begin with the Mujaddidī practices. While clarifying that he does not mean to assert the superiority of one Sufi order over another, since as he says, they all share the same goal but only differ in their practices or the means they use to attain that goal, he maintains that the Mujaddidī order has a particular efficacy for "people living in the modern times." To support this claim, in addition to mentioning silent *dhikr* and *murāqaba*, discussed in the next section, as among the most distinguishing characteristics of the Mujaddidiyya, Hasan highlights the principle of *INfB*, which dictates that training begin with work on the *qalb* before proceeding to the *nafs*, which he also explains is the reverse sequence of most other orders. He furthermore states that since the heart "is a very powerful center of consciousness," it is much easier to begin by working on it as opposed to the much more difficult and time-consuming approach of beginning with the *nafs*. On the latter aspect, Hasan notes that the Mujaddidī path offers faster progress with a lesser investment of time. He contrasts this more efficient means of spiritual development with earlier periods in the history of Sufism during which, he explains, people spent significantly more time on spiritual practices. So not only is beginning with the heart held to be easier, but it is also said to be faster and does not require extended periods of seclusion from the world, thus such a "completely new structure" is explained as being especially suited to the needs of contemporary students who, it is acknowledged, have busy lives and competing requirements for their time.[41]

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[39] Audio recording from 2017 SOST retreat in Poland.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Andrzejs52, "Sufi retreat in Poland part 2," YouTube, accessed October 20, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfaYKmpFnqk&t=5s; "Interview with Shaykh Hamid Hasan - Part 3 - Sufi Practices," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed December 29, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_dvg56I1pxY&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=5&t=0s; "Why do students in this order begin with the Mujaddidi practices," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed December 29, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qE44MjoDOIw&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=22&t=0s; and "Interview with Shaykh Hamid Hasan - Part 5 - Sufism and Modern Man," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed December 29, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oZhu1FEbZ4&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=6&t=0s.

Practices

In line with Rasool's original 1975 concept for IST, those interested in the teachings of SOST are invited to try the practices for themselves and then, based on their own experiences, decide whether or not this particular path suits them. The designation of "the practices," as used within SOST, usually refers to meditations and recitations prescribed by the *shaykh* for the student to perform daily. This includes the performance of *dhikr* and other parts of the order's silently recited litany (*waẓīfa*), including *durūd sharīf*, *khatm sharīf*, and recitations from the Quran. Perhaps most importantly, "the practices" also refers to *murāqaba*, which Hasan places the greatest emphasis on as being particularly powerful and it is the first practice begun by a new student. Accordingly, *murāqaba* is the primary focus for the following discussion, although the other aspects have been discussed in further detail in the chapter on Rasool's writings. Overall, however, it is said that by simply performing these practices, under the guidance and with the support of the *shaykh*, that a transformation in the individual will come about naturally. On how to gauge whether or not one is making progress, Hasan explains that it is often others that start to notice a change in the student and that instead of weaknesses like "hatred and jealousy and greed and anger," the practices cultivate one's strengths so that gradually, even within six months of consistent application of the practices, certain qualities are said to emerge and become more predominate in one's personality, such as "tolerance, patience, peace of mind, peace of heart, better control of anger, increased trust in God" and that "ultimately [the practitioner] becomes a better human being."[42]

While performing the practices, whether in doing the preliminary practices or after committing to the path through pledging *bay'a*, students are discouraged from taking part in "other philosophies or exercises such as yoga" because of the need for "a singleness of purpose" since, as Hasan explains, the practices of each spiritual tradition have their own particular effects and therefore combining practices can cause "confusion," and even "chaos," with regard to how the different practices affect one's life. He uses the analogy that just as one might consult different doctors about a physical illness but should not simultaneously take two different regimens of medication from two different physicians, likewise, one should also not engage in two different sets of spiritual practices. He therefore considers it advisable to "concentrate on one tradition at a time, see if it works for you or not, and then decide whether you want to continue with it or not."[43] Such can be seen as a response to the questing tendency among seekers of alternative spiritualities.

While five orders are taught, as mentioned, all students begin with the Mujaddidī practices unless they have some familial relationship with one of the other orders.[44] Hasan explains that while each order's goal is the same, the methods and the particular effects of those methods differ between orders. He asserts that the silent methods of the Mujaddidiyya "have been found to be very effective for the people of the modern times" and describes *murāqaba*, which he asserts is especially powerful, as "the main practice of the Mujaddidī order" as opposed to the other orders which center around "some form of *dhikr*," thus another reason for beginning with the Mujaddidiyya.[45] It should also be remembered here that major aspects of the Mujaddidiyya that are held up as reasons for its particular effectiveness especially in the modern era, such as *INfB* and *murāqaba*, were introduced by Sayyid 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh into the other orders that he passed on.

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[42] Book reading and SchoolOfSufiTeaching, "How does the student know they are making progress?"

[43] "Why is it important that a sufi student does not engage in other philosophies or exercises?," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed August 12, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-UPNcXuxX0.

[44] Hasan specifically mentions the Qādirī and Chishtī orders in this regard, likely because of their prevalence in the subcontinent as opposed to the Shādhilī or non-Mujaddidī Naqshbandī lineages.

[45] "Why do students in this order begin with the Mujaddidi practices," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed December 29, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qE44MjoDOIw&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=22&t=0s; "Interview with Shaykh Hamid Hasan - Part 5 - Sufism and Modern Man," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed December 29, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oZhu1FEbZ4&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=6&t=0s.

Starting the Practices

Just as all students begin with the Mujaddidiyya, they also begin with the same practice, *murāqaba* for the purpose of awakening the heart *laṭīfa*. This can be learned from a group leader at one of the weekly meetings or, as was the case for the researcher, instructions could be provided by way of an email with PDF instructions which might be followed up with a telephone call to address any questions or concerns. The PDF text itself is very brief, deals directly with specific instructions for how to perform the practice and what to expect, and is religiously neutral with no overt indications of an association with Islam for anyone unfamiliar with the words "Sufi" or "Mujaddidī." Aside from a cover sheet with SOST letterhead bearing the title "The Mujaddidi Order Preliminary Practices Lesson 1," the PDF consists of just under one page of text. The document contains only two Arabic technical terms, *qalb* and *laṭā'if*, and these appear in parentheses in transliterated italics after their English equivalents of "subtle centers of consciousness" and "Heart." The word *murāqaba* is not used at all and "meditation" appears in its place. The document allows the student to begin the first meditation practice without any background theoretical knowledge of Islamic or specifically Sufi doctrine.

As far as content, the text gives the location of the "first subtle centre," the intention to be made, and the instruction to sit quietly for 30 to 45 minutes. The reader is told that they should establish a regular time to perform this practice, but no mention is made of associating it with a specific Islamic prayer. The intention, which is made only once silently in the mind at the beginning of the meditation, is given only in English. It is a short, single sentence declaration that one turns their attention toward their heart and that their heart turns its attention toward the "Holy Essence." There is no specific sitting position prescribed other than the instruction not to lie down. The reader is told not to be concerned if they experience a rush of thoughts, as these will eventually subside. The goal is not to control one's thoughts but to turn away from worldly affairs, sincerely set the intention and wait for the blessings to come from the holy essence, or in the words of the text: "Simply, you have to sit, turn your attention, and wait for the blessings." The student is told that after some time they may experience a "drifting" state which might seem like sleep but in actuality is the state of having lost awareness of their self in meditation. It is also explained that over time, sensations or other phenomena in the area of the heart may be experienced and furthermore, that one may notice changes in their behavior and perspective.

Details pertaining specifically to Muslim students, like prayer times or the fact that *wuḍū'* should be performed before *murāqaba*, were explained verbally or in a separate PDF document. Further details were learned by the researcher from attending group meetings in person, such as the fact that the room in which one performs the practice is dimmed but not entirely dark, perhaps using a candle or a slight opening in the curtain to allow a small amount of light in. Also noticeable was the practice of wrapping oneself with a blanket during meditation. The blanket is typically draped over the head with some practitioners leaving the face exposed while others leave only a small opening for air, seeming to facilitate turning away from the outside world. Until the retreat attended in October 2017, the researcher had assumed that there was some sort of deep importance and symbolic significance behind the use of the blanket, something related to the etymological origins of the word Sufi as "wool wearer" or the tradition of passing on a *khirqa*. Yet upon asking the *shaykh* about this practice, he advised not to attach too much importance to it and that the blanket is not used in warmer climates, as observed in Hyderabad and in Bavaria during the warmest of the summer months. He further explained that it is used in cooler climates because it is "cozy" and helps the meditator to be comfortable.

Another detail not included in the official instructions is that the head is bowed while performing the practices as a sign of respect for God, the Prophet, and the saints of the lineage that are all believed to be spiritually present during the meditation and for the same reason, regardless of faith, women cover their hair while performing the practices and some of the Muslim men may choose to wear a prayer cap. An additional aspect is that some students, particularly those who are Muslim, may be given a second part of the *waẓīfa* at the same time as or shortly after the first. That practice is the recitation of *durūd sharīf*, a supplication for blessings upon the Prophet and his family. Some clue as to the purpose of this practice might be gleaned from Hasan's comment that "[…] it is important to create that love for the Prophet in your heart, because then it will be easier for you to follow […the Quran and

sunna].”[46] This might also explain why it is not always assigned to non-Muslim students from the outset, in line with the policy of not pressuring anyone to accept Islam.

Potential Experiences During the Practices

As far as what the student might expect to experience while performing *murāqaba*, we have already briefly encountered, in discussing the first lesson PDF as well as in the section on Rasool's writings, the potential rush of thoughts which should gradually die down, the “drifting” state (*ghunūdgī*), and perhaps the experience of certain other phenomena. Regardless of whether the thoughts eventually subside, or whether drifting is achieved or phenomena are experienced, the main point of the practice has been achieved as soon as one makes the *niyya* and sits sincerely waiting. The blessings (*baraka*) are understood to be received no matter what. By way of illustration, in conversation with one long-time student, the researcher mentioned that one particular session of *murāqaba* seemed worse for him due to excessive thoughts running through the mind and preventing the achievement of what he interpreted to be *ghunūdgī*,[47] something he had experienced in some previous sessions. The senior student advised against judging any meditation session, explaining that regardless of whether or not one's thoughts die down and one starts drifting, one still receives the blessings by performing the practice, and thus what is important is to set the intention and to wait.

Aside from drifting, Hasan explains that students may experience physical phenomena such as “pain, sensation, tingling, or some kind of warmth or cold in or around the heart or chest area,” the area associated with the five *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr*, or they may have what he calls “spiritual experiences,” meaning that they may “see some colors or lights or water or have some dreams or visions.” While saying that such experiences are positive, not much significance is attached to them, because what is more important is the spiritual progress and change that takes place in the practitioner, and without these, the “experiences have no value.” Hasan draws from and expands upon Rasool's automobile analogy on this topic in making a comparison to travelling by train with a pleasant view, saying that if the trains stops, then that view is of no benefit in reaching the destination. Similarly, even if it is dark outside but the train continues, then the destination will still be reached. On what the destination of the spiritual journey is, again he refers to the goals of Sufi practices: “to become closer to God, to purify your heart, to cleanse your *nafs* or your ego, and to develop good qualities of the character.”[48]

Students are discouraged, however, from sharing with other students any such experiences they may have. Hasan explains that each student is different and that experiencing such phenomena is not necessary for making progress and “may not have any direct relation to one's spiritual development.” Additionally, if students who encounter such phenomena discuss these experiences with others who have not, the latter may become discouraged. Further still, when students share experiences, they may try to interpret them amongst themselves, an undertaking that Hasan says should only be carried out by someone who is actually qualified and has the ability to do so, such as the *shaykh*.[49] Thus, while not emphasizing aspects such as visions and dreams, Hasan does not at all deny the possibility of them containing special messages.[50]

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[46] Audio recording from 2017 SOST retreat in Poland.

[47] Discussion with a senior student at the 2015 SOST retreat in Germany.

[48] “What do students experience during the meditation?,” SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed August 12, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJBo6Sf2q-g; also compare with *TTH* 36.

[49] “Why is sharing one's experiences with other students discouraged,” SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed December 30, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nxfhr_0z9dQ&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=11&t=0s.

[50] In fact, on the somewhat related topic of dreams, at the 2017 Poland retreat, in response to questions from the audience, Hasan explained that dreams come in three types: 1.) normal day-to-day dreams, which are not significant and can be ignored, 2.) dreams which come from God that have significance and meaning to be

Regularity with the Practices

In seeking to assist students on the path and to introduce it to those who are interested in embarking on it, Hasan's discussions focus not on explaining concepts and describing the practices in further detail than the instructions provide, something already done in Rasool's two books which students are free to refer to, but on encouraging the establishment of regularity and punctuality in performing the practices they are assigned. Hasan explains that everyone has the potential to make progress along the path and that generally "anyone who is regular with the practices will succeed." He further states that "these practices are so powerful that if you just do them regularly, everything happens on its own."[51] Yet perhaps his greatest challenge, and therefore a major part of Hasan's public discussions, is getting students to establish consistency in their assigned practices. He concedes that it can be difficult to become committed to doing so, first of all, he explains, because people have busy lives and the practices require a consistent investment of time to be effective.

On finding such time, he explains that this is largely dependent upon the degree of importance each individual places upon spirituality in their life, noting that "where there is a will, there is a way."[52] During the 2015 Germany retreat, one senior student, using the analogy of cups of different sizes representing each student's capacity for conducting the practices, explained that the *shaykh* will only prescribe each student enough practices to fill the size of their cup at any given point. Thus, while a beginner may only have a limited capacity, with time it becomes easier to complete the assigned practices, one's cup "grows" and they are able to manage doing more. When the researcher, in a private conversation with the same individual, expressed concern about the prospect of someday spending four to six hours daily in performing spiritual practices, the senior student, himself a tenured professor, again emphasized that with time, it becomes easier and that, despite his own busy work schedule, he found time for not only the practices, but also a number of other interests in his personal life. When the researcher expressed this same concern to the *shaykh*, his advice was not to worry about potential future practices, but to strive to become regular in what was already assigned. Indeed, the *shaykh*, having written a dissertation himself and understanding how scarce time can be, seems to have kept the practices he assigned the researcher to a minimum.

Also related to ensuring regularity and punctuality, as mentioned, the various practices are assigned specific times of the day, which Hasan explains are intended to assist the student in establishing a routine so that they become a part of one's daily schedule, thereby ensuring regularity in performing them. Nevertheless, there is flexibility in cases when it is not possible to perform the practices at the appointed times. Yet, he says, it remains important to "have your own fixed timings" rather than continuously changing them and thereby risking missing them. Here he again emphasizes the importance of placing a high priority on the practices, saying that if they are not foremost in one's priorities that "every other day there'll be some reason or some excuse for missing the practices."[53]

Another point toward the student's benefit with regard to finding time is that, according to Hasan, if done consistently over a period of time, *murāqaba* can eventually reduce the need for sleep. Thus, when *murāqaba* is incorporated as a regular part of one's schedule, the time devoted to meditation

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understood; and 3.) dreams that come from Satan, which should be ignored. He explains that it is difficult to distinguish between the last two types, so one should ask someone who has the necessary experience and knowledge to help determine whether the dream is from God, and then help one to understand it, or if it is from Satan, so that it can be ignored. Yet he goes on to say that with spiritual development, it becomes possible to reach a level where students can understand dreams for themselves. Audio recording from 2017 SOST retreat in Poland.

[51] "How many people succeed on the path and how do you evaluate their progress?," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed August 12, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_UjuZC_7X4.

[52] "Is it challenging to commit regular practices," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed December 30, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAClZVLn-To&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=23&t=0s; "Does a consistent meditation practice reduce the need for sleep," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, December 30, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IooueTXW9xg&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=19&t=0s.

[53] "How can a student establish a consistent daily practice?," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, November 15, 2016, accessed August 12, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4N7_i5LToqA.

can be recovered by sleeping less. He explains that if a person normally sleeps for seven hours and they are assigned two hours' worth of practices, they will "feel much more energy and much more freshness" if they perform their assigned two hours of meditation and sleep only five hours.[54] Such an assertion might lend further credence to potential arguments that *ghunūdgī* is simply the process of falling asleep or even a state of lucid dreaming and that *kashf* are only dreams experienced during REM sleep, but again, even if such a position is accepted, this can only be applied to the material physical aspect of the human being rather than the purported immaterial, non-physical, or spiritual aspect, which cannot be subject to traditional scientific inquiry and perhaps can only be explored by experiential investigation. Finally, beyond competing demands on the student's time, such as work, family, and social obligations, and sleep; Hasan mentions "spiritual hinderances," namely 1.) the *nafs*, which works to prevent one from performing the practices even when one is aware of the benefits, and 2.) Satan, who continually seeks to lead astray and to keep the student away from the path. These challenges, Hasan advises, can be overcome with sufficient willpower and determination to be consistent in the practices.[55]

Role of the Guide and Community

On the question of whether or not it is necessary to have a *shaykh* and belong to a *ṭarīqa*, much like Rasool and Saʿīd Khān, Hasan explains that "Theoretically you don't have to be a part of an order and you don't have to have a *shaykh*, but practically it is very important." To illustrate his point, he draws a comparison between trying to study a particular field like economics on one's own versus through a university where one can receive guidance, structure, support, examinations, and access to resources. He says that similarly, the lone spiritual seeker may wonder such things as which practices to perform and how long to do them as well as what to do if one encounters any problems. He explains that belonging to an order and having a *shaykh* provides the necessary structure and guidance but, more importantly, it also provides the necessary "heart-to-heart transmission" which can only come from a *shaykh*.[56]

As described in the section on Rasool's thought, the term *nisbat* refers to both 1.) affinity with the *shaykh*, due to the *shaykh*'s own level of spiritual attainment as well as his role as a connection to the *silsila* as a conduit for the divine blessings, and 2.) the affinity with God which is facilitated by the first sense of the term. This connection to or affinity with the *shaykh* is required to receive the necessary "spiritual transmission" or *tawajjuh* from him, and for Hasan, this connection is maintained by regular performance of the practices. This is furthermore "not dependent on physical proximity to the *shaykh*" although the relationship with the *shaykh* can be nurtured by attending the various retreats held throughout the year in a variety of places. Still, Hasan notes that many students have never met him in person, communicating with him by e-mail or telephone while still receiving the same guidance, support and transmissions as students who see him often in person. For him, the most important thing is "the teachings," that is performing the practices.[57]

Another important aspect of maintaining the relationship with the *shaykh*, one that was not mentioned by Hasan himself but only by his senior students, is the observance of proper *adab*, which

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[54] "Does a consistent meditation practice reduce the need for sleep," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed December 30, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IooueTXW9xg&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=19&t=0s.

[55] "Is it challenging to commit regular practices," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed December 30, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAClZVLn-To&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=23&t=0s; "Does a consistent meditation practice reduce the need for sleep," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed December 30, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IooueTXW9xg&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=19&t=0s.

[56] "Do you necessarily need to be a part of an order and have a Shaykh?," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed August 12, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQYEt5631cA.

[57] "How can a student maintain spiritual connection with the Shaykh?," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed August 12, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuUnm16kf3w.

following Rasool they translate as "spiritual courtesy." *Adab* is the subject of one of the London group's introductory lessons and while acknowledging that there are external behavioral guidelines that are learned along the way from more senior students, such as the prescription that the *shaykh* be the last one to enter and the first one to leave during meditation, what is more important, at least initially, is the inner feeling of respect and even love for the *shaykh*. This feeling ought to be fostered and protected in ways like avoiding discussing mundane affairs such as politics with the *shaykh* or telling jokes. Also, if one experiences any doubts or has any sort of problem with the *shaykh*, the student should respectfully bring up the matter with him in person rather than allow it to fester.

In SOST, *bay'a* is not a step that is taken lightly. It is a private affair and the researcher only knows of this oath having been taken once during the four retreats in Germany despite repeat non-Muslim, and therefore non-*bay'a*, attendees and indeed, many students have spent a number of years on the preliminary practices before deciding to take this step. Another point which demonstrates how seriously this oath is taken is the fact that for a prospective student to even begin the preliminary practices, they must not have already taken *bay'a* with another *shaykh*. Hasan explained how a small number of exceptions can be made to this rule in such cases as where the student obtains and produces written permission from their previous *shaykh* or if that *shaykh* has died. Another such circumstance wherein an exception might be considered is if the student unknowingly took part in one of the mass *bay'a* ceremonies sometimes found among what might be called mediating *shaykh*s.[58]

On interaction with the *shaykh*, the general tone is relatively relaxed if compared to, for instance, those who might be labelled as mediating *shaykh*s. When not in the meditation room, Hasan dons standard Western-style clothing, carries his own luggage, mingles informally with students, and at meals he sits at the same level without any particular seating position to distinguish him as the *shaykh*. This does not, however, mean that he never plays the role of the *shaykh* and his students that of disciples, only that his manner is more "toned-down," which of course makes him more approachable to those students in the West who may not be as comfortable with the master-disciple relationship, as compared with more charisma/mediation-oriented lineages.[59] In the latter case, devotional-style images of *shaykh*s abound on the Internet and may even be carried by each *murīd* as essential personal items. These are often professional portraits that depict the *shaykh* in various poses, such as a tilted head with a warm smile or gazing intensely, enigmatically, and hypnotically with kohl-rimmed eyes. In some cases, this may be connected with the practice of visualizing the *shaykh* (*taṣawwur-i shaykh*). This stands in stark contrast to SOST where, at the beginning of this research, it was difficult to find even a single image of the *shaykh* and still now one can only find his likeness in the few videos posted to YouTube and nowhere on the main official website. Likewise, at retreats, group photos with him were taken informally and at the insistence of his students, to which he seemed to reluctantly acquiesce, apparently wanting to avoid creating a "cult of personality" around himself.

Similarly, when he enters the room or arrives at a retreat, he is not received with any sort of fanfare aside from the fact that students may stand to show respect, but outside of prayers and meditation sessions, such as during meals, he actually seems to try to slip in discreetly to avoid causing a disruption. Nevertheless, senior students are very attentive to the *shaykh*'s needs, such as in preparing his breakfast or ensuring details about his lodging arrangement, so much so in fact that one of the nuns at the monastery in Germany lightly chastised them for "spoiling" him, saying that "he's such a nice man, you don't want to turn him into a guru." One final note with regard to interacting with the *shaykh* provides the opportunity to demonstrate a contrast between retreats in Germany and the one observed in Hyderabad. While the *shaykh* mingled fairly freely with students at the German retreats, such as while eating, in Hyderabad he was only seen leading prayers, performing the practices, or in personal meetings. On one hand, this might be seen as South Asian students being more comfortable with a distant *shaykh*, yet it could just as easily be attributed to differences in lodging and eating arrangements or the numbers of attendees.

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[58] Discussion with Hasan at 2017 SOST retreat in Germany.

[59] In Hyderabad, he was not observed eating with or mingling with attendees during the retreat and was only present for prayers, the practices, and individual meetings.

Collective Practice

Turning now to the collective aspect of SOST spiritual training, although the exercises are carried out individually, attendance at weekly group meetings is emphasized and strongly encouraged. Hasan explains that during group meditation, the blessings received by each student are shared collectively with the other members of the group.[60] So while each individual receives *baraka* according to their own capacity, when meditating in a group, the blessings are shared according to the collective capacity of a group of individuals at various stages of advancement. The contact sharing or transference of *baraka* is also not limited to only the individual engaged in the practices as the researcher was often told that his wife, although not performing the practices, was surely benefitting from the blessings being received. This was also expressed by Hasan in stating that whenever someone in a household is doing spiritual practices, not only do they receive blessings, but everyone else in the home does as well, and everyone is "affected in a positive way."[61]

Furthermore, students provide descriptions of an experience that Durkheim might explain as collective effervescence, which not only contributes to group cohesion and a sense of fellowship but, perhaps more importantly, it also helps reinforce the individual's dedication to being regular in carrying out the practices.[62] Students often describe how during and after attending a retreat, an intensive period of performing the practices collectively and in the company of the *shaykh*, they feel as if their battery has been recharged and they have a reinvigorated commitment to the practices. On the London group's blog, for example, one student reflects eloquently on a retreat they had attended in London in 2016, saying: "It can be hard to leave and return to daily responsibilities – but the light returns with us, illuminating our way and granting fresh strength to persevere with our practices."[63] Similar experiences, though to a lesser degree, have been used to describe the effects of attending weekly meetings. Hasan himself affirms that collectively shared blessings make it easier to perform the practices more regularly, comparing weekly attendance at meetings to a "booster shot" that facilitates consistency in carrying out one's assigned practices.[64]

Meditating at the Graves of Saints

In concluding the present section, another difference highlighted by observing the retreat in Hyderabad is the practice of *ziyāra*, or the visitation of saintly graves and shrines. There are potentially a number of contributing factors as to why this is not a part of SOST's public self-presentation. One might look to the controversy among Muslims surrounding the practice due to reformist critique or alternatively, to its association with a rural, popular, collective mysticism as opposed to urban, elite, individual mysticism that might be more appealing to SOST's Western constituency. Yet one might do better to look more toward two simple facts: 1.) that it is not one of the daily scheduled practices, but a supplementary means for accruing *baraka* to aid in spiritual progress, and 2.) there is a lack of access to saintly shrines in the West. While there are at least two, the shrines of Bawa Muhaiyaddin in Pennsylvania and that of Abdul Wahab Siddique in England, they are exceptionally few and far between when compared with Muslim areas of South Asia, where it is not uncommon to have several *dargāh*s within the same village. Similarly, based on ethnographic fieldwork among several Sufi lineages in western Europe, Francesco Piraino has found that *ziyāra* tends not to play a central role in day-to-day

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[60] "What is the importance of attending group meetings," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed December 30, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJ5GIy11ZV0&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=8&t=0s.

[61] Audio recording from 2017 SOST retreat in Poland.

[62] Arthur Buehler, "The Twenty-first-century Study of Collective Effervescence: Expanding the Context of Fieldwork," *Fieldwork in Religion* 7, No. 1 (2012), 70-97.

[63] "Reflection on the London retreat, February 2016." School of Sufi Teaching, London. May 17, 2016. Accessed October 20, 2017. http://www.schoolofsufiteaching.org/reflection-on-the-london-retreat-february-2016.html.

[64] SchoolOfSufiTeaching, "What is the importance of attending group meetings?"

practice and that when it is performed while travelling for the primary purpose of visiting the living *shaykh*, it fulfills a supplemental and secondary role for accruing *baraka*.[65]

Figure 8 *Dargāh* on the Outskirts of Hyderabad
Photo by the Researcher

In contrast to SOST events in Germany, visits to local *dargāh*s were integrated into the retreat schedule in Hyderabad, such as those of Syed Ahmed Ullah Shah Qadri Shaheed and Husayn Shah Wali. Such visits took place immediately after *fajr* prayer and participants walked from the mosque to the tomb, made a short intention given by the *shaykh* so that the blessings that the deceased saint enjoys from his proximity to God would pass from the saint's heart to the practitioner's own heart, and then they sat in *murāqaba* at the grave. Hasan, when asked during a private meeting with the researcher about the sometimes contentious issue of *ziyāra*, explained that the saints remain "alive in their graves" and are able to share or pass on some the *baraka* they enjoy from their proximity to God with those who visit the tombs to assist in their spiritual progress.

When asked what exactly *baraka* is, he explained it as blessings that come from God and that assist in one's spiritual progress, and he furthermore elucidated that when saints share some of their *baraka*, it can help the student to overcome obstacles they face on the path. The "bone of contention," Hasan explained, in the debate over the permissibility of the practice is whether or not the visitor to the grave is asking for something directly of the saint entombed there, which would essentially be praying to and thereby worshipping the saint and therefore impermissible, as opposed to seeking to share from the greater degree of *baraka* that the saint enjoys because of his proximity to God or asking the saint to pray to God on one's behalf. He lamented how caretakers of the shrines, often descendants of the saints

[65] Francesco Piraino, "Pilgrimages in Western European Sufism," and also M. Amer Morgahi, "Pilgrimage to a shrine: The recreation of a Sufi tradition in the UK," both of which are in Ingvild Flaskerud and Richard J. Natvig (eds.), *Muslim Pilgrimage in Europe* (New York and London: Routledge, 2017).

entombed there (*sajjāda nashīn*), sometimes encourage the former impermissible practice for financial gain.

Another note on *ziyāra* involves the role of the living *shaykh* in relation to the practice. Just prior to the Hyderabad retreat, the researcher had been to Sirhind to visit the tomb complex of Aḥmad Sirhindī and it was politely explained to him by fellow participants that it would have been better, in terms of both *baraka* received as well as appropriate *adab*, to have spoken to the *shaykh* before making such a visit. In explanation of why, the analogy was given that if one were visiting an important person that one did not know personally, that it would be better to be introduced by an intermediary and that the *shaykh* could serve such a role, in an extra-physical sense. Before returning to Delhi after the retreat, the researcher had the opportunity to express to the *shaykh* his desire to visit the graves of Shāh Walī Allāh and Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz. Not only did the *shaykh* give his blessing to do so, but he also drew a map in the researcher's notes for how to find the tomb.

Figure 9 *Fajr* Prayer before Performing *Murāqaba* at the Above Tomb
Photo by the Researcher

In concluding this topic, even though *ziyāra* is neither emphasized nor much elaborated on in the literature of Rasool or SOST and there is a lack of immediate access to the tombs of Muslim saints in the West, students living there do have the opportunity to take part in the practice during the abovementioned annual international retreats. For instance, students who attended the 2016 retreat in Uzbekistan were able to visit the tombs of early Khwājagān and Naqshbandī saints, including in fact seven links in the *silsila* from Ghidjuwānī to Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband at Bukhara in addition to other shrines, such as that of Aḥrār as well as the prophet Daniel in Samarkand. As also seen in Hyderabad, *ziyāra* is not limited to the graves of saints within SOST *silsila*s and prophets, so while the tomb of Salmān al-Fārisī was visited during the 2017 Jerusalem retreat, so was that of Rabi'a al-Adawiyya along with numerous other holy sites, including the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque. Likewise, those

who attended the 2015 retreat in Konya, visited the tombs of Ḥājī Baktāsh Walī (d. 1271), the namesake of the Bektashiyya, and of course Rūmī along with others of significance to the Mawlawiyya.

Relationship with Islam

To introduce the consideration of the relationship to Islam of SOST today, we open with a particularly insightful anecdote. One member of the London group, who is of non-Muslim background and who attended the 2018 retreat in Germany, described how she discovered SOST's website after encountering a quote by Idries Shah and doing some further reading and searching into the topic of Sufism. She contrasted the kind of secular image of Sufism that she had gotten from Shah's writings with her first impression of attending a meeting of the SOST group in London, describing having said to herself: "Oh my goodness, they're *so* Islamic!" On the other hand, however, an *'ālim* might see something entirely different, perhaps picking up on a student or two, who may have only recently embraced Islam, not raising their hands quite high enough for the *takbīr*, unconsciously allowing their toes to rise off of the floor during the *sujūd*, or not bowing quite low enough for the *rukū'*.

This highlights the importance of the relativity of different perspectives. In an environment including non-Muslims with varying degrees of past exposure to Islam as well as Muslims of diverse regional backgrounds, SOST tends to emphasize the spirit of the law and sincerity to follow it over the exactitude of its form, along with being highly contextually adaptive. As under Rasool, those exploring the possibility of conversion are allowed to do so at their own pace, taking a gradual approach to the *sunnat*-ization their life, if they so choose. In this same spirit of not having any compulsion in religious affairs, in some contexts and situations, a religiously neutral tone is set by the language used or the venues chosen, but in all cases, a climate of openness to diversity is deliberately fostered. Additionally, Hasan emphasizes that divine revelation is spiritual in nature and that beyond only literalist interpretations, it must be understood through the heart.

Spirit over Form

On the issue of spirit over form, Hasan opines how many contemporary Muslims have "forgotten the true message of Islam" and that "the form of the religion has become more important than its essence or spirit."[66] Expanding on this, he says that excessive importance is sometimes placed on aspects of the *sunna* related to culture while ignoring facets that are for him far more important and central to the message of Islam. He describes how people become wrapped up in aspects like what and how the Prophet ate or how he dressed and that they completely ignore the aspect of his character, which Hasan feels is the more important aspect of his life[67] and incidentally, the facet of his life, as they understand it, that SOST is trying to emulate by cultivating their own "strengths" through "developing the heart."

This focus on "spirit" over "form" certainly does not mean that the externals of Islam are done away with or followed half-heartedly. On the contrary, from what the researcher was able to observe over the last three years, members of SOST that converted to Islam seemed, at least outwardly, to be quite sincere, eager, and earnest in their efforts to educate themselves about their new confession and to faithfully fulfill its obligations to the letter. In this vein, students considering conversion are informally given assistance and instructions on the basics of Islamic belief and practice, generally in accordance with the Hanafi *madhab*, although there are also Shi'i members who have pledged *bay'a*. As one group leader from the UK explained, the emphasis when providing instruction to potential converts is on major aspects such as the articles of faith, how to pray, knowing what is *halāl* versus *harām*, and particularly the spirit, substance, or broader message rather than delving deeply into the intricacies of form. Still, neither the *shaykh* nor his group leaders are *'ulamā'* and they do not present themselves as such, nor do they try to fulfill such functions. Again, the emphasis at SOST events is on the practices as opposed to specific moralizing instructions and it is largely left to the individual to educate and regulate themselves on orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

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[66] Audio recording from 2017 SOST retreat in Poland.
[67] Ibid.

In this regard, Hasan encourages students to do their very best in following the outward forms of the religion, yet at the same time, he emphasizes that what is more important is one's inner intention and the effort one makes. Recognizing that "no one is perfect, no one is following everything one hundred percent," Hasan asserts that what is most important "is your intention and your effort," particularly in addressing those who are new to Islam. In explaining this in more detail, he says that in adhering to the guidance of the Quran and *sunna*, first one has to genuinely believe that it is something important for them to follow, then they have to actually have the intention to follow it, and finally, they have to make a sincere effort to live it. He believes that if these three criteria are genuinely met, then despite one's inevitable shortcomings, "God is all-merciful."[68]

Contextual Adaptivity

A major effect of this emphasis on "spirit" over "form" is that it renders SOST's approach to spiritual training highly context adaptive. That is it allows the IST/SOST curriculum, although tailorable to the needs of individual students, to be administered across a range of cultural contexts relatively unchanged while interpretations of the external aspects of the faith, that is how to practically apply it, are understood according to the circumstances. Both the emphasis on essence over form and the adaptability that characterizes SOST can be discerned in the words used in a fundraising video for the completion of the London *zawiya*, wherein it is said that the center is intended to represent "the spirit of Islam in London" and also to "harmonize with the local community."[69] Such adaptiveness to varying cultural contexts is particularly well illustrated by comparing certain aspects of the retreats observed in Germany with the one attended in Hyderabad.

Among most participants at SOST events observed in Germany, there were seldom any obvious visible markers of Islamic or, perhaps more accurately, Islamicate identity. For instance, few men wore beards and for those that did, including the *shaykh*, it was kept shortly trimmed. The *shaykh* wore a white *shalwār qamīż* (a traditional South Asian outfit consisting of baggy trousers and a long shirt) and *ṭāqīya* (prayer cap) during prayer and meditation but casual Western attire at most other times. Other men were typically only distinguishable from average non-Muslim German men by a prayer cap which was usually only worn while performing the prayers and practices and similarly, few women wore the *ḥijāb* outside of the prayer room. In contrast, however, nearly all participants in Hyderabad, including non-Muslims, generally wore a *ṭāqīya* and *shalwār qamīż*, usually both white. Also, while eating at retreats in Germany, everyone sat in chairs at the tables provided by the monastery or retreat center, whereas meals in Hyderabad were consumed while seated on the floor.

More significantly, another of the most obvious differences to the average non-Muslim Euro-American observer, and potentially one of the most controversial, revolves around the practice of *purdah*, or the separation of genders. In Germany, both men and women pray and perform *murāqaba* in the same room, though in separate lines with the men in front, but all can freely intermingle before and afterwards, whereas at the Hyderbad retreat, the two females in attendance made use of different rooms for the entire duration of the retreat. While sharing a taxi to the airport after the retreat with two other attendees, one of whom was one of the two female participants, herself raised as a Hindu, she informed the researcher that this more conservative arrangement was rather different than other retreats she had attended in South Asia, which she describes as being, so far as gender interaction is concerned, arranged similarly to those in Germany. When asked about this separation, Hasan explained that it was simply a cultural difference, and that the practice of *purdah* was in conformity with the local cultural norm. Critics might see such administering of SOST in a way that adapts to local norms as being wishy washy, morally flexible, or even two-faced, yet for these suppositional critics, such aspects that Hasan considers as related to form/culture may be important issues, but it seems that for him, such differences take a back seat to the essence/spirit, which is best apprehended through the refinement of one's character through the practices.

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[68] Ibid.

[69] SchoolOfSufiTeaching, "Fundraising appeal for the London School of Sufi Teaching Zawiyah."

The Encounter with Islam

It is not kept a secret that the Sufism of SOST is decidedly an Islamic Sufism, nor is it a secret that if one is to complete the entire curriculum, embracing Islam is a requirement. Nevertheless, the non-Muslim approaching SOST is not thrown headlong into an entirely new belief/life system and this new universe of Islam where one seeks to model one's own life on the life of the Prophet, is not thrust upon one all at once, or even at all. It is left entirely up to each individual if and if so, how quickly to immerse themself in Islam, or not. The desire to learn more about Islam, and possibly to embrace it, is something that must come from within the student. A number of students who eventually came to embrace Islam and pledge *bay'a*, some of whom having done so under Rasool, describe spending a number of years performing the preliminary practices and having had no intention or interest at all in converting to Islam, yet nevertheless one day feeling compelled to do so, personally from within rather than due to external pressure. Conversely, some students have been active in SOST for years and still have not embraced Islam. So in SOST we see a presentation of Islamic Sufism that facilitates a similar sort of interfaith exchange that we saw taking place in the eighteenth century at the Delhi *khānaqāh* of Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān, where Muslim and Hindu disciples gathered under one teacher. This is facilitated by making non-Muslim students feel more welcome and less overwhelmed through 1.) offering a more religiously neutral presentation in majority non-Muslim areas, 2.) displaying openness and sensitivity to cultural differences, and 3.) encouraging those investigating Islam to pace themselves and to focus on the essence over the exact form.

Religiously Neutral Presentation

The sometimes religiously neutral presentation of SOST has been seen in the PDF instructions for the first practice of *murāqaba* as well as in the choice of, instead of a local mosque, private apartments or a Yoga studio for weekly meetings, an Inayati Sufi center for a book reading, and for retreats in Germany, a monastery or other center, particularly those that often also hosts retreats for alternative spiritualities. It should be noted, however, that even in Hyderabad, despite a plurality of mosques in the neighborhood, the retreats were still held in someone's home. The choice of a more controlled private venue over a mosque, in both Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority areas, likely has a number of reasons, including convenience of logistics as well as ensuring that they are undisturbed during the practices, but perhaps there is also an element of the reformist critique forcing a degree of discretion. A perhaps related incentive to not hold retreats in local mosques in the Western context is also that it can provide a culturally neutral environment, where no single ethnic version of Islam predominates. This is especially true since most mosques have a particular ethno-regional connection and many of the mosques that do transcend such differences are Salafī-oriented and not very welcoming of Sufism.

Looking further at the experience of attending the retreat in Hyderabad, a major difference from those in Germany was that the encounter with Islamic conventions and prescriptions was more immediate in Hyderabad. With only three non-Muslims in attendance, prayers and *murāqaba* were performed in the same room, whereas at the first two retreats in Germany, prayers and *murāqaba* were held in separate rooms. Also, upon the researcher's arrival in Hyderabad and just before the first meditation session attended, he was shown the washroom and told that that was where he could "freshen up," by which was undoubtedly meant performing *wuḍū'*. On several other occasions throughout the beginning couple of days of the retreat, the researcher was politely invited to freshen up. He was also immediately invited by some friendly young boys to take part in the prayer. They had already taught one Hindu attendee the basic physical postures and movements which he was performing alongside them in the group. They were not forcing Islam upon the researcher, only inviting and helping him do what everyone else was doing, whereas in Germany, while most attendees are praying, performing *wuḍū'*, and so forth, not everyone is and for those who are not, it is left up to their own initiative to begin if they so choose.

To describe this phenomenon as a deemphasis on Islam would be crude and inaccurate, since Islam is indispensable for SOST, and it would likewise be mistaken to frame it as a sort of "no pressure" *da'wa*. Proselytization is neither a stated aim of SOST nor does it appear to be a somehow subversively pursued agenda, unless one considers the upper limit to the curriculum to be so. In fact, to ask if the attempts of SOST to spread Sufism are really hidden attempts to spread Islam is actually to pose a false

question. They are spreading a Sufi lineage that is unambiguously Islamic, yet they allow non-Muslims to take part, so the real question is whether there is a deliberate pressure for non-Muslims to convert. From what the researcher was able to observe and also from second-hand reports, this is not at all the case. On the contrary, there is a deliberate avoidance of putting pressure on individuals to convert. There is also no agenda to Islamize society either, especially given their low-key, small numbers approach, as compared with larger scale orders seeking conversion as a stated mission and boasting of their high numbers of converts such as seen with the survey.

The question of one's faith rarely if ever even came up. The researcher actually felt a bit rude for asking participants if they were Muslim or not, not because of anyone's reactions, only because it was not really a topic of discussion for most people, it seemed rather a private affair. While most answers were a clear yes or no, sometimes the question was met more ambiguously, such as by answering, "What do you mean by being a Muslim?" This also brings up the question of "Whose Islam?" SOST, as with some other *ṭarīqa*s with a significant footprint in both East and West, like the Budshishiyya, a diversity of interpretations are allowed to exist simultaneously within the same community. One German respondent, a long time student of SOST and unambiguously a convert to Islam, when asked if she attended any of the local mosques in her city, mentioned that she sometimes does but that certain expectations like wearing a dress instead of pants, understood as being more culture specific to the local majority Turkish Muslim community, made her feel less than welcome or able to be herself, unlike among SOST practitioners.[70]

Openness and Sensitivity to Diversity

Whether in Bavaria or Hyderabad, despite differences observed, a general atmosphere of openness and sensitivity to diversity prevailed at SOST events attended. We have seen the religiously neutral tone adopted in the European setting and in Hyderabad, beyond standard hospitality, a great deal of thoughtfulness was shown to potential religious or cultural differences of the researcher and ensuring his comfort. Upon arriving at the retreat, local participants, and the abovementioned group of young boys in particular, were diligent in ensuring that he felt at ease in this new cultural setting. This manifested in ways like asking whether the researcher eats "veg" or "non-veg,"[71] thus displaying sensitivity to religious or other dietary restrictions, or providing silverware to eat with instead of the hands, or ensuring that a chair was available for him to sit on if he wished, as opposed to using the floor like everyone else. These may seem like small gestures that some would take for granted, but they are far from the rule and add up quickly to produce a distinctively hospitable environment.

One respondent in Germany that had first begun the practices in India mentioned that he felt as though; in an effort to make him more comfortable, less overwhelmed, and indeed to reduce any culture shock; he was invited more toward groups and events that it was perceived he might be more comfortable and at home in, that is those that might be characterized as more culturally international and cosmopolitan.[72] Dickson observed a similar phenomenon among the Halveti-Jerrahis in the US, wherein the *shaykh* tended to direct potential students of Muslim background and non-Muslims to different *khalīfa*s and groups respectively, likely fostering two approaches for two types of students. While for the Halveti-Jerrahis, two different organizations with distinct approaches to Islam developed after the *shaykh*'s death,[73] this was not the case with SOST after Rasool's passing, and as we will see in Part Three, the Circle Group has a very similar relationship to Islam.

Similarly, early on, such as in London, SOST found its students largely among Western spiritual seekers of non-Muslim background and this was followed by a deliberate expansion to include those of Muslim background. In Germany, the senior group leader mentioned that Hasan had advised

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[70] 2015 Germany Retreat and again at the 2017 Germany Retreat.
[71] In India, with its majority Hindu and often vegetarian population but also a large Muslim minority who may eat meat, restaurants often label items on their menus as "veg" or "non-veg."
[72] 2017 Germany Retreat.
[73] Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 107-11.

against expanding too quickly into the traditional Muslim sector,[74] likely to prevent the kind of tension and friction that might lead to attrition and even internal schisms from differing views on how to live the faith, but also to foster a plurality of readings of the revelation. Such gradualism at the collective level in introducing this Islamic Sufi lineage to the West, from mostly non-Muslim spiritual seekers to also include those of Muslim background, also occurs at the level of the individual, with particular attention being paid to not overwhelming those who have recently embraced Islam.

By way of illustration, when Hasan learned of the ad hoc class on prayer that had been given at the 2017 retreat in Germany, he encouraged students that wanted to begin performing the prayers to start by focusing on the obligatory (*farḍ*) prayer cycles (*raka'āt*) before including the optional (*sunna*) cycles, seeming to want to slowly introduce those just learning about Islam rather than overwhelming them all at once with the full breadth of the *sunna*. It should be remembered that those in majority non-Muslim areas who are investigating Islam, and even those who have converted more recently, may still be learning the very basics of how to live the faith. Those individuals are at a disadvantage without the benefit of being continuously immersed, let alone raised, in a Muslim-majority context where so many prescriptions of *fiqh* have been incorporated into daily behavioral norms, reinforced by the surrounding community, and thus come as second nature. A paced approach toward *sunnat*-izing one's lifeworld, which to many is surely a daunting task, seems to foster the longevity of the effort and sustained enthusiasm for gaining and implementing knowledge of the faith. Most important, however, is one's intention and the inner dimension, which also takes precedence when seeking to understand the meaning of the divine revelation.

Understanding Through the Heart

On the interpretation of revealed scripture, which if we recall from the first phase in the historical survey was revealed to the Prophet's heart, Hasan holds that in turn it must be understood "through the heart," asserting that the Quran is "a spiritual book, with spiritual meanings" and that if only read literally, then its true meaning could be lost. In order to be able to understand God's revelation through the heart, Hasan maintains that one ought to prepare oneself by developing one's heart through spiritual training.[75] He does not, however, dispense with the literal meaning of scripture, rather he cautions against overreliance on literal interpretations. Hasan explains that God sent His revelation to humanity to guide their actions in life, to set up the boundaries for their behavior.[76] In addition to understanding through the heart, he also emphasizes the need to contextualize, and when asked about the well-known "verse of the sword" (Quran 9:5), Hasan replied that it is important to understand the circumstances in which the verse was revealed as well as the broader context of the revelation as a whole, saying that if one removes a particular verse from its contexts and reads it literally and in isolation, then its actual meaning could be entirely misunderstood.[77]

On a final issue related to Islam, when asked about reformist critiques of Sufism as being an unlawful innovation or *bid'a*, Hasan explained that those who make such accusations "simply lack knowledge." He goes on to say that while volumes have been written justifying Sufism's rightful place within Islam, if a person has "a closed mind and a closed heart," then it is difficult to change their fixed opinions. Instead, he holds that "there's no point in arguing with such people" and recommends allowing them to have their opinion, but goes on to say that what is more important is for the individual who is practicing Sufism to be convinced of the rightness of what they are doing and then, to "follow it with full conviction of heart."[78]

Societal Engagement

The issue of exterior versus interior religious observance, or of form versus spirit or essence, is also significant when considering SOST with respect to social and political activism. Beyond his

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[74] SOST group meeting in Munich 2018.
[75] Audio recording from 2017 SOST retreat in Poland.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.

abovementioned critique of excessive concern with the material world at the expense of the spiritual and his call for mutual understanding and the peaceful coexistence of people of all faiths, as described below, the only other instance where Hasan addresses a particular societal or political issue, can be found in a video denouncing terrorism. Therein he affirms that "Islam is a religion of peace" and laments how, after the Prophet, over time "the spiritual aspect of the religion was ignored" and "the form of the religion became more important than the essence," specifically criticizing those who have understood the Quran and *sunna* in what he views as an overly literal manner and who have used violence and terrorism to achieve their ends.[79]

Thus, he frames this problem too as a lack of attention to the spiritual and an overemphasis on the material, one solution or alternative to which for him seems to be Sufism. He goes on to explain that "the core values of Sufism have always been love, and compassion, and kindness, and peace" and that "Sufis have always believed that it is love and compassion which should be used as the means to change society, as the means to change the world […]."[80] When asked about this shift away from a strongly form and text-oriented version of Islam which was so important to certain earlier and socio-politically activist *shaykh*s in his own lineage; such as Sirhindī or Walī Allāh and Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd in trying to purify Sufism and Islam in India of non-Sunni and non-Muslim influences and also during and after the decline of the Mughal Empire and at the beginning of British colonialism; Hasan explained to the researcher that these *shaykh*s lived under different circumstances and adapted their respective approaches in response to the needs of their own time and place.

Solitude in the Crowd

So for Hasan, the needs of the current time period and globalized context require a balancing of the spiritual and the material by emphasizing the former through spiritual training of the individual, which is believed to result in a personal transformation that in turn resonates into broader beneficial effects in society and the world at large. The emphasis, however, is on the individual first working on himself or herself by performing the practices to establish a closer relationship with God, to purify the heart and the "ego," and "to become a better human being." Yet consistent with the Naqshbandī principle of *khalwat dar anjuman*, the current imbalance ought not to be overcorrected by focusing solely on spiritual practices at the expense of one's responsibilities in the world. Hasan asserts that "it's very important to have a balance between your worldly and spiritual life" and moreover, that it is actually easier to just have a spiritual life, but that maintaining a balance is much more challenging. He even goes on to explain that it is in fact "selfish to pursue only our own spirituality," because each person has a responsibility to not only themselves and their own spiritual refinement, but also to family and society. He goes on to say that "the world would stop working if everyone lived only a spiritual life" and he instead advises his listeners to live "in the world but not of it," that is to not be overly attached to it.[81]

Nevertheless, as already described throughout this chapter, for Hasan, the development of the spiritual has a direct impact upon the material, that is with regard to the development of one's "strengths and weaknesses" and in "becoming a better human being." On personal involvement in the world and in response to the question of one's responsibilities toward "family, marriage and friendship," Hasan

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[79] He says that such people are doing so "in complete contradiction to Islamic principles and teachings" and that their actions find no justification in the Quran or *ḥadīth*s. Here he specifically cites Quran 5:32 which states that whoever kills a person unjustly, it is as if they have killed all of humanity.

[80] Hasan continues, saying "[…] and we strongly disapprove and condemn any acts of violence and terrorism, and especially if they are done in the name of Islam because they are completely against the principles and teachings of Islam […]." He ends the video by appealing to his audience not to judge Islam and all of the world's Muslims based on the actions of a minority of people, saying that most Muslims are in fact peace-loving and disapprove of the actions of those engaged in terrorism. "Acts of terrorism by Muslim individuals and organisations have disturbed the whole world," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed December 31, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1B5BB616GI&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=18&t=0s.

[81] Audio recording from 2017 SOST retreat in Poland.

returns to the issue of strengths and weaknesses, saying that most people are ruled by their *nafs*, thus their strengths remain undeveloped, and this is "reflected in their lives, so in their family life, their work, and in their overall behavior toward the society." The practices bring about an "inner transformation" which allows the previously mentioned qualities, that is one's "strengths" or potentialities which have become hidden, to be brought out and developed. Of these strengths, in the context of speaking about their impact in one's life, he specifically mentions love and how through performing the practices, this quality of love, "not only for God but for everything that God has created in this world," is developed and manifests in all of one's actions and behavior, it "affects your life and everything that you do with your life" and in short, one becomes "a better human being and it is reflective in all of your actions," whether one is interacting with family and friends or society at large. [82]

Bottom-Up Social Change

This leads us on to the level of societal transformation, wherein Hasan further explains that human beings have a responsibility to "work toward the improvement of society [and the] world" but in order to do that most effectively, it is first necessary to become a "better human being" and to not be controlled by the selfish desires of the *nafs*. For him, this is achieved through Sufi practices which, again, result in an individual transformation, one wherein "the strengths of love and kindness and humility and tolerance" become a dominant part of one's character and personality and thus one's previously self-centered perspective changes and "it becomes much easier to look at society and make a contribution." Such transformation and shift in perspective also provide the drive to make societal contributions, and he says that doing so becomes much easier "if you clearly believe in it, if there is something from within you which is telling you that you have to make a significant contribution." He also explains that when someone has reached a spiritually advanced stage, they can have a positive spiritual impact on others with whom they interact. He describes how just as when someone is in a negative state, inner or outer, that this may negatively impact those around them, being in the presence of someone with "a good heart" can have a positive impact.[83]

Thus Hasan, far from advocating quietist reclusivism, does place great importance on spiritual practices, but the transformation these practices are said to produce are to have a direct impact on one's worldly existence as well as the society and even the world in which one lives. SOST, however, provides students with the techniques to achieve this transformation, but does not tell them specifically *how* to apply it to put it to work in the service of society. Obviously, from attendance at group meetings and retreats alone, the researcher cannot know or empirically measure how SOST students behave in their daily lives, how often they display compassion and love, whether or not they regularly donate to charities or if they volunteer at the local soup kitchen. It is not even the role of the researcher to impose such metrics. But over the course of the research, a definite interest in as well as some concrete examples of civic engagement were observed among SOST students.

At the 2015 book reading in Munich, one of the audience members, who himself later became a regular participant of SOST meetings and retreats, asked if there were any peace initiatives being carried out by SOST. The *shaykh* replied by explaining that while there were certain interfaith dialogue projects which students of SOST were either taking part in or administering, these were not organized by the school itself. Although in majority non-Muslim regions, one might consider the very presence of SOST; with its open, adaptive, and welcoming approach that invites anyone to take part in the practices; to be a sort of interfaith outreach, this is not an explicitly stated objective of the organization, but instead a very significant side effect.

One example, however, of an event where interfaith dialogue was the stated goal, one in which the *shaykh* himself took part, was held during the 2017 retreat in Poland. Over the course of four days, SOST students engaged in joint meditation sessions with a Christian group that also practices a form of

[82] "How important is for the sufi students to commit themselves to the responsibilities?," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed August 12, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbPnJhV9n4g.
[83] SchoolOfSufiTeaching, "How can a student be of service to the world whilst doing these practices," SchoolOfSufiTeaching, accessed December 31, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBnv2mAPsxI&list=PLdy3FHaPoiF85xIUAFr8Krj04gl6RmLCX&index=14&t=0s.

silent meditation. During this event, each day there was a question-and-answer session where Hasan and a Catholic priest answered questions from the religiously mixed audience, each from the perspective of his own respective tradition. It was in this context that Hasan presented his only other public statement, beyond the one denouncing terrorism, that could be considered to have a specific and overt social agenda, that is calling for mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence between people of different faiths, or in his words, "I think it's time to understand each other and basically learn to live together." He criticizes excessive focus on the differences between religions and, acknowledging that there are "some minor differences," he asserts that what they have in common is much more substantial. In the context of comparing the cosmo-psychology as well as the contemplative practices of SOST with those of their Christian dialogue partners at this event, he even asserts that "if you look at the methods it's the same."[84]

Similarly, the Rumi Foundation of Poland, an entity unto itself but founded by the senior SOST practitioner in Poland, lists a range of aims, such as providing assistance to those in need as well as a number of goals related to mutual understanding and respect among people of different cultural and religious backgrounds.[85] Another example of civic engagement on the part of members of SOST was an art exhibition held in Munich at the end of 2015 to raise funds to be donated to an aid organization providing assistance for the influx of refugees arriving in Europe at the time, especially Germany. Although this was not an actual SOST event, the curator along with several of the contributing artists were long-term members of SOST, including three of Rasool's most senior students from the UK and Germany.

So, instead of providing the organizational and administrative structure for such initiatives, SOST offers spiritual training intended to transform each individual, thereby assisting those individuals, each in their own way, in transforming society as a whole. This idea is best illustrated with a quote by Hasan himself: "I think that change can only happen with the bottom-up approach rather than the top down approach. In any system, unless you can change the elements, the system will never change. So, it boils down to individuals, unless you can change more and more individuals, then the system won't change."[86] He feels that "if more individuals can become selfless or have control over their ego, then they will bring that bigger change." Hasan also provides encouragement for those actively seeking to bring about positive societal change in whatever form it may be, telling them "you should never lose hope and you have to keep trying, and even if the results are very minimal, small but any change is a change." He goes on to recount the tale, often known elsewhere as "the Starfish story," of a boy throwing starfish that had washed ashore back into the ocean. When questioned about why he was doing so and told that he could not possibly make a difference because there were so many, the boy replied by picking up another starfish, throwing it back into the ocean and exclaiming, "I made a difference to that one."[87] Hasan summarizes the main point of his telling the story by saying: "A small change can lead to bigger changes, so we should never think that a small change is insignificant, no change is insignificant […]."[88] It is important to note, however, that the nature of such change is left to the individual to determine and that no specific plan or agenda is presented, only that whatever impact is sought after should be supported and guided by the strengths of character that have been developed by spiritual training.

To briefly conclude this section on IST and SOST under the leadership of Hamid Hasan, we see remarkable continuity with Rasool in all of the areas examined. Most modifications noted are either administrative; such as Hasan's increased use of the internet, expansion of regional retreats, and the introduction of annual international retreats; or presentational in nature; like his further streamlining of

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[84] Audio recording from 2017 SOST retreat in Poland.

[85] "Polska Fundacja Sufich," Rumi Foundation of Poland, accessed October 25, 2017, http://www.sufi.org.pl/english.html.

[86] Audio recording from 2017 SOST retreat in Poland.

[87] This tale is not taken from the Quran or a *ḥadīth*, rather, it derives from the writings of the American naturalist and philosopher, Loren C. Eiseley and its original form can be found in his book, first published in 1969, *The Unexpected Universe* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994), 67-92.

[88] Audio recording from 2017 SOST retreat in Poland.

explanations, his particular focus on the suitability of this lineage's teachings for the modern spiritual seeker, and rather than feeling compelled to convince potential students of the need for spiritual training or its compatibility with science, he instead focuses on encouraging them in regularity in the practices. No changes whatsoever were detected with regard to actual cosmo-psychological doctrines, the practices, or the student-teacher relationship. Likewise, Hasan remains quite consistent with his father with regard to pluralism and on the relationship to Islam and the need for a gradual approach, but also with Saʿīd Khān on the importance of the inner meaning of the revelation. Moreover still, his position on the need to prioritize personal spiritual training over social activism exactly replicates that of his father. Lastly, his view that Sufism has the potential to help resolve humanities ills is a position he shares with not only Saʿīd Khān and Rasool, but also with the latter's other heir, the American *shaykh* Ahmed Abdur Rashid. While Hasan seems to have deliberately sought to carry on the work of his father as unchanged as possible; institutionally (including aims and objectives), doctrinally and practically; Abdur Rashid exhibits substantial continuity as well as many instances of change in all of these areas, though drawing on broader Sufi and Islamic tradition in doing so.

The Circle Group

This section considers the other lineage descending from Azad Rasool, that of his American *khalīfa*, Ahmed Abdur Rashid (b. 1942), *né* J.E. Rash. The examination draws from the writings and lectures of Abdur Rashid; including two books, numerous pamphlets, chapters, and articles he contributed to edited books and journals, and a selection from his vast number of recorded and transcribed lectures; as well as web content and e-mail correspondence with the *shaykh*, his students, and employees of Legacy International, and finally, participant observation and interviews, including well over 20 hours of recorded interviews between the researcher and Abdur Rashid, conducted during four separate trips to the World Community from 2017 to 2019. It considers not only Abdur Rashid's life and work, especially the narrative of his spiritual search, but also that of his students, the Circle Group,[1] and the intentional community they established, the World Community; as well as the secular NGO they founded, Legacy International. The main focus of this section, however, is seeking to understand Abdur Rashid's mystical teachings, and supplementary to this, his positions on the categories of orthodoxy and activism. It seeks to grasp his work in and of itself, but also comparatively, with an eye toward continuity or difference from that of Rasool.

By the late 1960s, and prior to meeting Rasool, J.E. Rash had been active in the civil rights movement as well as in protesting the Vietnam War, but he had also, since his teens, explored a number of spiritual paths of Eastern origin that had begun to arrive in the West, including Buddhism, Taoism, and Yoga. He had in fact come to be a Yoga teacher, adopting the name Sri Vasudevadasji and he, along with a group of his students, founded the Prema Dharmasala *ashram* in southwestern Pennsylvania, which in time changed locations and evolved into what is now a *khānaqāh* called the World Community, in the rural woodlands of southern Virginia. It was intended to be a utopian ideal, an alternative, back-to-the-land, self-sufficient shared community that would allow them to engage freely in joint spiritual practices and where they would grow their own organic foods, practice homeopathy, and run a Montessori school for the children born there. After nearly a decade, Sri Vasudevadasji felt something missing in Yoga and decided to return to India to continue his spiritual search, which then led him to Rasool. After a few transitional years, the majority of the residents of the World Community embraced Sufism and Islam, and by 1984, Rasool had appointed Abdur Rashid as his only living *khalīfa*. Now, well over 50 years after the founding of the community, the Circle Group consists altogether of less than 100 people, mostly residents at the World Community, many of whom were founding members of the community or were born and raised there, but there are also others who have joined the community over the years. Additionally, Abdur Rashid has individual students scattered in different areas of the globe, often in Muslim-majority countries.

Unlike with SOST, where Hasan travels to retreats around the world, Abdur Rashid's students reside at or travel to the World Community to meet with him as well as attend his lectures there or remotely by video conference. This brings us to another difference in Abdur Rashid's approach, while still strongly emphasizing the practices, he also delves a great deal into what we have chosen to term here for lack of a better alternative *theoretical mysticism*, though Abdur Rashid argues that there is nothing "theoretical" about it, underscoring not only his certainty in his own beliefs, but also his orientation toward practical application. Each week, during the course this research, he normally gave a minimum of three lectures (*dars*) and one sermon (*khutba*), all around an hour each. These were broadcast online and recorded for students to return to at their leisure. The database had well over 5,000 hours and growing. The topics vary widely and build upon the teachings of Rasool, but also add to it Abdur Rashid's own spiritual insights as well as his research into a wide range of Islamic thought, primarily Sufi but also including other sources such as early Ismāʿīlī thinkers. He often produces seemingly new meanings by semantically expanding the scope of earlier Quranic, Sufi, and mystical terminology and, in contrast to Hasan's simplification and reduction of the amount of technical

[1] Out of convenience, the term "The Circle Group" will be used here to refer collectively to Abdur Rashid's students, although he himself does not use any specific term to refer to all those who study with him. The name Circle Group is actually a servicemark of the World Community for activities such as publishing Abdur Rashid's writings and lectures. "About Us," CircleGroup.org, accessed 5 Oct 2019, http://circlegroup.org/about-us/.

terminology, Abdur Rashid increases it exponentially. Similarly, as with Rasool and SOST, one often finds the encouraging of regularity in the practices, but Abdur Rashid spends significantly more time during his lectures discussing the mystical encounter with the divine from various angles and with regard to different aspects thereof. He also repeatedly emphasizes the need to manifest the transformation, that such encounter is held to produce, in the world, oftentimes referring to maintaining a balance (*mīzān*) or finding the corridor (*majāz*, which can also mean "analogy") between inner (*bāṭin*) and outer (*ẓāhir*), and reflecting the names and attributes of God, like the Compassionate and the Merciful, in the way one lives, which often takes the form of service (*khidma*) to humanity and the world, including the environment, such as through Legacy International.

Yet another aspect of his theoretical teachings and an area of focus of the Circle Group is "new science." Before him, Saʿīd Khān spoke of the potential for a complementary relationship between science and spirituality and Rasool made appeals to the scientific method to encourage potential students to empirically test the practices out for themselves. But Abdur Rashid goes a significant step further by actually engaging with the findings of various scientific disciplines, especially quantum physics and consciousness studies, to find parallels to the inner insights of Sufism, or what he sees as approaching the same Truth from different angles.

Concerning practices, while Abdur Rashid teaches the exact same five curricula of intentions for *muraqaba*, and the accompanying daily *dhikr* and *waẓīfa* recitations, as taught by Rasool and SOST today, he has also incorporated additional practices that are supplemental to these. In particular, he presents accounting for oneself (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*) as a practice that should be performed daily, and he often exhorts his students to conscious reflection (*fikr*) on the signs (*īshārāt*) of the divine presence in the world around them and within themselves. He has also introduced weekly collective vocalized *dhikr*, which he based on the silent recitations of the five orders he was taught by Rasool combined with his observation of other lineages' vocal *dhikr* gatherings during his travels in the Middle East and Turkey. He also places a great deal of importance on *suhbat*, or keeping the company of the *shaykh* and fellow seekers, and as part of this, the *dars* itself should also be considered one of the foremost practices of the Circle Group.

On the relationship to Islamic belief and practice, Abdur Rashid has a broad definition of Islam and what it means to be a Muslim. On the one hand, he is consistent with Rasool in requiring students who wish to proceed beyond the preliminary activation of the *laṭā'if*, and thus to pledge *bay'a*, to be Muslims in the conventional sense, professing the *shahāda* and striving to live in accordance with the *sharīʿa*. On the other hand, when dealing with certain *ḥadīth*s or verses of the Quran, particularly regarding how Muslims ought to treat one another, he adopts a much broader and inclusive understanding of what it means to be a Muslim, one that could potentially include all of humanity, that is as one who is in submission to a higher power. Overall, his approach to Islam can be characterized as seeking its inner meaning and essential principles, over what he sees can be practiced as empty form and ritual, and emphasizing contextual adaptivity and intra/interfaith pluralism. Added to these, he also advises living "on the margins of the mainstream," aloof of the individualism and materialism of Western society as well as the exoteric-dogmatism and empty ritualism he sees among many Muslims.

Pertaining to the category of activism, while Abdur Rashid asserts that he is not pushing any sort of political agenda, he is nevertheless outspoken on a number of issues that do have ramifications in the sphere of politics, namely his main goals of promoting peace and well-being for all of humanity, and even the entire planet. In achieving these lofty aims, he calls for renewal (*tajdīd*), but in a somewhat different sense from some of his Naqshbandī forebears like Sirhindī, or the reformism of Walī Allāh. He seeks a "paradigm shift" that will take place when enough individuals realize their own essential goodness (*fiṭra*) and reflect in their lives the names and attributes of God, which he equates with "universal values" that he asserts can be found in all faiths as well as even potentially among secular humanists.

As one part of achieving this, he calls for an end to extremism in all of its forms, which in the case of Islam he views as a distortion of and deviation from the original faith that has become so obsessed with form that it has failed to apprehend the very core principles of the message brought by Muḥammad, whom Abdur Rashid presents as not only a mystic, but also an advocate of peace, humanitarianism, pluralism, equality, and social justice par excellence. He furthermore considers democracy as not only eminently compatible with Islam, but also as a powerful tool for achieving such goals of peace and well-being for all. This is particularly true for him with regard to its conduciveness

for civic engagement, a major thrust of the work of Legacy International, a secular non-profit NGO that seeks to promote peace and wellbeing through engaged citizenship and the affirmation of the abovementioned universal values.

Originally founded as the Institute for Practical Idealism in 1979, Legacy International grew out of a summer camp held for students of the World Community's Montessori school. The school was founded on the idea that its students would become "living examples of deeply spiritual values such as compassion, patience, tolerance, justice, peace and mutual respect" and Abdur Rashid hoped to create "compassionate and visionary leaders for a global society faced with many challenges."[2] The summer leadership camp, which would come to be called the Global Youth Village, would make this an international aspiration and it has welcomed participants from over 120 different countries since its first year in operation in 1979. The Global Youth Village uses various program activities to promote respect, service, and global perspectives, including a curriculum they developed called LivingSidebySide®, which focuses on intercultural dialogue and conflict prevention skills. Abdur Rashid explains that it furthermore seeks to affirm the overarching Legacy principles of Universal Values, which he feels transcend such limitations as culture, religion, race, and gender.

Over the decades since, Legacy has widened its mission and added a number of additional programs, expanding their leadership training to include not only youths, but also citizen exchanges involving early to mid-career professionals, government employees from around the world, and socially responsible business entrepreneurs. They are able to operate through contributions from private donors and corporations as well as funding and grants from various foundations and US federal agencies. Participants across Legacy's diverse array of programs are encouraged to identify their own "core values" and to find ways to practically put these into action in the form of service to their communities, and thus to the world. They also provide access to resources and mentorship after training events to assist participants in, for instance, developing civil society initiatives in their home regions. Their philosophy is that working toward smaller, incremental improvements on a broad scale, under the initiative of local citizens and leaders, is the best way to bring about positive change in the world.

Abdur Rashid sees the work of Legacy as nothing less than the tangible results of their Sufi practice. Thus, unlike Rasool and Hasan, who focus on spreading the *ṭarīqa* as a *silsila* and a curriculum of Sufi practices, Abdur Rashid concentrates more on manifesting the results thereof. That is, he provides spiritual training for his small core of Sufi students, striving to transform their characters, and they in turn seek to encourage others to live by and express the "universal values," which Abdur Rashid equates with the names and attributes of God, through their portfolio of civic education, peace education, and leadership development activities, thus "catalyzing transformative leaders" for bringing about what they see as a better world.

Background of the Shaykh and the World Community

Abdur Rashid[3] provides a personal narrative of a well over 15-year spiritual search that led him through encounters with a variety of spiritual traditions before finally finding and embracing Sufism and Islam. Yet spirituality was not his only concern, and throughout his life, it seems to have been intertwined with a passionate urge to work toward bringing about positive change in the world. His story mirrors that of his own teacher Rasool in some significant ways, not only the exploration of various paths to ultimate Truth culminating in Islamic Sufism, but also the maturation from a youthful activism into a more sober but no less passionate endeavor to teach and inspire the next generation. Born as J.E. Rash in 1942, of Jewish heritage and originally from New Jersey, but having been raised

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[2] Brochure for the World Community Education Center (WCEC).

[3] The name Abdur Rashid not only includes, when rendered into Latin script, his birth surname of Rash, but it also means "Servant of the Guide" in Arabic, a reference to God as the ultimate Guide. The names that other members of the World Community adopted, either during the time that it was an *ashram* or after it became a *khānaqāh*, are indicative of the kind of shared objectives and ideals they hold in common, such as the pursuit of peace and service to humanity, as seen in names like the Sanskrit Shanti ("Peace") or the Arabic 'Abd al-Nāṣir ("Servant of the Helper").

in Pennsylvania, he reports that his search began early in life. He recalls how experiences in his childhood, like gazing in wonder at the starry sky, stimulated his curiosity about the universe, its vastness and one's place in it.[4] Thus, he says, he began to search out answers to age-old questions, but at that time, he explains, "the only thing available was Buddhism, so I followed that path for a while." Buddhism had been largely popularized by Beat writers in the late 1950s when Abdur Rashid would have been in his teens,[5] and he mentions that such writers as D.T. Suzuki and Alan Watts had been influential upon him in his youth.

But it was during his time at the University of Pittsburgh, where he had set out to pursue a career in law, that his search would begin to take a more concrete form. He mentions some disillusionment with higher education, explaining that he felt the lecturers were trying to dismantle beliefs, while he was looking for something to believe in. But it was there that he would find just that, something to believe in, not only in terms of his spiritual quest, but also with regard to social activism and greater causes to struggle for. His mind and heart seem to have been open to new ways of looking at the world. For instance, at the age of 18 in around 1960 during his freshman year, he recalls having been invited over to dinner by "some nice people" who turned out to belong to a cell of the Communist Party USA, which had been outlawed in 1954 under Dwight D. Eisenhower. Although Abdur Rashid recalls only briefly attending their meetings, where they listened to Radio Havana, and maintains that it did not have a formative impact on him,[6] it does show us his proximity to and openness toward counterculture currents of the time that sought to change the status quo, even at the expense of going against the establishment.

Much more significant with regard to social activism, however, is his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement, taking part in the Freedom Rides of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1961-62, and also in the anti-nuclear and anti-war protests, to end the Vietnam War.[7] He also mentions having been into the folk-music scene, which had become associated with the counterculture and left-leaning politics, especially in areas like Greenwich Village, and would come to be inextricably linked with the above protest movements.[8] While Abdur Rashid differentiates between such "social activism" of his youth versus the "social responsibility" that he strives to live and instill in others today, he nevertheless recognizes the former as an important precursor. But it was not long after the Freedom Rides that another important milestone emerged. It was in Abdur Rashid's junior year that he became a disciple of Parahamsa Yogananda, under whom he would practice *sahaja kriya yoga* and eventually become a group leader and counselor for the Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF). He furthermore worked for a while in New York City and in Pittsburgh in professional theatre and as an empresario for folk music groups. He spent time as a copy writer at a major advertising agency and then devoted himself to learning and teaching Montessori to parents and special educators while he lay down the foundation for the World Community.

For over a decade, Yoga would dominate his spiritual quest, but this would not hinder his exploration of other paths as well. For instance, at about the same time that his involvement with

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[4] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, interview by Michael E. Asbury, Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017. A brief description of one such experience can be found in Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *Salman Al Farisi: The Sojourner, the Guided, and the Guide* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2014), 8-9.

[5] In fact, he mentioned mingling in the same social circles in New York City as Allen Ginsberg, one of the founding fathers of the Beat movement who also transitioned into the counterculture of the 1960s.

[6] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, interviews by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, August 30-31, 2017 and June 26, 2018.

[7] On the relationship between the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s in the US, see Simon Hall, *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements in the 1960s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

[8] For the left-leaning associations of the folk music revival in America, see Richard Reuss and Joanne C. Reuss, *American Folk Music and Left-Wing Politics. 1927–1957* (Lanham, MA and Folkstone, UK: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2000); Christine A. Spivey, "This Land is Your Land, This Land is My Land: Folk Music, Communism, and the Red Scare as a Part of the American Landscape," *The Student Historical Journal* of Loyola University New Orleans (1996-1997), accessed January 4, 2020, https://web.archive.org/web/20080625072313/http://www.loyno.edu/history/journal/1996-7/Spivey.html; see also Rachel Clare Donaldson, *Music for the People: The Folk Music Revival and American Identity, 1930–1970* (PhD Diss., Vanderbilt University, 2011).

Yogananda began, he was corresponding with a certain Da Liu, one of the earliest Tai Chi and Qi Gong teachers and authors in the West, who has also written on Taoism and the I Ching and had arrived from China to the US in 1956.[9] He authorized Abdur Rashid to teach a small set of health and longevity exercises. As an emerging teacher of Yogic philosophy and meditation, he recalls having been "on the guru circuit for a while," moving in the same circles as a number of other Yoga masters in the 1970s and interacting with such figures as Sant Keshavadas, Yogi Amrit Desai, Swamis Satchidananda and Muktananada, Ma Yoga Shakti, and Dr. Ramamurti S. Mishra. He furthermore travelled to India and resided there, mostly in Northern India, such as Rishikesh and Uttarkashi, living as a renunciant by the Ganges,[10] but also staying in Delhi with his mentor in homeopathy, Dr. Prakash C. Mehta, with whom he would study and maintain contact for twenty-five years. He continues to practice homeopathy today, as will be discussed below.

Establishment of the World Community

By the early 1970s, J.E. Rash had become a guru in his own right, having been given the name Sri Vashudevadasji[11] and leading a group of fellow seekers. They came together with the dream of establishing an idealized community,[12] both removed from yet still actively engaged in society. Together they would seek to create a simple, peaceful environment in which to live, which would support a mutual focus on spiritual pursuits. They would grow organic food, practice Yoga and holistic healing, explore alternative energy sources, establish a Montessori school to educate the children born there, and devote themselves to the pursuit of spiritual transformation as well as to service to humanity, or what Abdur Rashid came to call "Practical Idealism."[13] In particular, the latter two aspects are a combination that seems less congruent with the lifestyle of a renunciant Yogi and more in line with not only the optimistic involvement of the times, but also with the Naqshbandī principle of *khalwat dar anjuman* and the idea of returning to be in the world after journeying to and in God. Originally called the Premadharmasala Ashram, over time, it would evolve into the Sufic community of today that is

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[9] See, for instance, Da Liu, *T'ai Chi Ch'uan and Meditation* (New York: Schocken Books, 1991).

[10] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *Why?* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2012), 2.

[11] The name was given to Abdur Rashid by a Yoga master who knew him well and it seems to be reflective of his very early emphasis on service, especially as connected with a higher power, since Vasudeva can refer to Krishna as *Brahman*, or ultimate reality, and *das* means "servant," a name quite similar to the Arabic Muslim name 'Abd Allah ("Servant of God").

[12] Abdur Rashid recalls the founding of the World Community in one of his lectures printed in pamphlet form as follows: "Many years ago I had a dream, a waking dream that never was far from my consciousness, a vision of the future. I dreamt that one-day people could live together in peace and security and happiness. Many people in my generation had the same dream, that there would be equality and equity that, with service and understanding, and community, there could be peace.

I dreamt of a community of people who shared these ideals. What I thought I conjured up in my own mind I realized later was a plan based on my Destiny created by Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*). Allah provided people, and place (and beauty, and nature), homes and gardens, with ample food on everyone's table. Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) provided us with the will to develop a new model, to gain skills we did not possess, to build relationships of trust, to learn the essence of forgiveness, love. Every person in our community has a story; every building, every tree has its history." Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *What?* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2011), 17.

[13] Abdur Rashid mentioned that the development of Legacy International was influenced in part by the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, founded by Jonas Salk (1914-1995), who is best known for having developed the first polio vaccine. Salk worked at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Medicine while Abdur Rashid was a student there, and the latter was later able to visit the Institute in San Diego and meet with Salk in the early 1980s. Abdur Rashid recalls how Salk had brought together people with a vast array of skillsets that could all serve some part in not only the development of medical breakthroughs like the polio vaccine, but also in the crucial task of getting the population to accept them. Abdur Rashid's being inspired by the idea that such a diverse array of experts in different fields; such as "historians, artists, musicians, philosophers, biologists, physicists, chemists, poets, and social scientists"; could all be brought together to work toward one common good (Abdur Rashid, interview, August 30-31, 2017), is echoed in the extensive networking of like-minded individuals that Legacy has and continues to seek to bring together, as will be discussed below.

called the World Community. What started as a Montessori pre-school for three children in 1971 grew to become the World Community Education Center (WCEC), which now teaches from pre-school through grade 12 and draws students not only from the residents of the World Community, but also from the surrounding majority non-Muslim community. It provides a secular education, but one that they assert is based in Sufic values and principles that people of all faiths or none at all can identify with.[14]

On how they arrived at their current location in rural southern Virginia, Abdur Rashid jokes that that is where their camels died on the way to California,[15] alluding to the trend of intentional communities being established, especially in areas like San Francisco, in the late 1960s and 70s. Yet Abdur Rashid prefers to differentiate their community from the "commune" phenomenon that has come to be associated with licentious libertinism, since, as he explains, from its very inception, the World Community was always centered around the twin pillars of spiritual development and service. From their initial location in the fall of 1970 in Ruff Creek, Pennsylvania (about an hour outside Pittsburgh), they searched for a suitable place to serve as a permanent location, considering various sites from Pennsylvania, New York State, and Massachusetts to further south. They moved to Virginia Beach in 1973, and then in March of 1975, they were finally able to purchase an area of wooded land in rural Virginia that would become their permanent home. The 80-acre property was essentially untamed forest that Abdur Rashid and the members of the community, most of whom had come from educated white collar backgrounds, labored with their own hands, erecting living quarters and all of the necessary facilities, to transform it into a fully functional independent community.

Encounter with Sufism and Islam

With the World Community established, Abdur Rashid reports that his spiritual quest was still unsatisfied. On the one hand, he mentions that, despite having been appointed as a group leader for the SRF, he did not feel truly authorized as a spiritual guide, and on the other, he recalls that "things came to me internally" and he found himself giving teachings that "didn't make sense from a Yogic point of view." Perhaps it was in part his ever-present emphasis on serving humanity and building "a better world," rather than escaping it for self-realization. But he has also cited other incongruencies between Yoga and what was coming forth from his inner being, including theological issues such as the doctrine that the "Guru is God." Thus begins the story of Abdur Rashid's discovery of Sufism.

By 1977, he had already explored a number of different spiritual traditions. Aside from those already mentioned, namely Buddhism, Qi Gong, and Yoga, he also mentioned, for example, having at one point even travelled to Israel as part of his search, but most significantly in hindsight, he also described some early encounters with Sufism. Leading up to these, he recalls having been affected at age 12 or 13 by the Christian Lebanese poet Kahlil Gibran, and later by the *Rubāʿiyāt of Omar Khayyām*, a text that has been interpreted by some as epicureanism and others as mystical poetry.[16] He also mentions having skirted around, though not engaged directly with, Gurdjieff's "Sufi flavored teachings"[17] at different times in his spiritual journey. For instance, he spoke of having once met Madame Ouspensky in New York City and also that some of his contemporaries at university; who were also interested in folk music and active in the civil rights, anti-war, and anti-nuclear movements; went on to become Fourth Way students while he ended up gravitating toward Yoga, at least initially.

But bringing us closer to the key turning point in Abdur Rashid's spiritual search, he told of having read somewhere of Sufism, including about Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, and described having felt an affinity with what he had read. Although uncertain of the exact source,[18] he believes that it was

[14] As Abdur Rashid stated in one interview in 2018: "It's not an Islamic school, it's a school that's run Islamically."
[15] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *United in the One* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2017), 11.
[16] Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 113, 124, 131.
[17] This label for Gurdjieff's teachings is taken from Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 83.
[18] One likely source might be *The Teachers of Gurdjieff*. Also of note, Shah's own writings include several references to the Naqshbandiyya, such as his *The Way of the Sufi* (London: Octagon Press Ltd., 1980), originally published in 1968, which includes an entire section on the Naqshbandī order that references Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband several times, see pages 141-57. Moreover, Shah's elder brother Omar Ali-Shah as well as his son and heir, Arif Ali-Shah, both explicitly self-identify as Naqshbandī.

written by a student of Idries Shah and that this led him to write to and be accepted into a group of students under Shah, which he was a member of for around a year, being in contact with a group leader in the UK with whom he corresponded by post. During this same period of wide exploration, of which Sufism was only a part, he also came to read about the teachings of figures like Ibn al-ʻArabī and al-Ghazālī. While still respecting and on rare occasions even quoting Shah to this day,[19] Abdur Rashid's search nevertheless continued, and he recalls that at this time Sufism was still only a vague idea in his mind.

It was in the year 1977 and at the age of around 35, that Abdur Rashid felt the need to return to India in search of answers for resolving the abovementioned incongruency between what he had learned from Yoga, on the one hand, and what was coming forth from his inner being, on the other. Upon arriving in Delhi, Abdur Rashid was met at the airport by the same Sikh taxi driver whom he had previously relied upon in Delhi and who was familiar with the holy sites that he had already visited there. This time, however, Abdur Rashid asked the driver to show him something he had not seen before, not another Hindu temple or Sikh gurdwara, but something different. With his recent exploration perhaps making him open to the possibility of visiting a Muslim shrine, the driver chose to take him to the *dargāh* of the revered Chishti saint, Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā', where he was approached by a man with whom he spoke for several hours and who gave him three recommendations regarding Sufi *shaykh*s to visit, one in Allahabad, another in Ahmedabad, and another in Delhi. Abdur Rashid recalls that being a practical American, he naturally chose to visit the one in Delhi.

Returning to the taxi driver who had been waiting outside, Abdur Rashid gave him a name and address at Jamia Millia Islamia, to which they then proceeded. After knocking at the door, he was met by a man of small stature wearing a *karākul* cap, a man who was none other than Azad Rasool, who had just recently founded IST with the aim of reaching Western spiritual seekers the previous year.[20] They then went into Rasool's office, where he taught Abdur Rashid the first practice and they performed *murāqaba* together, after which, contrary to Rasool's usual way of doing things, he then and there accepted this new student's pledge of *bayʻa*.[21]

Although immediately drawn to Rasool's teachings without apprehension, Abdur Rashid's complete evolution from a universalist Yogi to an Islamic Sufi would take time. Similarly, back in Virginia and among his students, the transition from a Yoga *ashram* to a Sufi *khānaqāh*, fully embracing Islam, was not an immediate overnight transformation either, but rather a quite gradual one. In one lecture, Abdur Rashid light-heartedly recalls an instance in which he had not yet fully and exclusively embraced Islam and was asked at the mosque in India if he was a Muslim. His reply was, "Of course. I'm everything!", but in hindsight he observes that in reality, "I was nothing," that is believing to be following all religions when in actuality adhering to none of them.[22] Furthermore, from advertisements inviting spiritual seekers to join the Prema World Community, as residents or by correspondence course, in the *Yoga Journal* in 1977, the same year Abdur Rashid pledged *bayʻa* to Rasool, it seems that his purely universalist stance still endured, as the advertisement reveals that he was teaching Yoga alongside Sufi practices and proclaiming "the Unity of all religions in Divine Love and the Oneness of all existence."[23] He mentions that in the very beginning, his lectures included a synthesis of Sufism and Yoga,[24] but over time, this unqualified universalist position would evolve to be more in line with that of Rasool, a kind of qualified universalism, in which he rejects the idea of all religions being entirely

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[19] While some scholars such as Schimmel and Buehler have expressed harsh disapproval of Shah, numerous Sufi practitioners in the West were first introduced to Sufism through Shah's writings and still hold respect for his ideas. Abdur Rashid describes Shah as a disruptor who challenged people's notions of what Sufism is. Abdur Rashid, interview, January 3-4, 2017.

[20] Abdur Rashid relates that Rasool greeted him and his first words were "Are you from America?" Abdur Rashid answered in the affirmative and explained that he had seen Rasool in a dream while on the plane from America.

[21] According to Abdur Rashid, Rasool then and there pointed out that such accepting of *bayʻa* during a first encounter was contrary to his usual way a doings things.

[22] Abdur Rashid, *Why?*, 2.

[23] Advertisement in the *Yoga Journal*, September 1977, 46.

[24] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.

equal and embraces Islam himself, while still holding respect and reverence for other faiths and acknowledging the value and truth therein. "Does it mean all religions are equal?" he asks in 2013, "No, it means it's all one truth."[25]

Regarding conversion among Abdur Rashid's students during the transitional period from an *ashram* into a *khānaqāh*, he explains that this too was a gradual process, as opposed to an overnight shift from a universalist understanding and practice of Yoga to Sufic Islam. Several senior students who had been with the community since the early seventies, and had thus witnessed the entire transition, all explained that no one was pressured to convert. Abdur Rashid made clear that embracing Islam was his own personal decision and that the other members of the community were under no obligation to do the same. One recalls that there was no "mass departure," but notes that some students seemed more interested in Yoga, while others felt that they had found the teacher who was right for them, regardless of the tradition, and she speculates that it was more the latter who stayed.[26] In any event, each individual made their own choice in their own time, and while some parted ways in the earlier years, now nearly all of the permanent residents of the World Community are practicing Muslims. The same student observed that "although the culture of our lives changed significantly" this took place gradually over the years, but the essence of the teachings had not changed, "he was speaking the same truth, […] the topic was still God, Allah, still right behavior in this world, still service, still being molded into the best human being that you could be, still generosity […]." It was made clear that there is a point in the progression of the transmissions and practices where accepting Islam is necessary, but "no one is rushing you to that point."[27]

Over a period of two decades, every year or two, Abdur Rashid and some of his students made the journey to visit Rasool in Delhi, and conversely, Rasool usually also travelled once a year or so to the US to visit the World Community. During such visits, they spent as much as six to ten hours a day performing the practices, but also spending time in *ṣuḥbat* and conversation, including question-and-answer sessions that would come to serve as much of the basis for *Turning Toward the Heart*. In just six and a half years, since Abdur Rashid had begun the practices, he received and progressed through all of the transmissions of all five orders. Thus it was fairly early, in February of 1984 during one of Abdur Rashid's trips to Delhi, that he was given *ijāza* and made Rasool's *khalīfa*, with permission to initiate and train disciples of his own in each of the five *ṭarīqa*s.

Abdur Rashid explains that this would usually take at least 23 years, but he attributes the unusual speed with which he progressed to his preceding 15 years of spiritual pursuits in other traditions. Rasool's trips to the US continued until 2000, when his visa expired, and in 2001, following the September 11th attacks, it became more difficult to acquire a new visa, and thus Abdur Rashid and some of his students travelled to London during Rasool's trips there, doing so the last time in 2005. While there was some interaction with the London group of SOST, including a few individuals coming over one year to work at the Global Youth Village, after Rasool's passing in 2006 and SOST, including the London group, coming under the leadership of Hamid Hasan, Abdur Rashid's students note that organizationally-speaking, not much changed for them, as their direct *shaykh* was and continued to be Abdur Rashid.[28]

While Rasool travelled frequently around the globe in his capacity as a Sufi teacher, as Hamid Hasan continues to do, maintaining and expanding the network of *murīd*s that his father had begun, Abdur Rashid travels very little in his capacity as a Sufi *shaykh*. Yet his role as the director of Legacy International does often require him to travel a great deal in the US and abroad, and he sees the work of this organization as a means of manifesting the results of their spiritual practices in the world. Today, Abdur Rashid's students number altogether less than one hundred, a relatively modest number in

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[25] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *Seeing By the Light of the Moon: The Prophet Muhammad* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2013), 30. Currently, in addition to their own mosque, the World Community also maintains on their premises worship facilities for all of the major world religions for the use of those who come to stay there.
[26] Conversations at the World Community on August 30-31, 2017. She also describes how the late sixties was a time when "a lot of us were seeking a teacher and had a thirst to understand what life is about and how to live it and who had the truth" and that a lot of teachers at the time were claiming to have had that truth.
[27] Conversations at the World Community on August 30-31, 2017 and June 26, 2018.
[28] Ibid.

comparison to the already small student base of SOST, but even more so *vis-à-vis* other transnational orders like the Haqqaniyya. This reflects not only the more personalized approach to the student-teacher relationship that he shares with Rasool, but also his own unique approach of propagating the principles of the order, rather than the institution of the order itself, which will be discussed in greater detail below in the section on Legacy.

The majority of these *murīd*s and *murīda*s, many of whom have been with the *shaykh* since the early 1970s while others joined later, continue to live and work together at the World Community, including adults who were born and raised within the community. Yet Abdur Rashid also has a small number of students scattered in different parts of the United States as well as smaller numbers in various countries, including India, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Croatia, Ukraine, UK, and Turkey. Among his students beyond the World Community are at least two recognizable names for the scholar of contemporary Islamic Studies, including a rather well-known American Quran exegete as well as a university professor and translator of classical Sufi works. Such students, however, do come to visit the *shaykh* at the World Community as well as listen in to his *ṣuḥbat* and *khutba* lectures (*dars*), that take place four times each week and are transmitted online via webcast. Besides these regular meetings, the fact that most of the students live at the World Community means that the performances of daily prayers, *murāqaba*, *dhikr*, and the remainder of the *waẓīfa* can all be done collectively and in the presence of the *shaykh* on a daily basis throughout the year.

Fostering Intra-Sufi/Islamic and Interfaith Relations

Over the years, Abdur Rashid as well as his students have travelled significantly as part of their work with Legacy International, including to the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and Europe. This afforded opportunities to meet and interact with Sufis in Muslim-majority areas, including *shaykh*s of various orders. A wall in Abdur Rashid's study is filled with pictures of such individuals and his meetings with them. Given his involvement in Sufism and propensity for networking, he was open to such exchanges and took advantage of these opportunities to build and foster connections to other Sufi *shaykh*s as they presented themselves, something he encourages his students to also do.

In the late 1970s, the one *shaykh* that Abdur Rashid deliberately sought out to meet, however, was Süleyman Loras (1904-1985), or as he is often affectionately called by his disciples, Süleyman Dede. A Mawlawī *shaykh* who first visited the US in 1976, much like Rasool, he deliberately spread his lineage there and found a substantial portion of his student base among Western spiritual seekers, often with varying levels of exposure to Buddhism, Yoga, or Gurdjieffian circles.[29] Abdur Rashid recalls setting out with some of his students to meet Loras at the Washington Dulles International Airport at the end of one of his trips to the US and by coincidence, parking directly behind the van carrying the *shaykh*. About this meeting, Abdur Rashid recounts how Loras somehow recognized and beckoned to them despite their visit being unannounced.[30] The two men spoke that day and Abdur Rashid would also travel to Konya years later to visit Loras on two occasions, where he explains that he had the benefit of spending private time with the *shaykh*, without him being surrounded by scores of disciples. Abdur Rashid recalls being inspired by Loras' saintliness and how he encouraged him to "be a better Muslim" and to delve more deeply into understanding Hanafi *fiqh*.[31]

Abdur Rashid's later meetings with Sufi guides from Muslim-majority regions took place after he had become a *shaykh* himself and began more with chance encounters that were further built upon,

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[29] In fact, the expansion of Loras' lineage into the US began through a community in West Virginia called Claymont, founded by Gurdjieff's British student J.G. Bennett as an American version of his Sherborne, and it was this very community that Loras had just been visiting prior to his meeting with Abdur Rashid. This same community also welcomed the Khalweti-Jerrahi *shaykh* Muzaffar Ozak. Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, 246-47. For more on Süleyman Loras and the organizations tracing their lineage back to him in the West, namely those led by his son Jelaludin Loras and especially his American *khalīfa* Kabir Helminski, see Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 102-05, *et passim*.

[30] For another account of Loras and other seemingly miraculous meetings at the same airport, see Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 102.

[31] Abdur Rashid, interviews, January 3-4 and August 30-31, 2017.

rather than deliberately seeking out those *shaykh*s from the outset. The earliest and perhaps most consequential of these was his relationship with the late Grand Mufti of Syria, Aḥmad Kuftārū (1915-2004), which began around 1982 after Abdur Rashid had taken part in a 1981 peace conference in India where he met one of Kuftārū's disciples, who was also Pakistan's ambassador to the UAR and would be one of the first heads of UNICEF. Despite some differences in approach,[32] both Abdur Rashid and Kuftārū have two major areas of work in common, areas which might even be considered the twin pillars of the latter's life's work: intra/interfaith dialogue and education. Abdur Rashid recalls having spent much time with Kuftārū, travelling to Syria twice at his invitation for several weeks as well as at different times in the US during the *muftī*'s visits there, in addition to telephone conversations. One of the two photos displayed of Kuftārū with Abdur Rashid, is of the former bestowing a *khirqa* on the latter, and in fact, Abdur Rashid reports that at one point, Kuftārū asked him if he would be willing to serve as a representative for him in the US should the need arise. Because of their shared interest in dialogue and peacebuilding, Kuftārū reappears often in the examination of Abdur Rashid's teachings that follows.

It was during the 90s, while Abdur Rashid was planning a trip to Turkey for his work for Legacy, when Kuftārū recommended that he meet and convey his greetings to another Kurdish Khālidī *shaykh*, 'Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn (1896-1997). One point among others that Abdur Rashid and Sirāj al-Dīn have in common is their expertise in homeopathy (discussed below), which also resonated with yet another of Abdur Rashid's fellow *shaykh*s. During the second interview with the researcher, Abdur Rashid mentioned having recently received a package of herbal curatives from the Uzbek Yasawī *shaykh* Saparbai Kushkarov. Their relationship began as the result of a chain of events that started when the car of one of Abdur Rashid's senior students, who was travelling in Uzbekistan as part of the work of Legacy, broke down. In 2005, Abdur Rashid also met the Bosnian Naqshbandī *shaykh* Halil Hulusi Brzina, while in Sarajevo doing work for Legacy International.[33] To this day, the World Community maintains friendly relations with such *shaykh*s and/or their students in the US and abroad.

At first glance, one might presume from such ties that Abdur Rashid had simply gone from his round of the guru circuit to one of the *shaykh* circuit instead, or "*baraka* surf[ing]" to make use of another of Hermansen's apt and witty coinages in describing one tendency among American Sufis of the counterculture generation. Yet this is not what happened, rather than "looking for the most powerful wave of charismatic spiritual leadership […] available at a given time,"[34] he followed Rasool's advice for those who have pledged allegiance to a *shaykh*: "Hold on to that shaykh's door, and hold it fast,"[35] remaining Rasool's faithful student, but while also fostering intra-Sufi relations. The meetings described above mostly took place in the 80s, 90s, and early 2000s, after Abdur Rashid had already received his *ijāza* from Rasool and become a *shaykh* himself, but also nearly all of the circumstances he describes in which he met such individuals, were largely happenstantial. Moreover, of all his encounters, the most prominent of the spiritual leaders that Abdur Rashid cites as having made an impact on him, and the one of whom the most pictures are displayed, is his own *shaykh* and guide on the Sufi path, Azad Rasool. He also explains that during all such interactions, it was always made clear up front that his own *shaykh* was Rasool.

Nevertheless, Abdur Rashid does describe having been affected by the *baraka* of these individuals, as well as by their example, so there is definitely a spiritual dimension behind these

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[32] For instance, while the Montessori school at the World Community is secular, the vast network of schools Kuftārū established in Syria are dual Islamic and secular. Similarly, while Abdur Rashid advocates collaborating with those who are like-minded, as the Grand Mufti of Syria, Kuftārū worked to engage in dialogue across a spectrum that also sought to bring Islamists to the table.

[33] Abdur Rashid had arrived on his first visit to the city and was sitting in a restaurant. It was Thursday evening, he recounts, and he knew that there had to be a *ḥaḍra* or *dhikr* going on somewhere in the city. He approached a group of men at a near-by table to inquire. One man who had been wounded in the war responded by saying "Come with me," and led Abdur Rashid to his car which was specially equipped to compensate for his war wounds. In less than ten minutes, he escorted Abdur Rashid into Halusi's mosque and tekkia. During several evening visits between the *shaykh*s, conversations touched on a number of topics, including silent *dhikr* as mentioned below.

[34] Hermansen, "In the Garden of American Sufi Movements," 158.

[35] *TTH* 79-80.

meetings. Some might even see a degree of a residual questing mode, echoing books like *Meetings with Remarkable Men* or *The Teachers of Gurdjieff*, but then again, travelling and meeting with remarkable men is not something baby boomer spiritual seekers have a monopoly on, as can be seen among the "ascetic" and mystical circles in the first centuries of Islamic history. Such meetings and interactions, which cannot be traced in the lives or work of Rasool or Hasan, might be best understood in light of both the spiritual benefits of association with such pious individuals as well as in relation to social engagement and building bridges between people, including fellow Sufis. So while Abdur Rashid was not attempting to seek out other *shaykh*s as teachers, we do see an openness to and interest in interaction when the opportunities present themselves, such as when travelling for Legacy. Of note, Hermansen has also observed a distinctive propensity in American Sufism toward networking and cooperation among different orders, particularly in the form of conferences, a feature she posits might even be traced back to the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893.[36]

Accordingly, in addition to building ties to the Sufi community internationally, Abdur Rashid and the World Community have also reached out locally and continue to do so, opening their doors to local Muslims for Friday prayers and sermons, hosting an annual Ramadan retreat, and cultivating relationships with other Muslim communities, particularly those of a like-minded and often Sufi orientation. One significant example is the late ʻAbdallaah Nooruddeen Durkee (1938-2020) and his community in nearby Charlottesville, Virginia.[37] Durkee founded the Lama Foundation in 1967, an intentional community in New Mexico that, quite similar to the earliest days of the World Community, pursued a universalist form of spirituality. In fact, he and the residents at the Lama Foundation edited, illustrated, and published the popular work by Baba Ram Dass (born Richard Alpert, 1931-2019) *Remember, Be Here Now*.[38] He along with some followers later embraced Islam and Sufism and moved on to found an Islamic community and study center, also in New Mexico, called Dar al-Islam, but eventually resettled on a farm outside of Charlottesville and established the Green Mountain School.[39] Durkee and Abdur Rashid often hosted each other for events and lectures, and both served on the Irshad council of the Islamic Studies and Research Association (ISRA).[40]

The ISRA vision statement holds that of all the misfortunes that have beset the *umma* in the last two centuries, the rejection of *taṣawwuf* is among the worst, and thus they seek "The Spiritual Revival of Islam," in which for them *taṣawwuf* plays a key role. This is in fact one of the main objectives Abdur Rashid calls for in his exposition of the doctrine of *tajdīd*, described below. Other members of the council have included such personalities as the Tijānī *shaykh* Ahmed Tijani Ben Omer[41] and two academic scholars of Sufism, namely Alan Abd al-Haqq Godlas and Kenneth Abdelhadi Honerkamp.[42] Both of the latter two contributed endorsements printed on the back of Rasool's *TTH*, with Honerkamp also writing its preface as well as the introduction to Abdur Rashid's *Applied Sufism*. Abdur Rashid has also participated in the Sufi Symposium where he built further connections with the broader Sufi community in the US, such as his friendships with the Halveti-Jerrahi *shaykh* Robert Frager or Yannis Toussulis, a *shaykh* of the Nuriyya-Malamiyya. Toussulis also taught a seminar on Islam and

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[36] Hermansen, "What's American About American Sufi Movements?," 45-6.

[37] On Durkee, see Marcia Hermansen, "Literary productions of Western Sufi movements," in *Sufism in the West* ed. Jamal Malik and John Hinnells (London: Routledge, 2006), 36-8.

[38] Baba Ram Dass' *Remember, Be Here Now* was originally published as *From Bindu to Ojas* (San Cristobal, New Mexico: Lama Foundation, 1971). "Lama Foundation Oral History Project," Social Networks and Archival Context Cooperative, accessed April 19, 2024, http://snaccooperative.org/ark:/99166/w6tv0p96.

[39] Their official website is GreenMountainSchool.org.

[40] On ISRA, see Marcia Hermansen, "South Asian Sufism in America," *South Asian Sufis: Devotion, Deviation and Destiny*, eds. Clinton Bennett and Charles M. Ramsey (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011) 247-65; 261.

[41] For more on his background, see Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 105-6. Ben Omer is one of the ten *shaykh*s Dickson interviewed for his study and insights from this interaction are found in various places throughout the book.

[42] "ISRA VISION: The Spiritual Revival of Islam," Isra International, accessed May 24, 2018, http://www.israinternational.com/index.php/isra-vision-the-spiritual-revival-of-islam.

democratization in 2008 to a delegation of Indonesian *'ulamā'* visiting the US as part of an inter-religious dialogue program being administered by Legacy.[43]

But in addition to fellow Sufis and Muslims, Abdur Rashid and some of his students have also nurtured their connection to the majority non-Muslim community at various levels in the US and abroad, actively taking part in interfaith dialogue events as well as engaging through Legacy with businesses, non-governmental organizations, local and national governments, and universities. These facets will be discussed in further detail below, but on interfaith dialogue specifically, Abdur Rashid meets regularly with leaders of other faith communities and participates in interfaith dialogue initiatives. Perhaps the most recognizable figure in this regard is the Dalai Lama, whom Abdur Rashid met in 1978, but he also engages routinely with non-Muslim religious leaders at more local levels. In June of 2018, the researcher was able to attend one such meeting Abdur Rashid had with the pastor of a local church, with whom he meets at least monthly. Being part of the Red-Letter Christian movement, which emphasizes the teachings of Jesus as found in the New Testament and seeks to apply these to current social issues, this pastor was especially engaged in addressing inequalities faced by African-Americans in the southern US. These monthly meetings are also usually attended by a local rabbi. Abdur Rashid emphasizes the practical side of such relationships by calling for "multi-faith partnerships" where people of a variety of faiths can work toward common goals, such as reversing "the trends towards violence, materialism, the breakdown of communities and families, drug and alcohol abuse, and other social ills."[44] But two other major aspects also deserve consideration here, namely homeopathy and engagement with science.

Homeopathy

Abdur Rashid's vocation as a homeopathic healer seems to compliment his role as a spiritual guide. This nexus was present before his encounter with Sufic Islam but it found considerable resonance there and continues to this day. At several points during the various interviews with the researcher, the conversation was paused for him to provide prescriptions and instructions to patients who called or stopped by. His early training was in homeopathy as taught to him by a Hindu physician, Dr. Mehta, as opposed to the more Islamicate *yūnānī ṭibb*, though these two traditional systems of medicine have developed alongside each other in the subcontinent.[45] Moreover, his initial interest might be seen as couched in the broader context of the Holistic Healing Movement (HHM), that emerged alongside alternative spiritualities and the HPM, and as a response to the rejection of traditional systems of medicine with the advent of modern medicine. Thus, it may be tempting to reduce Abdur Rashid's homeopathy and healing activities to being a remnant of his previous life as Sri Vasudevadasji and as part of a trend among alternative spiritual practitioners toward traditional health systems.

Yet there is a definite precedent for healing and the use of herbs as a major activity among Sufi *shaykh*s in South Asia and elsewhere. Healing and health-related issues like fertility are in fact among the major reasons that many people across the Muslim world come to visit Sufi *shaykh*s and shrines, and in addition to providing their *baraka* and *du'ā*, many *shaykh*s are also practitioners of traditional medicine, as we have just seen in his encounters with other *shaykh*s who are also accomplished herbalists. Recently in his own lineage, Sa'īd Khān was trained in *yūnānī ṭibb*, and not so recently Walī Allāh was also, as are many *shaykh*s in South Asia. This is believed to assist in their ability to assess whether physical symptoms a student may be experiencing are part of a medical condition or are the result of performing their assigned practices, such as a sensation of warmth in the heart held to be a result of striking the heart in *dhikr*.[46] In fact, the very continued existence of the *'anāṣir-i arb'a* in the Mujaddidī conceptualization of the microcosm of man; which although not deriving from the Quran

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[43] Interview Jun 2018; "Staff," Itlaq Foundation, Accessed September 26, 2018. http://www.itlaqfoundation.com/staff.html.

[44] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism: Classical Teachings for the Contemporary Seeker* (Livermore, CA: WingSpan Press, 2007), 3-4.

[45] On *yūnānī ṭibb* in general, see Helen E. Sheehan and S.J. Hussain, "Unani Tibb: History, Theory, and Contemporary Practice in South Asia," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 583, no. 1 (September 2002): 122-35.

[46] On the relationship of *yūnānī ṭibb* to Sufism, see Bashir, "*Sharī'at* and *Ṭarīqat*," 231-32.

and by *yūnānī ṭibb*'s own name is of Greek origin, had precedence in early Islamic philosophy and medicine, like with Ibn Sīnā, and mystical thought, like that of Tirmidhī, al-Hujwīrī, and Simnānī; might well be traced in significant part to the subcontinent's tradition of Greek medicine and its understanding of the body as being comprised of the four Empedoclean elements. Walī Allāh's abovementioned *yūnānī*-ized *laṭā'if* system is a case in point. Moreover, Abdur Rashid has clearly brought his praxis in line with its current context by incorporating Islamic and Sufi practices, such as by prescribing that patients contemplate on an imprint (*naqsh*) of stylized Quranic words or perform particular forms of *dhikr* and *du'ā*. Thus we see that healing is indeed another area of significant resonance.

New Science

Another salient part of Abdur Rashid's personal history is his interest in "new science," especially in relation to quantum physics as well as human consciousness. He describes how, beginning in the early 1990s, he became increasingly interested in the study of consciousness and began attending lectures and taking part in a series of conferences, including giving presentations of his own at several such events. In particular, he mentions his friendship, collaboration, and association with Emilios Bouratinos; author of such works as *Science, Objectivity, and Consciousness* and *Homeopathy of the Mind: How the Greeks Defeated Rationality*, and co-organizer, alongside physicist Vasileios Basios, of the Athenean Society,[47] which sought to develop an "epistemology of consciousness." Of note, Basios also worked under chemist and Nobel laureat Ilya Prigogine, whom Abdur Rashid recalls interactions with and whose work has been popularized among new science circles in the search to reconcile science and spirituality.[48]

Initially holding conferences in Athens, Olympia, the Yucatán in Mexico, and other locations; in 1994, the group around Bouratinos began taking part in a biennial conference in Tucson, Arizona known as "Toward a Science of Consciousness," now simply "Science of Consciousness," organized by Stuart Hameroff, an anesthesiologist, professor emeritus, and director of the Center of Conscious Studies at the University of Arizona.[49] The conference has received both praise and scorn within the scientific community, sometimes being criticized for its openness to unconventional perspectives,[50] but what is important for the present research is that it is a forum which allows for an interface and dialogue between science and spirituality.

So while Deepak Chopra; a popular spiritual teacher, author, and proponent of alternative medicine; has been a prominent attendee in recent years, the event is largely geared toward such fields as neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, and physics. Among past participants, for example, are such notables as mathematical physicist Roger Penrose, philosophers John Searle and Noam Chomsky, and cognitive scientist Daniel Dennett,[51] considered alongside Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, and Christopher Hitchins as one of the "Four Horsemen of New Atheism." Thus, we see an interdisciplinary conference with a wide range of perspectives and varying degrees of empathy or antipathy toward non-materialistic understandings of the nature of human consciousness.

Similarly, some members of the Athenean Society would also join The Scientific and Medical Network, a UK-based organization in which Abdur Rashid still maintains membership. Their self-description states that they seek "open-minded, rigorous and evidence-based enquiry into themes bridging science, spirituality and consciousness," and to transcend "the limits imposed by exclusively

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[47] "The Mind-Matter Mapping Project," Vasileios Basios, Accessed September 20, 2018. http://www.mindmattermapping.org/who-we-are/vasileios-basios.

[48] On Prigogine's association with new science, see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 62-76. The entire third chapter provides a discussion of such a "quest for a unified world view," idem 72-73.

[49] "Overview by SH," Bio-CV | Quantum Consciousness, accessed September 16, 2018, https://www.quantumconsciousness.org/content/bio-cv.; "Center for Consciousness Studies," Center for Consciousness Studies, Tucson, Arizona, accessed September 16, 2018, http://www.consciousness.arizona.edu/.

[50] C. Holvenstot, "Toward a Science of Consciousness 2011: The Greatest Show on Earth," *Journal of Consciousness Exploration & Research* 2, no. 4 (June 2011): 656-65.

[51] "Center for Consciousness Studies," Center for Consciousness Studies.

materialist and reductionist approaches." While attempts to bridge science and spirituality, that is to find a unified worldview, can be seen in alternative spiritualities in the West going back to the Theosophical Society, Swedenborg, and beyond, such was also called for by both Saʿīd Khān and Rasool. Science, philosophy, and religion all share a common ground and aim in seeking to understanding the nature of existence, though by different means and with different sources of information. Although Abdur Rashid is no longer as active in attending such events, his interest in exploring what he feels are parallels between science and Sufism, or what he sees as approaching the same truth from different angles, is still very much apparent is his writings and lectures, as we will see below. While Saʿīd Khān and Rasool saw the possibility of scientists and Sufis working together and alluded to such parallel premises, Abdur Rashid has actively sought to make this collaboration a reality and to explore these potential parallels from a Sufi perspective.

Sources of Abdur Rashid's Teachings

The main sources referred to in Abdur Rashid's teachings are the Quran and *ḥadīth*s, Rasool's teachings, and the thought of classical Sufis. But just as all other *shaykh*s throughout the history of Sufism have been influenced by their contexts, so Abdur Rashid's understanding and interpretation of these sources has been shaped by the time, place, milieu, and circumstances in which he has lived. For instance, his thought and work bear a number of marks that are often associated with the baby boomer generation, which came of age and experienced early adulthood in the 1960s and 70s, such as optimism, strong work ethic, involvement, and a desire to "make a difference." Accordingly, one might expect, given his diverse spiritual exploration prior to embracing Islam, that Abdur Rashid's teachings and practices would be somewhat eclectic religiously speaking and include elements from Buddhism, Taoism, and Hinduism, but such references are notably absent from his writings and lectures as well as in private discussions with the researcher. He sometimes refers back comparatively to ideas or practices from the days when the *khānaqāh* was an *ashram* as a way of explaining a particular concept to his audience, many of whom were there through the transition. So he might say, "this is kind of like when we used to […*xyz*…] back when we were doing Yoga," but he usually also follows this by explaining how such a Yogic or other concept differs from the Islamic Sufi topic he is discussing. Perhaps anticipating preconceptions of outsiders who may know of their universalist background, there is a very deliberate avoidance of anything that could be perceived as eclecticism. In fact, in the first meeting with the researcher, he stated explicitly, "I'm not eclectic," a statement which proved to be true from the inter-religious perspective, although within the Islamic tradition he brings together and synthesizes a wide range of thought under a single roof.[52]

One might try to argue that such a purely Islamic identity is only an overtly true and even unconscious façade, and that, for instance, his proclivity for more *wujūdi*-style statements about the nature of God's unicity (discussed below), reveal an Advaita Vedantic predisposition rooted in his previous spiritual seeking before becoming a Sufi. But we might do better to see a convergence or confluence of similar ideas, wherein the traditions he previously encountered, paved the way for his acceptance of Islam and Sufism. As mentioned, Abdur Rashid recognizes the value in other religions and sees his previous spiritual exploration as being what facilitated the unusual speed with which he was able to advance through the orders under Rasool's guidance, noting that "there is an essential truth in all of it" but "it's not like we're sitting in the mosque singing 'hare Krishna,' doing *bhajan*s, or chanting '*oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*.'"[53] It should be remembered that it was only for around 15 years, from his late teens to early thirties, that Abdur Rashid explored the religious traditions that were most available and popular in his time, place, and milieu, yet unsatisfied with these, he continued his search until discovering Sufism and Islam, to which he has held fast for the last nearly half a century. So like most Sufis throughout history, Abdur Rashid sees himself as, and wants to be nothing other than, a Muslim; which he defines as involving more than simply reciting the profession of the faith and following the external guidelines of the *sharīʿa*, but also as one who is in submission to a higher power and one from whose tongue and hand all are safe.

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[52] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.

[53] A *bhajan* is a form of devotional song performed among Bhaktis, particularly of Hindu or Sikh affiliation, while "*Oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*" is a mantra associated with the Buddhist bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokitesvara.

Yet despite his insistence on the inseparability of Sufism and Islam and avoidance of any syncretic blending of religious traditions, one does find occasional residual traces of earlier non-Islamic Sufi or Sufi-like thinkers, namely Idries Shah as well as Gurdjieff (perhaps as transmitted through Shah's writings), although he distances himself from more openly eclectic universalists, such as Sufi Sam Lewis. For example, on more than one occasion, Abdur Rashid refers to the importance of overcoming "conditioning" and he even quoted Shah during a lecture the researcher attended. He also sometimes echoes Gurdjieffian language, such as referring to "the Work" and the awakening of consciousness, yet such ideas and imagery are not necessarily inconsistent with Islamic Sufism.[54] Moreover, he is engaging with a discourse on consciousness that has been ubiquitous across religious and spiritual traditions since the last half of the 20th century. In any case, these are far from being the main sources of his teachings and he makes use of certain aspects of such teachings that he finds value in. Thus, he holds a sympathetic position toward Idries Shah and Gurdjieff, one that, in contrast to their academic reception, is similar to those held by other American Sufis, like Robert Abdul Hayy Darr and Yannis Toussulis. Still, these are just one small part of the wide array of literature Abdur Rashid draws on which, depending on subject and audience, ranges from Alex Haley's *Roots* and Alexis de Tocqueville to works on quantum physics and personal health, as well as especially sources that address contemporary societal issues.

As stated up front, however, his most commonly cited sources by far are the Quran and *ḥadīth*s. After these, in a number of lectures, he reflects on the teachings he received from Rasool. He recorded many of their conversations together and refers back to and discusses the contents of these in a number of his *dars*. Yet he also draws on a range of thinkers throughout Islamic history. He lists as significant, for example, the teachings of Sirhindī, Ibn al-ʻArabī, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, ʻAbd al-Qādir al-Gīlānī, and such Shādhilī personalities Abū al-Ḥasan Shādhilī himself (or at least the works attributed to him), his teacher Ibn Mashīsh (d. 1227), and the Shādhilī systematizer, Ibn ʻAtā' Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 1310). He also lists the teachings ascribed to the Khwājagān, perhaps relying on the *Rashaḥāt* or the works of Hasan Lufti Sushud. Aside from Sunni sources, he also looks to such traditionally Shiʻi personalities as ʻAlī and Jaʻfar al-Ṣādiq, who are also of course in Sunni Sufi *silsila*s, as well as to Ismāʻīlīs, like Nāṣir Khusraw and the early Nizārī *hujjāt*. Such a combination of Sunni and Shi'i sources is particularly unique and deliberately challenges the usual Sunni-Shiʻa divide. He explains that "What is important is the Truth, not the label of the writer or revealer of it [...]," that is whether they be Sunni, Shi'i, Ismāʻīlī, etc., and that he "disdain[s] such labels when they stand in the way of knowledge and personal awakening" and cause "bigotry, hate, and prejudice," which he sees as "anti-Sufi, anti-Islamic and anti-Human." He emphasizes that "the Truth is just that…the Truth."[55]

In addition to these classical sources; usually accessed through English-language translations, studies, and commentaries; one also finds citations of general academic studies on Sufism and Islam; such as works by Alan Godlas, Martin Lings, R.A. Nicholson, Arthur Buehler, William Chittick, and Karen Armstrong. Abdur Rashid was quite conversant and displayed an impressive familiarity with contemporary academic scholarship on Sufism, including major debates and significant scholars as well as their areas of expertise and theoretical models. In addition to academic scholarship on Sufism and translations of pre-modern Sufi texts, Abdur Rashid also draws on a range of contemporary Islamic thinkers, occasionally even citing Deobandī scholars. The researcher also noticed, on one of the many bookshelves that line the walls of his office from ceiling to floor, a copy of the work *Tablīghī Niṣāb* by the Tablīghī Jamāʻat ideologue, Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhlawi. But more often, he cites the texts

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[54] For instance, here is one of the few occasions that he quotes from Shah: "Idries Shah many years ago said, 'The Sufi Law of Life requires: Kindness to the young, Generosity to the poor, Good counsel to friends and Forbearance with enemies, Indifference to fools, and Respect for the learned.'" Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "The Sufi Law of Life," Lecture, July 19th 2017. Here he seems to be reading directly from Idries Shah, The Sufis (London: The Octagon Press, 2001), 360, originally copyrighted in 1964.
[55] E-mail to the researcher 2017.

of other contemporary Sufis and Sufi-influenced thinkers.[56] Contemporary Sufi *shaykh*s that he often references are Kuftārū, ʻUthmān Sirāj al-Dīn, and the Shādhilī Ibrāhīm Baṭāwī, along with many *shaykh*s of Western origin as well, such as Baṭāwī's *khalīfa*, the abovementioned ʻAbdallaah Nooruddeen Durkee, and Abdal Hakim Murad. Thus, with regard to his teachings, despite his initial rather universalist and inter-religiously eclectic beginnings, Abdur Rashid has delved fully and headlong into Islam and Sufism, though while also being respectful, much like Rasool, of the spiritual traditions pursued by others.

Mysticism

While still emphasizing the central role and necessity of *murāqaba* and the other practices for his students, Abdur Rashid is also a prolific speaker and writer who engages in a great deal of what we are calling here theoretical mysticism, in contrast to Rasool and Hasan, who focus primarily on engaging in the practices without delving extensively into the theory behind them. Without exception, such speculation is always placed in the service of putting the results of his mysticism into action through social responsibility and engagement. For him, as for Rasool and Hasan, the pursuit of spiritual refinement comes first, but Abdur Rashid places unprecedented emphasis on the nexus between faith and action, asserting that spiritual fulfillment cannot be fully realized without the action of service, thus simultaneously highlighting both the ascent and the descent. This same circle of ascent and descent, goes back at least to the beginnings of Sufism, and one might even argue from the times of the various prophets, who all are said to have returned to creation as messengers after colloquy with God. The practices are indispensable means for the ascent, and while Rasool and Hasan focus on these and allow the descent to happen on its own, Abdur Rashid supports the same practices and the accompanying ascent with his lectures, while also using these to inspire his listeners toward service to creation, that is the descent.

But before proceeding to examine the ways in which he does this, a few disclaimers are necessary. First, the same points noted about who is qualified to discuss Sufism, in the disclaimer above that precedes the chapter on Rasool's mysticism, also apply here. Second, and of the utmost importance, only a tiny sampling (less than % 0.02, since around 100 hours of lectures were consulted, though not nearly in the depth that was undertaken for Rasool or Hasan) of Abdur Rashid's vast output (over 5,000 hours of recorded regular lectures, not to mention articles, books, and lectures for other settings, like the activities of Legacy and Sufi or scientific conferences) could be examined. As outlined in the section on textual analysis, for the most part, this sampling has been carefully selected, though sometimes not, adding a certain degree of randomness, which has been compensated for by respondent validation and interviews with the *shaykh*.

The daunting task of making sense of such a massive corpus may not be as grave as it first appears, however, as Abdur Rashid explained that in this vast and continuously growing collection of talks, the same topics and themes are covered again and again, but often from different perspectives or with different connections. He said that in reality there are only a few topics, and when asked, he listed some examples: "faith, trust, compassion, the purpose of life, what is life?, what happens after life?, what is consciousness?, how to fulfill the *āmāna*." He mentioned how he might look back at a talk he gave in 1993 and see the exact same sentence that appeared in a talk he gave just the week before, but that now it would have an entirely different meaning.[57] So we see that his teachings are constantly evolving, but there is nevertheless a continuity. Surely, a comparative examination of his talks over time and during various phases of his development would be insightful, perhaps with such divisions as 1.) from his first talks as a Yoga guru until meeting Rasool in 1977, 2.) from then until receiving his *ijāza* in 1984, 3.) then until Rasool's passing in 2006, and 4.) from then up to the present. Regrettably, such an undertaking could not be realized here due to constraints in resources, time, and space.

[56] On the latter, for instance, one of his talks on *fikr* seems to engage with Zohair Abdul-Rahman's "The Lost Art of Contemplation: Spiritual Psychology Series." Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research. Accessed February 01, 2019. https://yaqeeninstitute.org/en/zohair/the-lost-art-of-contemplation-spiritual-psychology-series/#ftnt_ref5.
[57] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.

Yet a further disclaimer is necessary before proceeding: to make sense of this vast corpus, an alien structure has been imposed upon Abdur Rashid's work and teachings, that structure being based upon the themes of "orthodoxy" and "activism," frequently attributed to the Naqshbandiyya by contemporary academic scholarship, notably Weismann; as well as the concept of "mysticism," which has been shaped here by McGinn's and Zarrabi-Zadeh's definitions thereof and pared down further by the six key terms identified in the writings of Azad Rasool and used by SOST that are isolated for analysis here. Certain of these technical terms did not figure as prominently in the small sampling of sources initially consulted, namely *nisbat*, *tawajjuh,* and *indirāj al-nihāyat fi 'l-bidāyat*. Abdur Rashid and his students provided several articles to offset this, and offered many more, though time constraints prevented a full capitalization on their generous assistance. These six key terms were still used as anchor points for the examination, but not being so tightly tethered to them allowed for greater flexibility in gaining a somewhat fuller view onto Rasool's teachings.

A further aspect of this alien structure is that Abdur Rashid's cosmology has been examined through the lens of existing scholarship dealing with Naqshbandī Mujaddidī cosmology, such as the works of Fusfeld, Friedmann, ter Haar, and Buehler. This brings us to also consider how the focus on the Mujaddidiyya causes an imbalance of coverage at the expense of the other four *silsila*s that Abdur Rashid received *ijāza* in and teaches, but are not fully examined here. This imbalance seems justified by the fact that in this lineage, the Mujaddidiyya is traditionally the dominant *ṭarīqa*, since it is the first to be taught and, as we have seen, with 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh, this order came to significantly influence the other lineages. In line with such tradition, Abdur Rashid does usually begin teaching new students the Mujaddidī contemplations. Yet with time and depending on their personality and inclinations, he may have them move to the practices of another order before finishing the Mujaddidī curriculum. He says that one third of his students actually sit in other orders, especially the Chishtiyya, which he believes is particularly effective for contemporary times, an argument he also applies to why he has chosen to incorporate collective vocal *dhikr* (discussed below).[58] Abdur Rashid also points to commonalities, such as a shared "distinctive taste" between the Naqshbandiyya and the Shādhiliyya, and there are several Shādhilī personalities, classical and contemporary, among the sources he has drawn on.

Naturally, this imposed structure, which has acted as a sieve for and has shaped the nature of the data collected, is a necessarily imperfect tool for representing the thought of Abdur Rashid in and of itself, perhaps drawing greater or lesser attention to certain concepts than they might warrant if trying to understand Abdur Rashid's own thought in isolation. For examples of imbalances created by this approach, the discussion of the concept of *nūr Muḥammad* draws mostly from one pamphlet,[59] but because of its importance in Mujaddidī but also other Sufi cosmology, it is discussed in greater detail than other terms, such as *majāz* or *ishārāt* (discussed below), that were encountered more frequently and in a greater variety of sources during the research, but which are less useful in drawing comparisons with preceding *shaykh*s. If the main topic of this monograph were the teachings of Abdur Rashid alone, then such a tool would have to be revised. Yet considering the larger scope of this research, that seeks to understand both SOST and the Circle Group in context, supplemented by both the diachronic historical survey and the synchronic survey of the various contemporary manifestations of the Naqshbandiyya in the West, the benefit of this approach is that it provides common terms of reference for use in comparison. With these apologies made, we now proceed to our examination of Abdur Rashid's mysticism.

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[58] This stands quite in contrast to Hasan, who we saw make the same argument for the Mujaddidiyya and silent practices. Yet Abdur Rashid asserts that he does not disagree with Hasan, but sees vocal *dhikr* as substantially more difficult.

[59] Though in 2019, he gave several talks on this topic (August 28, 29, and 31, 2019 and September 4, 2018), yet these could not be properly analyzed and incorporated due to time constraints, again illustrating the challenge of dealing with a constantly growing and evolving corpus.

Cosmo-Psychology

Nisbat and the Interconnectedness of All of Existence

Abdur Rashid holds that "Sufism is a means to a personal experience of the presence of Allah (*Subh̲aanahu wa ta'aalaa*)."[60] Such an experience is believed to have a transformative effect on the individual that is described in a number of ways that all highlight different aspects of the relationship between the individual seeker and God. On the term *nisbat*, Abdur Rashid follows Rasool in using it in two major ways: 1.) as the affinity that can develop between God and man, and 2.) relationships between people, especially the "cordial relationship" one ought to have with their *shaykh* as a means for attaining the first type of affinity, though Abdur Rashid tends to use the term *munāsaba* for this sense. He does not seem to employ Rasool's abbreviative third use of *nisbat* as a comprehensive placeholder for a wide range of mystical concepts and practices, likely because he discusses a range of concepts individually and in detail. Abdur Rashid also, however, gives *nisbat* a third meaning of his own, saying that it refers to "one's relatedness to everything, one's affinity, one's awareness of everything."[61] This theme will return time and again in the following discussion.

More on the relationship between man and God, Abdur Rashid affirms, in line with the Quran,[62] that humans are created for the sole purpose of worshipping God. Essential to this, for Abdur Rashid, is remembering God, their Origin, and fulfilling the primordial covenant,[63] a major theme in Sufism since the time of Junayd that he often refers to, as we will see in the section on *dhikr*. He also frequently mentions that every person is born in *fiṭra*, "in a state of essential goodness and submission,"[64] and it is that state to which they should return. This also relates to other themes he constantly exhorts his audience to strive for, like realizing one's essential self, fulfilling the *amāna* ("trust") that God bestowed on mankind, serving as God's *khalīfa* ("vicegerent") to be a steward of the planet and one's fellow man, or becoming *al-insān al-kāmil* ("the perfect man") to actualize and reflect the names and attributes of God in one's life. Like thinkers from al-Muḥāsibī to Sirhindī, he describes "the final, or penultimate, type of glorification (*'ibaadah*)" as being in absolute submission wherein one is the slave (*'abd*) of God,[65] and as will be discussed below, being in submission to God is his foremost criteria for what it means to be a Muslim. Yet more controversially, he also often speaks of the goal as "uniting" or "reunion" with the soul's origin in the divine unity,[66] and says of God, "He is a part of everything He has created, and His Consciousness permeates all that exists,"[67] and he understands *tawḥīd* to mean that "In truth, there is only Allah,"[68] all without seeming to concern himself with theological defenses against potential accusations of *ittiḥād* or *ḥulūl*.

One cannot, however, view such statements as theological propositions on the objective nature of God and the universe, for Abdur Rashid is dealing with the subjective world of the individual seeker. So, for example, he points out how the idea of achieving nearness to God seems to contradict with the assertion that God is immanent and ever present. But he explains that the nearness to God that is sought is an "apparent nearness," it is a matter of the individual's perception, and what is pursued is the realization of or awakening to the divine presence that is already there and always has been and always will be there. Through all of the ups and downs of life and the spiritual journey, God is always present, yet it is one's awareness of that presence or lack thereof that makes Him seem near or distant.[69] Thus

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[60] Abdur Rashid, *Why?*, 13.
[61] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.
[62] Quran 51:56, "I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me."
[63] "In fact, we are asked to live daily a moment from pre-existence, of pre-eternity, a moment when we were asked: […] Am I not your Lord?" Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *When?* (Bedford, VA: Circle Group, 2012), 12-3.
[64] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 1, 82, 125, 203.
[65] Abdur Rashid, *What?*, 7-14.
[66] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 39.
[67] Idem 70.
[68] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "The Purpose of Activating the Laṭā'if is to Return to its Origin," Lecture, July 13, 2013.
[69] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *Transformation: The Challenge to Remember* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2017), 55. Abdur Rashid reflects on this paradoxical nature of God in the following verses:

due to the subjective nature of the mystical experience, it would be inappropriate to attach such labels as "pantheism" or "panentheism" to his thought. As a Sufi *shaykh*, as opposed to a theologian, his aim is to bring his listeners to such greater proximity and awareness of God, something that is personal, experiential, and subjective, rather than asserting theological premises about objective reality. Thus, he emphasizes God's immanence over his transcendent separation and does not even attempt to justify his statements with regard to theological debates on the matter.

When asked about the issue of *waḥdat al-wujūd* versus *waḥdat al-shuhūd*, he explained that he came to the same conclusion as Shāh Walī Allāh, which he summarizes as that they both refer to the same thing from different perspectives.[70] Sirhindī's *waḥdat al-shuhūd*, which upholds and underlines the distinction between God and creation, was expounded in a context in which he saw the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* as being responsible for excesses, antinomianism, and syncretism which he felt threatened Islam itself. Abdur Rashid, however, sees his own context as one in which people are mired in materialism, which results in a pervasive lack of awareness of and connection to God. It would therefore not be helpful in resolving this to emphasize God's distant transcendence, and thus Abdur Rashid instead emphasizes God's immanence, to bring his listeners to a greater proximity to and awareness of God, which is held to directly affect how they choose to live life, a goal that permeates the entirety of his thought and work. *Everything in Abdur Rashid's teachings, in one way or another, ultimately points back to achieving a profound awareness of God and living it in daily life*, which might be well summarized in the concept of *iḥsān*. But despite such emphasis on God's immanence, one can find occasions where Abdur Rashid affirms the ontological separation between God and creation, such as in his discussions of *fikr* examined below, wherein he explains the external world acting as a mirror for God, but like an image of a thing displayed in a mirror, the image is not the thing itself. Yet he does not emphasize such separation, as Sirhindī did, since his goal is to bring people to a greater proximity to God and an immediate awareness of Him in their lives.

His lack of concern for theological attacks against his teachings may also be attributed to the fact that he seeks to uncover what he feels is the inner meaning and essential spirit of Islam as well as to only engage with like-minded people, rather than debating with those who he sees as overly preoccupied with literalist dogma and exotericism. Furthermore, these debates took place in past centuries and such discussions, in their time and place, served to refine the understanding of the cosmological structure on which the transmissions are based, and to ensure that mystical intuition falls in line with prophetic revelation. Thus, Abdur Rashid seems to leave such deliberations to the great speculative mystics of the past, like al-Shaykh al-Akbar, the Mujaddid Alf-i Thāni and those that followed, while preferring to continue building in his own way upon the foundation they laid, moving forward to focus on his own hallmark: Applied Sufism.

It is here, with Applied Sufism, that the idea of the unity and interconnectedness of all of existence come to the service of his call for social responsibility and engagement. He connects this idea of the unity of existence with personal conduct of the individual and the impact that has in the world: "We recognize this inter-connected unity ecologically and environmentally, but most people don't recognize it when it comes to their thoughts and actions. We tend to think we are the exception; our actions are somehow segregated from the rest of humanity, but it is not true."[71] He sees the mission of the Sufi as "living in the ONE, *Aḥad*. […so that…] Only goodness flows from our actions, only sweetness from our words. All our intentions have love behind them."[72]

How Beloved can you be
So near to me
So far from me?
Your nearness fills my heart,
Yet my heart feels your distance.

[70] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.

[71] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *Where? Where for the Love of Allah!!* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2012).

[72] Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 15. See also Abdur Rashid, *What?*, 10: "In glorifying Allah, we are choosing to be in harmony with the rest of creation, which naturally glorifies Allah: all the trees, all the birds, the wind—everything created by Allah glorifies Allah."

Turning though to the cosmological structure of the path, Abdur Rashid uses the same sets of intentions or transmissions that were standardized by Sayyid ʿAbd al-Bārī Shāh which reflect travel through an emanationist cosmology, one that is seen as having been developed and refined over the course of the history of Sufism. Abdur Rashid retained the structure and content of the circles, along with the transmissions within them, intact and unchanged from how they were passed to him by Rasool. He keeps them filed in a wooden box in his office with each *ṭarīqa*'s transmissions printed on cards of a specific color for each order. The grouping of these transmissions into circles is discussed below in the section on *murāqaba*. In the following paragraphs, however, we will consider the five entifications that emanated from the undifferentiated divine essence and that make up the remainder of the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī structure of the cosmos as they are discussed as individual concepts in the lectures and writings of Abdur Rashid.

Nūr-i Muḥammad ("Light of Muḥammad ")

Abdur Rashid follows Mujaddidī cosmology, as well as the preceding theosophy of thinkers like Ibn al-ʿArabī and before him as early as the 9th century al-Tustarī, in considering *nūr-i Muḥammad* to be the first thing to come into existence, the first entification or the *ḥaqīqat-i Muḥammadiyya*, and that "All creation is nothing but an expression of that everlasting light."[73] In one talk, he clarifies that when mentioning the divine essence, it is usually this rather than the "undifferentiated essence" that he is referring to. He also explains that the goal of the path is to travel in this essence which is beyond the names and attributes.[74] Moreover, Abdur Rashid often makes use of light imagery and cites the "Verse of Light," *Sūrat al-Nūr* (24:35), explaining that therein can be found "the essence of this Nur-i-Muhammad and the central pillar of the mysticism of Islam."[75] Thus we see the significance of the concept of *nūr Muḥammad* in Abdur Rashid's cosmology and mysticism. Not only did mankind, and all of creation, spring from this pre-existential light and is to return to it at the end of time, but this light is also within each person and can be discovered during this very lifetime: "This first eternal light is the light that we return to, that we can come to understand in ourselves […]."[76] He explains that unlike the historical, embodied figure of the Prophet Muḥammad , the "pre-eternal light, […] the first cause of creation […] the Nur-i-Muhammad continues to emanate through our lives […and…] is accessible and relevant to us, here today, and every day, every moment."[77]

He relates *nūr-i Muḥammad* to his understanding of *tawḥīd* in connection with the interrelatedness of humankind, saying that despite its diversity, "we are linked together in many more ways than we are separate. The truth is it's all Nur-i-Mohammad." But he says there is a difference between stating such a premise philosophically and experiencing it for oneself, and he holds that just one moment of such experience has transformative effects. He maintains that this experience is a repeatable phenomenon, "even in a Newtonian sense."[78] So in answering the questions of: "How then do we find the light and the character of the Prophet within ourselves? How do we make it alive, vibrant, and glowing within us?",[79] he talks about the capacity that his listeners have to personally "experience a moment of illumination by the light of Allah […] a glimpse […] a period of time with the Truth, *al-Haqq*" and to see with an "inner light."[80] He speaks of the transformative effect that is caused by such an encounter as a "transmutation […] of a person's heart by coming into contact with the Essence (*dhat*) of Allah."[81] With regard to mystical practices and how one might concretely pursue such inner realization, he mentions one in particular, *murāqaba*, which he explains in this context as "polishing

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[73] Abdur Rashid, *Seeing By the Light of the Moon*, 30.
[74] Abdur Rashid, "The Spiritual Road Map of Contemplation"; Using the same term of "undifferentiated essence," Buehler observes the same with regard to Sirhindī. *Revealed Grace*, 34.
[75] Abdur Rashid, *Seeing By the Light of the Moon*, 23-4.
[76] Idem 29.
[77] Idem 6-7.
[78] Abdur Rashid, "The Purpose of Activating the Laṭā'if," 6-7.
[79] Abdur Rashid, *Seeing By the Light of the Moon*, 22.
[80] Idem 26-7.
[81] Idem 23-4.

the mirror of the heart so that it can reflect the Nur-i-Muhammad."[82] Elsewhere, he describes the passive process of *murāqaba* as attempting to direct the "effusive ocean of light," the outpouring (*fayḍ*) of *baraka* originating ultimately from the essence toward a specific *laṭīfa* in order to illuminate it.[83]

al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā ("The Most Beautiful Names")

Proceeding from the first entification of the light of Muḥammad that derived from the undifferentiated divine essence, we now move to further differentiated, specific, and particular manifestations of that light, the names and attributes of God or the second entification. Abdur Rashid often also refers to these as *al-asmā' al-ḥusnā* ("the most beautiful names") or the ninety-nine names of God, and their importance in his teachings cannot be overstated. The specific names and attributes that he mentions vary and throughout this research, we will see various lists of examples he provides. But there are several that he lists or alludes to often, such as the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Patient, the Loving, the Kind, the Provider of Peace, the Generous, the Forgiver, the Protector, and the Just. Thus he does tend to refer more often to the *jamālī* ("beautiful") names over the *jalālī* ("majestic") ones (the first eight out of the ten listed here being *jamālī*). Some names like the Avenger, the Destroyer, or the Reckoner were not found at all, showing that for him, certain attributes are more important, or at least more important for his listeners, than others, and as we will soon see, for him the foremost of these is the Loving. Here it should be noted that the Quran itself does not use these names uniformly, nor is there even a uniformly agreed upon list. For example, with the exception of *Sūrat Al-Tawba* ("Verse of Repentance"), every other chapter in the Quran begins by invoking God as the Merciful and the Compassionate. Additionally, his choice of which examples to provide is likely also driven by which attributes are most immediately relevant to his audience, ones they can most easily relate to and are able to practically reflect in their lives.

In any case, this emphasis on the names and attributes represents one major difference between Abdur Rashid and Rasool, as his teacher cautioned him against concentrating too much in his lectures on the names and attributes, because the goal is to go beyond those to their Source. So in one *dars*, Abdur Rashid explains how the ultimate objective is to travel "in the essence, not in the attributes," and that "This is why Hazrat was so strong with me about being careful about teaching too much about the attributes."[84] This difference is far from arbitrary and Abdur Rashid's emphasis on the names and attributes can be connected to the two main pillars of his teachings, achieving a profound awareness of God and living it in one's life. On the first, which we might call the ascent, he sees these as means through which the seeker can relate to God, and on the second, which we might see as the descent, these are means by which the seeker can manifest that relationship with God in their dealings in the world.[85] Thus Abdur Rashid's cataphatic "positive theology" that describes what God is, as contrasted with Rasool's apophatic "negative theology" that casts off all descriptions, is directly related to his propensity for emphasizing the role of the intellect as well as his focus on the descent. Yet both men have both aspects in their teachings, and both agree that the essence beyond attributes is the goal. The difference is in how much each *shaykh* discusses these different levels of the encounter with God.

So pertaining to what we are calling the ascent, after noting how Rasool would say to him, "Don't keep stressing the Divine Names," Abdur Rashid said that he questioned why, since for him these are ways in which "people can relate to Allah." He explains that Rasool, in contrast, maintained that the students should relate to God through the practices, yet Abdur Rashid felt that he needed "to do both," to teach the practices and to help students relate to God conceptually by discussing the names and attributes, which are easier to conceive of than the abstract notion of a divine essence beyond all attributes. This is of course is tied to his own use of *dars* alongside the practices, relating to God both

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[82] Idem 30. For another discussion of *nūr Muḥammad*, see Abdur Rashid, "The Purpose of Activating the Laṭā'if," 7-8.
[83] Abdur Rashid, "The Spiritual Road Map of Contemplation."
[84] Abdur Rashid, "The Spiritual Road Map of Contemplation."
[85] The issue of multiple ascents and descents has been touched on in with regard to the circles in the chapter on Rasool in the section on *murāqaba* and is discussed again below in the section on how Abdur Rashid describes *murāqaba* and the circles.

conceptually and intuitionally. He sees this as necessary since not everyone is at the same level of spiritual development, nor are all equally diligent in the practices.[86] He also explains that while the divine essence (which he has his students relate to conceptually through the names and attributes) should govern one's inner life, the names and attributes should govern one's outer life,[87] thus leading us to consider the descent.

Regarding a *ḥadīth qudsī* that he often cites in which God says of His servant whom He loves: "I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he seizes, and his foot with which he walks."; Abdur Rashid asks, "How?" For him, the Sufi must strive to reflect the names and attributes of God in their own daily life, and since the Sufi is to be "well integrated into the community, into the society," such a reflection of these divine characteristics benefits those around them. In this context, he mentions that like the Sufis of the past who spread "the light and knowledge of the Prophet […] some of us are still traveling around the world, engaging in peace-making, service, and humanitarian work *fee sabeeli-Llaah*."[88]

In another talk, he connects the names and attributes to the terms moderation, harmony, balance, and unity, and among these, he explains moderation as "action based on the personal expression of the Divine Attributes (the *Asmaa'u-l-Husnaa*), and of the light that reveals the unity (*tawheed*), the *tajalli* (lucent manifestation) that changes the heart from an organ of selfish sentimentality and duality to one of unity and selflessness."[89] He goes on to say that a true follower of the Prophet "follows the path of moderation and balance,"[90] that "Our way of Tasawwuf is to bring harmony and balance, and to attain remembrance of Allah (*Subh̲aanahu wa ta'aalaa*) with every breath," and that a Sufi's actions should be guided by the motivation "to create harmony and understanding, balance. Unity with the universe […including…] the ecology and the environment."[91] We will return to the notion of balance in the next pages in discussing, *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir*, but these quotes should amply demonstrate its importance for Abdur Rashid.

He does not, however, limit this discussion of the names and attributes to only Sufis or Muslims, saying that the "Divine attributes are legacies from God to every being of His creation, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality or religion. […] The challenge for all humans is the pursuit of the Divine attributes—learning to note, realize, embrace and activate them in our daily lives."[92] Of note, his referring to the divine attributes as "legacies" is clearly not accidental and gives a sense of why the secular non-profit organization he founded is called Legacy International. Moreover, on reflecting the divine attributes in daily life, in one talk he particularly lists "*ar-Rah̲maan* (the Compassionate), *ar-Rah̲eem* (the Merciful), *al-Ghaffar* (the Forgiver), *al-H̲afeed̲h* (the Protector), *al-Kareem* (the Generous), *as̲-S̲abuur* (the Patient)," and asks his readers to reflect on how to incorporate these qualities in their own lives: "How many times a day do we have the opportunity to dip our cups into the ocean of compassion, forgiveness, love, effort, justice, protection? How often can we distribute this ambrosia to others […]?"[93]

While Rasool does speak of the goal of the Sufi path as creating highly humane and moral people but devotes more time to explaining the practices, Abdur Rashid elaborates on this ethical dimension in greater detail. In fact, the different degree of emphasis on the names and attributes is also central to the differences in their two approaches and respective primary objectives, that is spreading the order as a *ṭarīqa* with a system of specific spiritual practices versus training a small group of students and seeking to manifest the results of those practices through service, such as by training emerging

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[86] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Proof of the Divine: Seeing the Unseen through the Unseen, Accelerating the Circles of the Laṭā'if," Lecture September 19, 2012.
[87] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Practices of Muraqabah: History and References, Rābita of the Shaykh." Lecture, September 20, 2012.
[88] Abdur Rashid, *What?*, 21.
[89] Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 14.
[90] Idem 14.
[91] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 32.
[92] J.E. Rash, *Islam and Democracy: A Foundation for Ending Extremism and Preventing Conflict* (Bedford, VA: Legacy International, 2006), 40.
[93] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 32.

leaders from all walks of life for bringing about a vision of a better world, as will be discussed in the section on Legacy. This leads us to another major reason for the importance of the names and attributes for Abdur Rashid, which is that they serve as a significant way for him to translate his Sufi teachings into religiously non-specific or even secular terms to reach an audience of many different faiths or even none at all through the work of Legacy International. He does so by using the term "universal values" as interchangeable with and equivalent to the names and attributes of God. As we will see below, Legacy and all of its programs are built around the concept of universal values.

Connecting the Inner (Bāṭin) and the Outer (Ẓāhir)

We now turn from the undifferentiated essence and the first two entifications, or the sphere of necessary existence, to the sphere of contingent existence, or the last three entifications: viz., the spiritual *ʻālam-i amr* ("world of command"), the liminal *ʻālam-i mithāl* ("world of image-exemplars"), and the physical *ʻālam-i khalq* ("world of creation") in Mujaddidī terminology. Abdur Rashid does extensively discuss and make references to these, and he also sometimes uses equivalent terms from the broader field of Sufi metaphysics, like the spiritual *ʻālam al-jabarūt* ("world of power"), the liminal *ʻālam al-malakūt* ("world of dominion"), and the corporeal *ʻālam al-mulk* ("world of sovereignty"), or as it is sometimes called, *ʻālam al-nasūt* ("world of humanity").[94] For instance, pertaining to the fourth entification, or the *ʻālam-i mithāl*, which stands as a *barzakh* ("interface") between the spiritual and physical realms, he also calls it, after Ibn al-ʻArabī, the *ʻālam al-khayāl* ("imaginal world"). While he does describe this as a world of pre-figured forms, which came into existence prior to the actualization and embodiment of these prototypical forms in the physical realm, he also connects it to the term *khayāl* ("imagination"), which he employs in encouraging his listeners to envision and then actualize their vision and plans for bringing about a better world.[95]

We could delve into each of these three realms in detail, drawing on the rich corpus of Abdur Rashid's lectures. Nevertheless, in the interest of time and space, here we will address a pair of concepts that in fact encompass all five entifications and which were more prevalent, and indeed, repeatedly addressed in the sampling of Abdur Rashid's writings and lectures examined for this research, that is the notions of *bāṭin* ("inner") and *ẓāhir* ("outer"), and the need to connect and balance or harmonize these two. So there is the outer physical universe, on the one hand, and a much larger inner universe, on the other, and it is in the latter that the Sufi travels back toward the Source, passing through the fourth, third, and second entifications toward the first. The prevalence of references to *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir* over enumerations of individual levels of Sufi cosmology in the sampling of Abdur Rashid's works examined here, might be seen as a kind of short-hand which can be understood by and speak to long-time students and new listeners alike.

He emphasizes that the inner and the outer, the spiritual and the physical, are not actually separate existences, but a unified whole, two aspects of the same universe. He says that while some people are content living their lives entirely in the outer aspect, remaining "asleep" to the inner, others feel drawn "to move through the corridor (*majaaz*) between these apparent realities […] through meditation, *dhikr*, and contemplation." He says that moving back and forth between these two worlds (a process we described as ascents and descents above), or rather aspects of the same world, creates a balance, a term already addressed in the preceding paragraphs on the divine attributes. For "balance," Abdur Rashid also uses the Quranic term *mīzān*, which is the scale used to weigh one's deeds on the Day of Resurrection, but in this sense as a Sufi technical term, this balance "maximizes our human and our spiritual potential" by being connected to both the spiritual and the physical worlds simultaneously.[96] Such balance (*mīzān*) between inner and outer results in *akhlāq*, "the practice of virtue, morality and manners," the essence of which for him is "to act from our spiritual character (or

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[94] See for example Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: The Material Universe, the Spiritual Universe, and Where They Come From," Lecture, March 1, 2017.
[95] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.
[96] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *Dhaahir and Baatin* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2010), 5-6.

qalb, *ruuh*, *sirr*, *khafee*, *akhfaa*) rather than acting out of our *nafs ammaarah* and lower aspects of our human nature."[97]

The connection or *barzakh* between *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir* is of undeniable significance for Abdur Rashid. He explains that the "secret of success" in spiritual wayfaring is "to be in balance (*meezan*) between the inner and outer; to realize it is in the world of the *barzakh* that we are really travelling."[98] Obviously then, for Abdur Rashid, one's inner spiritual life should be intertwined with one's outer physical life, and thus he cautions against going to the mosque on Friday and then separating or "siloing" spiritual practice from one's daily affairs. For him, "*Taṯawwuf* is not just an inner process. Our realizations in the inner (the *baaṯin*) should find expression in the outer (the *dhaahir*)"[99] and the degree of success one has in "creating the proper relationship between the *baaṯin* and the *dhaahir* […is determined by…] how well we perceive and interface […] with the Divine attributes in our own lives. This is the way we build a bridge in that *barzakh*, between the *baaṯin* and the *dhaahir*."[100]

Abdur Rashid elaborates on how to pass between these worlds from a number of different perspectives. In describing one way of doing so, he uses terms traditionally applied to the mystical interpretation of scripture, like *ta'wīl*, *majāz*, and *ishāra*, to exhort to looking for the inner meaning of not only the Quran and *sunna*, but also the inner meaning of that which is in the outer world. We will return to *ta'wīl* below, but looking at the concept of *majāz*, it originates in Quranic hermeneutics and refers to metaphoric or figurative interpretations of the revealed scripture,[101] but Abdur Rashid takes advantage of another use of the word in Arabic, that is to denote a "corridor," and he combines these two meanings so that "metaphor" can act as a "corridor" between the *bāṭin* and the *ẓāhir*. He often equates such metaphors/corridors with quantum tunnels or wormholes, by which one, while still in this world, can peer into another dimension: "we are in this world, and there simultaneously."[102] Such imagery calls to mind the famous Flammarion engraving that depicts a medieval missionary at the edge of the earth, the horizon where land and sky meet, and though kneeling on the ground, his head and shoulders poke through the fabric of the starry sky to see into another world.[103] Indeed, this same engraving appears on the covers of several of Abdur Rashid's lectures published as pamphlets, namely the two five-part series, *Notes from the Unseen* and *Strangers*.

Similarly, he often uses the term *ishāra* (pl. *ishārāt*), which is sometimes translated as a "sign," "equivocation," or "allusion" that approximates or points toward what is being indicated, and is often juxtaposed with the apparent meaning, or *'ibāra*, "a clear and unequivocal expression."[104] Taking these terms beyond just scriptural exegesis, Abdur Rashid explains that "Everything in this physical world is a reflection of the non-physical world. That corridor between the two worlds, that *majaaz*, can only be understood by *ishaarat*, not by actuality."[105] As for what it is that is ultimately being alluded to, it is none other than God himself: "Allah has left evidence of himself everywhere. *Ishaarat* pointing to His Presence," but Abdur Rashid warns that "if we are not conscious of where we are, we will not see the signs […] That is why we must unlock the doors of our heart; unlock the doors keep[ing] us from seeing His Presence."[106] He speaks of the possibility of being in such a state that "everything is illuminated by the light of Allah, everything reminds us of and point[s] us toward Allah […] That presence is always there, but when we are too distracted, we don't feel the attraction, we can't see what is right in front of

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[97] Idem 9.

[98] Abdur Rashid, *What?*, 25.

[99] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 73.

[100] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *The Continuing Voyage of Nuh* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2012), 26.

[101] *EI*[2] "Madjāz."

[102] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Nafs and Ruh: Contravailing Forces of our Being: The Pull of our Lower Nature versus Moving to Serenity," Lecture, May 16, 2013.

[103] This engraving seems to have first appeared on page 163 of Camille Flammarion, *L'atmosphère: météorologie populaire* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et Compagnie, 1888).

[104] For a more detailed discussion of *ishāra*, see *EI*[2] "Ishāra," and *EI*[3] "Allusion (in Ṣūfism)."

[105] Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 19.

[106] Abdur Rashid, *Where?*, 14; and "[…] so how can we know Him or describe Him? Allah has provided us with a manner of addressing this question of the Divine in the form of *ishaarat* (pointing, hinting) at the *laṯeef* (indivisible, subtle and non-material)." (Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 4).

us."[107] In order to reach such a state, he advises remembrance, together with *murāqaba*, and "com[ing] to the point that all things point (*isharat*) to the Divine Presence (toward Allah). Everything is a hint, an analogy."[108] For him, even "normal circumstances of life, on closer scrutiny, we see are all signs from Allah." If one is aware of this, they see that God is always present in their life "to make our destiny clear, to help us with our choices, to encourage us to do good things, to make us reflect upon ourselves." Thus, for success on the spiritual journey, he urges: "you have to let everything remind you of Allah Swt. Don't fragment. Don't separate your life."[109]

In addition to describing the mystical experience through the spatial language of inner versus outer, evoking a world beyond the ordinary physical one, Abdur Rashid similarly uses temporal language to express a time beyond ordinary time. His concept of *waqt*,[110] or what he calls "vertical time," as distinguished from "horizontal time" or *zaman* and the "Time of Allah" or *dahr*,[111] might be summarized as being spiritually in the moment, rather than being preoccupied with the past or future, combined with, even more importantly, seizing the moment. Both of these somewhat overlapping meanings are related to the interface between *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir*, that is the *'alam al-mithāl*, and the practitioner taking advantage of the moment, whatever moment, to access his or her inner existence and connection to God.[112] On *waqt* as living in the moment, Abdur Rashid asks: "When will we realize that it is where we are <u>in the moment</u> that matters more than how many moments we have?"[113] and he also describes this living in the moment in terms of "a transcendent state" described thus:

> In a moment of *waqt*, vertical time, there is nothing of this world able to interrupt, no matter what is happening in the outer. The world is going on around you, and you are in a state of no-thing-ness. You are now in a transcendent state. You are not limited by this world or held back by this world. The linearity of the world seems imperfect and transient.[114]

Abdur Rashid considers *waqt* to be "a doorway to a timeless time, wherein there is simultaneity"[115] and urges his listeners "to seize the moment (*waqt*) and use that moment as an entry point to the precincts of the Eternal […],"[116] also explaining that "The soul takes this elevator called *waqt* that travels away from this physical world. The doorway to this elevator is found by focusing on love, paying attention to the *laṯaa'if*."[117] Thus we see that for Abdur Rashid, one way of being in such time is through *murāqaba*, or as he states elsewhere: "the Sufi lives in a timeless time, seizing the moment and living beyond this world of *zaman* (linear time). In *muraaqabah* (meditation), one begins

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[107] Abdur Rashid, *Where?*, 14; and "There are so many stories in the Sufic tradition of the seeker who looks everywhere, travels the world, seeking something that they already have, or finding someone, by apparent chance, someone near to them already." (Abdur Rashid, *Where?*, 15.)
[108] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *Preparing for Al-Mahdi: Why?* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2013), 12.
[109] Abdur Rashid, "Proof of the Divine."
[110] On *waqt* in Sufism, see Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions, 129-30.
[111] "There are different levels of time. The Time of Allah: *dahr*, the moments of the human being: *waqt*. And the continual flow of moments: *zaman*." (Abdur Rashid, *When?*, 4).
[112] "The horizontal dimension of time—that is, our self-realization through our day-to-day interactions with what we consider reality—seems to be very momentary, irrelevant almost, in the vertical sense of time. It is only through using our imagination that we can conceive of and comprehend time. The world of imagination partakes of the attributes of both worlds—the seen and the unseen. There are two levels in this *'alam al-khayal*. One of them is closer to the world of the spirit and the other is closer to the world of the body. Everything manifested in the higher level of the world of imagination corresponds totally and correctly to the world of the spirit from which it gains its existence. But the lower level is colored by the nature of the receptacle, e.g. by the mental faculties of the person who perceives it." Abdur Rashid, *When?*, 8-9.
[113] Idem 10.
[114] Idem 17.
[115] Abdur Rashid, *Preparing for Al-Mahdi*, 11.
[116] Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 9.
[117] Abdur Rashid, *When?*, 17.

to transcend the limitations of time."[118] He furthermore states that "If we want to change our self, we begin now, in this moment, one moment at a time, until it flows from us like music […],"[119] thus also tying *waqt* to *zaman* and consistent effort, by stringing together the individual moments, as well as again linking contact with the spiritual world to personal transformation.[120]

Yet another time-related word that Abdur Rashid uses as a Sufi technical term with regard to connecting the *bāṭin* and the *ẓāhir* is the *ān* ("moment"), or as he calls it, the "creative moment," and in his usage of this term, the descent aspect of the mystical experience is particularly salient. Like the above usage of *khayāl*, it highlights the fact that Abdur Rashid is not only the spiritual guide of the Circle Group, but also the leader of the World Community and Legacy International and the founder of the World Community Education Center, and that many of his students are also members and/or employees in these organizations. Thus in his *dars*, he is not only functioning as a spiritual guide, but also as a community and organizational leader, seeking to motivate and inspire his listeners in their work, work that they feel brings the inner into the outer. But turning back to what an *ān* is for him, Abdur Rashid defines it as a "creative moment" or a "creative impulse that allows our creativity, inspiration, and imagination to come forward."[121] He speaks of how one can struggle with something one's entire life, but suddenly, "in one moment you take a creative leap […and…] something happens that catapults us into another state."[122] He says that it is like "a eureka moment, a leap of discovery, which leads to a paradigm shift," into another perspective or worldview that one had never had before,[123] or it is:

> a gathering of energy and experiences that all of a sudden coalesce, and manifest in some kind of a transcendent moment, epiphany, or awakening which totally engages one. All the differentiation falls away and all the silos disappear because all the silos are built around 'I'.

When such egoic "I-centeredness" falls away, what comes forth is one's sense of interconnectedness and responsibility for all of creation, which leads to a commitment to social responsibility, and one thinks: "how could it have ever been any other way?" He says that when an *ān* comes, "it is like a bright light inside of you," that you simply have to accept that energy and transmit it "into something good."[124] But connecting this with the practices, he observes that reaching such a creative moment results from a "cumulative process that transforms our perceptions and responses," which is the very awakening of the *laṭā'if*.[125] He says that God has given us tools to use as attractors for such a creative moment, tools that he lists here as "*salat*, *du'a*, *wudu*, *sadaqa*, fasting [and] giving mercy consciously," and he explains that these are not simply cleaning out the mind, they are "drawing the Divine presence to you." Yet he holds that the greatest attractor is one's "good character and good conduct."[126]

He discusses these creative moments as an actualizing of one's inner potential and achieving a higher level of consciousness by waking up to the divine presence, themes we will discuss more below in the sections on consciousness and the *laṭā'if*. But on transcending "I"-centeredness and social responsibility, he says that that responsibility "begins wherever you are" and it extends endlessly outward, starting with one's own life, family, community, and beyond, as far as one wishes to take it, and that this "reinforces the goodness in us" and gives "a purpose to our existence," particularly at times when one feels they have lost that purpose.[127] He asks his audience to reflect on what kind of

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[118] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 30.
[119] Abdur Rashid, *When?*, 20-1.
[120] In his lecture on the Mahdi, which is perhaps as uneschatological as any discussion of the Mahdi can be, Abdur Rashid reflects on seizing the moment and observes that "perhaps contemplating the coming of al Mahdi is the impetus we need." Abdur Rashid, *Preparing for Al-Mahdi*, 20.
[121] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Attracting the Creative Moments/An," Lecture, July 26, 2017.
[122] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "The Hard Work of Pursuing the An/Creative Moment," Lecture, July 22, 2017.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Idem 10.
[127] Abdur Rashid, "The Hard Work of Pursuing the An/Creative Moment."

organization they are, one that is dedicated to service, education and helping others to realize their own essential or *universal values*.[128] Community fits into such creative moments in that when the number of these moments increases, "the power and force go out from you and the actual physical realm changes, circumstances change, health changes, social circumstances change, political circumstances change [...but, he notes…] nothing will change unless there is a force for change."[129] This will be echoed when discussing Abdur Rashid's call for renewal (*tajdīd*) below. He also says that a human being can be a catalyst for bringing about these moments in others, "and probably the more humble they are the better catalyst they are going to be."[130] It seems clear that he is not referring here to only the role of the *shaykh*, but also to the potential of his students to inspire others, whether that be as teachers at the WCEC or in the form of "catalyzing transformative leaders" in the work of Legacy. But underlying all of this is a single pervasive attracting force: love.

Love: Ḥubb and ʿIshq

Love is a major recurring theme in Abdur Rashid's teachings and he even stated that if one wants to speak of Sufism, it is impossible not to mention love. Here we particularly consider the contents of one pamphlet that specifically addresses the topic of love, *Preparing the Chambers of the Heart for the Beloved*, supplemented by interview material, though love arises time and again elsewhere. Abdur Rashid most often uses the accepted Quranic term *ḥubb* ("love") in describing man's love for God, but he sometimes also employs the more controversial *ʿishq* ("passionate love"). We have seen how the introduction of the theme of love in the late 8th century, often attributed to Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya and with textual evidence in Shaqīq al-Balkhī, anticipated and heralded the very development of Sufism. Yet the issue of *ḥubb* versus *ʿishq* would be discussed later in the 9th century by Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Daylamī (d. 1001/2), and *ʿishq* would come to be the defining aspect of the relationship between God and mankind for Ibn Sīnā and later form the very centerpiece of the metaphysics of Aḥmad al-Ghazālī as well as become a central theme in Persian Sufi poetry with the likes of ʿAṭṭār, Rūmī, and later the Naqshbandī Sufi poet Jāmī.[131]

Abdur Rashid's use of the two terms appears to overlap to a degree, but some distinctive characteristics of *ʿishq* are discussed separately below. In any case, he considers love as not only "the most essential teaching of the Sufi," and "the most universal human experience except for death," but he also sees love as the very essence of the message brought by Muḥammad. Moreover, with a cosmological centrality that echoes Aḥmad al-Ghazālī's metaphysics of love, Abdur Rashid even sees love as "the most defining attribute of Allah," since, he asks, without love, "how can there be compassion […] or mercy or forgiveness?"[132] To further illustrate love's cosmological centrality for Abdur Rashid, he often says that there are two main attractive forces in the universe, that no matter where ones goes in the physical world, gravity is always present, and analogously in the inner world,

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[128] Idem 2.
[129] Abdur Rashid, "Attracting the Creative Moments/An."
[130] Idem 6.
[131] Joseph E.B. Lumbard, "From *Ḥubb* to *ʿIshq*: The Development of Love in Early Sufism," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Volume 18, Issue 3, 1 September 2007, Pages 345–385. On Ibn Sīnā and *ʿishq*, see Maha Elkaisy-Friemuth, *God and Humans in Islamic Thought: ʿAbd al-Jabbār, Ibn Sīnā, and al-Ghazālī*, London: Routledge,2006, 74-118. For a translation of Ahmad al-Ghazali's *Sawāniḥ al-ʿUshshāq*, see Ġazālī, Aḥmad Ibn Moḥammad Abū Al-Futūh, and Nasrollah Pourjavady. *Sawāniḥ: Inspirations from the World of Pure Spirits, the Oldest Persian Sufi Treatise on Love*. London: KPI, 1986; and for selected translations, see Joseph E.B. Lumbard, "Auspices of Divine Lovers: *Sawāniḥ al-ʿushshāq*," in Naṣr, Ḥusain, and Mehdi Amin Razavi. *From the School of Illumination to Philosophical Mysticism*. London: Tauris, 2012), 378-400; and for a monograph devoted to his life and teachings, see Joseph E.B. Lumbard, *Ahmad Al-Ghazali, Remembrance and the Metaphysics of Love*. New York: SUNY Press, 2016. On Jāmī and love, see Parvaneh Adelzadeh and Masoumeh Khalilnoe Aliabad, "Survey on the Meaning of Love from Nur ad-Din Abd Ar Rahman Jami View Point," in *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research* 3, no. 2 (2013): 1156-61. See also Encyclopaedia Iranica, "Deylamī, Abuʾl-Ḥasan ʿAlī."
[132] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *Preparing the Chambers of the Heart for the Beloved* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2011), 5

that ever-present, underlying, invisible, attractive force is love. As with gravity, love itself cannot be seen, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted, only its secondary effects can be perceived by the five senses, but we do experience it. He notes that this sounds a lot like God to him.[133]

On the personal level, Abdur Rashid contrasts directing one's love towards another person or to things in this world while saving little for God, which results in the well of such love becoming contaminated by the untamed *nafs* and also eventually running dry, with instead first directing one's love toward God and after this being "able to draw from the wellspring of Allah's love," thus the love that flows is "unending and pure."[134] Much like we saw with both Junayd and Plotinus, he speaks of how the temporary and conditional love of this world, the metaphorical love, can be used to lead to the timeless and unconditional love of the Divine. In this vein, he sees worldly love as a "template" for divine love, since following the Sufi path, for Abdur Rashid, involves the divine love transforming love of this world into love *of* and *for* God, until everything in existence becomes a reminder of Him. He also describes this process as using metaphorical love in this world to construct a bridge "through the doorway of the heart" to experience the true love of God.[135] Love is perhaps also the defining theme of his poetry: As early as 1983, Abdur Rashid published excerpts of what would become *Songs Sung in Silence: The Diwan of Ahmed Abdur Rashid*, a collection of poems he composed on a range of topics related to the Sufi path, often making use of classical themes from Persian Sufi poetry in the same vein as 'Aṭṭār, Rūmī, and Jāmī, notably the anguished longing for the Beloved and the pain of separation from the Source, but it also contains numerous allusions to a number of the topics he routinely addresses in prose in his other writings and lectures.[136]

But in explaining how to cross this bridge of love that connects the inner and the outer, we see his characteristic emphasis on linking mystical practices with the practical application of the results thereof in the physical world. So in terms of practices, he holds that the template provided by the love and attraction that are felt in this world can be activated by turning one's attention away from this world and toward the divine essence, that is performing *murāqaba*, and here he mentions the very first *niyya* of the preliminary practices.[137] But he also speaks of the need to strive to feel such love at all times, not only in *murāqaba* or *suhbat*, and to connect the love in the outer with the love in the inner.[138] He describes the goal of the Sufi path as being to create an environment, both inwardly and outwardly, that enhances one's "capacity to love" and ability to serve as a "conduit for the Love that is Allah."[139] He thus exhorts his audience to love God by loving others, to nurture love in their homes as well as in their overall approach to life, since relationships of love in the world are "the template for the Eternal relationship." But more than this, the love that one has for God, which is private and unseen, is attested to and made manifest in the world by "loving the people of this world, and the creatures of this world, without any distinction."[140] Again displaying love's cosmological centrality and connecting that with the descent portion of the mystical experience, Abdur Rashid asserts that all of the divine attributes are connected to love and that these are always available to the seeker, and by bringing the divine attributes such as compassion, mercy, and patience into one's life, one is "living in Allah's Love, by Allah's Love."[141]

Yet he warns that such social responsibility and engagement are no replacement for a personal relationship with God and, like Rasool, he is also careful to point out that there are dangers with regard to love on the path. Abdur Rashid describes two of these, namely failing to fulfill responsibilities in this world and, in quite the opposite direction, being misled and trapped by the metaphorical love of this

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[133] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018; Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, August 3, 2019.

[134] Abdur Rashid, *Preparing the Chambers of the Heart*, 6.

[135] Idem 3-4.

[136] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *Dooste Haghighi: The True Friend* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2012, originally published in 1983), 25-37; Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *Fragments from the Diwan of Shaykh Ahmed Abdur Rashid* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2011).

[137] Abdur Rashid, *Preparing the Chambers of the Heart*, 16-19.

[138] Idem 8-9.

[139] Idem 10.

[140] Idem 12-14.

[141] Idem 19-20.

world. That is, after experiencing only a taste of the divine love, the aspirant may project their inner yearning for the divine onto worldly relationships and things. The purity of one's love becomes tainted with the selfish urgings of the *nafs*, rather than the pure guidance of the heart. He warns that "we should never mistake the conditional love of this world with the Love of, or for, the Divine." He cites the examples of *naẓar ila'l-murd* or of how while relationships of affinity and love with the *shaykh* and members of the order are important and beneficial on the path, it nevertheless becomes problematic when these take precedence over or distract from love of God.[142]

But now to briefly consider how *'ishq* differs from *ḥubb*, for Abdur Rashid, it constitutes a more intense and higher level of love, one that is "reserved for the true Lovers of Allah." Although ultimately ineffable, it is characterized by a deep yearning (*himma*) that "finds no fulfillment, except in Allah," as well as by both the "pain of separation" and "the joy of union," a profound humility and even a feeling of being unworthy of God's love, as well as a calm serenity such that "not a harsh word" passes through their lips. He believes that it was due to al-Ḥallāj's intense love of God that all separation dissolved and caused him to utter "*Ana al-Ḥaqq*." Abdur Rashid also says that such true lovers of God "feel the presence of Allah in every moment" and that they are "freed from slavery to this world." As examples of those who bear the marks of *'ishq*, he refers foremost to Rasool as well as to certain other *shaykh*s he considers as informal mentors, namely Kuftārū, 'Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn, and Süleyman Dede.[143]

Such description of a spiritual elite also points to his concept of *wilāyat* and what it means to be a *wāli* ("saint"), that is those who have been able to achieve and maintain the desired equilibrium between inner and outer. As an example of such a saint, he names Rasool, of whom he says he only saw him become angry once, with someone trying to extort money from him to install a telephone line for the *khānaqāh* in Delhi. Abdur Rashid also names his own mother-in-law, whom he sometimes refers to as "Grandma" in his talks and whom he points out was a descendant of the Prophet and "a totally balanced human being," who could be woken up from a deep sleep or interrupted while reading the Quran and still look up with a serene face, ask what she could do for you, and then return to her previous activity.[144] He says that when such saintly people as Rasool or Grandma speak, the words are like "liquid love" coming from their mouths.[145] But he also states that achieving such a balance between inner and outer is a never-ending process that "demands constant vigilance, constant attentiveness, and continuous remembrance, *dhikr*."[146] As for how the practitioner can gauge whether or not they are making progress on the path toward reaching such a state oneself, he provides similar metrics as Rasool by explaining that it should become clear from how: "The character of one's life changes; the direction of one's thoughts changes; the way people relate to one changes; one exudes a different kind of light."[147]

Engagement with Science

In the context of the psychologization and scientification of mysticism during modern times, while Sufism in general, upon its arrival in the West, was and often continues to be widely placed into dialogue with psychology, Abdur Rashid is more likely to discuss Sufism in relation to science and theoretical physics, particularly quantum physics. In the Circle Group's online description of their areas of focus, "new science" is listed alongside the other areas of "community development, values and responsibility; personal transformation; [and] education."[148] So for instance, on the issue of *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir*, he maintains: "This understanding of both the outer and inner reality is similar to our

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[142] Idem 11, 14, 23; Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, August 30-31, 2017. *Naẓar ila'l-murd* refers to the practice of contemplating the beauty of God by gazing into the face of young beardless boys.
[143] Idem 15, 23-25.
[144] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.
[145] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, August 3, 2019.
[146] Abdur Rashid, *Dhaahir and Baatin*, 3.
[147] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 115.
[148] "About Us," The Circle Group, accessed September 15, 2018. http://circlegroup.org/about-us/.

understanding of the atomic or sub-atomic world that exists beyond the normal sensory perceptions."[149] He also compares the great Sufis of the past to physicists like Einstein, Planck, and Heisenberg, since both groups "were dealing with non-sensory experiences of reality, and non-duality" and just as physicists have used "metaphoric" terms to describe seemingly paradoxical realities, so the Sufis have made use of "poetic language" in expressing apparently self-contradictory ideas. He additionally relates quantum physics to his own understanding of *tawḥīd* by saying, "Quantum science deals with the interconnectedness of all things; so does *Tasawwuf* and so does Islam."[150]

Abdur Rashid is not alone in linking and incorporating concepts and terminology from science into his spiritual teachings. For instance, an internet search of "quantum Buddhism," "quantum Yoga" or "quantum Kabbalah," yield a plethora of relevant results, and Sufism is no exception. Discussions of what are interpreted to be connecting points between quantum physics and Sufism are found on various sites, including those of the Ibn Arabi Society, the Naqshbandī Haqqanī NurMuhammad.com, the Islamic Research Foundation International, or the Sufism Journal, to which Abdur Rashid has also contributed. While representatives of the mainstream scientific community often reject such pairing of mysticism with science, considering it to be fringe or pseudo-science, proponents reframe this more positively to present it as cutting-edge science with the potential to overturn the older materialistic paradigm. In questioning the scientific validity of such new science, Hanegraaff points to two ways in which science, especially theoretical physics like quantum theory, is appealing to and useful for contemporary spiritual teachers and practitioners, namely that its findings are interpreted and presented in such a way as to 1.) "legitim[ize] a spiritual worldview," and 2.) "to attack the existing scientific consensus,"[151] which we might do well to remember is predominantly based on a materialistic understanding of existence. We have in fact already seen such uses in Rasool's works, like his quoting Einstein and finding hope that mechanical materialism, born of physics, will also see its downfall at the hands of physicists. While Rasool, at least in his published writings, only pointed to the possibility of such a new understanding of the universe that allows for the existence of God and a spiritual realm along with appealing to his reader to conduct an experiment in the laboratory of their own inner being by trying the practices oneself, Abdur Rashid goes significantly further by interpreting and incorporating scientific terminology and concepts throughout his lectures and even, as we will see below, including references to the same in his secular writings as J.E. Rash, President of Legacy International.

Yet from a skeptical and even hostile perspective, Abdur Rashid's references to science might be seen as coating his mystical teachings with a scientific veneer to afford them legitimacy, or as Richard Dawkins says, "exploiting quantum jargon as plausible sounding hocus pocus."[152] But time and again, Abdur Rashid emphasizes that his intention in incorporating such scientific concepts into his lectures is not to prove religion and spirituality with science, or vice versa. He also sometimes prefaces parallels that he draws between science and Sufism by recognizing that the scientists he is quoting may not agree with his Sufi interpretation and application of their research findings. Congruent with a quote often attributed to theoretical physicist Richard Feynman: "If you think you understand quantum mechanics, you don't understand quantum mechanics,"[153] and unlike some other contemporary spiritual teachers who present themselves as having an authoritative understanding of quantum theory or aspects thereof despite lacking any qualifications in the field, Abdur Rashid quite openly acknowledged that he is not trained, for instance, in the kind of higher mathematics required to engage with theoretical physics on their own terms as a physicist. He also admits that sometimes he is only able to follow a fraction of some of the scientific lectures he has attended. Yet for him, this is unimportant, since he views science and Sufism as two ways of approaching or knowing the same thing, ultimate reality, from different angles or perspectives, ways that he feels, echoing both Sa'īd Khān and Rasool, can be

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[149] Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 5.
[150] Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 9.
[151] Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, 62-63.
[152] Dawkins makes this statement while criticizing Deepak Chopra's "quantum healing": 77GSlinger, "Quantum Quacks: Part 1, Richard Dawkins Exposes Quantum Charlatan Deepak Chopra," YouTube, December 18, 2010, accessed November 29, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfVIl1UUQns.
[153] Cited by Dawkins in 77GSlinger, "Quantum Quacks: Part 1."

complementary.[154] He allows that scientists are experts in their respective fields while his own expertise lies in Sufism, though lamenting that while he acknowledges their expertise, the reverse is seldom true. Still, he finds it both helpful and enjoyable to compare notes, if you will, with those whose expertise is in another way of approaching and gaining knowledge, although of different types (scientific versus mystical), of the same Truth.[155]

He parallels the scientific and mystical quests for knowledge, saying that, "It's all about the Beyond," that science takes one to a certain point and then a theory is developed, while faith and spirituality take one to the same or a similar point where a "leap of faith" is required. On the latter, he likens this leap to the decision to marry, since when one meets a potential partner, they have a limited amount of information about them and it is only "on the wings of love" that they are able to make this leap into the unknown. He also asserts, on more than one occasion, that "the two great attractors in the universe are love and gravity."

Abdur Rashid also points to the limitations of science and reason, and on the former he notes its inability to fully explain the creation of the universe or the fact that theories must be constantly "re-hypothesized, re-theorized, and re-explained," and that ultimately, "what you wind up with is this open-ended universe that has more questions than answers." On the limitations of reason, he says that one cannot understand destiny from a rational perspective and, drawing on a famous quote by Einstein about God not playing dice,[156] he affirms that there is a greater plan or order to this indescribably vast and complex universe. He provides examples of what, in Jungian terms, might be called synchronicities, viz., meaningful coincidences, or cases where someone is visited in a dream by a deceased relative with a message that anticipates events in the waking world or how a mother seemed to know the exact moment of her child's death in a war in a distant land. He observes that from a materialistic secular worldview, such stories are reduced to mere coincidences or "just a nice story," but from a spiritual perspective, for him they are evidence of much more, such as communication between here and the hereafter. In the same vein, he makes use of the argument from experience, explaining that there is a difference between proving and experiencing, and it seems that his goal is to lead his students to the personal experience of ultimate reality rather than proving it to them rationally.

Despite the inadequacies of reason and the intellect, he nevertheless holds that they do have an important role to play in this process and in faith generally, citing the fact that he uses these to impart the very ideas he discusses during his *dars*, not to mention the emphasis we will see him place on the practice of *fikr* below. He also speaks of seeing "science as a metaphor, revealing not just one truth, but many dimensions of truth"[157] and by drawing parallels to science, he asserts that he is not seeking to convert others to his way of thinking by validating Sufism with science, but by providing another way of seeing the Truth, or as he stated, "If it helps you to see it this way, see it this way, and if it helps you to see it another way, see it the other way." So at the very least, the parallels he makes can be seen as metaphors for teaching Sufi concepts, but he also leaves open, and even sometimes explicitly points to, the possibility that they might be more, that scientific and Sufic/Islamic concepts might be pointing, concretely and literally, to the same phenomena.

For some examples, in one talk he equates wormholes, structures in theoretical physics that bridge distant parts of the universe, with the Quranic term *ma'ārij* (sg. *mi'rāj*). He posits that the ability of angels to travel vast distances instantaneously and that the Prophet's night journey (*mi'rāj*) to God,

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[154] Similarly, the abovementioned Scientific and Medical Network, in which Abdur Rashid maintains membership, describes "Multiple Ways of Knowing" in saying that it "acknowledges the complementary roles of scientific, artistic and mystical ways of knowing." "About," Scientific and Medical Network, accessed September 15, 2018, https://explore.scimednet.org/index.php/about/.

[155] Or as he says, "science and religion seem to be two major approaches to al-Haqq, the truth. But they are really just parts of the same whole. Two ways of searching out the truth of the Universe. Who we are." Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "How to Know Yourself and Know Your Lord: Muhabbat, Part 4," Lecture, January 14, 2017.

[156] For another interpretation of what Einstein meant in this quote which critiques its use to support theological premises, see Vasant Natarajan, "What Einstein meant when he said 'God does not play dice...'," *Resonance – Journal of Science Education* 13, no. 7 (July 2008): 655-661.

[157] Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 104.

which has been used to describe the ascent in Islamic mysticism since the time of al-Bisṭāmī, both occur(red) by the same mechanism as wormholes. Quoting Quran 41:53 ("We [God] will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth."), he says that "what's happening in the universe is also happening inside of us" and that wormholes "are happening in our brains as well as happening in the astronomical universes." Additionally, how wormholes are held to work is sometimes visually explained by drawing two dots on a piece of paper and folding that paper to make the dots meet, depicting the folding of time and space, and Abdur Rashid points out how Quran 21:104 speaks of folding the heavens.[158]

Elsewhere, he mentions how astrophysicists speak of parallel or multiple universes and then he points to the inner and the outer, the various realms of Sufi cosmology, and the fact that God is called *Rabbi'l-ʻAlamīn* ("Lord of the Worlds") in the Quran.[159] By the very nature of a metaphor, which says that something *is* something else, as opposed to being *like* something else, we cannot tell based on his phrasing whether most of his statements are intended to be taken metaphorically or literally. We might find some clue though in the following example: in describing gravitational singularities, viz., the center of a black hole, through which an object leaves one universe and enters into another, he equates this process with what happens in deep *murāqaba*. But he goes on to say, "It happens biologically all the time. A larva crosses the singularity of the cocoon and then adopts totally new rules of existence and motion [as a butterfly]."[160] It is unlikely that he is really literally equating a caterpillar's transformation into a butterfly with an object in outer space passing through a black hole, and thus he probably does not mean that exactly the same process is happening in *murāqaba* either, though such correspondences are crucial to his engagement with science.

Yet another way he uses scientific concepts is by drawing lessons or inspiration and using them to segway into points for teaching Sufism. For instance, he mentions the observer effect in quantum physics, that holds that the mere act of observation influences the phenomenon that is being observed, which then leads him to speak of the practice of *muḥāsaba*, observing and accounting for oneself to influence one's own behavior.[161] So sometimes it is metaphor, sometimes he asserts more, but at the very least, he has added to the existing repertoire of Sufi imagery, so that now reed flutes, wine taverns, lovers, roses and nightingales, being, and light all share a place with wormholes, dark matter, black holes, and gravitational singularities.

Yet in addition to such parallels or correspondences, he also makes assertions that the Quran alludes to things like the ratio of water to land on the earth, the speed of light and the existence of dark matter and gravitational pull, and he asks how it is possible that the Prophet, an illiterate man living in 7th-century Arabia could have possibly known such things.[162] So how do we reconcile such, what seem to be fairly straightforward instances of Abdur Rashid seeking to use science to validate religion with his comments that he is not trying to prove one by the other? It seems best to understand that there is indeed likely an element of validation taking place from seeing such parallels to science, but that these connections are not the bedrock or foundation on which his spiritual worldview rests. It is rather a supplemental pursuit that plays a supporting role rather than acting as a cornerstone of his teachings. If all of the references to science were removed, his teachings would still stand as an internally coherent system of thought. As he stated, "To me, everything is a validation of the divine." So science is just one more thing that to him, along with all of existence, is a reflection, an affirmation, and a proof of the One. This is discussed at length in the section on *fikr* below.

Abdur Rashid furthermore explains his engagement with science by saying, "It's also because I enjoy it! I should get to have some fun too."[163] Similarly, there is also the factor of spicing up the subject matter for his audience, some of whom have been attending his lectures for more than half a

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[158] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Maʻarij (Corridors) Wormholes," Lecture, July 27, 2017.
[159] Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: The Material Universe, the Spiritual Universe, and Where They Come From."
[160] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Approaching the Singularity of Nearness," Lecture, July 5, 2017.
[161] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, August 30-31, 2017.
[162] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Teleportation: The Link of the Physical World and the Spiritual World," Lecture, August 2, 2017. At least one of his sources for this lecture seems to have been "Miracles of Quran," Miracles of Quran, accessed January 1, 2020, http://www.miracles-of-quran.com/.
[163] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.

century now and some share his interest in these topics, thus incorporating new science offers an endless wellspring of new topics to discuss that probably help to keep his audience engaged and challenged with new things to understand. But he also sees pointing out such parallels as affirming the "interconnectedness of everything in this universe" and uses this to point out the social responsibility he feels is inherent in that.[164] In closing, beyond metaphors and considering the possibility that there may be more to it than only metaphor, a common theme in Abdur Rashid's thought and work, whether as a *shaykh* or as the President of Legacy International, is making full use of the latest advancements in science and technology, and thus science also plays a very tangibly practical role for him as well. Another part of his engagement with science is substantial enough to deserve its own separate treatment, that is the subject of consciousness, which is also an engagement with a significant discourse in contemporary spirituality.

Consciousness

A number of Abdur Rashid's lectures center around the topic of consciousness, something he sees as continuing what he and the circle around Bouratinos had started in the early 1990s in their attempts to define "consciousness" and to develop an "epistemology of consciousness." These talks could not be fully and systematically described and analyzed here, but a couple of trends in his discussions on consciousness are worth note. First, he places philosophical and scientific debates on consciousness and the mind-body problem into discussion with Islam and Sufism, especially with regard to the spiritual aspect of man. Unlike in his talks dealing with quantum physics and astrophysics, most of his parallels on consciousness would probably best be understood as quite literal. Second, he deals with the quality of such consciousness, that is the awakening or elevation of consciousness. Unlike how Gurdjieff's waking up to a higher mode of consciousness excluded God from the equation, Abdur Rashid's centers around God and is classically Sufi and Islamic, though he also posits that even outside of an Islamic and even religious context, the Quran and Sufi methods could be helpful for individuals, such as in clinical psychology, as well as for society as a whole.

On the first trend, to support the idea of an immaterial spiritual aspect of the human being, a soul or spirit, he draws on a range of thinkers, such as Descartes and Kant, but also more often contemporary scientists. He states that "Contrary to the materialistic point of view of consciousness, Hameroff and others have an alternative explanation that I think finds a common ground between scientists and I would say informed spiritual human beings."[165] For example, during the first interview with the researcher, Abdur Rashid remarked how scientists are now finding neural cells in the human heart, and this was in fact a recurring theme in a number of papers delivered at the 2011 Toward a Science of Consciousness conference,[166] one that might lend credence to the Sufi idea of the *qalb laṭīfa* being the seat of mystical experience. Furthermore, in relation to the creation of the universe, he cites the medical researcher Robert Lanza's concept of biocentrism, which Abdur Rashid understands as follows: "The basic premise is that consciousness creates the material universe," as opposed to the reverse, or matter creating consciousness.[167] He sees this as a point of agreement between Sufism and science, noting that before matter, time, or space, there was Intellect and then came "*Kun! fa-yakūn.*"

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[164] "This link between quantum mechanics and spirituality is not just an intellectual pursuit, not something that can make us feel secure that science has in some way verified Sufism and Islam, or for that matter, religion in general. Rather, we really begin to embrace the fact of the interconnectedness of everything in this universe, in these universes. What is the responsibility of that? What are the moral and ethical responsibilities that go along with that understanding? Making war on one's brother and sister?" Abdur Rashid, "Teleportation."

[165] Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: The Material Universe, the Spiritual Universe, and Where They Come From."

[166] Holvenstot, "Toward a Science of Consciousness 2011," 658.

[167] Lanza and astronomer Bob Berman co-authored two books on biocentrism entitled *Biocentrism: How Life and Consciousness are the Keys to Understanding the True Nature of the Universe* (Dallas: BenBella Books, 2010) and *Beyond Biocentrism: Rethinking Time, Space, Consciousness, and the Illusion of Death* (Dallas: BenBella Books, 2016). Lanza is best known and respected for his work on cloning stem cells, whereas his writings on biocentrism, both of which carry endorsements from Deepak Chopra on the cover, have not been as widely well-received.

Acknowledging that scientists may call it the Big Bang, he says that for him, it is just another way of describing "*Kun! fa-yakūn*," referring to the Quranic account of creation, and the two are not mutually exclusive.

He takes the implications of this idea further and applies it to the individual, observing that the human soul, equating it here with consciousness, is made out of the very same primordial substance as the rest of the universe and that these existed in pre-eternity, as discussed with Junayd and al-Tustarī. Abdur Rashid further explains that "If the body generates consciousness, then consciousness dies with the body, but if the body receives consciousness, it's like this *dars* being transmitted, when we turn this off, all of this is in the cloud." Thus, he describes the brain as receiving consciousness, echoing the notion of God breathing life into Adam, and he provides a quote about near-death experiences from Stuart Hameroff that seems to support this:

> Let's say the heart stops beating, the blood stops flowing, the microtubules lose their quantum state. The quantum information within the microtubules is not destroyed, it can't be destroyed, it just distributes and dissipates to the universe at large. […] If the patient is resuscitated, revived, this quantum information can go back into the microtubules and the patient says 'I had a near-death experience.'[168]

Drawing from quantum physics, Abdur Rashid connects such a theorized ability of consciousness to exist outside of the physical body with the concept of non-locality, whereby particles separated by even great distances can seem to influence each other, a concept he also parallels with *tawajjuh*.[169] He furthermore argues that consciousness cannot be reduced to the physiological activity of the brain,[170] and in seeking to undermine purely materialistic understandings, he points to a quale: the taste of honey, and how it obviously does exist, but that the subjective perception, the taste itself, is non-physical. He uses other similar examples of things that likewise obviously exist but do not have a directly tangible physical existence, like the knowledge conveyed by letters of the Quran written on a page, or of justice and compassion, saying that one can give examples of justice or compassion in action, but that those ideals themselves are non-physical.[171]

In addition to the mind-body problem, his discussion of consciousness also deals with quality of consciousness, that is the awakening of consciousness. In engaging with the discourse on consciousness elevation that is so ubiquitous in contemporary spirituality, Abdur Rashid laments how we are living in a world where people are asleep versus awake, unconscious versus conscious, and he calls for the "overcom[ing] of conditioning and patterning," creating a new perspective, discovering one's true self, seeking personal transformation and the awakening of inner potential.[172] While such language and framing can be found in the HPM, "self-religions," Gurdjieff and Shah, just as Rasool used a similar presentation and then provided a rather standard course in Mujaddidī meditation and devotional exercises, Abdur Rashid's follows suit and his understanding of such personal transformation is decidedly Sufi and Islamic, as we will see, especially in the following sections that outline his conceptualization of such transformation and the means by which it can be attained. Additionally, we are probably seeing a convenient convergence (or following Pittman, confluence) of similarities in imagery, after all, it was the Prophet who said "men are asleep, and when they die, they awake." Moreover, the need to awaken from the "sleep of heedlessness," or forgetfulness (*ghafla*) of God, is a common theme in Sufi poetry,[173] and unlike some of the more secular approaches mentioned above, for Abdur Rashid, it is a profound awareness of God that he is seeking to awaken in his listeners to.

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[168] Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: The Material Universe, the Spiritual Universe, and Where They Come From."
[169] Ibid.; Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.
[170] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: It's Purpose and Meaning for the Sufi," Lecture, August 8, 2018.
[171] Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: The Material Universe, the Spiritual Universe, and Where They Come From."
[172] Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: It's Purpose and Meaning for the Sufi"; Abdur Rashid, "The Hard Work of Pursuing the An/Creative Moment"; Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: The Material Universe, the Spiritual Universe, and Where They Come From."
[173] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 107.

As he puts it: "I have been trying to describe for so many years that the root of this work […] is always the awakening of oneself to the Divine presence. […] We are always in the presence of Allah, […]."[174] Discovering one's own inner potential and true essential self, which he says requires creating a new perspective in life;[175] sounding much like the new perspective alluded to in Rasool's writings; also ties back directly to an elevated awareness of God. Elsewhere he states: "We are no longer conscious of our own selves, if you know yourself you know your Lord, so it's God that we're losing consciousness of."[176] The *ḥadīth* about knowing oneself to know one's Lord is dealt with at length in the section on *fikr* below. But his orientation toward application also manifests here, saying: "The real work of the Sufi is always stimulating that potential within oneself and other individuals."[177] This is indeed similar to how the HPM seeks to unlock the inner potential of individuals, who then help others do the same, who in turn then help others still, *ad infinitum*, but it is also similar to how Junayd called for a sober return to the world to act as a pious exemplar for others or for how Sirhindī, the path of *nubuwwat* must follow *wilāyat*. For the latter two, as well as for Abdur Rashid and Rasool, this involves exemplifying being a good Muslim and servant of God, something they essentially equate in a religiously non-exclusivist way with being a good human being.

But somewhat similar to how Rasool felt that engaging in the practices of this lineage could be beneficial for non-Muslims, Abdur Rashid, in an even broader sense than envisioned by Rasool, considers it possible for Sufism to be beneficial outside of only an Islamic context, and in ways not emphasized by Rasool, such as for psychological well-being. For just a few examples of the psychologization of Sufism, which is a major trend in the arrival of Sufism in the West, we could look to how the abovementioned American *shaykh*s Robert Frager and Yannis Toussulis are professional psychologists who have integrated such a perspective into their teachings, or how the Iranian Niʿmat Allāhī (Niʿmatullahi) *shaykh* Javad Nurbakhsh (d. 2008) was a psychiatrist who authored *The Psychology of Sufism: Del wa Nafs*, Tweedie's and Vaughan-Lee's incorporation of Jungian psychology into their Sufism, and the similarly psychologized Sufism of the Shah brothers, especially Omar Ali-Shah's talks at conferences for therapists that led to the publication of *Sufism as Therapy*.

Abdur Rashid also points to this possibility and with reference to a posited decline of religion, he believes there is more mental illness today than previously, since people lack the same outlet for their emotional upsets that they had with religion.[178] He holds that the many secular institutions that have been developed for the "outer development of human beings," such as for dealing with psychological and emotional problems, "will never bring human beings to look at their essential self."[179] Yet he does find shared ground with such institutions, saying that "Islam and Sufism are about transformation" and "Purification of the self is at the core of Sufism, and if you look, it is also at the core of psychology, you're trying to affect your behavior and character." Thus he asserts that the methods Sufi *shaykh*s use, such as in purifying the self, could be employed by psychologists.[180] He says that "If you want to secularize it," just like psychology, Sufism and the guidance found in the Quran, can help one to have "a fulfilled, meaningful, balanced life."[181] He sees it as possible to help people see and experience the *nūr-i Muḥammad* in their lives, without even necessarily calling it that, because it "uplifts the spirit" and he advocates doing so "not to convert anyone, but to help make better people." But he also maintains that "Spirituality is not only clinically relevant, but it's also societally relevant" and he feels that spirituality has tools that can be used for the benefit of individuals as well as society,[182] something discussed further in the section on *tajdīd* below and which also sounds much like how with Legacy, they strive to help others manifest their core, universal values.

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[174] Abdur Rashid "The Hard Work of Pursuing the An / Creative Moment."
[175] Ibid.
[176] Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: It's Purpose and Meaning for the Sufi."
[177] Abdur Rashid "The Hard Work of Pursuing the An / Creative Moment."
[178] Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: It's Purpose and Meaning for the Sufi,"
[179] Abdur Rashid, "The Hard Work of Pursuing the An / Creative Moment."
[180] Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: It's Purpose and Meaning for the Sufi,"
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid.

Again, however, we have only dealt with some cursory observations of a small selection of Abdur Rashid's writings dealing with consciousness. There is much that has not even been touched on, like his discussions of the nature of thought, which incorporate a variety of Islamic thinkers, from al-Ghazālī to the 19th-century Iraqi *mufassir* Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī (d. 1854). Yet we do see consciousness again below, such as in the section on *fikr*, and also of course, in dealing the the subtle centers of consciousness, or *laṭā'if*, to which we now turn. In the sections that follow, we will see how Abdur Rashid's engagement with the discourse on consciousness has not really resulted in a departure from Sufi tradition or Islam, but rather we see a reformulation in a new context, where that tradition is maintained and also applied in new ways.

Laṭā'if: Seeing Through the Heart

Abdur Rashid describes the *laṭā'if* in a number of ways, such as vehicles for the spiritual ascent, receptors for Divine grace (*baraka*) and guidance, but perhaps most often as subtle organs for the perception of both inner and outer realities. He connects them with a transformational process in which the *laṭā'if* are awakened or activated, one in which a kind of inner potential is accessed that has concrete ethical implications in how one lives life and contributes to the betterment of the world around oneself. Thus he explains that when one speaks of the spiritual journey, what it is that does the travelling is the *laṭā'if*, or elsewhere he says that it is in the *laṭā'if*, "freed from the limitations of thought," that the spiritual journey itself takes place.[183] He says that awakening the *laṭā'if* and performing *nafī wa ithbāt* create a subtle vehicle for the spiritual ascent[184] and elaborates how just as it is with the physical body that we move through the outer material world, it is with the *laṭā'if* that we are able to move in the inner spiritual world. He goes on to say that, just as one cannot drive a car through the ocean, one needs "more and more subtle vehicles to travel in other dimensions," which he enumerates as *qalb*, *rūḥ*, *sirr*, *khafī*, and *akhfā*.[185] On receiving *baraka* and guidance, he describes the *laṭā'if* as gateways or doors that are opened by *murāqaba*, *dhikr*, reading the Quran, and through the love and blessings of the Prophet as well as the *shaykh*'s *tawajjuh*, and "As one unlocks these doors, countless and profound blessings begin to flow toward and transform the wayfarer. One is drawn toward higher and higher, subtle and more subtle realms of perception and understanding […]."[186] He says that when the *fayḍ* reaches the *laṭā'if*, it influences one's attitudes, thinking, and behavior and that the *laṭā'if* affect a person in two major ways: 1.) changing one's character, and 2.), typical of his Applied Sufism, preparing one to "go out into the world and help others."[187]

Pertaining to the role of the *laṭā'if* in perception, Abdur Rashid says that "You see through, you hear through, and you understand through the refined *laṯaa'if*."[188] This takes place in both the inner and the outer, and an important part of striking the balance between the *bāṭin* and the *ẓāhir* is balancing one's perception of the external world via the outer physical senses; which he associates with the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water; with our perceiving the *bāṭin* through the inner senses, "through the organs of perception of the *lataa'if*: *qalb*, *ruuh*, *sirr*, *khafee*, *akhfaa* and *nafs*."[189] Thus we see an identical set of ten *laṭā'if* as taught by Rasool and nearly every other Mujaddidī *shaykh* for which data

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[183] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 55.

[184] Abdur Rashid, "Practices of Muraqabah"; Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 57. This analogy of a vehicle might be an echo, either directly or through academic scholarship, of other Mujaddidī lineages for whom the ascent takes place with all ten *laṭā'if* simultaneously after they have been combined and then empowered with *nafy wa ithbat*. For instance, this analogy is often described in studies by Buehler. In the lineage of Azad Rasool, it seems as though one might speak of multiple vehicles, since the circles are completed separately in each individual *laṭīfa*, except for the four elements.

[185] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 56.

[186] Abdur Rashid, *Where?*, 13.

[187] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Opening the Laṭā'if under the Feet of the Ambiya: Akhfā under the Feet of Prophet Muhammad (sal): *Muqallib al-qulub*: The Changer of Hearts," Lecture, May 3, 2012. He later added that these in turn affect perception, intuition, and self-reckoning (*muḥāsaba*), which he notes are indices of progress on the path. Email November 27, 2019.

[188] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *Prophet Musa: The Journey from the Mountain* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2013), 31.

[189] Abdur Rashid, *Dhaahir and Baatin*, 5.

is available on the subject.[190] Also in relation to their perceptive function, he often describes the *laṭā'if* as "lenses" that must be properly aligned and through which the practitioner must "learn how to perceive (to pay attention)."[191] For him, the *laṭā'if*, and it seems here that he is also referring to those of the *'ālam-i amr* associated with the *bāṭin*, are not only for perceiving the realm of the unseen, but also for seeing the outer world: "We must pay attention to our *lataa'if*, and look through the optical lenses of those *lataa'if* inwardly and outwardly."[192] He also says that "Only when the physical senses are aligned with the *lataa'if* (the subtle organs of perception) can we truly see."[193] He speaks of the inadequacy of the mind and the physical organs of perception to fully perceive reality, and that these must be supplemented by perceiving through the *laṭā'if*.[194] It is significant for his emphasis on action in this world that his understanding of the *laṭā'if* is not only that they are subtle organs that must be activated to serve as a vehicle for the individual's encounter with the Divine (the usage that was primary for Rasool), but in fact in the sources consulted, it was more common to find him exhort to using them to perceive the physical world and guide one's actions therein, or as he says: "Through the eyes of the heart, through love, we respond differently to the world than we respond when we are acting only through the intellect, through reason, or through our normal emotional reactions."[195] And he also asserts that the *laṭā'if* have "the capacity and potential to create the most humane human beings."[196]

As discussed above in the section on Rasool, the process of activating the *laṭā'if*, for Abdur Rashid, is also that of their being annihilated and returned to or reabsorbed in their origin (*aṣl*) above the throne (*'arsh*), and in this context, he discusses leaving the sphere of contingent existence (*dā'irat-i imkānī*) and proceeding to the names and attributes, listing here "compassion, mercy, tolerance, love, patience, perseverance," attributes that he notes are implanted in every human being. He explains that "We move into those names and attributes in order to know the qualities of our own self" which is also the process of deepening one's relationship with God, or as a *ḥadīth* he frequently cites states, "Know yourself and you will know your Lord." On such names and attributes being inherent in everyone, he often points to how all people are "hardwired for compassion," that seeing someone else in pain evokes compassion and that it is possible to realize that one is "swimming in the ocean of compassion" (God) and to be capable of drawing from the "endless wellspring of compassion." He relates such affinity between man and God to the resonance of sound, but he also uses the imagery, often associated with Ibn al-'Arabī's concept of the perfect man, of one source of light being reflected by innumerable mirrors.[197] On knowing oneself leading to knowing one's Lord, the illumination of the *laṭā'if* with "The light of true knowledge […] reveals who we are," and he says that "each *lateefah*, like a prism, has another view of the same one truth to reveal where we come from, where we are going,"[198] alluding to mankind's origin in and eventual return to God. Elsewhere, he likewise states that eventually "the *laṭā'if* are all revealing the same secret to you from a different point of view."[199] These descriptions are much like what we saw with Sa'īd Khān's descriptions of the *laṭā'if* as offering progressively deeper insights onto the same ultimate Truth.

Also similar to Sa'īd Khān's account, Abdur Rashid often describes the effects or what takes place when each *laṭīfa* is opened, awakenened, or illuminated. He is careful to note though that such events do not occur immediately when someone sits in each *laṭīfa* only once or twice, but they are what ultimately take place over time and with consistency.[200] While there are important differences, notably the latter's emphasis on social responsibility, there are also significant parallels. If we recall from the

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[190] Idem 15.
[191] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 64.
[192] Idem 73.
[193] Idem 128.
[194] Idem 130.
[195] Idem 63.
[196] Abdur Rashid, "Proof of the Divine."
[197] Abdur Rashid, "The Purpose of Activating the Laṭā'if is to Return to its Origin."
[198] Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 18.
[199] Abdur Rashid, "Proof of the Divine."
[200] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "The Laṭā'if: Rūḥ, Sirr, Khafī, Akhfā," Lecture, n.d.

discussion of the circles in Rasool's *SfT*, one proceeds through all of the intentions of the four circles in each of the first six *laṭā'if*, and Abdur Rashid is explicit that his descriptions of the transformations that occur on the path with regard to the different *laṭā'if* refer to passing through the circles in each. Moreover, in speaking of the association of each *laṭīfa* with a particular prophet, like Rasool and Sa'īd Khān, he notes that the seeker eventually comes to identify with one of these. That is, in the course of activating the *laṭā'if*, one of these centers will predominate in one's personality and the seeker will have a particular association with one of these prophets.[201] In various talks, he speaks of the different qualities inherent in these associations. For instance, the *rūḥ* is "under the feet of Noah" and "patience and perseverance" are some of its qualities, like Noah whom Abdur Rashid points out lived for 950 years and patiently sought to warn his people before the flood.[202] In addition to correspondences with the same prophets as Rasool and most other Mujaddidīs, Abdur Rashid has also maintained the other correspondences of colors and locations in the body. Now we turn to consider each *laṭīfa* individually, beginning with the heart.

Qalb

As for Rasool, the heart is of major importance for Abdur Rashid, and he describes it as the center of the microcosm and the *barzakh* between *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir*.[203] Of the ten *laṭā'if*, Abdur Rashid explains that the heart is the only organ existing simultaneously in both the outer (*ẓāhir*) and the inner (*bāṭin*), and it is there, where these two worlds meet in the microcosm of man, that the "expressions of Allah are reflected, like in a mirror, in the heart of a human,"[204] and he also relates this to the *ḥadīth qudsī*, "I am in the heart of the believer."[205] While each *laṭīfa* has a corresponding physical location in the body, he says that "the doorway to the origin of their unique *faiz* is in the core of the heart,"[206] and advises picturing them like a set of Russian matryoshka dolls nested within each other, the first and the largest being the *qalb*.[207] Perhaps most importantly, he describes the heart as "an open door, a direct line to Allah" and that we are invited to such contact at the "core of our own heart,"[208] seeming to point toward the deeper levels within the heart. Accordingly, in addition to directing attention to the heart during *murāqaba*, he cites Rasool as saying that when one performs *dhikr*, whether silently or aloud, it is in the heart where that *dhikr* is taking place, and it is the heart that is being trained.[209]

Consistent with Sa'īd Khān's description, Abdur Rashid describes the heart as the ruler of the human being,[210] and this ruler is pulled in two directions, since there is a tension between the *rūḥ*, which is drawn upward toward the Source, and the unrefined *nafs*, which pulls downward toward creation. The heart is affected by whichever of these has the upper hand, so if the *nafs* is dominant, one's heart is filled with worldly desires, whereas if the *rūḥ* prevails, the heart is filled with love and remembrance of God.[211] Thus, given that the heart can be oriented toward the world or toward God, Abdur Rashid often draws on the etymological relationship of *qalb* with the verbal form of the same root bearing the

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[201] Abdur Rashid, "The Laṭā'if: Rūḥ, Sirr, Khafī, Akhfā," He even observes how such a preference or inclination sometimes manifests even early on along the path, noting for instance how some students feel comfortable in the *qalb* and are reluctant to proceed to the *rūḥ*. Abdur Rashid, "The Spiritual Road Map of Contemplation."

[202] Abdur Rashid, *The Continuing Voyage of Nuh*, 8.

[203] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "The Ultimate Aim of Muraqabah: Achieving the Content Heart Muraqabah in the First Circle / Daira Incan," Lecture, December 24, 2014.

[204] Abdur Rashid, *Dhaahir and Baatin*, 15.

[205] Email November 27, 2019.

[206] Abdur Rashid, *Where?*, 13.

[207] Email July 26, 2017.

[208] Abdur Rashid, *Preparing the Chambers of the Heart for the Beloved*, 17.

[209] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Discussion of the Orders, Circles and Practices: Referencing Hazrat's (ar) Private Conversations," Lecture, June 14, 2012; Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "The Circles, Wuqufi Zamani, Duruud Sharif," Lecture, August 20, 2017.

[210] "[…] our heart is our leader, our messenger. […] So each one of us has an inner messenger that perceives, that sees the greatness of Allah (*Subh̲aanahu wa ta'aalaa*), that inherently knows the qualities and attributes of Allah (*Subh̲aanahu wa ta'aalaa*), feels what is right, and can sense the value of the message." Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *The Adamic Reality: The Beginning of "I"* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2012), 31.

[211] Abdur Rashid, "Nafs and Ruh."

meanings of “to turn around, turn upward, turn over, turn face up or down” as well as “transform, transmute.”[212] Abdur Rashid particularly highlights how, when the heart is in remembrance of God and “aware of the Divine Presence,” it is calm and tranquil, something he has also called “heartfulness.”[213] He in fact frequently refers to the peace and tranquility that are said to result from turning away from the world and toward God, the heart is purified by remembering its Source. For him, such remembrance and awareness are achieved through prayer, *murāqaba*, and the other practices of the order, but also through service to others.[214]

A difference between Abdur Rashid and his forebears; a difference that arises again below, such as in the sections on *murāqaba*, *muḥāsaba*, *fikr*, and *dars*; is that while Sa‘īd Khān and Rasool placed the intellect at odds with the heart, or at least excluded the role of the former in spiritual training, Abdur Rashid sees the mind as capable of having a positive influence on the heart. He asserts: “The information that is processed by us through our minds affects our hearts,” noting that seeing something beautiful uplifts the heart, while seeing something tragic evokes sorrow as well as empathy.[215] But more than this, in relation to the revolving nature of the heart, that it can only be oriented in one direction at a time, he holds that Sufi methods make use of the mind to affect the heart’s orientation and attention. He provides the example of procedures he teaches for *dhikr*, such as locking the tongue behind the teeth at the top of the mouth, moving the body around slightly to find one’s center, and focusing the mind on the recitation of “Allāh” or “Allāh Hu, Allāh Hu,” steps that he says are all designed to reduce external distractions.[216] He holds that such methods can be seen across all mystico-religious traditions, “The power of that concentration is in fact one of the practices that you find in every mystical path. Focusing on a candle, watching your breath, saying a sound, or repeating prayers over and over again […].”[217] But now we move one layer deeper, from the heart, which is pulled in two directions, to a subtle center that is intrinsically oriented toward God, namely the *rūḥ*, which Abdur Rashid variously translates as “spirit” or “soul.” While the former translation is used throughout this monograph, recently Abdur Rashid has leaned more toward using the latter.

Rūḥ

It is possible to discern the same general two areas, spiritual travel and the relationship of the spirit to the body, in Abdur Rashid’s writings on the *rūḥ* as were found in Sa‘īd Khān’s. As just discussed, opposite to the *nafs*, which urges toward creation and base desires but has the capacity to be reformed and reoriented toward God, is the *rūḥ*, which is already inherently inclined toward God and is “imprinted” with His ninety-nine names: “Our compassion for the people of this world, our sense of fairness and justice come from our *ruuh* (our soul), where Allah (*Subh̲aanahu wa ta‘aalaa*) imprinted those qualities, reflections of His Own Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names.”[218] In describing emanative pull, Abdur Rashid explains that at the moment of the creation of the universe, when God uttered “Kun!,” that “there was implanted in this soul, this enduring love for our origin. It pulls our soul, our spirit back,” and while sitting in meditation, the spirit is pulled back toward God, “but in a nonlinear way, to its source.”[219] The *rūḥ* existed before creation and was breathed into the clay from which mankind was made, thus animating it, and this *rūḥ* remains ever connected to God. It yearns to return to him, especially during meditation, and by prayer and turning away from the world and toward God in *murāqaba*, it becomes freed from mental distractions and attachment to this world. As worldly concerns subside, love (*mahabbat*) for God continues to grow, to the point that one can be transformed from one who desires God (*murīd*) to one who is desired by God (*murad*), from which *‘ishq* develops, which is

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[212] Abdur Rashid, *Preparing the Chambers of the Heart for the Beloved*, 16-17; Abdur Rashid, “Akhfā under the Feet of Prophet Muhammad (sal).”
[213] Abdur Rashid, “The Sufi Law of Life.”
[214] Abdur Rashid, “Nafs and Ruh,” 6-7.
[215] Abdur Rashid, “Approaching the Singularity of Nearness.”
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Abdur Rashid, *Why?*, 6.
[219] Abdur Rashid, “How to Know Yourself and Know Your Lord: Muhabbat, Part 4.”

described here as "an unconditional love for Allah (swt)." He says that as the rūḥ is awakened, one's "self-image dissolves," allowing the connection between one's own *rūḥ* and God to become apparent.[220]

On the interdependent relationship of the *rūḥ* to the physical body, he notes that if one were to operate on the brain, they would not find thoughts, and likewise if one operated on the body, they would not find the spirit.[221] He holds that the spirit operates through the body but is beyond it,[222] and that the body requires the spirit for movement, thought, and the functioning of the internal organs, observing that these cease when the spirit leaves the body.[223] The *rūḥ* also permeates or is suffused throughout the entire body, and he says that no part of the body is closer to this spirit than any other. Tying the microcosm back to the macrocosm, he parallels the body's relation to the *rūḥ* with the universe's relation to God, saying "no part of creation is closer to Him or further away," "*al-Ḥaqq* exists in every place, there is no place without Allāh" and "He is as near to you as your jugular vein."[224] He makes the same micro-macrocosmic linkage with regard to the animative role of the *rūḥ* in the human body, saying that "Since this prime mover of the body is the spirit, we know that the prime mover of the world must also be the spirit [of God, the *rūḥ Allāh*]."[225]

Sirr

Much in line with preceding Sufi tradition going back to Tustarī, Abdur Rashid describes the *sirr*, among other things, as the "heart of the heart" and also as "the point of communication between the Lord/Rabb and His 'Abd." Elsewhere he points out that the *sirr* is associated with the prophet Mūsa, who he points out communicated directly with God.[226] He also explains that this is the place along the journey where "secrets are revealed," where unveilings (*mukāshafa*) begin to take place and furthermore, he also refers to it, as well as the next two *laṭā'if* of *khafī* and *akhfā*, as one's conscience, one's sense of right and wrong. He also describes conscience as "awareness of oneself in a relative scheme […and…] with regard to high values and ethic[s] and morality." On the unveiling of secrets, he states that with the opening of the *sirr* comes the ability to discern (*firāsa*) the real from the illusory and to more clearly sense the divine presence through the myriad attributes of God. Thus, a particular "circumstance, a place, an action, a word spoken by another individual" or the teaching of one's *shaykh* can all produce "an epiphany, an unveiling in your mind," and indeed "every circumstance has a meaning, every utterance reveals something." Moreover, one's yearning and love increases as does one's capacity to receive "the Light of Allah (swt)," such that it can illuminate not only the seeker, but it can also "illuminate other[s] through you," it can even "illuminate the world through you." One's awareness becomes more and more directed away from the material and toward the spiritual realm, and at the same time, one's consciousness begins to shift from being centered around one's own individual existence toward a broader perspective, so that "you begin to see unveiled before you how integral you are to the whole and how you are attached to others." He also connects this to a parallel development in the transformation of the *nafs*, where the *nafs muṭma'inna* "begins to break free" from the *nafs ammāra*. Lastly, he explains that while the *qalb laṭīfa* has a calming effect and the *rūḥ* longs to return to its Source, the *sirr* starts "to be an expression of how an individual begins to live their life," also connecting it with an increase in will (*irāda*).[227]

Khafī

Turning to the *khafī*, Abdur Rashid explains that the preceding *laṭā'if*, viz., *qalb*, *rūḥ*, and *sirr*, have included a command or a trust from God, one that each individual must awaken within themself. Referring to the *sirr* as one's "conscience," he states that hidden within that, one finds a deeper secret

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[220] Abdur Rashid, "The Laṭā'if: Rūḥ, Sirr, Khafī, Akhfā."
[221] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Know Yourself, Know Your Lord, Part 3," Lecture, January 11, 2017.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Abdur Rashid, "The Spiritual Road Map of Contemplation."
[227] Abdur Rashid, "The Laṭā'if: Rūḥ, Sirr, Khafī, Akhfā"; Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.

or trust in the *khafī*, one "that is actualized only when a lover of Allah (swt) becomes overwhelmed by that love," using the term *'ishq* in this context. He also says that the *khafī* represents "consciousness itself—quality of consciousness," and that the function of this subtle center is "to perceive the omnipresence of Allah (swt)." In so doing, one realizes that that which they so passionately long for, is nearer to them than their own jugular vein. As a result of such realization, they experience a tranquility (*sakīna*) that facilitates intuitive spiritual insights as well as "objective realizations" in the external world, as the light that enters the *khafī* spreads not only to the other *laṭā'if*, but also to the physical senses as well.[228]

Akhfā

There is a significant difference in the perception of ultimate reality through the *akhfā*, which Abdur Rashid describes as the "most hidden of the hidden places" and the "innermost conscience." Through the *akhfā*, one "know[s] Allah through Allah, by Allah," and rather than being a mere observer, one is a reflection of the Divine. In this regard, he quotes the *ḥadīth qudsī* wherein God states: "[…] I become his hearing with which he hears, and his sight with which he sees […]." From the perspective of the *akhfā*, "the nafs is just a small dot in the universe." He also points out that the *akhfā* is "the central *laṭīfa*" with respect to its positioning in the physical body and that it can also be called "the eye of the heart." Such an elevated perspective "manifests as compassion and mercy and love for all creation," and in particular, Abdur Rashid emphasizes that "this compassion is not only for what is in front of us." Instead, when one looks out on all of the suffering in the world, the poverty, hunger, and death around the globe, one understands that they "are part of that circumstance," the implication being that one is capable and compelled to do something to change it.[229]

In another *dars* devoted entirely to discussing the *akhfā*, which is under the feet of Muḥammad, he mentions an epithet that is used in a number of *du'ā* to refer to the Prophet, namely *Muqallib al-Qulūb* ("Changer [or Turner] of Hearts"). Abdur Rashid says that when the *akhfā* is opened, awakened, or illuminated, that what results is the ability to follow the *sunna* and a desire to emulate the Prophet. On this, he explains that when Muḥammad came, there was hatred, conflict over resources, discrimination, and inequality among the people, and he sought to rectify these. Hence, people who had previously "hated each other, changed dramatically. Their hearts turned. He changed their hearts." He also speaks of how people who had previously "plunder[ed] the earth" and hunted game with reckless abandon, were transformed to become "custodians of the honor of the land, the minerals, the vegetation, the animals, and one another." He also highlights the Prophet's mercy in forgiving Waḥshī ibn Ḥarb, who had slain Muḥammad's uncle.[230] Elsewhere, he considers the Prophet as "not only a warner, a prophetic figure, a teacher and guide, but also a social and political leader, a mystic and a living example of the human potential."[231]

But here, Abdur Rashid also states that there is an enormous difference between "obeying" the *sunna*, as simply following a list of rules, versus actually "following" the *sunna*, that is forming one's life around the Prophetic example, especially his behavior and character. And from the above description, we see that for Abdur Rashid, the example of the Prophet is, at least in large degree, one that epitomizes social justice, harmony, and equality, caring for one's fellow human beings as well as the environment, and displaying mercy and forgiveness. So he says that when the *akhfā* is opened, characteristics like mercy are reflected in one's character, and "If they don't, it's not open." But in terms of proceeding though the sequence of the practices, he considers the *akhfā* to be a crossroad, where one either chooses to accept and implement what one has learned up to that point, or they can reject it. In this regard, the *akhfā* is particularly important to him because the next *laṭīfa* is the *nafs*, and as he notes, "if you don't follow the Sunnah, you are following yourself." That is, if one does not seek to live their

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[228] Abdur Rashid, "The Laṭā'if: Rūḥ, Sirr, Khafī, Akhfā."
[229] Idem 7-8.
[230] Abdur Rashid, "Akhfā under the Feet of Prophet Muhammad (sal)," 1-8.
[231] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *Prophet Isa - An 'Abd of Allah: The Example of Adab* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2013), 2.

life according to the Prophetic model as discussed above, one has only oneself as a model, a necessarily flawed self.[232]

In broader view of all of the *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr*, Abdur Rashid describes the awakening of these as a developmental transformational process, that while sitting in *murāqaba*, "another being is gestating," one that is wholly different than the one who began the journey. That being is none other than *al-insān al-kāmil*, the "perfect man."[233] But in arriving at this, there is a parallel process going on: the transformation of the *nafs*. Passing sequentially through the circles in each of the *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr* is the process of illuminating these five subtle centers, yet simultaneously, the *nafs* is also being transformed through its seven stages of development as it becomes familiarized with these higher realities. Abdur Rashid expresses that he hopes this point provides his audience, "some sense of why we end in nafs."[234]

Nafs and the 'Anāṣir-i Arb'a

On the force of the unrefined *nafs* and the process of purifying it, Abdur Rashid draws on the classic Sufi stages in the refinement of the *nafs* that were taken from Quranic references, saying: "From *nafs-i-ammaarah* to *nafs-i-mutma'innah* and beyond to the fulfilled and fulfilling, that being is no longer just a human being. That being is *insaan-i-kaamil*. You may say, 'It can't be me.' Yes, it can be."[235] Thus, for Abdur Rashid, the status of the "perfect man," another of the major legacies of Ibn al-'Arabī that Chittick places alongside *waḥdat al-wujūd* and the five divine presences in importance, is not limited to only one exceptional person out of all of humanity, but is a goal that is attainable by any seeker who undergoes and succeeds in the purification of their carnal soul. For Abdur Rashid, the *nafs* came into existence when God breathed life into the clay from which man was made and showered it with His light, attaching the *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr* to the physical frame. The *nafs* thus became "activated or empowered with certain basic instincts for good and for evil."[236] While he says that the *rūḥ* is singular, Abdur Rashid points out that there a multiple levels to the *nafs*,[237] and in addition to the standard three stages of the *nafs* alluded to in the Quran, Abdur Rashid also enumerates a seven-stage model of the refinement and transformation of the *nafs*, one that he asserts is "very particular to our Order."[238]

Whatever the enumeration, three or seven, we are not speaking of multiple different *nafs*, but rather different stages in the development of the same single *nafs*.[239] The seven-stage model is comprised of: 1.) *nafs ammāra*, or lower soul, which he says in the beginning of the path, works hard to pull one down toward the world, adding that "You can be in the beginning for a long time,"[240] ; 2.) *nafs lawwāma*, wherein one feels shame for sinful actions; 3.) "*nafs agheleh*,"[241] that reflects critically on one's actions to improve future conduct and which he connects to the *sirr*, that he has also described as one's conscience; 4.) *nafs mulhama*, "the inspired soul" which is capable of receiving God's light and inspiration, such as from the Quran and *ḥadīth*s, one's *shaykh*, the saints, and the prophets; 5.) *nafs muṭma'inna*, which is satisfied and has reached a degree of certainty from which one will not regress, though some faults remain; 6.) *nafs raḍīya*, wherein one is completely satisfied with one's state and has no desire for anything other than God; and ultimately, 7.) *nafs marḍīyya*, which God is satisfied with.

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[232] Abdur Rashid, "Akhfā under the Feet of Prophet Muhammad (sal)," 1-8.
[233] Abdur Rashid, "The Laṭā'if: Rūḥ, Sirr, Khafī, Akhfā," 8.
[234] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 90.
[235] Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 16; the sentences immediately preceding the above quotation read: "Now we, having she the worst of the ego (*nafs-i-ammaarah*) and having wrestled with the reality of desires, works, recognition, uniqueness, power, name, fame, pride, even pride of humility (*nafs-i-lawwaamah*), find peace (*nafs-i-mulhamah*) and serenity/sakeenah (*nafs-i-mutma'innah*). Light upon Light (from within our core) illumines our manifest from our un-manifest. We see clearly, dispassionately, humbly and we are fulfilled."
[236] Abdur Rashid, "Nafs and Ruh," 1; Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, August 30-31, 2017.
[237] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 89.
[238] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "The Sixth Laṭīfa: Nafs, The Seventh Laṭīfa: Sultan al-Adhkar," Lecture, May 5, 2012.
[239] Abdur Rashid, "Nafs and Ruh,"
[240] Ibid.
[241] The researcher was unable to find any other references to the "*nafs agheleh*."

He describes this as a process of "evolution" that requires one to submit to a path with discipline to achieve. Pointing out that unlike in Yoga, where one seeks to destroy the ego, he says that in Sufism, one seeks to transform the *nafs*, to "turn it toward the right path," toward good character and conduct, and that if the *nafs* were entirely eliminated, then one would lose the ability to desire to do even good, and this is what makes mankind different from angels.[242]

Abdur Rashid also discusses a relationship between the *nafs*, and its transformation, and the *rūḥ*, seemingly in the broader sense of the spiritual aspect of man. Consistent with *INfB*, it is by working through the circles and transmissions in each of the *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr*, the spiritual aspect of man, that the *nafs* gradually evolves. It is because of the relationship between the *nafs* and the *rūḥ* that this takes place, as the former seeks to find "resonance" with the latter, and thus a means of communication with God. One begins to "radiate the light of Allah" by manifesting the divine attributes, such as "compassion, mercy, love, tolerance, justice."[243] He also ties this transformation of the *nafs* to positive societal engagement, such as in countering extremism, but like Rasool, placing the onus on the individual to improve him- or herself first in order to improve society. He asserts that the manifestations of extremism in society are caused by various injustices and inequalities and that such extremism is paralleled in the lower soul of each individual: "The extremism that is corrupting our society (and other societies around the world) comes from various political, economic, and social imbalances. Analogously, inside ourselves there are forces of extremism, arising from the deteriorating effect of the ego or *nafs ammaarah*."[244] Hence, for Abdur Rashid, as for Rasool, the purification of the lower soul of the individual can facilitate the purification of society.

With reference to the four elements (*'anāṣir-i arb'a*), Abdur Rashid also describes them collectively as the seventh *laṭīfa*, the *qalbiyya*, or *laṭīfa sulṭān al-adhkar*, and as mentioned above, he associates these with the five physical senses. If we recall from Rasool's discussion, *sulṭān al-adhkar* is associated with the *dhikr* of negation and affirmation and involves all ten *laṭā'if*. Abdur Rashid explains that the seeker's character is profoundly affected, their inner being is purified and this is manifested in their outer being, and in seeking to do good, the universe seems to be supporting them in their endeavors, things seem to fall right into place.[245]

Indirāj-i Nihāya dar Bidāya

To briefly consider the guiding principle of *INfB*, or perhaps better *INdB*, since Abdur Rashid tends to use the Persian equivalent of *indirāj-i nihāya dar bidāya*, he does refer to this term on different occasions in some of the works examined for this research, as well as to aspects thereof that we discussed in examining Rasool's writings, such as purification of the heart and self, *jadhba* and *sulūk*, and *sayr-i anfusī* and *sayr-i āfāqī*. Nevertheless, out of the initial sampling, no lectures or writings were found that were exclusively devoted to the specific topic of *INfB*. To speculate on why this was not as readily found as it was in Rasool's writings, where it is given a highly prominent place, one might look to two possible contributing factors. First, while both of Rasool's English-language books, *TTH* and *SfT*, were examined fully and in detail, only less than 0.02% of Abdur Rashid's lectures at the time of this research were even consulted.

Another possible factor relates to how the narrative surrounding *INfB* can function as an argument for the superiority of the Naqshbandī, and thus also Mujaddidī, approach over other *ṭarīqa*s in order to gain more students. While Rasool was seeking to spread this lineage "from East to West, and from land to sea," Abdur Rashid, speaks to a relatively small group of students, most of whom are already highly committed to the path, as evinced by their taking up residence at the World Community. This is not to say that he somehow deemphasizes *INfB*; on the contrary, it appeared in his email signature block for several months during this research; but only that it was not as prominent in the texts initially

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[242] Abdur Rashid, "The Sixth Laṭīfa." See also Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "The Latīfa Sultan al-Adhkar: Filling the Body with Light," Lecture, May 9, 2012.
[243] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 85-91.
[244] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 217.
[245] Abdur Rashid, "The Sixth Laṭīfa."

examined, as it was in the writings of Rasool. Nevertheless, Abdur Rashid, his archivist, and another student were all consulted on this point and provided some samples of him discussing the term, examples in which he did not exhibit much difference at all from the descriptions in Rasool's writings. Thus, in the interest of not only time and space, but also paying more attention to aspects Abdur Rashid was found to speak at greater length about time and again, a full examination of this principle and its constituent parts according to Abdur Rashid is foregone here. What follows are only some brief observations.

On the order in which one awakens the *laṭā'if*, consistent with the principle of *INfB*, Abdur Rashid begins with the *qalb*. That is, the journey begins with the *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr* rather than those of the *'ālam-i khalq*,[246] and in line with Sirhindī as well as Rasool, for Abdur Rashid, *sayr-i anfusī* actually includes *sayr-i āfāqī* within it.[247] Also, as just described, the process of purifying and thus transforming the *nafs* is taking place concurrently with purifying or illuminating the five *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr*. By starting with the heart, rather than beginning by "trying to deal with the issues of the self," he says that "by the time you arrive at the *nafs*, you have much less to do."[248] He also quotes Rasool as saying that the most important thing in the Naqshbandiyya is *jadhba*, yet on the preceding page of the transcript, he also quotes him as having said that the most important thing in the Naqshbandiyya is *nisbat*. Although seemingly contradictory, these statements use two terms that actually refer to two aspects of the same thing. The *nisbat* (or *munāsaba*) one cultivates with the *shaykh*, which leads to the *nisbat* with God, provides the attraction (*jadhba*) that Naqshbandīs are held to experience from the very beginning of the path, in accordance with *INfB*, as opposed to the difficult *sulūk* said to be undergone in other lineages. Abdur Rashid quotes Rasool as having said that *jadhba* is associated with Abu Bakr, while *sulūk* is associated with 'Alī, and that "We combine the two," noting that Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, the fourth link in the Naqshbandiyya, was related to Abu Bakr by *silsila* while at the same time, he was a biological descendant of 'Alī.[249] In a more recent talk, Abdur Rashid quotes and draws on discussions of *INfB* in Sirhindī's *Maktūbāt*, explaining that they begin in the world of command rather than the world of creation, with the heart before the *nafs* and with *jadhba* before *sulūk*. But he also updates the discussion and brings contemporary events into the equation, that is in demonstrating how difficult it is to cleanse the *nafs*, he points to the darkness in the world, particularly pointing out cases of corruption among certain politicians. He also emphasizes the fact that their path is not simply *jadhba*, and that while it begins with *jadhba*, it also includes *sulūk*. Thus like all paths, it includes both, but the sequence is said to have been reversed by Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, a reversal that Sirhindī upheld in his teachings, and as Abdur Rashid points out, 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh is said to have introduced into their Chishtī, Shādhilī, and Qādirī lineages as well.[250]

Practices

In terms of practices, the Circle Group and SOST share the same five curricula of intentions for *murāqaba* accompanied by *waẓīfa*s comprised of *dhikr* and other forms of recitation, but Abdur Rashid also introduced certain other practices that were not among those mentioned by Rasool or Sa'īd Khān, but which can be found in broader Sufi tradition, most prominent of which are *muḥāsaba* and *fikr*. These practices often appear together in his talks, for instance in *Applied Sufism*, Abdur Rashid recommends *dhikr*, *fikr*, and in particular *murāqaba*, as means for allowing the state of *iḥsān* to come forth,[251] and in the same book, he outlines the practice of *muḥāsaba* as described below. For the practices that both branches of this lineage share emphasis on, they are very similar, if not identical, in how they are performed, but Abdur Rashid's own mark can be discerned in a number of ways in his lectures on these topics; such as his according the intellect a positive role in the mystical path, giving a greater place to

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[246] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 57.
[247] Idem 55.
[248] Abdur Rashid, "The Spiritual Road Map of Contemplation."
[249] Abdur Rashid, "Discussion of the Orders, Circles and Practices"; Abdur Rashid, "The Circles, Wuqufi Zamani, Duruud Sharif."
[250] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "The Mujaddidi/Naqshbandi Core Principle: Indiraj an-Nihayah fi'l-Bidaya," Lecture, October 5, 2019.
[251] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 64.

additional benefits said to come from mystical practice, such as health and psychological well-being, and of course his emphasis on "Applied Sufism."

First, as just mentioned in the discussion of the *qalb*, Abdur Rashid holds that the mind can affect the heart, which can be seen not only in his descriptions of the practices he learned from Rasool, but also in how the two additional practices of *fikr* and *muḥāsaba* that he incorporated are centered around the mind. Through his talks, as a supplement to the practices, he often uses his words to try to guide students to the same realizations that are primarily sought through their regimen of daily practices. Some of the most lucid descriptions of the practices can be found in a compilation of representative lectures by Abdur Rashid entitled *Transformation: The Challenge to Remember*, which was prepared as a companion to the 2017 Ramadan retreat at the World Community and has been consulted extensively in this research. In this reader, Abdur Rashid consciously decides to explore more the *'amalī* or "operant aspects of the Tariqah" over the *'ilmī*, that is "the intellectual or the speculative." In particular, he describes the two practices of *murāqaba* and *dhikr* as being especially important in the Mujaddidiyya, but he also devotes a significant portion of the reader to yet another practice, that of *muḥāsaba*.[252]

In these descriptions and those in his other lectures, Abdur Rashid emphasizes the broader meanings of words like *murāqaba* and *dhikr*. As if in contrast to Rasool and Hasan, who emphasized consistency and regularity in the practices, though also describing broader meanings, Abdur Rashid likewise exhorts to such diligence in the practices,[253] but while also encouraging his students to move "beyond the practices as practices," so they are not simply something that one does as part of a regular routine at certain times of day or night, but they become a part of one's way of being, of who one is. In this regard, he differentiates between the practice of horseback riding and actually riding a horse.[254]

With regard to the results of the practices, in contrast to Rasool's sole focus on the spiritual and ethical aspect of transformation, viz., one's relationship with God being exclusively paramount while considering any other benefits, like improved mental or physical health, as more accidental or peripheral, Abdur Rashid has a more holistic view of transformation. He sees spiritual transformation, and its asserted positive ethical ramifications, as also being paralleled and intertwined with physical and psychological transformation and well-being, something most apparent in his discussion of *fikr* below. These are, however, nothing new to Sufism, either with its arrival to the West in contemporary times or in the Muslim world. Both historically and today in Muslim-majority areas, healing, emotional well-being, and success in one's undertakings are common reasons for visiting Sufi *shaykh*s and shrines.

Lastly, consistent with his "Applied Sufism" and bringing the outer and inner into alignment, Abdur Rashid often connects these inner Sufi practices to practical application in the outer world. In the chapter of *Islam and Democracy* entitled, "Peace Making with Islam," Abdur Rashid includes, alongside the five obligatory pillars of Islam, the Sufi practices of *dhikr*, *muḥāsaba*, and *murāqaba* as all being practices that "bring us back to remembering a Higher Power. In so doing, they cultivate inner attitudes that enable outer peace making."[255] Now we will examine in turn the four main practices described by Abdur Rashid in the selection of his work consulted for this research, namely: *murāqaba*, *dhikr*, *muḥāsaba*, and *fikr*.

Murāqaba: Being Vigilant Over One's Heart

Abdur Rashid describes *murāqaba* in a number of ways that are very similar to Rasool, but while also building on such descriptions in his own way. Like Rasool, he considers *murāqaba* to be the most important practice of the order, taking precedence over *dhikr* and the other parts of the *waẓīfa* as well as being superior to *nawāfil*. He also refers to its meanings of protecting and vigilance, citing the

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[252] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 2.

[253] For instance, he frequently mentions that Rasool often spoke of making "progress" on the spiritual path, but never gave an actual definition for the term, instead saying that you perform *murāqaba* and *dhikr* and you make progress. Abdur Rashid uses this to encourage his students to consistency and diligence in their practices. Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 11; Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "The Importance of the Practices," Lecture October 21, 2018.

[254] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: The Bridge to the Eternal," Lecture, February 28, 2018.

[255] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 245.

story of Junayd learning *murāqaba* from watching a cat waiting outside a mouse's hole. Yet he also goes further and, similar to Rasool's two senses of *dhikr*, Abdur Rashid uses *murāqaba* to denote not only a particular practice, but he also uses it in a broader sense as a spiritual state in which one is vigilant about being aware of the divine presence. He makes it clear that by *murāqaba*, he not only means the practice of sitting in meditation, but it is also "actively paying attention to the Divine Presence."[256] So just as the goal of the practice of *dhikr* as recitation is the broader sense of the term *dhikr* itself, remembering God, the objective of the practice of *murāqaba* is the broader sense of the term *murāqaba* itself, vigilance in being "aware of the Presence of God within and around us."[257]

He likewise, in line with Rasool, says that *murāqaba* is a time to turn away from the world and sit waiting for blessings, allowing thoughts of "everything other than God" to subside while directing one's attention to God, thus nurturing one's spiritual aspect and leading to nearness (*ma'iyyat*) with God. Similarly, he describes *murāqaba* as passing from attachment to this world to attachment to the Infinite, and compares it to a kind of death, citing Muḥammad's statement in a *ḥadīth*, "Die before you die."[258] Also similar to Rasool, he says that the aim is not to focus one's thoughts but to awaken one's heart, he makes a clear distinction between sleep and *ghunūdgi*,[259] and he warns not to become overly preoccupied with any visions that may take place and, also like Rasool, he quotes Sirhindī's statement that these only serve "to please the seeker's heart. The final destination lies ahead."[260] He describes the purifying function of *murāqaba* by saying that it serves as a sort of "inner wuzu" and acts as a filter to remove impurities that distract one from God, that diminish *jadhba* and keep one mired in materialism. Thus for him, *murāqaba* is a means for keeping one's thoughts pure and one's intention focused on God.[261] So we see that Abdur Rashid's descriptions of *murāqaba* share many of the same features as those of Rasool or Sa'īd Khān. We might also recall here that Abdur Rashid played an active role in the process of preparing Rasool's *Turning Toward the Heart*. Moreover, the actual procedure for performing *murāqaba* in the Circle Group is identical to how it was taught by Rasool and is now performed in SOST, with the exception of the fact that the language in which the intention (*niyya*) is expressed has remained in Urdu for most of his long-time students, although Abdur Rashid has experimented with translating the intentions into various languages, for those whose mother tongue is Arabic or Turkish, but also English. As already mentioned, he asserts that he has not otherwise altered the transmissions as he received them from Rasool.

In light of the centrality of the practice of *murāqaba* for Abdur Rashid, the rhythm of the week at the World Community is set by a regular evening schedule of silent group *murāqaba* which students informally call "sittings." The starting time varies according to the month of the year, but always either beginning or ending with *maghrib* or *ishā'* prayer. Following the fashion of Rasool, the standard length of these group *murāqaba* sessions is forty minutes. During the session, as is traditionally practiced in India, all who are able, sit on the floor. Abdur Rashid sits furthest forward, facing the *qibla*; the men sit in a loose semi-circle behind him; and the women further behind, also in a semi-circular fashion. One novel aspect is that Abdur Rashid begins by quietly reciting or leading a recitation from the *waẓīfa*; including various *āyāt* and/or names of God, and the offering of the fruits of the *murāqaba* to the *silsila* (*khatm sharīf*); and then falls silent, thus setting a common "entry" into the silent period. After forty minutes, he rises quietly and departs.

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[256] Idem 64.
[257] Idem 131.
[258] Abdur Rashid, "Practices of Muraqabah."
[259] He describes *ghunūdgi* as "drifting, which seems to be like sleep but is actually more like awareness without being aware, e.g., of driving somewhere and arriving but having no detailed recollection of the drive or of any of the events along the way, yet one is totally attentive to the drive on another subtle level." Email November 27, 2019.
[260] Abdur Rashid, "Practices of Muraqabah."
[261] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 47.

Aside from the quiet initial recitation and a slightly different seating arrangement, probably due to larger numbers of people in a smaller space,[262] this very much resembles what was observed at SOST retreats in Germany and India. An important difference, however, is the fact that this is performed collectively every day, thanks in no small part to the shared community/*khānaqāh*-model, in contrast to SOST, where such collective performance of the practices is limited to weekly meetings and retreats. Circle Group students at the World Community perform this group *murāqaba* year-round, whether Abdur Rashid is able to attend or not. Some come on a near-daily basis, while others vary their schedules, sometimes performing *murāqaba* at the mosque and sometimes at home. During the Monday, Tuesday, Friday, and Sunday sittings, Abdur Rashid will often give new transmissions to students who are ready to progress. On Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday, the focus of the evening gathering is a *dars* or collective vocal *dhikr*, but always with an element of *murāqaba*.[263]

Figure 10 The World Community Mosque
Photo by the Researcher

Despite the considerable similarity and continuity with regard to descriptions of the practices themselves, there are some areas where Abdur Rashid's own contributions stand out more. For instance, recalling that Abdur Rashid is also a practitioner of homeopathy, he also connects *murāqaba* and the *laṭā'if* with healing and physical and mental health, describing *murāqaba* as "the best thing for our health and our well-being" and he states that it shares a certain similarity with other forms of practice such as Yoga, Qi Gong, or Tai Chi, in that they are all "based on focus and attention in peace."[264] He even includes an entire chapter on "Healing and Meditation" in *Applied Sufism*. Nevertheless, in line with Rasool, who does acknowledge the potential secondary benefits of *murāqaba* for mental health,

[262] While SOST meditation sessions in Germany involved from three to twenty people in rather large rooms and thus they could all sit along the walls, probably for the practical reason of comfort, viz., back support; the World Community mosque was about half the size of most of the meditation rooms used in Germany and had to accommodate around thirty people for most sessions. Thus after prayer, most sat for *murāqaba* basically right where they had just prayed. At the SOST retreat attended in Hyderabad, where a room of similar size to the World Community mosque had to accommodate around 100 men, the two female attendees meeting in a different room, some men sat against the walls while most found a place on the floor somewhere in the middle.
[263] I am very grateful to Shanti Thompson with regard to this paragraph.
[264] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 47.

Abdur Rashid points out that the actual purpose of *murāqaba* "is not to engender feelings of well-being," but instead to attain an "awareness of the Presence of the Divine in all aspects of life–to sense that there is a relatedness (*nisbah*) between all aspects of creation, all thoughts and all human experiences."[265]

Abdur Rashid also often draws connections between *murāqaba* and other practices. For instance, he holds that one's outer behavior or *adab* should complement the practice of *murāqaba*, and thus he stresses how *murāqaba* and *muḥāsaba* go hand in hand. He includes both in a pentad of concepts that he often refers to as "The 5 M's": one regularly accounts for one's thoughts and actions (*muḥāsaba*), strives against the lower soul (*mujāhada*), performs *murāqaba* consistently, removes the veils (*mukāshafa*)[266] and witnesses (*mushāhada*)[267] the Divine Presence. He connects these practices/this process with *islām*, *imān*, and *iḥsān* as found in the *ḥadīth* of Gabriel, leading to the point that "Wheresoever you look, there is the face of Allah," (Quran 2:115), to culmination in *iḥsān*.[268] He furthermore refers to one of the "most refined forms of *dhikru-Llaah*" as being *murāqaba* together with *tawajjuh*,[269] and he calls *murāqaba* "one of the most focused forms of remembering Allah."[270] Moreover, considering the connection he makes between *murāqaba* and yet another practice, viz. *fikr*, reveals one small but important difference from Rasool, not in the manner of practice itself, but in the way it is described.

While Rasool entirely excludes the mind from the process of *murāqaba*, Abdur Rashid accords the intellect a special place in this process, considering *fikr* as the very first part of *murāqaba*, the inner pronouncement of the *niyya*. He differentiates between *murāqaba* and *fikr*, saying that the former is passive while the latter is active, but that it takes place each time one internally recites a *niyya*, thus adding an active component at the outset of this passive waiting. Or stated differently, he says that *murāqaba* has two parts, that is 1.) actively making the intention, which he equates with *fikr*, and 2.) waiting passively to receive the blessings. Regarding the first, Abdur Rashid also considers *fikr* as a practice in and of itself, one that can be performed separately and in addition to the other practices, as will be discussed below. But despite according a role to the intellect and thought at the beginning of the practice, his overall description of *murāqaba* is quite consistent with Rasool's descriptions of it as a post-rational experience.

Beyond the Mind

On the second part of *murāqaba*, viz., the time spent sitting passively after the *niyya*, Abdur Rashid notes that in the beginning, one will typically be entangled in their own thoughts, but eventually the student will become "absorbed in the insights and experiences of the journey *beyond the realm of thought* [emphasis added]."[271] He similarly provides a sort of technical-psychological explanation of

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265 Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 127.

266 *Mukāshafa* can be translated as "unveiling." For several different understandings, see *EI*² "*Kāshf*."

267 For al-Qushayrī, this is the culmination of mystical realization, experiencing the "direct vision" of God. *EI*² "*Mushāhada*."

268 Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 10, 49-51; Abdur Rashid, "The Importance of the Practices."

269 Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 113.

270 Idem 127.

271 Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 46. Elsewhere, he describes three processes of 1.) concentrating the mind, as a preparatory measure, 2.) performing *murāqaba* and 3.) *dhikr-i qalbī* and *nafī wa ithbāt*, or as contemplation (*fikr*) in reference to the intentions of the circles. He likens the first step to sharpening one's pencil or wetting a brush, the second to writing letters and words, and the third to forming complete sentences. This particular triad along with its writing analogy (minus the reference to *fikr*), may have been drawn from a contemporary manual on *murāqaba* in another Mujaddidī lineage, that is Jalalludin Ahmad Ar-Rowi's *The Contemplations Of Mujaddidiyah* (n.p.: Khanqah 'Aliyah Naqshbandiyah Mujaddidiyah, 2010), 13. Alternatively, another potential source for this analogy can be found in Appendix 2 of Buehler's *Sufi Heirs* (241, footnote 2), which collates concentration, meditation and contemplation; *dhikr-i qalbī*, *nafī wa ithbāt* and *murāqaba*; and sharpening the pencil, forming letters and writing sentences. Nevertheless, aside from the possibilities of drawing on other contemporary lines or western scholarship, another possibility is that such an analogy is used among different

murāqaba, wherein the rational mind is set aside while the intuitional is deliberately brought forth. He says that *murāqaba* is "a way of directing one's silenced mind toward the Divine. When the rational mind is quieted or silenced, then something else comes forward […] an intuitive mode that produces a supra- or extra-ordinary kind of consciousness," that is "an experience of unity or oneness" or a "*tawheedic* state [that] brings us nearer to the One."[272] Like the new perspective constantly alluded to in Rasool's writings, Abdur Rashid describes meditation itself as a vehicle for "travel[ling] from our present perspective to a new paradigm,"[273] and that by "identifying with the *laṯaa'if* in meditation, we extend our awareness of the Presence of the Divine (*iẖsaan*) and our normal perceptions beyond the physical world."[274] He considers meditation as a process of "opening and closing the door" between the physical and the spiritual (outer and inner), and eventually "removing the doorway altogether. We enter a realm of peace and unity, linked through the *laṯaa'if* to" the *silsila* leading back to the Prophet and ultimately to God. Thus, we see the abovementioned harmonizing of *batin* and *zahir*. He describes the empowerment that results from this "new paradigm" as gaining strength by "seeing all humanity as part of the same chain," as well as how the "light of wisdom now illumines the world in which we live." [275]

On the perceptive function that the *laṭā'if* perform during meditation, Abdur Rashid uses what seems to be a novel analogy by comparing entering this place beyond thought in *murāqaba* with going to an optometrist to have lenses put in front of the eyes to correct one's vision, with the *laṭā'if* performing the same function as the lenses, "clarifying internally and externally that which is perceived."[276] He additionally describes being "spiritual[ly] present" in *murāqaba*, and specifically in *ghunūdgi*, as "being connected to a greater and more subtle Source/Power."[277] This brings us to another aspect of both *murāqaba* and the *laṭā'if*, the latter of which are not only subtle organs of perception in both the seen and unseen worlds, but they are also receivers of the Divine energy, blessings or *baraka*. Abdur Rashid speaks of how there is an ever-present ocean of *fayḍ* and that every meditation is "an attempt to guide that effusive ocean of light, from the essence, to a very specific *latifa*."[278] He likewise speaks of how *murāqaba* involves "relax[ing] and allow[ing] the Divine light to enter each of the *laṯaa'if*."[279] Yet a final example of imagery he uses in this regard, one that appears to be quite original to him, is when he describes the process involved in this receptive function by comparing it with tuning the dials on a short-wave radio: "As we direct attention toward the *laṯaa'if*, we are tuning to the Divine energy, in much the same way that we might adjust the dials on a short-wave radio to receive a broadcast. First, we turn the knob in large motions, then we refine the tuning, one kilohertz at a time."[280] But it is not only *baraka* that is received during meditation, but also guidance, which goes along with the perceptive function of the heart and other *laṭā'if* as receivers of guidance. He considers *murāqaba* as a time to receive such guidance from one's *shaykh* and the saints of the *silsila*, as well as from God. He says that when one is properly and sincerely doing the practices and sitting in meditation, "don't be surprised when messages come to you from this [other] world […]."[281]

Similarly, he also describes the experiences undergone during *murāqaba* as entering another world or dimension. While he defines *ghunūdgī* as "a state of peaceful repose on the cusp of

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groups in South Asia and that Abdur Rashid derived it from Rasool, since a nearly identical analogy was provided by the senior student at the SOST retreat in Hyderabad in August 2016, except that the three stages were 1.) awakening the *laṭā'if* (forming letters), 2.) sitting in multiple *laṭā'if* such as culminates in all ten with *nafī wa ithbāt* (writing words), and 3.) proceeding through the intentions of the circles (forming complete sentences). Abdur Rashid, "Practices of Muraqabah"; Abdur Rashid, "The Spiritual Road Map of Contemplation."

[272] Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 28-9.
[273] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 134.
[274] Idem 135-6.
[275] Abdur Rashid, *What?*, 23-4.
[276] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 128.
[277] Abdur Rashid, *What?*, 23-4.
[278] Abdur Rashid, "The Spiritual Road Map of Contemplation."
[279] Abdur Rashid, *What?*, 23-4.
[280] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 131.
[281] Abdur Rashid, "Approaching the Singularity of Nearness."

consciousness without the interference of the normal self or *nafs*," he also describes it as "being both here and there in a non-linear dimension of time." After the latter definition, using an analogy that invokes quantum mechanics, he describes *murāqaba* as "exploring the possibilities of the universe in the state of simultaneity." Recalling the abovementioned Flammarion print, he goes on to say that such language, if it means anything at all, is intended to give the listener a sense or "impression" of "some other reality," one that is different from everyday consensus reality, but which can be discovered and explored by those who are "compelled to seek the greater Truth."[282] Now, having discussed the topic of *murāqaba* generally, we now turn our attention to consider where it is that the seeker goes during meditation, that is we will discuss the actual circles of intentions, which he has described as comprising "a spiritual road map."

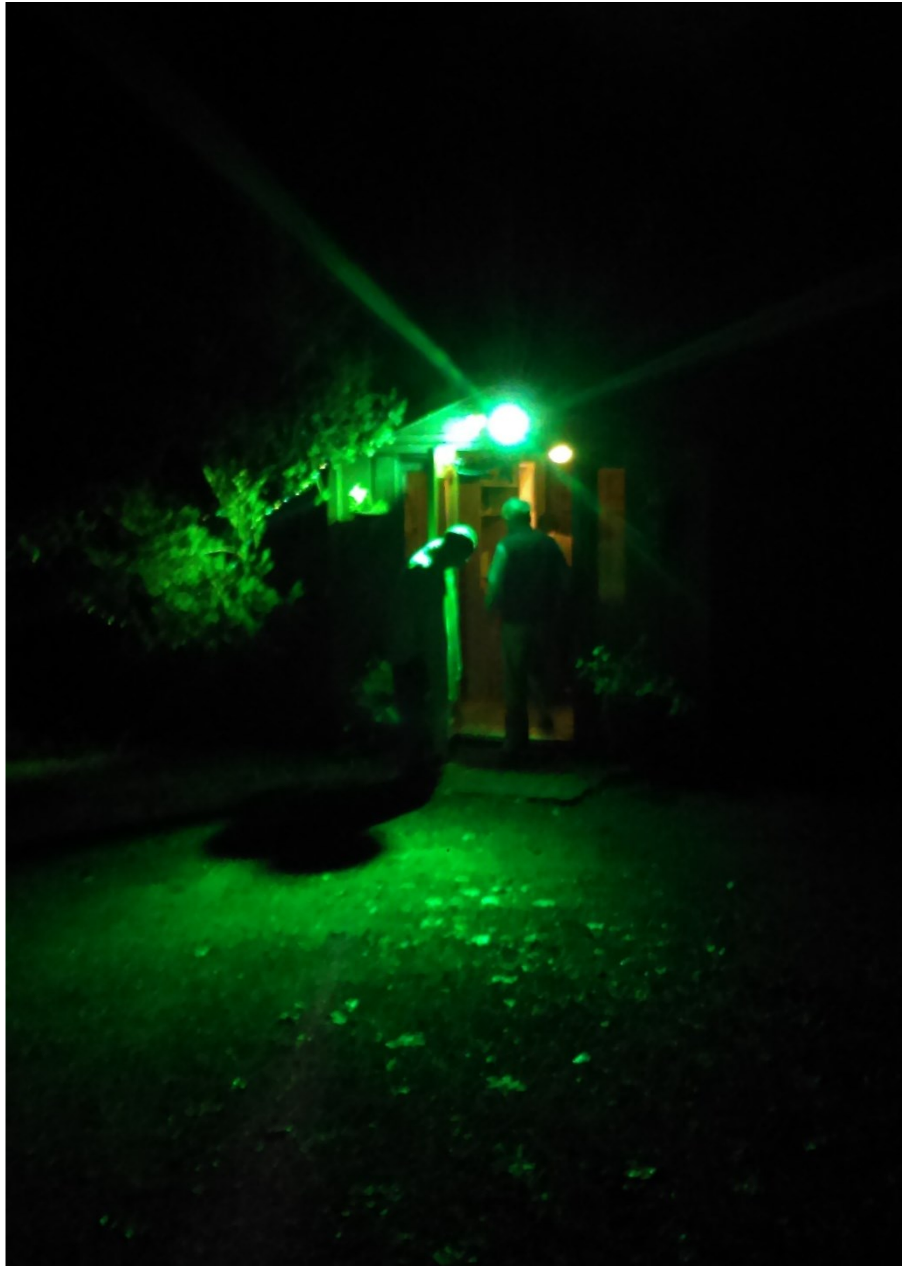

Figure 11 Entering the World Community Mosque Before *Fajr* Prayer
Photo by the Researcher

[282] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 55-6.

The Circles: A Spiritual Roadmap

Like his own *shaykh*, Abdur Rashid allows potential *murīd*s, both Muslim and non-Muslim, to progress through the first ten lessons, that is the initial awakening of the ten *laṭā'if*, before they are required to accept Islam and give *bay'a*, necessary steps before proceeding to the circles. While in *SfT*, Rasool provides a fairly detailed description of the structure of the circles, but not their content, Abdur Rashid discusses this topic in greater detail, such as in private lectures to his students. In fact, for a number of years, among Abdur Rashid's several ongoing projects intended for eventual publication has been a work that is devoted entirely to the subject of the circles. He sometimes reflects on individual transmissions, for instance, one that appears frequently in his *durūs* is the third transmission of the second circle, that of *ma'iyyat-i ḥubbī* ("accompaniment of love"), which he observes is "often a very transforming time for a mureed."[283] Yet here, in the interest of space and time available for research, we will limit ourselves to his descriptions of the circles overall.

To begin with, pertaining to why the name of "circles" (sg. *dā'ira*) is used, above we have pointed to the simple fact that Sufi cosmological diagrams in South Asia use circles to depict these levels of the cosmos. Yet Abdur Rashid provides some speculation of his own that is potentially more poetic, enchanting, and meaningful for his audience, asserting that "we live in a circular world," noting how often circles occur naturally. Akin to Rasool, he points to how the earth itself is not only spherical, but that it also rotates in circles around its own axis as it orbits in circles around the Sun, going on to say that if one peers through the Hubble Space Telescope, one sees that the universe is filled with similarly rotating celestial bodies. Moreover, he refers to how particle colliders that provide insights into quantum physics, particularly mentioning the Large Hadron Collider near Geneva, Switzerland, are circular in order to be able to accelerate particles to velocities approaching the speed of light. He goes on to point to the recursive nature of the human experience, including how life and death are cyclical, along with how the same "experiences, emotions, feelings" as well as the same life lessons can all return over and over again. The name of the Circle Group itself seems to have at least in large part been inspired by these circles.[284]

On the structure of the circles, Abdur Rashid describes how there are 23 intentions in the Mujaddidī order, a number that derives from considering the preliminary practices of awakening the ten *laṭā'if* before the circles as ten, to which is added a total of thirteen intentions in the actual circles (three in the first circle, seven in the second circle, two in the third circle, and one in the fourth circle). As already described, these thirteen are proceeded through in each of the first six *laṭā'if*. Progressing through these is seen as an ascent from the physical world toward the divine essence (*dhat*), one that echoes the Prophet's *mi'rāj*.[285] Probably through his engagement with both the literature of other Mujaddidī lineages as well as academic scholarship, Abdur Rashid took notice of the significant differences between the Mujaddidī intentions passed on by 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh as compared with the Mujaddidī intentions found in other lineages, especially those tracing back to Shāh Ghulām 'Alī, some of which were discussed above in the section on the circles in Rasool's chapter. In making sense of this, he attributed the differences to the changes made by 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh, implying that in this lineage prior to him, the intentions were closer to those of other lines, but that he truncated or rather condensed them into a smaller number of shorter intentions to make them more suitable for contemporary times.[286]

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[283] Idem 11.

[284] Abdur Rashid, "Proof of the Divine"; Abdur Rashid, "The Spiritual Road Map of Contemplation."

[285] Abdur Rashid, "Practices of Muraqabah."

[286] Thus, Abdur Rashid speaks of an "original 26 different *niyyat* which have been replaced in our line by the 23," even attributing these as far back as the Khwajagan, and says that "in the original teaching, the first contemplation focused on *ahadiyat*." He furthermore compares the first contemplation of *aḥadiyyat*; apparently drawing from the translation in Ar-Rowi, *The Contemplations Of Mujaddidiyah*, 29; with a *niyya* said to have been passed down from 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh. Noting how lengthy the first is as compared with the second, he explains that in order to adapt the teachings and make them accessible to those with busy lifestyles in a changing world, 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh abbreviated the intentions, while still retaining the same wealth of meaning, that is he "compressed it all so you can send it over the broadband faster." Abdur Rashid, "The Spiritual Road Map of Contemplation."

Abdur Rashid explains that these various intentions are represented and grouped into intersecting circles which serve as a map of the cosmos, as a "spiritual road map" from the physical world to the divine essence. It is a map because others have travelled that path before and brought back reports and descriptions that the seeker can use to traverse the very same path, a path that is the same as the prophets, saints, and *shaykh*s of the past which led them to their *nisbat* with God. He says that it is sometimes described as passing through "the seven valleys," but also that proceeding through these intentions is all an ascent (*'uruj*), which he likens to the Prophet's *mi'rāj*, and like climbing a mountain, it is an uphill journey. As for the terrain that is passed through on this journey, much like we have observed in the section on Rasool, Abdur Rashid points out that upon examining the individual intentions, one finds *sayr-i āfāqī*, then *sayr-i anfusī*, followed by leaving the *dā'irat-i imkānī*, the circle of contingent existence, and entering the realm of the names and attributes and leading ultimately to the essence. He points out how such descriptions make sense to those in his audience who have experienced it, but that "For others, it's all gibberish."[287]

He describes how the journey begins with the ten preliminary exercises for awakening first the five *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr* and then the five of the *'ālam-i khalq*. Then one circles back again to the *qalb* to ascend through the transmissions of the circles, then circling back again to the *rūḥ* to proceed through the circles with it, then on in turn to *sirr*, *khafī*, and *akhfā*. He points out that after the initial activation of the *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i khalq*, one does not return to working on them until the end, after proceeding through the circles in each of the *laṭā'if* of the *'ālam-i amr*, when one sits in the *nafs* and progresses through each of the circles in it, although one does not do so with the four elements.[288] Thus we see an identical process to that described by Rasool, and Abdur Rashid describes this process as a "dynamic rotation around the center of the heart" and that "the circling of attention on specific *niyyat*s, attributes and names creates a force," a process he likens to the operation of the abovementioned circular particle collider in Switzerland. This resulting force, he explains, is *jadhba*, the attraction to God that allows the Sufi to ascend inwardly to the Source.[289] Elsewhere, he says that the path may be visualized as "a series of concentric circles" or as "a spiral – moving ever nearer to Allah by both ascending and apparently descending movements."

On these descending movements, echoing Sirhindī's concept of *nubuwwat* as a stage higher than and taking place after *wilāyat*, he likens these to the Prophet's return to creation to fulfil his prophetic mission.[290] A major difference with Sirhindī, however, is that Abdur Rashid describes multiple descents throughout the process of ascent. That is, while Sirhindī and preceding Sufis described the path as a single circle with an ascending arc of return to God and a descending arc of return to creation, Abdur Rashid implies that the path is never really finished and that it is instead a lifelong pursuit.[291] There is an end to the curriculum of practices, but then one spends the rest of their life perfecting these, a never-ending process. If every time someone sits in meditation is an ascent, and every time they return to the world is a descent, from the very first practice, Abdur Rashid encourages his students to draw from their encounter with the divine (ascent) and manifest it in the world (descent), thus harmonizing *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir*.

Moreover, rather than Sirhindī's four-fold enumeration, Abdur Rashid tends to refer to *sayr ila'llāh*, *sayr fi'llāh*, and then a new term *sayr ma' Allāh* ("journeying with God"),[292] which by its name alone might be interpreted as being basically equivalent to Sirhindī's last two stages of *sayr 'an Allāh bi'llāh* and *sayr fi'l- ashyā'*, that is descending back to and being in the world transformed after the ascent. Abdur Rashid also makes certain to point out that such descriptions of a journey are in fact metaphorical imagery, that in reality, the journey is not one of "going from here to there (outwardly)"

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[287] Abdur Rashid, "The Spiritual Road Map of Contemplation"; Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 54; Abdur Rashid, "Practices of Muraqabah."
[288] Abdur Rashid, "Practices of Muraqabah."
[289] Abdur Rashid, "Proof of the Divine."
[290] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 54-5.
[291] Email November 27, 2019.
[292] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 90; Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Contemplations of the Prophets: Circles of Negation and Affirmation, Lesser and Greater Transmissions," Lecture, September 22, 2012; Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Journey in the Heart: The Abode of Light," Lecture, January 5, 2012.

but rather of "going from here to here, within one's own self." The figurative place one has travelled to is a different perspective on the world, or as he says, "it is awakening to that divine presence."[293]

Yet Abdur Rashid sometimes also lists a fourth step, which he explains he was explicitly taught by Rasool, namely, *waḥdāniyya* ("unicity") or *ananiyya* ("I-ness" or "selfhood"), which Abdur Rashid considers one and the same, that is the preceding three stages culminate in "the realization and experience that there is only One, Allah," and he describes this as being "where apparency and unity or reflection and Oneness meet within the seeker, total surrender or affirmation of *al-Aḥad* ["the One"]."[294] In this regard, Abdur Rashid evokes Walī Allāh's reconciliation of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd* as well as his, and Ibn al-'Arabī's, understanding of the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*).[295] We might also do well to remember that in Walī Allāh's expanded *laṭīfa*-model, at the summit and just before the *laṭīfa* called *al-dhat*, named after the divine essence, is the *ananiyya kubrā* ("greater selfhood"). Thus, the references to a greater self, waiting to be discovered within, which are found throughout Rasool's as well as Abdur Rashid's writings, references which resonate so well in the contemporary spiritual scene in the West with the HPM and "self-religions," were actually not adaptations at all, but were found in the thought of Sufi thinkers in non-Western settings centuries earlier and in a very traditionally Islamic form at that.

Citing further private discussions with Rasool, Abdur Rashid explains how his teacher described perfecting the circles as a process that could be likened to climbing a mountain or conquering the fortress of the *nafs*. In this struggle, as the circles are perfected, one comes to be assisted by certain "unseen forces," which Abdur Rashid understands as coming from God and His names and attributes as well as the assistance (*madād*) and accompaniment (*ma'iyyat*) of the prophets, through their relationships with the *laṭā'if*, as well as the saints and the *shaykh*, by way of the *silsila*. For him, as the student progresses, they realize that there is kind of a "spiritual energy" (using the term *fayḍ*) that is ever-present and constantly accessible to them. He notes in particular how the names and attributes of God, which are invoked in the intentions of the circles, are part of this Divine accompaniment and that these can serve as means (*wasīla*) and are not only with the student as they perform the practices, but also accompany them in daily life. He says that "it's your duty, your responsibility, to take what you are doing in your meditation and bring it into your day-to-day life, […] you practice those names, touch those attributes and use them as touchstones in your daily life […]."[296]

Yet as briefly mentioned in the discussion of the circles in the chapter on Rasool, simply because someone has been assigned a certain number of intentions or even completed an entire order, this does not mean that they have necessarily reached the corresponding levels of intimacy with God. Instead, one receives these and must work to perfect them, a process that if not completed in this lifetime, if it is something that is ever completed at all, can continue in the grave after death. Reminiscent of the story of how 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh elevated someone in their grave posthumously to sainthood, Abdur Rashid explains how Rasool told him that he could make *tawajjuh* and give transmissions to assist those have passed with their progress toward perfecting the circles. In fact, others aside from the *shaykh* can also help in this process by going to the grave and engaging in such activities as reading the Quran, making *du'ā*, or performing *murāqaba*.[297] These points are particularly salient for the Circle Group because there are members of the World Community who have been laid to rest in the cemetery there.

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[293] Abdur Rashid, "The Spiritual Road Map of Contemplation."
[294] This is something Abdur Rashid reports was explained to him by Rasool in the context of discussing certain transmissions that are only given to advanced students after they have completed at least one order. Because of the potential similarity of the two terms (*waḥdaniyya* and *ananiyya*) when spoken aloud, it is unclear which of them Rasool used, though he might have used both. Email December 23, 2019; see also *EI*[2] "Waḥda."
[295] Email December 23, 2019.
[296] Abdur Rashid, "Proof of the Divine."
[297] Abdur Rashid, "Discussion of the Orders, Circles and Practices; Abdur Rashid, "The Circles, Wuqufi Zamani, Duruud Sharif."

Dhikr: Not Just Saying "Allāh, Allāh, Allāh"

Abdur Rashid places a great deal of emphasis on *dhikr*, in fact, during the first interview, he explained that everything in Sufism revolves around *dhikr*. Indeed, remembrance is an oft repeated and central theme in his lectures and writings. After explaining, in accordance with Quran 51:56, that the purpose of mankind's existence is to worship God, he answers the question of how to worship God with Quranic verses that exhort to remembrance (2:152, 3:191, 33:41-42),[298] and accordingly, he observes how ritual prayer "organize[s] our day into periods of remembrance [… and…] interweaves our spiritual life with our material life."[299] Still elsewhere, he asserts that the very "purpose of this life is to remember Allah and be in the state of remembrance, outward and inward […]."[300] He often states, "You can't remember what you never knew," which could be seen as an allusion to the primordial covenant (*mithāq*), described in Quran 7:172, in which God asked mankind "Am I not your Lord?" (*Alastu bi-Rabbikum*?), to which they answered in the affirmative, "Yes, we have testified" (*Bala, shahidnā*). Or as he explains, "dhikr/remembrance is the inherent memory of our own origin, the moment before Kun Faya Kun in the intention of Allah, i.e. the creative Force."[301] So for him, *dhikr* consists of far more than the exercise of reciting prescribed formulae, whether silently or aloud, or as he states time and again: "*dhikr* is not just saying, '*Laa ilaaha illa-Lllah*' or '*Allah, Allah, Allah*.'" Instead, drawing from Quran 2:115, he says it "is realizing that wheresoever you turn, there is the countenance of Allah. *Dhikr* is realizing and feeling the Divine Presence." Elsewhere, he states that recitations can be a part of and a means for achieving it, but that *dhikr* "in its most comprehensive form […] is a process of making everything a reminder of the Divine Presence," that is everything that one sees, hears, thinks, does, or that happens to one.[302] He notes that "when you say, 'This is beautiful,' you have just said the name of Allah, *al-Jamal*."[303] Moreover, as we have seen and will see again below, he describes other practices, including *murāqaba* and *muḥāsaba*, along with *ṣuḥbat*, as all being forms of *dhikr*. So when referring to *dhikr* in his lectures and writings, it is far more common for him to be referring to the broader sense of the state of remembering God, rather than specifically performing recitations.

This state of remembrance has a direct relationship with personal conduct, how life is to be lived, through the concepts of *adab* and *iḥsān*. In his book *Applied Sufism*, Abdur Rashid connects *dhikr* with *adab*, describing these as mutually supportive so that for him, just as remembering God can improve one's personal conduct, so "through *adab*, we can construct an environment for remembering." In his explanation of the interdependent relationship between *dhikr* and *adab*, he discusses the importance of self-reflection and repentance to refine one's character as well as of reflecting the Divine attributes within one's daily life (see *muḥāsaba* below),[304] and states further that:

> *Dhikr* is the character of all that we do. It is the basis of the reason for our existence. It is the *adab*, the attention, the consciousness. It is how we treat people, how we think, how we act, how we shape and pursue our expectations, how we approach Allah (*Subẖaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) in our prayers.[305]

Finally, if *dhikr* is the very purpose of life, then its goal can be described as *iḥsān*: "Above all, the Sufi is the person who strives to fill the spaces in their heart, their mind, their seconds, minutes and hours with the remembrance of Allah. Our goal is to live a life of *iẖsaan*, forging a link between our self and Allah."[306] And on *iḥsān*, he asks: "what could be more important than developing a living

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298 Abdur Rashid, *What?*, 8-9, 18.
299 Idem 17.
300 Abdur Rashid, *The Continuing Voyage of Nuh*, 27.
301 Email 26 July 2017.
302 Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 23.
303 Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 28.
304 Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 100-11.
305 Idem 117.
306 Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 27.

consciousness of Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) moment to moment–a consciousness so strong and so clear, it is as if one is actually seeing God."[307]

Dhikr as Recitation and the Waẓīfa

As we turn to consider *dhikr* as a technique involving recitation, it should be kept in mind that in several cases, it is unclear as to whether Abdur Rashid is referring to *dhikr* in its broader sense or as recitation. Given this, and the fact that the former is the goal of the latter, it seems prudent to interpret such cases of ambiguity as referring to both senses of the term. For instance, he considers *dhikr*, like *murāqaba*, as a means for removing heedlessness (*ghafla*) of God from the heart,[308] and he quotes the *ḥadīth*: "There is a polish for every rust and the polish for the rust of the heart is the *dhikr* (remembrance) of God."[309] Either sense of the term *dhikr* could apply here. The same is true when he explains that after the experience of *fanā'*, of losing oneself in God, "you return to live it" (*baqā'*), but he warns that there will be ups and downs, alternation between being attracted to God (*jadhba*) and being distracted (*ghafla*). Yet when the distractions arise, one can turn to *dhikr* to restore one's state of remembrance.[310] But there are unambiguous cases where he is clearly referring to *dhikr* as recitation, though invariably, these always lead, in some way or another, back to its broader sense. For example, he says that the purpose of performing *dhikr* as recitation is to focus so much on God that eventually one achieves the state of constantly remembering or being aware of Him,[311] and one reaches a state of total submission to God, such that every action is a form of worship (*'ibāda*).[312]

Pertaining to specific formulae for *dhikr*, Abdur Rashid makes mention of the same major types of recitation as Rasool, namely *dhikr-i ism-i dhat* and *nafī wa ithbāt*. For him, the highest form of *dhikr* is that of the divine unity (*tawḥīd*), and on *dhikr-i ism-i dhat*, that is reciting "*Allāh*," he explains how all of the names and attributes are concentrated in that one name. Thus he compares it with viewing an overall picture from further away, as compared with reciting the different names and attributes, which he equates to a closer perspective that looks at the different individual elements of the same picture.[313] He also says that "Forgetting is also a part of remembering: forgetting everything other than Allah (*swt*)," which he connects with *dhikr-i nafī wa ithbāt*, citing Rasool as having said that it "takes you away from the world."[314] He also describes the need to "get beyond yourself," to turn toward and pay attention (*tawajjuh*) to God, and away, "Not from the world per se, but from worldliness."[315] In addition to these two major forms of *dhikr*, Abdur Rashid also sometimes elaborates on parts of the *waẓīfa*, such as when he explains that *durūd sharīf* is a form of *dhikr* and, citing Rasool, that the purpose thereof is "to create more ease" or that it "makes your path easier."[316] Another example is when, in response to a student's question, he explains that when the rewards for one's recitations are offered to the saints of the order in the *waẓīfa*, this serves the purpose of directing attention away from one's own self and towards those saints, whom he notes are also spiritually present during the practices, thus creating a "flow of energy" between them and the student while also cultivating humility in the latter.[317] Moreover, while advising that the remedy for overcoming the whisperings (*waswisu*) of Satan is quite simply to stop paying attention to them, he also explains that one could recite the *hawqala* or *durūd*, adding that "the point is, you don't get fixated on it."[318]

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[307] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 61.
[308] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 4.
[309] Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 28.
[310] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 25.
[311] Idem 5.
[312] Idem 10.
[313] Idem 24.
[314] Idem 29.
[315] Idem 30.
[316] Abdur Rashid, "Discussion of the Orders, Circles and Practices"; Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 29.
[317] Abdur Rashid, "Proof of the Divine"; Abdur Rashid, "The Circles, Wuqufi Zamani, Duruud Sharif."
[318] Abdur Rashid, "Approaching the Singularity of Nearness."

Additionally, he says that the student can turn to *dhikr*, in both senses of the term, to solve problems they face in life. Whether that be grief over injustices and the state of the world in general, the loss of a loved one, relationship problems, or any other disruptive and upsetting circumstances, "the cure is to remember Allah (*swt*)."[319] Specifically pertaining to recitations though, in addition to facilitating spiritual progress as part of a daily practice, the various formulae of intentions and recitations of *murāqaba* and the *waẓīfa* can also be assigned by the *shaykh* to help a student overcome obstacles that may be either spiritual or worldly in nature, such as an illness or other difficulty in the mundane world. He quotes instructions directly from Rasool in this regard, thus such a usage is not a matter of a new introduction by Abdur Rashid to suit the instrumentalizing expectations of Western spiritual seekers, but in fact a continuation of specific practices and applications already found in this lineage. This may involve reciting; alongside formulae like *khatm sharīf*, *durūd sharīf*, and the *hawqala*; particular names of God a prescribed number of times, as found in the intentions of the circles for *murāqaba* of the different orders, the names used being different in the *niyyāt* of each order. But with his own characteristic emphasis on Applied Sufism, where the names and attributes of God are to be reflected in a person's daily life, Abdur Rashid likens these transmissions to "tools," saying that as one obtains the transmissions of the different orders, "you put them in your toolbox, and then you have to use them. You use them for compassion, for healing, for helping others."[320]

The Ḥaḍra: Collective Vocal Dhikr

Turning now to the issue of silent versus vocal *dhikr*, like Rasool, Abdur Rashid teaches primarily silent *dhikr*, but one novel element that he introduced is collective vocalized *dhikr*. Expounding on the topic, in one lecture Abdur Rashid notes that in the Mujaddidiyya there is a preference for silent *dhikr*, one which he provides both individual and societal reasons for. On the former, he maintains that in comparison with vocalized *dhikr jahrī*, silent practices like *murāqaba* and *dhikr khafī*, while more difficult to master, help to "refine the perception." Moreover, the disruption of the breath in *dhikr jahrī* can undesirably "interrupt the chain of internal events," whereas with *dhikr khafī*, "the mind can run continuously" whether inhaling, exhaling, or holding one's breath. On the social dimension, he explained that Rasool's sole grounds for avoiding *dhikr jahrī* was so as not to cause controversy or provoke judgments from the neighbors.[321] But despite these benefits of silent practice, Abdur Rashid saw the need to also incorporate, on top of the curriculum of silent practices, a weekly session of collective vocal *dhikr*, as he feels that "Westerners respond particularly well to it."[322] Moreover, on the asserted comparative difficulty of silent versus vocal *dhikr*, Abdur Rashid recounts a story of his interactions with the Bosnian Naqshbandī *shaykh* Halil Halusi Brzina while in Sarajevo. During several evening visits between the two *shaykh*s, they held conversations on numerous topics, including *dhikr jahrī* and *dhikr khafī*. Halusi's students sat nearby listening and one of them asked Halusi why they did not perform *dhikr khafī*. He responded that "there are only two people in the room capable of performing *dhikr khafī*: Shaykh Abdur Rashid and myself."[323]

While new to this particular lineage since at least as far back as ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh, vocal *dhikr* is certainly not new to wider Naqshbandī tradition and before, and the *jahrī-khafī* controversy has shifted back and forth since the very emergence of the Khwājagān. In spite of silent *dhikr* being a kind of defining characteristic of the Naqshbandiyya, and by default of the Mujaddidiyya as well, as we have seen, the positions of different *shaykh*s on this issue have varied over the centuries. Accordingly, many contemporary Mujaddidī lineages, whether hailing from South Asia, the formerly Ottoman lands or elsewhere, do practice a form of collective vocalized *dhikr*. In fact, Abdur Rashid had attended the vocal *dhikr* gatherings of three such *shaykh*s belonging to the Khālidī sub-lineage of the Mujaddidiyya, namely Kuftārū, ʻUthmān Sirāj al-Dīn, and the abovementioned Halil Hulusi Brzina, along with some of other lineages such as a Shādhilī line in Morocco as well as a Qādirī-Rifaʻī branch in Palestine. He

[319] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 30.
[320] Abdur Rashid, "Discussion of the Orders, Circles and Practices; Abdur Rashid, "The Circles, Wuqufi Zamani, Duruud Sharif."
[321] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 7.
[322] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.
[323] Email April 4th, 2020.s

also noted how the abovementioned Mawlawī *shaykh*, Süleyman Dede was a strong advocate of vocal *dhikr*. These *shaykh*s' positions may have given further confirmation and reinforcement to his own decision to introduce the practice into his lineage, but only after discussing the issue with Rasool and receiving permission to do so.

In devising his own formula for collective vocal *dhikr*, Abdur Rashid based it on the contents of the silent practices and recitations of the five orders he received from Rasool, while also drawing inspiration from his observations and experiences attending the sessions of other lineages, of course combined with, he notes, his own intuition (*kashf*). He recalls showing Rasool this formula and asking for his permission to conduct vocal *dhikr* and being told that he knew his own students best and that "You're the *shaykh*, you can do what you like." As further justification, he cites how Rasool's only stated objection to vocal *dhikr* was the abovementioned concern about not stirring controversy in case the neighbors heard it; which might indeed be a problem if one has reformist-leaning neighbors in a Muslim-majority area of bustling Delhi, but would be less of an issue at a *khānaqāh* tucked away in the forested hinterlands of Virginia. Abdur Rashid recounts how during one collective vocal *dhikr* session of the Circle Group, Rasool, who was visiting the World Community but not actually present inside the room at the time, listened from outside and when later asked about his opinion, he replied that "They sounded happy."[324]

Considering now the practice itself, members of the Circle Group refer to their weekly collective vocal *dhikr* gathering as the *ḥaḍra*, literally meaning "presence," which might refer to either the divine presence or the presence of the *shaykh* and even the saints of the lineage and the Prophet. They also refer to this gathering as a *samāʿ*, literally meaning "hearing" with reference not to music, as might be presumed from usage in other Sufi contexts, as no music is played, but to listening to the various oral recitations being made. The *ḥaḍra* takes place every Saturday evening shortly after *ʿaṣr* or *maghrib* prayer. In Muslim-majority contexts, such gatherings more often take place on Thursday evenings, which mark the beginning of the Islamic holy day. The students stand assembled in the community's mosque and the *shaykh* begins with the statement: "The principles are five: contact of the mind upon the Infinite; abstinence and restraint for the higher power; generosity in all things; travel both inner and outer; and belief in the unity of all blessings." This statement might be further examined and unpacked here, but it points to topics that are well addressed in different parts of this research, like awareness of God and unity, ethical conduct, and travel both inner and outer.[325]

The participants stand in semi-circles (the closest to the *shaykh* being males, and then females), they individually approach and greet the *shaykh*, and then return to their place. Meanwhile, certain recitations are being voiced from memory: an invocation which pays respect to the saints and prophets and praises God; followed by the eleven Naqshbandī principles (*kalimāt-i qudsiyya*) or the "Rules of the Order," described in the next section and which deal with *dhikr* in both senses of the term; and then prayers for the peace of society and the world.[326] Significantly, this last recitation includes references to "the community," which could be understood as the World Community, the Muslim *umma*, or even to humanity as a whole: "Let us pray for the good of all people, for the constancy of our Order and of our community, for the peace of our society and our world" as well as "for the success of all noble enterprises."[327]

The recitations, when finished, are immediately followed by a group intonation of the word "*Hu.*" *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* is recited three times and a *duʿā* is offered. Everyone then sits and spends a period of about 15 minutes for *muḥāsaba* and *murāqaba.* Abdur Rashid then begins the sustained vocal part

[324] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.

[325] Abdur Rashid cites this opening statement of the *ḥaḍra* and expounds on the point pertaining to inner and outer in the pamphlet, *Travel both Outer and Inner: The Road to Fulfillment in Eternity* (Bedford, VA: Circle Group, 2011), 10-12.

[326] Which, the researcher observes, could be viewed as the underlying goal of Legacy's work.

[327] These recitations are printed on pocket-sized folded blue cards, which are available in the World Community's mosque and used to aid memory and assist newcomers. On the back of the cards are printed the exact prayer times for all five prayers for each day for a two-month period, thus indicating that they are reprinted at two-month intervals.

of the *dhikr*, which opens with reciting "*lā ilaha illā'llāh*," followed by various praises of the Prophet, names of *Allāh*, as well as phrases and recitations drawn from the practices of the five orders in which Abdur Rashid is authorized. The *ḥaḍra* may involve different movements, such as bowing, swaying, or walking in a range of different patterns, or even be done entirely while sitting. There is no single set form, as this varies and is totally at the direction of the *shaykh*, based on whatever he judges is appropriate for the moment. The typical length is 45-60 minutes, ending as it began with a prolonged intonation of "*Hu*," while Abdur Rashid recites the names and invokes blessings upon the Prophet and each member of the Mujaddidī *silsila.* The entire *ḥaḍra* event is then followed by a dinner and a *dars* in the community's main dining hall.

Abdur Rashid observes that the *ḥaḍra* can get somewhat lively, but he makes certain to point out that it takes place only once weekly, and the rest of the time they are engaged in silent practices. He often says that "the exception proves the rule," and his use of *dhikr jahrī* appears to be one of those cases, an analogue drawn from broader Sufi tradition, yet all the while maintaining overall the silent sobriety of his immediate forebears in this lineage the remainder of the time. Moreover, "lively" is a relative term, and regarding the *ḥaḍra* attended by the researcher, on the spectrum of collective vocal *dhikr* gatherings, it fell firmly on the reserved and sober side, much like those of Kuftārū.[328] Some of Abdur Rashid's students have reflected that the weekly punctuation of outer expression through the *samā'* has the effect of deepening their silent *murāqaba* and strengthening their awareness of the broader context of their chosen path. But now we will delve more into one part of prelude to the *ḥaḍra*, that is the "Rules of the Order."[329]

Rules of the Order (Kalimāt-i Qudsiyya)

Abdur Rashid mentions how much that is related to the key Naqshbandī practices of *murāqaba* and *dhikr* is summarized in the eleven Naqshbandī principles,[330] or as they are called on the blue cards on which they along with certain other recitations for the *ḥaḍra* are printed, the "Rules of the Order." These consist largely of instructions pertaining in particular to the practice of *dhikr* as recitation, but in their entirety could also be considered to deal with *dhikr* in its broader sense, thus it seems justifiable to cover them here. Moreover, as just seen, the Circle Group recites the complete set every Saturday evening as part of their collective *dhikr ḥaḍra* and as Abdur Rashid notes, they also try to live by them.[331] His inclusion of these in the *ḥaḍra* was quite deliberate, as he holds that virtually all of these principles have direct applicability to the process of performing collective *dhikr* and that these should be maintained in the heart and mind of each participant throughout the event. For instance, he says that if the mind begins to wander, principles like *yād kard* ("remembrance"), *hūsh dar dam* ("awareness of breath"), or *bāz gasht* ("restraint"), in the sense of a "hard stop" described below, can be used to bring one "back to total immersion in the Divine Presence."[332]

Although we do not find reference to this complete set in Rasool's writings, Abdur Rashid clarified that, aside from their incorporation into a vocal *dhikr* gathering, the teaching of all eleven principles is not a case of reintroduction, as he had learned these when he was studying under Rasool, including also as part of the other orders. It would then seem possible that it was 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh who, along with incorporating the principle of *INfB* into the Qādiriyya, Chishtiyya, and Shādhiliyya, also included the complete *kalimāt-i qudsiyya* into these other orders. In any case, here each of the principles is briefly enumerated and described below as they appear on the blue cards with regard to

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[328] For a comparison of collective vocal *dhikr* gatherings led by Kuftārū as compared with the much more lively ones in the Haqqaniyya, see Habibis, "A Comparative Study of the Workings of a Branch of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order in Lebanon and the UK."

[329] The preceding description is based on attendance at one *ḥaḍra* on August 3, 2019, explanations of the *ḥaḍra* by Abdur Rashid during the 3rd interview (Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018), and respondent validation from Abdur Rashid and a senior student of his. I am also again very grateful to Shanti Thompson for her especially helpful feedback on this section.

[330] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 2.

[331] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.

[332] Email January 7, 2020.

sequence[333] and content, but also drawing from references to individual principles in different writings and lectures by Abdur Rashid. Like in the *Rashaḥāt* and other sources, sometimes different meanings are ascribed to the same principle. The original Persian terms included below do not appear on the blue cards, but the translations of these terms that he uses are retained here.

The first principle of 1.) *yād kard* ("remembrance") refers to "oral and mental repetition" of *dhikr* formulae for the purpose of removing heedlessness and "remind[ing] one of life's purpose," namely to worship God. Next is 2.) *bāz gasht* ("restraint"), which he describes as "consciously interspers[ing] our life with short prayers" which "gives one the strength to return." Elsewhere, he specifically mentions a phrase that also appears under *bāz gasht* in the *Rashaḥāt*, but which is also part of the recitation performed at the beginning of the Circle Group's *ḥaḍra*: "O Allah, You are my goal and pleasing You is my aim." In connection to this, he also explains *bāz gasht* as consisting of a stopping of the *dhikr* followed by its resumption at a higher level,[334] and in the *ḥaḍra*, at the correct moment as determined by the *shaykh*, there is a "hard pause without movement to impress the heart with the value of restraint."[335] As for 3.) *nigāh dāsht* ("watchfulness"), it is being watchful over one's thoughts and not allowing them to wander, "especially during meditation and prayer." Elsewhere, he similarly describes it as guarding one's awareness against thoughts other than God, and as being "present in the practice, and not absent in the practice."[336] Regarding 4.) *yād dāsht* ("recollection"), it consists of "concentrat[ing] on the Divine Presence" with "an attitude of foretaste (intuition)." In one of his lectures, he also describes it as the "preservation of remembrance" while transitioning between different recitions.[337]

Turning to 5.) *hūsh dar dam* ("awareness of breath"), this principle involves breathing every breath in remembrance of God, whether inhaling or exhaling. Upon being asked by a student about the "alchemy" behind awareness of the breath, Abdur Rashid explained that "we live and die by [the breath]," and that by controlling the breath, one can also control one's thoughts, emotions, and mental states. He also notes the importance of breath control in Sufism as well as Yoga, although he makes the distinction that in Sufism, it is a continuous affirmation of God, whether inhaling, exhaling, or holding the breath (*habs-i dam*).[338] On a related note, he also teaches several different types of breathing

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[333] The sequence of the first eight principles, said to have been introduced by al-Ghijduwānī, differs from that found in the *Rashaḥāt*, in that for Abdur Rashid, the first four of these eight appear as the last four. In both sequences, these eight are followed by the three principles said to have been added by Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, both in the same order. Yet this sequence does match, for example, that provided by a contemporary of Sirhindī, Tāj al-Dīn ibn Zakariyya Mahdī Zamān al-Rūmī (d. 1640), whose short treatise is referenced in Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 202-04. To view the original manuscript online, see "Islamic Manuscripts: Epistle on the Customs of the Naqshbandiyya Order," Cambridge Digital Library, accessed January 08, 2018, http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01073/12. Due to not only this sequence but also to some similarities in translation and word choice in the descriptions, it appears that Abdur Rashid likely also consulted Trimingham. Still, this was clearly not the only source as there are important differences, including seemingly original material, such as in the principle of *naẓar bar qadam*. In a later email (January 7, 2020), Abdur Rashid acknowledged consulting Trimingham and other works that were available at the time to ensure clarity and accuracy, and he notes that: "Much has been written in the intervening years, but nothing I have read has altered my approach in any significant way." Moreover, the choice of the label "Rules of the Order," for the *kalimāt-i qudsiyya*, which literally translates into "sacred words," might well have been drawn from the writings of the Shah brothers, such as Omar Ali-Shah's *The Rules or Secrets of the Naqshbandi Order*, although Abdur Rashid does not seem to have been influenced by any of their more creative or idiosyncratic renderings of the principles themselves. Indeed, despite quoting Idries Shah on rare occasions, he explained that he does not put much stock in the writings or perspectives of Omar Ali-Shah. On the use of "Rules of the Order," however, he stated: "Indeed 'sacred words' is a better translation but doesn't effectively underscore the import of the 'rules' […]." (Email January 7, 2020).

[334] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 8-9; Safi, *Rashahat*, 21.

[335] Email January 7, 2020.

[336] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 8-9.

[337] Idem 8.

[338] Idem 15-6.

exercises and in fact, he devised a particular method of breathing with *dhikr* to be used in childbirth.[339] The principle of 6.) *safar dar waṭan* ("journeying in one's homeland") describes how the Sufi path is an inner journey, and he says that it means "realizing that what you are looking for is within you and around you in the most familiar places." Similarly, he also provides two meanings for this principle as referring to: a.) how the journey takes place in one's inner being, as just mentioned, but also b.) as the act of remaining in one place geographically, such as with one's *shaykh* and a community of fellow seekers.[340] Pertaining to 7.) *naẓar bar qadam* ("watching one's steps"), it consists of being "always turned toward the journey" as well as being watchful "to recognize the importance of each step," since "The miracle of the Way is found in watching." Next, perhaps one of the principles that he, as well as Rasool, cites the most is that of 8.) *khalwat dar anjuman* ("solitude amidst the crowd"), meaning for him to "Be in the world, not of the world." On the blue card, however, it is also particularly tied, with a play on words, to the importance of being in a community of fellow seekers: "Practice in a group to know Oneness. Come-unity."

Finally, we come to the three principles attributed to Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, all three of which contain the word *wuqūf*, which can mean a "pause" or "stop," but can also indicate "awareness." The first of these is 9.) *wuqūf-i zamānī* ("time pause"), or "Seiz[ing] each natural pause in action and thought to examine oneself." He considers this principle as being a kind of equivalent to *muḥāsaba*, described in the next section, and he cites Ya'qūb Charkhī (a disciple of Bahā' al-Dīn who appears in the Mujaddidī *silsila*) in describing it as taking the time to be aware of whether one's spiritual state is expanded (*bast*) or constricted (*qabd*), and either being grateful to God or asking forgiveness accordingly.[341] Abdur Rashid describes 10.) *wuqūf-i adadi* ("number pause") as being conscious of the number of recitations one counts in *dhikr*, which he also ties to honesty and commitment in performing the precise number assigned by the *shaykh* as well as to regularity in the practices. Such counting of the recitations is said to protect the heart from distractions.[342] Lastly is 11.) *wuqūf-i qalbī* ("heart pause"), which is explained as visualizing a thread connecting one's own heart with the heart of the *shaykh*, and that each heart is imprinted with the name of God. Appearing immediately after this on the card is the instruction to "Turn toward the heart without preferences. Affirm that Allah alone is the goal." Still elsewhere, Abdur Rashid cites Rasool as having described this as pronouncing "Allāh" in one's heart three times whenever one thinks of it, and he explains that it is to periodically turn away from whatever one is doing and to reaffirm one's connection to God, to direct one's attention to God in all circumstances.[343]

Consistent with his proclivity for practical application, in *Applied Sufism*, Abdur Rashid presents these last three principles as being effective means for countering extremism in the world by moderating the "extremism within the individual."[344] But having considered the practices that are particular to Abdur Rashid's lineage through Rasool; namely *murāqaba*, *dhikr*, and the other parts of the *waẓīfa*; and how he continues to propagate these teachings while also making his own contributions, we now consider two practices that Abdur Rashid teaches which were not found in the writings of Rasool, but which are nonetheless certainly not foreign to wider Sufi practice, namely *muḥāsaba* and *fikr*.

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339 Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.

340 Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *Al-Khidr: Keeping the Company of Those Who See* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2013), 20-2.

341 Abdur Rashid, "The Circles, Wuqufi Zamani, Duruud Sharif," 7-8. He goes into further detail on *qabd* and *bast* in the *dars* "Qabd and Bast: Contraction and Expansion, Seeking Parallels between Daily Life and the Stations in Tasawwuf," Lecture, July 11, 2012; Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 225; Blue Card.

342 Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 225; Blue Card.

343 Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 13; Blue Card.

344 Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 225-6. His aim of ending extremism is discussed at length below.

Muḥāsaba: Accounting for One's Self

One practice emphasized by Abdur Rashid as a major tool for building character[345] and modeling one's life after the Prophet[346] is *muḥāsabat al-nafs* or *muḥāsaba*, which he translates as "conscious reflection"[347] or "accounting for oneself" and explains that it "entails the examination of one's self, of one's intentions, decisions, actions, and conscience."[348] While *muḥāsaba* may not be one of the standard daily practices of this particular lineage prior to Abdur Rashid, it is certainly not new to Sufi tradition at large. *Muḥāsaba* not only appears as a daily practice in some other contemporary Sufi lineages,[349] but the name of the practice goes back to the 9th-century al-Muḥāsibī and the act of accounting for one's own actions might be seen as inherent in the very first Muslims striving to live in accordance with Muḥammad's message.

Abdur Rashid describes *muḥāsaba* as a form of *dhikr*[350] and emphasizes how it is a crucial part of the spiritual journey, that it is "a fuel for active transformation" that consists of actively seeking to discover one's own "strengths and weaknesses," cultivating and nurturing the former while rectifying the latter. He laments how, especially in contemporary times, people are reluctant to engage in such self-criticism, to the point that it has even become an anathema.[351] For him, *muḥāsaba* is a way for the seeker to assess where they are in their own personal journey now and to predict and have some influence over where they will be in the next moment, or in other words, "By looking at the past, we are able to evaluate ourselves in the present and to prepare ourselves for the future."[352] It seeks to elevate oneself from the *nafs ammāra* to the *nafs lawwāma*, to account for and rectify the damage done by the former.[353] Citing Quran 75:2 ("Nay, I swear by the self-accusing soul."), Abdur Rashid marvels at how through *muḥāsaba* it is possible to transform one's lower soul into that which God swears to His own existence by.[354]

As far as how one might go about performing *muḥāsaba*, in his discussion of this practice in *Applied Sufism*, he invites the reader to try one exercise in which they must relax, breathe deeply, turn their attention to their heart, and recite *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* followed by a specific *du'ā*, which includes the *ḥadīth*: "Account for yourselves before you are accounted, weigh your actions before your actions become a weight upon you." Next, one should reflect upon their day, asking themselves "What could I have done more according to Allah's will today? How could I have changed my responses, words, thoughts, actions to be in harmony with Allah's will?" He instructs the reader to conclude by making "the commitment that can change nations, by changing yourself."[355]

Yet he says that *muḥāsaba* is not simply a practice that one does every day, it is a way of linking God's guidance in the Quran to events in one's own life. Thus it is a way to make God more present in one's life and it even acts as a magnet in attracting God's mercy.[356] On this and other facets, Abdur Rashid asserts that *murāqaba* and *muḥāsaba* are actually quite similar.[357] He also maintains that *muḥāsaba* can enhance the quality of one's *murāqaba*, asking rhetorically, "do you think the muraqabah of someone who makes muhasabat will be different than someone who does not?" and stating that the

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[345] Ibid. 207-11.
[346] Abdur Rashid, *Seeing By the Light of the Moon*, 21.
[347] Idem 20.
[348] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 207-11.
[349] For instance, it appears in the daily practices of the Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya. See Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, *The Naqshbandi Sufi Tradition: Guidebook of Daily Practices and Devotions* (Fenton, MI: Islamic Supreme Council of America, 2004), 173-4.
[350] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 26-7.
[351] Idem 32.
[352] Idem 33, 68.
[353] Idem 33.
[354] Idem 70.
[355] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 207-11.
[356] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 36-7, 68.
[357] Idem 36-37.

next step is "how you make muraqabah after you have made muhasabat."[358] Similarly, alluding to its benefits for *murāqaba*, he likens *muḥāsaba* to a visa that permits entry into other "dimensions and realms."[359]

Moreover, he also describes how it is necessary to conduct a more advanced level of *muḥāsaba*, one that goes beyond examining only one's thoughts and actions each day to assess and rectify one's overall character. In this line, he speaks of how people often have an underlying assumption that "I am basically fine" and that they do not need to change anything about themselves and instead blame the environment for their shortcomings in character. From such a perspective, the problem lies not with the individual, but with the "pesky little interludes that come and disturb my absolute and total tranquility," or "If it was not for the rain today, I would have been a happy, harmonious person."[360] Thus he urges his listeners to hold themselves accountable for the quality of their character regardless of environmental factors, but he also stresses that they can also influence these factors. Hence he exhorts to "plac[ing] yourself and remain[ing] in an environment which is conducive to that change," such as "in suhbat, in the community of seekers/believers" where one can receive the strength and support necessary for transforming one's character.[361] He also points out another complementary means of coming to know one's own strengths and weaknesses, that is through *munāsaba* with a *shaykh* who can reflect these back to the student.[362] The importance and role of the relationship with the *shaykh* and the community are discussed in greater detail below. Lastly and reflecting his characteristic emphasis on societal engagement, in addition to taking account of oneself individually, Abdur Rashid points out that "*Muẖaasabah* also has a collective implication,"[363] meaning that one should also examine and rectify the state of society.

Fikr: How the Mind Can Affect the Heart

In contrast to Rasool and Sa'īd Khān, who emphasized how in the modern era the heart has been neglected in favor of the mind and reason, Abdur Rashid, without any lesser emphasis on the heart, also highlights the mind and its ability to affect the heart. Accordingly, the practice of *fikr* (or *tafakkur*), that is contemplation or reflection, is frequently mentioned and recommended by Abdur Rashid, who considers it a personal responsibility that compliments *murāqaba*, *dhikr*, and *muḥāsaba*. And just as with *muḥāsaba*, while *fikr* was not among the main practices of this lineage enumerated by Sa'īd Khān, nor is it one of the key technical terms highlighted by Rasool, Abdur Rashid finds a sound basis for it within the Islamic tradition, going back to the very origins thereof. In fact, his descriptions touch upon all of the major aspects of *fikr* discussed in Louis Gardet's entry on the topic in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd Ed.), which deals primarily with classical age Sufis,[364] though this article does not appear to have been one of Abdur Rashid's sources. So while Gardet asserts that "the gnostic soarings of those who profess *waḥdat al-wuḏjūd*" must have been arrived at through a process of *fikr*, Abdur Rashid laments how the contemplation that was so important to the great Sufis of the past like Ibn al-'Arabī and al-Ghazālī has fallen by the wayside.[365] In fact, al-Ghazālī lists *fikr* as one of four significant practices for Sufis that he calls *al-waẓā'if al-arb'a*, the remaining three being *dhikr*, *du'ā*, and recitation

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[358] Ibid.
[359] Idem 71.
[360] Idem 39-40.
[361] Idem 42.
[362] Idem 63.
[363] Abdur Rashid, *Seeing By the Light of the Moon*, 21; for further discussion of *muḥāsaba* by Abdur Rashid, see his *Applied Sufism*, 272-6.
[364] *EI*[2] "Fikr."
[365] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: A Positive Relationship with Science," Lecture, March 24, 2018; Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Our Ability to Perceive Signs in this World with Faith in the Unseen," Lecture, February 24, 2018. Pertaining to the latter source, from content as well as examining the selection of Quranic verses cited (2:164; 30:22; 41:53; 51:20–21), in terms of both sequence and translations used, it seems that one of the sources Abdur Rashid consulted for this particular talk is: Umar F. Abd-Allah, "The Perceptible and the Unseen: The Qur'anic Conception of Man's Relationship to God and Realities Beyond Human Perception," in *Mormons and Muslims: Spiritual Foundations and Modern Manifestations*, ed. Spencer J. Palmer (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University 2002), 209–64.

of the Quran.[366] Going further back, in support of the practice of *fikr*, Abdur Rashid looks to the Prophet and the first two generations thereafter. He points to how the Quran repeatedly and in various ways exhorts to ponder and reflect, along with citing *ḥadīth*s which state that the search for knowledge is the duty of every Muslim,[367] the scholar's ink is more precious than the martyr's blood,[368] and yet another which declares that a single hour of contemplation is better that a whole night spent in vigil.[369] On the latter, he attributes its narration to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, whom Gardet observes was an advocate of *fikr*. Elsewhere, Abdur Rashid cites another figure who, like al-Baṣrī, is generally recognized as an ascetic and scholar among the *tābi' al-tābi'īn*, Sufyān al-Thawrī, as having said, "When one is used to contemplation, there is a lesson in everything."[370]

We have already seen that, for Abdur Rashid, *fikr* plays a crucial role in *murāqaba*, that is in making the very *niyya* which initiates the practice itself. But he also accords it a special place in the performance of *dhikr* and the remainder of the *waẓīfa*, as well as in the collective *ḥaḍra*, as he advises against mere empty recitation, but instead exhorts to contemplating the meaning of that which is being recited. He asks, "How does it benefit you if you don't know what you're talking about?" The same aversion to simply repeating empty words holds true for making *du'ā* or reading the Quran, as he encourages pondering the meaning of the words themselves. Moreover, echoing al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, Abdur Rashid also extends this to standard acts of Islamic ritual observance such as prayer, urging to concentrate on the meaning of the ritual and the words being uttered as well as perfecting the performance thereof, with nothing else in one's mind,[371] much like the abovementioned Naqshbandī principle of *nigāh dāsht*.

In addition to such an integral role of *fikr* in the performance of obligatory and supererogatory worship, including Sufi practices, he also advises it as a separate practice in and of itself. He describes *fikr* as "an unrestricted form of worship," one that can be performed anywhere and under any circumstances.[372] On multiple occasions, he exhorts his audience to, much like with the other practices described above, make the space in their lives for contemplation, to specifically set aside time for this practice and to do so daily.[373] In the lectures examined for this research, the practice of *fikr* is directly connected with Abdur Rashid's discussions of consciousness. Accordingly, in providing one of several definitions he discusses for what *fikr* is, he asks his listeners to consider thoughts as "taking up space," and explains that *fikr* is consciously bringing or allowing thoughts to come into one's "cognitive space." That is, this space, which he also refers to as one's "consciousness" or "conscious awareness," can be emptied out and a thought can be intentionally placed there.[374] He thus emphasizes that *fikr* is a deliberate and active process, one that is not passive or simply reacting without conscious thought.[375] It is actively bringing or choosing to allow something into one's consciousness as opposed to passively letting wandering thoughts (*khawāṭir*), come and go as they will.[376] He also explains that it is preferrable

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[366] Kojiro Nakamura, *Ghazali and Prayer* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2001), 66; cited in Kaoru Aoyagi, "Al-Ghazālī and Marriage from the Viewpoint of Sufism." *Orient* 40, no. 0 (2005): 124-39, 129.
[367] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: Paying Attention is Healing," Lecture, March 8, 2018.
[368] Ibid.
[369] Ibid.
[370] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: Visualizing Who You Want to Become," Lecture, March 3, 2018.
[371] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: Paying Attention is Healing."
[372] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Contemplation: An Unrestricted Form of Worship," Lecture, February 23, 2018.
[373] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: A Positive Relationship with Science"; Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: Paying Attention is Healing"; Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "How the Divine Recognizes Us," Lecture, March 31, 2018.
[374] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: Tafakkur and Tadhakkur," Lecture, August 18, 2018. Such a definition is congruent with the meaning of the root *f-k-r* as used in philosophy and *kalām*, which according to Gardet indicates "the intellectual faculty in the act of thought, reflecting upon an object of intellection." *EI*^{2} "Fikr."
[375] Ibid. It is difficult here, however, not to think of Gurdjieff and Shah's overcoming conditioning.
[376] Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: Tafakkur and Tadhakkur."

for *fikr* to be performed in a quiet place, and that one should contemplate deeply on something with everything else emptied from the mind.[377]

As with the practices described above, Abdur Rashid draws connections and discusses the interrelation between these other main practices and *fikr*, potentially in both its sense as an integral part of those other practices and as a practice unto itself, although supplemental to *murāqaba*, *dhikr*, and *muḥāsaba*. So for instance, he asserts that contemplation leads to the state of meditation,[378] that is in the broader meaning of *murāqaba* as being vigilant in one's awareness of the divine presence. With regard to *dhikr* and *fikr*, Gardet describes a long-running debate among classical Sufis and their predecessors over whether *dhikr* (with its use of recitations having an asserted post-rational character) or *fikr* (being centered more on the intellect) is superior. Gardet concludes that although the latter has some prominent supporters; such as al-Baṣrī, al-Ḥallāj, and following him the Bukharan Sufi Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī (d. ca. 990); the general consensus gives primacy to *dhikr*, noting that while much has been written on the various methods and benefits of *dhikr*, there is a paucity of such writings on *fikr*.[379] While placing a significantly greater emphasis on the intellect than his immediate Indian predecessors, Abdur Rashid follows suit with them and preceding Sufi tradition in upholding the superiority of *dhikr*. For example, in a lecture devoted to consciousness and the topic of "*Tafakkur* and *Tadhakkur*," he describes *dhikr* as being supported by *fikr*, saying that while the former increases the knowledge in the heart, the latter functions to preserve such knowledge.[380] Moreover, there is some overlap between his descriptions of *fikr* and *muḥāsaba*, since a significant part of the former includes examining and assessing one's own self on the path, as we will see below, such that we might see *fikr* as including but not being limited to *muḥāsaba*. Gardet similarly considers "the 'scrutiny of conscience' (*ḥisāb*) advocated by al-Muḥāsibī" as itself being a type of *fikr*.[381]

But now, we finally turn to the actual content of such reflection, what that something is which is deliberately placed in or allowed to enter conscious awareness. While Abdur Rashid discusses a range of such objects of contemplation, even within just the small selection of talks consulted here, we might reduce these to one single topic: the signs (*āyāt*) of the divine presence, which can be found in the inner world as well as in the outer, the *bāṭin* and the *ẓāhir*. In speaking of, on the one hand, the macrocosm (*'ālam-i kabīr*) and the outer world, and on the other, the microcosm (*'ālam-i saghīr*) and the inner world, he describes how "God is the ultimate reality behind all things" and in both of these worlds there are signs pointing to that ultimate reality.[382] He states that, "The sign of what is real is within our own self, is our own self, and it is the cosmos,"[383] and also that "Whatever we take to be real is really a reflection of God" and here he is referring to "anything and everything in the cosmos," including oneself.[384] He quotes from Quran 2:115: "whithersoever ye turn, there is Allah's Countenance," alongside Quran 41:53: "We [God] will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth."[385] So the object of contemplation in *fikr* could be anything and everything at all, when it is perceived as what Abdur Rashid feels it truly is, a sign of the divine. As he says time and again, and as mentioned above pertaining to *ishārāt* and in the section on science, everything points to the divine. For him, it is only a matter of awakening to that knowledge, since "everything of beauty, everything of majesty […] stands at the doorway of the *ghayb*, one only has to open the door, the opportunities are all around."[386] And elsewhere, he similarly explains that:

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377 Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: A Positive Relationship with Science."
378 Abdur Rashid, "How the Divine Recognizes Us."
379 *EI*^{2} "Fikr."
380 Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: Tafakkur and Tadhakkur."
381 *EI*^{2} "Fikr."
382 Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: A Positive Relationship with Science."
383 Ibid.
384 Ibid.
385 Ibid.
386 Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: Tafakkur and Tadhakkur."

> Everything in the perceptible world stands at the entrance to the unseen world, in other words, everything of beauty, everything of majesty, everything of truth, all of creation, we're standing in front of all these doorways but we don't turn the knob and enter.[387]

The latter of the two Quranic verses cited above (41:53), along with another that also describes the signs being in the world and within oneself[388] as well as Abdur Rashid's discussions of *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir*, provide some structure for our examination of the ways he deals with various objects of contemplation. The discussion below is thus divided into the two main categories of contemplating the outer world and the inner world. Yet it should be remembered that, for him, this dichotomy is only apparent rather than actual, that it "is only real from the limited perspective of the physical world." But such a materially oriented position "can be transcended to realize that all of reality is a single continuum," and the *āyāt* can "bridge the gap between the seen and the unseen."[389] The seeming polarity, he says, is "a test for our soul," and he exhorts to realizing the impermanence of the material world, and to be cautious of how much one becomes entangled in their physical existence.[390]

Before providing some examples of contemplating the outer and inner worlds respectively, we will consider the results that *fikr*, but also all of the practices collectively as well as Islam itself, are held to lead to, that is a comprehensive transformation of the individual, and also the world. While for Abdur Rashid, the object of *fikr* is the *āyāt*, the subject that perceives these is one's own essential goodness (*fiṭra*), and he says that the *fiṭra*'s ability "to sense the reality of the unseen through the *āyāt* lays at the root of human growth and development."[391] He explains how when one sincerely and deeply engages in *fikr*, it has a "transformative effect," it "opens the doors and gates of knowledge" and an "alchemy" takes place.[392] This profound transformation is spiritual, religious, and moral in nature, but it is also physical and psychological. He additionally considers how Sufi practices can assist in times of difficulty and help one in their undertakings in this world. But by far, the foremost of all of these results, which is also the ultimate and primary objective of all of the practices advocated by Abdur Rashid, is achieving greater closeness to and awareness of God, and doing so for the sake of God.

Such awareness of God is of course directly connected with belief in God, and accordingly, he ties *fikr* to faith and the classical levels of certainty in Sufism: *'ilm al-yaqīn*, *'ayn al-yaqīn*, and *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*. In a statement that highlights *fikr*'s use of the intellect and the five senses, he sees it as a way of gaining "not blind faith, but actually faith that has eyes, and ears, […] and senses through the senses, through the five senses," which he holds should be complemented with the intuitive or post-rational mode by adding "and, as we all know, attenuated and refined through the other five senses, the *laṭā'if*."[393] Leading into the moral dimension of the results of Sufi practice in general, but here with regard to *fikr* and faith in particular, he says that the relationship to the divine through faith lies "at the root of human character (*akhlāq*)."[394] Furthermore, he warns that "without faith or belief, something to humble someone," that people can "become arrogant, narcissistic, authoritarian, destructive figures."[395] From a more positive angle, he explains how *fikr* uplifts "character (*akhlaq*) and makes us good people, and eventually perhaps even someday a *wali*."[396]

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[387] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: The Bridge to the Eternal."
[388] Qur'an 51:20–21, "And there are on the earth [manifest] signs (*ayat*) [of God's presence] for those endowed with certainty of faith, And so likewise are there [signs] within your [very] selves: Can you not see, then, and perceive?"
[389] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: The Bridge to the Eternal."
[390] Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: Tafakkur and Tadhakkur."
[391] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: The Bridge to the Eternal."
[392] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: A Positive Relationship with Science."; Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: Tafakkur and Tadhakkur"; Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: A Positive Relationship with Science."
[393] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: The Bridge to the Eternal."
[394] Ibid.; Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: Tafakkur and Tadhakkur."
[395] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: The Bridge to the Eternal."
[396] Ibid.

In other places, Abdur Rashid discusses how *fikr* leads to benefits like improved psychological and physical health and well-being,[397] and he extols the therapeutic effects of deep thought and imagination.[398] He furthermore asserts that if one engages in such contemplation consistently each day, that over time, "one finds that they are not only more spiritually awake, but that they have also changed. One changes. One transforms." He goes on to explain that "along with this kind of spiritual awakening, there is a type of mental, physical, and emotional awakening or ordering, balancing." Thus we see his rather holistic view of transformation, one that he connects with knowing one's own self, [399] an allusion to the well-known *ḥadīth qudsī*, according to which such knowing of oneself leads to knowing one's Lord. This particular tradition is discussed in further detail below. Another benefit of *fikr* he describes is that by bringing such thoughts to conscious awareness in times of difficulty, "the person gains deeper insight into the role that God plays in their life, into their destiny."[400] But perhaps more significantly here, for Abdur Rashid, *fikr* and the other practices can also help in one's endeavors in the world, which is where the transformation of society and the world also comes in, as we will discuss in short order.

Signs on the Horizons

Pertaining to seeing the *āyāt* as proofs or evidence in the outer physical world, perceptible by the five senses, Abdur Rashid makes certain to clarify that by "signs," he is not referring to omens for divination, citing Rasool's distinction between spiritualism and spirituality.[401] Instead, he says that everything in the outer world acts as a mirror for the divine, and it is our own essential goodness (*fiṭra*) that perceives these signs of God in the outer world. In a statement that clearly distances him from pantheism, as mentioned above, he explains that this is "Just like [how] a mirror shows you something that is real while the mirror is not the thing itself."[402] Sounding very much like the description of *iḥsān* in the *ḥadīth* of Gabriel, he says that when one sees such signs everywhere, no matter where one is, "You find yourself standing before God."[403] He also points out the paradoxical nature of how "it is what we *see* which is directing us to, or attesting to, the *unseen* [emphasis added]."[404] Just as the Quran itself describes various signs in the created world for those "who use their reason," such as enumerated in verses 2:164 or 30:22,[405] Abdur Rashid discusses a range of things that act as mirrors for or pointers toward the divine, including things in the natural world and human interactions as well as products of human ingenuity and the discoveries of science.

On seeing the signs in nature, among numerous other Quranic verses, he quotes 3:190, "Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are indeed Signs for men of understanding," [406] and he speaks of looking at creation; "nature, the universe, the stars"; and seeing its beauty and marveling at its precision. He mentions the wonders of nature, the changing of the seasons and how in the spring a tiny flower miraculously pushes through the still cold soil, and he sees in this an inner meaning (*ta'wīl*) that points to mankind's eventual resurrection at the day of judgement. He says that it is a matter of whether or not one is sensitive to those inner meanings.[407] By

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[397] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: Paying Attention is Healing."
[398] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: Visualizing Who You Want to Become."
[399] Abdur Rashid, "How the Divine Recognizes Us."
[400] Abdur Rashid, "Consciousness: Tafakkur and Tadhakkur."
[401] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: The Bridge to the Eternal."
[402] Abdur Rashid, "Our Ability to Perceive Signs in this World."
[403] Ibid.
[404] Ibid.
[405] Quran 2:164, "Behold, in the creation of the heavens and the earth; the alteration of the night and the day; in the ships that move swiftly over the sea bearing things beneficial to man; in the waters—dew, rain, and ice—which God sends down from the sky, giving thereby life to the earth after it was dead and causing to multiply thereon all manner of living creatures; and in the change of the winds and the clouds running their appointed courses between the heavens and the earth: In all of these there are signs (*āyāt*), indeed, for a people who use their reason."; Quran 30:22, "And among His signs (*āyāt*) [to you of His greatness] are the creation of the heavens and the earth and the variations in your tongues and your colors: There are in this, of a certainty, signs for those who have [true] knowledge."
[406] Abdur Rashid, "Our Ability to Perceive Signs in this World."
[407] Ibid.

paying attention, also using the word *tawajjuh* here, and pondering the phenomena of the world, which to him are all doorways to God, one eventually enters "a state of meditation," the broader sense of *murāqaba*.[408]

Yet he warns that the beauty in the world is actually only *zīna* ("ornamentation"), but behind and underlying which is a greater reality, and that seeing beauty in the world for its own sake, "will inevitably end in disappointment and unfulfillment" and that "When the world becomes a goal in itself, we are living in contradiction to what our soul's purpose is […]." Though he says it is possible for the world to cease being *zīna*, and that instead, when one lives with the divine names and attributes (listing here justice, compassion, majesty, and beauty), everything in creation can become an *āyāt*, a bridge that is within oneself which leads to the unseen, and to *iḥsān*. The result, he says, is that one's "character is refined, we become awakened, enlighted, capable of fulfilling the *amāna*, and the purpose for which we were created." And this purpose too is something that he says ought to be contemplated.[409]

Going further beyond only things in nature as signs of God, he also looks to human relationships and interactions, pointing out that seeing a mother's love and sacrifice is yet another affirmation of the divine presence. He explains that such things may seem apparent, but that it is only when one truly ponders and reflects on it that they come to a deep understanding.[410] He furthermore also includes the technological inventions of mankind, as God is ultimately their creator as well. In support of this, he cites the abovementioned Qur'an 2:164, which lists "ships that move swiftly over the sea bearing things beneficial to man" among a list of things that are signs "for a people who use their reason."[411] As we saw in the section on his engagement with science above, scientific discoveries can also serve as *āyāt*, as he argues that "Science, any science, shows us again and again these parallels."[412] Additionally, he asserts a qualitative difference in the results of the contemplation of scientists and thinkers who create something for its own sake versus those who do so with faith in and for the sake of something greater, saying that "it has a special quality to it, it's infused with love."[413] This leads us to an aspect of Abdur Rashids teachings on *fikr* wherein his emphasis on its being an active process comes to the fore, that is how it can be used to fix things in the outer world.

Abdur Rashid states "The desire for beauty and peace in the world, that's great contemplation,"[414] and he says that *fikr* is not simply seeing the beautiful, but it is also looking at "the ugly, upsetting, painful, frightening, disturbing, you can learn a lesson from it, how to avoid it, how to fix it."[415] Citing the current situation and events in the US at the time of this talk (March 2018), he urges not to simply react to, for instance, the provocative words of a particularly senior and controversial US political figure or to tragedies or injustices like the excessive or unnecessary use of force by the police, the shooting that had occurred at a high school the month prior, the "greed of the pharmaceutical companies," and government nepotism and corruption.[416] He says that if one contemplates for a time, not necessarily such negative things in and of themselves, but their positive aspects, that is solutions or ways of alleviating the problems, then "there is a power that follows you."[417] He also speaks of the power of the mind, of contemplation and what it can accomplish, saying that "we can come up with ways of travelling to different planets." So he advises and urges his audience to sincerely bring God to mind and visualize how they would like the world to be, contemplating on how to make that vision a reality.[418] Here it becomes apparent that he is not only speaking as a *shaykh* expounding on a Sufi

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[408] Abdur Rashid, "How the Divine Recognizes Us"; Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: A Positive Relationship with Science"; Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: Paying Attention is Healing."
[409] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: The Bridge to the Eternal."
[410] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: A Positive Relationship with Science."
[411] Abdur Rashid, "Contemplation: An Unrestricted Form of Worship."
[412] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: A Positive Relationship with Science."
[413] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: Paying Attention is Healing."
[414] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: Visualizing Who You Want to Become."
[415] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: Paying Attention is Healing,"
[416] Abdur Rashid, "How the Divine Recognizes Us."
[417] Ibid.
[418] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: Visualizing Who You Want to Become."

practice to his students, but also as the President of Legacy and the leader of their community, seeking to inspire his audience in the pursuit of the practical realization of their ideals. But going back to the power that he mentions accompanying one in the pursuit of finding ways of solving the world's problems, he relates it to knowing oneself, and thus knowing one's Lord;[419] the very topic now at hand, seeing the signs within oneself.

Signs within Themselves

Pertaining to *fikr* in the sense of reflecting inwardly, Abdur Rashid summarized it in an email to the researcher as "the process of contemplating one's self on the path of knowing one's Lord. Placing oneself in front of a mirror and looking seriously at this being, all the while asking or contemplating the questions that arise."[420] He is clearly alluding here to the *ḥadīth*, "Whosoever knows himself knows his Lord." In email correspondence, interviews, and the lectures examined, he particularly connects this *ḥadīth* with the practice of *fikr*. Yet he also describes *murāqaba* as "a pact to know oneself" and, as mentioned, *muḥāsaba* might be considered a subset of *fikr* when the object of contemplation is oneself. Indeed, he considers all of the practices as means to gain knowledge of oneself, and to acquire control and discipline over oneself, but he says it is more than this.[421] He sees the path of cultivating one's relationship with God as being "reflexive," and that in a sense, it is actually about the "relationship between myself, and my greater self."[422] He also explains that this is "a matter of degrees" and that "The degree you know yourself, that is the degree you will know your Lord."[423] Thus it seems that he is referring to the same sort of transformation or awakening of an inner potential that we have seen him describe in various other ways, such as realizing one's *fitra*, becoming *al-insān al-kāmil*, and reflecting the names and attributes of God.

So just as he exhorts to contemplation to help in transforming the outer world around oneself, he also urges his listeners to use such reflection to transform themselves. In a lecture entitled "Tafakkur/Contemplation: Visualizing Who You Want to Become," he speaks about becoming free from mundane, everyday thinking as well as from one's passions, saying that being free from these "doesn't mean they don't exist, it means they don't own you." He describes a number of techniques that go beyond the procedure outlined above for *muḥāsaba*, and in doing so he presents major figures from the Islamic tradition as having already pioneered methods found in modern psychology, thus echoing the abovementioned clinical relevance that he believes Sufism and Islam can have. For instance, he discusses therapeutic techniques from clinical psychology that are used for changing undesirable habits or dealing with negative feelings, and he asserts that such figures as al-Ghazālī and even Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350), the Ḥanbalī scholar and foremost student of Ibn Taymiyya, had spoken of these same techniques.

One such method involves mentally placing oneself in a pleasant and beautiful setting and then invoking a negative memory that one wishes to overcome, repeating this process "until the state of tranquility (*sakīna*) dominates." For another example, he cites al-Ghazālī as having said that good character is attained through practice, and that one must first imagine oneself in the desired condition so that one gradually assumes those characteristics, they become internalized and a part of one's very being. Thus, Abdur Rashid exhorts: "Even if you don't feel it, pretend to, you create this image and it becomes you, and even if you don't have that feeling, you evoke that feeling eventually by feigning it." He compares this to how among Shi'a Muslims it is encouraged to simulate crying during *'Āshūrā'* (the tenth day of Muharram on which Shi'is mourn the martyrdom of Ḥusayn, the Prophet's grandson) until one actually feels it. He also drew a comparison to a Zen exercise he had given years earlier, when the World Community was still a universalist *ashram*, which entailed laughing for ten minutes after waking up in the morning.[424] This also echoes a statement he sometimes makes regarding yearning (*himma*) for

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[419] Abdur Rashid, "How the Divine Recognizes Us."
[420] Email August 2017.
[421] Abdur Rashid, "How the Divine Recognizes Us."
[422] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Relatedness," Lecture, April 13, 2017.
[423] Abdur Rashid, "Know Yourself, Know Your Lord, Part 3."
[424] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: Visualizing Who You Want to Become."

the divine, wherein he says that if one does not truly feel such a yearning, that they should at least "yearn to yearn."[425]

Yet returning more specifically to the above prophetic tradition, during the course of this research, Abdur Rashid gave an entire series of lectures on the topic of knowing oneself to know one's Lord, wherein he provides a number of interpretations of this *ḥadīth*. In the interest of space, these lectures have only been meagerly touched upon here. But one interpretation he provides, for instance, is that if one recognizes their own shortcomings, they have recognized something that is true and therefore the Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*) is present.[426] Another interpretation he provides, one which also focuses on differentiation between God and creation, points to knowing how one's own qualities are the opposite of God's, stating for instance that "the more you know that you are disappearing from this world, the more you know that Allah is eternal."[427] Yet he also considers similarity between God and humankind, as well as connects seeing the signs within oneself with seeing them in the outer world. For example, he states that "When we see love within ourselves, we see it as evident throughout the cosmos."[428] Thus finding love within oneself is directly tied to being able to perceive its immanent presence in the world around oneself, such as the abovementioned seeing a mother's love. After all, for him love, just like gravity, is found everywhere.[429] Still elsewhere he describes knowing oneself as "the unfolding of our personality," that "in the safety and security one feels as one contemplates" and turns inwardly, parts of oneself that were not evident before become apparent, and "we begin to see the fullness of our character and personality as well as the flaws."[430] But characteristic of his Applied Sufism, he states that "the challenge is to act according to what we're seeing,"[431] which leads us to one final observation about *fikr*. As we have seen, in contrast to *murāqaba* as beyond the mind and dealing directly with the heart, *fikr* makes use of the rational mind as well as the five senses to affect the heart. This notion, that the heart can be affected by the intellect in working toward the same comprehensive transformation sought by performing the other practices, relates directly to not only Abdur Rashid's reliance on lectures (*dars*) as one means of spiritual training, but also, in a secular context, to the educational activities of the World Community Education Center and Legacy International in seeking to empower and inspire emerging leaders, affecting their hearts through their intellects.

Role of the Guide and Community

The role of the *shaykh* is very much indispensable in the teachings of Abdur Rashid, and he remarks that "there is no Sufism without the *shuyukh*."[432] It is the *shaykh* who must provide his *tawajjuh* to assist in the spiritual progress of his students, as Abdur Rashid says, "you cannot get a transmission from Google."[433] Just as a connection to the *silsila* and the transmission of *baraka* cannot come from an internet search engine, the living *shaykh* is also seen as an irreplaceable source of knowledge, and he explains that "teachings and real knowledge have always [been] transmitted teacher to student, not text to student."[434] In addition the *shaykh*'s roles of providing his *tawajjuh* and *ṣuḥbat*, in the form of both his physical presence as well as giving the necessary guidance and instruction, it is also of major importance for him to assess the student's progress on the path to determine "whether or not the teaching is operating […]"[435] and to "verify one's experience, and place it in the context of the spiritual journey (*sayru-s-suluk*)."[436]

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[425] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.
[426] Abdur Rashid, "Know Yourself, Know Your Lord, Part 3."
[427] Ibid.
[428] Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: A Positive Relationship with Science."
[429] Ibid.
[430] Abdur Rashid, "How the Divine Recognizes Us."
[431] Ibid.
[432] Abdur Rashid, *What?*, 22.
[433] Idem 26.
[434] Abdur Rashid, *Why?*, 16.
[435] Abdur Rashid, *What?*, 24.
[436] Abdur Rashid, *Why?*, 16.

He lists some of the attributes of the *shaykh*, two of which are that they should abide by the religious injunctions of the Quran and *sunna* and they should possess the ability to teach and reform people's attitudes.[437] Additionally, he considers a connection to the Prophet and "to the successive guides (*silsila*)" as another fundamental requirement for being a *shaykh*.[438] He sees the *silsila* as a "living lineage" with "far more power, meaning, and originality than words in books and laws" and "a living chain of instruction and experience, of memory and of practice that begins with the Prophet" and was passed through the *ṣaḥāba*, *tābiʿīn*, *tābiʿ al-tabiʿīn*, and after them through the successive generations of later *awliyāʾ* over the centuries up to the present and ultimately to the living Sufi *shaykh*.[439] When the student has chosen to pursue the Sufi path and selected a *shaykh*, and the *shaykh* in turn is willing to accept that individual as a student, their relationship is formalized through an oath of allegiance (*bayʿa*) and a connection to that chain is established.

In exactly the same way as Rasool, before accepting *bayʿa*, Abdur Rashid guides prospective new students, regardless of faith, through the first ten lessons of initially awakening the *laṭāʾif*. To proceed further, it becomes necessary to accept Islam and establish this formal relationship with the *shaykh*. Yet an important difference for students of Abdur Rashid, is that they are asked: "What are you going to do with it?" Stated differently, he places particular emphasis on reminding his students that giving *bayʿa* "is a beginning and not an end, and that the insights and results gained as a mureed must be used in daily life."[440] In his description of *bayʿa*, Abdur Rashid's trademark emphasis on a socially engaged Sufism, the centrality of being in a community of fellow seekers, and the onus that he places on his students to use the spiritual training he gives them to do something positive in the world, are all highly perceptible:

> In giving *bayʿat*, the aspirant becomes part of a community of faithful *mureeds* and *mureedas*. He or she affirms a commitment to service and *adab* (spiritual courtesy), based on ethical purity, justice, love, service and personal sacrifice *fee sabeeli-Llah* (for the sake of Allah (*Subh̲aanahu wa taʿaalaa*) and of one's fellow human beings. […] He or she seeks nearness to Allah (*Subh̲aanahu wa taʿaalaa*) through *khidmah* (service) to His creatures and His creation. Selfishness is the enemy of spirituality.[441]

As much as any other section of the present chapter, a major thread that runs through this section is positive social engagement. Another is of course, community, and both of these are crucial to Abdur Rashid. While Rasool focused on the spiritual facets of the relationship between student and teacher, like *tawajjuh* and *adab* of the heart, as Hasan continues to do today; Abdur Rashid emphasizes the necessity of the physically embodied aspects (especially *ṣuḥbat*) alongside the spiritual ones, as can also be seen in the slightly more pronounced outer displays of *adab* by his students. This is probably tied not only to the shared community structure of the World Community, but also to how, on the one hand, *TTH* is geared toward new students and likewise, retreats observed in Germany were the first ones to ever take place in the country; and on the other, the World Community has existed in one form or another for well over half a century.

Tawajjuh

The use of the term *tawajjuh* for Abdur Rashid does have the sense of the non-physical transmission of *baraka* from teacher to student to assist in spiritual progress, but for him it also has the meanings of the *murīd* turning toward, among other things, their own heart, toward the *laṭāʾif* of the *shaykh*, and toward God. He summarized this succinctly by saying that *tawajjuh* "is where you put your spiritual attention."[442] As revealed in his further elaboration, the "you" in that sentence can refer to either the student or the *shaykh*, and from only the small sampling of his writings and lectures examined

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[437] Abdur Rashid, "Approaching the Singularity of Nearness."
[438] Abdur Rashid, *Why?*, 16.
[439] Idem 17.
[440] Email March 17, 2020.
[441] Abdur Rashid, *Why?*, 22-3.
[442] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 14.

for this research, Abdur Rashid places a greater emphasis on the sense of *tawajjuh* that refers to the student directing their own spiritual attention. This is quite distinct from Rasool's primary usage of the term as indicating the *shaykh*'s general "attention" or specific "transmission" to assist the student in spiritual progress. Yet Abdur Rashid's understanding is in one important respect, also the return of an earlier idea, since among the early Naqshbandīs, including up to at least Jāmī, *tawajjuh* carried a similar meaning to that used for *murāqaba* today, as the student directing their attention toward God via their heart. This difference from his own *shaykh* is probably in part due to differences in their respective goals and audiences, while in *TTH*, Rasool was explaining how his system of spiritual training operates to new prospective students, Abdur Rashid uses his lectures themselves as a parallel form of spiritual training, seeking to inspire his existing student base, long-term and new alike, toward the same realizations sought through their assigned practices. This purpose of the *dars* is described further below, but now we consider some examples.

In one pamphlet, Abdur Rashid describes how Noah "paid attention to his heart, making *tawajjuh*;" when he heeded God's instructions to warn the people prior to the flood[443] and in the two-part lecture "Nazar and Tawajjuh," he deals with *tawajjuh* in combination with the term *naẓar*. In this lecture, Abdur Rashid acknowledges that he tends to use *tawajjuh* to denote the spiritual aspirant turning their attention toward God and *naẓar* as God's eternal "regard" or attention toward his creation, whereby "He showers His grace and His names and attributes find expression." He explains that when we turn our attention toward God, we begin to "resonate" with and reflect the divine attributes and, alluding to *fanā'*, that it is even possible to reach a point of losing oneself in such "resonance."[444] Noting that the root *q-l-b* in Arabic can also mean "to turn," he describes how the *murīd* "turns" their attention to their heart and then the heart "turns" its attention toward God. He additionally observes that *tawujjuh* also means to revolve, "so there is virtual perpetual motion once the attention is provided, attaining eventually a constant evolution-revolution."[445] He also highlights how this paying attention or *tawajjuh* toward God is something not only performed during *murāqaba* and the other practices, but it should also be done at all times and in all situations.[446] Thus, he also describes *tawajjuh* as paying attention to the signs of the divine presence both in the inner world and in the outer, as just discussed with regard to *fikr*.[447] It is even possible, according to Abdur Rashid, for the student to perform *tawajjuh* toward another person or even a situation. So, he explains, if the student encounters someone who is suffering, they can focus on the person's heart, imprinting a design (*naqsh*) with the name of God on it. In this way the compassion, love, and mercy within one's own heart is transmitted to the heart of the other person, and he asserts that this can facilitate their healing and even the awakening of their heart.[448]

Turning now toward the *shaykh* and his *tawajjuh*, one can discern both the general and specific senses of the *shaykh*'s *tawajjuh*, as attention and transmission, that were found in Rasool's writings in Abdur Rashid's thought as well. On the general sense, we could look to the above description of how the *shaykh*'s assistance (*madād*) accompanies the seeker in meditation and in life, and also how he explains that "the light from the *qalb* of the *murshid*, even without any knowledge of what is happening, comes from the heart of the *murshid* to the heart of the seeker."[449] Interestingly, he also talks about how such *fayḍ* can also be used for "material or worldly benefits," something deemphasized in Rasool's public presentation, but which seems to reemerge in Abdur Rashid's talks. He goes on to cite how many

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[443] Abdur Rashid, *The Continuing Voyage of Nuh*, 8.
[444] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Nazar and Tawajjuh" http://www.circlegroup.org/dars/2014/08/08-06-14.Wed.mp3 (accessed on 14 July 2017); Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Nazar and Tawajjuh Part 2" http://www.circlegroup.org/dars/2014/08/08-13-14.Wed.mp3 (accessed on 14 July 2017). The title and some of the content of this particular lecture reveal a certain debt to the Sufi writings of Fethullah Gülen. Abdur Rashid acknowledges reading and drawing on Gülen because of his clear descriptions of Sufi concepts. Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.
[445] Email July 26 2017.
[446] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 30.
[447] Abdur Rashid, "How the Divine Recognizes Us."
[448] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 14.
[449] Abdur Rashid, "Approaching the Singularity of Nearness."

go to the tomb of Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ for assistance in passing exams, as well as for such personal concerns as related to childbirth or healing,[450] though he disapproves of such utilitarianism.[451] But for evidence of the specific sense of *tawajjuh* in relation to the transmissions, we could look to his statement that the *niyyāt* are not simply words given from the teacher to the student orally or on a printed card, they are also and more importantly transmitted, *laṭīfa* by *laṭīfa*,[452] from the heart of the *murshid* to the heart of the *murid*.[453]

Suhbat

In comparison to *tawajjuh*, Abdur Rashid places a stronger emphasis on *ṣuḥbat*, which he describes as a form of *dhikr* and defines as "being in the company of the shaykh and fellow seekers, for spiritual purposes,"[454] We will return to the sense of *ṣuḥbat* as being in the company of fellow seekers in discussing the role of community below, but the primary meaning of *ṣuḥbat* for Abdur Rashid and in Sufi tradition at large, is the companionship of the *shaykh*, which could include performing *murāqaba* and *dhikr* in the presence of the *shaykh*, but it can also be simply spending time together, talking, and significantly, attending the lectures of the *shaykh*. *Ṣuḥbat* was not only important for Rasool and Saʿīd Khān as already described, though not prominent in the latter's presentation to the West, but it has also been considered a major feature of the Naqshbandiyya throughout its history and before. It was even the foremost figure of the Khwājagān, al-Ghijduwānī, who is purported to have said, "close your door to *k͟halwa*, but open it to spiritual companionship (*ṣuḥba*)."[455]

Abdur Rashid's greater emphasis on *ṣuḥbat* over *tawajjuh* is not to say that he in any way deemphasizes *tawajjuh* as the non-localized transmission of *baraka* from *murshīd* to *murid*. On the contrary, he describes sending the transmissions of the order to students around the world on a daily basis, but he warns that such *tawajjuh* is sometimes used as an excuse for not making the effort to be in the physical company of the *shaykh* and other members of the order. He maintains that *tawajjuh* has to be supported with *ṣuḥbat*, otherwise one becomes one's own *shaykh* and loses the benefit of having a "mirror" or "litmus test," noting also that "a book is not a mirror."[456] Similarly, and in line with his predilection for taking advantage of the latest advancements in technology, he celebrates how "we can find a dhikr on YouTube, we can watch our Shaykh via web-cast, we can create a Facebook group for our spiritual friends."[457] He also says that when circumstances prevent being in the physical presence of the *shaykh*, a substitute can be frequent correspondence, initiated by the student (as he asserts it has always been done), via mail, e-mail, telephone, instant messaging, and video platforms. But he is emphatic that "Being physically present in the company of the shaykh as much as possible is needed to make progress [on the Sufi path]."[458] As precedent, he mentions how for some 20 years, Rasool would travel from India once a year or so to visit the World Community, and that conversely, Abdur Rashid would reciprocally make the journey to India or London to see Rasool. While acknowledging that it is possible to be in the company of one's *shaykh* through the use of telecommunications technologies, he maintains that "There is no replacement for sitting quietly in the company of the Shaykh, not asking questions, not speaking, just sitting in companionship,"[459] and says that "for me this path is a personal path, you've got to be with your shaykh." He often connects being physically co-located with the *shaykh* to sincerity, and he remarks that in spite of what people may say is important to them, "it is where and with whom you spend your time and your effort that is important."[460]

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[450] Ibid.
[451] Email March 17, 2020.
[452] Email January 7, 2020.
[453] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 54.
[454] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 30. Elsewhere, he defines it as "being in the company of the shaykh and of sincere people." Abdur Rashid, "Approaching the Singularity of Nearness."
[455] *EI*² "K͟hwād͟jagān."
[456] Abdur Rashīd, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.
[457] Abdur Rashid, *Where?*, 20.
[458] Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 24;
[459] Abdur Rashid, *Where?*, 19.
[460] Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 24.

All of this being said, he also allows room and indeed stresses the need for the non-physical relationship with the *shaykh*, but as complimenting physical accompaniment, quite in contrast to how we saw Hasan consider consistency in the practices as sufficient for maintaining one's connection to the *shaykh*. In one talk, Abdur Rashid states that *ṣuḥbat* "means spending the maximum amount of time that you can with the guide." He follows this up by explaining that he does not mean "camping out in my office," but instead, being with the *shaykh* "internally and externally," "being present" while attending the collective *dhikr* and *murāqaba* sessions or lectures, but also, throughout daily life and especially when faced with challenges in life. He states that this combination of inner and outer *ṣuḥbat* "instantaneously creates progress on the path."[461] Elsewhere he similarly advises, when not in the physical company of the *shaykh*, seeking to be in the "inner presence" of the guide, seeing all of existence through his eyes while also being attuned to receiving his transmission.[462] He encourages his students to strive to attain to a level where, "no matter where they are in the world, in the physical presence or not, they are in the company of the shaykh."[463] He also uses other terms in describing this inner relationship with the *shaykh*, namely *munāsaba* and *rābiṭa*, which we will now consider.

Munāsaba, Rābiṭa and Adab

While Rasool used *nisbat* to describe the "spiritual affinity" between student and teacher, Abdur Rashid more often uses the term *munāsaba*, which he translates into English as "congeniality" or a "cordial relationship" and which derives from the same root as *nisbat*. He also describes *munāsaba* as "the congenial relationship of trust and willingness to follow the guidance of a guide."[464] Just as for Rasool with *nisbat*, for Abdur Rashid, *munāsaba* is necessary for the efficacy of *tawajjuh*, and it allows "the qualities and knowledge of the *shaykh* to pass like an electrical current to the *murīd*."[465] This relationship can be nurtured by both student and teacher. On the part of the student, such a spiritual relationship of affinity with the guide, and thus a connection to the saints of the *silsila*, to the Prophet and ultimately to God, is facilitated, for instance, by consistency in performing one's practices,[466] but also, as will be seen below, through correct *adab*.

Conversely, on the part of the *shaykh*, Abdur Rashid speaks of the need to be well-rounded and to take an interest in a range of things, so as to be able to connect more easily with his students based on shared interests, noting his own delving into a range of activities, such as music, poetry, and science. After the researcher, who is a practitioner of classical Japanese martial arts, inquired about the sword rack in Abdur Rashid's office, the *shaykh* mentioned his own dabbling in such traditions and went on to illustrate a teaching point using the four items mounted in the rack: a wooden training sword (a Japanese *bokken*), a dull sword, a sharpened *katana*, and a cane with a concealed sharpened blade. He likened each to different types of aspiring, false, or actual Sufis, including in turn the fledgling seeker, the one who looks outwardly like a Sufi but in actuality is not, the one who appears to be a Sufi outwardly and who also truly is inwardly, and the one that appears outwardly ordinary but is inwardly a Sufi.[467] The main point here, however, is that he built upon the common ground between himself and the researcher for pedagogical purposes.

Recalling from the chapter on Rasool, in addition to *nisbat,* he also used the term *rābiṭa* to describe the spiritual relationship with the *shaykh*, perhaps specifically the connection or bond aspect thereof. Abdur Rashid also employs this term, and in discussing *rābiṭa*, he explains that he first discovered this practice on his own long ago as a Yogi, and when in difficult situations, he would think of his own guru and ask, "What would he have me do?" Upon meeting Rasool, he transferred the same practice to him, asking himself, "What would Hazrat have me do?" He also describes *rābiṭa* as the

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[461] Abdur Rashid, "Approaching the Singularity of Nearness."
[462] Abdur Rashid, *Dooste Haghighi*, 11, 17.
[463] Abdur Rashid, "Approaching the Singularity of Nearness."
[464] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 54.
[465] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.
[466] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 12.
[467] A similar four-fold typology was given by Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā'. Lawrence: *Nizam Ad-Din Awliya*, 233ff; quoted in Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 138.

shaykh's accompaniment, assistance (*madād*), and serving as a touchstone in carrying out one's affairs,[468] thereby aiding the student as they go through daily life. Of particular interest, unlike Rasool, Abdur Rashid often uses the term *rābiṭa* in conjunction with *taṣawwur-i shaykh*, the practice of visualizing the image of one's *shaykh*. He notes that since the time of Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd, this has not generally been practiced in his Mujaddidī *Silsila*, and as we have seen, Sa'īd Khān uses this feature as one way of distinguishing the methods of this lineage as compared with others that rely on annihilation in the *shaykh* (*fanā' fi'l-shaykh*) followed by annihilation in the Prophet (*fanā' fi'l-rasūl*), as steps leading to annihilation in God (*fanā' fi'llāh*).

Nevertheless, Abdur Rashid explains that it can indeed still be performed in this order and he feels that under certain circumstances, it can be useful when used sparingly and with certain precautions, such as only performing such visualization with the *shaykh*'s permission and under his direct supervision.[469] The underlying risk seems to be that mentioned above with regard to *'ishq*, that is projecting fervent love for God onto that which is other than God, and of course the risk of *shirk*, or associating partners with God. Reminiscent of the story of al-Kharaqānī's assistance to a traveler ambushed by bandits and in connection with the *shaykh* being non-physically present to assist in challenging times, Abdur Rashid also mentioned that this might be useful in situations where the student is faced with some overwhelming fear, and that visualizing the *shaykh* could help in overcoming this.[470] In support of the practice of *taṣawwur-i shaykh*, he cites the approval of not only Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, 'Ubayd Allāh Aḥrār, and Walī Allāh in his own *silsila*, but he also provides quotes from the famed Deobandī scholars Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī (d. 1943) and Muḥammad Zakariyyā' Kāndhlawī (d. 1982).[471]

But returning to how the spiritual relationship with the *shaykh* is maintained, in line with Rasool's explanation that the outer manifestations of *adab* are gained with time (addressing new students), but from a different angle (addressing long-term students), Abdur Rashid warns that *adab* should not slacken due to familiarity with the *shaykh*, but should in fact increase.[472] Yet in considering difference, while Rasool emphasized the spiritual relationship with the *shaykh* over external formalities like outer *adab*, initially stressing the inner *adab* of the heart; at the World Community, the outer formalities of *adab* were somewhat more pronounced than that seen at SOST events in Germany, as will be described in the section on *dars* below. One possible explanation is that most students at events in Germany were comparatively new (much less than ten years), compared to at the World Community, where many had been with the *shaykh* for forty or more years, and who had also joined in a different era, when it was far more common to follow a spiritual teacher as part of a shared community. The high degree of commitment and personal investment alone in such an undertaking could also be a contributing factor.

But further on *adab*, in one pamphlet, Abdur Rashid provides a set of six "Lessons for the Mureed (Rules of Discipleship)," which are very briefly summarized here: 1.) not objecting in one's heart to the actions of the *shaykh* and instead seeking plausible explanations, 2.) reveal both good and bad thoughts to the *shaykh* so that he can properly assess and treat your spiritual condition, 3.) be sincere and diligent on the path, 4.) follow the instructions and recommendations of the *shaykh*, which it is stated usually pertain to such matters as *murāqaba* and attending *ṣuḥbat* but may also "have to do with your worldly life to make you a better person," 5.) avoid seeking spiritual advice from those other than one's own *shaykh*, and 6.) perform selfless service to the *shaykh* and the *tariqa* as well as to others generally.[473] Thus we see a fair degree of overlap between Rasool's discussion of *adab* in *TTH* along with those of senior SOST students at retreats in Germany, though also with some differences, like point six, where *ṭarīqa* might be understood as synonymous with community.

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468 Abdur Rashid, "Practices of Muraqabah."
469 Abdur Rashid, "Discussion of the Orders, Circles and Practices"; Abdur Rashid, "The Circles, Wuqufi Zamani, Duruud Sharif."
470 Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.
471 Abdur Rashid, "Practices of Muraqabah."
472 Abdur Rashid, *Dooste Haghighi*, 17.
473 Abdur Rashid, *Al-Khidr*, 24-9.

Dars

Perhaps the most apparent difference between SOST, past and present, and the Circle Group is the *dars* (literally "lesson," pl. *durūs*),[474] that is Abdur Rashid's lectures followed by question and answer sessions, which he regards as a form of *ṣuḥbat* and a practice unto itself that students at the World Community attend in person and others around the world are able to join in live, via telephone conferencing or on-line platforms like Zoom, as well as watch, listen, or read past archived lectures in different formats (video, audio, and text). While SOST relies more or less solely on performance of the practices, individually, in a group setting, and with the *shaykh*, supplemented with informal instruction by the *shaykh* and senior students; the Circle Group adds to this Abdur Rashid's regular *dars*. He usually gives a minimum of four lectures per week, generally lasting less than an hour each, three of which being labeled as *ṣuḥbat* and including more specifically Sufi-related material; one lecture being for the Friday *khutba* ("sermon"), and normally including more general Islamic content. Abdur Rashid acknowledges that this approach differs from that of Azad Rasool, saying: "My Shaykh didn't give lots of dars like I do, but taught vis a vis only the practices […]."[475] Nevertheless, Abdur Rashid explained that he was indeed "given very specific permission [from Rasool] to write and to give *dars*" and that although Rasool emphasized practices over reading and speculation, that he even instructed his own *murīd*s who were eager for material to read toward Abdur Rashid's writings.[476] One of Abdur Rashid's long-time students, who had arrived in the latter half of the 1970s just before the encounter with Rasool and the subsequent transition, described in awe how Abdur Rashid "has always had this astounding ability to not only go deeply into this other world (*ghayb*), but also to come back with profound wisdom and be able to express it in such a way as to bring others there too."[477]

On the *dars* as a part of *ṣuḥbat* and a practice in and of itself, he sees it as a form of *dhikr* in that it is not simply articulating or talking about God, but it is being in the presence of the Truth. He explains that it deals with the very subject matter that *dhikr* in the form of recitation points one to, and that it is "an explicative presentation of what's contained in the names that you're reciting."[478] Elsewhere, he describes how "*Suhbat* is a corridor (*majaaz*) with many doors that lead to refinement of attributes and attitudes (perceptions)," and part of this, he explains, is attending the *dars*.[479] He furthermore intimated to the researcher that the *dars* is also as much a practice for himself as the *shaykh* as it is for his students.[480] But like the other major intellectually-oriented practice of *fikr*, Abdur Rashid accords the *dars* a supplemental but interdependent role to the practices he received from Rasool.

Differentiating mystical experience from the theoretical description of mystical concepts and techniques, Abdur Rashid likens the former to actually seeing "a beautiful snow-capped range of mountains." At the time, knowing such things as their name or history are not important to appreciating their beauty, but later on, such additional knowledge may add depth to the experience.[481] His talks are intended to do just that, deepen the experience. By the very character of his talks in their seeking to inspire (mystically and practically), as seen throughout this entire chapter, it seems clear that Abdur Rashid is using the *dars* as an intellectual, parallel, and supporting means, alongside the "post-rational" practices of the order, to facilitate his students' spiritual progress as well as their application of the results thereof in the world. But for him, the *dars* is also not a purely intellectual pursuit, as he advises listeners to seek to not only understand his words with their intellect, but also to attune themselves to receive the "the message behind the words" or "the inner message," along with the transmission of

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[474] Although the Arabic plural of *dars* is *durūs*; similar to how *ḥadīth* is often used as a plural in English instead of *aḥādith*, and perhaps also because *dars* ends in an "s"; grammatically speaking, the word *dars* is generally used in this community in English as both the plural and the singular form of the word.
[475] Abdur Rashid, *What?*, 22.
[476] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.
[477] Discussion with a student of Abdur Rashid, August 30, 2017.
[478] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.
[479] Abdur Rashid, *When?*, 22.
[480] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.
[481] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 13.

baraka that accompanies it.[482] Conversely, looking at how *murāqaba* and the *waẓīfa* support the *dars*, he is emphatic that the practices are crucial to a student's being able to fully benefit from the *dars*. This seems to apply not only to the practices of the order, but also to the spiritual practices of other traditions. He noted how one attendee at the *dars* observed by the researcher, who though not a student of his but a practicing Buddhist of some years, was able to benefit from the *dars* because of her background, much like how he notes his own background aided his progress under Rasool.

Such talks started not long after the very beginnings of their community in 1970 and began to be recorded in around 1972, prior to their encounter with and acceptance of Islam and Sufism. At that time, the members of the World Community would gather together five days per week for two and a half to three hours, which would begin with a Yogic form of meditation followed by *kīrtan*, the singing of songs accompanied by Abdur Rashid playing the harmonium (a popular instrument across South Asia, including in *qawwālī*), and conclude with him giving a talk and telling stories.[483] After meeting Rasool, as discussed above, in the early years there was a gradual period of transition in content from a universalistic form of Yoga to the Islamic Sufism of today. Even today, his students hold respect for his past talks; before the encounter with Sufism (1972-77) and during the transitional years (1977 to no later than 1984, when Abdur Rashid received *ijāza*, but probably much earlier). One student marveled at the parallels between past and present talks, seeing this as "proof that the truth he was speaking was always *taṣawwuf* and Islam."[484]

Here we might again question whether Abdur Rashid has not simply reclothed his earlier universalistic Yogic teachings in an Islamic garb. But this leads us back to Sedgwick's comments about the similarities between Ibn al-ʻArabī and Eckhart, and the question of influence versus common experience, where we must choose from among the hostile perspective, the empathetic one, or a combination of the two. But it seems that not only is there little benefit in harboring a crypto-universalistic-Yoga under the guise of Islamic Sufism,[485] especially in the rural southern US in the post-9/11 era, such an intricate façade would be difficult to sustain for the more than four decades since Abdur Rashid embraced Islam. Furthermore, it is hoped that by this point in the monograph, even before the section on his relationship to Islam, that the sincerely Islamic character of Abdur Rashid's thought is not in question. It seems here that we are looking at another genuine inter-traditional analogue, the meeting of students around a spiritual teacher to receive oral instruction. Thus *satsang* (a Sanskrit term meaning to be in the company of good people, and which also refers to listening to the talks of a guru) can relatively seamlessly, upon the encounter with Sufi Islam, become *ṣuḥbat*, and when recorded, this can give birth to a rich Islamic and Sufi *malfūẓāt* tradition in the US.

These lectures, like most mystical literature, can be difficult to approach and decipher, especially at first, and this is something Abdur Rashid readily acknowledges. If we recall, Rasool stated that Sufism does not "deliberately keep students in a state of mystification,"[486] which for the newcomer, it might seem Abdur Rashid is doing with his *dars*. Yet he asserts that through his lectures, he is striving to do the very opposite: "My intention is to make Sufism/life understandable to seekers, readers, not to create esoteric mazes to confuse or in some way mystify the sincere seeker."[487] In doing so, he explains that his talks are "recursive," revisiting the same themes over and over, and also that in each talk there is something that can be taken away by the newcomer.[488] He also incorporates a range of topics that may interest and resound with different members of his audience, notably new science in addition to

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[482] Abdur Rashid, *Dooste Haghighi*, 17.
[483] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.
[484] Discussion during second visit to World Community, August 30-31, 2017..
[485] A more skeptical and indeed hostile counter to that argument could be that in a time when Yoga saturated the spiritual marketplace (1970s), there may have been an excess of supply (Yoga gurus), and Sufism might have offered an underexploited new product, one that through Rasool would also provide the authorization Abdur Rashid sought, and thus legitimization, despite the additional dimension of having to accept Islam. By the time 9/11 took place, two and a half decades later, there would have been too much investment to turn back. If there is any grain of truth in such a scenario, then it must be counterbalanced with the obvious and undeniable sincerity behind Abdur Rashid's words.
[486] *TTH* 8.
[487] Email July 15, 2019.
[488] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.

current events. Indeed after listening to or reading some 100 hours' worth of his lectures, the researcher can attest to how it does become somewhat easier to follow his talks as familiar themes recur and an internally consistent logic and structure presents itself, one which it is hoped that this research has helped to elucidate, as well as to demonstrate how it is truly a continuation of earlier Sufi tradition in the 21st-century US.

The *dars* observed in person by the researcher in August 30-31, 2017 took place in a large room in the community center of the World Community. It followed a group dinner, prior to which all of the students were assembled in a half circle to greet the *shaykh*, with many of the men grasping and kissing his hand as they greeted him. During the meal, the *shaykh* sat centered at the front of the room. As a courtesy, the meal was vegetarian, since a number of the members of the World Community adhere to a vegetarian diet. It was consumed while seated on the floor, and despite most though not all coming from a non-Muslim background of Euro-American heritage, all of the participants seemed quite as natural, at ease and comfortable with eating in a traditional Islamic fashion as someone born into Islam in a Muslim-majority country.

Such displays of *adab* and the adoption of certain cultural norms of the Muslim world stand in contrast to what was observed at SOST retreats in Germany, where only the most senior students went to particular lengths to ensure the comfort of the *shaykh* and Western seating conventions were observed while eating. The difference likely in large part relates to how many of Abdur Rashid's students have been with him for decades, while the SOST retreats in Germany were among the first ones to take place in the country, thus evincing different stages in the process of Islamization/Islamicatization in the Western reception of this Islamic Sufi lineage. After the meal, a 30-45 minute break was taken, during which the dishes, eating mats, etc. were cleaned up by a handful of community members, as determined by a rotating schedule and including a mixture of men and women, and audio-visual equipment was set up.

Following the break, everyone reconvened for the *dars* itself while students from overseas and other areas of the US either called in by telephone conference or logged into a video conference. Students are typically kept abreast of any changes in schedule by a community member who also serves as the archivist for Abdur Rashid's lectures via an email group named "Dial-a-Dars." The talk began with a short Quranic recitation and *du'ā*, and lasted around 45 minutes followed by a question and answer session of around ten minutes. At the end, the *shaykh* took note of and extended personalized greetings and well-wishes to those who had attended via telephone or video conference. In some lectures, he does a kind of rollcall at the beginning to see who dialed in, and at different points in his talks, he may address specific members, either physically present or remotely. This is often to draw on their knowledge of a particular topic, such as linguistic or professional expertise, including Persian, Turkish, or Arabic speakers and a Quran exegete, a physicist, and a psychologist. On Saturday evenings, the *ḥaḍra* precedes the meal and *dars*.

During this research, these lectures were being made available online to his students around the world and many were published publicly on their website and on YouTube. Although not all of the over 5,000 hours of talks given over the years have yet been digitized, there is a concerted effort to maintain this vast collection in transcribed, video, and audio formats. In line with his futuristic thinking and constant consideration of new ways to incorporate emerging technology, Abdur Rashid even mentioned, perhaps only half-jokingly, the possibility of living on through his *dars*, conceivably even as an interactive hologram that can answer students' questions by drawing on a database of these past lectures.[489] Whatever the future holds, it is clear that technology, such as the ability to record and store

[489] Among the examples he gave of where such technology already exists, is the hologram of holocaust survivor Pinchas Gutter, developed as part of the New Dimensions in Testimony project at the University of Southern California. Thomas McMullan, "The Virtual Holocaust Survivor: How History Gained New Dimensions," The Guardian, June 18, 2016, accessed September 10, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/jun/18/holocaust-survivor-hologram-pinchas-gutter-new-dimensions-history; "New Dimensions in Testimony," University of Southern California Institute for Creative Technologies, accessed September 10, 2018, http://ict.usc.edu/prototypes/new-dimensions-in-testimony/; Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.

vast amounts of data as well as to make it instantaneously available and searchable online from anywhere in the word, has substantially expanded the possibilities of the Sufi *malfūẓāt* tradition.

Community and Keeping the Company of Fellow Seekers

The importance of community for Abdur Rashid and the Circle Group has already been seen in various places throughout this chapter: with the *dars*, in the very establishment of their shared community as a place that allows them to arrange their lives around spiritual refinement and service, the daily collective practice of *murāqaba*, the weekly vocal *dhikr*, and we will see it again below in the section on the relationship to Islam, on living "on the margins on the mainstream," and in his critique of excessive individualism, as well as in the discussion of the WCEC and Legacy. While Rasool did indeed foster a sense of community among his students in their different groups around the world by encouraging weekly group meetings and regular visits to or from the *shaykh*, as Hasan continues to do with SOST, Abdur Rashid has taken this considerably further. In this regard and returning to the subject of *ṣuḥbat*, although Abdur Rashid primarily uses this term to denote keeping in the company of the *shaykh*, for him, it is also being in the company of fellow members of the *ṭarīqa*, of "good people," explaining that this "is where the outer 'where' meets the inner 'Where'," referring to the nexus of *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir*, to which we return in a moment.[490] On occasion, he has even extended the term *ṣuḥbat*, keeping company with good people, to include: "good Muslims, good Christians, good Jews, good Hindus, good whatever. Good people."[491] Yet most often he uses this technical Sufi term to refer to the company of the *shaykh* and after that, of fellow aspiring Sufis, especially those in the same *ṭarīqa* and under the same *shaykh*, thus fostering a strong sense of community. He also poetically explains such *ṣuḥbat* by saying, "When one enters into the company of others who have been saturated with the fragrance of Tasawwuf, one picks up the fragrance themselves."[492]

Some aspects of Rasool's discussion of weekly group meetings are echoed in Abdur Rashid's statements about *ṣuḥbat*, such as the notion of all participants benefitting from the sum total of *baraka*, when he says: "If you are only in your own *suẖbat*, you are only going to get the *fayḏ* proportionate to your own capability."[493] Likewise, revealing a kind of collective effervescence at group events, as pointed to by Rasool as well as SOST students today, the following quote by Abdur Rashid seeks to not reduce it to that alone, explaining that "*Suẖbat* is not a way to get motivated to do something spiritual […] it is recognizing the company of sincere seekers, focusing on Allah (*swt*) […] it is being present in the Presence, first of the Shaykh, then of *Rasuulu-Llah*, then of Allah (*swt*)."[494]

But Abdur Rashid's emphasis on *ṣuḥbat* in this communal sense goes much further than weekly meetings and annual retreats. Echoing his urging not to silo one's spiritual life from one's life in the world, of bringing together the *bāṭin* and the *ẓāhir*, he further bolsters the World Community through encouraging students to geographically locate themselves so as to be surrounded by other members of the *ṭarīqa*, as well as of course the *shaykh*. He states that "There is a strong correlation between where we are in the *dhaahir* and where we are in the *baaṯin*,"[495] and also that "where we are on the spiritual journey needs to also be in sync with where we are in the material world. […] the place where the inner meets the outer […]."[496] He also more explicitly asserts that while it possible for the sincere student to follow the path anywhere, "where they should be is near to other seekers and near their Shaykh; where there is sohbet of the heart."[497] Elsewhere, he encourages his listeners to keep the company of people who remind them of God, and that "It is not that you go to *halqah* and the *dhikr*, and then you keep the company of other people. […] You must keep the company of those who also seek their awakening."

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[490] Abdur Rashid, *Where?*, 18-9.
[491] Abdur Rashid, "The Purpose of Activating the Laṭā'if," 9.
[492] Abdur Rashid, *What?*, 23. He also states: "If you can't find pious people, don't make friends with bad people. If you can't find the pious people, then read the books of the people who are pious. Don't talk to people who are ignorant of the value of compassion, mercy, love, tolerance and patience." Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 25.
[493] Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 25.
[494] Abdur Rashid, *When?*, 23.
[495] Abdur Rashid, *Where?*, 7.
[496] Idem 23.
[497] Idem 18-9.

[498] Moreover, in another statement with poetic fragrance imagery, he states, "Do not sit with a blacksmith, an ember might fall on you. But sit with a perfumer, you may get a drop of perfume."[499]

Such a strong sense of community is not only important to Abdur Rashid and the Circle Group for spiritual development, it is also conducive to their deliberate and organized approach to social responsibility and engagement, as we will see in the final section of Part Three. The more centralized approach, with a circle of dedicated students co-located with their *shaykh* at a *khānaqāh*, seems to have had a direct impact on Abdur Rashid's maintaining a comparatively small group of *murīd*s, or as he says, focusing on "quality not quantity."[500] Interestingly, Rasool used the same expression ("quality not quantity") in describing his approach to spreading this lineage internationally, but the two men use it in rather different ways. Rasool employed it to distinguish his own lineage from: 1.) the phenomena of the mediating *shaykh* and mass initiations in the Indian context, and probably also 2.) the "more popularized presentations of Sufism," which he sought to distance himself from in the very introduction to *TTH*. In India, such popularized forms would include not only mediating *shaykh*s, but also the more ecstatic expressions of Sufism there, and in the West, it would refer to those whom he faulted not only for divorcing Sufism from Islam, but also for watering down and modifying its teachings for mass consumption by an audience with a lackadaisical disposition and an interest in the occult. Rasool was indeed trying to spread his teachings to as many people as he could that would sincerely pursue the practices, though without compromising what he felt was essential.

In contrast, Abdur Rashid invoked the same expression ("quality not quantity") in describing how his sole focus was not on promoting a particular lineage with a specific set of meditative techniques, but also on manifesting the results of those techniques in the world through practical application and in the form of service. While he does welcome new students, he concentrates more on Applied Sufism with his existing base of students, most of whom reside at the World Community with others scattered across the US and abroad. His students seem to remain relatively few in number due at least partially to the high degree of commitment and personal investment involved: 1.) travelling or even relocating to the World Community, as opposed to how his immediate Indian forebears travelled to visit their students, and 2.) the fact that Abdur Rashid expects his students to do something tangible in the physical world with the spiritual teachings he gives them, something that is positive societally, or as he describes asking his students, "What are you going to do with it?"[501] Regarding this decision to maintain a small and more centralized base of students to actively and in an organized way, work for the betterment of this world (as compared with Rasool's and SOST's only slightly larger and more diffused organization intended to spread the practices of a particular lineage while allowing the results to manifest on their own), Abdur Rashid states:

> Islam is not a matter of building institutions, and Sufism is not based on having millions of students. Rather, Islam and *Taṣawwuf* are about changing society in accordance with Islamic principles [the emphasis being on the underlying principles, rather than on the form of the religion, as will be discussed below] for the benefit of everyone: Muslim and non-Muslim, human and animal, insect and plant […].[502]

We will delve into this activist thrust in some detail in the final sections of this chapter, after a discussion of the relationship of Abdur Rashid and the Circle Group to Islam, but here let us briefly consider the practice of *ziyāra*, which has been added as an addendum to the section on the role of the *shaykh*, as it was for the section on SOST currently under Hasan. Not only does *ziyāra* relate to the *shaykh*'s continuing role in this world after passing from it, but like the other topics discussed in this

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[498] Abdur Rashid, *Who?*, 23.
[499] Email January 7, 2020.
[500] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.
[501] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, August 30-31, 2017.
[502] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 32.

section, it encompasses areas that, as noted by Nile Green, are often excluded in definitions of mysticism, such as the collective but also the physical.

Ziyāra

Given the location of the World Community and the paucity of shrines of Sufi saints within even the same hemisphere, opportunities for the practice of *ziyāra* are not as plentiful as in Muslim-majority areas. Still, he mentions opportunities for *ziyāra* that are available to them, such as going to see a hair of the Prophet that is kept by a family in nearby North Carolina, and he also spoke of having been thinking of organizing a retreat, perhaps in Turkey or Morocco. He also described to the researcher his preference for, in contrast to the, at times, emotional displays that take place in the context of *ziyāra*, sitting quietly in meditation at the shrines of saints.[503] In one pamphlet, he acknowledges the spiritual importance of shrines and other sacred sites, saying "There are many places around the world of deep spiritual significance: Mecca and Medina, dargahs and mazars […] places hidden and known, scattered around the globe, centers of Baraka."[504] But after pointing to this sacred geography, he adds that "a place can only knock on the door to our heart, and perhaps show us a way, but we must be the ones to open the door and let the Presence of Allah in."[505] He urges the reader to open "your heart to where you already are, […] We will not find Allah (swt) in a particular masjid or mountaintop, we find Allah (swt) in the heart of a believer. […] He lives in the core of the heart."[506] So rather than going to great lengths to travel to distant shrines to become closer to God, he advises his audience more toward remaining where they are and turning to look within their own inner being. But, like the *dargāh* of Bawa Muhaiyaddeen in Pennsylvania, the World Community itself might one day be seen as a place of *ziyāra* (and even *'urs*) if it has not already become one. In the context of the discussion of *ziyāra*, Abdur Rashid mentioned their cemetery, where such "good people" are interred,[507] and he in fact also often points out the unique saintliness of his own mother-in-law and the blessings of her presence there. This could certainly be the beginning of a new tradition for this lineage in the US.

Relationship to Islam

In line with Rasool's approach to spreading the teachings in the West, Abdur Rashid also allows non-Muslim students to begin the first ten preliminary practices, but prior to pledging *bay'a* and proceeding to work through the circles, he requires their acceptance of Islam, in the conventional sense of the term: making the declaration of faith and striving to live in accordance with the guidance of the Quran and *sunna*. Yet in other contexts, such as addressing scriptural references to how Muslims ought to treat one another, Abdur Rashid tends to use the word "Muslim" in a broader sense of the term, as a person who is in submission to a higher power, or God,[508] and "who actively works for the peace, security, and the well-being of all people."[509] In this line, he often makes reference to the *ḥadīth* which

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[503] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.
[504] Abdur Rashid, *Where?*, 9.
[505] Idem 10.
[506] Idem 11.
[507] Email January 7, 2020.
[508] He further elucidates on such references to the meaning of Islam as submission by saying: "My point is the actual meaning of Islam and the fact that the Prophet (sal) stated that he did not come to create a new religion. So the implication is that we are all born in submission to a higher power, that we are all (our souls) guided in primordial timeless pre-creation to the *amāna*." Email January 14, 2020. Elsewhere, he expounds further on this broader sense of Islam: "The Prophet Muhammad's moderate approach reflected a deep understanding of Islam in its most universal sense. It is valuable to recall that the Arabic language has no capital letters, and that therefore, when Muhammad (pbuh) spoke of Islam, he was not invoking a capitalized label. For him, and for those who first heard the revelations of Qur'an as he recited them, 'islam' meant surrender or submission. Extracted from the same root as salaam, it connoted an active process of coming to peace, safety, security, wholeness, and well-being through consciousness in the Presence of the Divine. Nothing in the term prescribe[s] a political agenda. For these early Muslims, Islam was first and foremost a framework for deepening the relationship between individuals and their Creator in moment-to-moment life." Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 111-2.
[509] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "Six Myths about Islam," in Michael Wolfe (ed.), *Taking Back Islam: American Muslims Reclaim Their Faith* (New York: Rodale, 2004), 45; Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 115.

states that "The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand the people are safe […]."[510] Without rejecting the need for the first meaning, it is this latter broader sense of the term, what he refers to as *taslīm*,[511] that he places the greater emphasis on. He says that what he teaches is *taslīm* and that this is what he strives to bring out and cultivate in his students.[512] Such broader definitions of what it means to be a Muslim are not uncommon among contemporary Sufi *shaykh*s, especially in the West, such as the abovementioned Frager, Toussulis, and Helminski.[513] Also of interest, in such a context, Islam itself is framed in terms of a system of spiritual development, as also seen above with regard to SOST as well as in the writings of Rasool.[514]

So, while emphasizing the necessity of Sufism to fall within the boundaries of the Quran and *sunna*,[515] Abdur Rashid criticizes obsession with merely the exoteric forms of Islam. In his own life and teachings, he fully embraces the external aspects of the faith, but he also encourages a deeper search for the inner esoteric meaning of the Islamic revelation. Moreover, he seeks out what he believes are the essential core teachings of Islam, such that even with regard to exoteric outer meanings, his discussions center more upon what he asserts are the underlying values and ethics than upon specific circumstantial prescriptions of *fiqh*. He also advocates contextualizing the revelation according to time and place, rejecting ahistorical readings as being harmful to the ability of Muslims to coexist in the diverse contemporary environment of the United States as well as globally. His message is inherently a pluralistic one, yet he does criticize and call for reform, or rather renewal, in what he feels are the moral shortcomings of both the Muslim world and the West. Despite these ills, and in fact in order to alleviate them, in true Naqshbandī fashion, Abdur Rashid advises living "in the world but not of the world." Thus, on the question of the relationship of Abdur Rashid's teachings to Islam, in the coming paragraphs, the following major topics will be addressed: upholding the necessity of Sufism to comply with the *sharīʿa*, but while also emphasizing the inner meaning of the Quran and *sunna* as well as what he views as the essential teachings of Islam, focusing on broader ethics and values, historical contextualization and adaptiveness in understanding the revelation, intra- and inter-faith pluralism, and remaining on the "margins of the mainstream" of both Muslim and non-Muslim society.

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[510] This particular *ḥadīth* (*Sunan al-Nasāʾī* 4995 In-book reference: Book 47, Hadith 11, English translation: Vol. 6, Book 47, Hadith 4998) is considered *ṣaḥīḥ* ("sound") and was narrated by Abū Hurayra, but most other narrations that are similar to this one explain how a Muslim should be one "from whose tongue and hand [other] Muslims are safe." (Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī 2628 In-book reference: Book 40, Hadith 23 English translation: Vol. 5, Book 38, Hadith 2628). For some, this would be a substantial difference in meaning, though it does not seem that this would be the case for Abdur Rashid, given his broader sense of what it means to be a Muslim.

[511] The more common usage of the term *taslīm* is to indicate the closing part of each ritual prayer wherein by turning right and then left, each time saying "*al-salāmu ʿalaykum wa raḥmatu-llāh*," one wishes peace and the blessings of God upon one's neighbors. This interpretation may be one of those that is unique to Abdur Rashid, yet from the time *ʿulamāʾ* and Sufis (though these roles often converged in the same person) emerged, there have been competing claims over who has the authority to interpret the revelation.

[512] In a discussion about current events between the researcher and Abdur Rashid's archivist and long-time student in June of 2018, she used *taslīm* in describing what was not taking place with children being detained and separated from their parents while attempting to cross from Mexico into the US.

[513] See Chap. 5, "North American Sufi Teachers on Islam and Sufism," in Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 169-205.

[514] For instance, Abdur Rashid explains that with the very advent of Islam, "to reach the highest level of spiritual growth, human beings had to develop a belief in […] the reality of the unseen world, the oneness of Allāh (*swt*), the Prophetic revelation, the judgement, [and] the life after death." Abdur Rashid, "Tafakkur/Contemplation: The Bridge to the Eternal."

[515] In stressing the need for *ṭarīqa* to conform to *sharīʿa*, he portrays *sharīʿa* as forming "the binder of the text of spiritual journeying," and quotes Mālik ibn Anas in saying, "He who practices Tasawwuf without learning Sacred Law corrupts his faith, while he who learns Sacred Law without practicing Tasawwuf corrupts himself." Abdur Rashid, *Why?*, 16.

The Inseparability of Sufism and Islam

Abdur Rashid affirms that *sharīʻa* and *ṭarīqa* are inseparable. In situating Sufism with respect to Islam, he likens *ṭarīqa* to "a high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane on the superhighway of *sharee'ah*," noting that while *sharīʻa* alone is sufficient for some, others "are more acutely aware of their separation from the Source."[516] He says that the combination of *sharīʻa* and *ṭarīqa* "create[s] a safe and secure and rapid means of traveling along a path," one that "parallels the same path travelled by" the prophets and saints of the past.[517] While acknowledging the sincerity of those that self-identify as Sufis yet do not embrace Islam, saying that the world would be a better place if it were filled with such people, he still maintains that they are not actually practicing true *taṣawwuf*. This position is congruent with that of Rasool, which as noted above is not far from that of the Traditionalist school. Thus echoing Seyyed Hossein Nasr's sentiments about "California Sufism,"[518] Abdur Rashid states that "The farther removed Sufism becomes from *sharee'ah*, the more it becomes labeled a New Age fad, as yoga has been. Sufism is not a fad."[519] He also rejects the idea that requiring a person to embrace Islam before proceeding beyond the preliminary practices is a form of *daʻwa*. At the same time, he offers an unconventional definition of *daʻwa* as, "the response to a call from within,"[520] also saying that, "The greatest *daʻwa* is to respond to the needs of our neighbors, our communities, our society, and our world."

On external indicators of Islamicity, in comparison with SOST's online presence, the website of the Circle Group, with its photographs of the *shaykh* and participants in traditional Islamic dress and its invitation to take part in their annual Ramadan retreat, presents the connection with Islam more overtly. This seems to reflect both SOST's objective of spreading the particular teachings of this lineage to a larger audience, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, and the Circle Group's reaching out more specifically to within the Muslim community in terms of Sufi practice as such, but more broadly with regard to their engagement in society. Residents of the World Community; who may work for the World Community, such as in the school or the dining facility, Legacy International, or a local business; generally wear Western-style business casual attire. The men often wear slacks and collared shirts but don a cap while performing the prayers, the practices, or attending the *dars*. The women are similarly dressed in Western attire during work and in the active parts of their day, while wearing *ḥijāb*, shawls and more traditional garments for prayer, performing the practices and attending the *dars*. Some wear the *ḥijāb* whenever outside the home.

From the content of his lectures, Abdur Rashid's emphasis to his Sufi students on following the Quran and *sunna* is quite clear, such as in describing how God has "offered us a step-by-step manual for success, for knowing how to deal with gain and loss, happiness and grief, sadness and joy." And for him, this manual is the Quran, and he says that the essence of Sufism is "understanding and living the Qur'an through the heart," and applying it to "the practical day-to-day situations of life,"[521] arguing that it if "we make our own rules […] we can abrogate them at any time."[522] But conversely, he criticizes an overreliance among Muslims on exoteric form and ritual, stating that "The community of the Prophet (<u>sal</u>) and his companions did not revolve around a predefined set of forms."[523] He holds that many people in the contemporary Islamic world lack "personal contact with the Divine," and goes on to affirm that "Studying Qur'an and hadith, learning *fiqh*, dressing modestly, knowing how to pray correctly—these practices are all beneficial; but if we embrace the dress, names, and structures, yet give up the

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[516] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 15-7.
[517] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 54.
[518] Dickson, *Living Sufism in North America*, 170-74.
[519] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017; Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 192.
[520] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.
[521] Abdur Rashid, *Why?*, 13.
[522] Idem 12.
[523] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 172. Elsewhere, he says: "You might be praying five times a day, putting your head on the ground, opening the book, and reading it, studying the intricacies of fiqh—form, form, form. It doesn't always look like it's not spirituality, but the spiritual life disappears." Abdur Rashid, *Prophet Musa*, 36; and "Even in Islam, we find more and more the same thing—ritual after ritual after ritual. The truth gets lost in the ritual. Ritual is fine, but where is it leading, and where is it coming from?" Abdur Rashid, *Seeing By the Light of the Moon*, 31.

yearning for personal experience, we reduce Islam to an empty shell."[524] But while saying that "the core of Islam, of *taslim* […] has so little to do with form," he also states clearly that he does not intend to disparage form, and that he and the members of the Circle Group follow the guidance of the Quran and *sunna*, just as any other pious Muslims, and that if the form were removed, one would be left with "no anchor, no context."[525]

The Inner Meaning of the Revelation

As examples of a Sufi approach to form and structure, he notes how the five daily prayers organize one's time around affirming faith and remembering God, and he underscores the importance of reflecting on the inner meaning behind the prayer and of the many supplications that one can make during therein. He considers such standardization cum personalizability, along with also the very combination of obligatory prayer cycles (*farḍ*) with optional ones (*sunna*) and supererogatory prayer (*nawāfil*), as simultaneously affirming both community and individuality.[526] Hence we see a Ghazālīesque emphasis on balancing a *bāṭinī* understanding with faithful adherence to the *ẓāhirī* prescriptions, and the necessity to understand the meaning and role of such exoteric practices and notably, what transformational effect they are intended to have on the individual. [527] Thus the outer aspects of Islam are affirmed, not simply as religious obligations, but understood with respect to their inner meaning, as well as their purpose within a framework of spiritual development.

Similarly, on the interpretation of divine revelation, Abdur Rashid speaks of how there are different levels of meaning for every believer according to their degree of spiritual advancement.[528] The personal encounter with the divine, achieved through the practices discussed in the preceding sections, is believed to allow one to perceive, through the subtle organs, the inner meaning of the revelation in order to bring the inner and outer into alignment. In perceiving this inner meaning, Abdur Rashid sometime relies on non-literal interpretations, for instance, on the *ḥadīth* which states that the prophet Adam was sixty cubits tall, which would be over twenty-seven meters or ninety feet, Abdur Rashid writes: "One could interpret this literally, or less literally, to mean that height indicates distance from the truth, or a regression of moral and ethical stature."[529] He also sees Muḥammad's destroying the idols in the Ka'aba, as not simply destroying statues, but being a symbolic destruction of the many polytheistic idols within our own selves.[530] In support of such non-literalist interpretations, he notes that God himself calls the verses of the Quran "signs" (*āyāt*). [531] He often refers to such an inner meaning as the *ta'wīl*, a term used by some Sunni Sufis, including Walī Allāh,[532] but also by Ismā'īlī Shi'is, to indicate the inner meaning of the Quran, *ḥadīth*, and in the case of the latter, the teachings of the *hujjāt* ("proofs," indicating the imams as well as the prophets).

He makes frequent reference to the use of *majāz* ("analogy" or "metaphor"), which he explains could also mean a "corridor," as in a link between the inner and the outer, between two worlds, "like a quantum tunnel, not conditioned by time and space."[533] This *double entendre* itself highlights one related method by which he seeks to interpret the Islamic revelation: since a single word in Arabic can have multiple meanings and connotations, he derives insight from these and describes sitting "with a

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[524] In other words: "The forms of Islam—the guidelines for salah, wudu', dress, diet, marriage, justice, and so on––are essential," but at the same time, he explains that "Islam originates not in form, but in the personal and direct experience of the Presence of Allah." (Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 171-3).
[525] Abdur Rashid, "Proof of the Divine."
[526] Email January 14, 2020.
[527] Ibid.
[528] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.
[529] Abdur Rashid, *The Adamic Reality*, 11.
[530] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "What *Kafir* Means: Seeking to Unite Our Selves" Dars Transcript, July 13, 2017, 9.
[531] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.
[532] Such as the latter's work entitled *Ta'wīl al-Aḥādith*.
[533] Email July 26, 2017.

Hans Wehr or the Lexicon"[534] and having the "realizations […] come like waterfalls." In seeking such inner meaning, he does not reject the apparent outer meaning, for instance, accepting the Day of Judgement as an actual occurrence at the end of time, he also understands it as referring to "paradigm shifts of consciousness." He not only looks to scripture for realizations, but also of course, as discussed with *fikr*, to the external world for āyāt or *ishārāt* ("signs"), since "everything points to something else," or God. But he maintains that such insights gained by "receiving with an open heart" must be filtered through the Quran and *sunna* for verification.[535]

Essential Islam

Related to and perhaps overlapping with his emphasis on the inner meaning of scripture is his goal of focusing on what he feels are the essential core teachings and principles of Islam.[536] For him, "Real Islam is the synergy of the essence of orthodox Islam and the mysticism, creativity, spirituality, and experience of the Sufi."[537] One must "look at Islam through the eyes of Tasawwuf," meaning, "through adab, social responsibility, care and concern for other human beings, striving always to gain more knowledge, both about prayer, *'uluum*, *kalaam*, and other Islamic disciplines, and about our personal relationship with Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*)."[538] Correspondingly, his presentation of Islam and how it should be lived focuses on ethics and values that could, arguably, be accepted by most Europeans and North Americans of any faith or none at all, particularly for those leaning toward the more liberal and pluralistic end of the spectrum. Or in his words, "Sufism reflects core values and experiences that resonate with individuals of all faiths and backgrounds."[539] Accordingly, while certainly not rejecting the exoteric prescriptions of *fiqh*, his *imitatio Muhammadi* focuses not on specific details of form, such as appropriate beard length or dress, but rather seeks to emulate the Prophet in broader terms, like following his example in having "love and respect [for] others, without distinction of race or creed," or showing concern for others, placing others first, showing love unconditionally, being strong of character, and offering kind words and actions.[540] In the same vein of criticizing a preoccupation with form over moral character, in discussing family life, he tells Muslim parents that "We have not succeeded if our young people look like Muslims, but act with arrogance, jealousy, and envy and do not know how to imbue their lives with Islam."[541] One statement in particular highlights how he feels that many are missing the point:

> All around us, we find in certain Muslims, people who are keenly dependent on what they believe is the law, the rules and regulations of Islam. They do not see the relationship between their character and attitudes and those guidelines, between the Sharia and fiqh and their own natures. These people can tell you exactly what to do and how to do it, and what is right and what is wrong according to the law, and yet they are hostile, arrogant, judgmental, have bad temperament, and humiliate others and themselves. They give a bad name to Muslims and Islam. How could that possibly be the truth? It cannot be.[542]

But when asked whether his own understanding and presentation of Islam, and his attempts to reveal its essence, might be the result of "cherry-picking" certain aspects of the faith while ignoring others, he admits that there are certainly some aspects that he does not discuss often, but during one

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[534] He is referring here to two well-known Arabic-English dictionaries: *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* and Edward William Lane's *Arabic–English Lexicon*.

[535] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 202. Further on his alternative perspective on Islamic eschatology, he states: "In a cosmic or quantum sense, the coming of the Mahdi represents a paradigm shift: a shift from a paradigm of war and oppression, poverty, greed, and inequality, to a paradigm of peace, prosperity, unity, and security. […] we all must put our drop in the ocean, however small." Abdur Rashid, *Preparing for Al-Mahdi*, 16-7.

[536] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.

[537] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 173.

[538] Ibid.

[539] Idem 171.

[540] Abdur Rashid, *Seeing by the Light of the Moon*, 14-22.

[541] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 174.

[542] Abdur Rashid, *Transformation*, 65.

interview, he offered two main reasons behind this: First, his role is that of a Sufi *shaykh* rather than an *ʿālim* and he finds some things less directly relevant to a students' progress on the Sufi path. Second and most significantly, he explains that every faith has areas of ambiguity, and his concern is not with explaining all of the areas in which controversy have arisen, but rather in seeking out the essential teachings and principles of Islam.[543]

For instance, he looks to the numerous conditions under which slaves must be freed as indicating that the main point is that slaves should be set free. As to why this is not simply stated as such, he explains, "you can't go tell a society that's had slaves for a thousand or two thousand years to free all their slaves, especially when you're only twenty, thirty or at most a hundred people." Instead, he argues that it was intended to create a system in which slavery has to virtually be abolished. Similarly, on the ban of and death penalty for sodomy and adultery, since four witnesses to actual penetration are required for such punishment to even be carried out, which Abdur Rashid notes is virtually impossible, he believes that the actual message here is more about removing those activities from public view since, he explains, in pre-Islamic Arabia, there had been rampant promiscuity including fornication in public.[544]

Contextualizing Revelation

In addition to seeking out the essential principles of Islam and focusing more on ethics and values in broader terms rather than detailed particularities of *fiqh*, Abdur Rashid emphasizes the need to contextualize one's understanding of the Islamic revelation according to the time and place in which one lives, as we just saw some examples of. He contrasts open-minded and flexible approaches to applying *sharīʿa* with "those who adopt exclusivist interpretations of truth and insist on rigid rules," saying that the latter "place themselves at odds with their surroundings,"[545] and also that "Islam recommends flexible approaches rather than dictatorial rules of behavior."[546] His emphasis on applying Sufism and Islam to contemporary contexts can be seen in the very title of *Applied Sufism: Classical Teachings for the Contemporary Seeker*. For him, the "Qur'an and *sunnah* […] are not rigid rules, but rather a framework for […] 'evolutionary ethics'," key to which is "placing the timeless guidance of Qur'an and *sunnah* in the context of our time, place, and circumstances."[547] He emphasizes that Islam is "designed to be dynamic and ever renewing" and that "If anything, the Prophet (*sal*) ushered in *new thinking*" with regard to a range of issues, such as "gender, minorities, conflict, peace, reconciliation, civil society," and that to follow his example is to "affirm the continuing relevance, validity and vitality of the message."[548] We saw such a progressive understanding of the prophetic model above in the discussion of the *akhfā* subtle center in particular, but it in fact permeates Abdur Rashid's teachings and work. In a section entitled "Sufic Islam's Potential to Heal Cultural/Ethnic Conflicts," he describes the Prophet and the new paradigm he brought as follows:

> Fourteen hundred and thirty years ago (by the Islamic calendar), two tribes of Arabia were locked in civil war […] Then, remarkably, they heard about a man who taught a new way of thinking: a man who had erased the lines between clan and clan, slave and master, black and white, rich and poor, calling all to equality in the name of one God.[549]

He then laments mankind's failure to follow this example as testified to by such ethnic conflicts in the later part of the 20th century as have occurred in Rwanda, Israel and Palestine, Northern Ireland, and the former Yugoslavia. In addition to equality, in the same section, he also lists as other fundamental

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[543] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.
[544] Ibid.
[545] Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 114.
[546] Idem 112.
[547] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 190.
[548] Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 10-11.
[549] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 279.

principles of the message brought by Muḥammad: "Peace, equity, co-existence, tolerance, forgiveness, and partnership."[550]

On stereotypes of Islam as being "rigid and backwards," he shows concern for how Islam, rather than relying on static ahistorical readings, can progressively address contemporary issues through proper contextualization. On the issue of organ transplants, for example, he mentions a more literalist and constrictive view that such procedures are un-Islamic violations of the body, but then he presents a differing interpretation which cites Quran 5:32: "[…] whoever saves a life, it would be as if he [or she] saved the life of all the people," and he deems the transplant as not only permissible, but also as being "in the same vein as the progressive transformative changes and contributions Muslim scientists, physicians and engineers have made throughout history." [551] Another example of his progressive application of Islam to contemporary settings can be seen in his treatment of gender issues. As noted earlier, many of Abdur Rashid's students are well-educated Western-born females and he tends to have a rather liberal perspective towards women's issues and the role of women in society. He discusses and valorizes Ḥawā (Eve) alongside Adam in the first of his series of lectures on the prophets and he cites the "integral role of women in Islamic society," such as Khadīja as the Prophet's employer and first wife, as well as mentioning that other women engaged in battle, served as scholars, or were saints.[552]

But while he does seek progressive change in how Islam is understood by Muslims today, he also expresses a concern to avoid being overly provocative, and thus "closing the door to someone's spirituality." Instead, in more public settings with non-Sufi Muslims in attendance, he seeks to "put a taste on [people's] tongues of something they're not used to."[553] Returning to perceptions of Islam by non-Muslims, time and again, he also places the onus on those in his audience who are "fluent in the *sharee'ah*, the *sunnah*, and *Tas̱awwuf*—and in the technology and vocabulary of our age," to take an active role in countering negative stereotypes of Islam as backwards. He calls on them to play a kind of ambassadorial role by doing their part to "present the teachings in ways that can make them a positive force for change."[554]

Intra/Inter-Faith Pluralism

In applying Islam to contemporary contexts and a global society, Abdur Rashid's teachings are distinctively pluralistic, pertaining to both the *umma* as well as mankind as a whole, yet he is still critical of both groups in his seeking reform, a "paradigm shift." Among Muslims, he calls for greater tolerance, such as in the section of *Applied Sufism* entitled "Relations Among Muslims: Tolerance, not Takfeer."[555] In criticizing sectarianism, he asserts that "Nowhere do we find evidence of rigidity or dogmatism in the behavior of the Prophet [… yet …] Today, our *ummah* is plagued with *takfeer*, rigidity, factionalism, and excessive concern with details, and no concern at all with ethics."[556] He calls for going "beyond doctrinaire approaches and cultural sectarianism."[557] Citing Quran 2:256, he asserts that although there should be no compulsion in religion, those who practice *takfīr* or assert their "own school of thought to the exclusion of any other […imposing…] narrow and restrictive definitions of *sharee'ah* and *sunnah*" are doing just that, engaging in forms of compulsion.

Instead, he advocates a median between "false orthodoxy and self-indulgent secularism" that seeks to appreciate and capitalize on "the diversity within our unity."[558] Such can be seen in his Sufi teachings where, while still linked historically to the Ḥanafī *madhhab* and drawing on it for guidance, such as in determining prayer times, he unabashedly makes references and even gives entire lectures on

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[550] Ibid.
[551] Idem 8-11; Email July 26, 2017. He later explains on the same issue, taking context into consideration, that there were no such procedures as organ transplants during the lifetime of the Prophet. Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 195.
[552] Abdur Rashid, *The Adamic Reality*; Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 8-11.
[553] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.
[554] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 191.
[555] Idem 205-6.
[556] Abdur Rashid, *Seeing By the Light of the Moon*, 19.
[557] Ibid.
[558] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 18-23.

Shiʿi, and in particular Ismāʿīlī, thinkers such as Nāṣir Khusraw;[559] something that would have been unthinkable for Simnānī or Sirhindī, despite some parallels in their own thought to certain Shiʿi currents. We have, however, previously encountered an intra-Muslim position similar to Abdur Rashid's with ʿAndalīb's *ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya*, which sought to transcend the Shiʿa-Sunni divide. Likewise, Abdur Rashid exhorts his readers to remember that the original community of the Prophet was diverse and accepting of all regardless of background, and he cautions against dividing the *umma*, and furthermore against "retreating into ethnic or racial enclaves: into […] the 'this-ethnicity' or 'that-language-group' masjid?"[560] In his eyes, although "ethnic, racial, or national identity" can be positive in bringing about group cohesion, when these are overemphasized, it ultimately results in "creating walls between people."[561]

Moving beyond only intra-Muslim relations, in discussing his concern about religious extremism, Abdur Rashid calls for a "middle way, the way of moderation as exemplified by the Prophet (*s̱alla-Llaahu ʻalayhi wa sallam*) in terms and on issues that are manifest in today's world" and he points out the need for interfaith dialogue along with practical co-operative service and action that goes beyond merely exchanges of words, thus "allowing opportunities for difference of perspective yet making evident our unity in the common human / Divine values at the core of the hearts of all faithful people."[562] He is not uncritical, however, of what he sees as moral shortcomings in what he identifies as certain prevalent values in the West, of which in one part he lists: "Individualism, self-centredness, hedonism, cosmetic beauty over inner contentment, [and] information over wisdom."[563] Out of these, the issue of individualism over the broader needs and concerns of society; along with the related topic of materialism, which we will see again below in this section; is specifically reiterated throughout *Applied Sufism* and his thought in general.[564]

With regard to the concern about the influence of such negative qualities on Muslims living in the West, Abdur Rashid observes that "while Muslims are being shaped by American culture, American culture has the potential to be shaped, too–why not by Islamic values?," ones that he feels could be accepted universally.[565] As a starting point for this, he observes that:

> The ideals of the United States closely parallel Islamic concepts such as *tarbiyah*, *adab*, *khidmah*, and *s̱adaqah*. Americans, for the most part, are service oriented and philanthropic. We [Americans] value heroicism and qualities of chivalry that are reminiscent of *futuwwah*.[566]

He stresses the positive involvement of Muslims in American society, stating that "We exemplify Islam when we create practical, up-to-date models that address the needs of our society using Islamic concepts." Of these, he notes how *ṣadaqa* and *zakāt*, voluntary and obligatory forms of charity or almsgiving in Islam, could help to alleviate "poverty and inequity in the United States," explaining that the country "provides rich soil for putting Islamic principles into action," principles that Abdur Rashid

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[559] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, *Nasir Khosrow: The Character of the Believer, Seek Until You Find* (Bedford, VA: The Circle Group, 2014).
[560] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 180-2. Elsewhere he similarly states that mosques divided along ethnic enclave lines "are (and should remain) first generation relics." Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 46.
[561] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 269-70.
[562] Idem 89-90.
[563] Idem 188.
[564] For instance, in one pamphlet, he states: "We live in a time when individualism is so important that we have lost an understanding of the value of collective community. In this day and age, everyone thinks they can be the exception—that someone else will take care of the collective responsibility. Someone else will take care of the elderly. Someone else will take care of the poor. Someone else will take care of my mother, my father […] some stranger, who may or may not deliver the dinner, or change the diaper, who may or may not change the sheets." Abdur Rashid, *Why?*, 12.
[565] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 170.
[566] Ibid.

pointed out he finds in Christianity, Judaism, and other faiths in the US.[567] Further common ground that he finds between Islamic and American values are discussed below in the section on his view of the compatibility of Islam and democracy. But he also places a great deal of emphasis on Islam as a global faith, saying for example that Muslim youth today must "understand the Qur'an and *sunnah* in the context of being part of a global society, understanding the terminologies of post-modern political and social discourse, participating in the information revolution, and being voices of tolerance, compassion, faith, trust, and reliability."[568]

On the Margins of the Mainstream

While he declares, when speaking to Muslim audiences, that "integrat[ing] more fully into American society as Muslims" is the most important challenge facing Muslims in the US today,[569] he also advises his students to balance this effort with still remaining somewhat on the periphery, what might be seen as a practical implementation of his stated goal of aligning and finding balance between the *bāṭin* and the *ẓāhir*. In drawing inspiration from the Prophet and his companions, he describes the "materialism, acquisitiveness, and competitiveness" of the *jāhiliyya* with which they had to contend in Arabia, drawing a parallel to the current situation of contemporary Muslims, and in fact all people, in the United States. He similarly draws a parallel between the historical context of Jesus, comparing the Roman Empire with "today's Western Empires" and noting "the rise of a more materialistic, objectified society; one that affirms form over essence, power over humility, empiric designs over community […]."[570] On his application of the word *jāhiliyya* to contemporary circumstances, this is certainly not to say that he is adopting a Qutbian understanding of the term, though one might trace such an unconventional use to him, or painting America as the "Great *Shayṭān*," in fact quite the contrary, as seen in the praise of other aspects of American society discussed above along with his explicit warning against the danger of ascribing moral shortcomings to only non-Muslims, as "diseases of the *kaafiruun*," and to acknowledge that the Muslim community also faces such issues as drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, and domestic violence.

As a brief aside, it is interesting to note how Abdur Rashid turns Islamist discourse on its head, such as in the case of his refitting Qutb's novel take on *jāhiliyya* as occurring presently rather than referring to pre-Islamic Arabia. Another example can be found in his explanation of what it means to be a *kāfir*, wherein he provides a unique interpretation of the term as denoting a person who willfully, purposefully, and consciously denies or conceals the truth.[571] While he avoids making *takfīr* by explicitly applying the label to anyone in particular, he does offer examples of such *kufr*. For instance, he speaks of when the news reports something that is true, but a politician denies it as "fake news." Another example he gives is the person who uses religion to justify violence, such as ethnic conflict and murder, saying that such a person "is not a believer because they are not in submission to a greater power."[572]

But returning to the issue of remaining "on the margins of the mainstream," in dealing with negative trends like materialism, he calls for an "*ummata wasaṯa*," or "community of the middle," that neither becomes mired in worldliness nor "ghettoizes" itself. He says that as followers of Muḥammad, Muslims "have a responsibility to serve society," but at the same time "retain some distance," remaining on the "margins of the mainstream" and, alluding to the principle of *khalwat dar anjuman*, "working constructively 'in the world, but not of the world.'"

Living on a shared property with a community of other like-minded Muslims, such as the case of the World Community, is one concrete example he provides for how this might be done. He explains

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[567] Idem 169; Email July 26, 2017.
[568] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 205.
[569] Idem 11.
[570] Abdur Rashid, *Prophet Isa: An ʻAbd of Allah*, 5. In a later email, he continued to expound upon the state of the world: "Now where truth is called false, and there is little concern about the value of one's pledge or word…and societies are failing due to a breakdown of values and lack of character. A world where there is immanent nuclear holocaust and arrogant disregard for the average citizen." Email July 26, 2017.
[571] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.
[572] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "What *Kafir* Means: Seeking to Unite Our Selves," Lecture, July 13, 2017.

that such a model can "counter the West's fixation with independence and personal rights [at the expense of others], and bring to the forefront concepts of mutual support, duty, and responsibility."[573] While living at a *khānaqāh* in the forests of rural Virginia is a step toward the margins of society; one that is intended to facilitate one's own personal transformation and connection to the *bāṭin* through creating an environment that supports meditation, an inward focus, and the companionship of others seeking the same goal; in balancing this, we will see a significant movement in the other direction in the next section. That is, putting the transformation gained from a connection to the *bāṭin* to use and bringing it into the *ẓāhir*, engaging in society and striving to embody and reflect the Divine attributes into the outer world through one's dealings in society, or as he calls it, Applied Sufism. For Abdur Rashid, this principle is expressed concretely in the work of the two organizations he founded, Legacy International and the World Community, via their educational initiatives.

Societal Engagement

Awakening Humankind to their Essential Goodness (Fiṭra)

To frame the discussion of societal engagement, we begin with an anecdote from an interview with Abdur Rashid held in his office at the World Community in 2018, wherein he used the technique of asking the researcher a series of rapid-fire questions to lead to a point that is particularly significant for Abdur Rashid's thought and work, that of the importance he places on faith in a higher power and/or spirituality in resolving the world's problems. Notwithstanding the fact that if given time to reflect and articulate more deliberate responses, the researcher would likely revise or at least elaborate further and refine, clarify, and qualify his very off the cuff answers, still the point is where Abdur Rashid went with this exercise. The dialogue went as follows:

AAR: "Why are you here?"
MEA: "To conduct research for my dissertation."
AAR: "Why are you writing a dissertation?"
MEA: "To try to contribute to making the world a better place."
AAR: "Why do you want to make the world a better place? What's wrong with it?"
MEA: "There's too much hatred and lack of mutual respect and understanding."
AAR: "Why is there hatred?"
MEA: "Because of fear of the 'other'."
AAR: "Why is there fear of the 'other'?"
MEA: "Because of wars, aggression, a lack of resources…"
AAR: "There's a lack of resources?"
MEA: "Okay, a perceived lack of resources…"
AAR: "So what's missing from all of your answers?"
MEA: *Shrugs*.
AAR: "You didn't give me one answer that had to do with faith or spirituality, a way out."[574]

Abdur Rashid creates an externally visible separation between, on the one hand, his role as a Sufi *shaykh* and spiritual leader of the Circle Group, and on the other, his persona as J.E. Rash, President of Legacy International. Beyond just differences in names or dress, that is traditional robes and a prayer cap versus a business suit and tie, he also engages in some seemingly very different activities, viz., the usual responsibilities of a Sufi *shaykh* in training and guiding disciples as compared with administering a non-profit organization intended to help young people of diverse backgrounds become engaged global citizens. But as already alluded to, upon deeper inspection, and in the view of Abdur Rashid himself, these two major areas of his life's work are deeply connected on an inner level. If we recall his insistence on not "siloing" one's life, on balancing and connecting the spiritual and material worlds, on manifesting the divine attributes and on bringing awareness of the divine presence into daily life, the

[573] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 182-3.
[574] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.

work of Legacy and the WCEC, for Abdur Rashid and the Circle Group members who are involved in these activities, is one of the very outcomes of their spiritual pursuits. With imagery that perhaps echoes Gurdjieffian discourse but also the Sufi notion of *sulūk*, he sometimes refers to "the Work" to refer to the Sufi path, meaning the pursuit of personal refinement or sitting in *murāqaba* and performing the recitations.[575] Yet he also uses it to refer to all of the activities of the World Community, whether that be working in the shared garden where their food is grown, at the school, or with Legacy, and even to the projects of its participants. In speaking to a group of such participants from the MENA region, Abdur Rashid made use of a quote from Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*: "Work is love made visible."[576]

In the remaining sections of this chapter, we will consider some of the outer aspects of this "Work," beginning with a consideration of Abdur Rashid's thoughts on the subject and ending with an examination of the structure and activities of the WCEC and Legacy International. On the former, we seek to understand what his ideas are for a better world from different angles and in different settings: Islamic Sufi, interfaith, and secular. In doing so, we draw mainly from two talks prepared as Shaykh Ahmed Abdur Rashid, one for an international gathering other Sufi *shaykh*s and another at a local church, in fact the same one led by the abovementioned pastor, to consider Abdur Rashid's doctrine of *tajdīd*. The other talks were given as J.E. Rash, President of Legacy International, and most of these were compiled and published in *Islam and Democracy*. The three main themes of that book are discussed here in turn: the compatibility of Islam and Democracy, ending extremism, and striving for pre-emptive peace. Another important talk consulted, one just cited in the last paragraph and that will be examined at the end of the section on Legacy, was given to a group of young people, most probably in their twenties, participating in one of Legacy's programs. Maintaining these two seemingly distinct personas of Abdur Rashid and Rash, at first appear to be in conflict with his constant exhortation to not silo one's life between the spiritual and the worldly. But in opening the talk he gave at a local church, he explained how the pastor had asked him to speak about what are seemingly several different topics, but which he believes are in fact just one, namely Sufism, Islam, Legacy International, and the World Community.[577] These last sections of the present chapter hope to give some elucidation as to what he means by this, as well as to what a better world looks like for him and how he seeks to achieve it.

Tajdīd ("Renewal")

In a speech he prepared for *The Sidi Chiker World Meetings of Tassawuf Affiliates*, an international Sufism conference that took place in Marrakech in 2009 and brought together some 1,500 participants from across the globe, many of whom were Sufi *shaykh*s themselves,[578] Abdur Rashid addresses the topic of renewal (*tajdīd*). From an examination of the script for the speech, he calls for a new understanding of *tajdīd* that differs significantly from previous usages, one that goes beyond only the Muslim community and extends to the entire world.[579] The concepts of *tajdīd* and *iḥyā'*, a term with which the former has become closely associated and is used to denote a revivification of the *sharī'a*, have been used to support a broad range of causes, including pan-Islamism and Arab nationalism as well as puritanical religious revival movements.[580] Perhaps most significant here is the use of *tajdīd* by Sirhindī, the renewer (*mujaddid*) of the first millennium, which would lend the very name to the most prominent *silsila* taught by Abdur Rashid: the Mujaddidiyya.[581]

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[575] Abdur Rashid, *Dooste Haghighi*.
[576] Private Video of Legacy Program.
[577] Abdur Rashid, *United in the One*, 1.
[578] Masooda Bano and Hilary Kalmbach, *Women, Leadership, and Mosques: Changes in Contemporary Islamic Authority* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 64.
[579] The speech for this script was provided by the World Community's archivist with the permission of Abdur Rashid.
[580] As'ad AbuKhalil and Mahmoud Haddad, "Revival and Renewal," In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*. *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0682 (accessed Sep 6, 2018).
[581] On Sirhindī's doctrine of *tajdīd*, see Chapter Two, "The Concept of Tajdid and the Millennium," of Friedmann, *Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī*, 17-28.

Abdur Rashid's renewal, however, is a call to all of humanity for greater spirituality, awareness of the Divine Presence, and realization of the interconnectedness of all of creation, which for him must in turn be carried over into daily life to result in enhanced ethical character, a manifestation of universal values which will not only resolve humanity's moral shortcomings, but also the social, political, economic, and environmental ills of the world. He feels that his Sufi audience has a particular responsibility in bringing about such change, a change which must also engage with and make full use of the latest advances in science, technology, and other fields of human knowledge. Regarding Islam in particular, he describes how the change needed today, rather than simply a replication of exact details of Muḥammad's life in 7th-century Arabia, is a renewal of the values and essential principles of Islam as epitomized by the Prophet and his companions, figures whom Abdur Rashid presents across his works as paragons of not only good moral character, but also inclusivity, social justice and responsibility, and peace advocacy.

Abdur Rashid begins this talk on *tajdīd* by lamenting the current state of the world, pointing to a disconnect between values and actions, to injustice, promiscuity, "a deteriorating of responsibility, compassion, patience, and tolerance," and of "traditional family values." He furthermore points to greed, individualism, and a lack of humility, sincerity, and *taqwā*,[582] but also to issues like "poverty, food security, war, genocide, depletion of natural resources, […] extremism, […] prejudice, [and] inequality." Yet while he sees the present as a time of corruption and great suffering, he also sees it as one of great and unprecedented possibility. For him, the current regrettable state of the world is at its root the result of "an internal and external imbalance and disharmony" that can be resolved through a meeting of the inner and the outer. That is, he holds that greater spirituality or connection to and awareness of the Divine presence can contribute to solving the moral, social, political, economic, and environmental ills of the world. He interprets Quran 57:4 ("He [God] is with you wherever you are.") as containing an imperative message, a command which can be put into practice by way of what he sees as timelessly relevant "Universal Values (indicated by the *Asma ul Husna* [the ninety-nine names of God])." Or in other words, such a connection with the divine will result in the manifestation of these universal values in the world.

While he makes similar appeals to putting universal values into practice when speaking to non-Sufi Muslims as well as in interfaith and secular settings, as we will see below, he sees those Sufis he is addressing here, as representatives of Sufism and Islam, as a global faith, as having a unique role and responsibility in rectifying the current situation. He calls on his audience to take advantage of their position, as human beings, at the meeting point of the *bāṭin* and the *ẓāhir*, to make use of the possibilities afforded by globalization and advances in science and technology in presenting the world with "a clear and effective expression of Islam and Tasawwuf," the goal of which is nothing less than to realize the very mission of the Prophet: "to complete the best of manners [*akhlāq* or 'good moral character']."[583] He feels that Sufism, grounded as it is in both the *sharīʿa* and personal experience, is particularly suited to applying the "traditions and essential foundations of Islam in ever new and relevant ways" and that it is even a "bulwark against losing the essence of our Deen." He thus calls for intellectual and moral renewal through the development of educational models that combine study of the classical texts with hermeneutical approaches that make them relevant and applicable to contemporary settings. He likewise speaks of casting off the shackles of "ritualistic behavior and attachment to only the legal rules" and realizing the value of the Islamic principles found in the Quran and *sunna* through personal experience.

He describes how a renewer (*mujadid*) comes when the *umma* have strayed from the Quran and *sunna* to restore the original purity of the faith, but that "in each age this has meant something different."[584] Tying in to the related topic of the revivification (*iḥyāʾ*) of the *sharīʿa*, for the present

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582 Sometimes rendered as "fear of God," *taqwā* might also be considered pious consciousness of God.

583 He quotes the *ḥadīth* reporting the Prophet as saying: "I was not sent except to complete the best of manners."

584 Although in no place does he even vaguely allude to himself being the *mujadid* of the present 15th Islamic century, it is interesting to note that Abdur Rashid founded Legacy International, an organization that seeks the broader kind of renewal he calls for, in 1979 CE, which coincides with the year 1399 AH of the *hijri* calendar. While this fact could not have been lost on Abdur Rashid, in the works examined, he makes no reference to this correspondence.

situation, he feels that what is needed is not a replication here and now of the details of how the original Muslim community lived in Mecca and Medina over 14 centuries ago, but rather a renewal in the sense of applying the fundamental principles of Islam, enumerating examples like "faith, submission, trust, kindness, inclusivity, mutual respect, love, justice, personal responsibility, community responsibility, and global responsibility," to the changing circumstances of today.

Abdur Rashid observes that a major difference between the renewal of today versus in centuries past is that it is now taking place in the time of globalization and instantaneous communication, a fact which has two major implications for his understanding of *tajdīd*. First, with globalization's coinciding with the internet revolution, he sees the possibility of a truly global *umma* as "mass communications have broken down boundaries, and social media can become spiritual media." He comments that the "growth of a global system of communication is very appropriate for a message that is global; that is universal,"[585] which brings us to the second implication of globalization for Abdur Rashid's *tajdīd*, namely that the message of renewal and the benefits it is expected to yield are not only for Muslims but for the entire world. He seeks to rally his fellow Sufis to accept the *amāna* ("trust"), which Abdur Rashid describes here as the responsibility for creation that God imparted onto mankind, and to work toward solving the problems of all of humanity, not just the issues faced by Muslims. He feels that Sufis ought to "affirm and work for justice, peace, tolerance and try to address the ills of this world with the skills of the mystic, drawing energy and guidance from Allah." He also calls on them to not only awaken spirituality among the Muslim youth; seeing the time as ripe for this since, he explains, 70 percent of the Muslim world is now under the age of 30; but also to work toward educating humankind in general as to "their common values and common purpose" and bringing Islam's "long history of wisdom, science and spiritual renewal to the world."

He acknowledges that his understanding of *tajdīd* is unconventional, but like Sirhindī in expounding his own doctrine of *tajdīd* with its particularly eschatological significance,[586] Abdur Rashid also makes use of the tradition that the Prophet stated: "Islam began as something strange and will go back to being strange, so glad tidings to the strangers." He also gives his own doctrine of *tajdīd* a slight eschatological flavor as he maintains that a paradigm shift, which we have seen him use as one interpretation of the *yawm al-qiyāma*, will occur when enough people have come to the realization that they are standing at this "nexus" between "wisdom" and "well-being for all," and have internalized the values which he sees as both universal and exemplified in the Quran and *sunna*. He holds that this paradigm shift, which will herald a new "positive period for humanity," is possible because of the interconnectedness of all of existence, that all things point to the same reality and the "the only separation is in our minds." He places the onus on his audience of fellow Sufis and Sufi *shaykh*s, as those who recognize such interconnectedness, to take part in bringing about such a shift.

He similarly describes *tajdīd* as "a movement to awakening" and; highlighting the pluralistic, environmentally conscientious, scientifically engaged, and spiritually balanced nature of the kind of renewal he is calling for; as "a movement toward building a dialogue between ourselves and everyone else in the world, between ourselves and nature, between ourselves and the unknown, between ourselves in the outer and ourselves in the inner." But echoing Rasool, Abdur Rashid holds that without correcting the inner at the level of the individual, any changes in the outer will only be superficial at best and at worst do further harm. Thus, he exhorts his listeners to seek their own personal renewal, maintaining their relationship with God by such means as *muḥāsaba*, *murāqaba*, and *tafakkur* and manifesting this inner transformation outwardly. So according to Abdur Rashid, by themselves exemplifying "the essential goodness and truth and eternal peace that is Islam," they can help humankind to rediscover its own *fiṭra*, to realize that each of us are "a part of a great integrative and eternal system, a reflection of the very same Truth, the very same Love and Compassion that is infused throughout the worlds."

If we compare this talk intended for other Sufis and Sufi *shaykh*s from around the world but meeting in a Muslim-majority country, as well as the content of his lectures to his own students, with

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[585] Although he does not explicitly detail this in the speech with regard to this comment or those that follow, in light of his statements elsewhere on *da'wa*, it seems unlikely that he is referring to a proselytizing mission to win converts to Islam, but rather to encourage all, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, to be cognizant of a higher power and to live by the kind of universal values he so often mentions.

[586] Malik, "Islamic Revival and Millennial Movements in the 16th and 17th Centuries."

one he gave at a local church in 2013, despite a very different audience, we see a remarkably similar message, but with the added feature of drawing parallels to Christian scripture and theology, given the context and to build on common ground with his audience. For instance, he discusses Applied Sufism as being the refinement of the inner self and carrying that refinement over into daily life, and also as pursuing one's original nature or *fiṭra*, which he translates as "our essential goodness."

The topic(s) he was invited to speak on, as mentioned, being Islam, Sufism, Legacy, and the World Community, he explains that whatever their work is, "our intention is the same: to become conscious of the Divine Presence, and to act for the common good for the sake of Allah, […] for the sake of Truth, for the sake of Compassion, for the sake of Mercy, for the sake of Peace." He points out that these are some of the *asmā' al-ḥusnā*, and that these are reminders that "we are 'swimming in the Ocean of the Divine'," and that everything is in fact an indicator (*ishāra*) toward God, pointing out also that similarly there are various ways of describing God in the Bible, going on to list some examples with Biblical references.[587] On applying such awareness of the divine presence in the world, he also invokes the notion of the *amāna*, describing this here as "the responsibility to care for Allah's creatures and creation," which he then compares with the Christian theological notion of stewardship.[588]

This brief pamphlet is drawn on further below, but its content is so congruent with topics we have already discussed elsewhere, it seems excessively redundant to go into a full outlining and examination here. But despite the remaining sections dealing primarily with his writings as J.E. Rash and addressing some apparently non-mystical and secular topics, we can nevertheless discern this circle of ascent and descent, and various facets thereof. But having touched on the topic of interfaith dialogue, we now turn to another aspect of Abdur Rashid's thought that is especially relevant to the fact that he is based in the West, namely, his belief in the inherent compatibility of Islam and democracy.

Islam and Democracy

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, Abdur Rashid contributed a chapter; alongside such other authors as Karen Armstrong, Khaled Abou El Fadl, Asma Gull Hasan, and Kabir Helminski; to the book *Taking Back Islam: American Muslims Reclaim Their Faith*, first published in 2002. Therein he seeks to dispel what he feels are six myths about Islam: that it is monolithic, puritanical, "Muslims are out to convert the world," Islam is unadaptive, "Jihad refers to military confrontations," and "Relations among Jews, Christians, and Muslims are inherently hostile."[589] While we do see Rasool addressing certain apprehensions about Islam that some of his readers may have had in *TTH*, published in 2002, it was only during the last five years of his three decades of spreading this lineage in the West, in the aftermath of 9/11, that fears of Islam in the West took center stage. Yet he did not really engage with this issue in *SfT*, prepared during the last years of his life. Instead, he focused on presenting the history and teachings of this lineage, along with telling the stories of his own *shaykh* as well as himself, IST, and SOST. Hasan, in turn, only touches on this topic briefly. For Abdur Rashid, however, the issues of the compatibility of Islam with what he sees as the positive values of the West are central, as is promoting such an understanding of Islam among non-Muslims and Muslims alike.

Pertaining to the latter, he asserts that "Islam is in need of revivification, which I believe could come from North America."[590] Some of the reasons he believes this is that Americans, he feels, see Islam differently, they approach it differently, with a fresh perspective free of "monolithic interpretations" and they are instead able to "live Islam as a dynamic and progressive faith" in the 21st century and to tap "Islam's capacity to be flexible without losing its firm foundation." When they see Islam, they see "democracy, diversity, a commitment to justice, equity, equality, reluctance to stereotype, and a commitment to community well-being, among other strengths." Moreover, he sees the

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587 Abdur Rashid, *United in the One*, 1-3. He lists: "Protector of the poor (Psalm 12:5) Rescuer of the poor (I Sam 2:8), Psalm 35:10, 72:4, 12-14, Isaiah 19:20, Jeremiah 20:13) Provider of the poor (Psalm 68:10, 146:7, Isaiah 41:17) Savior of the poor (Psalm 34:6, 109:31) Refuge of the poor (Psalm 14:6, Isaiah 25:4)."
588 Idem 4.
589 Abdur Rashid, "Six Myths about Islam," 40-8.
590 Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 44.

American context itself, with its "religious and personal freedoms, […] democratic institutions, multiculturalism, and wide spectrum of educational and professional opportunities" as particularly conducive and providing rich soil for such revivification.[591] So we see that alongside other factors, for him, democracy can play a significant facilitating role in the revivification or renewal or Islam. Yet the very compatibility of Islam and democracy has been questioned, particularly since 9/11, in the West and the Muslim world alike. Abdur Rashid, however, argues that "the values embodied in the US Constitution and Bill of Rights […] are as fundamentally Islamic as they are American."[592] On the future of Islam and democracy, Abdur Rashid looks to Muslims living in Western democracies, those who have "tasted both" and experienced their compatibility, as having as special role to play.[593] He feels that Muslims and non-Muslims alike can do better in presenting Islam as "a faith that shares human values deeply rooted in Islam as well as American history."[594]

His discussions of the compatibility of Islam and democracy are most accessible in his book, *Islam and Democracy: A Foundation for Ending Extremism and Preventing Conflict*, published under his birthname of J.E. Rash. In this collection of a stand-alone essay and three edited versions of talks he had given in his capacity as the President of Legacy International, he argues that Islam and democracy can indeed coexist. For him, this is especially true in "the hearts of those of us who have tasted both Western democracy and Islam," but he maintains that "a true marriage is possible only if we return to the roots and real meanings of both Islam and democracy."[595]

In a 2020 update (by email to the researcher) to this work he had published in 2006, such perspective still holds true for him, but with an added caveat in light of recent directions in US politics: "as long as democratic institutions are respected and protected, as long as the precedents that are long-standing have influence on governance and judicial decisions, and uphold the trust of the people." He sees this as essential to keeping democracy "safe from the hands of tyrants and their enablers." It is thus evident that at the beginning of 2020, he feels democracy itself is being threatened from within, and that there is the risk of an erosion of its principles. These statements seem remarkably prescient given the events that would transpire at the US Capitol Building just under a year later. Drawing an analogy from Sufism, pointing to increasingly divisive rhetoric as one major factor in such danger, he says that just as the lower soul leads one away from Truth, so fear of the other is "the primary disruptor of reason and stability in governance."[596] With that update and qualification, made at a point in US history when its society was increasingly and bitterly divided, we return to Abdur Rashid's 2006 book.

While acknowledging that there are differences to be reconciled between Islam and democracy, just as with Christianity and democracy, in highlighting the common ground shared by early Islam and American democracy, Abdur Rashid observes that despite being separated by more than 12 centuries, "the similarities of principles are striking […]."[597] In support of this, for instance, he compares the principle of checks and balances with an account of Abu Bakr beseeching the Muslim community to obey and assist him if he is righteous and to set him aright if he errs,[598] or the individual rights guaranteed by the Constitution with *ijmāʻ* and *ijtihād*.[599] Moreover, Abdur Rashid devotes the entire second chapter of this work to emphasizing the compatibilities between "classical democracy" and "essential Islam," saying that they both "define, encourage, and guarantee, individually and institutionally, justice, equity and equality."[600] He goes on to outline "Nine Principles of Classical Democracy Supported by Islamic Principles"[601] and "Ten Democratic Institutions Supported with

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[591] Idem124.
[592] Idem 44.
[593] Idem 3-4.
[594] Idem 44.
[595] Idem 3, 7.
[596] Email January 14, 2020.
[597] Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 22.
[598] Idem 26-7.
[599] Idem 124.
[600] Idem 79.
[601] These include: "The dignity of the individual," "Individual liberty," "Private property," "Natural rights," "Limited government," "Rule of law," "Religious toleration," "Peace and harmony," and "The right of 'exit'." Idem 81-5.

Islamic Principles,"[602] citing Quranic verses and *ḥadīth*s to substantiate his arguments. In concluding this chapter, he even goes so far as to assert that if one "understands the core principles of Islam, [they] cannot but extrapolate from that a democratically based form of governance" and that the reason such compatibility is not as widely recognized today, is the result of distortions, due to human folly and politicization, of the essential principles of both Islam and democracy.[603]

He furthermore holds that there is no conflict between Islam and the principle of separation of church and state. On the latter, he maintains that it is not meant to banish religious expression to the private sphere, noting that sessions of the US Congress and Supreme Court have traditionally begun with a prayer, but instead to ensure that the state does not impose an official religion on its citizens. With regard to Islam, he holds that for "moderate Muslims," the idea that there is no separation of church and state means that "Islam has built into it spiritual and religious values which encompass human life [including governance], and that encourage people to live their values (whether they are Christian, Jew, or Muslim)," rather than meaning that "an Islamic government should compel everyone to be a Muslim."[604]

He emphasizes the crucial role that he feels education can play in helping Majority-Muslim nations aspiring toward increased democracy to achieve their goals and, among other recommendations, he cites the benefits of civic education and citizen exchanges to increase ties between Muslim communities living in established democracies and those in Muslim-majority countries that are seeking to become more democratic. He specifically mentions the international exchange programs of the US Department of State's Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs (ECA, the same body responsible for overseeing the Fulbright Program) which Legacy has administered since 1982 and are discussed below. In the service of such education, he also highlights the importance of making full use of advances in available multimedia, telecommunications, and information technology,[605] something which Legacy and the Circle Group have clearly sought to do.

He takes issue with Islamist approaches which seek, by violence or legislation, to compel and force compliance with the *sharīʿa*, something he feels should be the outcome of personal striving.[606] Elsewhere he points to the Quranic injunction that there be no compulsion in religion, stating: "By not compelling religion, Islam {is designed to recognize} the importance of spiritual freedom of the individual."[607] As if in reply to assertions that democracy is the rule of man while a government enforcing a particular interpretation of *sharīʿa* is the rule of God, Abdur Rashid explains that "No believing Christian, Jew nor Muslim today would deny the superiority of Divine law over human laws."[608] In the same vein, he makes use of quotations that, on the one hand, explain that historically Muslim-majority areas have more often been governed by secular rulers rather than religious authorities, and on the other, that US officials seeking to promote democracy might do well to behave democratically and to encourage its values with consistency.[609] He likewise explains that it is important to be flexible and not to try to impose a particular version of democracy on other nations as well as to distinguish between actual democracy and things it has come to be associated with in the case of the US, like capitalism and global economy.[610] Time and again, he also emphasizes that "for democracy to

[602] For these, he lists the "Constitution [and] Bill of Rights," "democratic elections," "a federal system of government," "the creation of laws," "independent judiciary," "Office of the president," "public's right to know," "free media," "interest groups," and "Protecting minority rights." Idem 85-93.
[603] Idem 97.
[604] Idem 96-7.
[605] Idem 47-54.
[606] Idem 50.
[607] Idem 97. Curly brackets "{}" indicate a later revision by Abdur Rashid during respondent validation. Email January 14, 2020.
[608] Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 3.
[609] Idem 42-3.
[610] Idem 27, 37.

take root successfully in Muslim countries, the cultural and religious values of Islam must be acknowledged and become its allies."[611]

Similarly, he speaks of the "hypocrisy of 'preaching' democracy and freedom while working hand in glove with dictators and pseudo-democrats, monarchists, and religious zealots," the kind of collusion which he holds responsible for, rather than a clash of civilizations, "one of values, […] a clash of materialism vs. humanism."[612] He regrets that conflicts have been framed as being between Islam and the West, and how words like "'Muslim,' 'Christian,' and 'Jew'" have come to be imbued with political implications, since, as he argues, contemporary conflicts tend to be more related to social, political, and economic issues, and "have little to do with religion." He posits that what might seem to be a clash between Western and Islamic civilizations, is actually much more complex.[613] Another important facet of democracy that is important to Abdur Rashid's teachings and work is its connection to civic engagement and civic education. He defines the latter as "the means by which citizens learn about democratic processes and develop the skills to consider the choices facing their communities and contribute to effective political decision-making." Such civic engagement and education are among the main thrusts of Legacy, as is peacebuilding, which is discussed further below.[614] Yet before that, we consider another topic that came to the fore following 9/11, that of ending extremism.

Ending Extremism

On perceptions of Islam in the post-9/11 world, Abdur Rashid speaks of two competing pictures: one peaceful and tolerant and the other violent and intolerant. By way of illustration, he contrasts a quote by Kuftārū from a private conversation with him–"To be a good Muslim, one must first be a good Jew and a good Christian"–with Osama Bin Ladin and his epigones calling upon Muslims to fight all Americans, combatant and non-combatant alike.[615] In expounding on this topic, Abdur Rashid employed a set a terms, often used to categorize political and social outlooks, but that came to be particularly widely used in relation to Islam in the years immediately following the September 11th attacks: namely progressive, moderate, and extremist Islam.[616] Yet in recent years, such categories have drawn criticism as creating a dichotomy of "good Muslims versus bad Muslims," and the positively intended term "moderate Muslim," has come to be shunned by some as implying that one is somehow not fully Muslim.[617] While Abdur Rashid clearly takes issue with extremism and gives examples thereof, he is not seeking to divide the *umma* along the lines of such categories, but to deal with, rather than the people, what he sees as the sources of the phenomenon of extremism itself, as well as how it influences non-Muslims' views of Islam.

He thus devotes the third chapter of *Islam and Democracy* to examining the causes of extremism from what he describes as a Sufi perspective, one which he feels can reveal opportunities for bringing about moderation.[618] The definition he uses there for extremism is:

> […] those individuals and groups who position themselves at the far right of religious law, tradition and doctrine, almost always taking positions long repudiated by scholars of those

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611 Idem 4, 33, 63.
612 Idem 127.
613 Idem 127-28.
614 Idem 17.
615 Idem 103.
616 For instance, these three terms are used in a Rand report, which will be referenced again below, that was published the year after *Islam & Democracy*. Angel Rabasa, Cheryl Benard, Lowell Schwartz, and Peter Sickle, *Building Moderate Muslim Networks* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2007).
617 For example, see Khaled A. Beydoun, "The Myth of the 'Moderate Muslim'," *Human Rights*, Al Jazeera, 20 May 2016, www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/05/myth-moderate-muslim-160511085819521.html; Sarfraz Manzoor, "Can We Drop the Term 'Moderate Muslim'? It's Meaningless," *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 16 Mar. 2015, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/16/moderate-muslim-devout-liberal-religion. On tensions among "moderate" and "progressive" Muslims, see Nancy Graham Holm, "Debate: Moderate vs. Progressive Islam," *HuffPost*, HuffPost, 7 Dec. 2017, www.huffpost.com/entry/debate-moderate-vs-islam_b_5378000.
618 Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, vii.

religions and, more often than not, radically outside the accepted guidance, teachings and prophetic examples."[619]

When asked in 2018 in an interview with the researcher about his employing the labels of progressive, moderate, and extremist Islam; rather than a spectrum with progressives on one end, extremists on the other, and moderates in between, his description made use of the terms progressive and moderate in such a way that they are two adjectives that could be used to describe the same person. He considered progressive Muslims as those who "see that there's change in the world" and are thus looking toward human progress, which results in their progressive positions on issues like marriage, gender equality, economic development, interfaith understanding, and dialogue, as well as science and technology. He likens the difference between such progressive Islam versus extremist Islam to reconstructionist Judaism versus reform Judaism and Red-Letter Christianity versus right-wing evangelical Christianity.

On what it means to be a moderate Muslim, he explains that it is not that such people are somehow any less Muslim, but that moderate Muslims are not extreme in the way they practice their faith. Considering other aspects of his writings discussed above, we might take this to mean that such moderate Muslims are not trapped in mere ritualism and empty form. In contrast, he feels that extremists are not even practicing true Islam, or we might say that he feels they have missed the forest for the trees, since while they practice its external rituals and blindly seek to enforce its prescriptions, they fail to apprehend the essential teachings and principles of Islam. He compares this to some evangelical Christians' failing to adhere to the teachings of Jesus. He believes that the likes of Dāʿish (ISIS) are using the most superficial readings of scripture to justify their agenda and actions, such as beheadings and amputations, while not understanding what the very sources they rely on for such justification are actually pointing toward what they were meant to accomplish.[620]

In contrast, he maintains not only that "Islam denounces and condemns terrorism in all its forms," but also asserts that the Prophet was in fact "a pacifist for most of his life, only fighting defensive battles when faced with no other options, and thereafter returning to non-violence."[621] While it could certainly be argued that such an understanding of the prophetic example is in conflict with historical biographical accounts of Muḥammad which valorize his military prowess (*maghāzī*), we are back to the issue of what Abdur Rashid understands were the essential aspects of his message. Instead of highlighting the Prophet's role as a military leader, he speaks of the "inclusive framework, which was constructed at the advent of Islam by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his followers," and advises "Using the framework of tolerance, peace, and service [to gain] the strength to reject extremism as it raises its ugly head in our masajid or community."[622]

He finds as "especially disruptive," extremists' exclusive claims over the only "pure" and legitimate Islam, "their attempts to legislate human beings' relationship with God," and their lack of adherence to Islamic rules of engagement.[623] He asks that if, as he argues, "Open-mindedness, flexibility, and restraint" are fundamental to Islam, then why are so many Muslims speaking and acting in ways that contradict these concepts? Or in other words, what causes and facilitates extremism? In an attempt to begin to answer this, he offers ideas for some contributing factors, namely, "Cultural Overlays," like the insistence on maintaining pre-Islamic standards for modest dress, though he does maintain the importance of modesty for men and women alike;[624] "Politicization of Faith" by extremists using Islam in the service of their political ends and stoking bigotry and fear by exploiting anti-colonial

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[619] He also uses "extremism" interchangeably with "neo-fundamentalism," relying on Olivier Roy's definition as "a closed, scripturalist and conservative view of Islam that rejects the national and state dimension in favor of the ummah, the universal community of all Muslims, based on Sharia." Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 106-7.
[620] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.
[621] Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 110.
[622] Idem 113.
[623] Idem 108-17.
[624] Elsewhere he similarly blames the incorporation into Islam of certain "cultural traditions" in the Muslim world for "hold[ing] back the development of global Islamic thought." Idem 4. Email January 14, 2020.

sentiments, continued incursions in the Muslim world by Western powers, as well as xeno-/Islamophobia; and "Demographic Pressures," citing a "youth bulge" in many majority-Muslim regions alongside shortfalls in education being filled by *madrasa*s with extremist political agendas, unemployment, and the alienation of Muslim youth in the West from both their host nations and the Islam of their parents. He holds that some such youth have "found a voice and promise of future power and security in the simplistic world view" of extremist groups.[625] In summary, he explains:

> […] extremism is neither an inevitability of modern history [as Huntington's clash of civilizations posits] nor a product of a violent faith, but rather the unfortunate by-product of centuries of political and social complexities, aggravated by ignorance and power-mongering, local and regional conflicts, ethno/nationalistic world views, and the extreme economic disparities that feed poverty, disillusionment, and fear of life itself.[626]

Abdur Rashid asserts, however, that it is not only outer circumstances that shape and contribute to such issues, as he finds the inner spiritual state of each individual to be of particular significance. Thus, in seeking to counter extremism and bring about moderation, he finds hope in looking to man's innate goodness, from which he says can grow "qualities that are conducive to collective well-being, such as tolerance, compassion, generosity, justice, and a willingness to sacrifice and serve." He equates this with the Islamic doctrine of *fiṭra* while also providing a quote about Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan by Thomas Jefferson describing how "implanted in our breasts [is] a love of others, a sense of duty to them, a moral instinct, in short, which prompts us irresistibly to feel and to succor their distresses […]." He posits that the Sufi might see it as the duty of each individual to bring out and manifest in the world these inner potentials placed by God within each person, or "to live up to their highest potential," but that such cannot be compelled by empty ritualism nor can it "be legislated or enforced by one group upon another."

Instead, he points to *iḥsān* and the Sufi's "striv[ing] for attunement to a Power higher than oneself—to a timeless, unchangeable Truth." He speaks of indicators toward something "behind the apparent phenomena called life," in other words, the Truth or God; like the stillness of the mosque, the beauty of the recitation of the Quran, or the call to prayer, pausing to perform the prayers, the *sharīʿa*, meditation, and service; as means to establish a connection "between the outer realities of day-to-day life and the inner reality of one's self." He also draws a parallel between, on the one hand, the *ḥadīth* reporting Muḥammad as having said, "Who knows himself knows his Lord," interpreting this here to mean that one's real identity can be found in their relationship with God, and on the other, Jesus' words according to Luke 17:20, "the kingdom of Heaven is within you." He says that such "realizations foster harmony within and without" and describes the realization of this Truth as "see[ing] the Truth/Divine Presence in all aspects and experiences in life" and apprehending "the interrelatedness of life." Thus, we see some rather familiar ideas, especially from the section on *fikr* and seeing the signs within oneself.

So as a significant means for ending extremism, Abdur Rashid advocates cultivating in individuals the same kind of inner realization of the Divine presence and their own ability to manifest the names and attributes of God in daily life that, as we have seen in the above discussion of his mystical teachings, he tries to inculcate in his students. Then for him, it is Sufism thus defined, whether called by that name or not, as illustrated by his references to similar concepts in Christianity, that can contribute to bringing about an end to extremism. Indeed, he concludes this section by pointing out how some consider Sufism to be "Islam at its most progressive" and "conducive to peace," among other things, as well as quoting the Iraqi Sufi *shaykh* and author Fadhlalla Haeri, who says that in fact, "Sufism is the heart of Islam," a heart that it seems Abdur Rashid would like more Muslims and non-Muslims to rediscover, whether by that name or not.

Is There a Hidden Agenda?

As we have clearly seen thus far, Abdur Rashid's views are congruent with and resonate deeply with widely held modern, post-Enlightenment, and democratic values, which he argues are in fact

[625] Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 117-21.
[626] Idem 105.

universal and indeed, at the very core of the world's religions. Yet contemporary Muslim thinkers and movements that promote such values, as well as engage in activities like service and interfaith dialogue, are often regarded by some with deep suspicion. As Weismann, for instance, observes: "Western opponents […] deny the sincerity of such endeavors out of the belief that Islam's ultimate goal is to dominate the world. […] Muslim autocrats […] regard them as plots to replace their governments with an Islamic state, […and…] radical Islamists […see them as…] mere agents of the infidel West."[627] Adding another dimension to this, regardless of their religious or spiritual tradition, charismatic spiritual leaders in general are often the targets of varied accusations, legitimately or not.

Accordingly and for reasons that will become even more clear in short order, it seems prudent here, after discussing Abdur Rashid's position on extremism, to consider the possibility of hidden motives or agendas. Let it be said up front, however, that those brought up here have ultimately been dismissed as unlikely, if not untenable. As just seen in the preceding sections, Abdur Rashid has certain broad goals beyond bringing about greater spirituality or awareness of a higher power to discover and bring out people's essential goodness. Such goals seen thus far include reshaping the way Islam is understood, by Muslim and non-Muslim alike, and as we will see below, promoting peacebuilding. Yet in seeking to consider potential latent or hidden motives on his part, three possibilities come to mind: profit, power, and proselytism.

On profit, financial gain seems like an unlikely driving motive since Legacy International is a small non-profit organization that relies on donations and grants, for which they must constantly reapply, in order to operate. This is hardly the most steady or reliable source of income, let alone a scheme to get rich quick, since all funds must be dedicated exclusively to the non-profit purposes of the organization. On the contrary, there is a perpetual uncertainty about funding.[628] Similarly, while the WCEC is a tuition-based school, it is a small one and thus unlikely to yield substantial revenue beyond what is required for the maintenance of operations and paying its employees. They do not appear to be doing this work for the money, but instead, out of a sincere conviction of the rightness of their mission and the benefits they are striving to bring about in the world.

Turning to the second possibility of power, certain other Sufi-oriented religious leaders who also engage in dialogue and service initiatives and make use of networking have been accused of a range of schemes to garner social and political support and thus power. Yet the examples in mind are based in Muslim-majority countries, with the accusers being autocratic rulers in fear of being deposed, rather than in the US, where accusations are more likely to be rooted in fears of Islamization,[629] which we return to shortly. When questioned about such other Sufi-oriented religious leaders who pursue common themes and also share a propensity for networking, Abdur Rashid explained that he had not really thought of it that way, exhibiting genuine surprise, but affirmed that "I'm not trying to control anything, I'm just trying to link people together," and moreover, "I don't know [their] motivation, I can only speak to mine. My motivation is only to sustain networks that are beneficial for humanity, I don't care if you're black, white, green, yellow, […]."[630]

In a similar vein on power, there is also the possible accusation that he is a "cult leader." After all, he is a charismatic spiritual guide with a community of dedicated followers. The label of cult itself, however, is a highly problematic one, often being used for polemical purposes by more established communities to delegitimize other emerging ones. It should be noted, however, that if anything, Abdur Rashid fosters independence and creativity in his Sufi students, not only by focusing more on principles over specifics, but also in encouraging them to find ever new and innovative ways to apply their Sufism in practical ways. Moreover, Abdur Rashid was remarkably open with the researcher, generous with his time, and presented no boundaries in letting him wander around the World Community and interact

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[627] Weismann, "Discourses of Tolerance and Dialogue in Contemporary Islam," 367.
[628] Audited annual financial reports submitted to the IRS (on IRS Form 990), which are readily available on the internet, show Legacy International as being modest in terms of its net worth, and of the salaries it pays to its executives and staff. These reports can be found on Guidestar.org.
[629] See, for example, Itzchak Weismann, "Discourses of Tolerance and Dialogue in Contemporary Islam," in: Zarrabi-Zadeh, Omerika, Gugler, and Asbury, *Dynamics of Islam in the Modern World*.
[630] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.

with his students. This is not to mention how he granted the researcher unrestricted access to the password-protected section of their website to be able to search through all of his unpublished and unedited lectures going back to when they first began to be stored there in 2009.

Finally, to the third possible hidden motive of proselytism, one area that Abdur Rashid was acutely aware of was the potential that, because of his and his students' Islamic Sufi identity, others might perceive Legacy as having an Islamizing or proselytizing agenda. Accordingly, they have taken deliberate measures to mitigate this concern, such as by establishing Legacy as a secular non-profit. In the abovementioned talk to a local church, he explained, "I purposefully wanted it to be a secular non-profit organization; […] We have to serve everyone […] in a way that is above question, and without being thought of as having another agenda."[631] As President of Legacy International, he attempts to bracket his role as a Sufi *shaykh*, operating outside of the *ṭarīqa* institutional structure and Islamic framework and through a secular organization. The core of this organization, he asserts, is based on universal values that he says to him personally are also Sufic and spiritual values, but which could just as easily be secular values to the people that Legacy works with. He asserts: "We're not promoting Sufism, we're promoting values that happen to be Sufic values, which also happen to be deep Christian values, which also happen to be deep Judaic values […]." He affirms that "There's no intention to 'spiritualize'" the people that Legacy works with, pointing out that over half of Legacy's principal staff, seven out of 13 at that time, are not Muslims and some do not embrace any particular faith at all, but what is important is that they share the same values.[632]

To further elucidate, he uses the example of a Moroccan cloth weaver who recites *dhikr* in rhythm with his weaving, thus making his very profession an act of remembering God. Like Abdur Rashid, the weaver sees his product as the outcome of an Islamic Sufi spiritual practice, but the customers who purchase his shawls, including people of various faiths, do so for their own reasons. Accordingly, he says that "Whatever brings me to do the service to humanity is what brings me to do the service to humanity," that "There is no other agenda," and "I'm not doing this to promote my religious ideology or belief system, only to gather together people of like minds and like hearts from all backgrounds to work together." He explains that people who care about humanity do so from their own particular perspective, and while he arrived at such service as a mystic, early on as a universalist Yogi but eventually as a Muslim Sufi, others may arrive at it in other ways, including from a strictly secular humanitarian perspective. For him, this does not change the fact that he is performing this service "as a human being for other human beings," and he concludes declaring: "That's how I explain it to myself, and that's the way I motivate myself to do it."[633] That being said, as described above in examining talks he gave as J.E. Rash, President of Legacy International, one can discern a rather clear intention to reshape the way Islam is understood by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, calling for moderation and an end to extremism, and for him, Sufism has a potential role in that.

But aside from this one caveat of wanting to encourage a moderate understanding of Islam, which comes up again below, in the absence of any evidence to indicate otherwise, and in light of how he promotes the same ideas coherently across a variety of formats and to very different audiences, as seen above, it seems best to take his own descriptions of his motivations at face value. Yet this does not eliminate the potential that, despite perhaps having the most honest of intentions, he himself could have unwittingly fallen prey to serving as a pawn in someone else's game. In the US, when the average citizen identifies a problem in their community that they hope to resolve, one of the best ways of going about acquiring the resources to do so is by applying for government grants. This is especially true if one hopes to avoid association with a particular religious body which might have other agendas beyond only resolving the identified problem at hand.

As just seen, Legacy International's establishment as a purely secular organization was a very deliberate choice that underlines not only their desire to avoid having their work stigmatized as having a religious agenda, but also their commitment to transcending religious differences to work for the benefit of all humanity. Abdur Rashid and those who would come to serve on Legacy's staff, seeing conflict, suffering, and environmental degradation in the world, wanted to do something about it. In the

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[631] Abdur Rashid, *United in the One*, 8.
[632] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.
[633] Ibid.

absence of abundant wealthy donors, like private individuals or corporations, or contributions from a large community of members, probably the best if not only recourse in the US to pursuing such an objective is by applying for government grants. They thus viewed the idea of pursuing such grants to address these issues as a reasonable option, and indeed, it is the most logical one in their context. But while we have already addressed some hypothetical accusations of a hidden agenda on the part of the applicants, we now consider the government's motives.

We begin by considering the relationship in historical perspective, ultimately arguing that despite seeming continuity with the past, that a private secular NGO applying for grants in a secular democracy, is actually quite a different thing from a Sufi *khānaqāh* or other organization receiving government patronage from a monarchy, or for that matter an Islamic republic of today. Government patronage of Sufis as well as *'ulamā'* has taken place in the Muslim world at least as early as the very emergence of *khānaqāh*s and *madrasa*s, and the endowments (*waqf*)[634] which made many of them possible, such support often being crucial to the very survival of these institutions. It has also, however, been a source of controversy and fodder for inter-Sufi polemics, with some lineages like the Suhrawardiyya, or more significantly here, the Naqshbandiyya, being known for their mutually beneficial ties to rulers, or at least the former attempting to influence the latter; whether that be in Timurid Herat, Mughal Delhi, Ottoman Istanbul, Damascus and Baghdad, or modern-day Pakistan, Turkey, and Syria. Others, notably here the Chishtiyya, have made eschewing such ties a defining part of their identity, at least in theory, despite the significant sway Chishtī masters held over the Delhi Sultanate and later the Mughals, such as Akbar. *Waqf*s, for instance, are religious endowments given by Muslim rulers to institutions, like *dargāh*s or *khānaqāh*s, and to individuals or families, thus they can be hereditary.

To compare, however, the US government awards grants to Legacy International, an independent secular not-for-profit organization, and not to the World Community, an Islamic Sufi *khānaqāh*. The government has no dealings with the latter, and Legacy places particular stress on their independence from the World Community, an entirely separate entity with a separate board, staff, and mission. We might at first look at this separation skeptically, yet at the time of this research, the board of directors was composed almost entirely of persons external to the Circle Group. Only two of the eight board members were Sufi students of Abdur Rashid, and only one of those was a resident at the World Community. Legally, the governing power lies in the Board of Directors, and although he is the founder and president, the *shaykh* is not a member of the board.

Next, rather than a hereditary *waqf* awarded based on political expediency, the ruler's spiritual inclinations, or both, the State Department awards grants through a highly competitive process. Legacy is just one out of hundreds of other organizations – both large and small, including universities, for-profit companies, and non-profits – who bid on such grant opportunities and, from time to time, they win some of them. Determinations are made based on an organization's training expertise, history of program effectiveness, and subject matter competency. These award decisions are made by a jury of State Department employees who have no working relationship with Legacy, and such individuals are selected from a constantly changing team of US government personnel. An overview of this quite bureaucratic process is available online, accompanied by a detailed flow chart.[635] The concepts of patronage and *waqf* are thus quite different from State Department procedure.

On why most of Legacy's work has taken place in Muslim-majority areas, Abdur Rashid states that this was not a specifically intended goal and had they been awarded grants for other areas, they would have gladly taken them. He posits that their regional and cultural expertise and knowledge about Islam, along with their cultural sensitivity and history of working well in those areas, might provide them some edge in competing for such contracts. We might note here that, as described below, some of

[634] For a brief sketch of *waqf* throughout the history of South Asia, see "Excursus 7: Islamic Endowments," in Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 313-9.

[635] Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, "Institutional Awards Process Explained," U.S. Department of State, accessed January 22, 2020, eca.state.gov/organizational-funding/applying-grant/institutional-awards-process-explained. For the flow chart, see: https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/grants-flow-chart.pdf.

their earliest work was related to the Israel-Palestine conflict. He also asserts that "the work is universal and beyond 'religion.'"[636] Moreover, and also in addition to differences between *waqf* and State Department grants, while some of his lineal Naqshbandī forebears, like Aḥrār and Sirhindī, as well as others outside his line, like Khālid al-Baghdādī, pursued government implementation of the *sharī'a*; Abdur Rashid notes that he established Legacy to underscore the separation of his role as a Sufi *shaykh* from that of his positive engagement in society for the service of all of humanity, a global scope intended to affirm and work from a base of universal values.

But now, we finally arrive at considering potential ulterior motives on the part of the government. In recent decades, especially post-9/11, Sufis and governments in the West and the Muslim world alike have come to share a degree of common interest in the face of increasingly visible and consequential violent Islamism. In developing strategies for countering extremism, US think tanks have described Sufis as "natural allies of the West" and spoken of the need for "leveling the playing field for moderates," constructing "liberal and moderate Muslim networks,"[637] "religion building," and "assisting constructively in Islam's process of evolution."[638] To what degree such ideas have translated into any form of long-term policy needs to be further analyzed, but some attempts to co-opt Sufis have proven counter-productive shortly after they were launched, for instance, Musharraf's policy of "enlightened moderation" in Pakistan or the formerly government-backed Sufi Muslim Council, established in 2006 after the London 7/7 attacks, in the UK. In 2007, when the British government announced that it would be spending £70 million GBP on countering extremism, various communities scrambled to be the voice of "moderate Muslims," while decrying other sects as "extremists."[639] So the idea of supporting any one religious group at the expense of others within diverse Muslim communities, East and West alike, seems not only morally unacceptable, but also doomed to failure. In such a context, one might try to frame Legacy's applications for government grants as post-9/11 opportunism, similar to that just seen with regard to the UK. Yet they started applying for and winning such grants in 1985, over a decade and a half before 9/11 and the perhaps short-lived experiments of Western governments in co-opting Sufism.

Pertaining to the US in particular, especially with the Muslim World Outreach program launched in 2003 with the aim of supporting moderate Muslims to transform Islam from within, such efforts have been understood as part of a missionizing agenda to reshape Islam and the Muslim world in its own image, just one facet, a smaller and softer prong, of a much larger and primarily military (and intelligence) foreign policy strategy. Such a strategy has been understood as "taking pages from the

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[636] Email January 17, 2020. His placing "religion" in quotation marks here, in light of his writings discussed above, is clearly not declaring a universalistic transcendence of all religious difference, but instead he appears to be referring to the same critique of excessive focus on form and the empty ritualism and empty dogmatism that he sees among Muslims and applying it to how all faiths have sometimes come to be viewed and practiced.

[637] One monograph states that the "Moderates […] do not have the resources to create these networks themselves; they may require an external catalyst. […] the United States has a critical role to play in leveling the playing field for moderates. What is needed at this stage is to […] develop a 'road map' for the construction of moderate and liberal Muslim networks […]," and that "Because of their victimization by Salafis and Wahhabis, traditionalists and Sufis are natural allies of the West to the extent that common ground can be found with them." Rabasa, Benard, Schwartz, and Sickle, *Building Moderate Muslim Networks*, iii, 73. See also another salient Rand report in the next footnote, but also an additional significant report from another D.C. think tank that deals specifically with Sufism's "potential role in US policy," Zeyno Baran, ed., *Understanding Sufism and its Potential Role in US Policy*, Nixon Center Conference Report 2004 (Washington, DC: The Nixon Center, 2004).

[638] Cheryl Benard, *Civil and Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources, Strategies* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2003), 3, 25; quoted in Gregory A. Lipton, "Secular Sufism: Neoliberalism, Ethnoracism, and the Reformation of the Muslim Other," *The Muslim World* 101, no. 3 (2011): 427-40, here 433.

[639] Fait Muedini, *Sponsoring Sufism: How Governments Promote "Mystical Islam" in Their Domestic and Foreign Policies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 158-62. Muedini also raises the question of what happens when circumstances change and the Sufis whom governments have aligned themselves with are no longer seen as supporting the interests of the state. See also Jamal Malik, "The Sociopolitical Entanglements of Sufism," in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, ed. Armando Salvatore (Oxford, Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 597-601; and Bruinessen, Martin Van. "Sufism, 'Popular' Islam and the Encounter with Modernity." *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates*. Ed. Muhammad Khalid Masud et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 132-134.

Cold War playbook of divide and conquer," in reference to the US's successful attempts to separate "moderate socialists from hard-core Communists overseas."[640] Part of this is what has been described as a discourse of "Secular Sufism," seen as creating a "good Muslim" versus "bad Muslim" dichotomy that proffers a compliant state-sanctioned Islam. This approach has been described as "a form of cultural imperialism that insists on 'a set of liberal principles that others cannot brook without risking being bombed.'"[641]

Considering such a perspective, along with Abdur Rashid's writings in support of the compatibility of Islam and democracy, ending extremism, and promoting moderation; it may be tempting to dismissively read the relationship between Legacy and government sources of funding through this lens. But in addition to the fact that, as just mentioned, they have been working with government grants since 1985; Abdur Rashid's statements highlight a problem with such a perspective. Genuinely shocked when presented with the above theory, he said that if there is such a grand scheme from "some mystic group on the ninth floor of the State Department – and it's only eight floors high – then I don't know anything about it." From Legacy's long history of working with the ECA, Abdur Rashid has become well acquainted with much of its staff and he asserts that he does not know of anyone that he could believe would ever be involved in such a conspiracy. He explains that they are usually career State Department or Foreign Service officers that know and care about the regions that they work in and genuinely want to do good for the people of those areas. He went on to exclaim, "They're providing Legacy with money to do good in the world, so God bless them for it," and added, "If I could take the money that goes to armament and use that for peacemaking, that's what I'd do," thus echoing the cost-benefit analysis in his chapter on preemptive peace in *Islam and Democracy*.

By way of illustration, he brought up a comparison of the costs of the US's F-35 Lightning II fighter jet program which has cost almost $400 billion USD versus ending world hunger for one year for approximately $30 billion USD as estimated by a 2008 UN report.[642] He of course voiced his preference for ending world hunger, and it would not be surprising if his counterparts at State felt the same were they to be asked. The above theory, as just well illustrated by Abdur Rashid, gives insufficient recognition, if any at all, to the fact that the US government is complex and has diverse voices within it, among which are certainly many who strongly prefer building bridges of understanding. Such a reductionist evil empire scenario, which ignores the very real differences and tensions within, is also trapped in time and fails to sufficiently address how the national strategy constantly changes in response to current events and changing administrations.

While there may well have been strategists in the early 2000s thinking up ways of exploiting moderate Muslims in support of a broader military strategy, there are also others who have been working long before they came to build bridges of mutual understanding wherever they could, and they continue to do so, long after the Washington think tanks seem to have given up on their idea. From its inception, Legacy's agenda was to create a more peaceful and just world, among similar such goals for the wellbeing of all, and they made use of the opportunities available in their country to achieve this and have continued to do so through seven presidential administrations with very different approaches to foreign policy, from Reagan, Bush Sr. and Jr., and Trump to Clinton, Obama, and Biden.[643] Abdur

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[640] Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation," *Public Culture* 18, no. 2 (2006): 344-6; David E. Kaplan, "Hearts, Minds, and Dollars," *Global Issues*, accessed January 23, 2020, www.globalissues.org/article/584/hearts-minds-and-dollars. This article was originally published April 25, 2005 by *U.S. News & World Report*.

[641] Lipton, "Secular Sufism," 440; and quoted in Lipton, Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 203.

[642] "F-35 Lightning II vs. Helping the Poor." The Borgen Project. December 15, 2016. Accessed November 06, 2018. https://borgenproject.org/cost-comparison-f-35-lightning-ii-budget/.

[643] For instance, while the administration of Bush Jr. did indeed seek to spread democracy, by both diplomatic and military means, Trump represented a different approach that was generally more interested in building walls as opposed to bridges. Accordingly, he sought to cut the budget of the ECA by 75%, from the $634 million allocated

Rashid and the members of the World Community can cast their votes in elections, but they cannot alone control the direction of US foreign policy. What they can do is remain committed to their ideals and work, throughout all the ups and downs of a changing world, as they have done for the last nearly half a century. And now we turn to what is likely their most central aim: peace.

Pre-Emptive Peace

Perhaps most important for Abdur Rashid is the goal of peace, which permeates his writings as well as the work of Legacy and which is of course related etymologically to the word Islam itself, a meaning Abdur Rashid makes full use of. Peace is also connected with his usage of *taslīm* and his broader definition of what it means to be a Muslim, that is "a person who brings peace, security, and safety for all people." In Islamic contexts, he views the guidance of the Quran and *sunna* as the very means by which to achieve such peace.[644] More broadly speaking, Abdur Rashid rejects Huntington's thesis of a clash of civilizations and instead; drawing from a speech by and personal conversations with Hans-Peter Dürr (1929- 2014), a German quantum physicist and peace advocate; he urges going beyond 19th-century conceptualizations of peace and conflict.[645] Abdur Rashid characterizes such outmoded thinking as being "centered on a mechanistic or materially oriented view of reality," a "deterministic, competition-oriented worldview" marked by struggle in which "only the fittest survive. Differentiation breeds conflict" and "paradigms of 'good versus evil'" prevail. The new perspective he advocates rejects both the old notion of peace being achieved "when one competitor neutralizes others" as well as ideas that a viable solution can be attained through neoconservatism and economic globalization, which he says "buries" rather than "taps" the vast potential of individuals and civilizations.

In contrast, this new paradigm views peace as a collaborative and dynamic equilibrium; it values human diversity and sees in it a wealth of opportunities for exchanges of ideas and cooperation in adaptively responding to the challenges of a changing world, and even restructuring society,[646] finding solutions "in core spiritual and human values that emphasize trust, personal responsibility, social conscience, economic equity, and minority rights, just to mention a few."[647] Such reference to core values or universal values is of course a recurring and central theme in the work and teachings of Abdur Rashid and such a new perspective on peace and conflict exactly typifies what he and Legacy International are seeking to bring about on an international scale across the full range of their programs and initiatives described below.

More concretely, and in line with this new worldview, he explains that peace is "not simply the absence of violence." He instead advocates "pre-emptive peace-building," which he defines in contrast to conflict prevention and conflict resolution by saying that rather than simply preventing or resolving conflict, it is "an active commitment to co-existence in an atmosphere of security, trust, love, faith, and understanding."[648] He holds that all cultures and faiths have existing tools to accomplish this, and for

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for fiscal year 2017 under the Obama administration to only $159 million for 2019. Alliance Staff, "Administration's FY 2019 ECA Budget Would Hurt U.S. Diplomacy," *Alliance for International Exchange*, www.alliance-exchange.org/press-releases/administrations-fy-2019-eca-budget-would-hurt-u-s-diplomacy/.

[644] Idem 145.

[645] Likewise, in other chapters he points to a similar evolution beyond old ways of thinking. For instance, he contrasts "the linear world of Newtonian physics and Cartesian thought" with the new understanding of the world as found in Einstein, Heisenberg, and Planck, "the world of quantum physics and chaos theory." He explains that in the former understanding "we speak of *probabilities,*" but in the latter, "we must speak of *possibilities*." Another example is where he explains that Islam and the US are at a crossroads where what is needed is "In-depth understanding, not 19th century rhetoric […]." Idem 77, 126.

[646] See below on peacebuilding.

[647] Here Abdur Rashid also makes use of Dürr's two ways of understanding peace: 1.) the obsolete view of peace being a "tension-free state of static equilibrium," and 2.) a revised definition as "a poised statically unstable state that seeks a dynamic equilibrium through an interaction of forces and counterforces. Like life…it is a homeostasis, in which the counterforce is not the enemy of the force it opposes, but only the combination of the two makes vitality, openness, and freedom possible." Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 103-5.

[648] He also explains that such pre-emptive peacebuilding "uses the tools of peace, security, safety and inner contentment to actively create an environment that addresses the personal, social and political issues that create and promote the underlying causes of conflict." Idem 133,147.

Muslims, he views the *sharīʻa*, the guidance found in the Quran and the example of the Prophet (*sunna*), as the best resource to achieve such pre-emptive peace.[649] To illustrate this, he goes on to enumerate several examples of "Islamic Principles that Promote Pre-Emptive Peace." These include the injunctions to "reduce poverty, […] give people a voice in government, [since] Islam calls for consultation and consensus, […] prevent injustice, […] reduce ignorance, […and…] reduce prejudice," though he laments how some Muslim societies fail to reach such "ideals of equity, justice, and tolerance."[650] He also points to the vast potential for conflict resolution within the Islamic notion of *ṣulḥ* ("reconciliation").[651]

In the same chapter, Abdur Rashid offers a cost-benefit analysis wherein he argues that the costs of reconstruction following armed conflict, not to mention the toll in human lives and suffering, are greatly beyond what would be required to prevent such conflicts to begin with. He finds it regrettable, however, that presently "the global pattern is to react, not prevent" and that peacebuilding is treated "as a 'Track Two diplomacy' approach to conflict."[652] He also considers some obstacles to such prevention in the Muslim world, like divisions along tribal, ethnic, and sectarian lines and suspicion of and resistance to foreign ideas, calling instead for mutual respect and understanding in considering new perspectives. Here he quotes Quran 17:53: "And tell my servants that they should speak in the most kindly manner to those who do not share their beliefs. Truly Satan is always ready to stir up discord between people." He also speculates more generally as to why attempts at conflict prevention across the globe tend to fail, citing "lack of foresight," "lack of interest," and "lack of confliction transformation skills."[653]

As we will see, Legacy International works in one way or another to contribute to resolving these very issues, for instance on the last point with their *LivingSidebySide®* curriculum discussed below.[654] Moreover, in a quote Abdur Rashid draws from Professor of International Peacebuilding at the University of Notre Dame John Paul Lederach, the "Peacemaking roles and activities" listed as "educator, advocate, conciliator, trainer, envisioner, mediator, guarantor, observer, enforcer, rehabilitator and developer," might all be used to describe functions performed either directly by Legacy staff, by participants in their programs, or both.[655] But in addition to such outer work, he also emphasizes that "issues are influenced not just by outer conditions, but also by people's spiritual condition" and saying that "Ultimately, peace depends on more than social principles. It depends on establishing peace within human beings."[656] In that same vein, a student of Abdur Rashid since 1970 and one of the two Vice-Presidents of Legacy described striving to achieve "inner peace for outer peacemaking."[657]

Abdur Rashid also discusses peacebuilding, which he holds is inherent to Islam itself, as the "transformation of conflict," a process wherein there is a "transitioning from historical or political differences to a position of mutual benefit," from "extreme volatility and dependency on those in power, to one of self-sufficiency and well-being." In the latter desired state of "sustainable peace," those who

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[649] Although Abdur Rashid speaks about Islam more generally here in *Islam and Democracy*, during respondent validation, he mentioned the inner processes involved in bringing about such societal transformation with respect to Sufi practice. Thus, he spoke of the role of *murāqaba*, and in fact all "the 5 M's" (*muḥāsaba*, *mujāhada*, *murāqaba*, *mukāshafa*, and *mushāhada*), in making such change a reality. In this context, he also mentioned the facilitating role played by *dhikr*, in his broader sense of the term, as well as *ṣuḥbat*. He furthermore alluded to quantum theories of time and made mention of a phrase they often use: "peace in our time," pointing out the importance of the moment (*waqt*), and how "our" in the phrase goes beyond an immediately self-referential term to indicate how at "any moment the paradigm can shift." Email January 14, 2020.

[650] Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 133-6.

[651] Idem 136-8.

[652] Idem 139-40; 145.

[653] Idem 140-4.

[654] He asserts that "For people in emerging democracies, honing their conflict prevention abilities is potentially the greatest source of security and hope for building a constructive, equitable future in their communites." Idem 142.

[655] Idem 145.

[656] Idem 121, 136.

[657] Discussion with student before *dars* on August 30, 2017.

were once in conflict with each other are now "dependent only on the values and principles they share," that is the universal values Abdur Rashid so often mentions. For such progression, he highlights the importance of reconciliation (*ṣulḥ*) and the healing of old wounds as well as the need for a commitment to non-violence, as "violence breeds hatred." He points to a statement by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (d. 1988), known for his non-violent resistance against British rule in India,[658] saying that the "weapon of the Prophet" that neither the British police and army nor "any power on earth" can defeat, is "patience and righteousness," which Abdur Rashid finds congruent with the *ḥadīth* which states, "Allah grants to gentleness what He does not grant to violence."[659] He describes certain figures of the 20th century; including Abdul Ghaffar Khan but also Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Desmond Tutu; as epitomizing "non-violence as it was practiced by the Prophet (salla-Llahu 'alayhi wa sallam) for the first 13 years of his mission"and despite "a series of forced battles, […] after those, for the remainder of his life, he was again an advocate of non-violence."[660] So for Abdur Rashid, the Prophet was a peace advocate par excellence and he speaks of how Islam's "message of patience to avoid conflict or bloodshed is timeless."[661]

The chapter on pre-emptive peace, and also the entire book, concludes with Abdur Rashid, in allusion to his teachings on the meaning of *taslīm*, speaking of how in the contemporary world there are places and situations where people "can feel very safe and secure" and others in which the opposite is true. By way of illustration, he cites a number of minorities living in areas of conflict or inequality; such as Protestants in Ireland, Palestinians in Israel, or people of color in the US;[662] and points to the need to address the factors that contribute to such insecurity, factors that he says are used "to justify war and genocide, distrust and oppression" and that "create the 'other' and dehumanize the 'enemy'." In overcoming these factors that lead to conflict and the resulting sense of the "Other," as with his abovementioned solution to ending extremism, he looks to man's innate goodness (*fiṭra*) and shared humanity, and of course their shared values, saying that:

> By affirming in word and action that people are essentially good and that we all have similar personal goals and values, such as justice, peace, honesty, and the desire for the ability to earn a living and educational opportunity, we counteract the factors that create conflict.

He then affirms that old patterns of conflict and causes of corruption, like "ignorance, disinformation and short-term goals, greed for power and material wealth," can and will all be rectified through "personal and collective struggle (*jihād*) in the search for peace and reconciliation (*sulh*)," using the tools available in each culture and relying on a base of shared values, while also being sensitive to the differences that do exist.[663] In reflecting on the future, he finds hope in a prediction he attributed to Kuftārū that there would be peace in the 21st century, and Abdur Rashid states, "I believe, hope and pray that we are seeing the last vestiges of resistance to transformative change," though he worries at what cost that will come.[664]

Abdur Rashid's Vision of a Better World

This cluster of sections on Abdur Rashid's thought with regard to societal engagement began with an anecdote in which the *shaykh* asked the researcher some unexpected, rapid-fire questions. It will conclude with a reversal of those roles, though this was due to the events and compressed timeline of the day of the interview, rather than being an intentional stratagem to get at the truth by catching Abdur Rashid off guard. That morning, while playing the role of devil's advocate and seeking out any

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[658] He was also a member of the Indian National Congress mentioned above in considering Rasool's biography.
[659] Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 145-6. He also makes use of this in *Applied Sufism*, 253.
[660] Idem 222.
[661] Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 10.
[662] During respondent validation, Abdur Rashid noted that if he were updating the text, he would add such issues as the media using language like "Muslim terrorists," as well as an overall shift "toward authoritarianism, antisemitism, [and] 'hate of the other'." Email January 14, 2020.
[663] Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 146-45.
[664] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.

possible ulterior motives, the researcher asked the *shaykh* a series of rather direct, pointed, and probing questions. He was not provided these questions in advance, again by circumstance, not by design. Nevertheless, he took them in stride and did not appear to hold a grudge, though he did seem truly surprised by them, especially the "evil empire" scenario described above. During the course of these questions, the time came to travel to a nearby city for his lunch appointment with a local pastor, so the conversation continued en route. While his responses to most of these questions have already been discussed above, the last question was asked on the return trip: What is Abdur Rashid's vision for a better world? Thus, what follows is a summary of Abdur Rashid's vision for a better world, provided off the cuff in response to a question from the researcher, without prior knowledge of that question and while driving an automobile in city traffic, and then on some rather winding country roads, with the researcher as his passenger.

So, when asked if he might be able to articulate exactly what his vision for a better world is, Abdur Rashid explained his belief that all human beings are created for a common purpose in both the inner and the outer. In the inner, he describes that same purpose in different ways as being "to regain the knowledge that was lost with Adam," to achieve "nearness to God," to realize that "Allāh is present in everything, that Allāh is nearer to you than your jugular vein, that there is only Allāh." The realization of this purpose in the inner, translates in the outer into "being a very humane human being, caring for everything in Allah's creation, feeling a responsibility, or *amāna*, for everything in Allah's creation, and especially other human beings." Then, pointing to what has been called the Golden Rule for its universality across faiths, he quotes the *ḥadīth* according to which Muḥammad states, "love for your brother what you love for yourself," alongside the second part of the Great Commandment pronounced by Jesus in Matthew 22:39, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." He goes on to say that what one ought to want for oneself, and by extension all of humanity, is "a life of meaning and fullness where goodness rules and the rule of law is based on universal values," and he speaks of "a vision of a society that is committed to values that are well illustrated in the ninety-nine names of God." He maintains that such a vision for society; which he describes further as having such goals as "equity, equality and human concern" as well as "responsibility for water, land and creation"; has been articulated in documents from the beginning of recorded history, citing the Charter of Cyrus the Great (d. ca. 530 BC) as well as two present-day examples from the United Nations, namely its Universal Declaration of Human Rights along with its Sustainable Development Goals, which are in fact used to guide the very objectives of Legacy's Global Transformation Corps, as discussed below.

He states that all such documents are "basically a humane, humanitarian affirmation of the role of human beings and their responsibility to themselves and others and to all of creation." He notes that while these are not religious documents, what they contain is "at the core of religion" and that "any good religion is humane and gives people certain rights and responsibilities." So, he says, "That's my vision, a world of rights and responsibilities based on universal values that can be accepted by people of all backgrounds, races and religions," so long as those people are actually looking for, or at least open to, such common ground. He sees the actualization of such a vision as "transcend[ing] conflict and the history of disagreement," or put differently, he believes in the possibility of "a time of peace, peace meaning that that human beings accept one another because they realize we all come from the same Source, diversity in unity." He goes on to emphasize that "We can't keep talking about how different we are when the goal is to end those differences under one umbrella." He then turns to the issue of defining such an umbrella, and rather than attempting to bring all of humanity under one religion, he seeks to rally them around principles shared by not only all religions, as he asserts, but also by all "good humanitarian humane human beings." He even asserts that this might legitimately, at least linguistically speaking, be called Islam and that those who fit under that umbrella, could be considered Muslims.[665] All of this said, we now turn from ideals to forms in examining how Abdur Rashid seeks to tangibly actualize his ideals in the world.

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[665] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.

Societal Responsibility

In approaching the more practical part of our discussion of the analytical category of "activism," it should be noted that Abdur Rashid disagreed with the use of this label in describing himself currently or any aspect of his present work. For him, the term "activism" conjured up memories from his own past participation in the US civil rights movement and protests against the Vietnam War, and more importantly, he felt it has political implications in today's society. He clarified that he does not object to the label of activism "If our activism is defined by issues, like being 'active in addressing climate change' or 'progressive educational methods,' etc."[666] He thus feels it does not accurately portray what he and Legacy International now endeavor to achieve and instead he prefers the description, "social responsibility." Since "responsibility" can be seen as bearing a positive value judgement, the term "societal engagement" has been preferred in this monograph. Although active engagement in society as well as politics has often been considered a defining characteristic of the Naqshbandiyya, Abdur Rashid differs on this issue from both his own *shaykh*, who tended more toward individual spiritual refinement, as well as more activist Naqshbandīs of the past, whose scope was often limited to communities of Sunni Muslims in a limited geographical space. Abdur Rashid's area of interest, however, extends beyond religious, geographical, and ethnic boundaries to include all of humanity, as reflected in his choice of the name "World Community" to reflect his "concept of community as being ultimately, the whole world."[667]

During the researcher's first brief visit to the World Community, his questions and interests focused on the identified six key terms emphasized by Rasool and SOST. Thus, when given a tour of the community and an overview of the workings of Legacy International, he found it interesting but more peripheral to the main research topic of mysticism. As he spoke more with the *shaykh* and ruminated over their conversations in the weeks and months that followed, it became clear to the researcher that he had been expecting all of the "results" portion of our definition of mysticism (with its threefold division of practices, experience, and results) to fall neatly into a list of technical Sufi terminology, such as *ma'rifa*, *ma'iyya*, and *iḥsān*. For Abdur Rashid and the members of the Circle Group, however, the work being done at the World Community Education Center and at Legacy International is the very real and tangible result of their spiritual practices, and is thus of significant interest to the present study. Since the former of these results came first chronologically, and in many ways laid the groundwork and paved the way for the latter, we begin with it.

World Community Education Center

In 1971, one year after the World Community was established, the envisioned Montessori school, the World Community Education Center (WCEC) was founded and has run continuously since, providing a tuition-based private education for both the children born within the World Community as well as the surrounding community. The school is staffed by a team of trained educators including both teachers hired externally as well as members of the World Community, several of whom have over half a century of Montessori experience, having been with the school since its founding.[668] WCEC offers pre-school along with K-12, the option for high school students to take advanced courses through community colleges and a 13th year of assistance in transitioning to university. Their brochure notes that they have a "100% college-acceptance rate" and that the majority of their former students graduate with honors.

Abdur Rashid's Sufi teachings, like his focus on bringing a balance between the physical and the spiritual, are evident at the WCEC, with their "knowledge-plus-values based approach" and its dual focus on "academic excellence" alongside "universal spiritual values that build character and

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[666] Email March 17, 2020.
[667] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.
[668] "About Our Staff." World Community Education Center. Accessed July 7, 2017. http://worldcommunityedu.org/about-us/about-our-staff/.

community responsibility."[669] Despite the emphasis on spiritual values and the fact that WCEC is administered by a religious 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, viz., the World Community, the curriculum is secular and the only evidence seen by the researcher of any connection to Islam specifically is that Islamic Studies is offered as an elective at the secondary level[670] and Arabic is one of the languages offered for study, alongside French and Japanese.[671] It seems that equal weight is placed on the "universal" as on the "[Sufi] spiritual values," as attested to by the fact that the school attracts students from the surrounding majority non-Muslim community.

In striving to nourish the students "in mind, body, and spirit," each lesson taught at the WCEC seeks, according to their brochure, to instill "self-confidence, love of order, respect for others, self-discipline, generosity, cooperation, service to family and community" and hopes to help each student become "living examples of deeply spiritual values such as compassion, patience, tolerance, justice, peace and mutual respect." The vision does not stop there, however, and in founding the WCEC, Abdur Rashid was actually trying to create leaders for actualizing his dream of a better, peaceful world. We will consider more precisely what this might mean in the next section on Legacy International, but his idea for WCEC was to found an institution that "created compassionate and visionary leaders for a global society faced with many challenges" and on the back of their brochure in large font is written: "An Education for Life: Creating Leaders with a Vision for a Peaceful and Tolerant World Community," above which is a quote by Abdur Rashid:

> Well-educated serviceful people are the hope for a peaceful and secure world. Not only do they contribute to society through their work, but also on a larger scale, through their character and values. Focusing on values and on character is a foundation for both personal achievement and global peace.[672]

The choice of the Montessori model has a practical relation to this objective as they hold that it instills not only "a love of learning," but also adaptability, independence, and the ability to work in groups, decision-making, problem-solving, time management, communication skills, and high self-esteem;[673] all of which are of course desirable leadership traits, and similarly, in high school creating presentations and public speaking are emphasized in every course.[674] Abdur Rashid feels that his vision for the school has been transformed into a reality and of the children born among members of the World Community and educated at the WCEC, some, after going on to receive post-secondary degrees, have returned to work at the WCEC as well as at Legacy International. The latter is the topic to which we now turn and is what might be seen as the next logical step in seeking to actualize Abdur Rashid's idealistic vision for the world by reaching out internationally, especially to young people.

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[669] "Our Philosophy." World Community Education Center. Accessed July 7, 2017. http://worldcommunityedu.org/about-us/our-philosophy/; *World Community Education Center Student-Parent Handbook 2016-2017* (Bedford, VA: World Community Education Center, 2016), 2; and Brochure *World Community Education Center: Fostering a Lifelong Love of Learning and Service.*

[670] *World Community Education Center Student-Parent Handbook 2016-2017* (Bedford, VA: World Community Education Center, 2016), 12.

[671] "Upper Elementary." World Community Education Center. Accessed July 7, 2017. http://worldcommunityedu.org/programs/upper-elementary/.

[672] "About Our Founder." World Community Education Center. Accessed July 7, 2017. http://worldcommunityedu.org/about-us/about-our-founder/; and Brochure *World Community Education Center: Fostering a Lifelong Love of Learning and Service.*

[673] "Why Montessori." World Community Education Center. Accessed July 7, 2017. http://worldcommunityedu.org/about-us/why-montessori/.

[674] "High School." World Community Education Center. Accessed July 7, 2017. http://worldcommunityedu.org/programs/high-school/.

Legacy International

It was in 1979 that Abdur Rashid founded the Institute for Practical Idealism, or what would eventually come to be known as Legacy International:[675] "a US-based organization dedicated to promoting peace through education and increased citizen participation." Abdur Rashid has described Legacy as "a secular NGO based on universal values and a commitment to all people, regardless of such differences as background, orientation, religion, or ethnicity." He furthermore explained that the organization "translates those identifiable universal values into action, training what we call transformative leaders, entrepreneurs, young professionals, to be not only leaders but advocates of social change and social responsibility."[676] Their current mission statement, repeated throughout their website, is as follows: "Legacy International equips emerging leaders to transform their values and vision into sustainable success."

As for what this actually means in practice, it is helpful to examine each individual component of this mission statement. First, Legacy International is a secular non-profit non-governmental organization (NGO) which is also registered as a Private Volunteer Organization (PVO) and enjoys consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Legacy's areas of activity are listed as "Peacebuilding and Dialogue, Global Youth Programs, Professional Development, [and] Social Entrepreneurs," areas we will explore in greater detail below. Next, "emerging leaders" refers largely to youth or early to mid-career professionals working in fields like civil society, government, education, and healthcare, from any number of countries, who have been selected for one of the programs administered by Legacy, but it has come to increasingly include a wider audience, including more recently, socially responsible business entrepreneurs.

Next, the ways in which Legacy "equips" these "emerging leaders" include encouraging them to identify or articulate their own core "values," and from these develop a "vision" of an ideal to aspire for, a needed change in their community which might be achieved by way of a civic engagement project or even the establishment of an NGO. Then, the participants "transform" their "values and vision" into "sustainable success" with the aid of Legacy staff who assist them as they develop concrete ideas for action, for instance by exposing them to models of similar existing and successful initiatives, in the planning of such projects, and in gaining the necessary knowledge and skills, such as through civic education and specialized training.[677]

Lastly, Legacy provides continued encouragement, through sustained contact and follow-up; consultation, including assistance from a network of experts in a variety of fields; and even financial support in the form of small grants. Thus, Legacy might be described in short, if perhaps overly simplistically, as a civic engagement initiative that produces other civic engagement initiatives. This is not to say that they are seeking to exactly duplicate themselves or their own particular ideology, rather they seek to help participants identify their own core values and vision and develop a concept for implementing that vision to address a need within their own communities, as well as assisting them in the practical application thereof. Thus it seems that, true to its original 1979 name, Legacy is indeed an institute that seeks the practical realization of ideals. And as Abdur Rashid pointed out during respondent validation, true to the name "Legacy," they encourage participants to design sustainable projects, and hence to leave a legacy for future generations to build upon.

But returning to the mission statement, the word "sustainable" deserves further attention as it can refer to much more than just the longevity of a particular project's impact and more importantly,

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[675] For some idea of the meaning intended behind this name, "International" of course refers to the organization's global scope while "Legacy," can have a specifically Sufi but also universal meaning, as Abdur Rashid states in more than one place that "Compassion, Mercy, Peace and the other Divine attributes are legacies from God to every being of His creation regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality or religion." He also says that the challenge for all human beings is to realize and manifest these in one's daily life. For example, see Rash, *Islam and Democracy*, 40, 77.

[676] Email July 26, 2017.

[677] Legacy Vice-President, Shanti Thompson explained that participants "are aided by a wide range of speakers, trainers, and experts not only from Legacy but a wide variety of institutions, agencies, universities, and other entities. They receive skill training, opportunities to do research and fellowships, etc, in a wide variety of locations." Email January 16, 2020.

the concept of sustainability can give us some further idea of the kind of ideal world that Legacy hopes to bring about beyond the major thrust of pre-emptive peace. The concept of sustainability is complex and touches on a wide range of issues, but for some insight, we might do well to look to the way the term is used by the United Nations. The UN World Commission on Environment and Development defined "sustainable development" as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."[678] The UN's usage of sustainability and derivative terms, however, encompasses much more than environmental responsibility and protection, as reflected in the UN's seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition to several goals dealing with different areas of environmental concern, like clean water and energy, these SDGs also involve such aims as eliminating poverty, hunger, and inequality as well as promoting peace, rule of law, employment and economic growth, industry/technology/infrastructure development, gender equality, access to quality education, and public health. The UN website describes these as goals to "transform the world" and calls on all to do their part, including "governments, the private sector, civil society and people like you."[679] As we will see, Legacy works across all of these sectors of society internationally and the projects that they administer, or are carried out by participants of their programs, usually relate directly to achieving such goals. In fact, Legacy's Global Transformation Corps, discussed below, has explicitly aligned their own objectives with the UN's SDGs. So if we are searching for what Legacy is all about, what their vision for the a better world is and the kind of problems and opportunities they identify on the way to achieving it, it appears to follow along the same lines as the objectives agreed upon collectively by the largest international intergovernmental organization in the world, the UN.

Legacy's Organizational Structure, Sources of Funding, and Partnerships

Organizationally speaking, at the time of this research, Legacy International consisted of a principal staff of 14 individuals, some of whom worked and even resided at the World Community while up to six others were remotely based in Washington, DC, New York, and part time in other locations. Seven of the staff members were also part of the Circle Group, some even being founding members, while the remaining majority, including an alumna of the GYV and a former GYV camp counselor, were exclusively affiliated with the secular non-profit organization (Legacy). In addition to the principal staff, during high demand periods of program delivery, the overall staff of Legacy may expand for several months to more than 50 individuals who are hired for short-term assignments from around the US and across the globe in order to implement the various programs. Furthermore, there was a seven-person board of directors along with a much larger board of advisors. Both boards were almost exclusively composed of persons external to the Circle Group, and both consisted of individuals with extensive experience in their respective fields, professional qualifications, and advanced degrees, over one third of them holding doctorates. The board of advisors was divided into areas of expertise including: education and training; media and public relations; religion/philosophy; science, technology, and medicine; and non-govermental and governmental organizations.[680] Beyond this core of advisors was a much larger network of individuals, with varied areas of expertise, who have in some way interacted with the organization, maintained contact and expressed an interest in contributing to their efforts. This ranged from alumni of Legacy programs to business professionals, NGO experts, and even former members of US congress and international parliaments.[681]

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[678] "Our Common Future." UN-Documents.Net. Accessed June 18, 2018. http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf

[679] "Sustainable Development Goals." United Nations. Accessed June 18, 2018. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/.

[680] "Team." Legacy International. Accessed July 7, 2017. http://www.legacyintl.org/who-we-are/team/; "Board of Directors." Legacy International. Accessed July 7, 2017. http://www.legacyintl.org/who-we-are/board-of-directors/; and "Board of Advisors." Legacy International. Accessed July 7, 2017. http://www.legacyintl.org/who-we-are/board-of-advisors/.

[681] Brochure *The Legacy Advantage*.

Legacy has received funding and support from a number of sources including some rather prominent corporate sponsors along with various foundations, non-profit organizations, donations from private individuals, and government agencies from the US and abroad, not to mention from a branch of the United Nations. Of particular significance, starting in 1985, just six years after its founding, Legacy began by administering a program for the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and shortly thereafter in 1989, they began working with the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).[682] They have continued to collaborate with these organizations ever since and the ECA remains one of Legacy's most important sources of funding and support, a relationship that seems natural when considering the common ground in their respective objectives, not to mention both being US-based. The ECA seeks to promote mutual understanding between the citizens of the US and of other nations by way of educational and cultural exchanges,[683] a goal and means for attaining it that greatly resonate, as we will see, with those of GYV, which was founded nine years before any funding from the US Department of State began. They additionally partner with a number of other organizations including universities, colleges, businesses, and governmental and non-governmental institutions in the US and abroad.[684] But to better understand how Legacy's objectives are pursued, we turn to their very first program: the Global Youth Village.

Global Youth Village

In 1976, the year after the World Community established its permanent location in Virginia, and the year before Abdur Rashid first met Rasool, they held a small summer camp for youth from the community itself and the surrounding area. This would grow to become international in scale in 1979, the same year Legacy was founded, with the first iteration of the Global Youth Village (GYV), their "flagship program" which has continued ever since. The concept was a summer leadership camp which would bring together youths from various countries and thus be an opportunity for all participants to engage in intercultural exchange.[685] Legacy Vice-President: Director of Training, Shanti Thompson explains that in establishing GYV, Abdur Rashid sought to create "a global village in the United States where everyone who attends adapts to a new culture," where even the American participants experience a sort of culture shock.[686] An underlying motive of this was to promote pluralism and peaceful coexistence, and to that end, Thompson describes how, rejecting the by then outmoded "contact theory" for conflict resolution of the 1950s, in which it was believed that merely increased contact between different groups would promote mutual understanding, Legacy sought to create a new and more sophisticated model.

This model would make use of not only the decade of experience gained by Abdur Rashid and the members of the World Community in establishing and administering the WCEC, especially the Montessori "prepared environment" approach, but also research in conflict resolution that had been conducted, for instance, on the interactions of Israeli and Palestinian youths. From such research, supplemented by their own experiences, they drew certain principles that would become central to their

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[682] "Professional Development." Legacy International. Accessed July 07, 2017. http://www.legacyintl.org/professional-development/.

[683] "About the Bureau | Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs." U.S. Department of State. Accessed June 19, 2018. https://eca.state.gov/about-bureau. USAID works to provide assistance for development as well as disaster relief across the globe. "Mission, Vision and Values." U.S. Agency for International Development. Accessed June 19, 2018. https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/mission-vision-values.

[684] For partial lists of sources of funding and partnerships, see: "Funders." Legacy International. Accessed July 07, 2017. http://www.legacyintl.org/who-we-are/funders/; and "Partnerships." Legacy International. Accessed July 7, 2017. "Partners." Legacy International. Accessed July 7, 2017. http://www.legacyintl.org/who-we-are/partners/.

[685] In the beginning, the age was younger (9-14), and gradually it increased into the 15–19-year-olds they work with today.

[686] Shanti Thompson, "The Human Face of Community Building" (Bedford, VA: Legacy International, 2009), 2-3.

work with GYV and subsequent programs.[687] She also outlines three foundational beliefs or principles on which the work of Legacy, through GYV as well as its numerous other programs, is based: a.) that peaceful coexistence is both possible and necessary for global security, b.) it is better to deal with social issues preemptively rather than reactively, and c.) by finding the "connecting thread underlying the values that motivate people" and "operating from this common source, people can gain the strength to understand, respect, and serve each other."[688] One does indeed find these themes repeatedly, especially the idea of operating from base of shared values while also appreciating diversity, throughout the work of Legacy.

Since its 1979 inception, GYV took place nearly every summer and was attended by well over 5,000 youths from over 112 different countries. Today, walking or driving along the roads through the forested grounds of the World Community toward the areas where the camp takes place, one sees signs pointing toward the "Global Youth Village" before encountering cabins, buildings with classrooms and offices, a dining hall, outdoor stage, basketball court, pool, sports field, general store, the Village Café, and other facilities. On closer examination, one sees that each cabin and building is named and bears a placard with the word for "peace" in a different language. Despite the camp being only three weeks in duration, for many participants, aged 15 to 19, it may well be the first time in their lives that they have encountered such a culturally diverse environment, and thus the experience has significant potential for making a lasting impression and shaping the way they view their fellow humankind, the world, and their own place in it. As for the content of this international summer program, its focus is on leadership along with "intercultural communication and community action," and it seeks to instill "self-confidence and an expansive world view."

Attendees take part in a variety of activities and workshops related to "peacebuilding, cross cultural awareness, dialogue, leadership skill building, cultural arts and global music," not to mention the chance to develop friendships with other participants from across the world. The overall objective of these activities is to help each participant discover how they can live their life "as a peace builder, […] a social innovator […] and a global citizen."[689] So just as with the WCEC, but expanded to an international level, GYV aims to help create leaders for bringing about a better world.

LivingSidebySide® Curriculum

From GYV further programs would soon develop, as Thompson explains that "Legacy applies the principles and methodologies originally identified at the Global Youth Village throughout its portfolio of programs and services."[690] Central to their work in peace building and dialogue, and perhaps one of the most significant things to emerge from the lessons learned over the years of running GYV, is a curriculum known as LivingSidebySide® (LSBS).[691] It is a program designed to "foster inter-ethnic, racial, and religious understanding" and to provide participants with "the skills and shift in perspectives needed to begin to break cycles of intolerance and violence and transition from a culture of conflict to

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[687] These principles, or "*Prerequisites for Harmony*," are: a.) there should be "Equal-status contact" between participants b.) the interacting groups should work toward a common goal rather than in competition, c.) contact should go "beyond the superficial level," d.) the interaction should be sanctioned by society or some relevant authority, e.) participants should not have overly negative perspectives to begin with, and f.) some of the activities engaged in should "promote meaningful exchange, enjoyment, and fun." Shanti Thompson, "The Human Face of Community Building" (Bedford, VA: Legacy International, 2009), 2-3.

[688] Shanti Thompson, "The Human Face of Community Building" (Bedford, VA: Legacy International, 2009), 5.

[689] "Global Youth Village," Legacy International, accessed July 7, 2017, http://www.legacyintl.org/our-programs/global-youth-village/; "International Summer Camp | Summer Program for Youth." Global Youth Village. Accessed May 24, 2018. http://www.globalyouthvillage.org/.

[690] Shanti Thompson, "The Human Face of Community Building" (Bedford, VA: Legacy International, 2009), 4.

[691] For an independent impact assessment of this curriculum's delivery in Kyrgyzstan, see Anastasia Aladysheva, Gulzhan Asylbek Kyzy, Tilman Brück, Damir Esenaliev, Jamilya Karabaeva, Winnie Leung, and Eleonora Nillesen, *Impact Evaluation of the Livingsidebyside Peacebuilding Educational Programme in Kyrgyzstan, 3ie Grantee Final Report* (New Delhi: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation [3ie], 2017), https://isdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Impact-evaluation-of-the-Livingsidebyside.pdf.

a culture of participation, with respect for rule of law." The program has been administered, in the US and abroad, to youths from areas suffering from inter-ethnic/inter-religious conflict, including Israelis and Palestinians, Protestants and Catholics from Northern Ireland, different tribes from Nigeria, and Croats, Muslims, and Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina. It has also been carried out with diverse communities in the US, such as the 125 schools in which was implemented in New York City, as well as in ten schools in Kyrgyzstan. The curriculum consists of 36 hours of instruction, outlined in a facilitator's manual with participant worksheets, and can be delivered to youths, or modified for adults, in a variety of formats, such as after school programs or summer camps like GYV. There are also basic and advanced facilitator certification programs that respectively a.) certify adults, such as schoolteachers, to administer LSBS to youths and b.) qualify them to train and certify other adult facilitators.[692]

Other Legacy Programs

It was not long after the first iteration of GYV that the work of Legacy expanded beyond an international summer leadership camp and a listing of their diverse projects over the last four decades is provided on their website.[693] Beyond GYV and the LSBS curriculum, Legacy has administered a broad array of other programs for youths and early to mid-career professionals, many of which are or were supported by funds that originated from various government agencies (ECA, USAID, the US Institute for Peace, the National Science Foundation), as well as corporate, foundation, and other funders. According to their website, there are over 10,000 alumni of Legacy programs, including GYV, and Legacy has engaged in partnerships and carried out or facilitated programs in "over 110 countries on five continents," which they estimate has impacted some 700,000 people. They have been particularly active in the Middle East and North Africa, beginning in the 1980s working initially with Palestinians and Israelis and expanding to numerous other countries from Morocco to Iraq; Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Georgia and Abkhazia), since 1993; Eastern Europe (especially Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, and Belarus) and Russia, since 1994; Southeast Asia (with a focus on Indonesia), since 2004; and of course within the US.[694] More recent work has included the UK, Mexico, Turkey, and Cyprus. Of these projects, we look first to those tailored towards participants in their teens and early twenties.

Global Youth Programs

For a better understanding of what kinds of youth programs Legacy administers, we will enumerate the most recent projects listed on their website at the time of this research.[695] Also of note, their definition of "youth" reflects that of the UN's, individuals up to 40 years of age. First, one major project that began in 2012 and is still ongoing is TechGirls, a technology enrichment intensive that seeks "to empower and inspire young girls from the Middle East and North Africa to pursue careers in science and technology."[696] In 2019, the program came to also include Central Asia. Also of note, in 2017, the Jo Cox Memorial Exchange Program brought 20 participants from the UK to major US cities like Washington, DC and New York for an educational exchange built around the theme of fostering social cohesion.[697] Legacy furthermore administered, from 2007 to 2017, a language program for the National Security Language Initiative for Youth, that allowed American youth to study Arabic in Morocco, but which also incorporated community service opportunities.[698] In 2015 and 2016, as part of the American Youth Leadership Program, American youths travelled to Cyprus and, alongside Cypriot

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[692] Brochure *LivingSidebySide®: A Peace Building Program*; "Living Side by Side™." Legacy International. Accessed July 7, 2017. http://www.legacyintl.org/get-involved/resources/side-by-side/.
[693] "Past Projects." Legacy International. Accessed July 07, 2017. http://www.legacyintl.org/our-impact/archives/.
[694] "Our Impact." Legacy International. Accessed June 01, 2018. http://www.legacyintl.org/our-impact/.
[695] Email January 16, 2020.
[696] "What Is TechGirls?" TechGirls. Accessed May 31, 2018. http://legacyintl.org/techgirls/.
[697] "Community Building & Social Cohesion." Legacy International. Accessed May 30, 2018. http://www.legacyintl.org/community-building-social-cohesion/.
[698] "Travel and Language in Morocco." Legacy International. Accessed May 30, 2018. http://www.legacyintl.org/our-programs/arabic-language-institute/.

peers, participated in a program on climate change and environmental stewardship.[699] From 2007 to 2009, the Iraqi Youth Leadership program brought 275 Iraqi youth to the GYV campus for dialogue and leadership training alongside over 200 American youth,[700] and similarly, from 2004 to 2010, as part of the Indonesian Youth Leadership program, each year around 20 youth from Indonesia came to participate in a civic education program with their American counterparts.[701]

Professional Development

Legacy's professional development programs generally involve citizen exchanges that take part in two phases, one taking place in the US and another in participating nations. These also commonly involve small grants that facilitate participants carrying out their own initiatives designed during the program. We again consider their most recent programs here, such as the Professional Fellows Program (PFP) which is carried out annually and brings early to mid-career professionals whose work is related to the civil society (NGO) sector from Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco to the US where they observe how such organizations operate there as well as exchange ideas and network with their American counterparts. Some US delegates are also selected to travel to one of these countries for seminars and to gain area knowledge themselves.[702] Similarly and with these same countries, from 2013-15, during and following the Arab Spring when such nations were undergoing complex and rapid changes, Legacy administered the Legislative Fellows Program. Selected delegates spent four weeks in Washington, DC participating in training and fellowships in Congressional offices, agencies, and organizations, that focused "on public accountability, legislative procedures, and the interrelationships between government, citizens and NGOs." They also gained first-hand exposure to the workings of both governmental and civil society organizations in the US. As with PFP, US delegates in turn also travelled to these countries.[703]

Another ongoing annual program, since 2014, is the Saudi Young Leaders Exchange Program, in which Saudi university students or recent graduates come to the US to take part in a three-week program designed to promote US-Saudi mutual understanding, engaged citizenship, and leadership skills.[704] The North African Community Health Initiative, which took place over two years from 2011 to 2012, sought to build the capacity of health care professionals in Egypt and Morocco to improve medical care and public awareness in rural areas, especially for women and children.[705] The Kyrgyz Women's Initiative, which took place from 2010-11, sought to help strengthen civil society in Kyrgyzstan. Participants consisted of US delegates and female Kyrgyz delegates that included "community leaders, political leaders, educators, and youth workers."[706] The Religion and Society Program-Indonesia, which took place from 2007 to 2009, brought religious and community leaders from the US and Indonesia into dialogue concerning "the scholarship and practice of religion (particularly Islam)" in their respective countries.[707] The 2006-2008 program entitled "Responsible

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[699] "American Youth Leadership Program." Legacy International. Accessed July 14, 2018. http://www.legacyintl.org/our-programs/american-youth-leadership-program/.

[700] "Iraqi Youth Leadership." Legacy International. Accessed July 14, 2018. http://legacyintl.org/our-programs/iraqi-youth-leadership/.

[701] "Indonesian Youth Leadership Program." Legacy International. Accessed July 14, 2018. http://www.legacyintl.org/our-impact/archives/indonesian-youth-leadership/.

[702] "Professional Fellows Program." Legacy International. Accessed May 31, 2018. http://www.legacyintl.org/our-programs/professional-fellows-program/.

[703] "Legislative Fellows Program- N. Africa." Legacy International. Accessed May 31, 2018. http://www.legacyintl.org/our-programs/legislative-fellowship/.

[704] "Saudi Young Leaders Exchange Program." Legacy International. Accessed May 31, 2018. http://www.legacyintl.org/our-programs/saudi-young-leaders-exchange/.

[705] "North African Community Health Initiative." Legacy International. Accessed May 31, 2018. http://www.legacyintl.org/our-impact/archives/north-africa-community-health-initiative/.

[706] "Kyrgyz Women's Initiative." Legacy International. Accessed May 31, 2018. http://www.legacyintl.org/our-impact/archives/kyrgyz-womens-initiative/.

[707] "Past Projects." Legacy International. Accessed May 31, 2018. http://www.legacyintl.org/our-impact/archives/.

Governance, Civic Education, and Citizen Participation in Central Asia," brought delegates from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan that included "policy-makers, university administrators and pedagogical teachers, representatives of NGOs that work with youths, [and] school administrators and teachers" for a course on civic education.[708]

For a final example here, beginning in 1993, Legacy has carried out various Community Connections projects, that is international cultural exchange programs whereby local companies, NGOs, and families in southern Virginia host professionals from abroad who work in such areas as government, healthcare, education, and business. The most recent of these at the time of this research was Inclusive Education, which worked to promote equal access to public education for individuals with special needs in Ukraine.[709] While Legacy has been carrying out youth and professional development programs like the ones just enumerated for nearly half a century, they have begun to branch out more into another area, business.

Global Transfomation Corps

Having discussed peacebuilding, youth programs, and professional development, we now turn to the fourth area and also the most recent expansion of what it is that Legacy does, that is supporting socially responsible business entrepreneurs. Although their longstanding professional development programs overlap with and include professionals in the private business sector, in 2017, they announced the creation of the Global Transformation Corps (GTC) to work specifically with such entrepreneurs and their business ventures. An initial brochure explains that GTC seeks to generate "a global network of values-driven, entrepreneurial leaders to shift the world toward sustainable economies."

A major idea behind this is that existing business models lack sustainability, thus GTC hopes to facilitate the success of new business ventures that pursue not only economic success, but also strive to contribute to a better world, as envisioned in alignment with the abovementioned UN SDGs.[710] They hope to accomplish this by building upon Legacy's existing network, connecting and bringing into collaboration: 1.) aspiring and "values-driven entrepreneurs" with 2.) experts in different fields, who provide training, consultation, and coaching, as well as 3.) investors and donors, who supply much of the capital necessary to "accelerate" and ensure the continued success of such ventures. One major benefit, and even the very purpose behind the creation of the concept for the GTC, is that it is intended to create an internally "sustainable loop," so that Legacy's aspirations and endeavors are not entirely dependent on external funding from either philanthropy or government. This seems a prudent decision in light of the changing landscape of American politics.

Another prominent characteristic of GTC is seeking to maximize the effective use of digital technologies for marketing and other purposes.[711] Accordingly, GTC works closely with Entwine Digital, a digital marketing company founded by Ira Kaufman, the former executive director of Legacy who is also a long-time student of Abdur Rashid as well as a founding member of the World Community and the Circle Group. Kaufman also holds a PhD in marketing and has authored books on digital marketing.

Legacy's Methodology

Important to all these programs are values-based civic engagement and leadership development, as Legacy maintains that engaged citizens are crucial to the realization of a peaceful world. To this end, they expose participants to existing successful initiatives from which they might draw ideas and inspiration. They also facilitate participants' learning about how their own governments operate and

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[708] "Responsible Governance in Central Asia." Legacy International. Accessed May 31, 2018. http://www.legacyintl.org/our-impact/archives/responsible-governance-in-central-asia/.
[709] "Community Connections: Inclusive Education." Legacy International. Accessed May 31, 2018. http://www.legacyintl.org/our-impact/archives/community-connections-ukraine/.
[710] Besides generally unsustainable business models, other problems the brochure mentions are poverty and the imbalance of wealth, unemployment despite an increase in hi-tech jobs, radicalism, and ecological concerns.
[711] Brochure *Global Transformation Corps*.

how they can become involved, as well as developing the necessary skill sets to do so.[712] Complimentary to civic education is Legacy's particular methodology for leadership training, which is also found in, and indeed central to, all of their programs. This begins with having participants identify their own core values and what aspects of character are important to them. Next, they identify a vision as well as an "issue or need" that can be addressed in their own community. To achieve this end and realize their vision, they are then assisted in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to do so. Furthermore, after the training period is complete and the participant has returned home and is carrying out their project, Legacy staff provide continued contact and support in the form of encouragement and mentorship, which may draw on the expertise of Legacy's board of advisors or larger network, and even include small grants.

Related to such continued support, Thompson highlights how "the human dimension of community-building is undertaken quite consciously,"[713] and something repeatedly emphasized by Abdur Rashid is the importance of maintaining relationships as well as how Legacy has sought to establish, maintain, and expand a global network of similarly civic-minded, and engaged people. A further commonly encountered aspect of their methodology is what they call the "multiplier effect," wherein through the participants' engagement with others in their community through forums, contact with colleagues and volunteers, training other trainers, or establishing an organization such as a non-profit, the effects of their initiative are intended to reproduce themselves, to spread and multiply.[714]

It might be argued, however, that facilitators could, deliberately or inadvertently, guide participants toward particular values or visions. In response to this, Abdur Rashid stated that "we are very careful to collaborate based on individual goals and larger community needs that are not defined by us, but by those who we serve." Furthermore, one Legacy employee who facilitates such events explained to the researcher that, iteration after iteration, participants usually produce very similar sets of values on their own and likewise develop their plans based on needs and opportunities that they themselves identify in their own communities. She also mentioned how, when working with groups from majority-Muslim areas, Abdur Rashid sometimes points out how such lists tend to overlap well with the names and attributes of God. There are cases where, in speaking to participants, Abdur Rashid does mention particular values or character traits, but these are usually sufficiently broad as to resonate across religious, ideological or cultural divides, for instance love and compassion. One way in which he imparts the idea that these and other positive attributes are inherent in every individual is illustrative of this:

In addition to specialized training or activities that participants of Legacy programs take part in, Abdur Rashid tends to provide a kind of keynote speech. The above Legacy employee described how while giving these speeches, Abdur Rashid sometimes, pretending to walk feebly around a table, suddenly and dramatically feigns stumbling (perhaps drawing on his experience from working in theater). Invariably, the audience members react with concern and even hasten to his aid. He then uses such responses as a teaching point to illustrate how every individual is "hard-wired for compassion," that it and other such laudable aspects of character are inherent in every person, regardless of cultural, ethnic, or religious background.[715] Thus we see a Sufi, but also at the same time, a broadly human basis underlying his work at Legacy.

Another Legacy employee, who is neither a Muslim nor a member of the Circle Group, shared an unpublished and unedited video with the researcher of just such a talk that Abdur Rashid had given in 2017 to a group of North African delegates who work in the NGO sector. Knowing that the focus of the present research is on mysticism, this employee shared the video with the intention of exposing the researcher to one of Abdur Rashid's secular talks, which he felt were also worthy of attention. Yet interestingly enough, this secular speech is, in many ways, not all that different from Abdur Rashid's

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[712] Examples are listed as "Community organizing, letter-writing and publicity campaigns, use of the media, facility with developing and revising public policy, methodology for gathering and disseminating statistics, or tools for running for public office (and/or assisting others to do so)." http://www.legacyintl.org/our-approach/

[713] Thompson, "The Human Face of Community Building," 1.

[714] "Our Approach." Legacy International. Accessed May 30, 2018. http://www.legacyintl.org/our-approach/.

[715] Discussion during second visit to World Community, August 30-31, 2017.

Sufi teachings, despite the content being quite secular in nature. It contains a number of subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, allusions to many of the elements we have discussed in detail in the above section on his mysticism, although made relevant to the secular topic at hand. For instance, in opening his talk, after thanking his audience for bringing their light to the event, he nonchalantly and with a warm smile, slips in the statement: "After all, it's all *nūr*" without any explanation of the Sufi cosmology behind it. In the particular video examined, wherein he is speaking to an audience of native Arabic-speakers, he also casually drops a number of Arabic technical Sufi terms throughout the speech, though his audience may or (more likely) may not be aware of all of the Sufic meanings of such terms. But nowhere does he actually expound on these within a Sufi framework and the Arabic terminology could just as easily be removed for a non-Arabic-speaking audience without any significant loss of meaning to a general audience.

In fact, the very structure of the talk is built around concepts from and even the core of his Sufi teachings, yet he is in no way explicitly teaching or lecturing on what most would consider Sufism. Instead, he makes the concepts relevant to the topic at hand, so for instance, in a clear adaptation (or application) of the Sufi concept of *dhikr*, he exhorts to this group of delegates in a secular setting: "You have to remember, it's all about remembering," and that going into the office day in and day out, whatever challenges they face, "we can't forget who we are, what we are, and why we are doing what we're doing," he says "Don't forget it, don't forget your vision!" He also tells them that as the leaders of today "the future is in your hands," but that their success must also include "your happiness, your peacefulness," since "whatever happens in the outer must also be accompanied in the inner," thus alluding to his call for finding a balance between the *bāṭin* and the *ẓāhir*. Likewise, he comments that "Everything starts with an intention," which can refer to a *niyya* that initiates *murāqaba* as well as obligatory Islamic rituals like *wuḍūʾ*, or it might also refer to one's intention to pursue a particular civic engagement initiative. Moreover, he invokes the abovementioned "5 M's" by advising his listeners to reflect upon themselves (*muhāsaba*), to strive toward one's goal (*mujāhada*, as well as to make use of one's imagination or *khayāl* in doing so), and to be "vigilant against distractions from the work you're doing" (*murāqaba*). He then describes how "you have the sense of where you're going and the situation develops, you know the right thing to do [*mukāshafa*] and then, you'll see the results [*mushāhada*]."

Training the Trainers

Having outlined the work of Legacy, we now come full circle back to the Circle Group and Abdur Rashid's mystical teachings to his Sufi students. Whether as educators at the WCEC, staff members of Legacy, or pursuing other socially engaged initiatives in their own respective fields of endeavor, Abdur Rashid encourages his students to apply the transformation the practices are held to bring about in practical, tangible ways to manifest a corresponding positive change in the world. In other words, when he provides someone spiritual training, he expects them to "do something with it."[716] As mentioned in the introduction to this section, Abdur Rashid views the work being done at the WCEC and at Legacy International as the very real and tangible results of their spiritual practices.

His Sufi talks are filled with references to the state of the world and how it needs to be rectified, and he places the responsibility for doing so on his listeners. He often combines the language of a "crossroads" to provide a sense of immediacy, but also to provide a solution in the nexus or the meeting point of the inner and the outer, highlighting his listeners' ability to respond, or as he often says, their "response-ability." Such response-ability is underscored by yet further reference to Sufi cosmology, specifically to the interconnectedness of existence. To Abdur Rashid, we are connected to the problem, and it is thus our responsibility (*amāna*), and that very same interconnectedness, along with our essential goodness (*fiṭra*), is what becomes our ability to affect it.[717] He speaks time and again of working to

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[716] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, June 26, 2018.
[717] For some examples: "We have to not block our innate sense of interconnectedness. Look at the refugees streaming across our television screens, the children starving in Iraq, the victims of riots in Indonesia. […] As we come to recognize the inextricable bonds between our individual selves, our fellow human beings, and the Divine, we cannot not respond." Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 293-4. "It should become the goal of each and every

bring about a paradigm shift, "a shift from a paradigm of war and oppression, poverty, greed, and inequality, to a paradigm of peace, prosperity, unity, and security." And for this, "we all must put our drop in the ocean, however small."[718] We might imagine that such an enormous endeavor can probably at times be rather daunting, frustrating, arduous, and surely also occasionally dull. Accordingly, Abdur Rashid's *dars* not only seek to inspire his students, awakening their desire to make a difference, but also to encourage them along the way. As he states, "it seems like you're moving a mountain grain by grain, a mountain of sugar from one place to another. But we don't know when God's mercy will kick in. We don't know when the paradigm is going to shift."[719] Yet he also looks to the future, in case the paradigm does not shift within their lifetime, saying "try to find young people and teach them those principles."[720] He is not asking them to bring in more Sufi aspirants from a fresh generation, he is asking them to promote what he feels are universal values, as addressed below, the same values he asserts that Sufi practices have led him and his students to.

As we have already seen in the discussion of his *dars*, he uses his lectures as a supplemental means for spiritual training for his Sufi students, seeking to affect his listeners' hearts through their minds, in conjunction with their performance of the practices. But we also see him striving to do the same in secular contexts with people who are not performing the practices and who may or may not be Muslims in the conventional sense of the term. In some *dars* to his Sufi students, he reflects on his secular speeches and describes attempting to initiate "a catalytic process," and how while speaking on "transformative leadership" he hopes to "catalyze that transformation" in his audience so they will take that transformation to others.[721] That is, he is hoping to awaken the inner potentials, the essential goodness or *fiṭra*, of his listeners so that they will in turn manifest this in the world and awaken it in others. Thus, he does not limit this ability to catalyze others to only himself, and he encourages his Sufi students to strive to do the same. Echoing his unique application of the term *tawajjuh*, he asserts that they (in this context his Sufi students who work for Legacy) carry with them a "transformative transmission."[722] The following excerpt is especially illustrative of this:

> The processes of Tasawwuf—that is, the processes whereby the Shaykh guides the seeker to become an 'Abd Allah—send transmissions to the global society. If we give the time and make the effort; if we are sincere about our prayers, meditation and love for humanity; […] we can develop potential within us that can transform ourselves and our communities, and thereby become a powerful spiritual magnetic force that sends out a vibration to humanity. People who are in tune with it will resonate with it.[723]

For a more concrete example of how this might work, in one *dars* Abdur Rashid pointed out how earlier that day, he had seen one of his long-time Sufi students working in the garden with a boy (perhaps from GYV or one of their other programs). The *shaykh* then asked, "Did you inspire him, or did you just give him work to do? What lesson are you teaching him?," pointing out how that student is an elder who has been on the Sufi path for 40 years and has wisdom to share. He further exhorted: "That is his opportunity. It is his opportunity to be with an Elder, who is a Sufi, not your opportunity to

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person to endeavor for the social reforms affecting all people, improving the conditions of the people, and removing causes of injustice and tyranny in society. That is our responsibility." Abdur Rashid, *Preparing for Al-Mahdi*, 16-7. For a discussion of "response-ability," see Abdur Rashid, "Relatedness."

[718] Abdur Rashid, *Preparing for Al-Mahdi*, 16-7.

[719] Ahmed Abdur Rashid, "*Fu'ad*, *Basar*, and *Sama'*: Education of the Soul," Lecture, July 20, 2017. Elsewhere, he states, "Some might say: 'The endeavors of one or a few individuals trying to change the conditions in society may come to nothing; hence, one should not even try to do anything.' This fatalistic approach runs counter to much of the Quran and *ḥadīth*." Abdur Rashid, *Preparing for Al-Mahdi*, 16-7.

[720] Abdur Rashid, "*Fu'ad*, *Basar*, and *Sama'*."

[721] Abdur Rashid, "The Sufi Law of Life"; Abdur Rashid, "Relatedness."

[722] Abdur Rashid, "The Sufi Law of Life."

[723] Abdur Rashid, *Applied Sufism*, 295.

have him help in the garden. It doesn't matter if he ever becomes one, or even if he ever hears the name. It doesn't matter. […] you have to seize the moment."[724]

So we see Abdur Rashid presenting the transformative *results* of the spiritual training that he gives his students (rather than the training, or practices, itself) as something they can and should in turn pass on to others, and that they can do so with words, much like he seeks to do, affecting their listener's hearts through their intellects. He would probably add that this is also done through their example and their practical work in the world. But we also see from this statement how in private and unpublished talks alike, Abdur Rashid's goal is not proselytism or making more Sufis, at least not in the conventional sense of the term, but instead he seeks the awakening of people's essential goodness and the manifestation of universal values.

The foregoing paragraphs highlight the most crucial difference between the Circle Group and SOST. While Abdur Rashid's focus is on actively manifesting the results of their Sufi practices, such as through the WCEC and Legacy, Rasool and Hasan are more oriented toward promoting the Sufi practices themselves. Both groups share many of the same basic premises, but place their emphasis on different areas. For instance, both groups agree that the world is in need of change and that change starts small. A promotional video for Legacy includes the statement, "Smaller incremental community change is the best and the only way to really make global change."[725] We have also heard quite similar sounding sentiments from Hasan of SOST in speaking about positive societal engagement, such as "A small change can lead to bigger changes […]," as he gave encouragement to those among his listeners pursuing initiatives for the betterment of the world. Yet he and Rasool emphasized the need to refine oneself as a prerequisite for seeking such positive change in the world, and for this they offered their curricula of spiritual training. There is, however, no particular application arm of SOST, nor are there discussions about precisely how to going about changing the world. The results are to manifest on their own in the respective lives of each student.

In contrast, while still emphasizing the practices among his small group of Sufi students, Abdur Rashid founded two organizations (WCEC and Legacy) specifically designed to give form to the results of their spiritual practices, to manifest them in the world. In doing so, he created a deliberate division between the religio-spiritual and the secular, to avoid accusations of religious proselytism, while at the same time, seemingly paradoxically, helping them see and reflect the very same Truth in the world; though arriving at it from, religiously or humanistically speaking, whatever angle they happen to arrive at it from. Thus, the above statement in the Legacy video, is specifically referring to the projects undertaken by participants in Legacy's programs, without any Sufi practices, direct connection to the *ṭarīqa* or even knowledge about what Sufism is, but Abdur Rashid still feels they are reflecting the very same Truth and Compassion in the world as his Sufi students.

Abdur Rashid explained to the researcher that Rasool wanted him to continue the mission of spreading the order in the US, in much the same fashion as Rasool was spreading it in other areas of the world and how Sa'īd Khān and Ḥamid Ḥasan 'Alawī had worked to spread it in South Asia, all in realization of God's promise to 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh that his order would be spread "from East to West and from land to sea." Yet Abdur Rashid had a different idea for how to "spread the order," that is not actually focusing on spreading the institutional organization and meditative practices, but the results these are held to produce. On not being so much concerned with propagating "the order as an order," he stated, "I'm not a Sufi *dā'ī* ['missionary']," but he instead seeks to spread "what the order stands for." During their second interview together, the researcher was able to ask Abdur Rashid about this major difference. He in turn asked the researcher what the purpose of a *ṭarīqa* is. The researcher replied extempore, "to train disciples in becoming closer to God?," to which Abdur Rashid responded:

> So how do you know God? Do you feel compassion? Are you committed to justice? Do you want to be merciful? Be patient? Convey beauty? These are the ninety-nine names of Allāh (SWT). So let's help people to be more compassionate […].

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[724] Abdur Rashid, "*Fu'ad*, *Basar*, and *Sama'*."
[725] "Legacy International: Mission." Legacyintl1979. Accessed January 22, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRvvnqn3Vvk.

He then offered the example of a secular agnostic attending a talk that he gave as the President of Legacy. If that individual was inspired to become "a more compassionate and loving human being, fine, I've accomplished a great thing for the order, for Sufism, I brought them closer to God," whether or not they actually call it God or al-Rahman, or Truth, Compassion, Peace, or Happiness.[726] He likewise estimates that out of the over 5,000 attendees of GYV to date, that for at least 2,000 of them, the experience has helped to shape their career choices and has inspired them, in one way or another, to be of service to humanity, and for him, "that is the work of the order." In one private *dars* to his students, several of whom are Legacy employees, Abdur Rashid reflects in awe on how GYV, an experience that lasts just three weeks of a participant's life, can have lasting effects, "molding their life choices and affecting them even twenty or thirty years afterwards."[727]

For him, spreading a *ṭarīqa* as a system of spiritual practices is just one way of "making more Sufis," a way that he also pursues, though on a limited scale, yet he furthermore feels that the work of Legacy is also, in a way, "making more Sufis," whether they call themselves that or not. He expressed that, in other words, his preference is to work with a small number of individuals who are specifically devoted to following the Sufi path, but while also working with a much larger number of people who are committed to a common base of shared values.[728]

Despite their differences in approach, it does not seem that there was any sort of falling out between Rasool and Abdur Rashid, as the latter did not stop visiting the World Community until his US visa expired in 2000 and in the aftermath of 9/11, when it became more difficult for him to acquire a new one, after which they continued to meet in London until the last time they did so in person in 2005. Rasool was not involved in the work of Legacy, and during the two decades that he was making regular visits to the World Community, it was for the purpose of sitting in meditation with his *khalīfa* as well as his spiritual grandchildren. We cannot presume to know how much Rasool knew of the precise details about Legacy and their varied and continually evolving activities, but Abdur Rashid reports how Rasool admired the work being done there as well as their sincerity and dedication, as it reminded him of his early days at Jamia Millia where everyone gave their all to a common cause.[729]

At the time of writing this in 2020, Abdur Rashid was approaching his 78th birthday. He seemed quite in good health and still travelled regularly around the globe as the President of Legacy International and continued to lead regular prayer, meditation, and *dhikr* sessions as well as give four lectures per week. Looking ahead though, the long-term future of the Circle Group as an operating branch of this Sufi lineage is unclear, as Abdur Rashid stated that he does not plan to appoint a successor just to do so and that such a person must be properly qualified to take on the role.[730] Thus no one has yet been named as his heir, but whether he chooses not to select a *khalīfa*, or if he leaves the *silsila* in the hands of one of his existing *murīd*s, perhaps even one of the younger generation that was born and/or raised at the World Community, or even someone who has come later from outside, some amount of change is inevitable. If he chooses not to leave an heir, one might speculate that his teachings will continue through the vast collection of his recorded and transcribed *dars*, but what then of initiation and guiding students through this lineage's five curricula of practices? If he does leave an heir, several things also remain to be seen, such as whether that person will also take on the role of the President of Legacy International or if the shared community model will be retained. Lastly, on the future of the World Community as a shared property, Abdur Rashid acknowledges that times have changed: "Of course that was a different generation; people like myself and others who were not afraid to commit to a spiritual path, […] Still such a place is necessary; indeed even more relevant today perhaps, as we see the state of Islam in today's world; as we see the crass materialism and the religious cognitive dissonance […] where name and reality hardly meet. […] but the vision needs to be reawakened in the hearts of you who are young as it was in our hearts."[731]

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[726] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, August 30-31, 2017.
[727] Abdur Rashid, "Nafs and Ruh," 10.
[728] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, August 30-31, 2017.
[729] Abdur Rashid, Ahmed. Interview by Michael E. Asbury. Bedford, VA, January 3-4, 2017.
[730] Ibid.
[731] Abdur Rashid, *Where?*, 19.

Conclusion

Examining the subjects of this study through the analytical category of mysticism has allowed us to detect substantial continuity in the case study lineage despite transfer to entirely new geographical, cultural, linguistic, and religious contexts. The notion of resonance has been especially beneficial in explaining why such mystical ideas and practices were able to survive this transfer fundamentally unchanged, as we will recount some examples of below. Furthermore, the inclusion of the supplemental categories of the relationship to Islam and societal engagement, has not only allowed us to more easily engage with preceding research on the Naqshbandiyya, but it has also allowed us to examine some important differences in this lineage from earlier figures in its history, not limiting ourselves to only continuity, but also considering change. The diachronic historical survey demonstrated that the key terms used by Rasool to describe his mysticism have a long history within Sufism and primarily culminated to their current clustering and particular usages with the personality of the 16th-17th century mystic Aḥmad Sirhindī. The synchronic contemporary survey of Naqshbandī-connected presence in the West showed that other related lineages which can also be traced back to Sirhindī are also using, inter alia, much the same cluster of terms as well as performing very similar practices, while others may place more emphasis on the personality of the *shaykh* and collective activity. Following the examination of Rasool's teachings, a consideration of his two successors was able to discern further pronounced continuity under both Hasan and Abdur Rashid. Yet the latter has also introduced, in addition to the teachings he received from Rasool, new ideas and practices, so far as his immediate lineal predecessors are concerned, but while still drawing from wider Sufi and Islamic tradition in doing so. Before elaborating further, we qualify the findings of this research by considering some of their limitations, and then reflect on some of the contributions this research has made to Naqshbandī Studies, Sufi Studies, and Religious Studies more generally, along with ideas it has generated for potential areas of future research.

Limitations of the Findings

As mentioned at the beginning of this study, and notwithstanding the supplemental role of experiential investigation here, with the topic of mysticism, we are fated to examining tangible, external manifestations to explore what are held to be ineffable inner experiences and metaphysical realities. From such an emic perspective, we are believed to be only looking at fingers pointing toward the moon rather than the moon itself. In this vein, we have chosen to rely primarily on an examination of words, or technical Sufi terminology. Another limitation that must qualify the main findings of this study is that we were only able to get at limited details for the six personalities in the *silsila* prior to Rasool and had to rely largely, though not exclusively, on Rasool's own accounts of the last three Indian personalities in the *silsila* prior to him. Therefore, our comparison partners for assessing change and continuity consisted of 1.) the diachronic historical survey, 2.) the synchronic contemporary survey, and 3.) Rasool's own accounts of the lives of his three predecessors. The notable gap in knowledge about this lineage outside of its own hagiographical sources, and even without those in its earlier years in Bengal prior to ‘Abd al-Bārī Shāh, could be the subject of further research. The other notable limitation is that our observations of SOST were limited to first-hand participant observation in different cities in Germany and in Hyderabad, India, and second-hand accounts from those who were visiting members of, or who had been to, groups elsewhere. Thus, the picture of SOST could certainly have benefited from excursions to other groups, especially London, and events like SOST's annual international retreat. Nevertheless, the similarities in doctrine and practices observed between such culturally and religiously different areas as Germany and Hyderabad, augmented by second-hand accounts of SOST groups and events taking place elsewhere, point to the conclusion that additional excursions would have only further confirmed the thesis of continuity over change from the perspective of mysticism.

Contributions & Recommendations for Future Research

The most important contribution of this research is that it offers an unprecedented in-depth look at one lineage that has hitherto largely eluded academic inquiry despite its nearly half a century of presence in the West, discretely flying under the radar of scholarship in Sufi Studies. This has included

data from five years of participant observation on three continents as well as extensive and similarly unprecedented access to one of the three *shaykh*s studied. By demonstrating substantial continuity with past Mujaddidī and wider Sufi tradition, as well as similarity with other related Sufi lines that appeal to more exclusively Muslim student bases, this study has in turn problematized and called into question the extent of the applicability of terms and prefixes denoting "newness," such as "New Religious Movements" or "neo-Sufism," simply because a tradition has been transferred to a new context wherein it may comprise an emergent, non-dominant form of religiosity. Using the category of mysticism to explore other groups to which such labels as NRM have been or might be applied, could similarly reveal greater continuity in spite of changing contextual factors. Additionally, the broader and more inclusive definitions of *mysticism* as the subjective, intuitive, experiential dimension of faith, and *mystical experience* as the largest and main subset within religious experience, might be insightful elsewhere. It would be interesting and perhaps fruitful to study groups that reject Sufism, such as the Ahl-i Ḥadīth or others who have been labelled as Salafī or Wahhābī through the lens of such a definition of mysticism. This broader definition worked quite easily with the case study, but it would probably require revision to be applied to non-Abrahamic religious traditions, which might also prove a productive venture.

Methodologically, by seeking to strike a balance between a hermeneutic of suspicion and one of empathy that seeks to understand both from without while also from within, stepping inside the subject's internal logic and taking the insider perspective seriously, it is hoped that this study can serve as a step toward a return of the phenomenological approach, in the broader sense of the term, though in revised form. Such a restoration of phenomenology must also seek to empathetically understand even, and in fact especially, those with which a researcher may harbor ideological differences. It should resist the urge to assess for charlatanry and actually seek to "get it" from the other's perspective, regardless of whether or not one agrees with that perspective and its values or finds its means of pursuing spiritual fulfillment personally appealing. In further revision of preceding phenomenological approaches, it is also hoped that this study will provide an example for the need to assess individual mystical thinkers in their own right as opposed to creating a composite sketch from multiple reports of some ideal phenomenon that may or may not actually exist. This study also represents a step forward in attempts at experiential investigation, while also seeking to remain within established academic norms of objectivity.

The diachronic historical survey has mapped out into different phases certain major milestones in the development of Naqshbandī and Mujaddidī mysticism, gathering together bits of key information that were previously noticed by other scholars but were hitherto only scattered in disparate sources, often hidden in the footnotes and in one case, as mentioned, even penciled into the margin of another book. This has hopefully paved the way for a long overdue mystico-intellectual history of the Naqshbandiyya, placing rightfully at its center the very purpose of the Naqshbandiyya's existence, its mysticism, rather than contextual aspects like the dealings of some of its adherents with or against rulers. The preliminary survey in this study could certainly benefit from further refinement and additions, perhaps finding earlier precedents or additional significant milestones than the ones highlighted here. The survey has also brought up some potential for future areas of research, like how quite early on, Tustarī's thought gathers together many elements that centuries later would inexplicably reappear again together in the Naqshbandiyya, like the doctrine of Muhammadan light, visions of green light, *dhikr* as the practice of recitation and it being associated with the heart, and also the concept of the *sirr*. The reason for the delayed reappearance of this cluster by several centuries is unclear with the current state of research. The historical survey has also further highlighted the gap in our knowledge of Khwājagānī and early Naqshbandī sources and it has additionally underscored the need to examine the relationship between the Naqshbandiyya and the Kubrāwiyya which it eclipsed in Central Asia, though which may have absorbed key doctrines and practices like the *laṭā'if*, *INfB*, visions of light culminating in what Corbin called the *visio smaragdina*, silent *dhikr* and in particular, Simnānī's peculiar four-stroke version of *nafī wa ithbāt*.

Yet another prospect for further research that this study brings up is the question of whether or not there were any *ma'mūlāt* texts prior to those identified by Buehler at the turn of the 19th century, and also whether or not an oral tradition did indeed precede these *ma'mūlāt* texts, and if so, how far back does any evidence for this oral tradition go? Also in the same vein, while the importance of the

ma'mūlāt genre was brought to light in Buehler's *Sufi Heirs*, though discussed primarily in appendices, the current study has highlighted the diversity among the different curricula of intentions taught by various lineages. This offers a promising field for future research.

Similarly, the synchronic contemporary survey is a first attempt at mapping current Naqshbandī-related presence in the West and it has revealed numerous lines that have not received scholarly attention or have only been mentioned in passing in studies of Sufism in the West and have even not been studied in Sufi Studies generally either, like the numerous lines descending from Fazal 'Ali Shah Qurayshi or the Hakimabad Khanka-e-Mozaddedia or the Owaisiah. In contrast, countless studies have been completed on the Haqqaniyya, oftentimes finding similar insights as preceding studies on the same lineage. Yet the Haqqani line, in terms of doctrine and practice, are in several ways atypical as far as the Naqshbandiyya goes, such as the unconventional doctrine of the nine points, though this would probably be better seen as a marketing strategy rather than a central doctrine. This imbalance in coverage has resulted in recent research relying on studies of the Haqqaniyya for the standard of what it is to be Naqshbandī, when they are in fact a bit further from the norm than most. But again, the synchronic survey also highlighted the diversity among the Naqshbandiyya, demonstrating that there is no single standard Naqshbandī or Mujaddidī mysticism to be spoken of, and each lineage and even each *shaykh* of each generation has his or her own variant, which may adhere assiduously to a preceding generation or may veer considerably from it. Nevertheless, we have seen some frequently recurring aspects, like the *laṭā'if*, *INfB* and emphasis on the heart, *murāqaba*, *dhikr*, *tawajjuh*, and *ṣuḥbat*. We have also seen different tendencies in what a leader has to offer, what Buehler has described as the directing *shaykh* and the mediating *shaykh*, though it is unclear if we can speak of a decline from the former to the latter. It might be better to see this as the evolution of different leadership styles and pedagogical strategies.

Although less common, this study and others that likewise incorporate some element of experiential investigation, past or future, could serve to cross-cue further research in, or interdisciplinary collaboration with, other fields like Psychology. Such endeavors might, for instance, include a larger sampling of respondents, surveys conducted over time, and the quantitative analysis thereof, and could explore the efficacy of meditative techniques for behavior modification and psychological well-being, irrespective of whether the proponents of such techniques regard these ends as the actual aim of their practice or only a positive side effect. Moreover, this study's temporary suspension of disbelief and attempt to seriously and thoroughly understand the internal logic of the mystical tradition being studied is a step that opens the opportunity for future studies adopting this same approach to incorporate perspectives and methodologies from fields like Art and Literary Criticism. Religious Studies, seemingly a more comprehensive descriptor than the German term for the same field: *Religionswissenschaft*, should involve the study of religion from a myriad of theoretical and methodological approaches, not being limited by its origins and historical reliance on fields like Sociology, Philology, and History alone.

Summary of the Findings

We now finally turn to summarizing the answers to the questions laid out at the start of this monograph. The mysticism of Azad Rasool and his two heirs aims at the development of an affinity (*nisbat*) with God by means of cultivating an affinity with one's *shaykh*, the activation of subtle centers (*laṭā'if*) within the microcosm of the individual in accordance with a principle (*indirāj al-nihāyat fi'l-bidāyat*) that dictates beginning with the heart and attraction to God over the more difficult work of taming the lower soul. This is pursued by the *shaykh* guiding the student through a curriculum of meditative practice (*murāqaba*) and recitations (*dhikr* and the *waẓīfa*) as well as the former transmitting (*tawajjuh*) some of the blessings from his own level of attainment to assist in the latter's progress. But beyond only the identified key words, it also involves the accompaniment of the *shaykh* (*ṣuḥbat*) and meeting regularly to perform the above practices with other students.

Their mysticism is inextricably founded in Islam, the practices being structured around daily prayer, and it offers a way of deepening one's relationship with God on top of faithful performance of the prescriptions of the faith. The affinity sought with God is held to strengthens one's ability to follow the guidance of the Quran and *sunna* and lead to a state of *iḥsān*, results which Rasool respectively summarizes to an audience of mixed religious affiliation as becoming "a highly humane and moral person" and "doing what is beautiful." Thus, following Sufi thinkers going back at least to the time of

Junayd, Rasool sees the end result of the mystic path as becoming a good Muslim, which in a multi-faith setting he sees as fundamentally equivalent to being a good human being. In such a diverse international setting, he allowed non-Muslims to begin certain preliminary practices without converting to Islam, the very foundation of his mysticism. Even without ever embracing Islam, he felt that the practices of his lineage could be valuable for non-Muslim students, but to fully benefit and proceed beyond the preliminary practices, acceptance of Islam becomes necessary. For Rasool's two heirs, Hasan and Abdur Rashid, these features have remained fundamentally unchanged, although the latter has semantically expanded the meanings of some of these words along with (re-)introducing certain other ideas and practices from wider Sufi and Islamic tradition, past and present, to further build upon the tradition he inherited from Rasool. Additionally, for Abdur Rashid, the tangible result of such mysticism in this world goes beyond improved morality at the individual level and it leads to an especially active positive societal engagement.

This lineage and its above-summarized mysticism reached the West first through Rasool's establishment of the Institute of Search for Truth (IST) in Delhi in 1976 to appeal to Western spiritual seekers arriving in India as part of their search. With such seekers returning to their home countries and establishing groups there, it soon expanded into an international network that came to be known as The School of Sufi Teaching, wherein the *shaykh* regularly visited his students in the West, especially the US and UK, and these students would in turn come regularly to Delhi to visit him there. This was the expansion of a system of touring and mutual visitation between student and teacher that had begun in the South Asian context in this lineage around the turn of the 20th century, but which had precedents throughout the Muslim world since the very emergence of the *ṭarīqa*s beginning in the 12th century and the drive to spread particular mystical group identity affiliations, doctrines, and practices to a larger audience. This is how the *ṭarīqa*s were already transnational within a generation or two after their formation. Perhaps the only thing that is really significantly new here thus far is the extension of the scope to the non-Muslim West and intercontinental flights. After Rasool's passing in 2006, the largest group in the US continued under the leadership of his American *khalīfa*, Ahmed Abdur Rashid, while the remainder of the SOST network came under the leadership of his son Hamid Hasan. From an examination of Rasool's writings, we can detect a handful of major external shaping factors leading up to and part of this transfer, such as reformist critiques of Sufism, whether revivalist or modernist in nature, as well as a desire for a communal distinctiveness so as to be understood as different from the phenomenon that we have called the mediating *shaykh*. Yet these shaping factors were actually most felt in the South Asian context, usually before Rasool's own time. Nevertheless, some of the adaptations or distinctive features which they led to would help to make this lineage appealing to non-Muslim spiritual seekers in the Western context.

By far the most important shaping factor detected in Rasool's English-language writings is the viewpoint of his prospective student base. He first sought to appeal to, and indeed found students among, mostly non-Muslim Western spiritual seekers. This would gradually expand to include Muslims of various backgrounds, but in his writings we find a response to and dialogue with the interests, expectations, understandings, as well as apprehensions among his prospective students that were often shaped by preceding universalist, psychologized, and intellectually-oriented forms of alternative spirituality, including types of Sufism or Sufi-related pursuits that had already been present in the West before him, often with roots in Theosophical and/or Gurdjieffian circles, such as the writings of Idries Shah. Yet despite the significant shaping force of the understandings and expectations of this new audience, the main differences that we find upon an examination of his mysticism can be attributed to presentational aspects, with the actual mystical doctrines and practices being fundamentally unchanged.

He was able to achieve this primarily because what he had to offer was already much what his audience was looking for. It could thus easily resonate with them. Spiritual seekers in the West were already largely oriented Eastward, especially to India, something that can be seen developing among the German Romanticists, New England Transcendentalists, and Theosophy, but which was in full bloom in the 1960s and 70s by the time Rasool established IST. Language such as discovering one's inner potential, personal transformation, and elevating one's consciousness that are so prevalent on the alternative spirituality scene then and now, are quite easily applied to Sufi concepts like the *laṭā'if* without appreciably changing their meaning from how they appear in earlier Sufi writings and among

contemporary Islam 1st lines. Moreover, concepts like *INfB* or *khalwat dar anjuman* which allowed artisans in 14th-century Bukhara to maintain their occupations while also pursuing the Naqshbandī path, can easily be re-purposed and applied basically unchanged for contemporary seekers with busy lifestyles in London, Munich, and elsewhere.

Rasool uses the history of Sufism itself; which does indeed evince a cumulative and self-reflective, we might even say peer-reviewed, process of development; to present the teachings as the culmination of centuries of experimentation and refinement in the laboratories of the inner selves of successive generations of past saints, a history which is not only appealing for its claimed scientific-ness, but also attractive for those in search of an ancient perennial wisdom tradition, as so many in the West have sought since at least the times of Ficino and Mirandola in the Italian Renaissance. Such a presentation of the history of Sufism, which indeed has a basis in reality, whether or not we accept it as a scientific process, does not involve any change in actual mystical doctrine or practice, only in the presentation thereof. Moreover, with Sufism being criticized as a superstitious obstacle to modernization and the cause of Muslim decline by Muslim modernists from the 19th century on, the aspiration to reconcile mysticism with science was already on the agenda in South Asia well before the idea of introducing the lineage to the West ever arose. Yet such a program easily transferred and resonated in the West, since alternative spiritualities going back to the Theosophical Society and beyond have pursued a similar agenda.

Rasool did adopt some language from the discourse of the alternative spirituality scene in the West, such as on consciousness and inner potential, in order to culturally and linguistically translate established Sufi and Mujaddidī terminology, ideas, and practices into something understandable and appealing to his audience. Yet this has not appreciably changed the ideas or practices from how they are found in the Muslim world. He also adopted Western, modern, and scientific or academic sounding organizational names, namely the Institute of Search for Truth and the School of Sufi Teaching, to describe what is essentially the traditional *ṭarīqa* structure based around *murīd-murshīd* relationships. Other aspects which might on surface evaluation seem to be additions or changes for the new context include Rasool's engagement with academic research on Sufism as well as with the Western philosophical tradition, joining ranks with the likes of Bergson, Hegel, and Kant in a struggle for the supremacy of intuition over rationalism and scientific-materialism. Yet neither of these have resulted in changes to doctrine or practice, the former being used to argue for the Islamic origins of Sufism and the latter in fact began in India with his interest in Western philosophy well before the establishment of IST. This was perhaps rooted in a concern for reconciling mysticism with reason in the face of modernist critique, but it would serve him well later in presenting his teachings to a Western audience. Moreover, such engagement does not seem to have resulted in any modification to the Sufi doctrines and practices he taught.

Another major facilitating factor for resonance is the fact that similar cosmo-psychological frameworks to those found among Sufi theorists, and which can also be discerned in Sufi poetry, are also found in alternative spiritualities in the West. This is true whether these are based in a Neoplatonic-style emanationism or another framework that shares some similar structures, premises, and objectives. Examples include the existence of a spiritual realm, the need to turn away from the material world and one's base nature to realize their higher nature, returning to a primordial unitive state and ascending toward an ultimate reality, the need to look inwardly to realize this, and the idea that such an encounter results in the mystic being a better person, however that may be defined.

Furthermore, the fact that this lineage is one of those that emphasizes *murāqaba* practiced through a set of intentions offers a number of potential areas of resonance, such as the rational and systematic approach of proceeding through a step-by-step curriculum of intentions under the instruction and guidance of the *shaykh* to travel and advance through the various levels of Sufi cosmo-psychology. This systematized rationality is not to mention the appeal and popularity of "initiation" and progression through successive degrees among esoteric currents in the West with substantial roots in initiatic traditions, whether masonic, Rosicrucian, tantric Buddhist, or otherwise.

Yet Rasool's exhortation to throw away one's books and meditate, which has precedence in medieval Sufi tradition, notably with Rumi, might not be met so easily with those not ready to part with their books. From such a perspective, the emphasis on practices to the exclusion of speculative mysticism might be a source of damping for those who are interested in Sufism primarily as the source of a perennial wisdom tradition, something that also illustrates Rasool's limits in how far he was willing

to go to appeal to new audiences. His choosing to retain the simplicity and rigor of the teachings, including up to four hours or more of daily practices for advanced students, without making it any easier or more entertaining for his new audience by adding any bells or whistles so to speak, has probably resulted in a smaller following. Yet among those who endure is an esprit de corps sustained by a sense of belonging to an authentic tradition that seriously pursues a disciplined program of practice.

Rasool's orientation toward practices might thus instead be a source of resonance for others who are disenchanted with simply reading or talking about spirituality and attending the lecture circuit of spiritual teachers, and who are instead in search of something practical, a meditative method or spiritual technology, by which to experience such sublime realities for oneself. Thus, the practice-orientation also ties into the *experientation* of mysticism in the modern era and the rhetoric of experience. Through concrete practices, one is not so much reading or talking about higher realities as they are seeking to personally experience them, which of course ties back to the appeal to the scientific method to try the practices for oneself. Yet the practices and the experiences said to be undergone while performing them also have a long history in Sufism, such as found in the polychromatic visions and increasingly complex methods of performing *dhikr* found among the medieval-era Kubrāwīs, whose teachings were discussed and adopted among the earliest Naqshbandīs.

While on the topic of visions, Rasool's deemphasis, though not elimination, of aspects like visions or miracles presents a very rational mysticism, consistent with the de-mystification of mysticism in the modern era, but this was actually a Mujaddidī feature already present in the thought of Sirhindī, who lived in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Moreover, pre-modern examples of downplaying visions and/or miracles can be found in Sufism all the way back to Tustarī in 9th-century Basra, not to mention in statements attributed to Bisṭāmī as well as Kharaqānī, as noted in the historical survey. On a similar de-mystified note, the fact that Rasool does not highlight instrumentalizing facets of Sufi tradition, such as healing and the distribution of protective amulets, despite their presence in his line as recently as Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz, to appeal to potential Western students with a background in the HHM or an interest in the occult, shows not only the limitations of his willingness to cater to the whims of Western audiences, but also his clear and unequivocal focus on cultivating one's *nisbat* with God through the practices. Such deemphasis of instrumentalizing aspects of Sufism may also of course be a sign of adaptation in the face of modernist and/or revivalist reformist critique.

The characteristic silence, stillness, and sobriety of this lineage's practices probably also makes them more appealing to most Westerners than would the intoxication and highly emotional devotionalism displayed by some other Sufi and even Naqshbandī lineages. Moreover, the emphasis in this lineage is on the daily individual performance of one's assigned practices supplemented with weekly group meditation and regular retreats, as opposed to the reverse in some other lineages wherein the practical focus is more on collective vocal *dhikr* supplemented with some form of daily litany. Such a feature makes this lineage individualistic enough to be appealing in the West, but also collective enough to still remain within the fold of Islamic Sufism.

One major potential source of damping in the West, however, is the requirement to submit to the guidance of a *shaykh*. Yet the kind of low-key approach to the position of the *shaykh* that characterizes this lineage, tends to reduce this as a problem. This is not to mention the fact that having spiritual teachers from the mystic East was quite en vogue by the time Rasool started to expand beyond his primarily Muslim student base in India, thus this need probably resonated with some and fulfilled something they were already looking for. What we have described as this lineage's low-key approach with respect to the position of the *shaykh* has also probably made the requirement of submitting to a guide more acceptable in Western settings. Yet this was no adaptation for the West, as it was also found in the biographies of 19th- and 20th-century *shaykh*s of this line in India, something that might well be read as a response to and critique of more mediatory styles of leadership and pedagogy, with such aspects as mass *bay'a* initiations, in contrast to the carefully considered and not immediate giving of *bay'a* in this line, which is credited to 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh. Moreover, meditation retreats with visiting spiritual teachers, already prominent in the West and which we saw provide a structure within which SOST could expand into Germany, found an easy corollary in the tours of the *shaykh* that we already saw in the South Asian context beginning with Ḥāmid Ḥasan 'Alawī, continued by Sa'īd Khān, broadened to the West under Rasool, and further expanded globally by Hamid Hasan.

Given that this lineage is one of those that offers an established curriculum of meditative practice, the *shaykh*'s role as a guide and a teacher is more readily apparent than his mediatory function, although this role is certainly not lost, as *nisbat* and *tawajjuh* are among the key defining terms here. But the mediation and status of the guide is certainly toned down in comparison to lineages with what might be called mediating *shaykh*s, where the sense of a cult of personality is far greater. Those groups often emphasize love of the *shaykh* and collective activities, like vibrant *julūs* processions and animated loud group *dhikr*, all embedded in wider South Asian social networks. Such groups offer less appeal for the Western spiritual seeker in search of meditative practices, techniques, or spiritual technologies. Yet Rasool's line is one of those that offers exactly that, he already had what they were looking for and was thus able to adjust its presentation to a Western audience to enhance its appeal, while leaving the actual mystical doctrines and practices of his lineage intact and unchanged on a fundamental level.

Beyond areas of resonance that negate the need for Rasool to really make any substantial changes to his mysticism at all, yet another factor that has allowed this form of mysticism to be transferred to Western contexts while remaining basically unchanged is the very process of its development, which has led to an increasingly complex but also standardized and codified set of transferrable practices. We might see a process of vernacularization by relying on terminology and discourse which are diffused through the alternative spirituality scene, like "consciousness" and "inner potential." Yet this is the expression of these ideas in the local language and idiom while relying on established Sufi concepts, doctrines, and practices and transmitting standard curricula. Because of this crystallization of tradition, perhaps now more than ever, changes between generations may be less common. There is a consciousness of preserving tradition unchanged and as it was passed down. Thus, any kind of intergenerational change due to the independent thought of a given *shaykh* or to processes of vernacularization is greatly limited in scope. This crystallization of tradition can be contrasted with the greater fluidity in earlier generation in which these doctrines were still developing. For instance, the *laṭīfa* models of three Kubrāwī *shaykh*s within a century of one another all rapidly evolve, building on one another, but also introducing entirely new concepts. Similarly, just four steps in the *silsila* after Sirhindī, Walī Allāh propounded a fifteen-*laṭīfa* model based on his predecessor's version.

Hence, just as Sufism evolved and became more standardized over time, so did the *ṭarīqa*s. The Naqshbandiyya, and for that matter the Mujaddidiyya, did not come into being *sui generis* and fully formed in their present state, or more accurately, varieties of states. Its systematizers and theoreticians, like Pārsā and Sirhindī, relied not only on the teachings of their direct teachers, but they also drew from the vast wellspring of wider preceding Sufi thought. In the cases of Rasool and Hasan, they certainly do draw from and cite preceding Sufi tradition, but the evolution of their lineage is seen as having reached its pinnacle with 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh, after whom the time came to spread his order "from East to West, and from land to sea," and as unchanged as possible. For Abdur Rashid, while the teachings of 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh as found in the five curricula are likewise basically immutable, he exhibits a greater degree of fluidity elsewhere, especially through his *dars*, though always drawing from and basing his teachings in wider Islamic and Sufi tradition. This is reminiscent of earlier generations before the developmental process reached its culmination and became crystallized.

Considering generational change after Rasool, we find Hamid Hasan teaching the same system as his father, though with further streamlined and concise explanations, mastering the art of the sound bite to effectively reach, appeal to and be relevant to his audience. But he does so without making any appreciable changes or additions to mystical doctrine or practice. Similarly, Abdur Rashid has also retained the five curricula of spiritual training from 'Abd al-Bārī Shāh intact and unchanged from how it was passed to him from Rasool. This unchanging aspect of tradition remains at the core of his teachings and the practices of his students. Yet appended to these basically static and codified core teachings, we find additional aspects that are not part of the main practices of the order outlined by his predecessors; like his *dars*, *ṣuḥbat*, *muḥāsaba*, *fikr*, and collective vocalized *dhikr*; as well as new ideas drawn from wider Sufi and Islamic tradition along with what we might call shifts in doctrinal emphasis. Perhaps the most notable example of the latter is a greater stress on the names and attributes of God; although still asserting, like his teacher, that the goal is to go beyond the names and attributes to the essence. Abdur Rashid discusses the names and attributes more than his *shaykh* did, but he has not changed their position in the cosmological hierarchy, nor has he altered the ultimate goal of travelling in the essence. Notably, Abdur Rashid has continued the trajectory of asserting the compatibility of Sufism with science and reason that was started in the Indian context by his predecessors, Sa'īd Khān

and Rasool, but taking it even further in his lectures. Furthermore, in Abdur Rashid we find not only resonance, but indeed confluence, as pre-existing structures found corollaries in Sufi tradition, such as how their shared community, which was originally an *ashram*, evolved into a Sufi *khānaqāh*, or how his lectures that had begun prior to his meeting Rasool came to be the Friday *khutba* and regular meetings for *ṣuḥbat*.

The greatest obstacle to Rasool imparting his teachings as unchanged as possible to the West, however, was the aversion to embracing any particular faith among many Western spiritual seekers, that is the anti-dogmatism and anti-exotericism that Sedgwick describes as characterizing the reception of Sufism among Westerners. Thus, here we find adaptation in the fact that Rasool allowed prospective non-Muslim students to try the first ten preliminary practices for themselves without the requirement of conversion. Yet to proceed any further in the curriculum does require the acceptance of Islam as well as cementing the student-teacher relationship through *bay'a*. This same policy has continued unchanged with Rasool's two heirs. While such opening of the preliminary practices to non-Muslims constitutes a change for this particular lineage, we find precedence for this in other Sufi lineages in the Indian context, including notably at the Delhi *khānaqāh* in the 18th century with Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān's accepting Hindu disciples.

For Rasool, as for both of his heirs, there is a deliberate avoidance of pressuring individuals into conversion, and when someone does convert, they are to pace themselves, seeing the process of *sunnat*-izing one's life as a necessarily gradual one if it is to be lasting. Moreover, while instruction in basic Islamic belief and practice are provided, generally in accordance with the Ḥanafī Sunni *madhhab*, the exact details of how one lives the faith are to largely be guided by the individual's own heart and conscience. This may indeed be seen as an adaptation for the West, since Rasool's own teacher, Sa'īd Khān, is described as having been quite emphatic about assiduous adherence to the most minute details of the *sharī'a*, yet we also find reports of him criticizing overly literalistic readings of scripture. It also contrasts with contemporary related lines that are strongly *fiqh*-oriented as well as the earlier positions of Sirhindī, Walī Allāh, and Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd, but their efforts were probably what laid the groundwork for this lineage to retain its Islamicity through this transfer. As far as how Islam is understood and lived among our case study lineage today, there is an emphasis on the spirit of the law over form, on imitating the character of the Prophet over specific cultural details of his life, being context adaptive in the interpretation and application of scripture, and emphasizing the inner meaning over excessive literalism. Such features, which can also be found in preceding Sufi tradition including within this lineage, also make conversion to Islam less of an obstacle for anti-exoterically minded individuals in the West, but it can also make the teachings appealing to Muslims of various backgrounds.

Correspondingly, among all three *shaykh*s, we find marked pluralistic intra- and interfaith perspectives, and all recognize value in other faiths and different schools of thought in Islam and Sufism. All three welcome students of any faith or none at all, including those from all of the different denominations within Islam. Yet Abdur Rashid, perhaps reflecting his approaching Islam from outside of the South Asian context wherein Sunni-Shi'a divides were reified through generations of competing interests and communalism, takes this intra-Muslim pluralism a step further than earlier generations in his line, being willing to draw from the full range of Islamic thought, including for example Ismā'īlī thinkers. But among all three *shaykh*s, the prescriptions of the *sharī'a* are seen not solely as duties to be followed because they are commanded by God, but they are also explained rationally and in terms of their beneficial role in spiritual development. Such rationalization and spiritualization of the *sharī'a* might seem like an adaptation for the Western setting, yet again, one can look back within their own *silsila* to the pre-colonial Shāh Walī Allāh for precedence. What should probably be seen as an adaptation, however, is the fact that Rasool's writings and self-presentation of SOST today offers a more ecumenical or universalist self-presentation. This contrasts to the Circle Group, which presents a more immediately Islamic image. For instance, introductory SOST literature tends to use the word "God" in English, whereas Abdur Rashid more often uses "Allāh." This difference is probably largely due to the fact that the latter is less interested in the work of spreading the order as such to large numbers of people and more concerned with positive societal engagement, such as through his secular non-profit organization, in which he certainly makes use of more universal language. That said, Abdur Rashid

would likely point to the fact that he uses the language most appropriate to his audience. Whereas the Circle Group is largely speaking to individuals already personally connected with Islam and Sufism, in his positive societal engagement work, such as through his secular non-profit organization, he certainly makes use of more universal language. Other examples of this humanistic presentation are of course found in Rasool's translating *iḥsān* as "doing what is beautiful" or when he explains that "the true purpose of Sufism is to transform the seeker into a highly humane and moral person by building the seeker's character through spiritual training."

On the final research question of whether, and if so how, the representatives of our case study lineage pursue social or political activism, none of the three *shaykh*s pursue what most would consider political activism, though they do in different ways advocate positive engagement in society. During the course of the 19th century, a seemingly quietist position developed in this lineage but this took what we might consider an activist turn entering into the 20th century, though still comparatively quietist *vis-à-vis* more politically oriented ventures, with the drive to propagate the teachings of ʻAbd al-Bārī Shāh. Continuing in this direction, Rasool and Hasan view the best way they can be of value and service to their fellow humankind is by spreading the teachings of this order to the world. To this end, Rasool created IST and later SOST and Hasan continues and builds upon the work of making this lineage and its practices available to a larger audience internationally. They do not offer any organized approach to manifesting in society the moral transformation which their spiritual training is held to bring about. Much like how they allow the individual to be guided by their heart and by their conscience in determining how to understand and live the *sharīʻa*, they also allow whatever positive contribution their students decide to make in the world to develop organically, and in whatever form they might be guided from within toward, even if such contribution is simply living in the world as "a highly humane and moral person," and thereby contributing to making it a better place.

In contrast, Abdur Rashid places less emphasis on propagating the teachings of this particular lineage to a wider audience. While serving as a Sufi *shaykh* for his comparatively small group of students, he devotes significant time and energy toward what he feels is the tangible manifestation of their Sufi practices, such as the work of the secular non-profit organization Legacy International, with its range of educational and professional development initiatives in such fields as peacebuilding, development, environmental protection, and healthcare. They maintain that all of their programs are built around "universal values" which they seek to encourage participants to manifest in the world. This too might in some ways be seen as an example of the confluence of his early social activism and later emphasis on service with what has been held to be the characteristic activism of the Naqshbandiyya. The secular nature of his organization and the emphasis on universal values, however, may seem to contrast with the *sharīʻa*-oriented activism of past Naqshbandī figures. In their respective times and places, their scopes were limited to particular Muslim communities within specific regional contexts and sometimes in rather turbulent circumstances, yet for Abdur Rashid, the scope has broadened to include all of humanity. While he and his students adhere to the *sharīʻa* themselves, they seek to inspire others to realize the universal values within themselves and to manifest those in the world. Whether or not this really constitutes a change depends on how one interprets the message of Islam, which is beyond the scope of this monograph. But in Abdur Rashid's view, such humanistic ideals and universal values in fact constituted the very core of the Prophet Muḥammad's message.

Overall, as far as the question of whether or not we are looking at something new with this lineage, of course, as with every new generation, time, and place, we are always looking at something new, but while contextual factors have changed, the main mystical doctrines and practices of this lineage have been preserved without appreciable modification for the Western context. This was possible because, on the one hand, this lineage already offered much what its new audience in the West was looking for, and on the other, Rasool set clear limits on how far he was willing to go to appeal to this new audience. This may have kept their numbers small, but it has ensured continuity and preservation of tradition. Hasan has continued such an approach, as has Abdur Rashid with regard to the central teachings and practices of the order, though the latter also uses this core as the foundation on which he continues to build in terms of doctrine and practice, but drawing from and in dialogue with preceding Islamic and Sufi tradition.

Appendix: Experiential Investigation

For this appendix, I will be writing less formally and in the first person given the highly subjective and personal nature of the present topic. It also seems prudent at the outset to provide some background on my own religio-spiritual history. I am a long-time, self-described agnostic, though one that leans strongly toward the skeptical side of the spectrum. I am nevertheless open to broader ways of defining "God," for instance, as an abstract principle or notion of pure love or ultimate goodness. I was raised in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, popularly known as Mormonism, before starting to drift away from it in my mid-teens, but certainly without any hard feelings. While and after becoming inactive from the church, as a teenager, I experimented with some controlled substances, including on one occasion at around 17-years-old, LSD. This limited exploration ceased abruptly and permanently prior to becoming an Army officer cadet upon entering university. While I would not encourage such blind and haphazard experimentation, I did find that my single isolated experience with LSD induced in me a profound sense of wellbeing, joy, love, self-transcendence, and even a feeling of unification or at least profound connection with all of existence.

I found that immediately then and even decades later up to the present, the memory of the feelings from this experience and the new perspective it gave me helped me in coping with what had been a long battle with depression and social anxiety in my teen years, as well as the inevitable ups and downs of life since then. To me, these feelings that soothed my terrible pain so completely seemed to be the same ones described by the great mystics of the past in their accounts of the unitive state. I found encouragement that such a state might be achieved without reliance on chemical induction. Similarly, although also no longer active in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and no longer believing in immaterial spiritual realities, something of their mysticism remained inextricably with me. Rather than becoming disenchanted, I retained this profound sense of awe and wonder. Though entirely unsure of what I was seeking at the time, in hindsight, I believe I felt exactly as I do now: that the mystics of the past and present might have insights that could help us in coping with the human condition, finding happiness and fulfillment, and becoming a source of goodness in the world for the benefit of all.

Since then, I have looked into a range of what I termed "alternative spiritualities" above, probably involving more reading than actual practice, but I have definitely tried a range of different practices as well. This exploration was always of a more scientific character in the sense that, after leaving the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, I never believed in the existence of non-physical spiritual entities or realms, but felt that religion was a precursor to modern psychology that might still hold invaluable insights for coping with the human condition. It was with a similar sentiment, combined with the desire to promote interfaith understanding and respect between Muslims and non-Muslims in the post-9/11 era, that I embarked on the present study.

In my personal life, the tradition I have explored the most by far over the years – in fact the closest thing I have to a religious belief system, though without personal belief in anything for which no physical evidence is available, so more a philosophy – is a form of traditional Japanese martial arts that has a strong philosophical-mystical dimension rooted in Shintoism and Shugendo, a blend incorporating elements from Japanese esoteric Buddhism (Mikkyo), Taoism, and folk religion. My broader exploration, however, has run the gamut of the field of alternative spirituality, admittedly sometimes out of casual curiosity grabbing straight from whatever happened to be on the popular New Age shelf, not always the most refined material I acknowledge, while at other times being a bit more discerning. Just to free list for a moment on the range of things I have looked into throughout my life, what comes to mind, beyond academic literature on the world's religio-spiritual traditions, includes various forms of Yoga, Qi Gong, Kabbalah, Hermeticism, Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, the ceremonial magic of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn as well as Aleister Crowley, Buddhist mindfulness meditation (via Jon Kabat-Zinn, Thich Nhat Hanh, Pema Chödrön, and others), Baba Ram Dass, Jack Kerouac, Alan Watts, Joseph Campbell, Carl Jung, Jiddu Krishnamurti, Carlos Casteneda, Dan Millman, Kahlil Gibran, Paulo Coelho, Robert Anton Wilson, Idries Shah, and Gurdjieff.

In fact, the photo of Azad Rasool wearing a *qarāqul* cap on the cover of *Turning Toward the Heart* could not but evoke in me early on, after having roughly compared his teachings with what I knew of Mujaddidī practice from my MA thesis, a feeling that I had discovered a real version of

Gurdjieff, one with a real brotherhood that was verifiable and had been studied. By this, I mean the Naqshbandiyya as opposed to the likely fabricated, but possibly Naqshbandī-inspired, Sarmoung Brotherhood. Again, it is not the objective scholar's purview to assess for the authenticity of spiritual teachers. But more than that, based on my familiarity with Arthur Buehler's notion of the mediating *shaykh*, I came to the conclusion that I had also actually found one of those rare treasures he had spoken of (treasures due to their rarity, but perhaps more), a *shaykh* who was actually still teaching the practices, a conclusion that Buehler soon confirmed to me in an email that he concurred with. Thus, my discovering this lineage echoed the searches of both J.G. Bennett and Buehler. But in light of such an exploratory background, it may be clearer why I found it odd, even impossible, to attempt to write about any type of mysticism without actually ever having tried to experience it myself. So now we turn to my experiences during this research.

Starting in September of 2014, before this research even began, for several weeks after receiving PDF instructions in an email for the first practice and having some telephone conversations with the main group leader of SOST in Germany to clarify any questions, I was able to maintain a quite consistent daily practice for several weeks. Yet that quickly devolved into missing several days and even weeks at a time. I had been expecting to move along to the other *laṭā'if* a bit more quickly, but it soon became clear, and as was explained to me early on, people are generally kept "sitting on the heart" for a while. This first practice was actually rather difficult for me. From my exploration of other traditions, I was used to easing more slowly into meditative practices in terms of duration, such as starting with five or ten minutes and working up to longer sessions gradually, and also not every day of the week. Other traditions also had more complex instructions, such as counting breaths in a specific manner. But with SOST, the very first practice started quite simply with turning my attention to my heart, silently making the intention, and waiting for 35-45 minutes, to be performed each day of the week without any days off.

It was not easy to establish this as a daily practice. Whenever I attended group meetings in person (usually well over an hour's drive away from my home), I found my enthusiasm for the practices restored and I would continue going strong for a week or two before my consistency would again falter. The entire first year was characterized by these spurts of diligence interrupted by troughs of laziness or negligence, even well after the fourth month, when I had submitted by dissertation proposal to study this lineage and had committed to myself to diligently perform the practices at least for the duration of my research. Just after the one-year mark from the time I had started the practices was the release of the German edition of *Turning Toward the Heart*, and Shaykh Hamid visited Munich for a book reading followed by the first annual SOST retreat in Germany in 2015. During my meeting with the *shaykh* there, I admitted my shortcomings and he explained that missing one's practices happens from time to time, and advised that if this occurs, not to miss the next day's practices, and if one misses two days in a row, certainly not to miss the third day. After that, I adhered to his advice and it helped in making this a part of my daily routine. I left that session with the *shaykh* at the first retreat with no new instructions to move to the next *laṭīfa*. I would remain sitting on the heart for a full second year, after all, during my first year of performing the practice, my effort was half-hearted so to speak. But I did leave with substantially renewed enthusiasm and the *shaykh*'s helpful instructions.

It was during my next meeting with the *shaykh* at the second retreat in 2016, after a much more consistent year of practice, that he instructed me to proceed to performing the second preliminary practice, starting with, for the first month, setting the intention on the *rūḥ* only and thereafter including the *qalb* and *rūḥ* together. As one might imagine, after more than two years of directing my attention to the *qalb* at the lower left side of my chest, moving to the *rūḥ* at the lower right was a completely different feeling. I then remained on this second lesson for another two years, during which time I attended different meetings in Germany as well as the 2017 retreat there and another in Hyderabad just two months before that. It was at the 2018 retreat that Shaykh Hamid instructed me to proceed to the next *laṭīfa*, following a similar procedure from the last time, performing *murāqaba* on the *sirr* alone for one month and after that, including the *qalb*, *rūḥ*, and *sirr* all together at once. Again, after two years on the *qalb* and *rūḥ*, this was quite a different sensation.

I was unable to attend the 2019 retreat in Germany. My personal savings and veteran's benefits, which had been the sole sources of funding for this research, had more than run out and I had to take a full-time job as a UPS deliveryman by day alongside proofreading by night to be able to complete this research. Thus, I had to work during the days of the retreat. After explaining my situation to the *shaykh*

by email, he replied expressing his understanding of my absence and his well wishes and prayers for my situation to improve and for the successful completion of my dissertation, but also, to my surprise, he instructed me to proceed to the fourth preliminary lesson, that is to proceed to the *khafī*. Throughout the course of this research, the only practices I performed under the instruction of Shaykh Hamid were these four preliminary exercises, but I did these on a daily basis for over half a decade, excepting the occasional missing a day and of course the first year of ups and downs. Thus, I speak from a limited perspective in comparison with many other more ardent practitioners, but I did devote a substantial amount of time to seriously pursuing these practices.

On the whole, performing *murāqaba* is a pleasant experience and I will return to that side below, but as mentioned, beginning to establish the first practice in my daily routine was difficult. This was true not only for the above-described reasons, but also because of simple restlessness, having a hard time sitting still, as well as doubts, distractions, and unwelcome thoughts. I sometimes doubted what I was doing with my time, since a noticeable portion of my day, that could have been used for work on my dissertation, was being taken up by just sitting, seemingly unproductively from the perspective of finishing my research. Thus, I sometimes had trouble pulling away from pressing tasks. Moreover, in the beginning, the flow of stray thoughts was especially manifold, and what mindfulness meditation teachers call the "monkey mind," to describe the stream of random thoughts rushing through the mind and pulling it in different directions, would certainly fit here too. But sometimes these thoughts were especially uncomfortable: sitting alone with myself in a silent dark room, occasionally thoughts would surface that were quite unpleasant, things I had said or done in the past that were selfish, inconsiderate, rude, impatient, or otherwise hurtful to others, might come back to painfully confront me. I could not help but interpret these experiences as a sort of painful but necessary purification. Such unpleasant thoughts and difficulties became much less of an issue with time, especially once regularity was established during the second year. It became easier. And as mentioned, on the whole, even from the very beginning, the experience was by far a primarily quite pleasant one.

With experience, stray thoughts settled faster, though not always, and I would generally arrive at a tranquil and happy but stable feeling of general well-being. This feeling is not unlike one I recall from my youth in church, where it was commonly described as "feeling the holy ghost" and which usually occurred for me in the context of inspiring and faith-affirming religious discussions, such as what members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints refer to as "bearing one's testimony," as takes place during monthly "fast and testimony meetings." I would, however, categorize this earlier experience as slightly more emotionally charged, such as resulting in "goosebumps," whereas the feeling from *murāqaba* for me was not entirely different, but on the whole, a bit calmer and more toned down, perhaps reflecting the characteristic sobriety of this lineage. On the other hand, the feelings I experienced while performing *murāqaba* were substantially, even exponentially, more subdued than my one chemically induced experience with LSD, which was what I can only assume to be is meant by the designation of a "unitive state." But then again, from the perspective of their Mujaddidī Sufi path, I had not even really started beyond the first few preliminary practices, and far from where, according to Sirhindi's cosmology, *waḥdat al-wujūd* takes place (wherein unitive feelings would be expected), and much less the more sublime goal of *waḥdat al-shuhūd*. In any case, the sober, serene state felt in *murāqaba* could usually transfer over into daily life, framing my re-entry to the world, so to speak. Even if the thoughts did not settle over the entire course of the meditation, afterwards, I was usually nonetheless in a more tranquil state than beforehand.

I did not experience any visual phenomena of colored lights that I do not think were produced by my own mental projections, especially from having read so much about the *laṭā'if* and their color associations. All such fleeting photisms occurred in a state of complete wakefulness, and as we saw from Rasool's description, for him visual phenomena in such a state are usually the products of one's own mind, whereas those in *ghunūdgī* may carry greater meaning. This of course brings us to consider *ghunūdgī*, the drifting state, described as somewhere between sleep and wakefulness. Using this description as a guideline, I would say that I have experienced this quite often, though without any visual phenomena or dreams that I recall. After over five years of practice, it even became the norm to experience what I understand to be *ghunūdgī*, but it was not uncommon for me to experience this even from the very beginning.

Reflecting on it for a moment, such a description of a state between wakefulness and sleep sounds much like REM sleep, which is between wakefulness and deep sleep, and is a state in which vivid dreams can occur. Thus, I would not be surprised if a researcher were to attach an EEG to someone performing *murāqaba* and who had entered a state of *ghunūdgī* for the readings to indicate some stage in the sleep cycle, maybe even REM. Perhaps this is how we have such vivid accounts from the Kubrāwīs. Yet this of course would only explain the physiology, what is happening in the material world, and Sufis would maintain that there is a much vaster and more significant inner world to be considered. Whatever the case, in my opinion, sessions of *murāqaba*, and the accompanying afterglow, are most pleasant when *ghunūdgī* is reached. Perhaps unsurprisingly, in addition to the serene state, I usually felt quite refreshed afterwards. Again, we might look for physiological explanations while Sufis would offer meta-physiological ones, but it is worth noting that while I have on many occasions felt worse after taking a nap (sleep inertia), I do not recall ever having had such an experience after *murāqaba*.

While I could go into much greater depth about a range of other aspects of my experiences in taking part in experiential investigation over the course of this research, before addressing what the results of this practice may have been, I will consider just one final aspect of my experiences from *muraqaba*: sensations in the area of the *laṭā'if*. From having tried different exercises in traditions like Yoga and Qi Gong involving what is popularly called "energy work," which for me also seemed somewhat analogous to waiting to receive *baraka* in *murāqaba*, in my own experience, if you direct your attention to any part of your body for long enough, you can feel sensations there. Hence, I was not surprised that from the very first time I performed the initial preliminary meditation, I could feel something, a sensation in the location of the *qalb* where I was directing my attention. The sensation for me personally was sometimes tingling, occasionally sharp, but most often best described as a dull pressure. With time, this feeling became increasingly pronounced and easier to feel, a process that was repeated for the next three *laṭā'if*.

As summarized, I did not work on all four *laṭā'if* for the same amount of time and the degree of their respective sensations were graded, the *qalb* offering the strongest sensation, followed by the *rūḥ* as slightly fainter, then the *sirr* somewhat subtler and the *khafī* even subtler still, not unlike some of the above descriptions as increasingly subtle levels. Such gradation is not, in my experience, entirely static and sometimes it felt as though whichever one had the strongest sensation could change. For instance, when I was meditating on the *qalb* and *rūḥ*, for some time the latter felt dominant. Whatever the case, even today I sometimes, throughout the course of the day, notice the sensations in the locations associated with the *laṭā'if*. It is almost as if, over the last few years, the sensations of each *laṭīfa* were impressed (*naqsh*) in their respective locations permanently (*band*). In fact, sometimes, without even stating a *niyya*, I direct my attention to them and find immediate access to something of the tranquil state from *murāqaba*, something which has also given me serenity but also strength to push through difficult times, especially during the long hours involved in completing this research. Although my exact definition of God may differ from that of a theologian, Islamic or otherwise, for me the *laṭā'if* offer a connection to something higher, an ultimate good, the ideal forms of such qualities as mercy and compassion.

Before concluding, one important question is whether or not I continued with the practices after completing my dissertation and thus becoming free of the initial commitment I made to myself to continue this practice throughout the full duration of my research. The short answer is that I tried, but in the long run, fell out of practice. In the version of my dissertation submitted in March of 2020, I reflected on this:

> "Performing *murāqaba* has become an important part of my daily routine, I enjoy it and as I discuss in a moment, I find it personally beneficial. This is not to mention how, due to writing my dissertation about this lineage, it has now become a significant part of my life. Thus, I cannot see myself stopping anytime soon. That being said, at this point in my life, I do not see myself converting to Islam, or any other religion; but then again, neither did many others in SOST who eventually did just that."

As far as what followed, just three days after submitting an earlier version of this study as my doctoral dissertation on March 19, 2020, the first COVID-19 lockdowns began in Germany. The tragic

pandemic changed much, but regarding my meditative practice, the situation allowed me slightly more time to be consistent in performing *murāqaba*, though most of my day was spent either parenting, proofreading, or searching for a job. The pandemic also provided additional opportunities for remote meditation and interaction with others who were also engaged in SOST's practices. For instance, remote meetings over Zoom, within Germany and internationally, became the norm and there were also special online events and lectures. Of particular note, a kind Iraqi-born SOST member in the London group regularly hosted wonderful children-friendly Zoom meetings for those interested in learning and practicing Arabic. I immensely enjoyed attending these with my son, who was just over two years old at the time. Because of the association with SOST, this further bolstered my practice, much like group meetings.

Six months after submitting my dissertation, however, still unable to find work in academia (or otherwise) and needing to somehow help my wife, a schoolteacher, in supporting our family, I finally found work as a hotel night auditor alongside continued academic proofreading to supplement this minimum-wage job. Shortly thereafter and on top of these jobs as well as watching our son after daycare, I also started part-time work stocking grocery shelves during the day. Thus, my wife and I were perpetually overworked and sleep deprived. I hardly had time to perform my assigned *murāqaba*, if at all, let alone another practice. It was during this time, just before the grocery store job, that it came up in discussion with a senior student that I had not yet been assigned the practice of *durūd sharif*, but that I was sitting on the *khafī*. He explained that I should have been given that practice by now and provided me with the PDF instructions for it. I tried to incorporate it into my daily practice, but immediately encountered difficulty. The problems arose not because of the content or nature of the practice, but simply from a lack of sufficient time to perform it alongside *murāqaba*.

Within a few months, I was not only not performing *durūd*, but *murāqaba* had fallen to the wayside along with it. This was also during a time of personal trauma as well as professional and existential uncertainty in my life, as I was then informed that the second reviewer of my dissertation had given this research a failing grade on the grounds, inter alia, that I had lost my objectivity, advocated a post-rational approach, and was promoting the views of my case study lineage (none of which being true). This may have also caused me to subconsciously want to distance myself from the practices out of frustration and a desire to prove the falsity of these accusations. This was a tough time in life. I truly would like to have continued performing the practices, and believe I would have benefited from them, but it simply was not in the cards with my life circumstances from 2021 to 2023. It was not the assignment of *durūd* or the negative assessment of my dissertation that caused me to stop, rather they only helped precipitate the inevitable.

In late 2022, I began a career that is more commensurate with my qualifications and experience. I now have the luxury of some free time in which I could return to performing the practices. Nevertheless, at this point in my life, I cannot imagine making such an investment of time in the practices. This is certainly not because I do not find them valuable, only that I have chosen to prioritize other things. These include, to name just a few, pursuing professional development in my current field, my enduring practice of traditional Japanese martial arts, and serving as a Den Leader in my son's Cub Scout Pack. This is certainly not to say that others could not both perform the practices and live an otherwise fulfilling life outside of their Sufi practices. I know this is possible from my interactions with multiple practitioners of this lineage who live fascinating, multifaceted lives. It is only that the number and nature of the things I prioritize do not allow sufficient time for it. If there were more hours in the day, I would not hesitate to continue as I had during my research.

But now we turn to the final question of whether or not my character improved as a result of this practice. While I do indeed feel that I had become a better person at the end of this research than when I started it, I also know that I have a long way to go. What I mean by this is that during my research, I found that performing *murāqaba* each day helped me to stay connected to my ideals and remember to strive toward becoming the kind of person I would like to be.

Selected Glossary

adab: "etiquette."
akhfā: "most hidden," "superarcanum."
'ālam-i khalq: "world of creation," the physical world.
'ālam-i amr: "world of command," the spiritual world (within the sphere of contingent existence).
'anāṣir-i arb'a: "the four elements," which comprise the physical body.
'aql: intellect.
baqā': "abiding" in God.
bāṭin: the "inner," or esoteric.
baraka (pl. *barakāt*): "blessings."
bay'a: oath of allegiance to one's *shaykh*.
dars (pl. *durūs*): "lesson."
dā'irat-i imkānī: "circle of possibility," or "sphere of contingent existence," the entire created world including the spiritual *'ālam-i amr*, the liminal *'ālam-i mithāl* and the physical *'ālam-i khalq*.
dhikr: "remembrance,"

1. "Any act that is in keeping with the *sharī'a* […]."[1]
2. recitation of specific formulae prescribed by one's *shaykh*.
3. continuously maintaining God in one's awareness throughout daily life.

dhikr-i jalī: "vocalized remembrance."
dhikr-i khafī: "silent remembrance."
dhikr-i ism-i dhāt: "remembrance of the name of the Essence."
dhikr-i nafī wa ithbāt: "remembrance of negation and affirmation."
du'ā: supplicatory prayer.
dunyā: the material world.
durūd-i sharīf or *durūd*: supplication for blessings upon the Prophet and his family.
fanā': "annihilation."
ghayb: the "unseen" or supersensory.
ghunūdgī: "drifting," a state reached during *murāqaba* which is described as being in between sleep and waking consciousness, and as the "shadow of annihilation."
iḥsān: "the state of doing what is beautiful," or moral perfection.
ijāza: "authorization," such as to teach or serve as a *shaykh*.
imān: "faith."
indirāj al-nihāyat fi'l-bidāyat: "the inclusion of the end in the beginning," the principle of spiritual instruction in which the purification of the heart takes place before the purification of the self.
al-insān al-kāmil: "the perfect man."
jadhba: "attraction" to God, what Sedgwick has called "emanative pull."
karāma (pl. *karāmāt*): "miracles."
kashf (pl. *kushūf*): "vision," the experience of seeing the manifestation of someone or something, such as during a meditative state.
khafī: "hidden" or "arcanum," the hidden *laṭīfa*.
khalīfa (pl. *khulafā'*): "deputy" or "successor."
khalwat dar anjumān: "solitude in the crowd," the principle of being inwardly with God while outwardly in society.
khatm-i sharīf or *khatm*: recitations for honoring the saints of the *silsila*.
laṭā'if (sg. *laṭīfa*): "subtleties," "subtle centers of consciousness."
ma'mūlāt: a Sufi literature genre providing recitations and/or intentions to be performed for worldly or spiritual benefit, usually under the guidance of a *shaykh*.
ma'iyyat: "with-ness," referring to proximity to God.
ma'rifat: "knowledge," particularly mystical intuitive knowledge.
murāqaba: "vigilance,"

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[1] *SfT* 56.

1. contemplative practice prescribed by one's *shaykh*.
2. a state of being vigilant of one's awareness of God.

nafs: "self," the self *laṭīfa*. Also called the "soul" or "ego."
nisba or *nisbat*: "spiritual affinity,"
1. an element of Arabic grammar denoting relation.
2. the spiritual affinity or relation between an individual and God, the very goal of Sufism.
3. a comprehensive, catch-all category collectively denoting the processes, interim steps, experiences and aspects of the ultimate goal, including the results thereof.
4. the spiritual affinity between people, such as between a person and a particular *ṭarīqa*, or a disciple and their *shaykh* as a technique for the disciple to attain spiritual affinity with God.
5. the interconnectedness of all of existence.

niyya (pl. *niyyāt*): "intention," a statement made silently at the outset of performing acts such as ablutions or most often here, *murāqaba*.
pas anfas: "awareness of the breath."
qalb: "heart,"
1. the heart *laṭīfa* as a separate subtle center.
2. the heart *laṭīfa* as being inclusive of all the *laṭā'if*.

qarāqul: a sheepskin cap worn by men in Central and South Asia.
rūḥ (pl. *arwāḥ*): "spirit," the spirit *laṭīfa*.
sayr-i āfāqī: "journeying to the horizon."
sayr-i anfusī: "inner journeying."
shajara: "tree," the initiatic chain of transmission leading back to the Prophet Muḥammad, also known as a *silsila*.
silsila: "chain," spiritual genealogy, see *shajara*.
ṣuḥbat: "accompaniment,"
1. being in the physical company of the *shaykh*.
2. being in the physical company of the *shaykh* and fellow Sufi aspirants.
3. being in the physical company of good people.

sulṭān al-adhkar: "sovereign of remembrances," involving the performance of *dhikr-i nafī wa ithbāt* and the illumination of all of one's *laṭā'if*, including the entire body.
sulūk: noun derived from the Arabic root *s-l-k*, denoting travelling along a road, which . be used to denote:
1. spiritual practices in general.
2. the difficult work involved in purifying the self.

sirr: "secret," the secret *laṭīfa*.
ṭāqīya: a cap, often worn by men during prayer.
ṭarīqa (pl. *ṭurūq*): "way" or "path,"
1. a formalized organization of Sufis
2. the mystical path to be travelled by the aspirant.

tawajjuh: "spiritual attention," "spiritual transmission,"
1. the method by which the *shaykh* directs his attention toward the disciple in order to assist in his or her spiritual progress by actively transmitting *baraka*.
   1a. specific lessons or instructions which are provided to the disciple at various points throughout their spiritual journey and are accompanied by the active transmission of *baraka*.
   1b. the ever-present active transmission of *baraka* from the *shaykh*'s constant attention.
2. the directing of attention by the practitioner to their *laṭā'if* and also with their *laṭā'if* toward people, places or things (like the divine essence, the *shaykh*'s *laṭā'if* or the tomb of the Prophet) during meditation and other practices for the passive reception of *baraka*.

taṣfiyat al-qalb: "purification of the heart."
tazkiyat al-nafs: "purification of the self."
'ulamā' (sg. *'ālim*): religious scholars.

uwaysī: pertaining to the non-physical and non-temporally bound transmission of knowledge, blessings and/or initiation between two individuals.
waḥdat al-shuhūd: “unity of witnessing.”
waḥdat al-wujūd: “unity of being.”
waẓīfa: “duty,” a litany of daily recitations typically involving Quranic formulae and short verses, *durūd-i sharīf* and *khatm-i sharīf*.
ẓāhir: the “outer,” or exoteric.

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